

Advancing Women's Representation in Tonga*

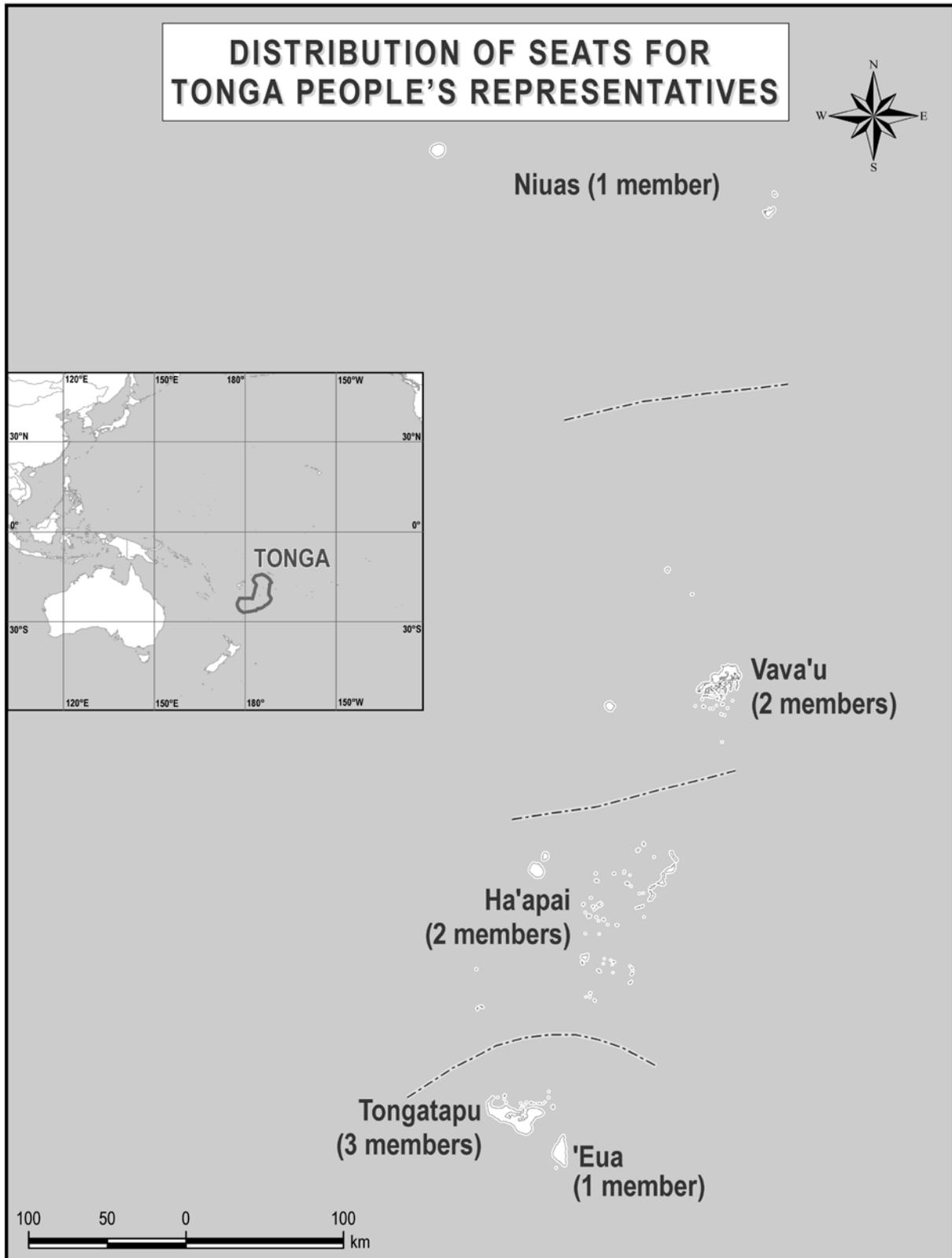
By

'Ofa Guttenbeil-Likiliki

“One cannot deal with the problem of female representation by a quota system alone. Political parties, the educational system, NGOs, trade unions, churches all must take responsibility within their own organizations to systematically promote women's participation, form the bottom up....”

(<http://archive.idea.int/women/parl/ch4a.htm>)

* This research report was completed before the passing of His Majesty King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV. Therefore, all references to the King in this chapter refer to King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV. He is succeeded by his son, King George Tupou V.



Source: PIAS-DG maps database

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“...Study after study has shown that there is no effective development strategy in which women do not play a central role. When women are fully involved, the benefits can be seen immediately: families are healthier and better fed; their income, savings and reinvestment go up. And what is true of families is also true of communities and, in the long run, of whole countries...”

— Kofi Annan, CSW March 8 2003

Up until the early 1980s, the Kingdom of Tonga was governed entirely under the principles of the 1875 constitution, which gave considerable power and authority to the monarch and the King’s aristocrats, made up of the 33 hereditary Nobles and members of the royal family. This enjoyment of power and authority was experienced largely by the male population of the Tongan aristocracy. Even during the reign of her late Majesty, Queen Salote Tupou III, there are no records of any women being appointed by her to positions of authority under the Government’s governing structure. However, during her reign a significant period in history was recorded when she amended the constitution to grant women the right to vote and stand as candidates in 1951.

Since emancipation from the rule of King George I in 1862, the inception of the 1875 Constitution, the establishment of Parliament, and the granting of the vote to Commoners in 1914, very few women have taken part in the country’s political journey. Despite the fact the the Tongan people celebrated for a period of three months of feasting and dancing during emancipation, Tongan women are yet to overcome the enormous barriers to achieve their own sense of self-emancipation—this includes their right to participate in the decision-making processes at home and to be represented within the community and its institutions and the country as a whole.

Over the last decade or so, the move towards political reform has increasingly strengthened and has pushed the Tongan Government into a state of political transition. The years 2005 and 2006 have been what Lopeti Senituli of the Human Rights and Democracy Movement of Tonga Executive, terms watershed years:

- The revival of Clause 7 of the constitution reinforcing media freedom following illegal amendments and changes which restricted the rights set out under the clause;
- The overwhelming civil servants’ strike which ran for up to 5½ weeks with demands for wage increases;
- The King’s approval to set up a national committee looking at commencing dialogue on the processes of political reform;
- The resignation of the King’s son, Prince ‘Ulukalala Lavaka Ata, as Prime Minister and the appointment of the first-ever Commoner by His Majesty to the portfolio of Prime Minister, Hon. Dr. Fred Sevele.

