



Tonga National Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action

May 2024

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Acronyms

AOD	Alcohol and Other Drugs
AUT	Auckland University of Technology
ADB	Asian Development Bank
BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
Cat-DDO	Catastrophe Deferred Drawdown Option
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSFT	Civil Society Forum Tonga
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
DoE	Department of Energy
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
DV	Drugs and Violence
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunities
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FFFA	Fi-e-Fia 'a Fafine Tonga
FIES	Food Insecurities
FM	Frequency Modulation
FPA	Family Protection Act
FPLAC	Family Protection Legal Aid
FRDP	Framework for Regional Resilience and Disaster Risk
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GES	Gender and Environment Survey
GESI	Gender and Social Inclusion
GRB	Gender Responsive Budgeting
GSC	Gender Status Card
HIES	Household Income and Expenditure Survey
ICT	Information Communication Technologies
ID	Identity Document
IDA	International Development Association
IT	Information Technology
IWDA	International Women's Development Agency
IWISE	International: World Innovative Students Expo
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex, Asexual and Others
LPS	Labor Force Survey
MEIDECCC	Ministry of Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Climate Change and Communications
MFF	Ma'a Fafine mo Famili
MHEWS	Multi-Hazard Early Warning System
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MoET	Ministry of Education and Training

MoF	Ministry of Fisheries
MOI	Ministry of Infrastructure
MSDP	Migration Sustainable Development Policy
NCGAD	National Committee on Gender and Development
NCD's	Non Communicable Diseases
NGO	Non-Government Organizations
NSDP	National Service Delivery Protocol
NSDS	National Strategy for the Development of Statistics
NSW	New South Wales
NWEGET	National Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality Tonga
PCC	Pacific Council of Churches
PEFA	Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability
PEUMP	Pacific-European Union Marine Partnership
PFM	Public Financial Management
PGEP	Progressing Gender Equality in the Pacific
PISFCC	Pacific Island Students Fighting Climate Change
PSA	Public Service Association
PSDI	Private Sector Development Initiative
REACH	Registration, Evaluation, Authorization and Restriction of Chemicals
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SET	Skills and Employment for Tongans
SDP	Service Deliver Protocol
SPC	South Pacific Community
SWP	Social Welfare Policy
TC	Tropical Cyclones
TERM	Tonga Energy Road Map
TFGBV	Technology Facilitated Gender Based Violence
TNCP	Tonga National Child Protection Policy
TNCWC	Tonga National Center for Women and Children
TNWG	Tonga National Working Group
TNYC	Tonga National Youth Center
TPL	Tonga Power Limited
TRRA	Tonga Rugby Referee Association
TRU	Tonga Rugby Union
TSD	Tonga Statistics Department
TSDFI	Tonga Strategic Development Framework II
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
TWICT	Tonga Women's Information Communication Technology
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSW	University of New South Wales
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
US	United States

VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
WAD	Women's Affairs Division
WAGED	Women's Affairs and Gender Equality Division
WCCC	Women and Children Crisis Center
WEGET	Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality Tonga
WPS	Woman, Peace and Security

Section One: Highlights

In March 2020, although Tonga was still COVID-19 free the risk of transmission via international travel was high and a State of Emergency was declared closing Tonga's borders for the remainder of 2020 and throughout 2021.

Whilst the borders were closed, in April 2021 Tonga was hit by category 4 Tropical Cyclone Harold causing damage to public infrastructure along the coastal areas, inundation of water sources, damage to food and agriculture and destruction and damages to homes. 731 family homes suffered minor damages while 210 sustained major damages and 41 were completely destroyed.

In January 2022, whilst dealing with the COVID-19 restrictions and rebuilding from Tropical Cyclone Harold, Tonga faced an unprecedented national disaster in with the eruption of the Hunga-Tonga-Ha'apai volcano (the largest recorded eruption since 1883) which triggered tsunami waves of up to 15 meters, which struck the west coast of Tongatapu, 'Eua and Ha'apai and with ashfall covering an area of at least five square kilometers. Significant damage occurred to the network of international and domestic undersea fibre optic telecommunication cables cutting off Tonga from the world and leaving the country at its most vulnerable.

It is estimated that as many as 84,175 people or 84 percent of the population was affected by the disaster, particularly by ashfall. A total of 169 houses were completely destroyed, 117 houses were severely damaged, 101 houses suffered moderate damages while 81 houses experienced minor damages bringing the total of affected households to 468. 2,507 people were displaced in which 50% and 26% were female headed households.

On 18 January, the Prime Minister of Tonga declared a state of emergency, with international assistance requested to assist in the response. During the much needed response efforts of the international community, Tonga's risk of COVID-19 transmission was at its highest and in February Tonga confirmed its first cases of COVID-19. Whilst the country was reeling from the trauma of the eruption and the tsunami, the country was forced into a hard lockdown due to COVID-19 community transmission which saw an exhausted workforce and people.

Tonga experienced a substantial COVID outbreak in the first half of 2022 and another outbreak in July-August 2022. COVID-related restrictions on tourism and mobility had an important impact on Tonga's economy. In combination, these factors saw GDP fall by 3.2 percentage points in 2021, from growth in real terms of 0.5 percent in 2020 to contraction of 2.7 percent in 2021. Tonga's GDP was expected to contract by a further 1.6 percent in 2022.

However despite three years of back-to-back emergencies which escalated in severity and risk with each emergency and the national GDP falling over two consecutive years, Tonga was still able to progress the implementation of the key priority areas of the Beijing Platform for Action with the passing of new legislations, review of national and government policies, the development of tools and programmes, the creation of new national datasets, the introduction of new initiatives and even complete a first of its kind survey on multidimensional poverty.

Section Two: Priorities, achievements, challenges and setbacks

2.1 The most important achievements, challenges and setbacks in progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women?

WEGET Outcome Area	Achievements	Challenges	Setbacks
1. Enabling environment for mainstreaming gender across government policies, programmes and services, corporate budgeting and monitoring and evaluation	<p>During this reporting period, the following listed provide protections and equal opportunity for women and girls in Tonga to be safe, empowered and treated fairly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2019/2020 the SET Project commenced to improve opportunities for secondary school progression and facilitate the transition to jobs in the domestic and overseas labour markets for Tongans. • 2020 Tonga Energy Road Map (TERM) review resulted in the new TERM Plus 2021 – 2035 Strategy now has a dedicated section on Gender inclusive of a Gender Roadmap. • 2021 the Tonga Labour Mobility Policy was launched allowing for an increase of women participating in the labour mobility schemes in New Zealand and Australia in horticulture, meat processing, constructions, tourism and hospitality. • Tonga National Strategy For The Prevention And Control of Non-Communicable Diseases 2021– 2025 aims to guide and consolidate Tonga’s efforts to prevent and reduce NCDs over the next five years. • The National Committee on Gender and Development (NACGAD) have continued to meet regularly to monitor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For women employed in the private sector, lack of key maternity leave is a barrier to maintaining employment after becoming a parent. • Paternity leave is rarely available in the private sector. • Limited gender budgets in corporate plans creating a reliance on donor funded projects. • Understaffed and under-resourced of the national machinery for gender. • Lack of institutionalized data collection especially disaggregated data by relevant ministries. • Local government leaders lacking basic understanding on gender. • Contradictory cultural practices and religious beliefs. • Lack of coordination between stakeholders and conducting programs and development partners on gender 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project based and donor funded activities end when together with funding cycles or when donor priorities shift before government and stakeholders have the resources to absorb the costs of these initiatives. This creates

	<p>Tonga's implementation of the national, regional and international gender equality commitments.</p>	<p>equality and empowerment of women activities causing confusion, delay and unnecessary duplication of work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public service lacking awareness on mainstreaming gender and lacking the relevant capacities to implement. • Support provisions do not cater for the most vulnerable members of community such as people with disabilities, elderly and LGBTQI. • Natural disasters and competing priorities of members of the National Committee on Gender and Development has required meetings to be continuously rescheduled and also further impacted by the turnover of key staff from the National Women's Machinery who are the Secretariat. 	
<p>2. Families and communities prosper from gender equality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2020 the Electronic Communication Abuse Offences Act came into effect defining offences relevant to the use of technology to facilitate abuse of women (further elaboration on this Act is provided in section 3.3). • 2021 The NACGAD CEDAW working group was activated. The membership consists of: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same challenges as above (1) • There needs to be a dedicated staff to ensure that the CEDAW working group meetings continue and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discriminatory law preventing women from having control over their bodies. For example, women required their husband's consent regarding their reproductive health. • Laws that conflicted with the strategic plan

	<p>Chair: Chief Secretary and Secretary to Cabinet, Deputy Chairperson: Civil Society Forum Tonga (CSFT), Secretariat: Ministry of Internal Affairs, Women’s Affairs and Gender Equality Division (MIA/WAGED) with the Terms of Reference to be finalized.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ma’a Fafine mo Famili Inc. (MFF) CEDAW Legal Literacy Training delivered across the main islands of Tongatapu and some of the outer islands. • 2021 launch of the National Service Delivery Protocol on Multisectoral Responses to Cases of Gender-Based Violence. The Protocol aims to coordinate and guide the national response of services to survivors of GBV and provides an agreed set of procedures and minimum standards to ensure a survivor-centered approach, continuity of care across the preparedness-emergency-recovery continuum and more positive outcomes for survivors, their families, and communities. • The Family Protection Advisory Council has continued to meet regularly to monitor the implementation of the Family Protection Act. • 2021 the Tonga National Child Protection Policy Committee developed a Child Protection Policy draft specifically tailored for the protection of children, including those with disabilities. • 2020 the Ministry of Justice Disability Policy was established to ensure that all 	<p>follow up on matters arising as approved by the members.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There needs to be budget support for the CEDAW work in the recurrent budget. There is currently none and the work will rely on support from other partners and stakeholders. • Natural disasters and competing priorities of members of the Family Protection Advisory Council has required meetings to be continuously rescheduled and also further impacted by the turnover of key staff from the National Women’s Machinery who are the Secretariat. 	<p>of action under this priority outcome for example, definition of rape not including penetration by objects other than the penis, marriage allowed with consent for children at the age of 15.</p>
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	<p>persons employed or who use the services of the Courts are not subjected to discrimination of any kind on the basis of physical or mental disability.</p>		
<p>3. Equitable access to economic assets and employment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2020 Tonga became a party to the United Nations Convention Against Corruption is participating in the Implementation Review cycles established under the Convention. • 2020 the Employment Relations Bill was passed to ensure the fundamental rights and principles at work. In addition to maternity leave and equal pay for men and women who perform the same work, it is to be noted that Section 68 of the Bill is dedicated to laying out the Restrictions on termination specifically for female employees. • 2021 Tonga Informal Business Survey 2021 a national survey of 2,301 informal businesses was conducted in Tonga and found that more than half of the businesses were operated by women (56%), who run nearly all the businesses engaged in the production of key Tongan handicrafts and furthermore, females, due to the nature of the goods they produce tend to be more market oriented than for home consumption. • 2022 the Public Service Sexual Harassment Policy w to ensure that the Public Service Commission take appropriate steps to protect the public servants from workplace harassment, including by third 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same challenges as above (1) • Stringent administrative and financial procedures by financial institutions providing micro loans. As such, women’s successful access to micro loans are limited. • For women employed in the private sector, lack of key maternity leave is a barrier to maintaining employment after becoming a parent. • Paternity leave is rarely available in the private sector. 	

