NGO’s: The Voice of the People: The Relationship Between Government and Civil Society in a Samoan “Democracy”

Dani Karnoff
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NGO’S: THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

The Relationship between Government and Civil Society in a Samoan “Democracy”

Dani Karnoff

November 2010
NGO’s: The Voice of the People

The Relationship between Government and Civil Society in a Samoan “Democracy”

By

Dani Karnoff

An Independent Study Project (ISP) submitted as a requirement for the School of International Training (SIT) program in Samoa.

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“S.I.T. Samoa Fall 2010”
ABSTRACT

This project examined the meaning of civil society, both in its true form as well as in the Samoan context, the roles of civil society, and whether civil society is used as a modem to converse with the Samoan government on behalf of the people. The purpose of this study was to formulate a more complete understanding of the term “civil society”, how civil society works within the Samoan Democracy, and the relationship between civil society and government. Research for this study was completed through interviews, surveys, secondary research, and field based observations. The interviewees for this study were either members of civil society or members of government. The civil society members represented many aspects of civil society including religious institutions, public awareness organizations, NGO umbrella organizations, and public and private schools. Surveys were conducted at various NGOs in Apia and its neighboring villages. The findings for this study suggest that the concept of civil society in Samoa differs greatly from the general ideology. Samoan civil society takes on many roles not traditionally accredited to non-governmental organizations including educator, watchdog, and voice of the Samoan people. Lastly, civil society’s relationship with the government varies among different organizations. More outspoken organizations tend to have controversial ties with the government, while religious and other unobtrusive organizations are complementary to the government and influence the decision making process.
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this paper to all the members of Samoan civil society; whose commitment to their people and pride in their work will inspire future generations to demand their rights and protect their people.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the guidance, perseverance, and dedication of my professors, Jackie Faasisila and Silao Kasiano. Throughout this semester, both teachers have pushed the group to work harder, achieve more, and learn more than I ever thought possible. This experience would not have been possible without the support and understanding of my parents, Michael Karnoff and Stacey Willis, both whom encouraged me to follow my heart and ignore my head. To my fall of 2010 SITs, who have made this experience exciting, adventurous, lively, rambunctious, and truly memorable. Lastly, this project would not be complete without the guidance, support, and perseverance of Mani Mua; who has pushed me to complete this project with a smile on my face every step of the way.
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Introduction

The development and growth of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) slowly emerged in Samoa with the onset of independence in 1962. The Samoan government which had been traditionally structured around largely autonomous villages changed into a more centralized system of administration with the introduction of modern concepts and forms of democratic government. With the establishment of Samoa as a democratic representative government [and its fundamental clash with the traditional structure of the hierarchical fa'aSamoa]; the need also arose for the community to participate more fully in the new state and to ensure that public officials and institutions of the new state remained accountable to the community (Toleafoa 2010). Huffer and Schuster states that “There is indeed agreement in Samoa as in other democracies that the responsibility for decision making and contributing to the processes of decision making must come from all sections of society. In other words, political management should allow for more direct participation by a wider cross-section of society (Huffer and Schuster 2000:43).

Macpherson and Macpherson argue that on the surface, the preconditions of “good governance” have been met. Yet since independence, the new state has failed to achieve the intentions set forth with the establishment of democracy (Macpherson and Macpherson 2000:20). Samoa became a one party state in 2006; operating under the absolute power of the Human Rights Protection Party (HRPP). NGOs emerged in Samoa to protect the people of Samoa from the one party state. The basic purposes of such organizations were to ensure that the benefits of development were evenly distributed throughout the country, to promote legislative changes in both public and private sector
administration, and to represent local community and minority groups (Macpherson and Macpherson 2000:38). Many of the NGOs were aligned with similar organizations from donor countries such as The National Council of Churches, The Family Enrichment Society Inc, and the Samoa Cancer Society. With no opposition to the governing party, NGOs gradually moved in to act as a “watchdog” over politicians, to promote community development and involvement, and to help the country adjust to societal changes in light of Samoa’s new form of governance. NGOs are effective tools to further democratic development in Samoan society, especially in a one party state, because they work to promote public participation, education, and awareness.

NGOs function within “civil society”, a concept only recently adopted into Samoa’s vocabulary. The purpose of this study is to define what the term civil society entails, in both the general sense as well as in the context of Samoa. Additionally, this study will examine the true role of civil society in Samoa and how NGO’s provide an outlet for civil society to voice their opinions. Lastly, the relationship between the government and civil society will be analyzed in an attempt to understand how the Samoan people use civil society as a means of communicating with or in opposition to the government.