With all this change, democracy seems to becoming a closer reality, but the rights of women are to a large extent ignored in Tonga. There has been very little willpower by the Government to address these issues in its development strategies. The Government’s Strategic Development Plan 8 2006, shows little evidence of enhancing women’s political development and lacks an overall gender-based approach. One

of the great concerns that is surfacing in the process of political reform in Tonga is the poor participation of women in the political sphere. Since women were granted the right to vote and stand as political candidates in 1951, only four women have been voted into Parliament as People's Representatives in the Legislative Assembly.

There had never been a woman appointed to a Ministerial Position of the Crown until very recently when Solicitor General 'Alisi Taumoepeau was appointed Minister of Justice in May 2006. Women cannot be voted in through the nine Noble seats or the two Governor seats because under the 1875 Constitution these aristocratic titles can only be inherited by men. Despite the limited scope for women getting into Parliament, the current electoral framework for registration to vote and candidacy under the People's Representatives nine seats and the process of voting on the day does not legally discriminate against women.

So wherein lies the problem?

1. The composition of the Parliament disadvantages women:

- two Governors seats—allocated to men only
- nine Nobles seats—allocated to men only

This clearly leaves out 11 seats that cannot be held by women. The 12 seats reserved for Ministers of the Crown and the one seat for the Prime Minister are all appointed by the King. It wasn't until very recently that a woman was appointed to a Ministerial Position for the first time.

The nine seats out of the total 33 seats of the house reserved for People's Representatives represent women's only hope of getting into Parliament.

2. Even with the nine seats that women have an opportunity to stand for as candidates, women are still struggling with the negative social and cultural attitudes towards women participating in politics and decision-making processes of the country. These negative social and cultural attitudes do not come, as might be thought, only from the male population. Various discussions held with women around the country show that women are their worst enemies—an attitude that has slowed the progress of women professionals in their journey towards success and achievement.

The survey conducted among 250 women for this report showed that women are more judgmental of other women when it comes to promotions at work, allocating positions in the community and various institutions such as church, and even at the formal schooling level where female students are more aggressive in trying to outdo other female students. The majority of men interviewed during the research also made comments about the judgmental and aggressive nature of women towards other women, and some of the male interviewees even stated that "it's a woman's thing and they need to deal with it themselves first before they can go any further".

However, rather than satisfying ourselves with the latter comment, which is a view held by many Tongans, the leading question should be "why are women reacting like this and why do a majority of registered women voters still vote for men?" The answer to these questions lies in the social and cultural attitudes and belief systems that are deeply embedded in the Tongan social fabric. Decision-making in the home has been dominated by the husband/father. Only very recently has this process started to change. With an increase in younger educated couples, the decision-making processes is becoming more balanced and is shared between husband and wife. However, within the extended family the 'Ulumotu'a (Elder Male

family member) still has precedence in making decisions for the entire family. The *fabu* system has seen unanticipated changes such as family groups appointing male *fabu* more commonly seen at funerals.

Decision-making mechanisms within the community and villages is still largely dominated by men and it was not until the 2004 local government election that Tonga had its first female Town Officer voted in. The *kava* circle is also still regarded as the place where politics, economics and social issues are discussed. It is the *kava* circle that brings together men of all levels from senior government officials, nobility, and the working class to the individual farmer, where they all enjoy receiving a constant flow of information and are able to take part in debates within the circle. The discussions held at these *kava* circles, scattered widely all over the country, influence the thinking and, possibly, the majority of voting decisions in the nation. These men return home and talk about the issues passionately to their wives, daughters, sons and relatives. The men therefore have a power-based knowledge resource from the information they receive from the *kava* circle and are proud to be able to talk about it confidently to their family members.

Very few women are represented at the decision-making levels of the public sector. Although there are some very prominent Tongan women at Level 1 positions, their numbers are low in relation to the number of qualified and skilled women employed by the public sector. However, within the private sector women are advancing and there are successful businesses led by women including larger institutions such as the Westpac Bank of Tonga, Fund Management, OSB Trading, Molisi Tonga Ltd, Uata Holdings, and Royco among other smaller businesses. There has also been an increase in the number of women holding higher executive positions in the private sector. The private sector seems to be progressing at a much faster rate than the public sector.

The slow progress of women's participation in politics and decision-making as a whole, intertwined with Government's lack of political will to address this issue, provides evidence as to why women, although given the right to vote and stand for elections, are extremely under-represented in politics. Women are so inexperienced in politics in Tonga that the majority of registered women voters don't vote for other women. This has been experienced in other parts of the world;

"Even women do not elect women," says Amal Khoury, a research assistant with the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies. "There is no trust in women that they are capable of doing the job. There is still a mentality that as long as a husband is working, she should stay home and take care of the children."

Lepolo Taunisila, MP for the Two Niuas since 2005, is only the fourth woman to get into Parliament after 24 years of full sovereignty. Government needs to face the realities of women's participation in politics and include in their development strategies plans to advance women's political representation. Everyone should play a role in enhancing this opportunity for women, be it churches, civil society, families, schools or our Government.

It is the working together of these groups that will eliminate the negative social, cultural attitudes and behaviour towards women in politics. And it will lead to the building up of a more gender conscious government structure and to an era of new beliefs and values allowing women to achieve and enjoy gender equality to its fullest.

1 Introduction

This report is part of a greater regional research to advance women’s political representation in Forum Island Countries commissioned by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.

Enhancing women’s representation in politics has over the last decade, taken on global importance, moving up the priority lists of governments all over the world. Almost all contemporary societies regard improving women’s access to decision-making processes at the micro, meso and macro levels as one of the crucial indicators of women’s empowerment—an initiative undertaken by all Government Leaders in their commitments under the Millennium Development Goals. This includes the Government of Tonga.

The Tonga Government is one of more than 170 countries who have made such commitments to women’s development worldwide. These commitments include specific goals and initiatives to improve women’s political participation:

INTERNATIONAL LEVEL COMMITMENTS	REGIONAL LEVEL COMMITMENTS	NATIONAL LEVEL COMMITMENTS
<p>1. Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). A result of the United Nations Millennium Declaration made in September 2000—A powerful call to action by the International community including the Government of Tonga.</p> <p>There are 8 goals in total with Goal #3 on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women including an indicator which specifically relates to representation of women in Parliamentary decision-making</p> <p>Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women Indicator 12: Proportion of seats in national Parliament held by women</p>	<p>1. The Pacific Platform for Action (PPA) for the Advancement of Women 1994</p> <p>Two objectives: (1) Take measures to ensure women’s equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making; (2) Increase women’s capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership</p> <p>Critical Area 7: Women in Power & Decision-making as adopted in the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA)</p>	<p>1. Gender and Development Policy (GAD) passed and approved by Tonga Government in 2003</p> <p>Policy Area 6: Gender & Politics</p>