	<p>parties. It is also to provide clear guidance to employees, public servants and volunteers in the Public Service on sexual harassment in the workplace. This is the first legislative response specifically to the issue of sexual harassment in Tonga.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2022, Tonga became the first country in the world to pilot a new phone-based survey of multidimensional poverty and inequality, through the Equality Insights Rapid Survey. This also made Tonga the first country in the Pacific to officially conduct both household-level and individual-level assessment of multidimensional poverty. 		
4. Increased women's leadership and equitable political representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2020 the Voters' Perceptions of Women as Leaders in Tonga was conducted the Tupou Tertiary Institute Research and Training Centre to investigate the perception of Tongan voters in regard to women's involvement in decision making platforms to better understand realistic situations which Tongan women face in the family, the community and in national political platforms, such as parliament. • 2022 Tonga appointed its first female Acting Supreme Court Judge its first female permanent Supreme Court Judge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same challenges as above (1) • Despite many initiatives to increase women's leadership and political representation, women continue to be under-represented on national boards, commissions and other decision making bodies and community development committees. 	<p>The Voter Perception study found that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a still a very strong view that men are inherently better leaders in family and in the village and for parliament. • 92% believed that fewer women than men have the right skills and experience for parliament. • 52% stated that they will vote for a male candidate over a female candidate with exactly the same qualifications. *A full list of the findings can be found further down the report.
5. Create equal conditions to respond to natural disasters, environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2024 launch of the Gender and Environment Survey which examines the relationship between men, women, and the environment, highlighting gender-specific impacts and 		

challenges and climate change	contributions to environmental issues. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Multi-Hazard Early Warning Policy 2024 – 2030 endorsed by the cabinet in May 2024. The guiding principle ensures the multi-hazard early warning system is inclusive and is for all groups in society, including women, men, youth, immigrants, elderly, differently abled and remote communities. 		
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2.2 Top five priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in your country through laws, policies and/or programmes

The Legislative Assembly passed an amendment to the **Criminal Offences Act in 2022** to expand the definition of “rape”. Previously limited to rape cases involving a female and a male, the new definition encompasses various forms of rape such as anal and digital, ensuring more comprehensive protection for victims

Public Service Sexual Harassment Policy was endorsed by Cabinet in 2022 to ensure that the Public Service Commission (as employer) take appropriate steps to protect the public servants (their staff) from workplace harassment, including by third parties. It is also to provide clear guidance to employees (including permanent employees, daily paid labourers, casual employees, contract employees, interns and volunteers), public servants and volunteers in the Public Service on sexual harassment in the workplace. This is the first legislative response specifically to the issue of sexual harassment in Tonga.

Electronic Communication Abuse Offences Act (2020) defines offences relevant to the use of technology to facilitate abuse of women, in particular through section 4: Using a service to abuse and cause harm by posting an electronic communication, and section 5: Using a service to bully, menace, harass or cause harm. The Act defines ‘posting an electronic communication’ as including (but not limited to) dissemination in any form of an intimate visual recording (which includes photographs or videos). The Act will enable women to bring complaints for acts such as revenge porn and harassment via text message, email and in other electronic forms.

Tonga Labour Mobility Policy (2021) was launched allowing for an increase of women participating in the labour mobility schemes in New Zealand and Australia in horticulture, meat processing, constructions, tourism, and hospitality.

The draft **Child Protection Policy (2021)** was developed by the Tonga National Child Protection Policy Committee specifically tailored for the protection of children, including those with disabilities.

2.3 Actions to prevent discrimination and promote the rights of marginalized groups of women and girls

Ministry of Justice Disability Policy 2020 was established to ensure that all persons employed or who use the services of the Courts are not subjected to discrimination of any kind on the basis of physical or mental disability.

Equality Insights Rapid Survey Tonga 2022: Understanding the hardships and experiences of poor people beyond lack of income is a priority for the Government of Tonga. It is more difficult to prevent and address gender-based and intersectional discrimination if you can't see it in data. Undertaking the Equality Insights Rapid Survey Tonga 2022 provided new data into the circumstances of particular groups in relation to 15 key dimensions of life that can be disaggregated by gender, age, disability and location.

The data makes visible differences by gender, age, disability and location where they exist, providing the Tongan Government with information about how development investments and actions are translating into outcomes for particular groups. The initial findings from the study present information about 15 key dimensions of life disaggregated by gender, age, disability and rural/urban location.

The data and portal for exploring the results, provide ministries with new information about the situation of young women, older women, people living with disabilities and living in different island groups, to assist the Government in addressing specific challenges experienced by particular groups. Further intersectional analysis of the data may provide additional insights into the overlapping challenges faced by particular groups, to inform policy and programming priorities.

Integrated Aged Care: With funding from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Japan Fund for Prosperous and Resilient Asia and the Pacific, and Climate Change Fund, the Government of Tonga will implement a project that aims to enhance the well-being and quality of life of older people in Tonga by providing appropriate, safe, and high-quality integrated health and care services and support to caregivers. The project has three outputs: (i) Output 1: community-based and climate-resilient aged care centers established, (ii) Output 2: aged care services and programs implemented, and (iii) Output 3: caregiver support and measures to recognize, reduce, and redistribute the caregiving responsibility implemented.

To ensure gender is mainstreamed throughout the project, a Gender Action Plan has been developed to ensure alignment with the National Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality Tonga Policy 2019–2025 and Family Protection Act 2016 Revised Edition.

Gender-responsive features of the aged care centers include separate toilet and baths for older men and women, enough spaces for individual or group activities, and consultations to be undertaken with older men and women recipients with the ongoing enhancement of the aged care operational and management policies and aged care services and programs.

There are approximately 3,800 older people (60% of which are women) suitable for community-based services. Assessment of older people will also include types and severity of functional

difficulties that will be included in their individual care plan. Criteria will prioritize poverty or income levels, women-headed households, people with disabilities, and other social inclusion factors.

2.4 Effects of the confluence of different crises on the implementation of the BPfA in your country, and what measures have you taken to prevent their negative impact on progress for women and girls

In responding to the impact of the 2022 eruption of Tonga’s Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha’apai undersea volcano and subsequent tsunami, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Women’s Affairs and Gender Equality Division with support from UNDP Pacific and UN Women Fiji Multi-Country Office mobilized the REACH “A’u Tonu Ki Ai” community outreach programme.

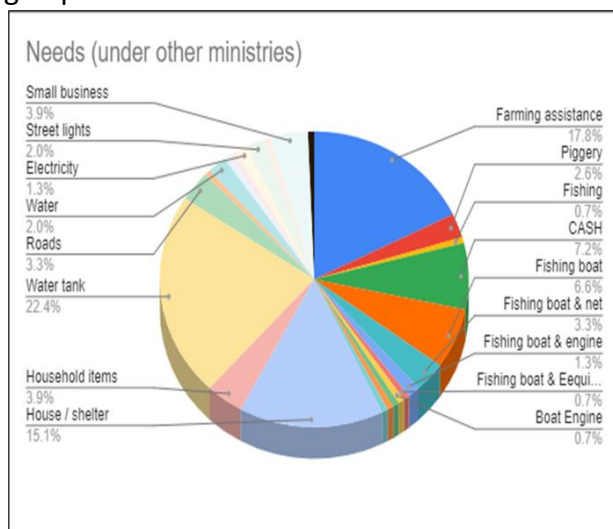
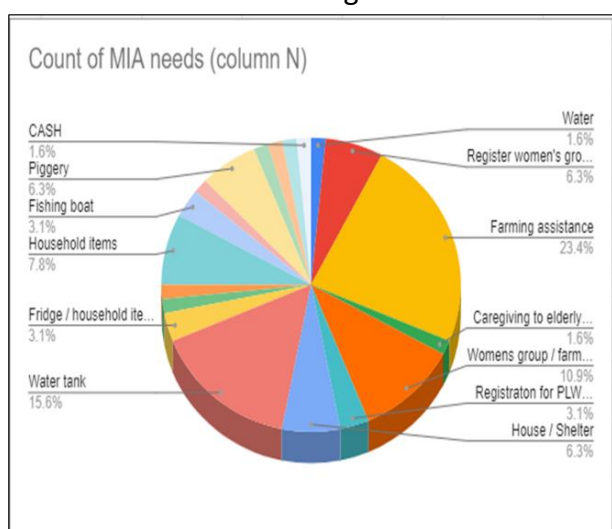
The REACH programme mobilizes government and civil society organizations to take services to out to communities recognizing the challenges of access to services. Ahead of roll-out the programme team undertake a scoping visit with community leaders and members to establish the services desired by the community and then coordinate with the relevant services for mobilization.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the REACH programme was unable to conduct the in-person scoping. To work around this challenge, the “REACH call center” (the first of its kind in Tonga) was set up with the objective of identifying the government and non-government services needed to assist communities severely impacted by the disaster to then coordinate mobilization.

The call center set up a national toll-free number with 5 lines running simultaneously and was promoted via text blast, radio announcements and national talk back radio and was operational from the 11 -14 April from 11am – 3pm.

220 calls were received over the 4-day operation with the majority of callers were from the four hotspot areas identified in the Initial Disaster Assessment as being the most badly impacted by the disaster.

Analysis of the calls found: Over 60% of callers were women, 73% of callers stated they had not received assistance from government nor NGOs, 23% was largely food and water and consistent with the bulk of the damage 80% of calls from Tongatapu.

