

Social Aspects of Sustainable Development in Tonga, 2002

Poverty

No standard definition for poverty for the Pacific. Similarly, there is yet to be a specific policy on poverty to direct or inform Government, apart from sectoral policies that aim to improve the overall standard of living of the Tongan people. It is likely that the concept of poverty evident in Western and Asian societies may not exist in Tonga.

The emphasis on rural and regional development has been an avenue that Government has targeted to mitigate poverty. The establishment of a Rural and Regional Development Unit within the Planning Department by Government to direct assistance to improve the quality of life of “disadvantage residents” perceived vulnerable to poverty in the Kingdom.

No recent household income and expenditure survey on which firm conclusions can be assessed. However small scale surveys indicated that household expenditure tended to exceed income in most cases particularly in urban Nuku'alofa.

On comparative scale, Tonga ranks sixth (6) in terms of the UNDP Index (HDI) out of 14 Pacific Island state, just below Fiji and above Samoa in 1999. Tonga's relatively high ranking arises from its social achievements in the provision of universal primary education, public health services, water and sanitation which have produced an almost universally literate population with an average life expectancy of 70.7 years, based on calculations in 1996.

However on a Global Composite Vulnerability Index, which measures vulnerability to external economic shocks and natural disasters, Tonga ranked third most vulnerable out of 111 countries. For instance, tropical cyclone Waka in December 31st 2001 devastated the North Island groups (the Niuas, Vava'u and part of Ha'apai), wrecking its commercial fishery, tourism facilities and agricultural farms in Vava'u. The estimated total cost of damages inflicted by tropical cyclone Waka was estimated at \$104 million pa'anga.

Demographics

Tonga's demographic profile is characterised by, a high migration rate (estimated net migration rate -2.0%), declining mortality (14.4 per 1000 live births) and fertility (4.15 per women), and a gradual increase in life expectancy (69.8 and 71.7 male and female respectively). The interaction of these processes has led to a declining rate of population growth revealed in the most recent census of 1996 (Statistics Department, Tonga Government). This has consequently altered the nature of the population's age structure, whereby there is an increase in the working age, while on the other hand, there is a slight increase in the dependent population.

The 1996 census estimates Tonga's crude birth rate (CBR) to be 30.4 and the crude death rate (CDR) at 7.5. This gives a natural population growth of 2.3 percent per annum. However, the 1986-1996 inter-censal period indicates that Tonga's annual population growth rate was 0.3 percent suggesting an annual net migration rate of approximately -2.0 percent (Population Census 1996: Administrative Report and General Tables). This means that an estimated 1905 people leave Tonga annually (Tonga Population Profile based on 1996 Census).

Health

Tongan access rate to health care services is very impressive at 100 percent. Infectious diseases are very much under control, which is attributed by good standard of water and sanitation facilities as well as developing of primary health care delivery system that focused on both communicable diseases and maternal and child health. The reflection of Tonga's impressive performance on maternal and child health is revealed on the obstetric and immunization indicators. The total fertility rate (TFR) has been stable between 1995 and 1999, fluctuating between 3.1 and 3.8. Tonga's infant mortality rate (IMR) is estimated at 14.4 per 1,000 live births in 1999 a decline from 19 in the 1996 population census. Tonga is currently one of the best performing Pacific island countries in terms of IMR. This is a decline from 26 in 1986. The advances made in maternal and child health have made an impressive impact on the national maternal mortality rate.

The life expectancy at birth for Tonga is estimated at 69.8 years for males and 71.7 years for females. These indicators suggest that mortality has decreased during the 1986-1996 inter-censal period (67.6 years for males and 70.7 years for females). The slow decline in mortality, however, could be attributed to an increase in non-communicable diseases (cancer, diabetes and heart disease) associated with lifestyle factors such as changing consumption of traditional food high in fibre to processed food high in fat and sugar, smoking and reduced physical activity.

Education

Education is compulsory for ages six (6) to fourteen (14) and is one of the priority areas for Government's public investment as stated in the Strategic Development Plan 7 (SDP7). It is also highly valued by Tongans and most parents aspire to educate their children to the highest attainable. In Tonga today, formal educational qualification is becomingly an enabled entry to any employment opportunities.

The access rate to primary schooling is universal (100%) as primary education (class 1 to class 6) is free to everyone. Unlike primary school, Tonga has yet to achieve near universal access to secondary schools, although enrolment rates are relatively high. For instance, in the 1986-1996 inter-censal period, secondary school attainment increased from approximately 56 per cent to 60 per cent. The success of Tonga's education system reflects in its impressive literacy rate of approximately 99 percent.

Post-graduate & non-formal education

As earlier mentioned, the Tongan population has appeared to take advantage of the educational opportunities available. This is evident during the 1986-1996 inter-censal period, where tertiary education attainment increased from 1.5 percent to 3.6 percent.

Substantial development in post-secondary education has been achieved especially with the introduction of Diploma level studies and various certificate level courses in technical areas such as hospitality, computing and general engineering. These are operated and coordinated by local post-secondary institutions.