**Methodology**

The research for this project was completed over a three week period from November 4\(^{th}\), 2010 through November 24\(^{th}\), 2010. The materials used include interviews, surveys, secondary resources, newspaper articles, and personal observations. The selected materials were implemented to extract necessary information for the research objectives.
In an attempt to define the term “civil society”, secondary resources such as scholarly articles, internet resources, the Apia Public Library, and the USP Library were used. The definitions of civil society were selected based on accuracy and relevance to the research topic. Interviewees and survey respondents were directly asked to define the term civil society and the roles of civil society in Samoa.

The roles of civil society were also defined through interviews, newspaper articles, and surveys. A list of non-governmental organizations supplied by SUNGO was used the survey and interviews; this list included the names of all NGOs in Samoa and contact details. A total of twelve interviews were conducted with prominent members of civil society and 10 surveys were completed by randomly selected members of non-governmental organizations. Interviews were conducted at civil society organizations, government buildings, and the Apia Public Library. Surveys were distributed directly to the non-governmental organizations, all of which were based in Apia and the surrounding villages. The data retrieved from the questionnaires were converted to percentages and displayed through charts found in the analysis section of this paper. These findings were used to further indentify the relationship between the government and civil society. Other relevant resources can be found in the appendix.

**Defining Civil Society**

Civil society, as defined by Harry Blair, is an intermediate associational realm between the state and family populated by organizations which are separate from the state, enjoy autonomy in relation to the state, and are formed voluntarily by members of society to protect or extend their interests or values (Blair 2005:926). Essentially, civil society was
developed to merge the gap between the state and the people in industrialized societies, and make the state more accessible to the people. This large gap between the state and ordinary people in highly developed societies hinders public participation in government; therefore civil societies developed to bridge the gap between people and governments and to meet the need for ordinary people to have more say in the workings of government (Toleafoa 2010).

The organizations that are termed civil society organizations (CSOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and community based organizations (CBOs) all fall under the umbrella of “civil society”. These groups or organizations of ordinary people from society are mobilized to achieve particular community related objectives. They exist not to represent themselves or the interests of their members but to serve some wider purpose or clientele (Hill 1994:131). Civil society covers a very diverse range of organizations including youth movements, women’s organizations, environmental lobby groups, peace movements, trade unions, consumer movements, religious organizations, human rights advocacy movements, health advocacy groups, non-formal education providers, welfare advocacy and self-help groups, solidarity movements, professional and scientific associations (Hill 1994:130). Overall, the single commonality among these groups, organizations, and associations is their independence from the state.

Helen Hill, author of “Theory and Practice in Pacific NGO’s” identifies common perceptions of civil society and their relation to the state on an international scale. She quotes South African writer, Robert Hine, who identified five elements that are common in discussion of civil society.

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Hine describes these perceptions of civil society as widespread; yet these common perceptions fail to embody the true nature of civil society. For instance, the negative notion of civil society as that which is not the state, and the democratic idea of people against the state do not correspond with the opinions of many civil servants and government officials. Kilali Alailima, Director of the Civil Society Support Facility in Samoa, broke modern society down into three major sectors; the public sector (government), the private sector (business) and the civil society sector. She explained that each sector helps maintain an overall balance of power within a democratic society; a society where the government is accountable to the people. (Alailima 2010). Civil society should be complementary with the government. It is not one with the state, yet it is not against the state. Thus, a primary purpose of civil society is work with the state to enhance democratic cooperation on behalf of the people.

Afamasaga Toleafoa stated that, “accountable government is good government” (Toleafoa 2010). A government that is held responsible for its actions is far more likely to respect the rights of the people and to work for the good of the people as a whole rather than for its own ends. Therefore, decisions will be made on behalf of the people; and civil society plays a significant role in making government accountable to the people. It is the
body that enables individuals to have a greater influence in government by way of informing people about issues and mobilizing the ordinary people’s political and technical power to influence government decisions and actions (Toleafoa 2010). When ordinary people are informed and engaged with the decision making process, then the chances are that a representative democracy can flourish.

Roina Vavatau, Chief Executive of the Samoan Umbrella for Non-Governmental Organizations (SUNGO) stated that, “A strong civil society is a pillar toward democracy” (Vavatau 2010). In her opinion, a strong civil society is one where people are well informed; they understand their rights and demand those rights from their government. Civil society works to educate the public, advocate on behalf of the public, and help the public understand what a true representative democracy entails.

