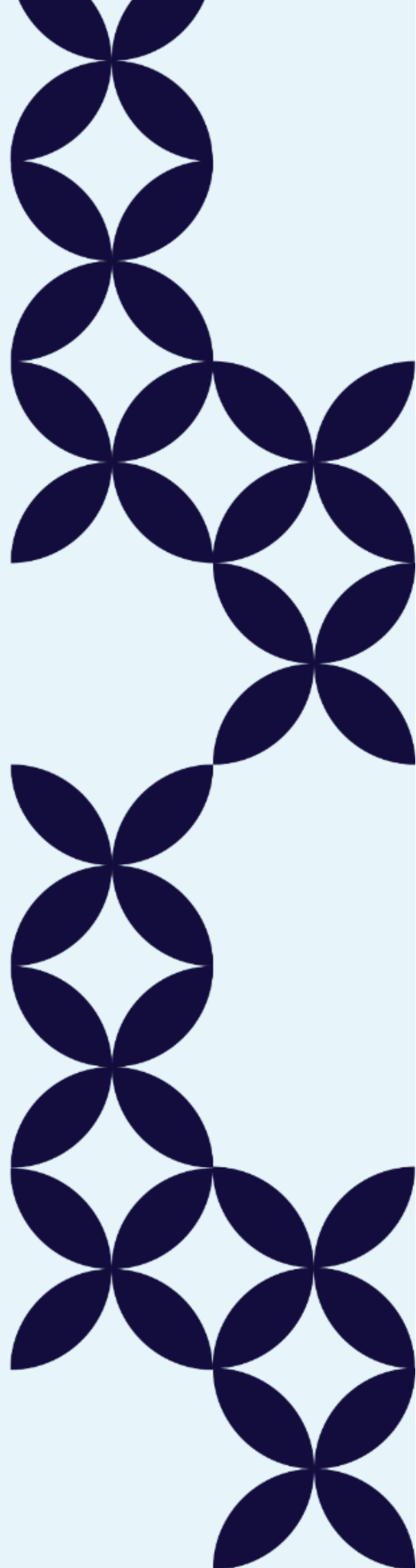
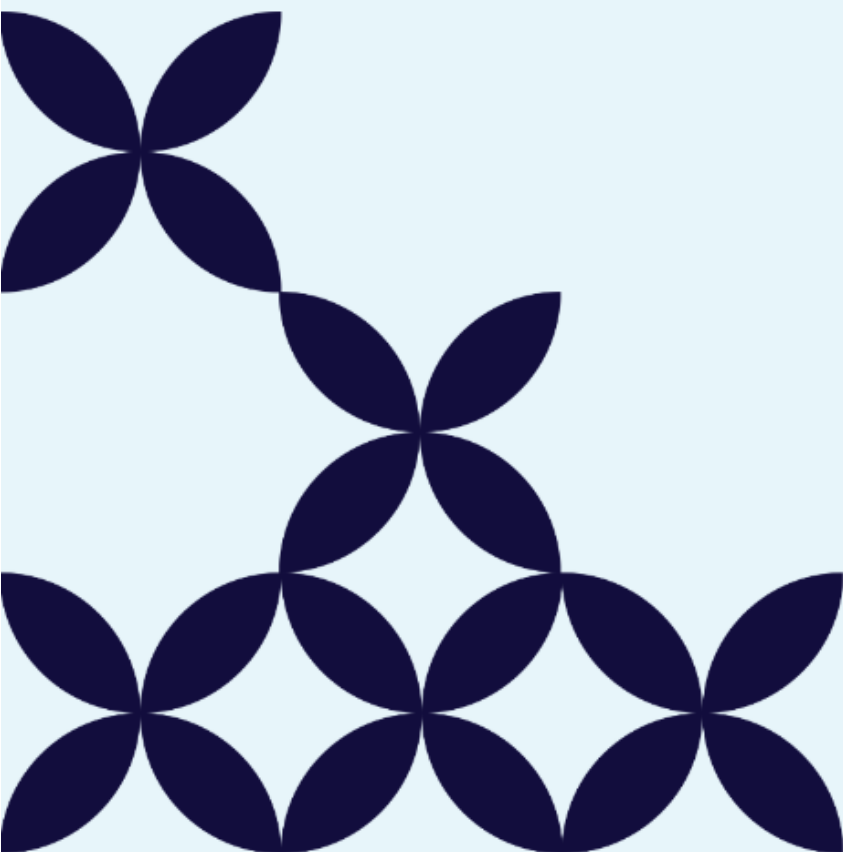


# Tokelau

## Country Plan

May 2025



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## Purpose of this document

The New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) has developed this Plan to guide the planning and management of New Zealand's overall engagement with Tokelau, and as a foundation for dialogue with partners and stakeholders.