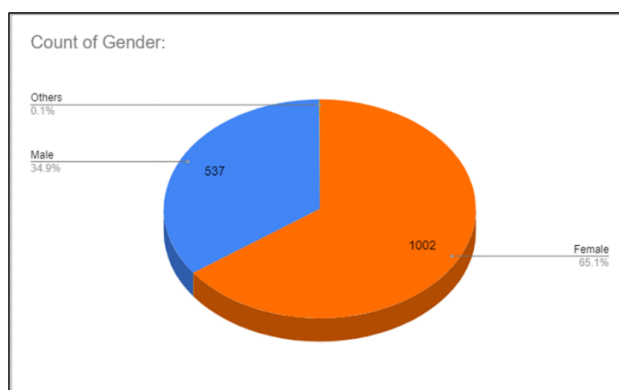
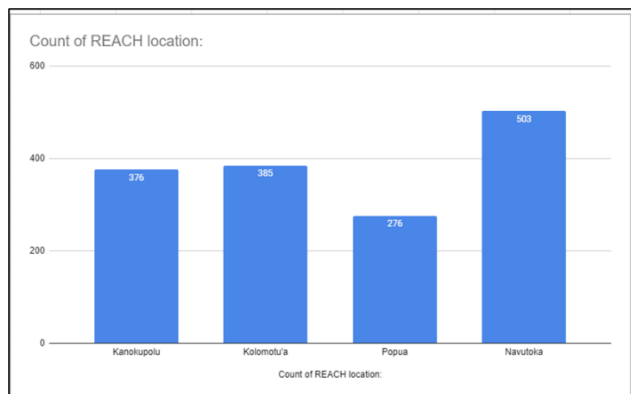


Recognizing the increased risk of gender-based violence within the community, rapid training was provided for the call center operators on: Using smart sheets for data collection, how to manage GBV disclosures, Survivor centered approaches to calls, how to make referrals within the call center to the GBV specialist, the basics of the Service Delivery Protocol on managing GBV cases and referral pathways and each member was provided a copy of the GBV service directory for referrals.

Using the call center data, the REACH team prepared for mobilization as the COVID-19 restrictions started to lift. Orientation training was provided to all participating government ministries and civil society organizations and town and district officers on: Survivor Centered Approach, managing disclosures of GBV, how to refer to the participating women’s crisis centers during the mission and on the REACH data collection and reporting system.

The REACH team provided services to 1012 people in Tongatapu at four locations over two weeks. Out of the 1012 people reached around 94 people were assisted by MIA Social Protection & Disability team of which 79% were women. Majority requested services to complete their forms to be able to access CASH assistance and benefits from Government.

REACH sites were set up in all four hotspots identified in the IDA and some of the key services included GBV counselling, psycho-social support, national ID registration, passport, birth certificate and drivers licence registration and issuance (many people lost ID when evacuating however urgently needed formal identification to access the government cash assistance), support for infrastructure needs, food, access to water, health services, police services and many others.



2.5 Priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in your country through laws, policies and/or programmes over the next five years

The review of the National Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality Tonga Policy and Strategic Plan of Action 2019-2025. An initial round of stakeholder consultation has been completed and with several more to take place mid – 2024 with the aim to have the revised draft completed by the end of 2024 for endorsement and adoption in early 2025.

Running parallel to the policy revision will be the roll out of gender mainstreaming workshops across government ministers and statutory bodies. The workshop in 2024 will have a dual purpose of

educating about gender and mainstreaming, but also to gather information to inform the policy review. As demonstrated throughout this review, there are several other key government policies with similiters Mainstreaming of the National Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality Tonga Policy and Strategic Plan of Action 2019-2025

The Equality Insights Rapid Survey Tonga 2022 found that women experience greater deprivation than men in Voice, Safety and Time use. These findings underline the continued importance of the Government's efforts to implement its National Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality Tonga Policy with increased focus on people with disabilities, women's leadership and participation in decision making and safety.

Section Three: Progress across the 12 critical areas of concern

Inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work

3.1 Actions to advance gender equality in the world of work

As highlighted in the table of achievements at the start of this section the following have provide safeguards and measures which support the advancement of gender equality in the world of work:

- **2021 Tonga Informal Business Survey**
- **2021 the Tonga Labour Mobility Policy**
- **2022 Public Service Sexual Harassment Policy**
- **2020 Employment Relations Bill**

To better understand the gaps and challenges in advancing gender equality in the world of work, the Equality Insights Rapid Survey undertaken in Tonga in 2022 provided insights into the relationship between paid and unpaid work for specific groups. The Work dimension of the survey assesses both paid and unpaid work, including status/ availability of work, dignity of work, and any harm experienced at work.

Overall, 61 percent of people experienced some level of Work deprivation, with 33 percent moderately deprived and 28 percent severely deprived. Rural areas had higher levels of work deprivation, with two-thirds (66%) meeting the threshold for some level of deprivation compared to less than half (45%) of those in urban areas. Men and women experienced Work deprivation at similar levels. A significant interaction between age and gender suggests that younger women have higher odds of experiencing Work deprivation than younger men.

3.2 Actions taken to recognize, reduce and/or redistribute unpaid care and domestic work, promote work-life and family balance and strengthen the rights of paid care workers

The Integrated Aged Care Project aims to enhance the well-being and quality of life of older people in Tonga by providing appropriate, safe, and high-quality integrated health and care services and support to caregivers. For the first time, Tonga will implement a multifaceted approach to aged care, recognizing that aging involves physical, emotional, social, and psychosocial aspects. The project will also support caregivers (who are predominantly women) to promote a more sustainable and positive experience in providing care for older people and a psychosocial approach to care.

Output 3: Caregiver support and measures to recognize, reduce, and redistribute the caregiving responsibility implemented, supports caregivers' immediate needs and promotes strategic, transformative approaches to make caregiving careers more appealing, especially among less-involved men, and achieve equitable distribution of care responsibilities. This output will directly benefit informal or family caregivers, mostly women, who provide care to older people. Activities include:

- (i) piloting the provision of caregiver allowance for informal family caregivers who care full-time for older people who need a high level of care and assessing its sustainability;
- (ii) delivering caregiver counseling services;
- (iii) training to enhance the quality of care and provide a pathway to formal employment;
- (iv) capacity building to government agencies, caregivers, and communities on supporting older people in adapting to climate change and during disasters;
- (v) providing reduced-cost products and equipment such as commodes, hoists, and walkers to older people and their caregivers, and other individuals with disabilities;
- (vi) providing home modification grant for eligible households; and
- (vii) organizing events to encourage and support more male caregivers, such as community awareness campaigns, special incentives, and recognition programs.
- (viii) This output will reduce and rebalance the distribution of unpaid care and domestic work by providing both financial and psychosocial support. The project evaluation will include assessment of the caregiver allowance pilot, its sustainability, and feasibility for scale-up. This output will address the norms surrounding care work which often place all responsibilities on women without adequate support or recognition, and promoting it as a viable career option, particularly for men.

The Time Use dimension of Equality Insights Rapid assessed the dual burden of caring for dependents while doing paid work and the financial, social and physical consequences of time poverty. Understanding the people who are severely deprived in Time Use include people who experienced dual burden during paid work, those who did not have discretionary time to seek medical care, those who did not have time to visit friends or family most of the time, and those who lost income because of lack of time.

The survey found that women (57%) were more likely than men (48%) to be deprived in the Time Use dimension, with 22 percent of women experiencing severe deprivation, compared to 17 percent of men.

3.3 Actions taken to reduce the gender digital divide

Tonga Women in ICT (TWICT) provide training and take a comprehensive approach to equip women with the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in today's digital world. In addition to providing direct support to women at the newly opened IT workspace Café located at the Tonga National University, team also provide outreach to schools, particularly Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions.

Efforts have centred on a diverse array of activities and trainings aimed at fostering digital literacy and gender equality in the ICT sector. By engaging students and providing valuable insights into ICT careers, the desired outcome is to see an increase in female participation in the field. These collective endeavours have not only empowered women but have also cultivated a more inclusive and vibrant tech community in Tonga.

Training provided includes Entrepreneurship, Digital Literacy Skills and Building a Small Database in Tonga.

Electronic Communication Abuse Offences Act (2020) defines offences relevant to the use of technology to facilitate abuse of women, in particular through: Section 4: Using a service to abuse and cause harm by posting an electronic communication, and section 5: Using a service to bully, menace, harass or cause harm.

The Act defines 'posting an electronic communication' as including (but not limited to) dissemination in any form of an intimate visual recording (which includes photographs or videos). The Act will enable women to bring complaints for acts such as revenge porn and harassment via text message, email and in other electronic forms.

3.4 The effects of macroeconomic and fiscal policy environment on the implementation of the BPfA and macroeconomic policies has your country implemented in support of a more gender-equal economy

The **Technical Working Group on Migrant Assistance and Protection** chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Immigration Division) developed the **Tonga Migration & Sustainable Development Policy (MSDP)** launched in 2020. The MSDP pays special attention to all vulnerable populations, but especially how gender shapes resilience and risk factors amongst women and men, as well as boys and girls and is organized according to fourteen thematic areas.

Each thematic area addresses the intersection of migration and sustainable development for that given sector, as well as the policy statements, objectives, and strategies that must be considered for all policy stakeholders and beneficiaries. Moreover, the MSDP highlights the unique roles and

considerations of two important segments of the population and how their distinct needs and priorities cut across the formulation of the MSDP's policies. The policy ensures that women and girls are not disadvantaged in accessing economic resources and opportunities in order to secure their rights and livelihoods in the face of changing social institutions and norms due to migration.

It is important to understand the context of shifts, challenges and influences on the macroeconomic and fiscal policy environment in light of the recent disasters and emergencies in Tonga. The impact of these natural shocks created an unprecedented impact on national budgets and donor funding which required immediate reprioritisation, reprogramming, delays and cancellation of activities and initiatives on the implementation of the BPfA.

The **Hunga Tonga Hunga Ha'apai volcanic eruption and ensuing tsunami** caused economic damage in the order of T\$207.9M (US\$90.4M). Post disaster assessment underscored there would be significant economic losses associated with the event due to follow-on disruption in tourism, commercial, agriculture and infrastructure activities associated with the event.

1. The economic damage impact was mostly concentrated in Tongatapu (and the islands around Tongatapu), with Tongatapu accounting for around 76% of the total damage cost.
2. The impact of this event on damages is equivalent to the order of 18.5% of GDP and directly around 2% of capital; however, damage is distributed very unevenly across the islands. With Tonga not experiencing a similar volcanic eruption and related tsunami event in recent history, it is difficult to make comparisons to other historical events, thus the damage distribution cannot be compared directly to past events. However, Tropical Cyclone Harold in April 2020 had economic damages equivalent to greater than T\$255.3 (US\$111M) (April 23, 2020), and Tropical Cyclone Gita in 2018 had T\$208.8M (US\$96.2M) in damages (+ T\$147.3M or US\$67.9M in losses). This event is smaller in terms of economic damages compared to the Cyclone Gita and Harold events; however, for the tourism sector, potentially more damaging. Cyclone Ian in 2014, had damage and losses pegged at T\$115M (US\$50M) or 11% of GDP.
3. The total estimated replacement value of damaged residential buildings is at about half of the estimated damage to non-residential buildings, given the significant impact to resorts on islands such as 'Atatā, Fafā and Pangaimotu, as well as on the western coast of Tongatapu. These tourism assets will require significant rebuilding of not only structures but also the land, walkways, moorings and other associated infrastructure and facilities.

