

TUVALU



A SITUATION ANALYSIS OF CHILDREN, WOMEN & YOUTH

GOVERNMENT OF TUVALU
with the assistance of UNICEF

2006



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United Nations Children's Fund
3rd & 5th Floors, FDB Building
360 Victoria Parade,
Suva, Fiji

Email: suva@unicef.org
www.unicef.org

Prepared by: Dr Chris McMurray
Photos: Chris McMurray

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LIST OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

Funafuti

Teuleala Manuella	Community Affairs Officer
Bateteba Esela	Department of Community Affairs
Lapana	Acting Principal, Motufoua Secondary School
Tiutupe Puava	Acting Principal, Nauti Primary School
Talo Asaulu	Primary school teacher
Easter Molu	Primary school teacher
Rosie Vatau	Primary school teacher
Patisepa Ioapo	Primary school teacher
Alamai Sioni	Cultural Officer
Asita Moloti	Project Officer, Women's Department
Lonatana Panapa	Assistant Secretary for Youth, EKT Church
Teagai Elisala	Teacher, Motufoua Secondary School
Pasemeta Talaapa	EU-NZAID In-Country Coordinator
Maseiga Osema	Acting Director of Education
Vailisi	Director, Secondary Education
Teimana Ene Avaniatele	Education Officer
Evotia Tofula	Education Officer
Taufania Fiti Tautai	Programme Officer, Education
Capt. Richard Henshaw	Commander, Tuvalu Maritime Training Institute

Dr Nese Ituaso-Conway	Acting Director of Health
Sepulona Iona	Coding Clerk, Department of Health
Filiala Sakaio	Public Health Sister
Liliane Falealuga Tine	Secretary-General, Tuvalu Red Cross
Matakina Simii	Field Officer, Tuvalu Red Cross
Tataua Pese	CC/DM Officer, Tuvalu Red Cross
Petueli Noa	Youth Officer
Semu Malone	Government Statistician
Grace	Statistician
Annie Homasi	Director, TANGO
Makalini Tuilimu	Pre-School Teacher
Ulata Sapolis	Pre-School Teacher
Luke Paeniu	Former parliamentarian
Sarah Brewster	Volunteer Doctor, Tuvalu Family Health Association
Steve Barlow	People's Lawyer

Nukulaelae

Mania Paul	Principal, Faikimua Primary School
Lake Tomu	Secretary, Nukulaelae Kaupule
Namaha Viliamu	Senior Staff Nurse
Liliane Tapaolo	Community Worker
Various youth, adults and other members of the community	

Niulakita

Nurse, teachers and other members of the community



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Tuvalu is among the world's least developed countries and faces issues of land shortage, overcrowded urban areas and potential inundation if sea levels rise. The total population of around 10,000 is distributed across nine scattered atolls, making it costly to provide basic services to all, while limited wage employment opportunities and a small tax base contribute little to national revenue. With the dwindling of its 1990s Internet revenue windfall, Tuvalu is experiencing increasing difficulty balancing the national budget and providing essential services.

The 1994 Household Income and Expenditure Survey estimated that 23 per cent of households were below the basic needs poverty line, while the 2004/2005 survey shows steadily increasing average living expenses. The national average household size in 2002 was 5.5, but in the crowded urban settlement on Fongafale it is more than eight, with instances of 15 or more living in the typical 10 x 6 metre houses. In such circumstances, children, youth and women are among the most vulnerable groups and likely to suffer hardship.

Tuvalu has formulated a substantial Social Development Corporate Plan to address some of these concerns, and there are also major strategies in place to improve health and education. Challenges in health include how to contain the growing epidemic of non-communicable diseases, as well as maintain primary health care and an adequate standard of public health in the face of limited staff and facilities. One success is that although Tuvalu has one of the highest per capita rates of HIV/AIDS cases in the Pacific, there have been no new cases since 2002, suggesting that the spread may have been contained by a vigorous awareness campaign and improved access to condoms, especially for seafarers.

Although virtually all Tuvaluan children attend primary school on their own atoll, there is general under-resourcing in the education sector, and because there is only one major national secondary school, Motufoua on Vaitupu Atoll, secondary education means substantial costs for families. One of the greatest challenges for Tuvalu is how to maintain sufficient quality and diversity in secondary education to meet national needs. Historical factors have resulted in an emphasis on white-collar-oriented secondary education, even though there are few white collar job opportunities, while technical and vocational education (TVET) and post-secondary educational opportunities are underdeveloped. This contributes to high discontinuation rates in secondary education. At present the Maritime Training Institute on Funafuti Atoll is the main source of quality TVET, and although it admits only limited numbers of trainees each year, its contribution to human resource development and national income is crucial. A proposed major restructuring of secondary education in the Tuvalu Education and Training Sector Master Plan should help to effect a substantial improvement in the education sector and ensure that educational opportunities are better adapted to national needs.

