

Tokelau



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Comment by Ulu-o-Tokelau, Faipule Pio Tuia

When he spoke for the first time to the Pacific Islands Forum in Samoa in 2004, Tokelau's Ulu-o-Tokelau, Pio Tuia, outlined his wish for his people as follows:

"I want my people to live lives that are free and worthwhile. As we strive to achieve full self-government with the ultimate goal of exercising our inalienable right to an act of self-determination, we seek to be self-reliant to the greatest extent possible. We seek to maintain a viable and living community. We want to maintain our vitality. We seek to protect our environment, our fisheries resources, our song and dance and, yes, our dreams."

International Trust Fund

A fund for future development

In the year 2000 Tokelau and New Zealand set up an International Trust Fund to provide Tokelau with an additional source of revenue for recurring budgetary and development expenditure. The purpose of the Fund is to improve the quality of life of the people by providing Tokelau with an additional, independent source of revenue. Current sources of locally generated revenue are minimal.

As at July 2005 the Fund stood at NZ\$15.5 million, mainly through contributions from New Zealand and Tokelau. For the first five years the funds will be deposited in banks or

government bonds. After that they may, by unanimous vote, be invested elsewhere.

The Board of Trustees, set up by New Zealand and Tokelau, may accept contributions from other parties in the form of direct cash grants or freely convertible currencies.

The three atolls will soon form one of the world's smallest self-governing territories. It has few financial reserves and a minimal revenue-generating capacity. Because of those restrictions, Tokelau needs assistance to overcome the difficulties imposed by its remoteness and the lack of natural resources.

New Zealand and Tokelau now wish to promote the Fund to other donors.

Enquiries may be made to:

Tokelau Unit
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Private Bag 18-901
Wellington
New Zealand

A Tokelauan initiative

Falani Aukuso, General Manager of Tokelau's National Public Service outlined Tokelau's need for global support for its Trust Fund as it steps into the role of a self-governing state.

"This is an initiative of the people and the elders of Tokelau who were mindful that they had no reserves. This will give Tokelau its

own source of revenue. It is a fund that is looking 30 to 50 years ahead to guarantee financial security for Tokelau's future generations."

Is there scope for economic partnerships in Tokelau?

"Yes, most certainly! There is the fishing industry, in particular, which covers Tokelau's biggest resource. But it's the most difficult to exploit in terms of positive management, so the issue is more often how to make the best use of this resource.

"Partnerships are best where your support is the most effective and, to be effective, you need to be reassured that the project identified will be successful. To achieve this it will be to our mutual advantage if we talk as equals in developing any partnership proposal."

Global Support Needed

"We need a much stronger [safety net] that can help us develop our own infrastructure to the greatest extent possible."

What do you need from donor countries?

"We need assistance to realise Tokelau's potential in terms of its human and economic resources. We have a traditional ability to help ourselves and we welcome the development of a dialogue between the donor community and ourselves to decide how to develop our economic opportunities while retaining our culture, language and unique system of governance and social structures.

“Tokelau recognises that its economic opportunities are limited. Nevertheless, it wants to maximise those opportunities. We seek to encourage donors to help us – providing that Tokelau can demonstrate that it is doing as much as possible to help itself first.

“We do not want to go down the road to further dependence. I believe our political leaders wish to retain our traditional values of self-help and self-reliance that have continued through Tokelau’s transition from a largely subsistence economy to a monetary economy.

“There have been pluses and minuses as we embrace this change – we have a higher standard of education and health, but Tokelau now faces new lifestyle diseases such as diabetes and high blood pressure. How can donors help us face these new challenges?

“We also face environmental problems associated with the rising sea level and global warming – two developments not attributable to us but which need to be addressed in a practical way. We are three tiny, vulnerable atolls so vocally we carry little weight when voicing our concerns on the international stage

“Tokelau also wants to cut down its sense of isolation and become part of the global community by developing its telecommunications and ICT (information and communications technology) with links. There is a need to improve sea transport to Tokelau. With that, associated issues such as wharves, sea channels for bringing in supplies and the safe handling of fuel need to be addressed. We need more seawalls to protect the

vulnerability of our villages from natural disasters like the recent Cyclone Percy.

“In essence, it’s about maximising the potential of our people. It’s about valuing a culture that is like no other. It’s about preserving the homes and the unique lifestyle of our people – not as a museum, but with the injection of assistance that will help Tokelau to grow and take its natural place in the region and, where possible, in the international community.

“Tokelau is a home where the elders retain a rich oral tradition and overseas Tokelauans can come and rediscover their roots and revitalise themselves. It is a cultural reservoir for our overseas communities.”

Why ask for donations now?

“New Zealand has provided wonderful support as our administering power. It promises to continue its supporting role as we move away from its administrative umbrella, but it has only so much money in the bag and cannot meet all of Tokelau’s increasing needs.

“Three major partners are involved in our path towards self-determination – New Zealand, the United Nations and Tokelau. Our understanding of the United Nations Charter is that it encourages self-determination for different peoples. We already have that to a large degree but now we plan to stand as an identity with our own flag and national anthem and to speak for ourselves in various regional and international forums.

“But why would we take this step without reassurances and guarantees of material support? New Zealand has offered us a safety net but, in reality, we need a much stronger one that can help us develop our infrastructure to the greatest extent possible; one that will give us the confidence to reach our full potential. We can’t do that alone.”