As highlighted in the table of achievements at the start of section 2 the following have provide safeguards and measures which support the advancement of a more gender-equal economy.

- **2021 Tonga Informal Business Survey**
- **2021 the Tonga Labour Mobility Policy**
- **2022 Public Service Sexual Harassment Policy**
- **2020 Employment Relations Bill**

Poverty eradication, social protection and social services

3.5 Actions taken to reduce/eradicate poverty among women and girls

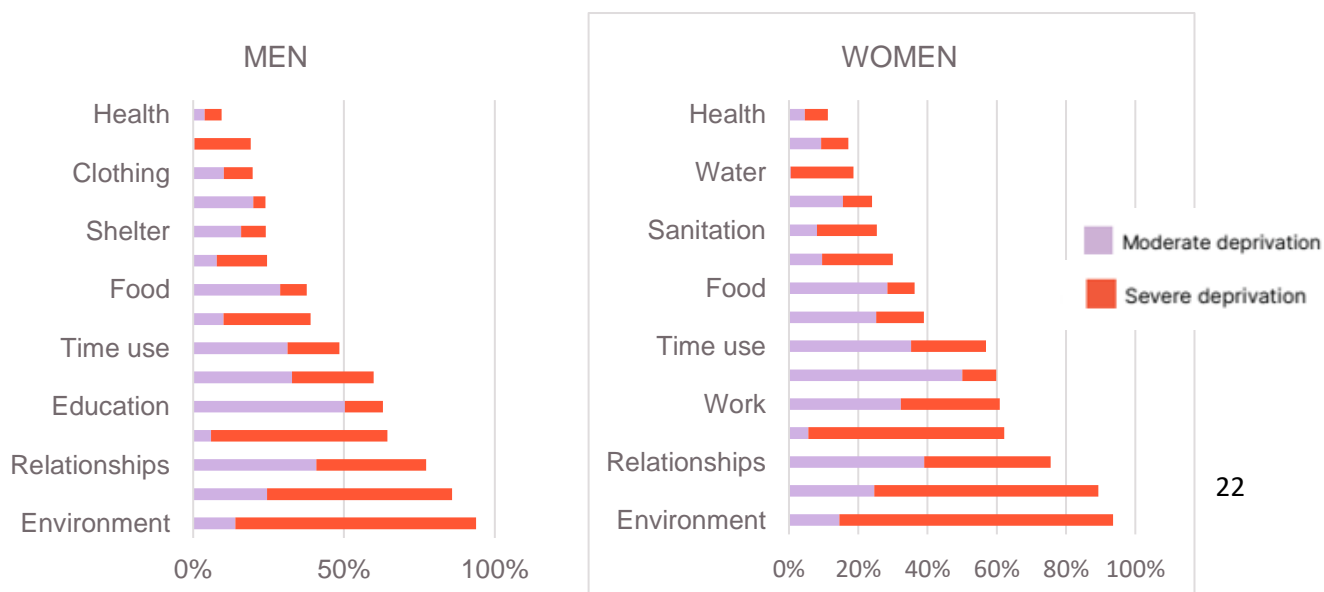
To understand more about multidimensional poverty in Tonga and the implications of COVID-19 and the 2022 volcano and tsunami on the lives of Tongans, the Tonga Statistics Department, in partnership with Tonga’s national machinery of women, the Ministry of Internal Affairs Women’s Affairs and Gender Equality Division (MIA/WAGED) and supported by the Equality Insights team at the International Women’s Development Agency (IWDA), undertook a survey of individual-level multidimensional poverty using Equality Insights Rapid.

Tonga is the first country in the Pacific to adopt a multidimensional poverty measure as its national poverty measure, and to officially conduct household-level and individual-level assessments of multidimensional poverty, to deepen insights into the barriers facing particular groups including women. The Government of Tonga recognizes that poverty is about more than money, and how it is assessed needs to assist in understanding the lives and experiences of ordinary people including hardships and disadvantage.

Data collection for this nationally-representative survey was undertaken between May and June 2022, some four months after the volcanic eruption and tsunami. Figure 2 below presents an overview of deprivation in each dimension by gender, revealing differences in the dimensions where deprivation is concentrated and in the intensity of deprivation experienced. Having individual-level data about multidimensional deprivation has provided new insights into similarities and differences by gender, to inform policy, programming and resourcing priorities.

In June 2023, IWDA and MIA/WAGED held a roundtable with women leaders from across Tonga to explore how new insights and evidence can be used to advance gender equality priorities. A data retreat for staff from the national statistics office, MIA and planning undertaken in Melbourne in May 2024 focused on deepening capacity to use Equality Insights Rapid data in reporting, and in planning, policy and programming to tackle poverty among women and girls.

Figure 2: Percentage of people experiencing deprivation across each Equality Insights Rapid dimension, including 95% CIs, by gender



Additionally, the contribution and influence of the afore mentioned Tonga Labour Mobility Policy and Employment Relations Act 2020 is to be noted.

Poverty Elimination Programme with Conditional Cash Transfer to Students of Poor Households - SET Project – commenced in 2019/2020 with the Project development objective to improve opportunities for secondary school progression and facilitate the transition to jobs in the domestic and overseas labour markets for Tongans. With secondary students assisted financially with their school fees payments from poor households, there was a total of 3,880 by December 2022.

3.6 Actions taken to improve access to social protection for women and girls.

The following listed provide protections and equal opportunity for women and girls in Tonga to be safe, empowered and treated fairly.

Through the **Tonga National Child Protection Policy (TNCPP) Committee** (established by Cabinet in 2021), Tonga managed to develop a Child Protection Policy draft (in collaboration with Auckland University of Technology (AUT) specifically tailored for the protection of children, including those with disabilities. It recognizes gender equality, anti-discriminatory approaches to child upbringing, encourages early intervention and doing no harm to children as one of its guiding principles. At the same time, it still acknowledges cultural values such as Nofo 'a Kainga (living in the family unit), as well as the 4 golden pillars of the Tongan values.

The Government of Tonga approved in May 2021 to increase the **Social Welfare Policy (SWP) benefit** for the Tongan old persons aged 70-79 years to \$80.00 per month and those aged 80-100 years to \$100.00 per month. The SWP applied to all older persons in Tongatapu and the outer islands. To date, a total number of 4,500 older persons have been paid out under the SWP.

The SWP also approved a social welfare for persons living with disabilities in Tonga, this includes a monthly stipend of \$50.00 per month for those living in mild conditions, \$80.00 per month for those living in moderate conditions and \$100.00 per month was given for those living in severe conditions.

As of January 2023, a total number of 2,502 persons living with disabilities have received this welfare.

The Government of Tonga launched the **National Strategic Plan for Long Term Care 2020-2024** in August 2020 in an effort to ensure proper care is in place for Tonga's elderly population.

The Supreme Court has developed an **Internal Policy on Persons with Disabilities** which was implemented in 2020 to ensure their needs are catered for when accessing the Courts. The main objective of the Policy is to ensure, to the greatest extent practicable, that: all persons who are employed within and who come before and use the services of the Courts are not subjected to discrimination of any kind on the basis of disability; the physical and mental integrity of persons with disabilities is protected; and all persons have access to justice.

UNICEF CASH TRANSFER top up of \$200 per head, was granted in October and December 2022 to children with disability, persons with disabilities and affected households from Hunga Tonga Hunga Ha’apai volcano eruptions.

The outcome of the previously mentioned review of the Equality Insights Rapid Survey for Tonga will provide additional guidance on addressing gaps and challenges for women and girls in all their diversities. A particular focus would be on access for people with disabilities.

3.7 Actions taken to improve health outcomes for women and girls in your country

Tonga National Strategy For The Prevention And Control Of Non-Communicable Diseases 2021–2025 aims to guide and consolidate Tonga’s efforts to prevent and reduce NCDs over the next five years. In contrast to previous strategies, the new strategy takes a systems-based approach to address NCDs.

A systems approach considers the underlying social, economic, cultural, political and environmental factors, alongside their interactions, consequences and systematic impacts on health outcomes for women, girls, men and boys.

By doing so, individuals, families and communities are empowered, and success is attainable at the national level. This strategy seeks to improve coordination and stakeholder engagement and to ensure effective, measurable implementation. To achieve maximum health impact, the interventions and activities proposed in this strategy target NCDs at both population and individual levels.

In 2020 the **School of Public Health and Community Medicine of the University of NSW** conducted research titled **“Adolescent unplanned pregnancy in the Pacific: Tonga**. This research aimed to understand the contemporary context and realities of adolescents in Tonga who face unplanned pregnancy and motherhood.

Issues facing adolescent girls regarding sexual and reproductive health are implicated in social, cultural and economic development, and in human rights imperatives in the region. Young women in Tonga navigate sexual and reproductive decision-making in increasingly complex social and cultural contexts, and other relevant contextual information includes access to sexual and reproductive health education and services; access to contraception; enablers and constraints to sexual health decision-making and action; traditional knowledge and practices of fertility control; and the role of older women in these matters.

The recommendations of the research are aimed at policymakers and government ministries with portfolios that include health, education, women’s affairs, youth and child welfare, social services and justice; civil society organizations working in the areas of women and children’s wellbeing, family and child welfare, gender equality, youth, and sexual and reproductive health; donors; and regional organizations – all of which have a role to play in improving young women’s and girls’ agency in relation to sexual and reproductive health. The following are the key recommendations of the research:

- a) Facilitate discussions between younger and older women about sexual and reproductive health and gender equality.
- b) Strengthen sexual and reproductive health education in schools.
- c) Strengthened community programs designed for adolescent girls and boys to promote understanding of gender equality and challenge harmful gender dynamics.
- d) Strengthen the availability and accessibility of contraceptives to adolescents, including evidence based and accurate information on its use and side effects.
- e) Strengthened healthcare worker training on the importance of providing non-judgmental and confidential sexual and reproductive health services and commodities to adolescents.
- f) Mentoring for young mothers and support groups mothers to complete their education and gain employment.
- g) Strengthened gender-based violence prevention and response programs.
- h) Advocacy for abortion legislation review and repeal.
- i) Strengthened engagement with organizations and key members of the community that have been advocating for strengthened sexual and reproductive health education and/or gender equality, access to contraception, abortion legislation review and repeal, and ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women.
- j) Ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women.
- k) Further research as indicated by the data.

The **Tonga National Youth Policy & Strategic Plan Of Action 2021-2025** policy proposes a set of agreed priorities and guidelines for government and youth stakeholders to support youth in their development and growth with a view to initially meet their needs and aspirations and also realize their own goals.

