



# The Changing Climate in Tokelau

## *Living with Change: Enhancing the Resilience of Tokelau to Climate Change and Related Hazards*



This briefing paper provides an overview of the changing climate in Tokelau and actions to address these changes through *Living with Change: Enhancing the Resilience of Tokelau to Climate Change and related hazards (LivC)*.

LivC is a response to rapid developments on climate change and sustainable development policy-making at the international, regional and national/community levels. The adoption of the United Nations *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Agenda 2030)*, the *Paris Agreement* in 2015, the *SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway* in 2014 and *the Joint Commitment for Development 2016-2018, New Zealand and Tokelau Governments* provides both

**Tokelau's Fakaofu Atoll in the 1970s.** This hospital compound has since been swept away. In 2015, the *aumaga* (able-bodied men) redeveloped the area with seawalls and a new building for women's activities. *Photo Courtesy: Anthony Hooper.*

challenges and opportunities for Tokelau. The socio-economic and physical impacts of climate change, direct and indirect, threaten to undermine the core objectives of Tokelau national sustainable development pathways.



## 1. Strategic Context

### *Economic, Socio-Cultural, and Physical Vulnerability*

Tokelau is among the most physically vulnerable low-lying atolls in the world. It is highly exposed to adverse effects from climate change and natural hazards (including tropical cyclones, non-tropical cyclone systems, droughts, sea level rise). Tokelau is also among the most economically vulnerable atolls. Heavy reliance on imported petroleum and bunker fuels and lack of infrastructure (including an airport, hotels) makes it extremely difficult for the government and local communities to attract foreign investments. International policies and measures agreed under Agenda 2030, the Paris Agreement, and SAMOA Pathway could further hinder and/or enhance future economic and social investments and developments in Tokelau. These emerging challenges and opportunities need to be identified and take into account in future Tokelau national development plans.

### *Present Status of Climate Change Developments*

Tokelau has been involved in climate change policy-making since the 1990s. A number of climate change programmes have been developed and implemented in Tokelau since then. Most of the programmes were developed in response to meeting Tokelau international and regional climate change and related obligations. As a result, many of the programmes are 'ad hoc' and 'reactive' rather than 'strategic' and 'proactive'.

In addition, past plans and strategies did not fully take into account Tokelau's long-term strategic goals and development aspirations. The absence of a climate change unit within the Office of the Council for the Ongoing Government of (COOG) to coordinate Tokelau's climate change programmes did not ensure consistency between climate change and national development plans. These 'ad hoc' approaches limited Tokelau's access to a range of resources (including financial, capacity development, technical and scientific expertise) available to assist small and low lying atoll states to address climate change.

Te Ulu o Tokelau, Alikii  
Faipule Afega  
Gaulofa, at the  
Pacific Energy Summit  
in Auckland, June  
2016. Photo Courtesy:  
Fatu Tauafiai

**LivC supports "...  
Tokelau's  
Development  
Platform 2016-2020  
towards  
accelerating a  
quality of life  
[objective]...and  
progressing  
Tokelau's aspiration  
towards greater self  
reliance and self  
determination."**

- Joint Commitment for  
Development 2016-18, New  
Zealand and Tokelau  
Governments, 2016.



The Government of Tokelau recognised the need to place climate change as one of its key priorities in 2014. This realisation led to the establishment of the Climate Change Division and appointment of the first Climate Change Programme Manager (CCPM) in 2015. The CCPM primary role is to realign Tokelau's climate change programmes with its future national sustainable development plans.

The first step towards the realignment is to identify key climate change and related risks priority areas for Tokelau. LivC was developed to meet this need.

## 2. LivC Description



LivC is a customised programme prepared by and for the people and Government of Tokelau in collaboration with Tokelau's development partners. It builds on past and existing climate change and related programmes.

**Tokelau Ceremony opening of the Fono in 2013, Nukunonu.** Photo Courtesy: Litia Maiava.

The goal is to further enhance the resilience of Tokelau to climate change and related hazards. It is a "strategic and policy" support tool aimed at facilitating a 'whole of communities' (including government, civil society, private sector, development partners) response to climate change.

LivC aims to facilitate the institutionalisation of climate change project activities for Tokelau, including the production of knowledge, information, and innovative systems on the basis of Tokelau's national development priorities, public policy dialogue mechanisms for people-centered response actions, and the creation of public education and awareness material for mainstreaming climate change concerns at different levels of Tokelau society (Specific Outputs and Outcomes in Box 1).

**Box 1. LivC Expected Outputs and Outcomes.**

Component	Expected Outputs	Expected Outcomes
Strategic Planning and Situational Analysis	National Climate Change Strategy, 2017-2027 National Climate Change Action Plan, 2017-2027 National Communications National Mitigation Plan of Action Nationally Determined Contributions National Adaptation Plan of Action	Improved climate change planning and preparedness.
Institutional Strengthening – Adviser role to the Government of Tokelau	Policy relevant advice.	Improved scientific and policy advice.
Intergenerational Knowledge System	IKS Database Tokelau IKS network Tokelau oral history of climate Training attachment scheme	Tokelau knowledge system protected for present and future generations.
Public Outreach	Target Audience database Climate Change awareness materials Media and Public Relations Strategy	Improved Tokelau Climate Change profile internationally. Greater awareness of Climate Change impacts for local communities.

**3. Implementation**

The first phase will commence on 1 July 2016 and ends on 30 June 2019. The second phase will cover the period 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2022. The final phase covers the period 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2025. The implementation of LivC is subject to funding availability.

**4. Programme Management**

Ms. Paula Faiva, jointly with the National General Manager, Mr. Jovilisi V. Suveinakama, of the Office of the Ongoing Government of Tokelau, are responsible for managing Tokelau climate change programmes, including LivC.

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