The Plan is used to bring clarity to what work should be prioritised, and to help monitor progress towards shared outcomes and strategic goals.

This is a living document that will be reviewed with partners and updated periodically to ensure it responds to changes in country / regional context, including the impacts of any external shocks.

## An integrated approach to Pacific engagement

New Zealand pursues an integrated approach to engagement with Tokelau. We focus on coherence across our diplomatic, trade and economic, climate change, environment, security and development objectives to deliver sustainable progress in developing countries, and advance New Zealand's interests and values. As such, our development contribution (both policy and financial) is an integral pillar of our foreign policy – it reflects our network of international relationships and commitments, and is an expression of our values.



## Country overview

### Country context

Tokelau comprises three village communities living on three low lying atolls located about 500 kilometres north of Samoa with a total land area of 12 km<sup>2</sup> and a highest elevation point of 5m above sea level. In 2022 its population was 1,458 spread evenly across three villages, with 49% of the population aged under 25. Approximately 8,600 Tokelauans live in New Zealand.

Adapting and building resilience to climate change are the greatest priorities to secure Tokelau's future well-being, prosperity, and security. This is because living with the impacts of climate change is already an everyday reality for Tokelau. The environmental, economic and social harms caused by cyclones, droughts and tidal surges are exacerbated by slow-onset disasters like sea-level rise, coastal inundation and rising average temperatures.

As a non-self-governing territory, Tokelau is not eligible for many sources of financial assistance available to other Small Island Developing States, including most climate financing. Tokelau's two principal sources of income are fisheries revenue and budget support from New Zealand. Climate change is projected to affect Tokelau's fish stocks, potentially reducing fisheries revenue. It also has an International Trust Fund that may disburse dividend income in future<sup>1</sup>.

While officially non-self-governing, in practice Tokelau exercises a high degree of autonomy in its governance. It controls its own political institutions, judicial system, public services (including health and education), and budget. Tokelau's three villages are extremely remote. Due to their extreme remoteness and small populations, Tokelau's village communities face workforce capacity and capability constraints which limit opportunities for economic development and make delivery of public services and infrastructure challenging. Technical assistance, capacity building support and, where appropriate, capacity supplementation remain essential for Tokelau to maintain and improve its governance, institutions, and public service delivery. Safe, secure, and reliable internet and transport connections are all essential to support connectivity between atolls, and between Tokelau, New Zealand, the wider region and the world.

Tokelau faces high rates of non-communicable diseases, communicable diseases, as well as challenges associated with youth health and general well-being. The preservation of culture and traditional practices contribute to well-being in Tokelau, as demonstrated through the practice of inati (the tradition of sharing communal resources). Traditional approaches to governance and gender also limit opportunities for women and younger people.

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<sup>1</sup> As at June 2024 the balance was \$119.50 million and no disbursements had yet been made.



## New Zealand's partnership with Tokelau

Tokelau remains New Zealand's only non self-governing territory under the UN Charter, following acts of self-determination by (Western) Samoa, Cook Islands and Niue in the 1960s and 1970s. This places New Zealand's responsibilities to promote the well-being of Tokelau's inhabitants in a uniquely broad and visible international context.

In conjunction, Tokelau is part of the Realm of New Zealand. Realm citizens hold New Zealand citizenship, and there is a greater degree of interconnectedness, reciprocity and commitment with our Realm partners than our other partnerships in the Pacific. The [2003 Joint Statement of the Principles of Partnership \(SOPOP\)](#) is the formal statement of the relationship between New Zealand and Tokelau. The SOPOP outlines our respective responsibilities, obligations, and shared values, and notes that we will work together in a partnership based on trust, openness, respect, and mutual accountability. It sets out New Zealand's obligations to provide economic and administrative assistance to Tokelau which, at Tokelau's request, is focused on improving the quality of life on the atolls. It describes New Zealand's economic assistance as representing a first call on New Zealand's international development cooperation, and recognises that Tokelau is entitled to a good and satisfactory standard of services and infrastructure.