In order to achieve “Healthy, productive, fruitful and happy lives for all youth in Tonga by 2025”, the Tonga National Youth Policy has the following five (5) priority outcomes:

1. The health and wellbeing of the youth’s body, mind and soul
2. Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD): addiction and effects on youth
3. Youth Employment
4. Social Protection and Accountability for youth
5. Enabling environment at national level to mainstream youth issues among key stakeholders

Policy Outcome 1: The health and wellbeing of the youth’s body, mind and soul

- 1.1 Strengthen awareness on health obligation and rights for youth and their accessibility to health services and programs
- 1.2.2 Improve and strengthen youth mental and emotional prevention creativities
- 1.3 Promote healthy lifestyles for youth and physical activities through sports
- 1.4 Encourage and promote Life skills and capabilities programs for youth
- 1.5 Strengthen existing parenting guides based on best practices and lessons learnt
- 1.6 Promote the active participation of youth in social, economic, political environment to ensure they are part of the decision making process in matters concerning their life and future

3.8 Actions taken to improve education outcomes and skills for women and girls, including in sectors where they are underrepresented

As previously mentioned in section 2, the Tonga Energy Road Map Plus has a dedicated section on Gender. Below are excerpts from the plan that reflect the policies acknowledgement of the benefits of gender participation in the energy sector as well as the Gender Roadmap of the policy which details the opportunities, contributions and benefits for and by women.

Benefits of equal gender participation in the energy sector		
Economic	Social	Project-level
Higher GDP and/or better performing economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved project success rate
Larger workforce to provide needed skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximisation of socio-economic benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bringing new or different perspectives and/or solutions
Ensure Women and Men can equally benefit in economic outcomes and opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased energy access Increased safety Better health and education outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement in collaboration and yielding better performance overall

Interventions/ Policy Alignment	Short-Term Target 2025	Medium-Term Target 2030	Long-Term Target 2035	Key Stakeholders
Employment, education, training and professional development Policy: TSDFII	Identify baseline for women's participation in energy sector, by subsector and through Interventions above, the TERMPLUS aims to achieve increase in women's participation in energy sector workforce	Identify and create pathways for women and youth through technical and vocational education, training and internships to develop technical skills for the energy sector.	Establish mentoring and networking programs for women and youth employed and graduates in the energy sector.	Sector Lead: MEIDECC – DoE Partners: TPL, NGO Finance: GoT
Energy policy, monitoring and evaluation Policy: TSDFII	Develop Gender assessment tools, set indicators to monitor gender aspects and collect gender disaggregated data Assess gender mainstreaming w/in DoE, energy sector, TPL and the energy sector, Develop action plan to address gaps Development of a gender monitoring programme for gender balance in utilities and ministries, in employment and entrepreneurship	Promote development of gender monitoring programme w/in DoE similar to TPL. Develop action plan Apply a gender approach to clean energy investment tools: feed-in-tariffs, renewable energy auctions and competitive bidding techniques, power purchase agreements, performance metrics, private sector subsidies and other economic incentives	Mandate collection of gender-disaggregated data in clean energy. Create and implement a gender scorecard for ministries and utilities	Sector Lead: MEIDECC-DoE Partners: TPL, NGO Finance: GoT
Partnerships, advocacy and awareness raising Policy: TSDFII	Support enhancement of the capacity of gender experts, women's organisations, and multilateral gender focal points on renewable energy and climate change mitigation, in order to encourage engaged participation in policy and large-scale project development	Build awareness of women's role in clean energy, including stories of women and girls in the energy sector, side events at major energy meetings, communication campaigns, identifying high level champions, and replicating successful models for women's advancement	Develop publicly accessible case studies, data, webinars, and other tools on gender in clean energy infrastructure Host Pacific Island Countries, leadership exchange on women's advancement in the energy sector.	Sector Lead: MEIDECC – DoE Partners: TPL, NGO, Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Dept. of Women Finance: GoT
Projects and procurement Policy: TSDFII	Research avenues for addressing gender as a way of reducing risk and increasing returns on clean energy investments	Adapt project documents and assessments to be gender-responsive throughout the project cycle	Explore a requirement of gender-responsiveness in all contracts and agreements.	Sector Lead: MEIDECC-DoE, TPL Partners: NGO Finance: GoT

3.9 Actions taken to ensure that economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic closes gender gaps in poverty, employment, social protection, education, and/or health that the pandemic has exacerbated

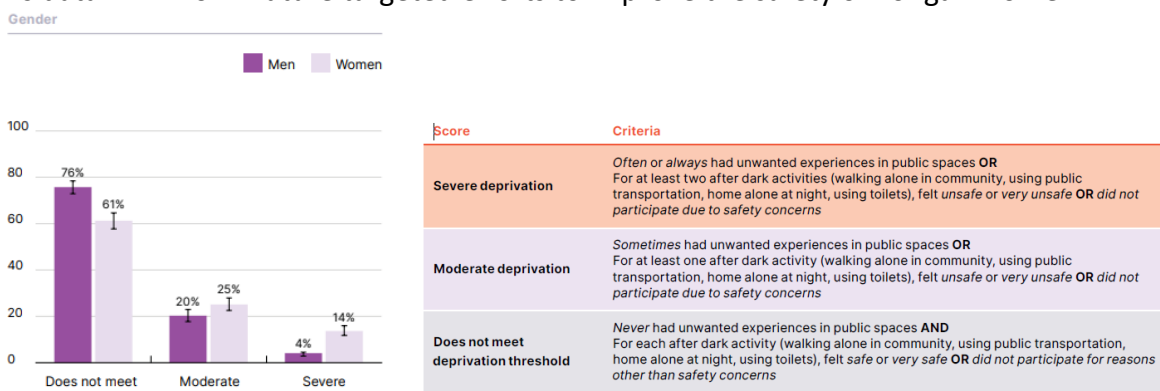
Refer to sections 3.3 – 3.5

Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes

3:10 Forms of gender-based violence in specific contexts or settings, prioritized for action

- Technology Facilitated Gender-Based Violence
- Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies
- Violence against the elderly

The Safety dimension of the Equality Insights Rapid survey conducted in Tonga in 2022 measures perceptions of safety and experiences of harassment in public spaces. It is intentionally not designed to assess violence inside the home.¹ The Equality Insights Rapid Tonga Survey 2022 found that women were significantly more likely to experience deprivation in Safety than men, with 25 percent of women experiencing moderate deprivation and 14 percent severe deprivation. Young women had higher odds of experiencing Safety deprivation than young men or older women. The availability of this data will inform future targeted efforts to improve the safety of Tongan women.



3.11 Actions prioritized to address gender-based violence

In April 2021, Tonga became the fifth country in the Pacific region to launch its Service Delivery Protocol (SDP) in Responding to Gender Based Violence (GBV). The primary purpose of the **Tonga National Service Delivery Protocol for Responding to Cases of Gender-Based Violence** (hereafter referred to as the ‘Protocol’) is to define and establish minimum standards for multisectoral responses to gender-based violence. This Protocol articulates Tonga’s efforts to build a strong multi-sector service delivery system that is equipped to meet the needs of survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) in all scenarios, including emergency and non-emergency times. One system aligned to an agreed upon set of procedures and minimum standards will ensure a survivor-centered

approach, continuity of care across the preparedness-emergency-recovery continuum and more positive outcomes for survivors, their families, and the communities of Tonga.

Tonga National Youth Policy and Strategic Plan of Action 2021-2025 recognizes the particular impacts of GBV on young Tongan women, and that GBV undermines the Policy Outcome: Social Protection and Accountability for Youth. Key output 4.1 of this plan is ‘Measures are in place to eliminate GBV and user-friendly social services are in place for youth victims / survivors. Some actions listed towards achieving this output include:

- Improve the general public and youth’s awareness of gender-based violence, harm and broader implications and human rights and obligations
- Enforce the law to bring justice to victims of violence and hold perpetrators accountable.
- Support the sensitization and education of legal enforcement entities on violence and establish strategies to protect victims of violence and re-educate perpetrators.
- Improve and strengthen programs, services and support for the perpetrators
- Build and strengthen capacities of those who are working in youth programs and services on gender based violence and human rights
- Integrate and improve adolescents and youth awareness regarding their obligation and rights for their own protection, safety, growth and the safety of others

The Women and Children Crisis Center (WCCC) Tonga, “through the Uloa approach”, supports over 30 communities throughout Tonga and reaches over six thousand people. The mobile counselling clinics ensures that people, particularly women and girls, have access to timely and quality counselling. This is significant in the remote islands where there are no formal crisis centers or trained counselors. A weekly radio counselling program provides information on responding to violence against women and related issues.

3.12 Actions taken to prevent and respond to technology-facilitated gender-based violence

The passing of the **Electronic Communication Abuse Offences Act 2020** as previously mentioned in section 2.1.

In 2023, Tonga participated in the **Safe and Equal Online Spaces Symposium** – a regional conference on TFGBV co-convened by Pacific Women Lead at SPC and Australia’s eSafety Commission during which the need for TFGBV training and awareness across sectors was highlighted during the launch of the **Technology Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) training for frontline workers**.

Developed in collaboration with Pacific stakeholders, the TFGBV Training for Frontline Workers in the Pacific aims to raise awareness among service delivery workforce who support survivors of domestic and family violence, about the prevalence and impacts of technology facilitated abuse.

Following the launch and with the assistance of and in partnership with the Australian eSafety Commission the Women’s Affairs and Gender Equality Division of the Ministry of Internal Affairs hosted a 2-day **Technology Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) training for frontline workers**.

Facilitated by the Australian E-Safety Commission the training objectives included:

- Increase participants understanding of the prevalence, behaviours and impacts of TFGBV An improved understanding of the additional challenges and barriers for diverse and marginalized women experiencing TFGBV
- Increase participant's confidence in supporting survivors of TFGBV
- Increase practice skills to identify and respond to TFGBV
- Greater awareness of the services and systems to respond to TFGBV

Tonga has now been identified as a pilot country to undertake a Training of Trainers workshop to be able to deliver this much needed training in country to government, civil society organisations, faith based organisations and community organisations.

3.13 Measures taken to resource women's organizations working to prevent and respond to GBV

Funding and grants have been provided to Women's Development groups to support with economic empowerment initiatives which have built in gender-based violence elements to build understanding of gender-based violence and support and prevention services available.

Government and civil society organisations alike collaborate on initiatives using core and donor funds to provide and share resources. Examples of this include the sponsorship of national and international training opportunities, the development and dissemination of Information, Education and Communication resources, technical assistance to one another, dissemination of material resources, attendance to national, regional and international conferences, convening's and forums and joint collaboration in local activities and initiatives.

3.14 Actions taken to address the portrayal of women and girls, discrimination and/or gender bias in the media, including social media

The **Fanguna Counselling Talatalanoa Radio Programme** provides counselling services and information on a wide range of intimate partner and family relationship issues. A 95% positivity response rate from participants showed that the program is effective in changing attitudes and behaviors towards women and girls.