In addition to providing a general overview of living conditions, health and education, this report looks at specific issues for children, youth and women. The main issues for children include limitations in Maternal and Child Healthcare (MCH) service delivery due to remoteness, limited transport and communications and under-staffing in the health sector; lack of sufficient fruit and vegetables in diets; limitations in the quality of education; and lack of services for

disabled children. Although Tuvalu has restricted use of corporal punishment in schools and raised awareness of CRC, there is still a general culture of authoritarian parenting and reliance on physical methods to discipline children.

The main issues for youth are limited youth participation, scarcity of employment opportunities, few facilities for sport and recreation and limited access to confidential health services, especially sexual health services. These issues tend to contribute to low self-esteem and high risk behaviour, and substantial rates of unplanned teenage pregnancy are a concern. Life Skills workshops are helping to address youth issues, but under-resourcing of the youth sector and the difficulty of making the transition from school to the workplace sustain youth vulnerability. Nonetheless, juvenile offenders are likely to be treated as harshly as adult offenders by the justice system. There is a need for review of laws applying to juveniles and introduction of appropriate strategies to rehabilitate young offenders.

A major issue for Tuvaluan women is limited gender equity in society and the workplace. Women living on the outer atolls are especially likely to have few opportunities and encounter cultural barriers if they attempt to step outside traditional women's roles. Apart from the variable standard of MCH services, the main health concerns for women include increasing physical inactivity and bodyweight with age, which predisposes them to non-communicable diseases, especially diabetes. While fertility is relatively low and married women tend to have good access to family planning, lack of specialist services and screening mean that other aspects of reproductive health tend to be neglected.

Although the prosecution statistics suggest that gender based violence is not a significant problem in Tuvalu, informants claim it is under-reported because of a community tendency to conceal shameful events, while sexual harassment is tolerated as a 'normal' part of male-female interaction. Female-headed households caused by divorce or widowhood have a heightened risk of disadvantage, but female headed households can also be found among the highest income groups in Tuvalu if they have a breadwinner working overseas.

This report concludes with a review of progress since the 1996 situation analysis, which has tended to be variable. Strengthening and recommitting to some of the 1996 recommendations is suggested, and some new recommendations are made.

INTRODUCTION

This report is an update of 'A Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Tuvalu 1996', prepared by the Government of Tuvalu with the assistance of UNICEF. Since then there have been many changes in the world and in Tuvalu, and children, youth and women confront new issues and have other needs.

Tuvalu is among the world's least developed countries, and although its population growth rate is slower than some other Pacific nations, it faces issues of land shortage, overcrowding in urban areas and potential inundation if sea levels rise. Added to this, a lack of natural resources and a small taxation base means limited capital for economic and social development. In such situations the risk of disadvantage and inadequate provision for basic needs and rights tends to increase for children, youth and women.

Part One of this report provides an overview of the Tuvaluan land, history, culture, economy and people, and highlights a few issues that impact contemporary society. **Part Two** provides overviews of the health and education systems and patterns of employment, and examines issues that affect all three groups that are the focus of this report – children, youth and women. **Part Three** focuses on issues that are specific to each of the three target groups. **Part Four** reviews the recommendations made in the 1996 Situation Analysis, and updates them and makes additional recommendations in light of the situation as assessed in August 2006.

The Ministry of Education coordinated the author's 10-day visit to Tuvalu to gather information for this report. Interviews were conducted with various government officials, representatives of local government and NGOs and members of the community, in Funafuti and the southern islands. For background this report draws extensively on the Social Data Report, 2005, prepared by the Department of Community Affairs in the Ministry of Home Affairs and Rural Development with assistance from UNDP, and on material provided by the Central Statistical Office. Some of the tables obtained from these sources have been updated with the latest available data, and others have been depicted graphically.

Most of the discussion of issues in this report is based on comments made by the various officials and other stakeholders during face-to-face meetings in Funafuti, Nukulaelae and Niulakita. Accordingly, when no other citation is provided, the analysis can be assumed to be the author's synthesis of stakeholder comments.

