

ABSTRACT

Tonga has endeavoured to meet most of its international responsibilities and obligations under the Barbados Plan of Action, Mauritius Strategy for Implementation, and Millennium Development Goal. Tonga has concerns for Climate Change and its impacts on the environment and the wellbeing of the communities. Non-communicable diseases are a major concern and Tonga has committed to combat NCDs through the MDG Acceleration Framework. Tonga has a vision in its planning and budgeting process which is to develop and promote a just, equitable and progressive society in which the people of Tonga enjoy good health, peace, harmony, and prosperity, in meeting their aspirations in life. This emulates sustainable development at national level but need institutional strengthening to implement and enforce its footings on the ground (local level). Further, sustainable development can be interpreted as a 'balanced' progress that avail equal weight to political, social and economic progress. As such, Tonga would like to see that renewed political commitments for SIDS are equated with the necessary resources by the development partners.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tonga's Strategic Development Framework 2011-2014, provides the broad policy and planning framework against which progress achieved or not under various national, regional and international programmes of action, including the Barbados Plan of Action (BPoA) and the Mauritius Strategy of Implementation (MSI), can be measured.

Despite Tonga's effort to promote and progress with development objectives, delimiting factors such as economic recession, financial constraints, limited human resource capability, and institutional weaknesses continue to hinder developments.

This report aimed to support Tonga prepares for PSID meeting in July 2013. Further, this is Tonga's first step towards the SIDS 2014. This report is built on previous preparatory processes and outcomes, in particular the 5-year high level review of the Mauritius Strategy (MSI+5) in 2010, MDGs, and the UNCSD/Rio+20 in 2012. In addition, consultations were carried out to attain views of various stakeholders and interest groups. Given the limited timeframe, the MDG committee members' forum was utilized, as well as CSOs. Overall, this is a brief review of the progress, and challenges for Tonga with regards to the sustainable development; and the opportunities and possible way forward.

2. COUNTRY CONTEXT

a) PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The Kingdom of Tonga lies between latitude 15 and 24 degrees South and longitudes 173 and 177 degrees West. It has 170 islands with a total area of 747 km². Only 36 islands are inhabited. Depending on tectonic activities along the Tonga fault line, it can be over 170 islands for short periods. The island kingdom has four main groups of islands, namely the Niua (Niua-toputapu and Niua-fo'ou) in the far north; the Vava'u Group; the Ha'apai Group; and the Tongatapu Group (including 'Eua), which is the main group. Overall Tonga has a total land area of 720 square kilometres not all of which are habitable.

The Tonga islands are built on two ridges, the Tonga Ridge and the Tofua Ridge, running in parallel to one another in a southwest-northwest direction. In parallel to these ridges is the axis of the Tonga-Kermadec Trench, which is one of the deepest locations on earth. The islands on the Tonga Ridge are coral in origin

and low and flat; these include the Tongatapu Group, Ha'apai and Vava'u groups, which accommodate almost all the national population. The Tonga Ridge is not volcanic but it is tectonically active. The islands on the Tofua Ridge are volcanic in origin, high and rugged, including the islands of 'Ata (southernmost island), Kao and Tofua (Ha'apai Group), Late Island (Vava'u Group), and the Niuaas.

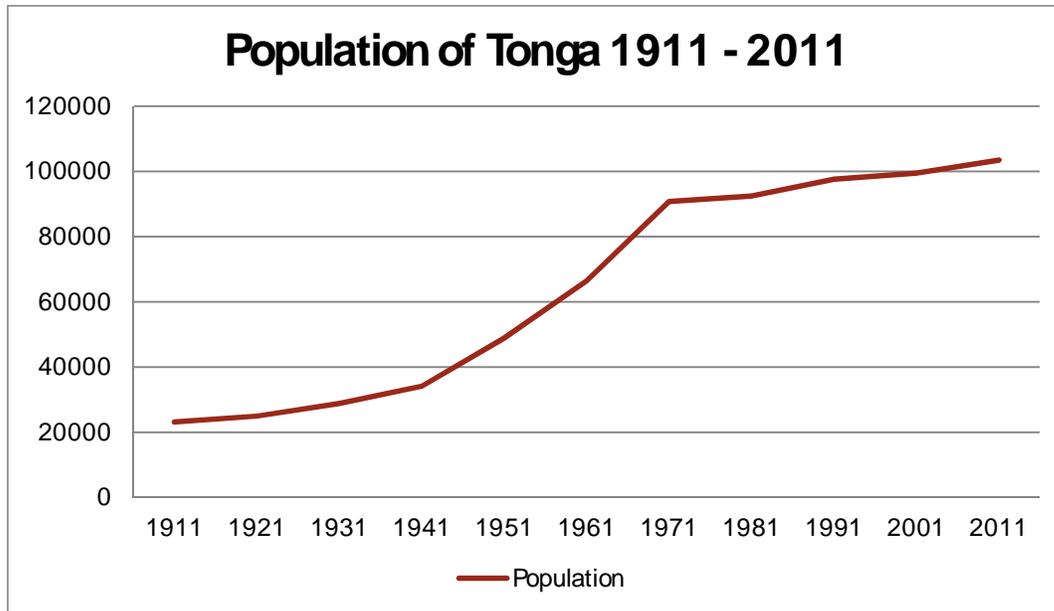
It is well known that Tonga's landscape has been extensively modified over the years by natural disasters and particularly by human activity leading to the loss of much of the native vegetation that once covered the islands. This trend continues at a faster rate in Tongatapu Island than other parts of Tonga. Further, the Nuku'alofa area bears the full effect of human activity, followed by main townships across the main island groups. It is well known that land allotments continue to be subdivided for residential and business purposes. Even, in vulnerable areas such as the marsh areas west of Nuku'alofa.