**Samoan Civil Society**

Democracy in the independent state of Samoa is a fairly new concept. Since the establishment of democracy in Samoa in 1962, its true understanding has failed to stand hold. Rather, the government has assumed its traditional role under the *fa’aSamoa*. The *fa’aSamoa* is essentially a traditional governance system; serving social, economic, and political functions that encapsulate all aspects of Samoan life. This system of governance is a system of control and social order, where the *matai* or chief makes all outstanding decisions (Iati 2000:71-76). The *fa’aSamoa* and democracy fundamentally do not mesh. Multiple members of civil society explained that the Samoan people are unaware of their rights and don’t understand the true concept of democracy, which centers on public participation and a representative governing body. Iati Iati, who writes on the
implications of the fa’aSamoa on civil society, believes that on a national level the fa’aSamoa facilitates corruption by the Head of State and the governing party (Iati 2000:71-76). The Samoan people are comfortable with the matai system under the fa’aSamoa, and allow government to lead without questioning its authority (Toleafoa 2010). Currently, Samoa is a one-party state, and has been under the “absolute power” of the HRPP since 1982 (Huffer and Schuster 2000:44).

Though civil society is fundamentally separate from the state, political neutrality is difficult to muster in a small society like Samoa’s. Asofou So’o, Vice Chancellor of the National University of Samoa and accredited author states that, “There is an interesting relation between civil society and the government. Since there is no major opposition, NGOs are trying to act as a voice for the people without being involved with politics, but the reality is that Samoa is a small country and people can’t be politically neutral, everyone has their own opinion” (So’o 2010). Kilali acknowledged that there is a tension between government and civil society in Samoa. Civil society plays an adversarial role rather than being in partnership with government. Much of this stems from the advocacy component of civil society (Alailima 2010).

SUNGO is the most visible NGO in Samoa. Through frequent appearances in the media, SUNGO has fulfilled its advocacy role and provides a voice for the people. Keni Lesa, editor of the Samoan Observer, stated that, “People are waking up and realize they need change, NGOs are a refreshing voice.” Additionally, Lesa feels that SUNGO is performing their role as advocate and speaking out against unjust policies (Lesa 2010). Kilali explains that with respect to SUNGO, the government questions whose views they actually represent. “Are they truly the views of the people or are they just the opinions of
a few outspoken individuals?” (Alailima 2010). The tense relationship that has developed between the government and SUNGO has transformed the role civil society in Samoa. Civil society should be complementary with the government, yet SUNGO’s outspoken voice has provoked the Prime Minister to make outlandish comments over the position of civil society. Prime Minister Tuilaepa Sa’ilele Malielegaoi stated recently on the front page of *The Samoan Observer* that, “You [SUNGO] are too fat, independent and anti-establishment; you are no longer skinny like you used to be” (Tauafiafi 2010:1). This statement illustrates that the government is uncomfortable with the voice of civil society as a strong and independent entity. Civil society has an important part to play in making the democratic process work. It does that best when it is independent of government and works alongside government. Yet it appears that the Prime Minister would prefer civil society to be under the jurisdiction of the government. In response, Samoan civil society has taken on multiple roles to ensure that ordinary people are meaningfully engaged in government and in the decision making process and these include; civil society as “educator”, civil society as “watchdog,” and civil society as “the voice of the people.” The next section will examine those roles of civil society in Samoa.

**Roles of Civil Society in Samoa**

1. **Civil Society as “Educator”**

“A strong civil society is a civil society where people are well informed” (Vavatau 2010). Roina explains that in order for civil society to have any real impact, the public must be aware of their rights, understand their rights, and act on those rights. Afamasaga confirmed that approximately 60% of the population doesn’t understand what is
happening in Samoa (with regard to the changes that the HRPP has made to the constitution); and there is little understanding of modern democratic government due to the lack of education on democracy (Toleafoa 2010). The people must understand what democracy entails, their entitlement to voice their concerns, and demand that the government must respect their constitutional rights. It is now civil society’s responsibility, since the government has not correctly addressed the problem, to establish community programs and other workshops to educate the people. They must be taught about their basic rights to understand what democracy entails and what is currently happening with the government; as well as how to sustain themselves and learn the skills necessary to be successful in a developing nation. SUNGO and other organizations are trying to get the message out, but they are underdeveloped. In order to establish true development and change in Samoa, the attitudes and values of the people must also change. People will need to know the difference between democratic values and their application and fa’aSamoa values and their application. The two sets of values and behavior patterns do not go well together as they are diametrically opposed. Understanding these differences and their particular spheres of application holds the key to the development of democratic government in Samoa (Toleafoa 2010). Roina feels that the people of Samoa are very capable people, yet there needs to be a raised awareness on human rights and issues She stated, “We can start it off, we can educate people” (Vavatau 2010).