Where tables depict information by atoll, this report follows the convention of listing the atolls from north/west to south/east rather than alphabetically. This order, which is often used in official Tuvaluan documents, has the advantage of highlighting differentials that may be related to distance from Funafuti. In other words, the normal expectation would be that atolls listed at the top (the north western atolls) and bottom (the south eastern atolls) of each table are likely to appear disadvantaged compared with those in the middle (the central atolls).

PART 1

BACKGROUND

PART ONE: BACKGROUND

1.1 The land

Tuvalu comprises nine coral atolls or groups of islands located from five to 11 degrees south of the Equator. In terms of distance, Tuvalu's nearest neighbours are the southern Gilbert Islands of Kiribati, but the availability of a twice-weekly air service from Suva to Funafuti means that in practice its closest neighbour is Fiji, around two and a half hours flying time to the south. In the past Air Marshalls flew from Nadi to Majuro via Funafuti and Kiribati several times a week, but this service has been discontinued and the only air service at the time of writing was the link to Suva.

The land area of Tuvalu's atolls ranges from 5.6sq kms for Vaitupu to only 0.4sq.km for Niulakita, with a total of only 25.6 sq. kms for the whole country. All atolls are low coral formations, either ringed with islets or with only one or two islands protruding above sea level. Islands and islets range from a few metres to several kilometres in length. The maximum height above sea level is only around four metres, so Tuvalu is extremely vulnerable to coastal erosion and global warming.

The sub-equatorial location brings a tropical climate ranging from 25 – 32 degrees Celsius, and around 3 metres of rain each year. Rainfall is erratic, sometimes extremely heavy for several days and at other times not falling for up to three months. The porous coral soils support coconut, breadfruit and pandanus in abundance, and household gardens can support bananas and vegetable crops if compost is used to build up the soil. Puluka (swamp taro) is grown in pits so water can collect around the roots, but the pits are vulnerable to salination if high tides flood the water table, and if this occurs the crop will die. Pigs are raised for household consumption and sale and chickens and other poultry are raised for meat and eggs. Apart from this, the islands are unsuitable for cropping and have no known mineral deposits. The Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 518,000 sq kms and human resources are considered the major national economic assets.

The administrative centre and seat of government is on Funafuti, the atoll with the largest lagoon, where the main island, Fongafale, supports a small international airport and the largest settlement in the country. A modern three-storey government office block, donated by the ROC Taiwan in 2004, dominates the Funafuti skyline and houses the main government departments. A 16-room hotel, also built with Taiwanese assistance, and a few small guesthouses provide accommodation for visitors, but the tourist industry is undeveloped and most visitors come for government or private business.

There are small settlements on the outer islands, ranging from less than 40 people on Niulakita to just over 1500 on Vaitupu. In 1988 Britain donated a freighter of around 800 tons, the 'Nirvaga II', which brings supplies from Fiji and makes regular trips to the atolls carrying passengers and freight. A second ship, the 'Manu Folau', was donated by the Japanese Government in 2002. A more modern vessel of about 600 tons, the 'Manu Folau' has more space for passengers but less space for cargo than the 'Nirvaga II'. It is now used primarily for transporting passengers and freight to the outer islands. On both ships most of the passengers sleep on mats on covered deck space.

Local shipping schedules are variable and vulnerable to weather and other events. There are no moorings at most of the atolls, and, as the ships cannot cross the surrounding reefs, passengers and cargo are unloaded onto small boats in the open sea so they can be transported to shore. When seas are rough, the ship may need to wait several days before it is possible to disembark passengers or unload cargo. When the author boarded the 'Manu Folau' for a circuit of the southern group of islands, rough weather forced a change of schedule and extended the duration of the voyage. Sometimes it is not possible to reach a particular atoll at all in the time available, and the ship has to return to Funafuti without unloading. Since both ships have busy schedules, it can be three to four weeks before the ship returns.

1.2 History and Government

Tuvalu was first settled by Polynesians around 2000 years ago. The first recorded visit of a foreigner was that of the Spanish explorer Mendana, who visited Nui in 1568, but was unable to land. The whalers who roamed the Pacific from about 1700 visited Tuvalu only infrequently because of the difficulty of reaching the shore, but during the early 1860s Peruvian slave traders kidnapped more than 400 people from Funafuti and Nukulaelae. From 1865 onward, missionaries from the London Missionary Society began to convert Tuvaluans to a Protestant congregationalist faith. In 1892 Britain annexed Tuvalu, then known as the Ellice Islands, and administered them as a British Protectorate until 1916. From 1916 until 1974 Tuvalu was combined with the atolls of Kiribati (then called the Gilbert Islands) to form the British colony of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands. During the colonial period the islands was governed by Britain, which also controlled the mining of phosphate on Banabas (also known as Ocean Island and now part of Kiribati). In 1943 Tuvalu served as an operations base for Allied forces battling Japanese in the Pacific, and thousands of marines were stationed there until December 1945. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tuvalu>).