The climate of Tonga is characterised as sub-tropical with a wet season during December to April and a dry season from May to November. On the island of Tongatapu, the average annual temperature is 23 °C with a maximum of 32 °C and a minimum of 11 °C. The northern parts of Tonga receive on average of about 2,600mm of rainfall per annum while the south islands receive about 1,700mm per annum. Tropical cyclones are a common occurrence in the kingdom due to its global position. However, there is more than 50% probability that no cyclone will affect Tonga in any particular cyclone season while in other seasons; three or more cyclones may pass through Tonga. In general, the weather pattern, although short term observations shows some indications of climate change. The raining episodes seem to be more intense for instance. However, further researches and time are needed to confirm this.

Tonga is, however, very vulnerable from the environmental point of view. Because of their low topographic position many of Tonga's islands are prone to natural hazards like sea-level rise, volcanic activity, earthquake and tsunami hazards. Besides, recent and future social and economic developments, including a more intensive agricultural use of land, put the country at risk for various aspects of land degradation.

b) SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

According to the 2011 Preliminary Census Report, Tonga's national population is 103,036, there were 52,001 male and 51,035 female. About two third of the population resides in the main island, Tongatapu. However, half of the Tongatapu population concentrate within and around the Nuku'alofa area. In fact, Tonga's population has steadily grown until the second half of the twentieth century.



Sources: Census 2011; Statistical Abstract 1993, 1999; Halatuituia 2002¹.

The population has grown very little since the 1970s, as the annual growth rates experienced by the Kingdom over these years have been countered by emigration and social changes, leaving a low real annual growth rate. The annual rate of population growth pattern has declined since the period 1956-66, when it was about 3.6 percent to 1.6 percent in 1966-76 and 0.5 percent in 1976-86 (1993 Statistical Abstract) to 0.3 percent in 1986-96 (Statistics Department 1999). Since the 1970s, the total population has stayed around the 100,000 mark.

Population growth is an issue of importance in any area of study in Tonga due to the limited resources available. Population growth in Tonga, although slight but localised, strains the bureaucracy, the environment, and natural resources.

The population growth in the last decades has been relatively low, meaning that the population had been relatively stable. An influential factor on this would be international emigration. However, the population pressure progresses as land use and land practice continue to evolve. In effect, the population pressure on land intensifies on certain areas, and unfortunately in some cases, on vulnerable and sensitive areas. Further, strain on its biodiversity and resources like sandalwood and bechedemer are in verge of being extinct.

Population growth, coupled with urban migration especially on the island of Tongatapu is increasing the already growing demand for land for settlement purposes. Regulatory entitlements can no longer be fulfilled pushing families to put pressure on coastal areas and sensitive areas. If this rate of degradation continues unabated, the damage to natural ecosystems could seriously affect the government's vision for a 'high quality of life for the people of the Kingdom'.

Due to the limited availability of land, some mangrove areas and vulnerable areas have been subdivided and filled for settlement especially on the islands of Tongatapu. Unfortunately, some of these lands are rarely filled to sufficient heights to escape the impacts of climate change, particularly of rising sea levels.

¹ Tonga's Contemporary Land Tenure System: Rhetoric and Reality, PhD Thesis, University of Sydney

TONGAN ECONOMY

Despite the fact that Tonga in its budget statement prioritised good governance, improve private sector growth, improve community development, and improve productivity and effectiveness of the public sector, the reality is that, the economy is in a tight fiscal situation. Hence, these priorities will not be met.

Tonga has an agriculture-based economy organized around semi-subsistence small holdings. Subsistence production focuses on a range of customary root crops such as yams, taro, sweet potato and more recently, cassava. Commercial production has focused on squash pumpkin over the last decade. However, considerable effort has been made to diversify into higher-value export crops notably vanilla, watermelon but these too, have proven hazardous ventures because of the problems of quality control, diseases and major fluctuations in supply and demand.

It is well known that the agriculture sector is the main contributor to the Tonga economy, considering the GDP in the last decade. However, the vulnerability of Tonga's economy to exogenous shock in EVI² is 48.8 but the threshold is 33. Given Tonga's EVI, the option is for Tonga to diversify its agricultural sector in term of production and export.

Tonga is yet to fully exploit great potentials such as her vast area of marine resources, undeveloped niche tourism industry, and well-educated English speaking population. This is critical for a small island state that is dependent on foreign aid and remittances.

c) POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATION SETTING

Tonga is revered for its longstanding political structure under its 1875 Constitution, with a government, a legislature and a judiciary system, and headed by the monarch. However, 2010 saw the transition of the Monarch's executive power to government, a democratic elected government in fact. Despite the change in political power, the constitutional and administrative structure and establishes the modern land and marine tenure remain relatively unchanged. Similarly, resource management, supporting institutions and management structure in Tonga lagged the global changes and existing needs. For instance, the global focus as a result of the UNCED (1992), BPOA (1994) and WSSD (2002) and others have shifted global attention to sustainable development and the need to strengthen institutional arrangements and administrative capacity. This is fully supported by Tonga, the institutional arrangement in Tonga is still transforming, at a slower rate though.

Tonga, in her aspire to be more efficient at lower expenses, has moved from specialised ministries to mega-ministries. The goal of the restructure is commendable, it will take some time before it is confirmed a success. However, with limited institutional arrangements in place prior to this restructure, it would mean that critical matters such as sustainable development would be up in the air.

d) NATIONAL STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK (TSDF)

The TSDF provides the guiding principles and directions for a four-year term, that the current administration. The actions and strategies are in sectorial plans.