INTERNATIONAL LEVEL COMMITMENTS	REGIONAL LEVEL COMMITMENTS	NATIONAL LEVEL COMMITMENTS
<p>2. 49th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), March 2005</p> <p>The then Minister for Women's Affairs, Hon Cecil Cocker made a personal commitment towards enhancing women's development in the area of decision-making & the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women –CEDAW</p> <p>Article 7 with support of Articles 4 & 5 deal with women's representation in politics and decision-making</p>	<p>2. 2004 Nadi Declaration, 2nd Pacific Ministerial Meeting on Women</p> <p>The Ministerial Communiqué and the Nadi Declaration represent the highest ministerial political commitment to gender equality. The expressed goal of Ministers, Officials and participants in the Conference is to mobilise the required resources and implement the commitments made in this Regional Charter, which is the Revised Pacific Platform for Action for the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality 2005-2015 (PPA), and in the Beijing Platform for Action.</p>	<p>2. Government's Strategic Development Plans (SDP)</p> <p>Clear gender commitments are made in Strategic Development 7—which is linked directly to the Gender & Development Policy</p>
<p>3. United Nations 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly (UNGASS) , 2000, New York (“Beijing +5”)</p> <p>Reaffirmed implementation of the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action</p>	<p>3. The Pacific Plan, endorsed by Pacific Forum Country Leaders, October 2005</p> <p>One of the Pacific Plan Strategic Objectives under the Goal of Sustainable Development is to improve gender equality.</p> <p>One of the Strategic Objectives under the Goal of Good Governance is to improve transparency, accountability, equity and efficiency in the use of resources. This includes a specific initiative to develop a strategy to support participatory democracy and consultative decision-making (including women, NSAs and youth) and electoral processes.</p>	<p>3. Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Recommendations by Tongan Parliamentarians, 2005</p> <p>First Recommendation: For the Tonga Government to Ratify CEDAW</p>

INTERNATIONAL LEVEL COMMITMENTS	REGIONAL LEVEL COMMITMENTS	NATIONAL LEVEL COMMITMENTS
<p>4. Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), UN Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995</p> <p>The BPfA is an agenda for women's empowerment. It aims at accelerating the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and at removing all the obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making. It sets a 30 per cent target for women at all levels of decision-making</p>		<p>4. Convention on the Rights of the Child—Ensuring the Girl Child's Participation</p> <p>Article 12 is to encourage adults to listen to the opinions of children and involve them in decision-making. It does not give children authority over adults and does not interfere with parents' rights and responsibilities in relation to matters affecting their children. The Convention recognises that a child's participation in decision-making must occur in a manner that is appropriate to the child's age and maturity.</p>
<p>5. Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015</p> <p>The Commonwealth focuses on four critical concerns: (1) Gender, democracy, peace and conflict; (2) Gender, human rights and law; (3) Gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment; (4) Gender and HIV/AIDS. Critical concern 1 reiterates the 30 per cent target for women in decision-making by 2015.</p>		
<p>6. UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security</p> <p>For governments to ensure a gender perspective and participation of women in the peace dialogue and decision-making processes of the country</p>		

INTERNATIONAL LEVEL COMMITMENTS	REGIONAL LEVEL COMMITMENTS	NATIONAL LEVEL COMMITMENTS
7. Commonwealth Heads of Government Harare Declaration, 1991 Commonwealth Heads of Government agreed that Gender Equality is a fundamental principle		

Despite commitments made to advance the status of women in all spheres, the Tongan Government has yet to ratify the fundamental instrument ensuring women’s formal legal equality, notably CEDAW, which ensures equality in terms of:

- Equality of opportunity
- Equality of access
- Equality of results

Article 7 of CEDAW states that “State Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure women, on equal terms with men, the right:

- (b) To participate in the formulation of the government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government.

Article 7 can also be supported by Article 4 (Temporary Special Measures aimed at accelerating *de facto* equality shall not be considered discrimination i.e.; reserved seats) and Article 5 (to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either sexes, or on stereotyped roles for men and women).

Tonga was also noted as one of the “Dirty Dozen” in the Beijing Betrayed Report published by the Women’s Environment & Development Organisation (WEDO)—in reference to the low participation of women in Parliament worldwide. However, acknowledgement of recent developments following the publication of the WEDO report (i.e.; the election of the Niu’a People’s Representative to Parliament Lepolo Taunisila and the more recent appointment of the first ever Women Minister, Alisi Taumoepeau as Minister of Justice) represent positive stepping stones for Tonga’s political history.

1.1 Objective

To carry out nationwide research to assess Tonga’s electoral system and the social barriers to women’s representation in Parliament.

1.2 Methodology

Two types of data are used in this research report—quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative data has been extracted from a wealth of reports both at the regional and national level regarding human development and women's status in Tonga, general statistics and electoral statistics. A short questionnaire was distributed throughout Tonga to 250 women to solicit their views on women's political decision-making. The questionnaire focused on female respondents only within the legal voting age. This was to enable the researcher to draw some conclusions for the purposes of this report, on women's voting and decision-making patterns, as there is currently no available data specifically dealing with women voters and women and decision-making in Tonga.

Qualitative data was collated from a pool of individual interviews, focus groups and the formulation of individual case studies.

The researcher worked with assistants from the Tonga Trust Women's Project on Vava'u, 'Eua and Ha'apai, to liaise with respondents who were identified by the researcher and the research assistants.

Telephone interviews were held with women from the Niuas, and the same questionnaires were given out randomly in Tongatapu throughout the various districts.

Field work began in late December 2005 on Tongatapu, followed by Vava'u, 'Eua and Ha'apai during the months of January and February 2006.

1.3 Outcome

A draft Tonga Report was presented along with national reports from Nauru and Tuvalu at the Pacific Regional Workshop On Advancing Women's Representation In Parliaments held on April 19-21th 2006 in Rarotonga, Cook Islands.

The outcomes of the report was also presented at a national one-day consultation in Nuku'alofa before being submitted to the National Committee of the Kingdom of Tonga on Political Reform for consideration of its recommendations for facilitating the advancement of women's political participation.

2 Background

2.1 Composition of the Government and Women's Representation

The Kingdom of Tonga has three large island groupings; Tongatapu and 'Eua, Vava'u and Ha'apai, and the Northern Island group of Niuaotupapu and Niuafo'ou. Located in the South Central Pacific, the Kingdom consists of 169 low-lying coral and volcanic islands of which 36 are inhabited. The total land area is approximately 670 km² stretching over 360,000 km² of sea within the South Pacific Ocean.