In 1974 a referendum was held and the Ellice Islanders voted for separation from the Gilbert Islands. For the next four years it was administered as the separate British colony of Tuvalu, and on 1st October 1978 Tuvalu achieved full independence and became a self-governing country. The separation of Tuvalu and Kiribati roughly followed ethnic lines, with Kiribati encompassing most of the settlement considered as Micronesian while Tuvalu comprises mostly Polynesians. Although the two countries are now classified as belonging to different sub-regions, there are still many family links between them and substantial numbers of people in both countries share both a Micronesian and Polynesian heritage. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tuvalu>).

The British colonial relationship of the past means that English is the language of Government, and English as well as Tuvaluan is taught in schools. The national government, situated in Funafuti, comprises 12 elected members, one of whom is the Prime Minister. The Cabinet comprises the Prime Minister plus six other ministerial posts. As Tuvalu is still a member of the Commonwealth, the Queen is the Head of State and is represented in Tuvalu by a Governor General. In 2000 Tuvalu became a member of the United Nations.

In 1997 much of the responsibility for local government and island development was passed to the Falekaupule (the council of elders on each outer atoll) via the Falekaupule Act. Decisions and policy made by the Falekaupule are implemented by the the Kaupule, the local government office for each atoll.

Generally only men aged 50 or more, and on some atolls 60 or more, do most of the speaking and decision making at the Falakaupule. Although women are said to have a vote on all but two atolls, most do not appear to exercise their voting rights. Youth can attend and listen to the proceedings, and youth representatives can vote on some matters, but youth also tend not to exercise their voting rights. Different conditions sometimes apply to females and men under 50 who are temporary or permanent heads of their families. As well as forming a focal point for contact with the central government and managing local affairs, the Falakaupule set social standards and impose social sanctions (personal communications, Tuvalu informants).

1.3 Culture and Society

Tuvaluan culture shares characteristics with other Polynesian cultures, while retaining its own unique identity. The Tuvaluan language is similar to the Samoan family of languages, but it has absorbed some Gilbertese from its close association with Kiribati, and some older people and the people of Nui atoll speak both Tuvaluan and Gilbertese. Although English is widely used in schools and government, most people speak Tuvaluan or Gilbertese in their homes and day-to-day life.

The basic units of Tuvaluan society are the extended family and the village. Each atoll has one major village, with perhaps a few other settlements. Most Tuvaluans, including those resident in the Funafuti urban area, still have strong connections with an outer island village and regard it as their true home.

Traditional households typically comprised three or four generations, and may include related siblings and any widowed family members. This pattern is still the general standard, although nuclear families are beginning to appear in urban areas. Traditionally males have seniority over females, and the head of each extended household or clan was the most respected male member who had attained an age of at least 60 years. The Falakaupule on each atoll still comprises the heads of all village clans. The changing nature of the family in modern society, however, and especially the absence of some men on overseas employment contracts, mean that younger men and sometimes females are now being accepted as family heads, although their rights to be heard in Falakaupule meetings and participate in decision making vary between atolls.

Within the household children are expected to be 'seen and not heard', and to behave respectfully and obey older family members. They must also perform household tasks when required, and make significant contributions in the form of caring for animals, sweeping the household surrounds, fetching water, running errands, cutting toddy, helping with fishing and caring for younger siblings. Traditionally the eldest male child was accorded special respect and younger siblings were expected to care for him, but this practice is no longer followed (Government of Tuvalu & UNICEF, 1996:3).

Traditional Tuvaluan society places great importance on community activities, and everyone is expected to participate in village projects, either contributing labour or assisting with fund raising. Women in particular may be required to contribute substantial amounts of time to village and church activities, including fund-raising.

Tuvaluans are conscious of how they appear to the rest of the community, and try hard to avoid becoming the subject of negative comment and gossip. Church and community leaders reprimand individuals for improper behaviour and encourage them to reform (Government of Tuvalu & UNICEF, 1996: 4). Leaders who do not behave appropriately are likely to be voted out. Since community members who behave with dignity and attract respect are likely to be rewarded with election to a village or national public office, there is considerable incentive to conform. These and other measures designed to reduce and/or suppress social friction contribute to a generally peaceful and orderly society.