Quick profile of Tokelau

Position: Southern Pacific Ocean, 500 km north of Samoa.

Area: Land area approximately 12.2 sq km plus a 12-nautical mile territorial sea and a 200-nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

Terrain: Three low-lying coral atolls – Atafu, Nukunonu and Fakaofu. Their coral islets (motus) and reefs enclose large lagoons. Typical islets are less than 200 metres wide. The northernmost atoll is Atafu. It lies 92 km north of Nukunonu and has 42 islets that total about 3.5 sq km. Its lagoon is 17 sq km. Nukunonu is the middle atoll. It has 24 islets that total 4.7 sq km and a lagoon measuring 98 sq km. Fakaofu lies 64 km southwest of Nukunonu. Its 62 islets cover four sq km and its lagoon 50 sq km. No point on Tokelau is higher than five metres.

Population: 1600 approximately – Atafu 600, Fakaofu 550 and Nukunonu 450.

Overseas population: Probably more than 8000. An estimated 6500 live in New Zealand.

Languages: Tokelauan – a Polynesian language; English.

Ethnic group: Polynesian. The people have linguistic and cultural links with Samoa and strong cultural links with Tuvalu.

Citizenship: Tokelauans are New Zealand citizens.

Religion: Congregational Christian Church 70 percent; Roman Catholic 28 percent. Atafu villagers are Congregational Christians, Nukunonu villagers are Catholics and Fakaofu villagers can be either denomination. Seventh Day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses are present in small numbers.

Climate: Warm and humid much of the year, moderated by trade winds (April to November). Wet season: November to April. Dry season: May to October. Average maximum daily temperature: approximately 30°C. Tokelau lies in the Pacific cyclone belt.

Land use: Arable land – negligible. Permanent crop – coconuts.

Political status: A dependent territory of New Zealand since 1926. Tokelau is currently moving towards self-government in free association with New Zealand.

Head of State: Queen Elizabeth II.

Head of Government: Faipule Pio Tuia. The position rotates annually among the three village leaders.

Local Government: Each village is managed by its Village Council or Taupulega.

Entry requirements: Entry visas not required for stays of up to 30 days. A return ticket to Samoa is required.

Travel to Tokelau: By boat every fortnight or so from Apia, Samoa. The journey takes between 24 and 28 hours.

Accommodation: Luana Liki, a hotel on Nukunonu. Tel/fax: 690 4116. Accommodation on other atolls can be arranged through local families. It is possible to arrange accommodation through the Tokelau Liaison Office in Apia, Samoa:

Local transport: Walking is the usual way of travelling around the tiny atolls. Few vehicles exist. Small boats operate around the atolls.

Communications: Telephone, fax and email facilities on all three atolls. The country code is 690. Each atoll has its own FM radio station.

Local time: GMT -11.

Currency: New Zealand dollars. Western Samoan currency is sometimes used. There are no banks. Credit cards are not in use.

Medical: Each atoll has a hospital with basic amenities.

Electricity: Diesel generators provide electricity for up to 24 hours a day.

Food: Local fish, coconut products, breadfruit, poultry and pork make up the local diet with canned foods and drink available from the local cooperative stores.

Tourist activities: Swimming, snorkelling, fishing with the local fishermen or visiting the outer islets for a family picnic. Nukunonu has the only hotel.

Shopping: Superbly made hats, fans, wooden model outrigger canoes and inlaid wooden fish tackle boxes. Stamps and coins.

History

Polynesian linkages

Polynesians began settling on Tokelau's three atolls – Atafu, Nukunonu and Fakaofu – maybe 1000 or more years ago when canoes criss-crossed the Pacific. But there are no exact records. Samoa, the Cook Islands and Tuvalu are all traditionally described as “homelands”. Tokelauans have linguistic, family and cultural links with Samoa and strong cultural links with Tuvalu.

The first recorded European contact was in 1765 when Commodore John Byron, in *HMS Dolphin*, logged Atafu and named it Duke of York Island.

A second British naval ship, *HMS Pandora*, under Captain Edward Edwards, sighted Nukunonu in 1741 while searching for mutineers from the infamous ship *HMS Bounty*, and named it the Duke of Clarence Island.

It was not until 1835 that an American whaler, *General Jackson*, under Captain Smith, sighted Fakaofu and named it De Wolf Island.

Only in 1841, when a United States expedition explored the atolls, was a detailed report made of Tokelau. The *USS Peacock* and *USS Flying Fish* spent several days there and the Americans changed the name of De Wolf Island to Bowditch Island (now Fakaofu). They estimated its population at between 500 and 600 with around 120 people on Atafu.

From 1845 missionaries began introducing Christianity. Atafu was converted to Christianity by a Samoan teacher from the Protestant London Missionary Society. Nukunonu became Catholic while the people of Fakaofu became either Catholic or Protestant.

Peruvian slave traders arrived in 1863 and decimated the population. They took an estimated 47 percent of Tokelau's population, including nearly all of the able-bodied men.

During the 1860s, American, Scottish, French, Portuguese and German beachcombers, along with Polynesian immigrants, settled there, married local women and repopulated the atolls.

Peace returned, the population recovered and, in 1877, the Fiji-based British High Commissioner for the Western Pacific in Fiji received jurisdiction over British subjects in Tokelau.