² EVI or Economic Vulnerability Index reflects the risk to the development of a country caused by global shocks. EVI is a combination of 7 indicators namely; population size, remoteness, merchandise export concentration, share agriculture, forestry and fisheries in GDP, homelessness caused by natural disasters, instability of agricultural production, and instability of export or goods and services.

The TSDf 2011-2014 affirmed Tonga's vision *"to develop and promote a just, equitable and progressive society in which the people of Tonga enjoy good health, peace, harmony, and prosperity, in meeting their aspirations in life."*

The nine outcome objectives: 1) Strong inclusive communities; 2) Dynamic public and private sector partnership; 3) Appropriate well planned and maintained infrastructure; 4) Sound education standards; 5) Appropriately skilled workforce; 6) Improved health of people; 7) Cultural awareness, environmental sustainability; 8) Better governance; and 9) Safe, secure and stable society, are reflected in the Budget Statement 2013/14. These are followed by four Enabling Themes. These are grouped with their respective strategies, 42 in total.

It is apparent that threads of the economic, social and political principles under the sustainable development have been woven onto the TSDf. The expectation is that the corporate plans of government ministries, departments, and state own enterprises will emulate accordingly.

The second chapter of the TSDf outlines detailed monitoring and evaluation structure in order to gauge progress against each strategy leading up to the objectives and vision. This is complemented by individual ministries Action Management Plan and Corporate Plan, and Annual Budget. The Government also adopted a very clear approach plan such as Enhanced Corporate Plan to diversify its effort with clear indicators to measure the performance of each sector.

BUDGET STATEMENT 2013/14

The Government's nine outcome objectives set out in the TSDf are still the main targets. However, the current Budget Statement has indicated four priority areas namely;

- i. Improve Private Sector Development;
- ii. Improve Community Development;
- iii. Improve Productivity and Effectiveness of Public Sector;
- iv. Maintain Sustainable Fiscal Consolidation.

The selected priority areas are consistent with the priorities in the TSDf. Admittedly, foreign assistances would still fund the government's on-going policy, provision towards human development and social protection such as poverty, health and education. As usual, expenditures within these four prioritised areas are not comparable. The proposals in the enhanced corporate plans, both for recurrent operations and maintenance, and for new aid funded projects, will still be vetted before any financial commitments. Serious consideration will be given to some areas, such as governance, which case the Ombudsman and Anti-Corruption Commission is desirable. These are considered important for business confidence and the welfare of communities overall.

3. SECTORIAL STATUS

This report is primarily based on the 5-year high level review of the Mauritius Strategy (MSI+5) in 2010, and the UNCSO/Rio+20 in 2012. This is followed by a brief summary of Tonga's progress with MDG.

I. CLIMATE CHANGE AND SEA LEVEL RISE

Given Tonga's geology and geography, she is vulnerable to climate change and sea level rise. Therefore, adaptation to adverse impacts of climate change and sea-level rise remains a priority for the Tonga.

The Ministry of Lands, Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources is the leading ministry, besides other line ministries (Ministry of Infrastructures for example) and bodies (Climate Change Cabinet Ministers Committee for example).

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Tonga acceded to the Kyoto Protocol in 2008 and the United Framework Conventions on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
- Tonga also ratified the Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPS)
- MLECCNR had been implementing the South Pacific Sea Level and Climate Monitoring Project (SPSLCMP) since 1991
- JNAP Framework
- Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS) Act
- Environmental Impact Assessment Act 2003

CHALLENGES

- Limited financial resources and staff capacity and capability
- Limited understanding and appreciation among the population of the negative impacts of climate change and sea-level-rise on the country
- Limited enforcement of policies and legislation

OPPORTUNITIES

- Information gathering (database) and sharing (data management)
- Create equal conditions to respond to natural disasters and environmental and climate change
- Improved knowledge about the gender perspective in response to natural disasters and environmental and climate change adaptation.
- Increased capacity of households to respond to natural disasters and to the impacts of environmental and climate change³

II. NATURAL AND ENVIRONMENT DISASTERS

Tonga, as a small island state, is vulnerable to natural hazards thus this is a priority sector.

National Emergency Management Office (NEMO) was established to be responsible for the management of disaster relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction. NEMO is part of the Ministry of Infrastructure. Further, Tonga's Meteorological Service (*Lofa Talamatang'i*) also operates under the Ministry of Infrastructure.

³ Draft Reviewed National Policy on Gender and Development 2012

On the other hand, the Ministry of Lands, Environment, Climate Change, and Natural Resources have key technical capabilities in terms of Natural Disasters Management, Seismic Monitoring Network, Geographical Information System, Coastal Management, and Land Use planning and urban management.

Two tragedies that struck in 2009, the ferry tragedy and the tsunami, both brought to the fore the gender aspect of disaster. In general, more than 70% of the adults who died in this disaster were female⁴. Both of these disasters showed us that we need to mainstream gender, and differences between women and men, and how these roles can make us more vulnerable.⁵

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Joint National Action Plan on Climate Adaptation and Disaster Risk Management 2010-2015
- Geographical Information System is now up-to-date mapping and information on various sectors including disaster management
- Building Control and Standard Act
- Tsunami Early Warning System

CHALLENGES

- Lack of financial resources and capacity within NEMO
- Building Code and Standard need to mainstream Climate Change
- Lack of collaboration among line ministries (developing and implementing major projects; due diligence on respective area of development)
- Population distribution and geographical setting is an issue in terms of information dissemination, providing supply and assistance to disaster affected areas
- NEMO does not have the number of required staff however, if there is a need, relevant ministries will come together to mobilize supplies, funds, assistance when a disaster occurs
- Gender differences in deaths from natural disaster indicates that women are more vulnerable to men

