

GOVERNMENT OF TUVALU



Tuvalu Statement

3rd & 4th Periodic Review

At the 60th Session of the UN CEDAW Expert Committee

On the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women

Geneva 2015

Madam Chair,

Distinguished Members of the CEDAW Expert Committee,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Greetings from the people and the Government of Tuvalu. It is indeed an honour and privilege to represent the State of Tuvalu in this – the 60th Session of the UN CEDAW Expert Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

Madam Chair, it is my pleasure to introduce members of the delegation from Tuvalu to this important dialogue.

I am Puaita Fauvaka Etuati – Senior Assistant Secretary in the Office of the Prime Minister and also Head of Delegation

Ms Laingane Italeli Talia – Acting Senior Crown Counsel from the Attorney General's Office

Ms Lupemua Tavita – Acting Director for Gender Affairs Department

Ms Lily Tangisia Faavae – Assistant Secretary for the Ministry of Health

Ms Maseiga Ionatana Osema – Schools Supervisor from the Ministry of Education

1. First of all, I would like to congratulate you Madam Chair on your new appointment as Chair Person of the CEDAW Expert Committee. I am sure having the honor and privilege to take the seat, as chair of the Committee, will facilitate drawing out the realities that countries face in their own life situations and thereby paving the way for finding solutions and strategies to address issues to improve the quality of life for everyone and especially women and children.
2. On that note, I would also like to convey our gratitude to the outgoing Chair of the CEDAW Expert Committee for the work and tremendous expertise that she had shared not only as a member of the Committee but most importantly as Chair of the Committee in these past years.
2. This morning I am honored to deliver this Statement on behalf of the Government and the people of Tuvalu.
3. At this stage Tuvalu is in the phase of preparation for the general election next month and is under a caretaker Government. Thus making it impossible for the Prime Minister or Minister to attend this important dialogue. Nonetheless, the Government of Tuvalu fully supports the attendance of technical personnel to this dialogue making it possible for us to appear before you as a delegation from our country.

4. Madam Chair, may I crave your indulgence whilst I share with you and the distinguished members of the Committee some of the relevant developments in Tuvalu which have taken place since the submission of our report.
5. Firstly, in the area of legislative development, I am pleased to inform you Madam Chair of the enactment, in December 2014, of the new Family Protection and Domestic Violence Act 2014. This is indeed a significant milestone in Tuvalu's quest to take responsibility and play its part in global efforts to end Violence Against Women. The enactment of the Act is envisioned to provide greater protection for women and girls from violence within domestic relationships, ensuring the safety and well being of victims in a domestic relationship and also provide for shelters of victims of domestic violence. Madam Chair, though the journey of the Bill to make it to the doorstep of Parliament was paved with its share of challenges, at times having to discuss and address sensitive issues raised during the stakeholder consultations, I am pleased to report that the Bill was passed unanimously by Parliament.
6. Madam Chair, the enactment of the Falekaupule (Authorisation of Budget) Amendment Act 2014 which came into force in July 2014, to amend the Falekaupule Act (i.e. the Local Government Act) is another significant legislative development. By virtue of this amendment, women who are resident within the territorial jurisdiction of the local government council and of or above the age of 18 years will be entitled participate and vote during the approval stages of the Local Government Council's budget.
7. Tuvalu is gradually implementing changes given its commitments under the Convention. There may not be a lot of changes with regards to the legislative framework to address and fully realize women's rights, nonetheless with the insufficient resources available, things did change progressively overtime.
8. The goal of the new Tuvalu National Gender Policy of 2014, aims to achieve the recognition of women and girls in Tuvalu as partners and beneficiaries in all aspects of development and decision making and to ensure progressive realization of women's human rights. The Policy focuses on the following priority outcomes:
 - Increase capacity within all sectors of Government to address key issues of concern in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment within each sector;
 - Reflect Government commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment in legislation and in sector policies affecting Government and civil society;
 - Create an enabling environment for the full participation of women in economic development;
 - Take measures to ensure women's and men's equal access and full participation in decision-making as a means of enhancing leadership and governance at all levels;

➤ Eliminate all forms of violence against women.