In August 2020, the Women and Children Crisis Centre (WCCC) launched the Fefine To'a or Woman of Strength series and published stories in English and Tongan, showcasing Tongan women's resilience to encourage dialogue and shift perspectives on women and the social norms. The Fefine To'a stories have been disseminated online via social media and email, in local newspapers and on WCCC's weekly radio programme. In 2021, WCCC released 23 stories and two digital videos totaling 43 stories since the launch – well past the original target of 11 stories. These stories show diverse lived experiences of women and girls in Tonga, and normalize breaking the silence around women's experiences of GBV. During the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence the Fefine To'a platform released a special series featuring WCCC's counsellors and a spotlight story on a woman living with a disability. In 2021 Fefine To'a stories had reached 175,440 readers and viewers on social media alone.

The objective of the Fefine To'a initiative is to use storytelling – a platform that culturally resonates with Tongans and the Pacific – to explore complex issues, give space and agency to the ones telling the story and to share this experience across communities. Research is still underway as to the best modality to produce the Fefine To'a *talanoa* sessions, a 60-minute session that dives into one story or a specific topic. A first session was held in November 2020. Options include live sessions on Facebook Live and Zoom and/or pre-recorded sessions uploaded onto social media which all have their benefits and challenges. Another preference for communities in the outer islands is radio. The diverse audience, including Tongans in the outer islands and the diaspora, have different needs and different levels of access to technology. More live sessions are envisaged for 2022. WCCC also piloted two video stories to accompany the written stories as a method to assess participant interest and uptake.

In 2021 the Talitha Project continued to engage youth, especially girls and boys between the ages of 14 and 18, through activism, media and sport. Youth activism on the radio continues to be a key entry point to reach young people across Tonga with constant and consistent messaging on gender, VAWG and shifting of social norms. From the 2019 and 2020 youth camps, 10 boys and eight girls received continued mentorship from the Talitha Project staff. These young mentors have an increased level of awareness and understanding of healthy relationships, consent, acceptable behaviour, choice, developing positive image and how use the media.

In 2021, the Youth Mentors participated with the Talitha staff on the weekly Friday morning breakfast show that aired on FM 88.6 with an approximate reach of 10,000 listeners across Tonga. Discussion topics includes cyber bullying with guest speakers such as Mr. Siosaia Vaipuna, Director of Tonga Cyber Emergency Response Team/Tonga Cyber Safety Working Group; challenges of women and girls in rugby; an introduction to the Electronic Abuse Offences Act (2020); themes from the Ministry of Justice Week in 2021; challenges of coaching women's rugby, International Youth Day in partnership with Tonga Rugby Referee Association (TRRA) and the Tonga Rugby Union (TRU) ; special guest discussions about VAWG with Mr. Alekasio from the Tonga Police Force; and special guest discussions with Ms. Vika Akau'ola from the Family Protection Legal Aid Centre.

3.15 Actions taken specifically tailored to address violence against marginalized groups of women and girls.

Refer to sections 3.3 – 3.5 and 3.11 – 3.15

Participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions

3.16 Actions and measures to promote women's participation in public life and decision-making in the past five years.

In 2020 the **Voters' Perceptions Of Women As Leaders In Tonga Study** was conducted the Tupou Tertiary Institute Research and Training Centre to investigate the perception of Tongan voters in regard to women's involvement in decision making platforms to better understand realistic situations

which Tongan women face in the family, the community and in national political platforms, such as parliament.

Some of the key findings of the study included:

- 61% of respondents believed that the Tonga family unit, “fāмили” is hierarchical, with males at the top of the hierarchy and therefore the head of the Tongan family
- 69% of respondents believed that mothers/women should stay at home with children while fathers/males attend and participate in village (fono) meetings.
- 80% of respondents felt that a woman, staying in her husband’s village, can participate in village meetings if she has been involved in village activities.
- 52% of respondents believed that it was appropriate for a Tongan mother to be a wage earner while father remains at home to conduct domestic chores.
- 80% of respondents recognized the privileged role of “mehekitanga” (father’s sister) in the Tongan family.
- 57% believed that males should lead in the villages while 57% believed that both males and females can lead in the workplace, 53% believed that both males and females can lead in parliament, BUT the percentage for both genders had a much higher percent for those that chose males as best leaders.
- 52% stated that they will vote for a male candidate over a female candidate with exactly the same qualifications.
- 92% believed that fewer women than men have the right skills and experience for parliament.

Research implications found:

- There is still a very strong view that men are inherently better leaders in family and in the village and for parliament.
- There is greater acceptance of women as economic earners, but that their role as mothers still comes first. Greater visibility of women leaders in decision making arenas, such as being leaders in workplaces, must be considered as way of encouraging increased women participation.
- Stories which highlighted unfair treatment of women appeared to have an emotional impact on respondents and elicited a different response from their ‘traditional’ views. Storytelling that highlights injustices for women, should be a major tool for advocacy for women’s’ rights.
- Traditional Tongan values about gendered roles within the Tongan family seems to be reinforced within the village and church communities – without influence and advocacy efforts at this level, national policies will continue to remain aspirational.

In 2020 the Prime Minister of Tonga, Honorable Dr. Pohiva Tu’i’onetoa has officiated the national launch of the new FI-E-FI-A’a Fafine Tonga (FFFT) network to support and empower women and girls particularly during the COVID-19 and TC Harold response. FI-E-FI-A’a Fafine Tonga, formerly known as the Women in Leadership Coalition, aims to promote women’s full participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, cultural, private and public life. This work is supported by the Balance of Power and includes supporting commitments

prioritized by the Government of Tonga through its National Policy on Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Tonga (WEGET).

FFFT also works with other stakeholders to ensure women and girls are confident and free to make decisions about their life and future. The organizations who originally formed FFFT under its former name as the Women's Coalition include the Ma'a Fafine moe Famili (MFF), Tonga National Centre for Women and Children (TNCWC), Women and Children Crisis Centre (WCCC), Tonga National Youth Congress (TNYC), Public Service Association (PSA), Civil Society Forum Tonga (CSFT) and the Talitha Project with support from Regional Rights Resource Team and more recently, FFFT received individual members with Dr. Rev. 'Ungatea Fonua Kata joining the network.

3.17 Actions taken to increase women's access to expression and participation in decision-making in the media, including through information and communication technologies (ICT)

With funding and technical assistance from the Balance of Power Programme, the Ministry of Internal affairs partnered with Balance of Power on the campaign **"Poupou'i 'a Fafine kihe Tu'unga Taki"** (Support Women for Leadership positions). The campaign supported the production of 5 short awareness videos on women in leadership. The videos include the following:

1. Introductory video on the campaign
2. Women in Emergency
3. Women in Local Government
4. Women in Business
5. Women in Parliament (in progress)

The videos are intended to be aired via local television and radio stations to increase awareness on how women are contributing to the development/progress through their leadership roles. The videos are also intended to be used as resources by the WAGED and any other (relevant) stakeholders for their work on gender equality, e.g. trainings, outreach, etc.

Following the airing of each video, a radio talk-back show on each of the highlighted issue will be discussed with the public to capture views in order to inform WAGED work in each thematic area.

In 2021, Youth Mentors participated with the Talitha staff on the weekly Friday morning breakfast show that aired on FM 88.6 with an approximate reach of 10,000 listeners across Tonga. Discussion topics includes cyber bullying, challenges of women and girls in rugby; an introduction to the Electronic Abuse Offences Act (2020), challenges of coaching women's rugby, International Youth and violence against women.

In August 2020, the Women and Children Crisis Centre (WCCC) launched the Fefine To'a or Woman of Strength series and published stories in English and Tongan, showcasing Tongan women's resilience to encourage dialogue and shift perspectives on women and the social norms. The objective of the Fefine To'a initiative is to use storytelling – a platform that culturally resonates with Tongans and the Pacific – to explore complex issues, give space and agency to the ones telling the story and to share this experience across communities. The Fefine To'a stories have been

disseminated online via social media and email, in local newspapers and on WCCC's weekly radio programme.

3.18 Current national women's machinery (government entity exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women) and describe the measures that your country taken over the past five years to establish and/or strengthen it

The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) is tasked with addressing gender equality, the empowerment of women and the disadvantaged, responsibility for the care and protection of children, and addressing the needs of women and children within all spheres of Tongan society.

The Women's Affairs and Gender Equality Division within MIA is the national machinery that plays the leading role of coordinating, monitoring and providing advisory services in respect of the WEGET Policy on behalf of the government.

The implementation of the Policy requires the engagement of all sectors and all government agencies at both local and national levels. Each sector and agency concerned with the outcomes of the Policy must dedicate appropriate human, financial and material resources and are expected to play a leading role in achieving the outcomes in relation to their sector.

With the WEGET policy, the Ministry has committed to align its work and focus areas on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and several other regional and international action plans. The MIA is responsible for monitoring government initiatives, including the drafting of new policies and procedures that will respond to the gender equality needs of Tonga.

3.19 Other mechanisms and tools used to mainstream gender equality across sectors?

At the 2023 Tonga National Committee on Gender and Development retreat a recommendation was tabled for the National Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality Tonga (WEGET) Policy 2019-2025 to be included as the fifth policy to be mainstreamed through the national corporate planning process. The national corporate planning process led by the National Planning Department within the Prime Minister's Office provided a strategic platform to support the mainstreaming of the WEGET policy, using the 2019 Gender Mainstreaming Handbook of the Government of the Kingdom of Tonga, both developed by the Women's Affairs and Gender Equality Division within the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

At the 2024 National Planners Forum, the WEGET Policy was streamlined in discussions across the other four priority areas being:

- Tonga Energy Road Map (TERM)
- Tonga National Strategy For The Prevention And Control Of Non-Communicable Diseases 2021– 2025
- Tonga National Youth Policy & Strategic Plan Of Action 2021-2025

- The National Cluster system

Preceding the forum, a series of pre-planner's forum sector engagement workshops were used as the starting point to engage with government ministries and agencies.

Additionally, there are several mechanisms in place to support stakeholder engagement. These take place across different timelines, forums and convening's of which vary in engagement platform. The different entry points for engagement include membership on committees working groups such as the:

- Family Protection Advisory Council established under the Family Protection Act 2013
 - Counselling sub-committee
 - Data sub-committee
 - Referral sub-committee
 - Faith Bases sub-committee
- National Advisory Committee on Gender and Development
 - Women in Leadership sub-committee
- The UPR-Working Group
- The Regional Working Group on DV Legislation
 - Advisory sub-committee
 - Data sub-committee
 - Coordination sub-committee
 - Counselling sub-committee
- National Case Management Committee
- 16 Days of Activism Committee
- Breast Cancer Awareness Campaign

Moreover, convening spaces and opportunities for engagement include:

- National Gender Equality Consultations
- Monthly televised panel discussions delivered by the National Women's Machinery
- Gender Equality Policy review consultations
- Technical capacity workshop on:
 - Gender Mainstreaming
 - Service Delivery Protocol on Multisectoral Response to Cases of Gender Based Violence
 - Gender in Humanitarian Action
 - Family Protection Act awareness workshops
 - Technology Facilitated Gender-Based Violence
 - 16 Days of Activism campaigns
 - Women in Leadership forums
 - Women's Economic Empowerment training

3.20 If there is a national human rights institution in your country, what measures has it taken to address violations of women's rights and promote gender equality?