OPPORTUNITIES

- A gender perspective should be integrated into all disaster risk reduction policies, plans and decision-making processes, including those related to risk assessment, early warning, information management, education and training;
- Participatory community targeted disaster risk reduction strategies;
- Increase involvement of CSOs disaster risk management;
- Provide trainings on disaster management volunteers, disaster management information system for local governments, disaster victim identification, and the basics of disaster management for women, men⁶

⁴ For both Samoa and Tonga

⁵ Speaking Notes on 3rd Global Platform for Action Gender Roundtable, Geneva 2011

⁶ Polotu Paunga presentation on UNDP / Korean Government / KOICA Short Course for Policymakers on Gender-Responsive Economic Policy Management, Korea, 2012

III. MANAGEMENT OF WASTES

Population growth and migration (rural-urban) and development pressure, would mean wastes continue to increase in volume but also in types. Tonga had progressed in this sector but limited to land-based wastes.

ACHIEVEMENT

- Waste Management Authority Limited was established under the Waste Management Act 2005
- National Marine Spill Contingency Plan (NATPLAN) to prevent marine pollution from oil spills and other sources
- Recycle efforts has been successful, which the non-government organisations and private companies engaged in particularly exporting metal wastes.
- Cooperation between the Tonga Water Board to bill water and waste is a positive move to eliminate the billing issues that had hindered the Waste Management Authority over the past years.

CHALLENGES

- No effective regulation on the waste dumped off vessels
- Lack of commitment from the Waste Management Authority to manage the wastes in a cost-effective way and ensure it is sustainable
- Financial and technical capacity in dealing with some waste management issues, especially hazardous materials and e-waste

OPPORTUNITIES

- Introduce 'new' working relationships and cooperative arrangements among the administrative agents
- Proactive and introduce specialised policies to reduce wastes such as plastic (bags) and hazardous chemicals

IV. COASTAL AND MARINE RESOURCES

The Fisheries Division (MAFFF) is the main administrative arm of Government for marine (living) resources.

The Geology Unit (MLECCNR) is responsible also for the non-living resources (sand, heavy minerals) and coastal management. The Environment Division (MLECCNR) is mandated with maintaining the biodiversity that includes conservation of marine and coastal resources.

ACHIEVEMENT

- Tonga submitted a partial-claim to the Continental Shelf Commission
- Deep sea exploratory expeditions have started on Tongan waters
- Special Management Areas (SMA)
- Aquaculture Management Plan
- Tuna Management Plan
- Aquarium and Live Fish Management Plan

CHALLENGES

- Lack technical and financial capacities to effectively monitor and control illegal unreported and unregulated fishing
- Lack funding to continue supporting the SMAs
- Technical capacity constraints
- Continuing illegal, unregulated and reported (IUU) operations by foreign vessels
- Climate change impact on fishing
- Limited institutional capacity particularly in monitoring the harvesting of undersized fish and seafood

OPPORTUNITIES

- Reinforce relationships with CSOs to manage SMAs; and expand SMAs to other areas
- Avail equal consideration to the economic benefits as well as the social and environmental aspects of exploiting resources (for example sea cucumber)

V. FRESHWATER RESOURCES

The main sources of water in Tonga are groundwater and rainwater. The Tonga Water Board is a public enterprise which provides water supply services to the urban areas. The rural areas, village water supply (borehole) are managed by their respective *Komiti Vai* (Water Committee).

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Established a National Water Resources Committee secretariat to oversee and coordinate all water resources issues and works
- MLECCNR has proposed a Water Management Bill, strictly to manage and monitor the underground water source.

CHALLENGES

- Lack of clarity with regard to the mandates concerning water: Tonga Water Board (SOE for urban areas; *Komiti Vai* for rural areas, MLECCNR with a natural resource mandate, Ministry of Health mandated with health).
- Commercialisation of water but there is no management or monitoring mechanism

OPPORTUNITIES

- Enact the new Water Management Bill allowing better management of the groundwater source; and regulations for enforcement
- Strengthen the capacity of MLECNR to manage, regulate, and enforce

VI. LAND RESOURCES

LAND

The Ministry of Lands, Environment, Climate Change, and Natural Resources is the administrative arm of Government, mandated to manage and monitor all lands.

Some respite for the women holding the highest number (70%) of lease hold land, where the Constitution dictates land inheritance through the legitimate male lineage, which guarantee men's land rights to a town and country allotment and inheritance passes through the male heirs.⁷

ACHIEVEMENTS

- The Royal Land Commission in two decades completed the review of the legal framework and land management. The RLC Report came out with 102 recommendations.
- The Planning and Urban Management Agency was established in 2008. The National Spatial Planning and Management Act had been enacted as law in Tonga.
- Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Project
- Women holds the highest number of lease hold land 70% in 2009

CHALLENGES

- Limited financial and human resources to implement mandated functions and enforce policies.
- Lack of coordination to ensure sustainable development is fully appreciated.
- Lack of awareness programmes on land management.
- Lack of and/or obsolete legal framework to address lands, natural resources, and environmental issues.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Improve efficiency by establishing a computerised information and data management system
- Train and/or refresh courses for staff in land management and sustainable development
- Refocus on core functions and corporatize or privatise technical support services such as surveying

AGRICULTURE

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forests, Fisheries and Food (MAFFF) had created an enabling environment to sustainably enhance agricultural productivity and promote agricultural diversification and food security.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Established policies, legislations creating environment to raise income opportunities to farmers, exporters and foreign revenue
- Engaged the farmers and fisher in food production for subsistence and the use of traditional methods and technologies.