2. Civil Society as “Watchdog”

Civil society organizations perform their role as “watchdog”, or the monitoring of government to protect the rights of the people, through two techniques. The first method
is lobbying, or promoting legislation directly to the government. The second method is advocacy, or publically expressing concerns about the government through the media.

Samoan civil society strives to protect the rights of the citizens by keeping a close eye on the government and its actions. Civil society must defend the democratic rights of the people and ensure that government is held accountable to the people. This is done through a variety of techniques that differ among organizations. Mapusaga o Aiga, a NGO that deals with issues of domestic violence and human rights on behalf of women and children, advances the rights and interest of their client base through lobbying and promoting legislation directly to the government. The government is the decision making body, but it is civil society’s responsibility to influence Parliament and address the issues that they feel are crucial to improve the quality of life for the people. Faoliu Tupua Wendt, a prominent researcher for Mapusaga o Aiga stated that, “it is the state’s obligation to make sure laws and legislation are in place and it is the responsibility of civil society to ensure that government fulfills these obligations by lobbying and so forth.” Additionally, “There are issues that we have to voice for the sake of the people, but at the end of the day the government makes the decisions, we can lobby but we can never change it”(Wendt 2010). Therefore, although the government will have the final say it is the role of civil society to lobby directly to the government, and promote the issues of interest.

Questionnaires were distributed among civil society organizations to further explore the relationship between civil society and the government. Organizations were asked whether or not they have been involved in voicing the people’s needs to the current government.
According to the survey, 80% of civil society organizations participate in voicing the people’s needs to the government. This statistic signifies that most civil society organizations in Samoa fulfill their role as “watchdog” by working directly with the government and ensuring that it pays attention to the key issues in Samoan society.

Civil society, in particular SUNGO, works to inform the public on the government’s agenda and to publically address their concerns. On November 15, 2010, *The Samoan Observer* showcased the article “Eviction Letter.” This article discussed SUNGO’s forcible removal by the government from their state owned land. Roina claimed that the government attacked SUNGO largely because of their advocacy role and other statements made against the Prime Minister. Additionally she explained her role as advocator,

We serve the public by taking agreements signed by the government on behalf of our communities and inform the public about those agreements so there is understanding as to what those decisions mean and their impacts on the nation, communities and families. We take a stance on issues membership say is of public concern and make interventions on behalf of the public (Tauafiafi 2010:2).

SUNGO monitors government through speaking to the public, informing them about the actions of the government, and explaining the effects of governmental decisions. Essentially, they play watchdog in order to hold government accountable for its actions. Kilali stated that, “Voicing protests, disagreement, and putting forth another point of
view is healthy. Civil society is the watchdog of Samoa” (Alailima 2010:67). Despite the government’s objections to civil society’s advocacy role, they plan to continue their work and not submit to the will of the HRPP.

3. Civil Society as “The Voice of the People”

Roina Vavatau declared that the role of civil society in Samoa is to be the “voice of people.” “Where is the voice of the people? If we didn’t exist where would the voice of the people be?” Roina stated that “SUNGO is the only unified voice in Samoa” and it is their responsibility to speak on behalf of the people to demand their rights and voice their opinions to the government (Vavatau 2010).

In order to establish meaningful change, civil society must be visible and active (Toleafoa 2010). Over the past few years, SUNGO has made attempts to influence the government by inciting cooperation among the public. Speaking out against the government and its proposed legislation has become a major role of SUNGO. Also, SUNGO has organized massive rallies with public support to oppose government legislation. Roina specified the Land Registration Bill of 2005, the Police Power Bill of 2007, and the People Against Switching Sides (PASS) movement in 2009 as major outlets for voicing the opinions of the Samoan people (Vavatau 2010).