In the past entertainment was provided by community meetings, sport and other group activities, but now that most homes are connected to electricity, home entertainment has become popular. Although there is no national television in Tuvalu, broadcasts from Fiji and elsewhere are received by satellite in many households in Funafuti and some on the outer islands. Videos and DVD players are also popular and imported movies can be rented from hire shops. As long ago as 1996 it was reported that this has changed the lives of children, especially, who now spend hours watching material that has little relevance to their own lives (Government of Tuvalu & UNICEF, 1996: 5).

Tuvalu has established a Department of Cultural Affairs in the Ministry of Home Affairs to promote social cohesion and Tuvaluan cultural activities. This department plays an important role in encouraging traditional skills and activities are not lost and that traditional entertainments of singing and dance are learned by young people and performed by young and old at community meetings.

1.4 Economy

Traditionally a subsistence society, Tuvalu has evolved into a typical post-colonial dual economy, with most non-subsistence economic activity centred round the public sector. The private sector in Tuvalu is underdeveloped and generally restricted to retail outlets and a few tradesmen, so there are few employment opportunities outside the public sector.

Copra was harvested and exported in the past, but low and fluctuating prices on the world markets have undermined the cost effectiveness of the hard work necessary to produce it, and generally only those on outer islands who have no other source of cash earnings continue to harvest and export copra. The currency of Tuvalu is the Australian dollar (AUD) and the main sources of national revenue are remittances from Tuvaluans working overseas, income from the Internet and a fisheries treaty and the Tuvalu Trust Fund (TTF). In recent years returns from the last three of these sources have declined.

At one time there were 1000 Tuvaluans in Nauru, but most have been repatriated since the decline of the Nauruan phosphate industry, and most remittances now come from seafarers. Seafarers currently contribute more than AU \$5 million annually, which comprises around 20 per cent of Tuvalu's GDP.

Tuvalu earned a substantial technology windfall in the 1990s by selling the rights to its allocated Internet domain name '.tv', initially for approximately AU\$ 48 million, plus annual royalties. A spin-off benefit of this windfall was that it catapulted Tuvalu into the electronic age and brought improved satellite communications and efficient Internet connections, on Funafuti at least. New charging structures within the Internet industry have caused royalties to dwindle to less than AU\$ 1,000,000 a year, and further declines are expected. Revenue from the 1988 fisheries treaty with the United States have also declined since there has been less fishing in Tuvalu waters, which is said to be related to climate change. The TTF was established in 1987 with donor assistance, and deposits of revenue from the fisheries treaty and Internet revenue increased it to AU\$ 75.8 million by 2003.

The decline in revenue from the above sources and the decline in value of the US dollar relative to the Australian dollar led to major budgetary deficits in 2003-2005. Total government revenues fell by 45 per cent in 2003 from a 3-year annual average of AU\$41.6 million to AU\$20.7 million. This necessitated withdrawal of funds from the TTF. The economic down turn impacted on government capacity to fund public services and on the cost of living. At the time of writing, a new government had just been elected with a mandate to improve the economy. Unless there are further financial windfalls this is likely to be a long and difficult process, however, and the economic situation is unlikely to show a substantial improvement for several years, at least.

1.5 Living standards and hardship

Most of the usual statistical indicators for the Pacific suggest that Tuvalu is quite well off in terms of human development. UNDP (1999) ranked it seventh out of 14 countries in the Pacific, with 95 per cent adult literacy, 74 per cent gross school enrolment for ages 5-19, an average life expectancy of 67 years and a per capita GDP of AU\$ 1,652. Tuvalu also had a low poverty index score of 7.3 (compared with more than 50 in some Melanesian countries) on the basis of its high population survival rates, absence of underweight children under age five, 85 per cent access to safe water and universal access to health facilities.

Despite this ranking, many Tuvaluans live a very simple lifestyle and some have difficulty in meeting their basic needs, and this has become more evident since the recent economic decline. The existence of poverty tends to be a sensitive issue in Pacific countries, and is often denied because it is associated with famine images of starving people dressed in rags. Even so, the 1994 Household Income and Expenditure Survey found 23 per cent of households were below the basic needs poverty line, meaning they were unable to afford both adequate nutritious food and other basic household expenses and necessitating choice between buying food, paying school fees, meeting social and community obligations and paying electricity or other fuel bills (ADB, 2003).