In 1889 the British placed the islands under British protection. In 1916, when they were known as the Union Group, the atolls became part of the newly proclaimed Gilbert and Ellice Islands protectorate (now Kiribati and Tuvalu) and were administered from phosphate-rich Ocean Island (Banaba). Then, in 1925, administration was shifted to the New Zealand territory of Samoa and the following year the British government transferred administrative control to New Zealand.

The name "Tokelau Islands" became official in 1946. Two years later, the Tokelau Act of 1948 made Tokelau a territory of New Zealand and its people New Zealand citizens. More recently the name "Tokelau" was chosen by the people of Tokelau.

In 1974 administrative responsibility was transferred from New Zealand's Department of Maori and Island Affairs to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

1976 saw the first of the United Nations' five fact-finding missions visit Tokelau at the joint invitation of Tokelau and New Zealand. New Zealand and Tokelau have traditionally cooperated closely with the United Nations in line with their Charter obligations.

In 1992 Tokelau and New Zealand reached agreement on a constitutional programme that would provide Tokelau with formal powers to establish and operate its own national government. This produced a “first glimpse” of a constitution for Tokelau.

In November 2003 Tokelau and New Zealand signed a Principles of Partnership agreement which addressed the management of the partnership, self-determination, Tokelau’s language and culture, New Zealand citizenship, economic and administrative assistance, co-ordination of services to Tokelau, defence and security, foreign affairs and the Tokelauan community in New Zealand.

In June 2004 the New Zealand-appointed Administrator of Tokelau formally delegated his responsibilities to the Village Councils of the three villages.

An act of self-determination based on self-government in free association with New Zealand is the likely next step for Tokelau. As at mid-2005 Tokelau and New Zealand are developing a draft Treaty of Association in line with a decision taken by Tokelau’s General Fono in October 2003 to “actively explore the option of self-government in free association with New Zealand”. This exercise is being run in close consultation with the United Nations.

Political System

The “Modern House” of Tokelau

Tokelau’s traditional source of authority is each village’s Council of Elders, or Taupulega. Each three years sees the election of a Village Head or Faipule. An elected mayor, the Pulenuku, directs village activities. Members of the General Fono or National Assembly, are elected at three-yearly intervals to deal with national issues.

The Ulu-o-Tokelau, is the head of the national government, and the position rotates annually among the three Faipule. The Ulu chairs the Council for the Ongoing Government of Tokelau while the Chairman of the General Fono is elected by members of the General Fono.

Elections are held every three years. In the January 2002 elections, the General Fono adopted a population-related pattern of representation which allowed Atafu eight members of parliament, Fakaofu seven and Nukunonu six – making a total of 21 seats. The General Fono meets in three or four sessions of about four days during the year.

Between General Fono meetings, the three Faipule and the three Pulenuku (mayors) meet as the Council for the Ongoing Government of Tokelau to provide national government continuity. The three Faipule are effectively brokers between the villages and the outside world, while the Council for the Ongoing Government of Tokelau forms the tie between the traditional village governing structure and the national government.

In 2004 the New Zealand-appointed Administrator formally delegated his administrative powers to the Village Councils and the Tokelau Public Service was divided into four units. Village Councils assumed control of their public servants and a General Manager was appointed to head the offices of each Taupulega, while a national public service unit continued operating from Apia. The Councils charged the General Fono with responsibility for issues (such as external relations, fisheries policy and shipping) that need to be dealt with at a national level.

The government called this combination of traditional Tokelauan and Western administrative methods the “Modern House of Tokelau”. The Taupulega now runs all services on each atoll and provides employment for public servants. It is the ultimate source of authority in Tokelau.

Now non-traditional and traditional government procedures operate side by side. Tokelau’s national government assists the traditional governments on the atolls and provides advice to the elders so they can make informed decisions and interface with the outside world.

The “Modern House” programme sought to maintain core traditional values and principles while identifying and integrating overseas principles that could fit into the local context. “It was about marrying two or more cultural wisdoms; the base being our own culture and the others from afar,” says the Ulu-o-Tokelau, Pio Tuia. “The goal was to have an interlocking cultural

foundation of governance and modern advice that could serve Tokelau better today and tomorrow.”

Falani Aukuso, the Apia-based General Manager of the Council for the Ongoing Government of Tokelau, heads a 30-member unit that gives Tokelau access to the outside world.

“I provide advice to the Ulu-o-Tokelau, the General Fono and the Council on matters of national and overseas interest and economic development and offer administrative support and services,” Mr Aukuso said.

“Overseas interests include foreign affairs relationships with the administering power, New Zealand, and with regional and international organisations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the University of the South Pacific (USP), the South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme (SPREP), the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) and the local UNDP Representative. UNDP is our second largest donor after New Zealand.”

His unit also coordinates government activities, manages Tokelau’s shipping services, supports and supervises scholarship students, procures supplies for officials and the villages, liaises with the atolls’ medical services and patients referred abroad and provides linkages with NGOs (non-government organisations).

Mr Aukuso also provides a regular National Public Service newsletter, Fakatiu, and a weekly radio programme, Vakai, which

keeps Tokelau's communities up to date with the Council's operations.

New Zealand has implemented a support structure for Tokelau, known as the Administrative Assistance Scheme. Government agencies have been directed to assist Tokelau within their areas of responsibility. Specialist advisers assist Tokelau's departmental directors of health, education, finance, economic development and the environment.

One of Tokelau's major concerns when it achieves self-government is that it will need international support, beyond that promised by New Zealand and UNDP. It knows it cannot make the voyage of self-government alone.