There is currently no human rights institute in Tonga.

Peaceful and inclusive societies

3.21 Actions taken to build and sustain peace, promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and implement the women, peace and security agenda

Tonga endorsed the dedicated Peace and Security pillar in the Blue Pacific Strategy to 2050 as well as the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration of 2023 which reflects women peacebuilders' call for the implementation of the WPS agenda by ensuring the full, equal, effective, and meaningful leadership and participation of women and girls in all their diversity at every stage of peace processes, conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding for peace and security.

Further information is provided in section 3.24

3.22 Actions taken to increase the leadership, representation and participation of women in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding, humanitarian action and crisis response, at decision-making levels in situations of armed and other conflicts, and in fragile or crisis settings

The government of Tonga established eleven clusters with representatives from the inter government agencies, civil society organisations, regional and international organisations and led by national government agencies. Tonga's Safety & Protection cluster is one of the eleven Cluster groups established under the Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Act 2021 led by Ministry of Internal Affairs with technical support provided by UN Women.

The Safety and Protection Cluster advocates for safety and protection of all vulnerable groups during preparedness, response and recovery from Disasters and Climate Change impacts. The cluster through National Disaster Risk Management Office also provides support to strengthen community resilience through capacity building and trainings to reduce the vulnerability of the people to the impacts of disasters. Safety and Protection cluster also works with other ten clusters and lead agencies to mainstream Gender and Social Inclusion across their cluster response plans and activities throughout the disaster management cycle.

3.23 Actions taken to enhance judicial and non-judicial accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and violations of the human rights of women and girls in situations of armed and other conflicts or humanitarian action and crisis response

On 15 March 2024, His Majesty's Government approved Tonga's first ever **Written Statement to the International Court of Justice for the Advisory Proceedings concerning the Obligation of States in Respect of Climate Change**.

Tonga's Written Statement incorporates Tonga's priorities in the context of climate change and the impacts it has encountered at a national level and at an individual level. It draws the attention of the Court to the impacts of climate change on Tonga's land, sea, people, economy and the impact which Tonga's future generations will encounter.

Tonga's Written Statement was prepared by the Tonga Core Team comprised of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Attorney General's Office, and the Department of Climate Change, External Counsels, in collaboration with line Ministries in Government, the PISFCC, and important stakeholders from the community giving testimonials on how climate change has impacted the private and community level sector.

The Statement was filed with the Registry of the International Court of Justice on Tuesday 19 March 2024 and Tonga will participate in the Reply round before June 2024 and the oral proceedings before the International Court of Justice which will take place later this year or early 2025 at the International Court of Justice in The Hague, The Netherlands.

3.24 In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to eliminate discrimination against and violations of the rights of the girl child, including adolescent girls?

Refer to sections 3.3- 3.17

Environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation

3.25 Actions taken to integrate gender perspectives and concerns into environmental policies, including climate change adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity conservation and land degradation

At the national level the policies and legislations that integrate gender perspectives are:

- Disaster risk management Act
- Joint national action plan for Climate change
- Tonga Energy Road Map Plus
- National Multi-Hazard Early Warning Policy 2024 – 2030
- Tonga National Youth Policy and Strategic Action Plan

Assessment of COVID-19 socio-economic impacts on Special Management Area households and small-scale fishers in Tonga conducted by the Ministry of Fisheries (MoF) with technical support from the Pacific Community Fisheries Aquaculture Marine and Ecosystem division revealed interventions and recommendations that can be used by MoF to advocate for and mobilize additional COVID-19 response and recovery financial support in the coastal fisheries sector.

The assessment recommended that interventions to assist households through coastal fisheries development and management activities, should consider current fishing practices, and access to resources and coping mechanisms (for instance pelagic fishing is less often conducted by women and households in the lowest income category). Priority should be given to households with lower income since they reported being more affected. A strategy to better tailor assistance to household needs and so avoid unequitable outcomes is to conduct consultations in targeted communities, ensuring wide and diverse participation from women, men, youths and marginalized groups, in order to refine interventions before deployment.

The Pacific Community (SPC), through the Pacific-European Union Marine Partnership ([PEUMP](#)) programme in partnership with the Tonga Ministry of Fisheries conducted a Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI) Training in August 2023. The training involved officers from the Ministry of Fisheries, Tonga and aimed at applying gender equity and social inclusion lenses in fisheries, focusing on coastal fisheries working with the Special Management Areas programme.

3.26 Actions taken to integrate gender perspectives into policies and programmes for disaster risk reduction and building environmental and climate resilience

Tonga is committed to implement the **Regional Framework for Resilience and Disaster in the Pacific (FRDP) 2017 – 2030** which seeks to reduce exposure to climate and disaster risk, support low carbon development and improve disaster response and reconstruction. Protection of human rights, integration of gender considerations and priorities the needs of the vulnerable communities are key principles central to the implementation of FRDP.

The government of Tonga is committed to implement the **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction**. This framework recognizes women’s participation as critical to effective design, management, and implementation of gender-sensitive DRR plans, policies and programmes, stating capacity-building measures should be put in place to empower women to build their own preparedness capacities. The framework emphasizes the importance of multi-hazard early warning systems as a key component of disaster risk reduction. Tonga developed its National Multi-Hazard Early Warning (MHEWS) Policy 2024 – 2030 that was endorsed by the cabinet in May 2024. Guiding principle 3 of the national policy focuses on Equity, Fairness, Gender sensitive and inclusiveness. The guiding principle ensures multi-hazard early warning system is inclusive and is for all groups in society, including women, men, youth, immigrants, elderly, differently abled and remote communities. It ensures Gender considerations are incorporated throughout the early warning system components. The implementation of the policy is the responsibility of the Tonga National Working Group on Multi-Hazard Early Warning System established by the cabinet and Ministry of Internal Affairs is an approved member of the TNWG MHEWS.

The **2022 Gender and Environment Survey (GES) Tonga** is a comprehensive national household survey exploring the multidimensional relationship of women and men with the environment in the Kingdom of Tonga. The survey estimates household and individual level exposure to the immediate consequences of recent disaster events and the prolonged impacts of climate change. It also evaluates the reciprocal influences of both women and men on the environment through their daily economic activities and livelihoods.

The 2022 GES Tonga was implemented by the Tonga Statistics Department (TSD) with support from the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women). The content of the survey was based on guidelines provided by UN Women, including the Model Questionnaire for Measuring the Nexus between Gender and Environment , and adapted for the Tongan context in consultation with national stakeholders from the Ministry of Internal Affairs; the Ministry of Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment Climate Change and Communications; the Ministry of Fisheries; and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forests; as well as civil society groups, including the Tonga National Centre for Women and Children and the Women and Children Crisis Centre Tonga. Estimates from this survey provide sex-disaggregated data

for national and global monitoring frameworks, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sendai Framework for disaster risk reduction and the Global Set of Climate Change Statistics and Indicators.

The data collection and analysis took place following one of the largest recent volcanic eruptions in the Tongan archipelago in January 2022, situated just 70 kilometers from Nuku'alofa, the capital city. Plumes from the eruption spread over the 'Eua, Ha'apai, Vava'u and the Niua island groups, and a resulting tsunami crossed the Pacific, affecting the neighboring countries of American Samoa, Fiji and Vanuatu. The findings reflect on the vulnerability of the Pacific region to frequent disaster events, the long-term impacts of climate change and the individual experiences of women and men who are confronted daily with these impacts.

The main objective of the 2022 GES Tonga is to provide nationally representative and sex-disaggregated statistics across several thematic areas. These areas include household-level data on housing characteristics and individual level data for women and men respondents. The individual-level data span various themes such as personal attributes, exposure to and experience of disasters and hazards, the impact of climate change, agriculture and land use, and environment-related livelihoods. The 2022 GES Tonga largely adheres to international guidelines, as outlined in the Model Questionnaire for Measuring the Nexus between Gender and Environment, with adaptations specific to Tonga that incorporate modules at the household and individual levels.

Section Four: National institutions and processes

4.1 National strategy or action plan for gender equality

The National Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality Tonga Policy 2019 – 2025 (WEGET) is the national blueprint for gender equality for Tonga. The vision of the policy is for Gender equity by 2025: That all women, men, girls and boys as a whole achieve equal access to economic, social, political and religious opportunities and benefits.

The policy provides a revised set of agreed priorities and guidelines for the government and civil society to improve their capacity to address gender issues and enhance the well-being of the families by integrating a gender perspective in the process of developing laws, policies and programmes which will serve to ensure equal rights, opportunities and benefits for women and men.

The goal of the WEGET is to advance gender equality ensuring the active contribution and meaningful participation of both women and men in all spheres, and at all levels, of development and decision-making for the well-being of the family and for the benefit of the whole society.

Promoting universal and free participation and partnership of women and men in all spheres of life – religion, society, politics, economics, and culture.

Based on the proposed vision and strategy, Tonga must build a society that allows equal participation of women and men, young and old. Such a society will respect the uniqueness of each individual and will ensure that opportunities are fair and that each may play a role in society according to his or her abilities and ambitions. Striving for this will mean rethinking the rigidly defined roles of women and

men. This can be achieved by providing opportunities and support for women to develop their abilities to maximise their participation and benefits from society.

The Policy acknowledges the greater struggle of women and men living in the Outer Islands as they have limited access to information and awareness-raising initiatives and on gender equality and human rights, which do not always reach them. Services to address their needs are more limited. They have less access to employment opportunities and their production reaches the market with difficulty. Hence greater attention needs to be given to ensure their fair contribution to the implementation of the Policy and benefits from it.

The policy is guided by the following principles:

- The family is the basic and most important unit in society and equity in the family needs to be promoted, based on harmonious partnership between women and men, including wife and husband, including husband and wife.
- Women and men are equal partners in the development of Tonga and equal value needs to be given to their respective roles and responsibilities.
- Strong partnerships and coordination mechanisms need to be in place between the Women's Affairs Division, other line and sectoral ministries, CSOs and Tonga National Forum of Church Leaders.
- Mechanisms must be put in place to ensure that women and men living in Outer Islands contribute to the implementation of the Policy and benefit from it.