In 2003 the Asian Development Bank undertook a *Participatory Assessment of Hardship* to assess perceptions and experiences of poverty (ADB, 2003). While most respondents in this study did not consider there could be 'poverty' in Tuvalu because of the ready access to land and food and absence of beggars on the streets, a general perception of shared disadvantage and of 'poverty of opportunity' was apparent. There was also mention of increasing disparities between those in well-paid jobs and those who did not have access to good incomes.

This is reflected in the most recent Household Income and Expenditure Survey of 2004/2005 (Government of Tuvalu, 2006), which also found considerable evidence of hardship. While there is no explicit setting of a poverty line in the preliminary report on that study, it is clear that the cost of living in Funafuti presents a major challenge for many families. Table One shows that average annual household expenditure in Funafuti was AU\$ 17,863, and on outer islands it was AU\$ 9,871. Given that lower level public service salaries are typically less than AU\$ 10,000 per year and some households have only one employed person, it is clear that many would not be able to afford this level of expenditure. Although residents on outer islands have more capacity to grow or catch their own food, it is apparent from Table One that they too require substantial amounts of cash to meet their basic household requirements.

Table One: Average annual distribution of household expenditure, 2004.

	Funafuti			Outer Island		
	\$ year	\$ week	%	\$ year	\$ week	%
Food	6,404	123	36	6,396	123	65
Housing	4,348	83	24	1,192	23	12
Household operation	2,727	52	15	829	16	8
Misc goods and services	2,030	39	11	715	14	7
Transport	1,527	29	9	348	7	4
Tobacco and alcohol	541	10	3	195	4	2
Clothing and footwear	286	5	2	196	4	2
Total	17,863	341	100	9,871	191	100

Source: HIES, 2004/2005, pp 21-23

Table One shows average annual expenditure on food in Funafuti households amounted to more than AU\$6,000, and more than AU\$7,000 a year on housing and household operation. Transport also absorbed more than AU\$1,500 a year. It is notable that although it would be assumed that there is more access to land for cultivation in outer islands, the amount expended on food was almost the same, and the biggest differences between Funafuti and outer island households were in expenditure on housing and services.

The 2003 ADB poverty study identified an interesting trend in the five years preceding the study. Most surveyed communities saying that their access to basic services was better than five years ago, reflecting extension of electricity and telephone services, water tanks, more schools and health services on outer islands and paved roads in urban areas. On the other hand, they believed their situation was beginning to deteriorate because these services, which had been constructed during the '.tv' boom, were not being maintained in good condition.

The groups identified as most likely to suffer hardship were those without access to a regular source of income, those without access to land (e.g. outer island migrants living in Funafuti), those with large families, abandoned elders whose children had migrated, the disabled, orphans, wives of alcoholic men, widows and single mothers, elderly childless couples and families in squatter areas (ADB, 2003, 5). The hardship of squatters is exacerbated by poor access to water and sanitation. People in urban areas, however, tended to believe that poverty is more common in rural areas, while rural residents perceive poverty as more common in urban areas.

Another dimension of poverty is overcrowding. This includes large numbers living in a single dwelling and also lack of space between dwellings. According to the Household Income and Expenditure Survey of 2004/2005 the average household size was just under 5.5 people, but respondents to the ADB study mentioned instances of up to 15 people in a 10 x 6 metre house in Funafuti (ADB, 2003: 5). Similarly, the Funafuti Squatter Survey, 2003 (ESCAP, 2004) found the average size of the 49 households interviewed was 8.1 people, and 18 households contained more than nine people. There was an average of 3.6 children per household. Much of the housing was of very poor quality, and although most had a water tank and were connected to electricity, 37 per cent did not have proper toilets. Despite these difficult conditions, a common reason for moving to the squatter settlement was overcrowding at their former location (ESCAP, 2004: 6)

Overcrowding and inferior living conditions increase social stress and facilitate the transmission of infectious diseases including measles and other respiratory diseases. Skin and some eye infections become especially contagious in situations where there is insufficient water for good hygiene.

Among the causes of hardship mentioned by respondents to the ADB study were joblessness, low wages, insufficient land and social problems such as excessive expenditure on alcohol and too many family and community obligations. Elders also mentioned loss of respect for elders among the young, school absenteeism and low personal motivation (ADB, 2003: 10). Squatting is also a cause of hardship. While 73 per cent of the squatter households had come to Funafuti from outer islands within a decade of the survey in search of more opportunity, their living conditions were generally poor, they lacked access to land for cultivation, and 30 per cent of the 49 surveyed were earning less than \$100 per week (ESCAP, 2004).