In 2007, the Samoan government proposed the “Police Power Bill,” a piece of legislation that would arm the police force of Samoa. SUNGO felt that this bill was unnecessary and could potentially harm the citizens of Samoa. Roina stated that, “There is a strong system of governance at the village level, and all matters are brought to the council of chiefs; since there is such a strong internal system of governance in Samoa there is no need to
place so much power into the hands of the police” (Vavatau 2010). Her outspoken words on behalf of the people prevented the legislation from passing through Parliament, and Samoa’s police force remains unarmed. SUNGO also opposed the Land Registration Bill of 2005. This bill sought to register all land holdings in Samoa and had the potential to undermine customary land ownership rights. SUNGO voted against this bill claiming that, “Land is the safety net of Samoa, and the only reason that the government proposed this piece of legislation was to promote foreign investment” (Vavatau 2010). SUNGO’s constructive voice reflects the opinions of the people and works to verbalize their opinions, yet the government does not always pay attention to the public will.

In 2009, the Prime Minister declared that there would be a road switch; claiming that for economical reasons vehicles must drive on the right side of the road. In response, SUNGO presented submissions to the government in an attempt to disprove the Prime Minister and counter the proposed legislation. Additionally, they organized the “People Against Switching Sides” (PASS) movement. SUNGO successfully rallied over 20,000 people in September of 2009 to voice their concerns about the bill to the Prime Minister. Despite the mass opposition to the road switch, the submissions and protest were unsuccessful in swaying the government’s decisions and legislation passed through Parliament. Kilali believes that, “In terms of influencing government, it is hot and difficult. SUNGO should work within the framework of government in order to make a change” (Alailima 2010). Despite these setbacks, SUNGO has fulfilled its role as the voice of the people, plans to continue its work on behalf of the people, and will persist to get the national dialogue going between the state and civil society. “As they say, Rome wasn’t built in a day, and neither was Samoa” (Wendt 2010).
The Constitution of the Independent State of Samoa guarantees every citizen of Samoa certain rights regarding the freedom of speech, assembly, association, movement and residence. Part II, Article 13 reads that,

All citizens of Western Samoa shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression; to assemble peaceably and without arms; to form associations or unions; to move freely throughout Western Samoa and to reside in any part thereof (The Constitution of the Independent State of Samoa 2010).

These rights are entitled to every Samoan citizen, yet most fail to understand their significance. Faoliu Tupua Wendt of Mapusaga o Aiga expressed that, “We must believe in the constitution and educate the youth about their rights as laid out in the constitution” (Wendt 2010). She believes that civil society must be the voice for the people, so that they may learn how to advocate for themselves in the future. Salanieta Uesele, CEO of Mapusaga o Aiga, stated that, “It is the role of civil society to speak for the people, but it is one of the core principles to push the people to speak for themselves, the people need the knowledge and skills to advocate for themselves” (Uesele 2010). Education over time may instill this advocacy role within the people, but currently this role must be fulfilled by civil society.

Analysis

Samoan civil society is composed of a wide variety of organizations; each with its own goals, objectives, and focus. The data from this study suggest that different sectors of civil society have different relationships with the government. Questionnaires were distributed to ten civil society organizations in an attempt to understand the variances among these organizations, their different feelings toward the government, and their individual relationships with the government.
Each organization was asked, “How is your organization’s relationship with the current government in terms of communications and addressing political issues?”

The chart demonstrates that more than half 60% of the NGOs surveyed feel that the relationship between the current government and civil society is just satisfactory, while 40% of the NGOs believe that the relationship between civil society and the present government is good. Additionally, organizations were asked whether or not they felt the government meets the needs of the Samoan people.
The results indicate that there is disagreement among NGO’s and whether or not they feel the government meets the needs of the Samoan people. Approximately 40% of the NGOs surveyed felt that the government meets the needs of the people, 20% believes that the government does not meet the needs whatsoever, and 40% of NGOs believe that the government meets some of the needs of the people, while not fulfilling others.

The findings suggest that perceptions of civil society’s relationship with the government appear to be contingent upon the type of organization. Reverend Motu, Secretary of the National Council of Churches (NCCC) of Samoa, feels that the government works well with civil society. He believes that civil society is the body to voice opinions to government leaders, to improve decision making, and to support the government. He explained that the government regularly delegates with and listens to civil society stating that, “We advise the government in ways to better their decision making” (Motu 2010). Reverend Motu also suggested that the government works well with religious organizations stating, “People of Samoa are really afraid of God. I am not afraid of the Prime Minister, but we are afraid of God” (Motu 2010). The government respects the church and its will. Without the support of the church, the government would be completely illegitimate in Samoa.