⁷ SPC Stock take of the gender mainstreaming capacity of Pacific Island governments, Tonga pg 7

- Provided infrastructure for local markets for food, agriculture and fish products
- Increased insertions of modern scientific knowledge and technology into the production, harvest, post-harvest and processing in agriculture, livestock, forestry and fisheries
- Facilitate transfer of modern scientific technologies via trainings of farmers, communal groups, church's groups, women groups, and youth groups.
- Facilitated the expansion of vanilla production and improving the yield management for export.
- Facilitated the production of squash for export to Japan and Korea; from training of farmers, advice for appropriate use of mechanized cultivation, pesticides, fertilizer, and impose quality control of exports.
- Improve the services provided by the ministry with better management systems, with better academically qualified staff
- Established a Agriculture Marketing Fund to support the export of local produce
- Established a Post-harvest and Fish Processing Infrastructures tailored for small and medium entrepreneurial exporters, farmers and fisheries to grow into big exporters, farmers and fisher
- In Fisheries, the empowerment of the community to manage the nearby reef area (Special Management Area) results in elevations of fish and marine stock in depleted and over-fished reef areas. This secure food supply in the long term run
- In Fisheries, facilitate the expansion of tuna fishing industries with legislation framework and also the quality and food safety requirements of exported markets.

CHALLENGES

- Although land in Tonga is unusually fertile, the supply is not only limited, a good percentage lay idle.
- Reliance on imported food products, especially meat and sugary products
- Rising cost of productions and freight cost of export products to foreign markets
- Increasing impacts of climate changes such as: increasing frequency and intensities of annual cyclones, rising sea levels, chaotic rainfall distributions, rising temperatures, dying reef systems.
- Rising threats of global pandemic zoonotic diseases (bird flu, swine fever, mad cow diseases, etc.)
- Maintaining of the farmers and fishers population to the next generations, and also the indigenous knowledge and technologies in farming and fishing
- Minimize the use of pesticides and fertilizers and other chemicals in agriculture and fisheries productions and processing

FORESTRY

The Division of Forestry (MAFF) is responsible for managing forestry and promote tree planting by providing seedlings. In this role, the Division plays a key role in climate change mitigation and sustainable development in Tonga.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- National Forest Policy
- National Forestry Strategic Plan
- Tonga Forest Product Limited (SOE)

CHALLENGES

- Financial constraints
- Poor coordination of projects
- Weak collaboration between line ministries

OPPORTUNITIES

- Import substitution – All current treated construction timber used in Tonga is imported
- Explore export opportunities – there exists a possibility to export both treated pine and untreated sawn timbers.
- Strengthen the TFP through skills training of local workers in the forestry and timber processing sectors.

VII. ENERGY RESOURCES

This is a priority sector for Tonga. Tonga Power Limited (TPL) is not only the power company in Tonga, but it is a state owned enterprise. The gravity of such make up means that TPL's strategic plans are within the overall national development framework.

Tonga' is heavily dependent on imported fossil fuels for her energy needs. However, the economy is particularly vulnerable to oil price shocks, disruptions in the world supply of oil. Further, the risks posed by transportation and storage of fuel.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Tonga Energy Road Map (TERM)
- *Maama Mai* Solar Farm
- Micro-wind turbine trial
- Renewable Energy Policy
- Renewable Energy Act
- Pilot Micro-wind turbine (Nakolo)

CHALLENGES

- Financial and Technical limitations
- Limited Technical Capacity and Expertise
- Resources for biofuel and biomass are not available in a large scale and it would require extensive rehabilitation of existing standings (coconut) or new crops.

OPPORTUNITY

- Promote knowledge of and sponsor research on the role of women with regards to energy efficiency and renewable energy, focusing particularly on traditional women's knowledge and experience ⁸
- Promote renewable energy usage by formulating a policy and amendment to the current legislation to exempt solar equipment from import duties and CT, particularly for household use.
- Strengthen the technical capacity of TERM

⁸ Tonga Energy Roadmap Report 2010

VIII. TOURISM RESOURCES

The Tonga Visitors Bureau, under the Ministry of Commerce, is the national tourism agency, and plays a pivotal role in terms of developing tourism and promoting Tonga as a tourist destination. However, tourism has become a proven contributor to Tonga's economic growth.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Building Blocks of Tourism 2011-2013
- Tourism Master Plan
- Star rating System
- IFC Tourism Sector Diagnostic for Tonga
- National Tourism Authority

CHALLENGES

- Limited infrastructure development
- Climate change issues threatens low-lying islands

OPPORTUNITIES

- Strengthen and equip the National Tourism Authority
- Advertisement campaign at the international market

IX. BIODIVERSITY RESOURCES

The Ministry of Lands, Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources is charged with conservatory mandate to manage threatened species and ecosystems, through ensuring sustainable use of natural resources.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Ratified Convention on Biological Diversity in 1998
- National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP): Fourth Report
- Mangrove Ecosystems for Climate Change and Livelihood (MESCAL) from 2010-2013

CHALLENGES

- Protection of traditional culture and practices and indigenous property rights;
- Species conservation;
- Management of invasion species,
- Lack of finance and human resource
- Climate change

OPPORTUNITIES

- Engage and fund the CSOs in conservatory activities, particularly indigenous species such as sandalwood
- Establish a sustainable land management policy to guide and inform people

X. TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATION

Tonga's geography means that transport and communication are critical, and remain important challenges in the promotion and implementation of sustainable development.