The executive government of Tokelau is exercised by the Administrator of Tokelau based in New Zealand. In practice, however, most of the Administrator's powers have been delegated to Tokelau in line with New Zealand's obligations under Article 73 of the UN charter to develop Tokelau's self-government. As a result, the Administrator's engagement with Tokelau's Council for Ongoing Government and General Fono is mostly in an advisory capacity.

New Zealand's key high level engagement with Tokelau is via the General Fono, which takes place in Tokelau three times each year. In addition to ad-hoc senior officials talks, there is regular engagement between the Administrator and the Council for Ongoing Government, along with direct day to day contact between officials, all to advance shared goals and address mutual challenges.

New Zealand does not have a post in Tokelau.

Across each of our goals and outcomes, our partnership will be grounded in regular and meaningful dialogue and engagements between the Administrator and Council, and between officials. Ad-hoc senior officials talks will take place (ideally annually), and we will maximise opportunities for high level engagement, including during Council visits to New Zealand (ideally annually).

In February 2026, Tokelau will mark 100 years of New Zealand administration. In the lead up to the anniversary, Tokelau is intending to examine its possible options for self-determination with a view to developing a plan in time for the centenary anniversary. New Zealand stands ready to support Tokelau examine its options at a time of Tokelau's choosing.

New Zealand adopts a partnership approach to supporting humanitarian response and disaster management in the Pacific. We focus on responding quickly to requests by Pacific governments, and delivering practical and financial assistance for those most in need when a disaster strikes. This includes a 'whole of Government' commitment to work with other New Zealand Government agencies to deploy specialist emergency capabilities in a disaster response. We also work closely with other development partners, the United Nations, international and local non-government organisations and the private sector in all responses. Our bilateral development programmes invest in our Pacific partner's longer-term recovery from disasters. We also recognise the value of investing in measures that reduce and manage the risks of disasters, and increase resilience; and in helping countries be better prepared for disasters through regional, bilateral and NGO partner initiatives.



New Zealand's IDC efforts also comprise our multilateral, regional, and NGO partnerships programmes. Where relevance and value to Tokelau is evident, these play an important role in supporting the achievement of our goals and outcomes.

### Partner plans relevant to the relationship

Tokelau's strategic goals are set out in the *Tokelau National Strategic Plan 2021-2026* (TNSP). The TNSP's long term vision is "Thriving communities with equal opportunities for all". It has eight strategic goals across governance and leadership, public financial management, health, education and learning, infrastructure and utilities, environment and climate change resilience, fisheries resource management, and social cohesion.

### Strategic framework for the Tokelau Country Plan

The International Development Cooperation (IDC) Priorities Framework 2024-27<sup>2</sup> is a guiding document for the Tokelau Country Plan. It shows how the IDC Programme contributes to the Ministry's overall goals, as set out in the Ministry's Strategic Framework<sup>3</sup>, and articulates the priority outcomes that we aim to advance through the IDC Programme.

The Tokelau programme logic diagram that is included on the next page, sets out our ambitions for our work with Tokelau, in alignment with the IDC Priorities Framework. It represents integrated delivery across development, foreign policy, trade, and security and covers a total country view of our IDC investment, covering our core IDC programme, multi-country investments, NGO partnerships, and scholarships.

The logic diagram sets out how our strategic goals drive more specific medium and short term outcomes. New Zealand will work towards these outcomes in partnership with Tokelau. The medium term outcomes in the logic diagram describe our interests in more detail. The short term outcomes cover our areas of immediate focus, rather than all the initiatives required to deliver these medium term outcomes.

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<sup>2</sup> See: <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/assets/Aid/Aid-General/IDC-Priorities-Framework-2024.pdf>