"While Tokelau is pursuing its way ahead, it is keeping its eyes fixed on the rear-vision mirror in order to maintain contact with the administering power (New Zealand) and other helpers following it," said Pio Tuia. "It needs to do this in case Tokelau requires a bit of a push or help in the event of the engine stalling. But then, why not get the helpers into the same vehicle to save fuel and time?"

It's that international support, which can give "a bit of a push", which Tokelau now seeks.

Economic development

Enterprise and innovation overcome isolation

Tokelau's constraints on economic growth include its tiny size and isolation, the distance separating the atolls, limited natural resources and natural disasters such as cyclones. So far its economic stability has been secured through assistance provided by New Zealand.

During the visit by New Zealand's Prime Minister, Rt Hon Helen Clark in 2004, Tokelau and New Zealand's Agency for International Development (NZAID) signed a multi-year economic support agreement. Aid from the office of the UNDP in Apia, Samoa, also contributes to Tokelau's social and economic development.

One of Tokelau's top priorities at present is to prepare an overall economic development strategy. With the issues identified and plans in place it will be able to channel donor funding and investments into interconnecting projects that will increase the atolls' sustainability

"So we need planning," said Tokelau's Director of Economic Development and the Environment, Foua Toloa. "We need first to involve the community in consultations. We need input from the people because, at the end of the day, they'll be the ones implementing the programme. Consultation first, and then a strategy. The challenge for Tokelau is to develop economically whilst strengthening the Faka-Tokelau – Tokelau way of life."

Mr Toloa's twin portfolios of Economic Development and the Environment are inseparable because, given the minuteness of Tokelau's atolls, economic development can impact markedly on the environment, particularly the fragile coral reefs and lagoons that provide life-supporting marine life.

Greater self-sufficiency for Tokelau is Mr Toloa's ultimate aim.

One of his priorities is to "catch the Big Fish" – that is, capitalise on the marine resources within Tokelau's 200-mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ). He claims that for too long other nations have fished illegally in Tokelau's EEZ. "It breaks my heart when I look at the record of illegal fishing and the volumes of fish taken from our waters," he said.

"Tokelau benefits from the FFA/US (Forum Fisheries Agency – United States) Tuna Treaty, which has provided it with an annual income for the past 17 years," Mr Toloa said. The annual income fluctuates, sometimes markedly. In 2001 /2002 fishing fees amounted to US\$506,308 but the return the following year dropped sharply.

Tokelau has drawn up a Tuna Management Plan that will allow it to benefit directly from its fishing resources. Mr Toloa wants to audit the marine resources and develop commercial fishing capabilities.

Mr Toloa sees additional marine-related, commercial possibilities. Other South Pacific countries have been developing them and

Tokelau, with financial backers or partners, could benefit from their experience.

Tourism also holds some potential. "Successful tourism depends on the way you manage it," Mr Toloa said. "Tokelau is the last paradise on earth and there is no lack of enthusiasm among people for wanting to accommodate tourists. Tokelau's isolation perhaps adds to the flavour. The diving is good in the lagoons and perhaps we could offer survival packages. We might also develop ecotours for nature lovers."

Health

Rising to the challenge

Tokelau faces considerable challenges in providing effective health services. Its remoteness, the need to "triplicate" many resources, and health-impairing lifestyle changes make the provision of health services difficult and expensive. Each atoll has a basic hospital equipped with an operating theatre and a locum surgeon is currently working on a six-month contract in Tokelau. An 18-month system for locum doctors is in place to give treatment continuity. Two dentists serve the three atolls.

Serious cases of illness and dental problems are transferred to Samoa or New Zealand for diagnosis and treatment. Transfers account for about a quarter of Tokelau's health budget. Qualified medical practitioners and healthcare workers are in short supply. Each atoll is responsible for its own health services and has three to four qualified nurses and four or five nurse aides.

Overall support for the three health services operating on the atolls is provided by Tokelau's National Department of Health based on the atoll of Nukunonu. It:

- organises the undergraduate training abroad of health personnel
- oversees the referral of patients to Apia and New Zealand
- purchases pharmaceuticals and medical equipment
- arranges the supply of locum doctors
- monitors the professionalism of health spending
- formulates health policy
- monitors and provides surveillance of diseases
- advises the Minister of Health
- provides the point of contact with regional and international health agencies such as the WHO, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Family Planning Association (UNFPA) and Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in the United States.

Tokelau is about to launch a pilot cervical screening scheme on Atafu –thought to be the first among the Pacific islands – and operates an effective immunisation programme for children. The average life expectancy in Tokelau is 69.

Tokelau needed a long-term health strategy to give it a sense of direction, said Tokelau's Director of Health, Dr Tekie Iosefa. He will work over the next year with the New Zealand-based Health Adviser and health staff in the three villages to develop a six-year strategic health plan that could be in place by 2006.

An important task is to fight Tokelau's increasing lifestyle diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity and gout. Imported foods and changing lifestyle contribute to these problems.

Dr Iosefa stresses the need to persuade community members of the importance of a healthy lifestyle that can restrict the prevalence of non-communicable diseases. The cost savings on the health service would be immense but he acknowledges that persuasion will not be easy.

"We need to promote good health, so Tokelau needs a good health promoter who will recommend healthy diets and curb unhealthy lifestyle habits," Dr Iosefa said.