The Kingdom is governed by a constitutional monarchy. The following figure illustrates Tonga's constitutional governing structure:

The King is supported by his Executive composed of the Privy Council and the Cabinet. In his Majesty's Privy Council, which he chairs, there are 14 members, the Ministers of the Crown and the two Governors of Vava'u and Ha'apai. All the members had been male since the establishment of the above governing

Figure 1. Tonga's Governing Constitutional Structure

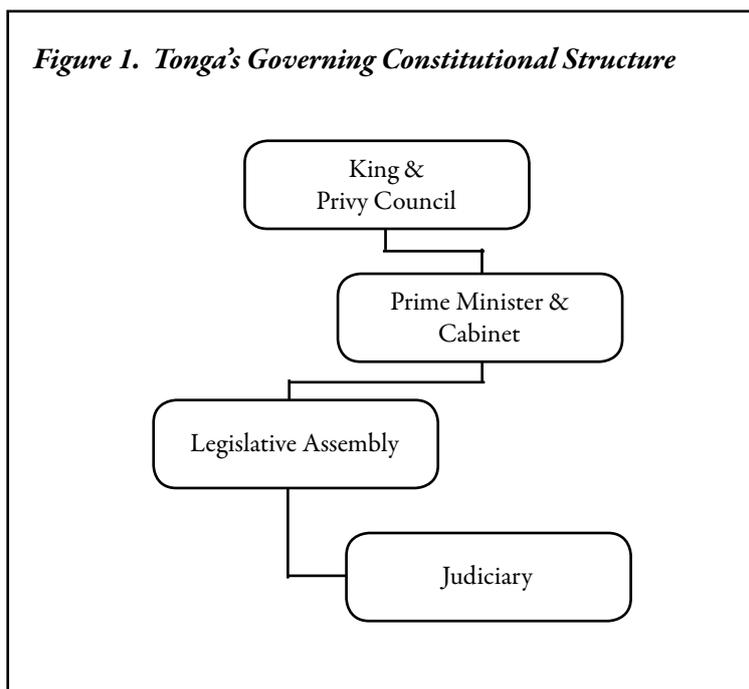


Table 1: Legislative Assembly Structure

Position	Number in parliament	Appointment by
1. Speaker of Parliament	1	Appointed by the King from the pool of 9 Nobles elected to Parliament
2. Nobles	9	9 Nobles are voted in by the group of 33 Noble title holder
3. Governor of Vava'u	1	Appointed by the King
4. Governor of Ha'apai	1	Appointed by the King
5. Ministers of the Crown	12	Appointed by the King ⁶
6. People's Representatives	9	Elected by the People
TOTAL	33	

Source: Friendly Islands Human Rights & Democracy Movement of Tonga

system in 1875, until the recent appointment of the first woman Minister ‘Alisi Taumoepeau in May 2006 as the Minister of Justice.

The Cabinet is the Prime Minister, the 12 Ministers of the Crown, the two Governors and Chief Secretary to Cabinet with the latter being the only female member of Cabinet until ‘Alisi’ Taumoepeau’s recent appointment. Under Cabinet, there are seven advisory committees; the Public Service Commission, the Development Coordination Committee, the Law Reform Committee, the Vava’u Development Committee, the Ha’apai Development Committee, the Niua Development Committee and the ‘Eua Development Committee.

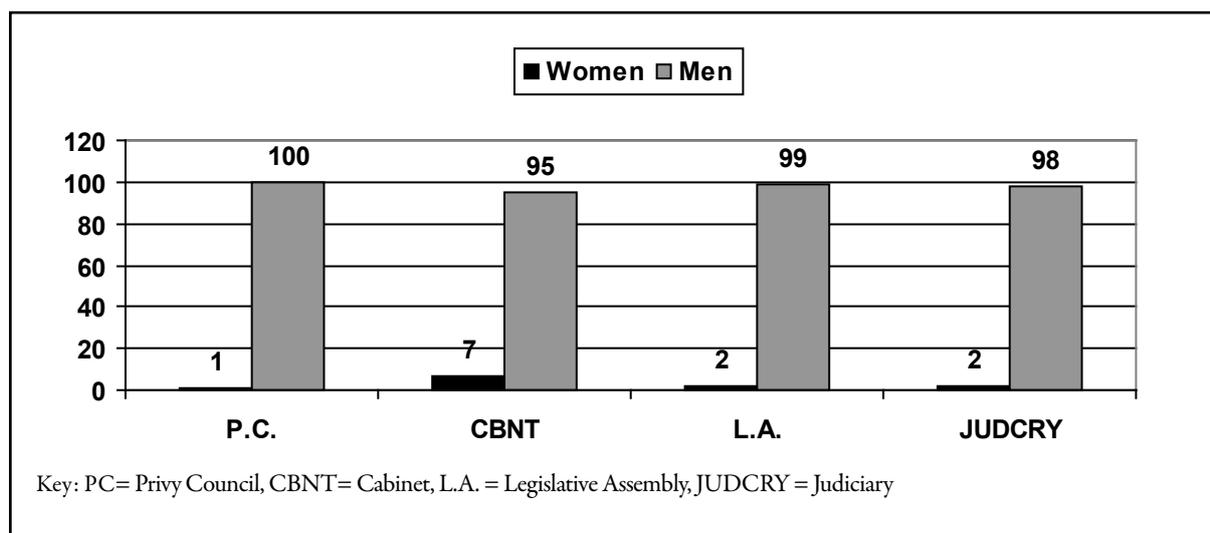
The Legislative Assembly consists of 33 members.

- The Speaker of Parliament, Nobles and the two Governor positions (12 positions) in total, automatically disqualify women’s participation. These positions are only available to men. Noble Title Holders can only be inherited by male lineage in accordance with the 1875 Tonga constitution.
- From 1875-2005 there had never been a female Minister or Prime Minister appointed by the governing Monarch, even during Her Late Majesty’s Queen Salote’s ruling. However, as stated, in May 2006, the first woman was appointed to a ministerial position, ‘Alisi Taumoepeau, as Minister of Justice.
- There were three women Acting Ministers appointed during the Taufa’ahau Tupou IV’s reign. This appointment occurred in 2005 where Vika Fusimalohi was appointed Acting Minister of Labour, Commerce & Industries (2005), ‘Alisi Taumoepeau as Acting Minister of Law (2005) and Meleseini Lomu as the Acting Minister for Finance (2005).