There is considerable Government awareness of these issues, and the Department of Community Affairs in the Ministry of Home Affairs and Rural Development (MHARD) is focussed on monitoring and developing social policy to address them. Tuvalu takes an integrated, overlapping approach to social development, and, as well as developing policy, the Department of Community Affairs lobbies and coordinates the activities of other departments within the MHARD - Youth, Women, Rural Development and Culture - and other stakeholders in social development - Ministries of Health and Education and the NGO sector.

The first Social Policy, prepared in 2001, focussed on identifying and developing policies for the most vulnerable groups in society (Government of Tuvalu, 2001). The 2001 policy was effectively a corporate plan, but advocacy was needed before it could be implemented. Two main advocacy

strategies to demonstrate the need for assistance for vulnerable groups were media presentation, including making a video about disadvantaged groups, and preparation of the Social Data Report 2005, which includes statistical documentation of living conditions.

The latest Corporate Plan had just been endorsed as this report was being prepared. Box One sets out the national issues and priorities identified in the Corporate Plan and the objectives, which are to be achieved through a detailed plan of activities involving various stakeholders (Government of Tuvalu, 2006a). The next stage in the process of social development will be formation of the Social Services Council to prioritise needs and promote implementation (Personal communication, Department of Community Affairs).

The work of the MHARD is vital as regards improving the situation of children, youth and women in Tuvalu. It is therefore important that donors such as UNICEF keep up-to-date with the Social Policy and Corporate Plan activities and harmonise with them, even if their point of contact is in a different ministry or an NGO. This will facilitate effective social planning and monitoring, avoid duplication of effort and ensure local ownership and commitment.

Box One: The 2007-2009 Social Development Corporate Plan: Department of Community Affairs

Issues and priorities

- A small and under-developed private sector.
- A growing labour force with high levels of under-employment, especially on Funafuti.
- While Tuvalu has a unique living culture, strong influences from outside are causing losses and distortions.
- The need to enhance the skills of the family unit in dealing with modern and modernizing situations, including business and livelihood skills in the cash economy.
- Limited staff capacities (quantity/quality) imply a need for staff and stakeholder training, to enable professional approaches to these challenges
- The need to focus on the vulnerable and disadvantaged, including the elderly, disabled, children, and youth.
- Help families sustain their basic needs.
- Help Tuvaluans to keep themselves safe in their work, their homes, etc.

Objectives of the Social Development Corporate Plan

1. Organise Social Development in Tuvalu

- 1.1 Empower Tuvaluans in Social Development.
- 1.2 Strengthen Tuvalu's Social Development Networks

2. Lead Social Development Planning & Policy Preparation

- 2.1 Improve the availability of SD data.
- 2.2 Provide Social Development Policy Advice

3. Develop & Manage DCA as a Professional Social Development Organisation

- 3.1 Develop Human Resources in Social Development.
- 3.2 Maintain Project & Program Continuity
- 3.3 Meet Tuvalu's Social Development Needs
- 3.4 Optimise DCA's Asset Management

4. Deliver Relevant & Timely Social Development Services

- 4.1 Counsel people facing social problems
- 4.2 Assess needs for social services

Source: Government of Tuvalu, 2006a.

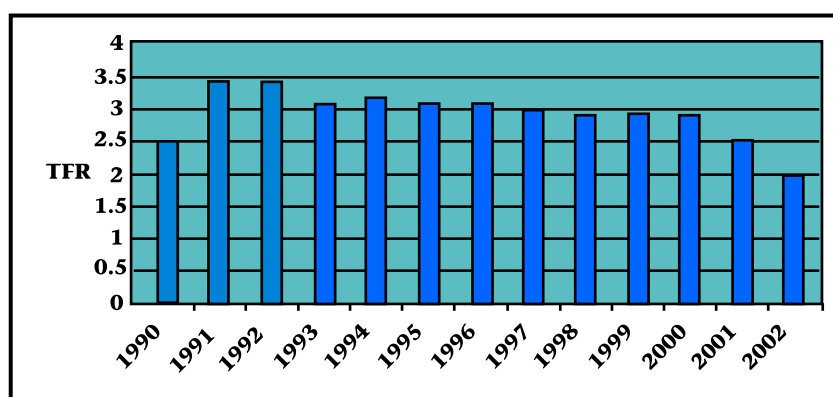
Garbage disposal is another concern in atoll environments. While councils collect garbage on Funafuti and Nukulaelae and dispose of it in specified dumping grounds in remote parts of the atoll, almost 60 per cent of the rest of the households in Tuvalu dispose of their own waste. The most common methods are burning, burying or taking it to a public dump, but the 2002 census showed that around 10 per cent disposed of rubbish by dumping it in their own backyard or in the sea (Government of Tuvalu, 2005: 45).