In order to achieve gender equality that will benefit the whole of the society for future generations, the WEDGET Policy has the following five (5) priority outcomes.

1. Enabling environment for mainstreaming gender across government policies, programmes and services, corporate budgeting and monitoring and evaluation
2. Families and communities prosper from gender equality
3. Equitable access to economic assets and employment
4. Increased women's leadership and equitable political representation
5. Create equal conditions to respond to natural disasters, environmental challenges and climate change

People with disabilities and vulnerable groups are integral to the five (5) priority outcomes.

A major challenge faced in coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the Policy was that the National machinery charged with the responsibility was understaffed and under-resourced for most part of the term of the Policy. This caused delays in many of the works required and also the completion of various documentation that would assist in the works which was a set-back. For example, the delay in completing the Gender Mainstreaming Handbook which was seen essential to achieving priority.

Outcome 6 and proposed entry points for mainstreaming gender through government's governance and processes and targeted to be used by decision makers in Government Ministries and others. Another challenge was the inconsistency and equal spread out of outreach on gender to the rural areas and in the outer islands was poor due to financial and transportation barriers.

Funding is covered partially by the Ministry of Internal Affairs recurrent budget in its Corporate Plan and also by donor funding mainly from the Government of Australia through its Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the UN Women. There are plans to create further partnerships with other developing partners. Tonga remains committed to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and with this plan and intends to implement a more inclusive, sustainable and empowered women and girl's development agenda by strengthening its commitment to SDG 5.

The Plan is yet to be fully costed, however sufficient resources are currently in place to work together with all necessary stakeholders in implementing and achieving the key actions and outputs covered in the plan for the period covered. Current budgets are made on a financial year period (June-July).

4.2 System for tracking the proportion of the national budget that is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women

There are no formal mechanism however annual budget estimates and statements provide a breakdown of the budget allocation for the National Women's Machinery.

Pacific Technical Assistance Centre conducted Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) Public Expenditure and Financial Assessment (PEFA) for Tonga. The purpose of the PEFA supplementary assessment of gender responsive budgeting (GRB) was to collect information on the extent to which gender is mainstreamed in Tonga's public financial management (PFM) system and establish a baseline for future assessments. Tonga has taken initial steps in mainstreaming gender, so the assessment results are expected to facilitate the measurement of progress.

Tonga has not formally adopted gender responsive budgeting; however, there is commitment to advancing gender equality and development at the national, regional, and international levels. Tonga aware that, for gender policies to be effective, and men and women to benefit equitably, they must commit the necessary resources for initiatives to be implemented. This is referenced clearly in the National Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality Tonga (WEGET) policy and its Strategic Plan of Action 2019-2025. A new gender policy document aims to carry on the momentum generated by the previous National Policy on Gender and Development (RNPGAD) and its Strategic Plan of Action (2014—2018) and was developed by WAD under the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

This will also require the Government - through its policies, technical capacities, financial, and monitoring resources - as well as the engagement of WAD, to raise awareness and provide training and support to line ministries, in particular the Ministry of Finance, for gender to be mainstreamed in the budget processes. WAD also prepared a guidance document 'Gender equality: Where do we stand?' which outlines how to improve the dissemination and use of gender statistics in order to better monitor progress toward gender equality.

Although Tonga does not officially undertake gender responsive budgeting, several of its public financial management systems and processes are gender responsive. The Government's budget over recent years has included allocated budget resources to a number of gender specific initiatives: i) addressing youth unemployment, specifically among young women; ii) microfinance fund for women; and ii) women's crisis center to help with incidences of gender-based violence.

More generally, however, the budget circular does not currently require budgetary units to include gender considerations in their budget proposals. The budget documentation also does not include a report on the current status of gender equality and there is no summary of findings of ex ante gender impact assessments of budget policies. Similarly, no reports are produced to demonstrate government's achievements in implementing key gender programs and addressing gender inequalities. However, some information is presented in ministries' corporate plans

Furthermore, through support from the Government of Australia the Ministry of Finance is undertaking to incorporate gender responsive budgeting into the Public Financial Management (PFM) reform for Tongan government. Support to the Ministry of Finance is through the financing of a long-term PFM advisor role to help with the revision of the Public Financial Management Act and the revision of a PFM Reform Roadmap that is based on Tonga's last PEFA Assessment that also included a gender responsive budgeting assessment.

The Public Financial Management reform roadmap has integrated the recommendations from both assessments as part of its roll-out. There is a PFM Technical Working Group within the, that is chaired by Chief Secretary and Secretary to Cabinet with members being relevant CEOs who have oversight for the plan.

4.3 Formal mechanisms in place for different stakeholders to participate in the implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

There are several mechanisms in place to support stakeholder engagement in the implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Platform for Action. These take place across different timelines, forums and convening's of which vary in engagement platform. The different entry points for engagement include membership on committees working groups such as the:

- Family Protection Advisory Council established under the Family Protection Act 2013
 - Counselling sub-committee
 - Data sub-committee
 - Referral sub-committee
- National Advisory Committee on Gender and Development
 - Women in Leadership sub-committee
 - Gender Data sub-committee
- The UPR-Working Group
- The Regional Working Group on DV Legislation
 - Advisory sub-committee
 - Data sub-committee
 - Coordination sub-committee
 - Counselling sub-committee
- National Case Management Committee
- 16 Days of Activism Committee
- Tonga Breast Cancer Society
- Pinktober Campaign

Moreover, convening spaces and opportunities for engagement include:

- National Gender Equality Consultations
- Monthly televised panel discussions delivered by the National Women’s Machinery
- Gender Equality Policy review consultations
- Technical capacity workshop on:
 - Gender Mainstreaming
 - Service Delivery Protocol on Multisectoral Response to Cases of Gender Based Violence
 - Gender in Humanitarian Action
 - Family Protection Act awareness workshops
 - Technology Facilitated Gender-Based Violence
 - 16 Days of Activism campaigns
 - Women in Leadership forums
 - Women’s Economic Empowerment training

4.4 How stakeholders have contributed to the preparation of the present national report

A three-day National Gender Equality Consultation was conducted with stakeholder from government, private sector, civil society organisations, faith-based organisation, sports organisation, disabled people’s organisations and development partners. The objective of the consultation was to engage stakeholders and present the questions for the review. All participants took part in a two-day world café where they were presented all of the review questions across six thematic groups.

Additionally, a desktop review was undertaken of annual reports, corporate plans, national policies and strategies, organisational policies, donor reports, national, regional and international publications and meeting minutes. The information gathered was cross sectorial.

4.5 Country’s action plan and timeline for implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women or of the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review or other United Nations human rights mechanisms that address gender inequality/discrimination against women.

At the 43rd session of the Universal Periodic Review Working Group (UPR-WG) of the Human Rights Council, Tonga submitted its National UPR Report, on the 1st of May 2023, presented the report to the Human Rights Councils UPR-WG. The report was successfully adopted by the Council on the 5th of May 2023. The adoption received 173 recommendations from 59 countries, which is an increase from the previous cycle’s 110 recommendations.

Section Five: Data and statistics

5.1 Most important areas and progress of gender statistics at the national level

In 2022, the Tonga Statistics Department, in partnership with the Ministry of Internal Affairs Women’s Affairs and Gender Equality Division (MIA/WAGED), and supported by the Equality Insights team at the International Women’s Development Agency (IWDA) with funding from the Australian

Government, undertook a survey of individual-level multidimensional poverty using Equality Insights Rapid. This new survey has added to the suite of gender statistics collected by the Government of Tonga. An online data portal supports use of these data by non-statisticians, <https://equalityinsights.org/data-portal/>.

The Statistics Department in Tonga facilitated a National Training on Producing and Using Gender Statistics to Monitor SDG and Implement the Pacific Roadmap in January 2023. This reflects the Government of Tonga's commitment to achieving gender equality and using gender data to inform decision-making, monitoring and evaluation.

Tonga is committed to the Pacific Roadmap on Gender Statistics which provides the guiding framework to support Pacific National Statistical Systems to generate quality, relevant and timely gender data that meet users' needs to advance gender equality.

Tonga has also improved its data collection through the successful implementation of the Equality Insights Rapid Survey in May 2022, which measures multidimensional poverty at the individual level, providing crucial data on how poverty affects men and women differently. Additionally, Tonga conducted the Gender and Environment Survey in October 2022, which examines the relationship between men, women, and the environment, highlighting gender-specific impacts and contributions to environmental issues.

5.2 Priorities for strengthening national gender statistics over the next five years

Following the Pacific Roadmap on Gender Statistics, the priorities for national gender statistics are based on the list of the country's priority national gender indicators. This also includes ensuring gender data is collected or produced, analyzed and gets disseminated and used.

5.3 Gender-specific indicators prioritized for monitoring progress on the SDGs

Tonga Statistics Department launched the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) 2019-2023 which is the guiding framework for establishing, and monitoring & evaluating the SDG human rights indicators in Tonga.

Tonga Statistics Department launched the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) 2019-2023 which is the guiding framework for establishing, and monitoring & evaluating the SDG human rights indicators in Tonga.

The gender-specific indicators Tonga prioritized for monitoring progress on the SDGs follows the Pacific Indicator Set.

5.4 Data disaggregation's routinely provided by major surveys

The major surveys done every five years are:

- Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS),

- Labour Force Survey (LFS)
- Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES)
- Tonga National Population and Housing Census

The data disaggregation is according done according to sex, age, location, religion, marital status (in some surveys) and the Washington short set of six questionnaires in identifying impairments for People with Disabilities.

Section Six: Conclusion and next steps

The work over the past five years has been a testament to the resilience of our people having faced unprecedented challenges yet being able to achieve so much. Whilst COVID-19 brought the world to a halt, it also brought country folk together world over and the results of this review reflect this.

This review process has highlighted several achievements and opportunities in the development of legislation and policies, in the creation of new data sets that will be used to inform future work, in the collaborations across sectors, in the forward steps in mainstreaming gender and in being able to do in light of COVID-19, a volcanic eruption that cut Tonga off from the world and two tropical cyclones.

In light of Tonga's national, regional and international commitments, the timing of the review has been positive.

In addition to the national review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, Tonga is also preparing to engage at the regional level at the upcoming 15th Pacific Womens Triennial Conference and 8th Minister of Women Meeting and the Pacific Island Forum Women Leaders Meeting in July of this year and will also be commencing the review of the National Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality Tonga Policy and Strategic Plan of Action 2019 – 2025.

Further, as Tonga assumes the role of Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum in 2024, it is pertinent that national GESI stakeholders have come together to dialogue and input into Tonga's global and regional reporting requirements as well as the review of the national gender policy.

This report and the information collated in its preparation will be used to inform the national policy review with focus areas already emerging.

Tonga looks forward to continuing to build from the progress made identified in this review by taking forward and addressing the gaps and challenges.

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