Figure 2: Women’s Representation in Tonga’s Parliamentary Timeline

1839 -----	1862 -----	1875 -----	1914 -----
Establishment of Vava’u parliamentary government	Emancipation by King George I	Constitution of Tonga proclaimed	Increase of members to 30 & commoners given the vote
1951 -----	1975 -----	1978 -----	1993 -----
Women allowed to vote & stand for elections	First woman MP, Princess Si’ilikutapu 1975-1977, (Tongatapu)	2nd woman MP, Papiloa Foliaki 1978-1980, (Tongatapu)	3rd woman MP, ‘Ofa Fusitu’a, 1993-1995 (Niua)
2005 -----	2006 -----		
Lepolo Mahe Taunisila elected to Parliament as Niua Representative (4th Woman MP)	First woman appointed as Cabinet Minister ‘Alisi Taumoepeau (Minister of Justice)		

Figure 3: Current % of Women's Representation at the Executive Level



- Only four women have been elected into Parliament as People's Representatives. (Princess Si'ilikutapu (1975-1977), Papila Foliaki (1978-1980), 'Ofa Fusitu'a (1983-1985), and Lepolo Taunisila (2005- present).

Women have held a very small proportion of seats in the Tonga national Parliament ranging from 0 per cent to 2 per cent from 1975-2006. This is also the case in the Tonga local Parliament of Town and District Officers where representation has been 0-1 per cent.

There are now two women in Tonga's Parliament, one as a Representative of the People and more recently one as a Minister of the Crown. Two women have also been recently appointed to the Public Service Commission under Cabinet, Mishka Tuifua (General Manager of the Westpac Bank of Tonga) and Tai'atu 'Ata'ata (Senior Officer Tonga Telecommunications Cooperation).

Although representation of women at the executive level of government is low, there has been a significant increase just in 2006 with recent appointments.

2.2 Socio Economic Data

Tonga's population is estimated at between 98,000-100,000. The 0.3 annual population growth rate is relatively low compared to other Pacific Island countries. This could be linked to a high rise in migration patterns to Australia, New Zealand and the United States of America which is caused by economic factors and educational opportunities.

The largest portion of the population lives on the main island of Tongatapu with a total of 61,260 as recorded in the labour force survey of 2003. Vava'u has the second largest population followed by Ha'apai.

Women have a higher life expectancy than men. According to the 1999 Human Development Report, Tonga had a relatively low infant mortality rate of 19 compared to other Pacific Island countries such as Tuvalu with an infant mortality rate of 51 and Kiribati at 67 per 1000. Both males and females in Tonga

Table 2: Tonga Census population figures over the last 6 decades

Year	Total Population
1891	19,196
1956	56,838
1966	77,429
1976	90,085
1986	94,649
1996	97,784

Source: Department of Statistics, Figures from previous census figures

(Between 1891 and 1976 the population of Tonga was rapidly increasing. However from 1976 to 1996 there was a major decrease in the growth rate).

Table 3: Tonga population by districts

Division	Male	Female	Total
Tongatapu	30,910	30,360	61,260
Vava'u	7,700	7,590	15,290
Ha'apai	3,560	3,420	6,990
'Eua	2,600	2,420	5,020
Niuas	960	850	1,810
TOTAL	45,730	44,640	90,370

are recorded to have high literacy rates of 99 per cent which could be linked to school enrolments and access to education throughout Tonga, in both rural and urban areas.

According to Tonga's progress in its MDG Report 2005, the net enrolment ratio in primary education was 91.6 per cent in 1990 and in 2000 there was a slight decrease to 89.4 per cent. Tonga's literacy rate of 15-24 year olds recorded 99 per cent in 2000. Access to primary school education was also above 80 per cent for both rural and urban areas.

Table 4: Tonga in comparison to other Pacific Island Countries

Country	Population (0000s) 1998 est.	Annual Population Growth	Life Expectancy at Birth		Infant Mortality Rate	Adult Literacy		Combined Gross School Enrolment		GDP Per Capita (US\$)	Human Development Index
Cook Is	16.5	-1.8	71	74	11	93	94	84	86	4,947	0.822
Fiji	797.8	0.9	65	69	16	95	91	80	83	2,684	0.667
FSM	114.1	2.1	64	67	46	77	66	71	71	2,070	0.569
Kiribati	85.1	2.1	59	65	67	94	91	67	69	702	0.515
Marshall Is	65.1	3.6	63	67	63	79	69	72	72	1,882	0.563
Nauru	11.5	2.4	55	62	11	95	95	79	80	3,450	0.663
Niue	2.1	-1.0	74	74	18	98	97	81	87	3,714	0.774
Palau	18.5	2.4	64	74	20	94	88	83	84	8,027	0.861
PNG	4,412.4	2.5	55	54	77	35	21	30	27	1,196	0.314
Samoa	174.8	1.2	65	67	22	96	96	84	88	1,060	0.59
Solomon Is	417.8	3.3	64	66	38	39	20	38	31	926	0.371
Tokelau	1.5	-0.8	68	70	38	92	90	85	92	n.a.	n.a.
Tonga	98.0	0.3	65	71	19	99	99	82	84	1,868	0.647
Tuvalu	11.0	3.0	64	70	51	95	95	75	75	1,157	0.583
Vanuatu	182.5	2.7	64	67	45	37	30	60	55	1,231	0.425

Source: Pacific Human Development Report 1999

Table 5: Vital Statistical Indicators, 2002

1. Households (1996 Census)	16,194
2. Labour Force Participation Rate	58.4%
3. No. of Government Employees	5,209
4. No. of other Employees	7,215
5. Unemployment Rate	13.3%

Source: Department of Statistics, General Statistics of Tonga Labour Force, 2003

2.3 General Statistics on Women in Tonga

Table 6: Total Population & Annual Growth Rates by Sex

	Female	Male	Total	Annual growth rate (%) 1986-1996
Total Tonga	48,169	49,615	97,784	0.3

Source: 1996 Census, Department of Statistics

In 2004, the Department of Statistics projected the female population at approximately 51 per cent and the male population at 49 per cent of the total population. The next census is due to take place in November 2006.

Table 7: Currently employed population aged 15 and over, by sex and industry of main job

Industry	Total	%	Female No.	%	Male No.	%
Agriculture, hunting & forestry	9,950	28.8	470	3.4	9,470	46.4
Fishing	1,050	3.0	180	1.2	870	4.3
Mining & quarrying	60	0.2		0.0	60	0.3
Manufacturing	8,530	24.7	7,630	53.9	910	4.4
Electricity, gas & water	530	1.5	160	1.1	370	1.8
Construction	1,440	4.2	30	0.2	1,410	6.9
Wholesale & retail trade	2,930	8.5	1,590	11.2	1,340	6.6
Hotels & restaurants	630	1.8	400	2.8	240	1.2
Transport, storage & communications	1,580	4.6	430	3.1	1,150	5.6
Financial intermediation	510	1.5	290	2.1	210	1.0

Real estate, renting & business activities	260	0.7	90	0.6	170	0.8
Public administration & defence	2,590	7.5	690	4.9	1,900	9.3
Education	1,780	5.2	1,060	7.5	720	3.5
Health & social work	660	1.9	360	2.7	280	1.4
Other community, social & personal service activities	1,330	3.8	340	2.4	980	4.8
Private households with employed persons	610	1.8	350	2.4	260	1.3
Extra-territorial organizations & bodies	90	0.3	30	0.2	60	0.3

Source: Department of Statistics Tonga Labour Force Survey, 2003

Women's presence in the labour force is largely in manufacturing, wholesale, trade and education. Manufacturing mainly covers the production of handicrafts and other traditional arts and crafts. Women have relatively low representation in the areas of agriculture, fishing, construction and public administration and defence.

