

TOKELAU ISLANDS
FIG SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES
18-20 SEPTEMBER SUVA, FIJI
TALKING POINTS

By

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The Land and the People of Tokelau:

??LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION??

- Tokelau consists of three small coral atolls that lie between latitudes 8 and 10 degrees south and 171 and 173 degrees west in a sea area of some 300, 000 square kilometres.
- Tokelau's closest neighbour Samoa lies 480 kilometres to the south. Tokelau is relatively isolated, where the only means of transport is by sea via Samoa and it is from here that travel and shipment of supplies originate.

Demography:

- The 2011 Tokelau Census of Population and Dwellings showed Tokelau had a “de jure” usually resident population of 1,411 people. This count included usual residents absent from Tokelau during the census, and Tokelauan Tokelau Public Service employee based in Apia, and their immediate families.

Geology and Soils:

- The atolls are composed of calcium carbonate reef, sands, and rock. The soils are generally characterized as being highly alkaline, highly porous, nutrient poor and as having low humus content with a high surface salinity.

Land Based and Agricultural Resources:

- Cultivated food crops are generally limited to breadfruit (*Artocarpus altilis*), giant swamp taro 'pulaka' (*Cyrtosperma chamissonis*); taro palagi (*Xanthosoma sagittifolium*); giant taro (*Alocasia macrorrhizos*); bananas (*Mus sp.* [2 varieties]); papaya (*Carica papaya*); pandanus 'fala' (*Pandanus odoratissimus*); pumpkin; and coconut (*Cocos nucifera*).

Marine Resources:

- It is generally recognized that Tokelau's greatest asset is in its natural marine resources. Tokelau's fisheries are made up of an inshore lagoon fishery, reef fishery and an abundant offshore pelagic fish and deep-ocean fishery. It has been reported that up to 55% of all animal protein consumed in the atolls is from reef, migratory, and shellfish (*UNDP unpublished report*).

Environmental Ecology and Biota:

- The atolls themselves have a relatively species-poor ecosystem. The atolls have been described (by others) as being, generally low in both plant and animal diversity. Although this may be expected on such a remote and insular atoll environment, the further degradation and/or loss of the limited biodiversity is highly cautioned.

Climate and Weather:

- The climate is hot with an average temperature of 28 deg C. Severe tropical storms have been more frequent in recent years with cyclones in 1987, 1990, 1991 and 2005 and due to the low-lying nature of the atolls, causes extensive damage to houses and general infrastructure. The global climatic changes are a real threat to Tokelau's long-term viability.
- Climate change has had an obvious effect on Tokelau. We now experience more cyclones and storm surges than we had in the past. The cyclones and storm surges are more intense and the impact of this is evident on the coastal areas which have eroded and some species of plants have noticeably disappeared due to the saline levels of the soil. We have also seen the disappearance of some of our smaller islets due to the sea-level rise caused by climate change. On larger islets, the increasing erosion threatens the production of the few crops which can be grown.

The Economy: Tokelau

- Tokelau is dependent on financial assistance from New Zealand for its recurrent budget and also for the majority of its infrastructure developments. There is currently little opportunity for diversification. Local revenue is primarily from the EEZ Fishing License fees, locally imposed duties and taxes, freight and boat fares and interest payments.

TOKELAU TODAY

- **2012:** Tokelau's electricity production is 100% solar energy generated:
- In October 2012 Tokelau officially announced to the world that it had switched off all its fossil-fuelled generators and transitioned to providing 100% of its electricity needs through using an indigenous resource it has plenty of – sunshine
- Solar energy is currently used to generate ALL of Tokelau's electricity!!!
- **This makes Tokelau number 1 in per-person reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in the world and fulfilling its global obligation!!!**
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Fakafetai lahi lele!