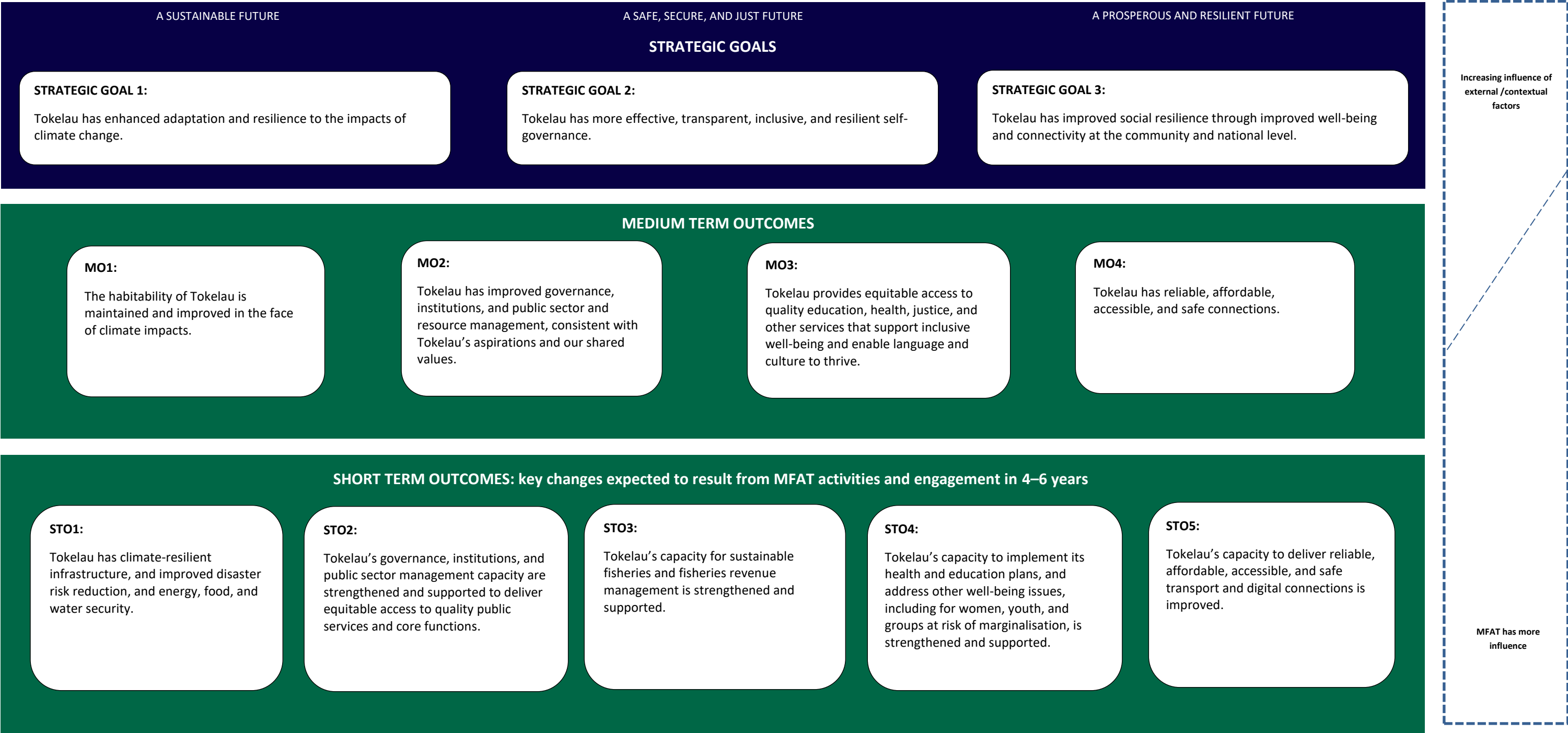
<sup>3</sup> See: <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/assets/About-us-Corporate/MFAT-strategies-and-frameworks/Strategic-Intentions-2024-2028.pdf>



Logic diagram for the Tokelau Country Plan



Vision statement: Tokelau is well-governed, resilient, and has a trusted partnership with New Zealand.



## How we put this Plan into action

New Zealand's IDC funding for this Plan is managed over a three year period. There is flexibility to move funds into and between Plans in order to respond to rapidly changing contexts. Current information about New Zealand's overall International Development Cooperation budget for the current funding triennium is on the MFAT website<sup>4</sup>.

## How we will work to deliver on this Plan

New Zealand's International Cooperation for Effective Sustainable Development (ICESD) Policy<sup>5</sup> identifies four development principles that guide New Zealand's work with partner countries, and sets out a commitment to deliver development that is effective, inclusive, resilient and sustained.

In line with Tokelau's special constitutional status, New Zealand provides budget support as its primary IDC modality. This enables Tokelau to deliver core services and improve its capacity and capability. The budget support modality makes appropriate use of Tokelau's systems and promotes Tokelau's self-governance.

Alongside budget support, and cognisant of capacity constraints, New Zealand's IDC Programme supports a range of bilateral technical assistance and capacity development activities, and infrastructure and climate change-related projects.