Tokelau is about to begin a basic WHO-type "stepwise" survey of non-communicable diseases in the population. From that it can develop a database of the incidence of some of the lifestyle diseases. It will also be able to identify individual health problems and develop a profile of key diseases in the country which will help it to design appropriate programmes and put them into place.

The Health Department will then, later this year, set up a Health Information System (HIS) funded by WHO. "An IT operator has already been sent to Massey University in New Zealand for instruction in a programme selected for our purposes," Dr Iosefa said. "When we start he will be the main operator for our central medical database. His other role will be to train IT operators for the three atolls and our Apia office.

“Later we would like to incorporate this system into a national IT programme for Tokelau and collate clinical data for individual patients and for epidemiological purposes.”

Tokelau also plans to launch this year a pilot educational project on communicable diseases aimed initially at Tokelau’s scholarship students in Apia and then spreading to the three atolls in 2006.

Education

Education faces the challenge of isolation

Tokelau has a compulsory and free primary and secondary school education system for children up to the age of 16, and operates a scholarship system to allow students to continue their education in Samoa, Fiji or New Zealand.

A director for the Fijian-based University of the South Pacific (USP) was appointed at the start of 2005 and the University’s Centre on Atafu was re-opened. As a member of USP, Tokelau has access to the USNet educational telecommunications system through a satellite on Atafu.

New Zealand Volunteer Service Abroad (VSA) teacher volunteers also provide support to schools with two volunteers based at each school on the three atolls providing leadership in key areas of teaching and learning in which they have experience and expertise.

In 2002 a review of education services stressed the need for a long-term strategy to shape Tokelau's future. New Zealand provided additional funding and a senior Education Adviser was appointed to assist the Director of Education, Kelihiano Kalolo.

Tokelau's three-year Education Strategic Plan is now in place. "The areas covered are curriculum and assessment, teacher education and training, resources and facilities, community partnership, access and equity for students with special needs, administration and management, and post-secondary and community education," said the Education Adviser, Lili Tuioti. "The main areas of focus for the financial year ending June 2006 are curriculum development and in-service training for teachers."

"There is a need for professional development and, given the shortage of qualified teachers and the effects of long absences, hands-on assistance by visiting relief teachers is preferred for the present while an ongoing teacher training scheme is put in place," Mr Kalolo said.

Tokelau is also developing a curriculum that is directly relevant to the needs of its people and which compares well with those offered by neighbouring countries.

"The main points in the new curriculum are not to stray too far from what New Zealand currently has in place but make sure that we meet international standards in a context that is relevant to students and teachers and allows learners to achieve the same standards as those in more developed nations," Ms Tuioti said.

The Director of the USP Centre in Atafu began early in 2005 and has immediately made an impact. "We have a handful of students currently enrolled on courses through the centre," Ms Tuioti said.

"More will enroll in the second semester this year. The Director is working closely with the Department of Education so that we can use the facilities and courses available to improve teacher quality and increase Tokelau's 'qualified' population."

"Professional development for teachers is ongoing," Ms Tuioti said. The provision of "educational resources in the Tokelau language is an area requiring development and funding. Improving the quality of teacher performance is a long-term process."

Tokelau's isolation creates difficulties for the teachers who have lacked the regular in-service training to keep them abreast of teaching methods. Current teaching methods tend to lag behind those overseas. A former school principal, Vae Lopa, who became one of the first women elected to the country's General Fono, or National Assembly, endorses the need for in-service training. She believes the rote system of learning should be replaced by a more effective teaching style that will teach the children how to learn.

Even New Zealand-born and trained Tokelauan teachers face difficulties adjusting to teaching requirements in Tokelau. Nila Lemisio discovered problems when she read children a story that referred to a woman in an ambulance. "But then I realised they

had no concept of an ambulance, so I learned to select texts that the children could relate to," she said.

While bilingualism in Tokelau's schools is important, a major problem is the lack of Tokelauan language resources, Mr Kalolo said. Mathematics, science, technology and social studies texts exist in English. "The translation of these texts is a huge task because of the technical concepts involved and the lack of any consistency in translation, both within each school and between schools," he added.

"Funds are needed for the production and publication of Tokelauan materials like short stories, the collection and recording of myths and legends and other genre, like poems, and traditional and modern songs," he said.

Ms Lemisio is currently preparing a Tokelau language curriculum for the New Zealand Ministry of Education so that schools can teach Tokelauan as a second language. Communities will have a chance to learn Tokelauan and pre-school groups can be introduced to the language. Proficiency in the Tokelauan language will also allow skilled New Zealand-born Tokelauans to fit more easily into their homeland communities should they return. New Zealand's Prime Minister, Rt Hon Helen Clark, has promised support for promoting and maintaining Tokelau's language and culture within Tokelau and New Zealand.

Communication

TeleTok - providing links to the outside world

Tokelau set up its Telecommunications Corporation (TeleTok) in 1996 and inaugurated an international voice and fax telecommunication service the following year. Previously Tokelau had relied on short-wave links to Samoa. In 2004 TeleTok introduced direct Internet services to each village.

FM radio stations began operating independently on each of the atolls in February 2002. They help to maintain Tokelau's cultural heritage, communicate community matters and increase transparency in political, social and economic developments. Tokelau also has a website www.dot.tk that opened in 2002.