SUNGO on the other hand, expressed that the government is unable or unwilling to work effectively with civil society. She feels that the Prime Minister makes decisions on his own behalf and does not serve the interest of the people. Roina stated that, “We are not here to serve the Prime Minister; we are here to serve the interest of the people” (Vavatau 2010). Different organizations are treated differently by the Samoan government; and the relationships and attitudes of civil society organizations vary with respect to the
government. Afamasaga stated that “The government is a one party state, or essentially a dictatorship, therefore they work well with quiet organizations who do not question their authority” (Toleafoa 2010).

**Conclusion**

The outcome of this study revealed that civil society, or the groups or organizations from society that mobilize the people to voice their opinions, acquire different roles and responsibilities in relation to the state of the government. In Samoa, civil society acts as “educator”, “watchdog” and the “voice of the people” in an attempt to compensate for the absence of a formal opposition to the ruling party. Samoan civil society undertakes many responsibilities to protect the rights and interests of the people. Non-governmental organizations educate the people of their guaranteed rights under the constitution, advocate and lobby to the state on behalf of the people, and act as the voice for the people to express their concerns with the government and its proposed legislation. Additionally, the relationship between civil society and the government varies with respect to the type of organization. NGOs that comply with the government have substantially healthier relationships with the state than other more outspoken organizations. Civil society believes that it is their role to protect the people and intends to persevere despite the reign of the HRPP, and will continue to protect the interests of the Samoan people for generations to come.
Bibliography

Interviews


Literature


Newspaper Articles


Appendices

Appendix 1:

Survey Questionnaire

NGO’s: The Voice of the People
The Relationship between Government and Civil Society in a Samoan “Democracy”

The purpose of this survey is to explore the meaning of civil society, how civil society function in the Samoan context of democracy and how various civil society organizations give voice to the Samoan people within the current state of government. Additionally, this survey is being conducted to find out how Non-governmental Organizations (NGO’s) are significant in voicing the Samoan peoples’ needs to the current government and exploring its successes and or failures. [Note: all information gathered will be kept anonymous]

1. What is civil society?

2. Is your organization involved with politics?
   - Yes [ ]
   - No [ ]

3. If yes, how are you involved?

4. How well is your organization’s relationship with the current government in terms of communication and addressing political issues? (Refer to question 3)
   - Poor [ ]
   - Satisfactory [ ]
   - Good [ ]

4. Do you feel that the current government meets the needs of the Samoan people?
   - Yes [ ]
   - No [ ]

5. What does your organization do to benefit society?

6. Is the relationship between civil society and government good or bad?

7. Has your organization been involved in voicing the people’s needs to the current government?
   - Yes [ ]
   - No [ ]

8. If yes, in what ways have your organization been involved?

9. Is there any other information you feel is important and relates to the topic of interest?
Eviction letter

“For SUNGO’s activities many are done by volunteers who give their time, donate food and many other things straight from their hearts. This is an area where you serve...To sell them off, for me, is just not worth it. I’d rather go to the grave standing than go kneeling for forgiveness.” – Roina Vavatau

Aigaletasilele’s F. Tualepa

The Samoa Umbrella of Non Government Organisations (SUNGO) has been given until the end of the month to vacate the government land it occupies at Moto’otua.

The order is given by Prime Minister Tuilaepa Sa’ilele Malielegaoi in a letter written in Samoan and dated 1 November 2010, obtained by the Samoa Observer.

“It is my opinion you should look for a land, there are a lot of land owned by the Catholic Church at Maloolele so you can build a house there and vacate the government land for other organisations,” Tuilaepa’s letter transmises (see letter in full below).

“There are other organisations who are trying to survive and have been crying to me but you are too fast, independent and anti-establishment, you are no longer skinny like you used to be.”

The Prime Minister said SUNGO has so much money it does not know what to spend it on. He said it would be “very good” if they can move by the end of November so other organisations can move in on 1 December.

He did not say which organisations he was referring to.

But the letter is copied to all Cabinet Ministers with a footnote to the Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Faʻatūa Tiaia Luga stating: “Please proceed and ensure that SUNGO is evacuated by 30th November 2010.”

SUNGO Chief Executive, Roina Vavatau said her appearance on the controversial Campbell Live show where she attacked the government over tsunami funds might have something to do with the notice.

“I’m fairly sure my comment on the Campbell Live show is why the Prime Minister is angry and the cause of the letter,” she said.

As to her comment to New Zealand journalist, John Campbell, Mrs Vavatau said: “He’s a dictator and it’s a one Party State.

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Appendix 3: Photocopy of SUNGO’s membership list of NGOs