The Ministry of Infrastructures covers all transport aspect of transportation in Tonga, namely sea, air and land. However, the Ministry of Information and Communication is mandated with the communication sector.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Marine Pollution Prevention Act
- Domestic sea and air transport initiatives (FISA and REALTonga)
- Liberalisation of telecommunication allow for healthy competition
- Tonga Cable Limited (optic fibre cable)
- National Infrastructure Investment Plan (NIIP)

CHALLENGES

- Small market size
- Limited staff capacity and capabilities

OPPORTUNITITES

- Firm up the enforcement of the current legislations by strengthening the administrating arms of the Government

XI. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

This is not a well-developed sector in Tonga, despite efforts by MEWAC and various institutions like USP. Therefore, Tonga will still need the support and partnership of regional and international bodies.

XII. GRADUATION FROM LEAST DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Not applicable to Tonga.

XIII. TRADE: GLOBALISATION AND LIBERALISATION

Tonga's trade is predominantly imports rather than exports.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- National Economic Development Council
- Tonga Business Enterprise Centre: Providing advisory and mentoring resources to local businesses.
- WTO member 2007

CHALLENGES

- Limited capacity and expertise constraints (limited negotiation skills and limited ability to satisfy the requirements of international organisations).

XIV. SUSTAINABLE CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Government of Tonga, through the Ministry of Education, Women Affairs and Culture is the main provider of primary a tertiary education. Majority of the secondary education is provided by non-government institutions.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Almost 100% literacy rate
- Tonga National Qualifications Assessment Board (TNQAB)
- Promote cultural and traditional knowledge at all levels
- TVET
- Tonga Educational Support Programme

CHALLENGES

- Lack financial resources to support youth programmes
- Government restructure (Ministry of Employment, Youth and Sports)
- Lack of collaboration among line ministries
- Limited partnerships between Government and Civil Society

OPPORTUNITIES

- Need to mainstream sustainable development at all levels of the school curriculum

XV. SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION

Not well developed in Tonga.

Tonga did not participate in the Johannesburg Plan for Implementation, aimed to develop a 10-year framework of progress supporting regional and international initiatives on sustainable consumption and production.

XVI. NATIONAL AND REGIONAL ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

Not well developed.

This is a sector that is addressed only in some policies and legislations.

XVII. HEALTH

The Ministry of Health has the mandates to deliver a preventative and curative health services in Tonga. Tonga's health system delivers a good range of general clinical services. However, access to basic health services in the outer islands (Vava'u, Ha'apai, 'Eua, Niuas) are inadequate.

Tonga has performed relatively well compared to its neighbour island states: maintained a low child mortality; high percentage of deliveries; and well-structured public nursing child health program. However, growing incidents of NCDs is a national concern.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- District Health Centres completed
- Non-government organizations provide health services (private health clinics and pharmacy)
- Tonga Health Promotion Foundation
- Vaiola Hospital development and expansion
- MAF (Millennium Development Goals Acceleration Framework): Focussing on progressing NCDs, Gender Equality, and Poverty Reduction.

CHALLENGES

- The main issue now is the high number of people vulnerable and suffering from non-communicable diseases (NCDs).
- Low maintenance budget means that the state of health assets and facilities will likely to be deteriorate.
- Health seem to be isolated within the regional scene (The Pacific Health Ministers link direct to the WHO, but not necessarily to PIF)

OPPORTUNITY

- *"Kau Mai Tonga ketau Netipolo"*; A Joint Initiative of the Governments of Tonga and Australia to address NDCs in women through exercise and netball tournaments
- MDG Acceleration Framework should be supported at all levels of various sectors

XVIII. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND INFORMATION FOR DECISION-MAKING

Not well developed

XIX. CULTURE

Education, movement of people, and globalisation poses a risk to the Tongan traditions but even with that, culture is a living part of Tongan society, and change is inevitable with time. The main concern is the preservation of it and managing change.

The studies of Tongan culture and traditions have been promoted in schools and in all secondary schools up to Form 6 (Year 12).

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Tonga ratified the World Heritage Convention in 2004.
- A 2013 Draft Culture Policy has been developed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs

CHALLENGES

- Cultural development is not a priority in government expenditure.
- Human rights and Gender equality

OPPORTUNITIES

- Enact the Culture Policy and assist the Ministry of Internal Affairs to implement it

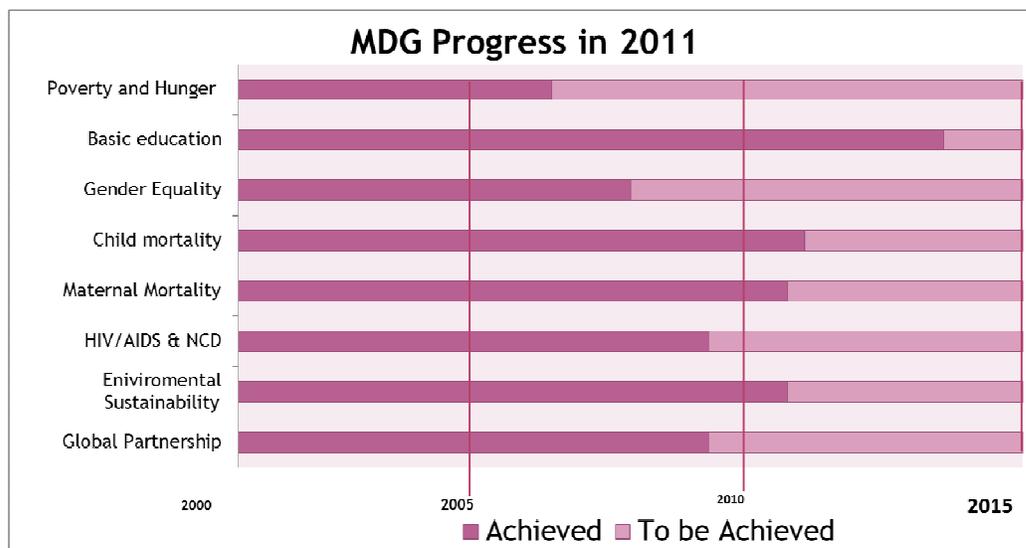
4. MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDG)

The MDG eight goals are time-bound, quantitative targets that aim for results by year 2015. The MDGs include:

- (1) Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- (2) Achieve Universal Primary Education
- (3) Promote gender equality and empower women
- (4) Reduce child mortality
- (5) Improve maternal health
- (6) Combat HIV/AIDS, Non Communicable diseases (NCDs)
- (7) Ensure environmental sustainability
- (8) Develop a global partnership for development

Tonga committed to its obligation under the 2000 Millennium Declaration. Unfortunately, as shown by the following graph, Tonga's effort achieved a mixed result. Most of the goals are possible to achieve but not likely by 2015⁹. This is despite of a relatively strong national support.