9. The Tuvalu Gender three year Strategic Plan of action 2014 – 2016 proposes a series of outputs and key actions in order to achieve the outcomes of the Policy on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment. The Plan was prepared after a gender stock take of government ministries and government public organizations. Some of the activities implemented include:-

- Gender Policy Orientation for Permanent Secretaries 2014
- Gender Training of Trainers for Government Officers & Civil Society 2014
- Leadership Training 2014
- Mock Parliaments for Women in 2013
- Mock Parliaments for Youth in 2014
- Show case events in 2013 and 2014 for rural women. Women during these events come from rural communities to the main island to sell their handicrafts
- Trade Fair events encourage women to show case their various talents
- Massive Awareness Program on Elimination of Violence Against Women 2014

On each of the eight islands of Tuvalu, there are Community Workers who are women dealing directly with rural women’s affairs.

Regarding leadership roles in government, there is an increase of women holding positions of Assistant Secretaries from 20% in 2012 to nearly 50% currently. Also at the Island Kaupule (Local Councils) level from 1 in 2012 to 3 in 2014.

For the upcoming general elections in March, it is anticipated that three (3) women will be contesting, one of whom is a current member of Parliament and the other two (2) are new to the political field if they are to be elected.

The newly titled ‘Gender Affairs Department’ was formerly known as the ‘Women’s Department’ is a reflection of national gender mainstreaming efforts.

The Gender Affairs Department has always envisioned having induction workshops with newly elected parliamentarians to encourage and promote the concept of gender sensitization as part of their agenda whilst in Parliament.

10. Madam Chair, in the area of Education, the Government of Tuvalu stresses the importance of Access and Quality in Education for All. Measures had been taken to closely monitor the attendance of primary school children through the Tuvalu Education, Monitoring and Information System (TEMIS). The data gathered is disaggregated through schools, sex, age and islands. With this information system, the state is able to get information on students who need assistance socially and academically. The State would also use the data for decision-making and development.

11. More opportunities have also been provided in schools for students at the Upper Primary and Secondary level. These opportunities allow students to pursue vocational

and skills development courses which are franchised from tertiary institutions from other countries in the Pacific. These courses give more chances for students especially girls to continue further instead of dropping out at a younger age. Courses such as Applied Computing, Horticulture and Office Management, Carpentry and Joinery, Fabrication and Welding, students are given the choice to choose the courses they would like to pursue. It is seen here that there is no stereotypical in courses, that is, girls have pursued courses on carpentry and joinery and welding.

12. At the primary level, Community Training Centers were opened to cater for those who could not make it for secondary school level, giving more opportunities for girls to pursue life skills that would be important for their survival and at least develop their small-scale businesses and to become entrepreneurs.
13. A school grant provided by the state to all schools was being paid out to schools last year. This fund enables schools to purchase equipment that will help in the learning and the teaching of children. This was an initiative under the project that is currently run in Tuvalu, Achieving Education for All in Tuvalu Program (AEfATP) funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia (DFAT) that is implemented by UNICEF. In addition, Teacher standards have also been implemented in all schools in the state to ensure quality learning and teaching is been practiced and addressed.
14. The inclusion of Family Life Education in the curriculum is one milestone that has been achieved by the Education Department. This is seen as a program to be included in science subjects, which delivers very sensitive issues such as sex, sexuality and human reproductive education. A huge concern from stakeholders with regards to the inclusion of this issue in the curriculum but the State sees it important to be included so that children are able to make wise decisions when encountered with these issues.
15. Pre-School Teachers, which is made up of 100% women, have now been paid by the State. This is a very big achievement, as this job has been seen as a very low paid job and very discouraging in the past.
16. Two private schools owned by churches and also run by board of governors of these churches have also been paid by the state. This is also a very big achievement as 90 % of the teaching staff of these two schools are women, and to be paid by the state is so encouraging as most of the time teachers can go without pay for months.
17. Formation of a sky is the limit; Student Education Loan Fund (SELF) has also been a very encouraging initiative by the State. This opened up more opportunities for students to pursue studies at the tertiary level. Students apply for this funding to enable them to pursue further of their choice.
18. The discriminatory practice allowing only young men to the Tuvalu Maritime Training Institute has been abolished as a result of the national consultations undertaken by the

Institution with the assistance of stakeholders on the idea to neutralize the practice. Recently, there have been young women attending the Maritime Training Institute Institutions took in two young women to pursue seaman ship skills while two other young ladies pursuing cadet ship and hoping to graduate soon from their institutions as captains.