Linking this back to the formal school curriculum, subjects are still gender stereotyped and there is a lack of gender mainstreaming with career options and subjects at this level.

Table 8: Household Heads by Sex

Household Size / Sex of Head	1986			1996			% Change 1986-1996		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1-3	1,653	1,406	3,059	2,837	897	3,734	71.6	-36.2	22.1
4-6	3,033	2,656	5,689	4,890	1,183	6,073	61.2	-55.5	6.7
7-9	2,270	1,899	4,169	3,609	680	4,289	59.0	-64.2	2.9
10-12	830	711	1,541	1,237	244	1,481	49.0	-65.7	-3.9
13+	351	282	633	522	95	617	48.7	-66.3	-2.5
TOTAL	8,137	6,954	15,091	13,095	3,099	16,194	60.9	-55.4	7.3

Source: Department of Statistics Household Analysis, 1996 Census

The number of households of size 4-6 headed by women decreased between 1986 and 1996. This could be due to a large number of males, particularly husbands, temporarily migrating overseas to work and send money home. Although there are more male-headed households, there are however a significant number of households headed by women, a total of 6,954 households.

Table 9: Currently Active Population Level of Schooling 15 and Over

Level of Schooling	Male	Female	Total
No Schooling	100	*	
Primary: Less than 6 years	500	300	
Primary: 6 years or more	1,600	1,500	
Secondary: Less than 6 years	13,400	8,700	
Secondary: 6 years or more	3,300	2,900	
Tertiary: Less than 3 years	600	500	
Tertiary: 3 years or more	1,600	1,400	
TOTAL	21,200	15,300	36,400

Source: Department of Statistics Tonga Labour Force Survey, 2003

Table 10 clearly indicates the educational level of the active labour force in Tonga. Approximately 90 per cent of the labour force has had some secondary education and 11 per cent has received higher education. 31 per cent of the female labour force has received education up to at least the higher levels of secondary school compared to males at only 26 per cent.

According to the Tonga Labour Force Survey data, there are approximately 3,000 people of graduate level who are in the currently active population, with an almost equal share between males and females.

2.4 Women and Culture

Tongan culture is very strong and plays a significant role in shaping gender roles within society. Cultural practices and traditions are largely based on a system of beliefs and values that is heavily influenced by particular interpretations of the Bible. Over time this has determined the “Tongan Way” and how girls and boys should be brought up.

Tongan women have high expectations placed on them from the time of birth. The first-born daughter of any family is regarded as a blessing from God and a piece of gold gifted to the family, for she represents and upholds the ongoing tradition of maintaining the *fabu* system. According to this tradition the sister (particularly the eldest sister) of a male Tongan is revered as the most highly ranked in the family structure and can only be superseded by her aunt (sister of her father).

Although boys are also regarded highly at birth, it is only because they are able to carry on the family name and inherit the land from their father—giving mothers peace of mind.⁷ There are also cases where male children are spoilt especially if the number of female children is greater. However, traditionally female children are given precedence. For example, the first birthday of the first-born Tongan daughter causes more fuss than that of the first born-male child.

In the past, as a girl got older, and if there were other sisters born after her, it was expected that the brother(s) would leave the main house to go to a sleep-out adjacent to the main house. The sisters would remain in the main house because of the brother/sister *tabu*⁸ and were often given the best bed linen and the best bedroom in the house. This was still the case up until 20 years ago. More recently, Tongans

have been building European-style housing, eliminating the sleep-out and now have bedrooms for all the siblings.⁹

Although this sounds like a fairytale story for girls, the spoiling of sisters or daughters also had its negative aspects. Because a young girl was revered, so too was she expected to behave in certain ways. She was, and still is, to present herself with the utmost self respect in that she is to remain a virgin until she marries, and not go wandering around at night to parties and clubs unless chaperoned. She is to show her brother(s) respect by way of language used, and to be careful to not be exposed to anything regarded as *tabu* in the company of her brother (e.g. romantic movies and sexy music clips). A wall of respect was and is still to a large extent built up between brother and sister. Brother and sister in the Tongan sense refers to first cousins as well and even extends to second and third cousins. So a young girl would refer to her first, second and third cousins as brother relatives. It is expected that all the protocols between a sister and her biological brother also extend to her brother relatives.

Using respectful language between brother and sister is a very important protocol, and some may see Parliament as a place where most disrespectful language is used. In addition, personal histories are often raised during campaigns by the media or competing candidates, or the community of the candidate. This might deter women from running for fear of their history being publicised and heard by brothers or brother relatives. Some women also may feel Parliament is not an option because of *tabu* restrictions; they may have some brother relatives in Parliament.

A young girl's first menstrual period is also a celebrated event because it not only shows that the young girl is entering womanhood but extends further to the fact that she is able to biologically have children. It is also at this time that security over her is increased and parents become more watchful over the actions of their daughter.

If a young Tongan girl gets pregnant prior to marriage—regardless of whether she is 17 or 27—she is still referred to by the family as *fnemotu'a vale*, or stupid old female, because she has got herself into such a predicament. However if she has a brother that has several illegitimate children, he is referred to in a more comical way and is not ridiculed as severely as his sister. Some mothers interviewed during a teenage pregnancy survey said that this is because they spend so much time taking care and showing full attention to their daughters—when something happens they feel as if they've wasted all that energy looking after their daughter. If the same situation occurs with their son and he got a girl pregnant, they see it as a fault on the part of the young girl's mother.

Women who have had a child before marriage or have been known to be 'promiscuous' are often referred to in this negative sense and this often prevents them from continuing or hoping to become a politician, because this is likely to be held against her during campaigning, causing embarrassment and particularly exposing her parents to nasty coverage. Men, on the other hand, don't have this problem.

A young girl is also brought up acknowledging that the family house she was brought up in and the family land that provides for the family's welfare is to be inherited by her brother. She develops the mindset that she cannot inherit the land and can only remain in the house as long as she remains unmarried. As soon as she marries, she will have to leave the home and accompany her husband to his family home. Only recently have women begun to stay with their husband at the wife's family home—in particular when the brother is not present.