Over the past years, the Tonga government and Ministry of Education have taken positive steps to align the country's training and education systems with the country's manpower and development needs. Moreover, the introduction of distance education

facilities under the Community Development Training Centre (CDTC), which offers a variety of courses, the technical courses offered at the Tonga Maritime Polytechnic Institute (TMPI) with predominantly male enrolment, the Tonga Institute of Education (teachers training college) and the Ministry of Health: Queen Salote School of Nursing geared to train future teachers and nurses of Tonga, the Tonga Defense Force and the Ministry of Police respective schools, the University of the South Pacific extension and others controlling by Non-government authority are playing a major role in developing the post secondary education sector. However, most of these courses are held in Nuku'alofa, the outer islands being disadvantaged.

Previously, Tonga's current educational system, like that of many of other Pacific island countries does not take into account the problems faced by young school leavers. Instead of promoting the potential for gainful self-employment or marketable skills, they tend to have strong motivation for wage employment, often in government establishments. Lack of job opportunities in the labour market together with the limitation in vocational and technical training further worsens the students' desire for a paid job. To date, the curricula offered in the government and non-government systems include a range of more vocationally oriented subjects to cater for students who are not achieving through academic examinations.

Human Settlement

The distribution of Tonga's population is fairly the same pattern as was in the 1986 census.

Table 1: Population distribution by division, 1986 & 1996

Division	1986	Population %	1996	Population %	Average annual growth rate (%) 1976-1986	Average annual growth rate (%) 1986-1996
Tongatapu	63794	67.4	6979	68.5	1.1	0.5
Vava'u	15175	16.0	15715	16.1	0.1	0.4
Ha'apai	8919	9.4	8138	8.3	-1.9	-0.9
'Eua	4393	4.6	4934	5.0	-0.2	1.2
Niuas	2368	2.5	2018	2.1	0.2	-1.5
Nuku'alofa	21383	22.6	22400	22.9	1.6	0.5
Total	94649	100.0	97784	100.0	0.5	0.3

Source : Statistics Department : 1996 Census report.

A total of 97784 people were enumerated in the Kingdom of Tonga at the 1996 census. The population is unevenly distributed amongst the island groups with more than two-thirds (69%) living on Tongatapu, of which almost a quarter (23%) live in the capital, Nuku'alofa.

Although Tonga's population growth rate over the last inter-censal period has been relatively low at 0.3 percent, 'Eua and Tongatapu experienced higher growth during the same period. It needs to be noted that Tongatapu grew at a lower rate during the decade 1986-1996 compared to the decade 1976-1986. Much of the recent growth in Tongatapu is probably due to in-migration from Ha'apai and Niuas, both of which showed negative growth during the same period. This is not surprising, given that the

Niuas are very remote, and the Niuas and Ha'apai do not offer as many employment opportunities, among other reasons, compared to Vava'u and Tongatapu.

Social Indicators

Population

Estimated population in year 2000:	100,283 ¹
Sex ratio in year 2000:	103 per 100 females
Average annual population growth 1986-1996:	0.3%

Youth & Elderly population

Percentage of total population under age 15 in year 2000:	37.4%
Percentage of male population aged 60+ in year 2000:	8.1%
Percentage of female population aged 60+ in year 2000:	8.4%
Sex ratio in the population aged 60+ in year 2000:	100 per 100 females

Human Settlements

Population distribution

Table 2: Population distribution by division, 1996

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Vava'u	15715	16.1	0.4
Ha'apai	8138	8.3	-0.9
'Eua	4934	5.0	1.2
Niuas	2018	2.1	-1.5
Nuku'alofa	22400	22.9	0.5
Total	97784	100.0	0.3

Source: Statistics Department: 1996 Census report.

Housing

Average household size:	6
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Health

Life expectancy 1996:	Male	69.8
	Female	71.7

Infant mortality rate 1999:	14.4 ²
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Child-bearing

Total fertility rate 1999:	3.1
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Estimated maternal mortality ratio 1999:	0
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¹ Statistics Department: Demographic Analysis summary & Population Projections, 1999

² Ministry of Health: Draft National Health Plan 2000-2005, 2000

Education

Enrolment in primary schooling 2000: 16,697³
Enrolment ratio 2000: 114 boys per 100 girls

Enrolment in secondary schooling 2000: 14,955
Enrolment ratio 2000: 104 boys per 100 girls

Education attainment of the population 1996:

Education level	Number of persons	%
No schooling	1685	2.0
Primary	28057	34.0
Secondary	49925	60.4
Tertiary	2998	3.6
Total	82665	100.0

Source: Statistics Department : 1996 Census report.

Public expenditure on education 1999/2000: 12.2% of Government budget

Literacy

Literacy rate 1996: 98.5%
Estimated adult (15+) illiteracy rate 1996: 1.1%
Illiterate rate among persons aged 25+ 1996: 1.3%

³ Ministry of Education Annual Report, 2000