Unsatisfactory methods of garbage disposal pose a hazard to health in various ways, including providing breeding grounds for flies and mosquitos and increasing the risk of injury. A particular concern is that the risk of environmental contamination from garbage and other forms of waste grows as population densities increase. Flooding and high tides can also increase the risk of contamination from inadequately disposed garbage. Another environmental concern is that Tuvalu lacks customised safe disposal facilities for chemical, nuclear and other hazardous wastes.

1.7 Population Characteristics

As Tuvalu lacks mineral wealth or significant industry, its small land area and limited agricultural potential restrict population size. When Tuvalu was still part of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, population numbers increased only slowly, but between 1973-1979, immediately prior to Independence, the population grew by 25 per cent, from 5,887 to 7,349, an average annual increase of 3.7 per cent. This can be attributed in part to immigration of Gilbert and Ellice Islanders choosing to identify with Tuvalu, including some from Nauru (Government of Tuvalu, 2005). According to SPC, between 1979 and 1991 the average annual growth rate slowed to just over 1.7 per cent, although the same report includes an alternative, slower growth rate estimate of 1.2 per cent (SPC, 1998: vii and 16).

Figure One: Annual estimates of the Total Fertility Rate



Source: Statistics provided by the Ministry of Health

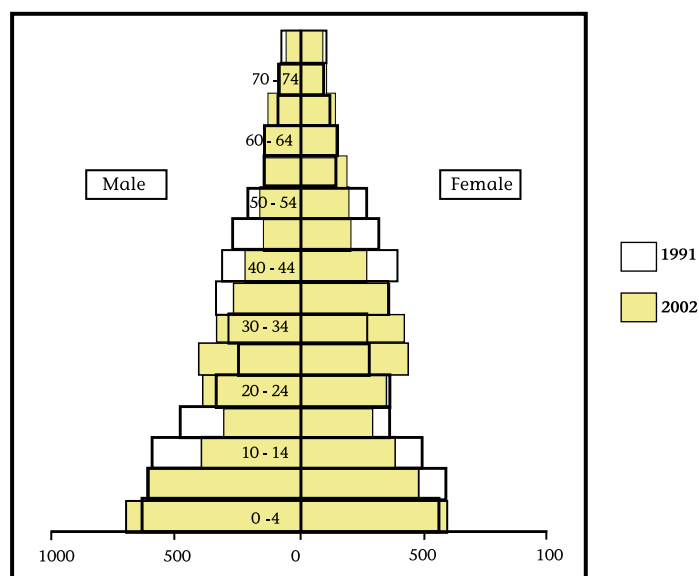
Tuvalu has had a relatively low average Total Fertility Rate (TFR)¹ for some years. In the 1960s the TFR for Polynesians living in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands was estimated as 5.6 children per woman, but estimates for the 1969-1973 intercensal period showed it had declined to 3.3 (Veltman, 1979: 53), and it has changed only a little since then. The TFR derived from the 1991 census was 3.4 children per woman, and by 1994 the TFR was estimated to have declined to 3.1 children per woman (SPC, 1998: 16). Ministry of Health estimates of the TFR each year from 1990 to 2002 are shown in Figure One.

It can be seen that although there are small fluctuations from year to year, the average is just over 2.9. Since these statistics exclude home deliveries, they are consistent with the census-based estimates. No statistical significance should be attached to the lower rates for 2001 and 2002 as they could simply reflect a few more homebirths or other omissions from the statistics for those years.

In 1991 the total population had attained 9,043 and population size and growth rates had become a national concern. Throughout Tuvalu people were becoming aware of the potential for sustained population increase to place extreme pressure on the available resources, especially as sea-level rise could reduce the existing land area.

The period 1991-2001 saw a marked slowing of the population growth rate to 0.5 per cent per annum, with a net increase of only 500 people in the 10-year period. The population counts were 9043 in 1991 and 9561 in 2002. Figure Two shows the population composition by age and gender for 1991 and 2002.

Figure Two: Population by sex and age group, 1991 and 2002,



Source: Population and Housing Census, 1991 and 2002

¹The Total Fertility Rate is the average number of children each woman would have if current fertility rates pertained throughout her reproductive life. It is a standardized measure that is generally considered the best indicator of current fertility levels and can be used to make comparisons.