19. Madam Chair, in Tuvalu, health services are free to all Tuvalu citizens and non-Tuvaluans that the Government of Tuvalu employs on contract basis. Last year, Government set up two health clinics on the main island to ease the load of health care services at the main hospital, Princess Margaret Hospital. These health centres were built on each side of the main island, and are manned by qualified midwives to ensure that ante and postnatal care services could easily be accessed by women in these remote settlements from the main hospital.
20. The Ministry of Health (MOH) advocates for safe motherhood during antenatal periods based on its health programmes run by the Health Department. It also promotes the increase utilisation of family planning methods available in country as this will prevent further transmission of sexually transmitted infections such as HIV and AIDS.
21. During antenatal clinics every week on Wednesday and Thursday, mothers are taught by nurses, medical doctors and other health professionals on pre-natal, during delivery, and post-natal care. They are given a Maternal Health Book in antenatal clinic, whereby they can refer to it regarding basic facts on motherhood, antenatal clinics and their health records. It is a very useful book for the mothers in terms of increasing their knowledge on the basic events of pregnancy.
22. The Health Department also uses health commemoration days, for example breastfeeding week, to advise mothers in the communities on any maternal health issues, including miscarriages. Outer island nurses conduct their outreach health programmes to women groups in the communities. A one-to-one counselling of young girls is done without the older women present, due to the sensitivity of the topic to discuss openly among a mixed groups of young girls and older women. This approach is encouraged by the Health Department for confidentiality and to avoid discrimination of young girls or women.
23. Given our small population and vulnerability to HIV and AIDS, the Ministry of Health work closely with local stakeholders to control the spread of this deadly disease. A national committee called the Tuvalu National Advisory Committee (TuNAC) was established and consists of representatives from government and NGOs to coordinate activities and programs against HIV and AIDS. A lot of awareness programs in the area of sexual and reproductive health were conducted by the Department of Health. These programs include information on Sexually Transmitted Infections, condom distribution, and counselling. However, there is still some resistance in terms of Information and Education Communication materials on STIs as well as the availability of condoms at

certain places. There are no new cases of HIV/AIDS recorded since the last case in 2009. This reflects the fact that knowledge on HIV/AIDS transmission has increased immensely coupled by the many outreach health programmes from the Health Department and its partners such as the Tuvalu Family Health Association (TUFHA), Tuvalu Red Cross Society, Tuvalu Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (TANGO) and other stakeholders of the Tuvalu National AIDS Committee (TuNAC).

24. We acknowledge with appreciation the technical and financial assistance from our various development partners the World Health Association (WHO), UNFPA, Global Fund for HIV and AIDs, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), to the development and implementation of our various health initiatives. We hope to continue working together in partnership with these organisations for the overall development of our health sector.

25. Madam Chair, there are also challenges faced in the full implementation of CEDAW. These include:

- Shortage of technical human resources in most sectors
- Lack of financial resources for national review of laws
- Cultural Barriers – In the full implementation of the Temporary Special Measures that has a which is a new concept to the grass root people in particular
- Scattered location of the islands – problems of unreliable shipping services due to effect of climate change on weather.
- Communication problems
- Different agenda and tight schedules of stakeholders
- Political Will

However one of the major challenges is the devastating impact of Climate Change that the people of Tuvalu continue to experience and challenge in their everyday lives which pretty much affects the lively hood of the people and causes frustration and fear in the people.

26. Madam Chair, work in the implementation of the newly enacted legislation and the amendment to the Falekaupule Act is undergoing at the moment with our partners, Regional Rights Resource Team

27. Despite the many challenges and hurdles that Tuvalu confronts as a small developing island state with limited resources, the Government of Tuvalu is and will always be committed to carry out its objectives to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women.

28 Lastly may I also take this opportunity to acknowledge the tremendous assistance provided by the UN Women and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community's Regional Rights Resource Team which enabled the compilation, reporting and participation of my delegation at this very important meeting.

29 My delegation and I look forward to a constructive, fruitful and friendly dialogue with members of the Committee

30 Thank you for your attention

31 Tuvalu mote Atua (*Tuvalu with God*)