Tokelau's participation in various Pacific multi-country IDC activities is an important way to highlight Tokelau's place within the Pacific community, and strengthen our contribution to Tokelau's priority outcomes. New Zealand will seek to ensure Tokelau is able to access and receive value from relevant multi-country and regional activities, while managing the risks around absorptive capacity.

Through the Administrator's Fund, New Zealand supports small-scale village-focused initiatives that complement our broader programme and prioritise groups at risk of marginalisation including women, youth, and children.

The Manaaki New Zealand Scholarship Programme provides a range of scholarships with offerings tailored to align with New Zealand's bilateral and regional priorities, and with the human resource development needs of partner countries. Alumni engagement is also a key feature of the programme.

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<sup>4</sup> [www.mfat.govt.nz/en/aid-and-development/our-approach-to-aid/where-our-funding-goes/our-planned-aid-expenditure/](http://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/aid-and-development/our-approach-to-aid/where-our-funding-goes/our-planned-aid-expenditure/)

<sup>5</sup> See: <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/assets/Aid-Prog-docs/Policy/Policy-Statement-New-Zealands-International-Cooperation-for-Effective-Sustainable-Development-ICESD.pdf>



## Who we will work with to deliver on this Plan

Consistent with our special relationship, MFAT's primary partner in all aspects of the relationship with Tokelau is the Government of Tokelau.

In line with the SOPOP, and a relevant cabinet mandate, New Zealand's government agencies are obliged to provide necessary administrative assistance to Tokelau. A significant number of agencies work in close partnership with Tokelau and MFAT to provide crucial policy and technical advice and capability strengthening to Tokelau across a wide range of sectors<sup>6</sup>. Such support is valued by Tokelau and complements New Zealand's core economic support.

Pacific Regional Agencies and other multilateral agencies are crucial delivery partners in various regional and multi-country initiatives that include Tokelau. With New Zealand's support, Tokelau is a member of several Pacific regional agencies, including the Pacific Community (SPC), the South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme (SPREP), the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), the Pacific Financial Technical Assistance Centre (PFTAC), and University of the South Pacific (USP). It is also an associate member of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), and is a participant in the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) Vessel Day Scheme. Tokelau is an engaged participant in Pacific fisheries forums and attends most Pacific ministerial forums in other sectors.

New Zealand plays a key role in supporting Tokelau's voice in the international arena, including participation in key UN climate change meetings and the Special Committee on Decolonization (C-24). New Zealand supports Tokelau's aspirations to engage with multilateral institutions where its constitutional status enables it to do so, and actively explores avenues for Tokelau to access climate financing regardless of its constitutional status.

New Zealand welcomes Australia's development assistance to Tokelau, which is managed by MFAT via a delegated cooperation arrangement with Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

A New Zealand Trustee (appointed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs) helps govern the Tokelau International Trust Fund, along with a representative of Tokelau (the Ulu) and an independent Chair. The Fund represents an important intergenerational asset and requires effective governance to ensure the asset is managed productively and in support of Tokelau's national strategic objectives.

MFAT partners with New Zealand non-government organisations (NGOs) through the *Partnering for Impact* programme, which supports inclusive economic, social and environmental resilience, good governance and strengthening of civil society. Through this approach, we partner with NZ NGOs and local civil society to use their experience, knowledge and reach, to support delivery of locally led solutions for people experiencing vulnerabilities.

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<sup>6</sup> Including but not limited to: education, health, audit, law, justice, transport, fisheries, public service leadership, elections, policing, emergency management and disaster risk reduction.





## How we will assess progress against this Plan

The logic diagram sets out the strategic goals, medium and short term outcomes we hope will result from New Zealand's activities and engagement with Tokelau. We report back on progress towards our goals in Tokelau via the annual Minister of Foreign Affairs Report on the IDC appropriation<sup>7</sup>. We also report back on this Plan to the Government of Tokelau via ad-hoc High Level Consultations, the General Fono, and engagement with senior officials. This not only gives us an opportunity to discuss what has been achieved in partnership, but also to test whether our Plan remains fit-for-purpose or if we need to change anything.