⁹ Second National Millennium Development Goals Report TONGA.



Given the 2015 due date for MDG, Tonga has decided to apply the MDG Acceleration Framework to reduce the incidence of NCDs, including consideration of the socio-economic determinants and women empowerment issues. This is quite a feat for Tonga, as it is localising a global commitment and taking ownership of its priorities.

Tonga, as part of the Millennium Development Goals Acceleration Framework (MAF), is focussing on MDG 6C (*Halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of NCDs*) with the consideration of MDG 1 (*Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger*) and MDG 3 (*Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women*). Admittedly, these will require special dedication and devotion from the government and its development partners.

5. CROSSCUTTING ISSUES

- **Lack of governance (or champion that advocate SD):** At the moment, there is commitment from the Government overall but it lacks leadership and direction. Though effort has been made, integrating SD into decision-making at various levels is still lacking.
- **Political firmness:** Regular changing of leadership, such as Cabinet Ministers and CEOs, so fresh leaders will have to hit the ground running when they take over new portfolios. This is practically an impracticable task, given that this is the first democratically elected government, under an enormous pressure to perform.
- **Inadequate resources, particularly financial limitations and skilled human resources:** This is a reality and Tonga needs ‘to do more and better with less’, and do away with the deficit approach.
- **Lack of capability and capacity:** Tonga has advanced in term of its capability by introducing new laws and policies. However, the greater concern is with its capacity, given its small labour force and expertise in specialised areas. ‘Brain drain’ does not help either, as educated and skilled

Tongans migrate overseas (regional and international). The Government seem to be inattention of such trend.

- **Partnership between Government and NGOs:** Government appreciates the usefulness of the NGOs. However, the NGOs voices are not fully learned, especially in the social sector. At the same instance, there is still need to unify and coordinate efforts to forge partnership between the government, the private sector, and the civil societies.
- **Cohesion among ministries:** The organisational structure and vertical links within government and ministries are relatively strong. However, the weaknesses emerge across the horizontal links among ministries. Further, fragmentation on authority for environmental and sustainable governance also contributes to the inconsistency of approach and policies.
- **Communities, NGOs, Private Sector are not fully engaged or utilised:** Tonga has progressed and developed in certain areas of business and expertise over the last decade especially. However, the government is still engaged in and provide services that can be better served by non-government entities.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** At best, the successes provide outcomes and failures reveal shortfalls. However, with limited or non-existent M&E, means that no practical reasons or lessons learned are collated and acted upon.
- **Information Management and Communication:** This is an area that requires strengthening at all levels (International, regional, national), and especially between the stakeholders (national and local).
- **Country driven:** It should be clear whether the priorities are country driven or just emulating the donor's expectation.
- **The Four Pillars of Sustainable Development Framework,** developed by an independent consultant in 2006, and adapted from the UN Task Team Report on the Post 2015 UN Development Agenda, 2012, proposes that children's youth and women's issues should be cross cutting.¹⁰

6. PROGRESS AND OUTLOOK

Government and non-government stakeholders may have their differences; both sides expressed commonalities under the SD, and the inspiration for sustainable development in Tonga. It was evident Tong made some progress in its 5 year review of the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation (MSI+5). In fact, SIDS have made less progress than most other global groupings, in economic terms, especially in terms of poverty reduction and debt sustainability¹¹. Consequently, the Rio+20 recalled and expressed concern over these findings and reaffirmed the special case of SIDS last year.

¹⁰ UNICEF , May 2013 Report "Sustainable Development Starts and Ends with Safe, Healthy, and Well Education Children

¹¹ The Mauritius Strategy of Implementation (MSI) was the outcome document of the 2nd Global Conference on SIDS held in 2005, 10 years after the original SIDS Conference in Barbados in 1994 which resulted in the Barbados Programme of Action (BPoA).

Tonga still stands to face significant challenges ahead. The existing huge public debt levels need to be reduced; the dominating public service wage bill still encroached on critical operations and maintenance spending and limiting the capacity to fund investments from local funds, while our cash reserves are declining; the civil service needs to be further rationalised; more private sector development is needed, and more jobs need to be created. The unplanned reduction in budget support for 2011/12 did influence the current budget, and thus highlights the Kingdom's dependency on external support that cannot always be guaranteed.

In parallel to the above, most people agreed that climate change still pose a terminal threat to the island Kingdom. The impacts of climate change and severe weather is a concern for all stakeholders. Further, linkages between the environment concerns and socio-economic developments raise further concerns about the future of sectors such as the primary sector (fisheries and agriculture for example).

Sustainable development goals must also pay attention to the dynamic processes of contemporary demographic change, and shifts in political power. The increasing population, dynamic migration patterns, and youth and gender all play a role in the inequality of SIDS. Social issues have not been represented well in development agenda, including the MDG. These aspects of social development in Tonga need to be appreciated more and emphasised better at community development through to national development plans, particularly youth and gender.