The following summarizes the protocol in the Tongan culture between male and female regarding their roles in within the family institution.

WOMEN
High in Rank
(Fahu System)

MEN
High in Power
(Ulumotu'a System)

As noted above, under the *fahu* system the sister of a brother or father is the most highly ranked in the family and is referred to as the *fahu* or the *mehikitanga*. On the other hand, the head of the family is known as the *'Ulumotu'a* and he is the one responsible for making the final decisions and distributing instructions to be carried out by family members.

Household chores (indoors and outdoors) were basically split up between brother and sister. Anything that exposed the daughter to too much sunlight (it was ideal that the young Tongan maiden kept her skin as fair as possible) would be discouraged. Work outside the house also represented masculine strength. Therefore, the majority of in-house work was carried out by girls while boys handled the work outside of the home and in the plantation.

Meal time was particularly structured. Fathers as the head of the household would be served first and the rest of the family would eat after. Usually the mother would eat last as she was only revered as high rank among her own family—her own brothers and their children. In her nuclear family, the husband remains the head of the household and the wife carries out the typically expected 'wifely' duties, such as cleaning, cooking, washing and looking after the children.

In the large majority of Tongan families, it is an accepted practice that the father participates in the village or church *kava* drinking club. This can be from two days per week to the full seven days per week. At the *kava* circle, in depth discussions about politics, economics, village, church and social issues are discussed as well as light entertainment. If the men are lucky, they have a young female virgin serving the *kava*, mostly for their visual enjoyment.

Mothers and young daughters however are expected to stay home after sunset. They usually hear about the *kava* discussions from their husbands, especially if they are about politics. Most political candidates attend *kava* circles in their campaigns and rarely visit women's groups during the day.

Domestic violence is also a growing concern in Tonga. It is still very much referred to as a "behind the doors" issue and is not considered the business of the community and leaders of the church and institutions such as the police. Women are often encouraged to reconcile with their abusive husbands rather than pressing charges. Most often husbands use alcohol and *kava* as a poor excuse for their violence. A woman who is seen to pursue her rights and stand up to her abusive husband is seen as unwomanly and more animal-like—*anga'i manu*. Many people view Parliament in the same category—a place only reserved for men and their aggressiveness, not a place for a real Tongan woman!

The real challenge is eliminating these negative gender based stereotypes and presenting politics and the house of Parliament as the decision-making hub of the entire nation which requires the participation of both men and women to achieve a sex balanced approach and a more dynamic nation.

2.5 National Policy on Gender and Development

The Women's Development Centre (WDC) was established within the Prime Minister's Office in Nuku'alofa 1993, initially known as the Women Development Affairs Unit. Its main focus was to

coordinate women's development projects as well as to offer support and technical assistance to women's NGOs.

In 2003, Tonga's commitment towards improving the status of women was reiterated by Cabinet's decision to approve the formulation of a national policy on women's development by the WDC. The policy was to be based on Tonga's various commitments to gender equality on both a regional and international scale;

- United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on the Implementation of the Outcomes of the Platform for Action (Beijing+5), New York, June 2000;
- UNGASS on the implementation of the outcomes of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD+5), Hague, February 1999;
- Declaration & Platform for Action on the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, China, 1995;
- Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development, 1995;
- Declaration and Program of Action of the UN World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, Denmark, March 1995;
- UN International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo Egypt, 1994; and
- The Pacific Platform for Action for the Advancement of Women, 1994

The vision of the Tonga National Policy on Gender and Development is to achieve Equity by 2025;

“That all men, women, children and the family as a whole achieve equal access to economic, social, political and religious opportunities and benefits” (National Policy on Gender and Development, Tonga)

The national policy has 10 main policy areas which cover a wide scope including, family, religion, culture and society, health, education, economy, public sector, private sector and rural women. Policy area 6 looks specifically at Gender and Politics. Its emphasis is to:

- Promote equal access and participation in decision-making at work, in the family and society;
- Encourage and support women in their pursuit to occupy top management/decision-making posts at work based on merit;
- Promote equitable representation at all levels of the political process and public life
- Strengthen national women's machinery to promote gender empowerment and educational awareness program; and,
- Foster and encourage gender sensitivity in the formulation of political decisions

The WDC held its national summit on the GAD policy in June 2005, bringing together various government departments as well as a wide range of NGO and CSO groups. The main recommendation arising out of the summit was for the WDC and NGOs/CSOs to forge stronger partnerships in ensuring that implementation of the GAD policies are effectively carried out. There was also a strong call for the ratification of CEDAW.

2.6 NGO/CSO involvement

There are several NGO groups involved in the development of women. Those NGOs with particular focus on Government's commitments to the advancement of women *vis-à-vis* national, regional and international commitments such as the MDGs, Beijing Platform for Action, and the Pacific Platform for Action are: the Langafonua 'a Fafine Tonga, the Catholic Women's League (CWL), Aloua ma'a Tonga, Tonga Family Health Association and other more recent emerging associations such as the Tonga Disabilities Project and Tonga Women's Action for Change (TWAC), a network of professional women looking at discriminatory policies that act as barriers towards women's development.

Other major organisations are also starting to look at adopting projects that deal with advancing women in their respective work, such as the Human Rights and Democracy Movement which has recently begun looking at advocating and lobbying government to ratify CEDAW. The Tonga National Youth Congress is also discussing ways of including gender training as part of its life skills program.

The Langafonua 'a Fafine Tonga has received technical and financial support from UNIFEM over the past years to conduct the Women in Politics project in close collaboration with the WDC. The main objective of this project is to carry out a comprehensive voters' education program with women from both the grassroots and professional levels. Women candidates are also given support through this program.

The Catholic Women's League of Tonga, through its Legal Literacy Project (LLP), carries out training and awareness on human rights treaties and conventions. The LLP is a partnership project between the CWL and the Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT) based in Suva. The CWL is one of the strongest advocates for the ratification of CEDAW and has published a detailed booklet on CEDAW in the Tongan language as well as producing a piece of research on CEDAW through its partnership with the United Nations Volunteer Project (UNDP Suva), titled *Bringing CEDAW Home to Tonga*.

There has also been a significant push for the effective implementation of the GAD policy by the NGO sector in partnership with the WDC. However, there are concerns regarding on-going partnerships between the WDC and the NGO sector, as new government reforms under the government's National Strategic Development Plan No.8 include plans to have the WDC removed from the Prime Ministers Office and transferred to the Ministry of Education, which will be renamed as the Ministry of Education, Culture and Women's Affairs.* The concerns are mainly focused on the push for strengthening the national women's machinery and how effective it will become in one of the country's largest Ministries. It is hoped that government will ensure that the implementation of the national GAD policy, as well as its commitments at both the international and regional levels towards the advancement of women, will not be marginalised under this proposed new reform.