"We use the Internet to stream radio programmes onto local servers on each of the atolls and feed them into the community," said Teletok General Manager Tino Vitale, who sees numerous applications for the Internet, including sister school connections with New Zealand schools.

He has already tried this by exchanging cultural information with students at Pirinoa School in the Wairarapa. Another option is a distance learning programme that could be streamed to students at all three schools on the atolls. Visual programmes could also be downloaded and then projected onto big screens for the communities to see, Mr Vitale added.

Mate Perez, in Nukunonu, and Tavita Gualofa, in Fakaofu, are two of the FM radio station operators who beam music, weather

information, news, interviews, meetings, community issues and religious programmes to their listeners. Atafu also operates a similar FM station.

Tokelau's remoteness is the main problem. Although Tokelau's Apia office provides a regular broadcast on nationally related events, there is little inter-change among the atolls themselves or input from New Zealand's Tokelauan community. Telephone calls among the stations can produce news and information about activities on each atoll, but the calls are costly.

A wide-ranging review of Tokelau's ICT systems and services was carried out in early 2005. Decisions on the recommendations are expected in the third quarter of 2005.

Transport

The essential link

Tokelau's link with the outside world is a fortnightly shipping service based in Apia which takes around 24 to 28 hours to reach the atolls – depending on weather conditions. The ships unload passengers and cargo onto barges that head through man-made channels (blasted by the New Zealand Army) in the reefs to reach the shore.

The distances between the atolls means that inter-atoll transport is also expensive. Until recently Tokelau's main vessel was the *MV Tokelau*, a ship with limited cargo and passenger capacity. When a United Nations Mission visited the islands in 2002 it

concluded that the lack of transportation options was one of the greatest drawbacks to Tokelau's economic development.

In recent years New Zealand has provided additional funds to support a more frequent use of larger vessels under charter from the Samoa Shipping Corporation. Meanwhile, Tokelau and New Zealand are reviewing Tokelau's long-term shipping requirements. It is expected that this review will be completed in August 2005.

Energy

Assessing energy options

"In order to achieve development objectives, conventional approaches to energy must be reoriented toward the promotion of energy systems, among others, based on renewable energy, energy efficiency and conservation and cleaner fossil fuel technologies which will make it possible to address social, economic and environmental concerns simultaneously."

Tokelau's Minister of Energy, Kolouei O'Brien.

When Tokelauans recognised the risk of being largely dependent on imported fuel they sought a policy that would focus on the long-term goal of 100 percent renewable energy for the three atolls. Diesel fuel is imported essentially for generating electricity. Petrol drives the numerous outboard motors and LPG is imported in returnable cylinders for home cooking.

Thomas Tafia, Tokelau's General Manager of Energy and Herbert Wade, an international Pacific Island Renewable Energy Project consultant, prepared an energy assessment. This concluded that solar photovoltaics would remain the basis for renewable energy development for the immediate future.

They assessed wind, solar and biofuel energy options and identified inhibiting difficulties associated with land availability, costs, cyclones and labour. Common to all three, because of their small-scale application on separate atolls, would be the inability to support advanced technical personnel who specialised in renewable energy development.

Other problems included Tokelau's limited human resources, the lack of local technical education facilities, the loss of technically trained people to New Zealand, land issues and subsidised tariffs that made it difficult and expensive to convert to renewable energy,

Solar photovoltaics were the best competitor to conventional fuels because the technology was competitive with small diesel generators in terms of life-cycle cost, the consultants said. Solar water heaters should be the first choice if there was a demand for piped hot water at the hospitals, hotel or schools. Wind-generated electricity was likely to be impractical and although processed coconut oil could, technically, replace diesel oil it was still more expensive.

Currently Tokelau is concentrating on completing its diesel generator system to guarantee a 24-hour power supply. Its first

National Energy Policy and Strategic Action Plan, however, stresses the need to work towards 100 percent independence from imported fuels by using renewable energy. The initial step towards this goal is the trial of an approximately 10 kWp photovoltaic 240 V AC stored power system for Fakaofu.

Art

Artist on an atoll

Faumanu Kirifi is one of Tokelau's most talented artists – yet his work is rarely seen beyond the shores of his homeland. He likes to paint his surroundings on Atafu in oils. People fortunate enough to see his work want more.

Manu, as he is called, captures the various activities of the villagers and scenes around his atoll, Atafu, with a Gauguin-like simplicity and directness that mirrors the pace of life there. "People keep asking me for paintings and I'd like to sell them some but I don't have much work at present," he said. "I don't have the time."

Manu studied art at the Elam School of Fine Arts in Auckland and began painting seriously in 1987. He teaches and, with his family commitments and his involvement in village activities, creative painting time is limited. When we spoke he was, along with the other able-bodied men in the village, unloading cement and other goods from a barge.

“In my heart I know I could produce more work because I still love my painting. It’s an emotional thing,” he said. His problem is how to divide his time between teaching, village and home commitments and painting. “It’s something I have to struggle with,” he added.

Although few people know of his work, the demand remains undiminished. The atolls’ isolation presents marketing difficulties for all of Tokelau’s craftspeople who make beautifully crafted hats and fans from fibres of the pandanus and coconut palms plus wooden model outrigger canoes and rounded fishing tackle boxes from the local hardwood kanava. Since few tourists visit Tokelau the people are not pressured into mass production, so the quality of their work is excellent. Some craftwork is marketed in Apia but outlets, generally, are limited.