Overall, the regional review¹² of Pacific SIDS (PSIDS) sustainable development, established that the vulnerability of PSIDS such as Tonga, has increased whilst capacity to cope has not. In fact, most PSIDS have experienced low economic growth averaging 2.1%¹³.

7. WAY FORWARD

The gravity of SD and its three pillars to a small island state like Tonga fundamentally critical. This is officially acknowledged by all stakeholders, government and non-government. However, the views and attitudes diversify when it comes to direction and implementation. National and local institutions needs strengthening and coordinated more closely in introducing and implementing the SD agenda. Such stronger links and coordination needs to be across all levels.

Tonga needs to strengthen SD within its current national institutions and its enforcement capabilities. Partnerships also need to be bolstered and efforts need to be coordinated in an more appropriate manner. In general, institutional strengthening by introducing a national framework that focus on the 3 pillars; and coordinate and direct SD efforts, is necessary. Further, it will present an opportunity for Tonga to identify and prioritise specific aspects of SD to focus its effort upon; with a timeframe and realistically localised target.

Understandably, it is a long way from SIDS as a global phenomenon to the national level in Tonga. The broader the scope of a goal, the less notice anyone takes of it, even regional goals do not work nationally. Further, statistical criteria for development that make sense in large countries don't make sense in small developing countries. To be effective, development goals have to be articulated and applied at the individual country level. Tonga needs to strengthen and fully utilised its national statistics and also its development planning branch. Further, the representation and capacity of such body should reflect SD, namely, economic, political and environmental capacities.

¹² The 2010 PSIDS Five-year review of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the BPoA

¹³ Source: ADB Database

a) NATIONAL SD INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Given the current status of sustainable development in Tonga, the gaps identified are due to the fact that the sustainable development institutions are too weak and fragmented. In effect, such fragmentation on authority for environmental and sustainable governance means lack of coherence of policies. In some cases, there is lack or non-existence of policies.

In order to promote and institutionalise sustainable development, Tonga needs to integrate all three pillars of sustainable development. This is back up by a commitment to its enforcement, and follows up with a Monitoring and Evaluating effort.

The necessary step forward for Tonga would be an institutional framework to guide and coordinate sustainable development efforts; and more importantly, emphasise sustainable development on decision-making at various levels and sectors. Further, such framework will strengthen the partnership between the stakeholders (government, private sector, civil societies). It is noted that tracking these partnerships and ensuring their coordination, accountability and usefulness is a challenge for all stakeholders involved. However, a peer to peer review process (south-south and triangular) can strengthen national institutions to engage and manage partnerships for development better.

Institutional arrangements in Tonga are well structured and coordinated in vertical format. Naturally, this is based on the fact that our culture and society is vertically structured. However, the weakness is apparent, horizontal coordination. The latter, will be buttressed by a national institutional framework in fact. Such coordination, in essence, will promote, integrate and coordinate sustainable development in Tonga. This should be seen as an extra plan, but an adaptation of the existing process to improve compliance with SD.

This will provide clear objectives, so that the stakeholders will have some measurable target to aim for within a define period of time. Further, all stakeholders will be availed equal footing in information and opportunities. Also, SD will have a “home” so that its principles could be transferred among stakeholders and even across the sectors. It more practical to place direct responsibility within the MLECCNR, as such the SD will be given a firm footing by legislations like the EIA Act, Land Act, Spatial Management Plan Act for example.

There is also great opportunity for the Government and the Parliament to cooperate and collaborate in sustainable development. Parliament committees, such as the Environment Parliamentarian Committee, can play a proactive role in promoting and enforcing of SD. Further, the link through the Members of Parliament, is not often utilised as part of the SD effort. The approach to SD should take into consideration the new democratic government system in Tonga.

8. CONCLUSION

“...The best interest of the country as a whole should always be foremost in our thinking and not that of individual needs or political beliefs...” (HM Tupou VI, Closing Session, Parliament, *Matangi Tonga*, 18 October 2012)

This statement serves an objective for Tonga’s development aspirations, and also a modality of sustainable development. In brief, this proclaimed the crutch of SD, a bearable, equitable and viable development.

Tonga has progressed in terms of its political development, now has a democratically elected Government on the helm. At its best, this is a politically transition period for the new political system. Economically, Tonga is guided by the TSDF 2001/14 vision but faces significant challenges. Tonga's public service wage bill dominates the budget estimates. This continues to significantly reduce critical operations and maintenance spending. Further, it also limits the capacity to fund investments from local funds. Unfortunately, Tonga's cash reserves are declining in view of the global downturn. Social challenges will be an on-going challenge as the population continue to grow and converging on the main island of Tongatapu.

Tonga fully appreciates sustainable development, and has made tremendous effort to integrate the 3 pillars at various levels of decision making. Unfortunately, delimiting factors such as economic recession, financial constraints, limited human resource capability, and institutional weaknesses will continue to hinder sustainable development efforts.

Tonga needs a cohesive and comprehensible approach at the national level, and a decisive commitment at the international level, and equated with the necessary resources to assist Tonga. Having a national framework to coordinate country level policy processes and implementation will provide platform to effect lasting development in Tonga. Strengthened national systems will help to coordinate and tailor support in way that is commensurate with Tonga's capacity.

In summary, Tonga requires a national framework on SIDS to coordinate and track development programmes and projects from designing to implementation, and beyond the project lifetime. Taking ownership of that process means that one of the existing branches/committees (Aid Coordination at MFNP; National Environment Committee at MLECCNR; Parliamentary Environment Committee) or a blend of these should be tasked with such determination. Of course, development partners' commitments in terms of technical and financial assistance are still critical and needed.