Progress against the Plan will be assessed with the following indicators:

Strategic Goals	Indicators <sup>8</sup>
Goal 1: Tokelau has enhanced adaptation and resilience to the impacts of climate change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ND-GAIN Vulnerability score (split by sector - Water, Agriculture, Health, Infrastructure, Food, Ecosystems) (<i>Source: ND-GAIN or SPC equivalent measure</i>).</li> </ul>
Goal 2: Tokelau has more effective, transparent, inclusive, and resilient self-governance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WGI - Government Effectiveness.</li> </ul> <p>Tokelau's Census or the <i>Tokelau National Strategic Plan (TNSP) 2021-2026 Monitoring and Reporting Framework</i> :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>GL5: Number of individuals from the three Taupulega, General Fono and Council who receive training or capability building support in governance (M/F).</li> <li>GL8: Quality of planning, budgeting and expenditure management duties by Public Servants have improved, following their training.</li> </ul>
Goal 3: Tokelau has improved social resilience through improved well-being and connectivity at the community and national level.	<p>Tokelau's Census or the <i>Tokelau National Strategic Plan (TNSP) 2021-2026 Monitoring and Reporting Framework</i> :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TNSP: H6 - Incidences and prevalence of NCDs (per each NCD) in Tokelau reduces over the TNSP period.</li> <li>TNSP: EL4 - Participation in formal education: Stable or Increased enrolment rates at i. primary, ii. secondary and iii. tertiary education.</li> <li>Census: Household access to the internet; or TNSP: ID11- Proportion of households that access internet services.</li> </ul>

Short Term Outcome (STO)	Indicator
STO1: Tokelau has climate-resilient infrastructure, and improved disaster risk reduction, and energy, food, and water security.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence of climate-resilient infrastructure, and improved disaster risk reduction, and energy, food, water security.</li> <li>Number of people directly benefitting from activities that aim to increase resilience to climate change and environmental degradation (M/F).</li> </ul>

<sup>7</sup> See <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/aid-and-development/our-approach-to-aid>

<sup>8</sup> Note: there is limited standardised data available for Tokelau. Data sources may change as data improve over time.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of people directly benefitting from improved infrastructure and services (M/F).</li> <li>• Number of people receiving training / capability-building support in infrastructure and climate change (M/F)</li> </ul>
STO2: Tokelau's governance, institutions, and public sector management capacity are strengthened and supported to deliver quality public services and core functions, including for women, youth, and groups at risk of marginalisation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of strengthened and supported governance, institutional, and public sector management capacity to deliver quality public services and core functions, including for women, youth, and groups at risk of marginalisation.</li> <li>• Number of people receiving training or capability-building support in governance (M/F).</li> </ul>
STO3: Tokelau's capacity for sustainable fisheries and fisheries revenue management is strengthened and supported.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of strengthened and supported capacity for sustainable fisheries and fisheries revenue management.</li> <li>• Number of people receiving training or capability-building support in fisheries and oceans (M/F)</li> </ul>
STO4: Tokelau's capacity to implement its health and education plans, and address other well-being issues, including for women, youth, and groups at risk of marginalisation, is strengthened and supported.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of strengthened and supported capacity to implement health and education plans and address other well-being issues, including for women, youth, and groups at risk of marginalisation.</li> <li>• Number of people receiving training or capability-building support in health (health workforce) (M/F).</li> <li>• Number of people receiving training or capability-building support in education (education professionals) (M/F).</li> <li>• Number of people that complete tertiary or vocational scholarships (M/F).</li> <li>• Number of people benefitting from enhanced learning through ICT (M/F).</li> </ul>
STO5: Tokelau's capacity to deliver reliable, affordable, accessible, and safe transport and digital connections is improved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of improved capacity to deliver reliable, affordable, accessible, and safe transport and digital connections.</li> </ul>

The Plan will be evaluated approximately once every four years. The next strategic evaluation of the Tokelau Country Plan is expected to take place in 2026. The Ministry's forward strategic evaluation schedule is available on the website<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/aid-and-development/our-approach-to-aid/evaluation-and-research>



## For further information

Contact details for the Administrator of Tokelau are available on the MFAT website<sup>10</sup>.

To find out more about New Zealand's engagement with Pacific Island countries also go to the MFAT website, at [www.mfat.govt.nz/en/countries-and-regions/australia-and-pacific/](http://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/countries-and-regions/australia-and-pacific/).

This document is one in a series of Plans published by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) and managed by the Ministry's Pacific and Development Group. For the latest version please go to [www.mfat.govt.nz](http://www.mfat.govt.nz)

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/countries-and-regions/>

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1981/0047/latest/DLM51358.html>