New Zealand’s Tokelauan Communities

Skills for Tokelau’s development

The Tokelauan population in New Zealand is an important resource for the economic and social development of the islands. This growing pool of young people can develop the skills that Tokelau needs and help to implement its long-term projects for health, education, communications, energy and economic development.

Tokelau’s population pressure was once so great that, in 1963, the New Zealand government introduced an assisted migration scheme to resettle Tokelauans there. Migration accelerated after

a cyclone struck in 1966 and families, rather than single people, began settling in New Zealand.

The resettlement scheme ended once the population on Tokelau stabilised. For the past 30 years Tokelau's population has remained in the banding 1500-1600 due to the counterbalancing forces of natural increase and emigration.

Tokelauans come to New Zealand for family, educational and employment reasons. With their numbers now nearing 6500, they form New Zealand's sixth largest Pacific ethnic group. More than half live in Porirua and the Hutt Valley, near Wellington, and 24 percent live in Auckland.

Tokelauans born in New Zealand now account for 66 percent of the Tokelauans living there. They are a youthful group. Some 60 percent of them are under the age of 15 and the midpoint of all Tokelauans' age distribution was 18.8 years in 2001.

Traditional atoll affiliations continue in New Zealand. In Wellington the Tokelauans maintain their allegiance to their atolls – Atafu, Nokunonu and Fakaofu. Through their different associations they seek to preserve their Faka-Tokelau – the Tokelauan self-help culture and identity.

"They maintain our values, cohesion and unity," said Michael Perez, an active community worker who was largely instrumental in boosting a Tokelauan radio programme in New Zealand from one to six hours per week. "Our responsibility is to teach unity

and self-help to our children and help them build their self-esteem.”

Community leaders remain concerned about the achievements of the growing number of young people. Leaders like Susan Hei Perez are continually searching for ways to motivate them. As the first woman president of the 30-year-old Mafutaga Tokelau I Niu Hila – Tokelau Sports and Cultural Young Persons’ Group – Ms Perez wants to create a step-by-step achievement map for young people to follow to achieve their dreams.

“Our young people do have the desire to achieve. The lack of resources and mentoring programmes perhaps is the reason some of our youth are not being identified early, thereby losing a great opportunity to guide them through an important stage of their sporting careers,” she said.

“Every two years the sports and cultural group brings together the New Zealand Tokelauan community for a sports and cultural event. “Our strength lies in gathering our people every two years to celebrate our culture and sport,” she said.

Tokelau’s community in New Zealand is producing achievers. Zechariah Fred Reuelu and Moses Viliamu are two New Zealand-Tokelauans who, through their graphic design company Hoe Mua Designs Ltd, are working to strengthen the links between their homeland and New Zealand. Designer-artist Samuel Sakaria uses his skills to design stamps. Women fashion designers are introducing additional Polynesian designs into the fashion world. Musical groups take Tokelauan sounds overseas.

Messrs Reuelu and Viliamu want to keep their Tokelauan culture alive in New Zealand for the New Zealand-born children who have never visited Tokelau. They also want to “Take the Pacific Dimension to the World” under the brand name Zealandesia. Their designs and images reflect Polynesian themes across a range of products.

Hoe Mua Designs is the first Pacific Islands business to be accepted into the New Zealand Trade and Enterprise Incubator programme in Porirua. This system offers emerging companies mentoring and creative support.

Samuel Sakaria is an illustrator, stamp designer and artist who works with the illustration company Watermark Ltd. Born in Tokelau, he was seven when he came to New Zealand. After studying for four years at Wellington Polytechnic’s School of Design he majored in illustrations, set up business for two years then later was hired by Watermark Ltd, where he produces visuals for television advertisements and has now produced three sets of stamps for New Zealand Post.

His work is predominantly executed on the computer. “The computer is a very efficient tool, especially when clients demand work with very fast deadlines and you don’t have time to wait for the paint to dry.”

Helen Kisona, a Tokelauan community worker in Porirua, has been involved in two Tokelauan fashion shows. Prime Minister Helen Clark attended a charity fashion event in 2000 where the

designs and the materials used by the Tokelauan designers reflected their Polynesian heritage.

On the musical stage the Auckland group Te Vaka has taken its unique style of music across the world.

Said Mr Perez about these and other achieving Tokelauans: "I love people who have dreams, who have the passion to succeed."

Stamps and Coins

Cashing in on Tokelau's artists

Stamps and commemorative coins provide Tokelau with a fluctuating income governed by international demand. Revenue from stamps and coins in 2000 totalled around \$5500. The following year revenue rose to nearly \$41,000. In 2004 revenue rose to \$54,000 and is estimated to reach \$70,000 in 2005.

Foua Toloa, Director of Economic Development and the Environment, is keen to expand these operations and create higher and more consistent returns on sales since stamps and coins represent one of the few sources of income available to Tokelau.

The highly decorative stamps reflect Tokelau's marine life – from seahorses and reef fish to sharks and rays -- scenic photos of the atolls and reefs and birds and insects. Mr Toloa encourages Tokelauan artists to design the stamps in the hope they might appeal more to collectors.

Impressions

A visitor's images and impressions

From the deck of a ship, a Tokelauan atoll looks like Morse code dots and dashes strung along the horizon. After 28 hours' steaming from Apia, in Samoa, they're a welcome sight.

An atoll suggests one lonely dot in the ocean but Tokelau's three atolls consist of numerous stretches of coconut palm clad islands that encircle large lagoons. It's surprising to see the villages set on relatively small islands while much larger ones lie on the other side of the lagoon. However, the prevailing winds and seas, plus tradition, dictate where the Tokelauans settle.

The ship, the *Lady Naomi*, stopped well clear on the wave-washed reef and we watched as an outboard motor-driven barge bounced through waves and headed towards us through a gap blasted in the reef. Passengers heading ashore perch around the edge of the barge while the cargo is manhandled aboard.

We visited Nukunonu first, the atoll worst hit by Cyclone Percy. The fury of the storm swept waves right across the low-lying atoll and so startled a locum doctor and his wife, whose house was badly damaged, that they promptly left the island. Tokelauans, however, have nowhere to go, so, in their calm, stoical way, they set about clearing debris, fallen coconut palms and boats from their streets, backyards and school grounds. They cope with the ferocity of the elements with an enviable fortitude.

Modern Tokelauan houses are built of concrete to withstand the fury of the elements. The newer ones are raised on a concrete-walled ground floor. These enclosed basements become water tanks fed by downpipes from the roof and help to overcome Tokelau's water shortage. There is little other water available.

Progress has meant the almost complete disappearance of traditional canoes built from the local hardwood, kanava. Tokelauans prefer outboard motored aluminium run-abouts. Each atoll has its own diesel-driven generator and solar power fuels their satellite dishes which provide telephone and facsimile communications. More work is required to give Tokelau a guaranteed 24-hour power supply.

From Nukunonu we steamed to Atafu, lying 92 kilometres north-west. Each atoll is different. A bridge links Nukunonu's two islands. Fakaofu's population has spread from tiny, overcrowded Fale to Fenufala, a much larger island. It houses the school and hospital and powerboats make the 15-minute connection. Atafu is the most populated atoll.

A tour of the atolls produces mixed images of slender coconut palms curving over mirror-like lagoons, stunning sunsets, darting multi-coloured reef fish and shadowy sharks that Tokelauans claim never bite you. Seawalls, some broken by the cyclone, remind visitors of the ocean's ever-present threat.

Smiling school children chanting "hello" stroll to school in their neat uniforms. Luckier ones park their bikes outside. Rugby posts signal one popular sport, although the crushed coral

playing fields look painful. Children play volleyball and touch rugby after school. There's no one playing kilikiti, Tokelau's boisterous version of cricket. Games involve the whole village, which is divided into two sides– named Amelika (America) and Egelani (England) for these and other occasions. Sadly, Cyclone Percy has badly damaged the island's cricket pitch.

Schoolchildren need job opportunities to encourage them to develop high educational levels. Sefo Vulu, the principal of Nukunonu's Matiti School, would like to introduce a homework course to maintain the students' after-school educational momentum. The University of the South Pacific (USP) has reopened its centre on Atafu in 2005 and the response to the courses offered has thrilled the university's representative, Dr Heather Hemerton.

Village elders face growing expectations from their young. The traditional lifestyle, with its village-sharing inati system, is in contrast to the coveting consumerism of the West that has invaded the islands.

The inati system, though, is still strong. Elders select the communal fishing days and on a selected morning the air buzzes as outboard motors drive aluminium runabouts across the lagoon where the men fish the reefs. At midday the boats come skimming back and the catch forms a shimmering, colourful pile of fish. Then an elder, armed with a noticeboard, directs their distribution to each household.

Women still play their anchoring role in community life and their presence in decision-making circles has increased. They are the *fatupaepae*, the cornerstone, of the household. They preserve handicraft skills and are deeply involved in social and church events.

Traditionally men filled the Village Councils and made community decisions, but now five women fill 21 of the parliamentary seats on the General Fono.

Vae Lopa, referred to as a “Living Treasure” by a former national leader, believes women should play a larger role in Tokelau’s affairs. She would like women to be more active politically and says meaningfully: “There are not many women in politics – yet!” As one of the first women elected to parliament, she supports equal opportunities for women.

Women also fill nursing, dental and teaching roles and hold office positions. The police sergeant on Fakaofu is a woman. Tokelau has no prison because there is little crime in these close-knit communities. Any wrongdoer faces the wrath of the village elders and enforced community work.

Beneath the casual manner of the people lies an embedded village system. The men, women and young people all have their place in the running of the village. Families in need receive help. The village elders have complete administrative authority over their atolls. The self-help system unites and gives the people strength to withstand setbacks like the impact of Cyclone Percy.

When the *Lady Naomi* sailed back to Apia it stopped at Fakaofu. Heavy surf prevented the barge from returning to shore through the usual channel so the ship steamed to another channel. By then it was dark. The ship's searchlight temporarily picked out the surf rolling onto the reef but we saw no sign of a gap. Yet the unassuming Tokelauan boatmen confidently loaded passengers and cargo onto the barge and various boats and then headed into the inky darkness.

You sail away feeling that this kind of self-assurance will also steer Tokelau safely past the reef of uncertainty into its new age of self-determination.

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Zealand's findings on Tokelau's community in New Zealand drawn from the 2001 Census. My thanks also go to the people who supplied the photographs, particularly Tony Johns and Helen Kisona. The booklet is not intended to be anywhere near an exhaustive examination of Tokelau. Its role is to show readers the extent of the issues and tasks facing the Tokelauan people as they prepare to embark on a new phase in their history – self-determination.

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