3. Current political status of Tonga

The Kingdom of Tonga is currently undergoing political reform. The two major initiatives that have attracted immense public attention are:

1. the formulation of the National Committee of the Kingdom of Tonga on Political Reform (NCPR) in October 2004—which is currently holding discussions around the country as well as taking formal submissions from community groups and individuals

* As of 4 September 2006, the WDC officially became part of the Ministry for Education, Women's Affairs and Culture.

regarding recommendations for Tonga's political reform; and

2. the long-time struggle of the Human Rights and Democracy Movement and individual democrats who are determined to see political reform transform the kingdom as soon as possible.

Tonga is a constitutional monarchy, in which the King has executive power. Legislative power is vested in both the executive government and the Legislative Assembly.¹⁰

(A) National Reform Committee

As noted in their brochure distributed nationwide, the National Committee of the Kingdom of Tonga on Political Reform (NCPR) includes the following members;

1. HRH Prince Tu'ipekehake (Chairperson) Nobles' Representative
2. Hon. Tu'akinamalohi Taumoepeau Tupou, Representative from Government, Minister of Foreign Affairs & Defense, Acting Governor of Vava'u
3. Hon. Tangipa, Nobles Representative
4. Mr. Fineasi Funkai, People's Representative
5. Mr. William Clive Edwards, People's Representative
6. Dr. Sitiveni Halapua, Director Pacific Islands Development Program, East-West Center, Hawaii
7. Mr. 'Aisea Taumoepeau, Barrister, Wellington New Zealand
8. Dr. 'Ana Taufé'ulungaki, Pro Vice-Chancellor University of the South Pacific, Fiji

The NCPR is currently holding *talanoa* (discussions) around the Kingdom with regards to the entire political reform processes and legislative amendments as noted in the NCPR's purpose and objectives;

“The National Committee shall receive and consider submissions, hold consultations and facilitate *talanoa* relating to political and constitutional reforms and recommend legislation and/or other changes with a view to building national unity and promoting the social and economic advancement of the people of Tonga”

The motion to establish a national committee that would look at the political reform processes of the nation was passed by the legislative assembly on October 12, 2004. On October 24, 2005, the make-up of members was resolved and since then work has commenced on achieving the above purpose and objectives.

The NCPR, after completing its rounds in Tonga, will also visit overseas Tongan communities mainly NZ, Australia and the United States of America where a large population of Tongans currently reside.

Sitiveni Halapua, member of the NCPR, says that the discussion held thus far has been overwhelming. He considers the process of facilitating a space for *talanoa* among all members of the community gives much more weight than the usual one-way form of communication which is used through the mediums of radio, TV and print, to provide information on politics, economics and social issues to the wider community. The *talanoa* process allows for a much closer look at reality by creating a two-way communication system, allowing people to talk about what they really think and what they really want to happen to Tonga and the future generations.

The results of the discussions and submissions are to be analysed in July with a final report submission to the Legislative Assembly due in August 2006.

(B) Three models of political reform

Three models of political reform have been endorsed by the NCPR, the Human Rights and Democracy Movement of Tonga and other individual democrats, such as 'Akilisi Pohiva, who are adamant to see a quicker process of political reform after many years of dedicating their efforts to achieving democracy in Tonga.

The group made up of mainly civil servants, members of the civil society of Tonga, NGO representatives, church leaders, community and local government leaders and politicians, actually called for political reform to take place on 5 December 2005. The attempt was somewhat unsuccessful because on the same day a March for Jesus was organised, led by the Queen. The events of the day were so blurred that it confused many citizens as to actually what and who they were marching for. Nevertheless, the three models still stand as submissions towards political reform.

The models of Clive Edwards and Laki Niu represent their personal views whereas the model presented by Lopeti Senituli presents the views of the Human Rights and Democracy Movement. Draft No. 5 is the most recent one written by Lopeti Senituli below and it has been submitted formally to the NCPR.¹¹

3.1 Electoral system

There is no evidence that the Electoral Act of 1989 and its amendments (1992) discriminate against women.¹² It would be fair to say that both men and women have equal legal access and opportunities under the Electoral Act. However the voter is still referred to as '*he*' and amendments have not been made to address this issue.

The current electoral system used in Tonga is the Block Vote system, which can be summarised by the following points based on the interviews held for the purpose of this research report;

- only one party-like group exists in opposition—the Friendly Islands Human Rights and Democracy Movement
- electoral system only allows Commoners to vote for 9 seats in the Legislative Assembly
- electoral system is fair towards both women and men
- legislation has very little evidence of gender discrimination or gender barriers

The issue of whether another type of electoral system would help increase women's participation in Tonga's Parliament is certainly up for debate. A strong belief among women respondents is that if there were smaller constituencies, there would be a much greater chance of more women getting into Parliament. "Larger constituencies tend to drown out women's chances: I mean if you're running in the Tongatapu constituency that means contesting in areas that you might have had nothing to do with in the past. So smaller constituencies will allow more intimate voting and women would do well in that because their community work speaks a lot of who they are," says to Papiloa Foliaki (2nd woman Member of Parliament).

However, the results of the past elections show that only a small number of women stand for elections. Therefore, it would be unfair to say that women are marginalised based on the current electoral system if

history shows low participation. It is imperative that one understands ‘why’ Tongan women may not see Parliament as an ‘ideal job’ or career option by looking at other factors such as social and cultural barriers.

3.3 Results from the 2005 General Elections

The current People’s Number One Representative to Parliament, ‘Akilisi Pohiva won by a landslide in the 2005 General Elections. As a member of the Human Rights Democracy Movement, ‘Akilisi had won the seat alongside two other members of the HRDM, ‘Isileli Pulu and Dr. Fred Sevele, who was later appointed by the King to a Ministerial port folio.

The electoral system does not favour any party getting into power. Only one party exists in opposition. The electoral system, in which Commoners (i.e., non-Nobles) directly elect only nine of thirty seats in Parliament, does not favour political parties forming a government. Parties exist as pressure groups rather than electoral vehicles or patronage dispensers. A majority of the Commoners in Parliament belong to the Human Rights and Democracy Movement.

Table 10: Summary of the 17 March 2005 Tonga Legislative Assembly election results

Parties	Seats
Human Rights and Democracy Movement	7
Other people’s deputies	2
Members elected by the 33 hereditary Nobles of Tonga	9
Members of the Privy Council	10
Governors (appointed by the King)	2
Total	30

The Human Rights and Democracy Movement of Tonga, now known as the Friendly Islands Human Rights & Democracy Movement of Tonga (FIHRDMT) is not a political party, however it exists almost like a party. The main focus of the movement is to address issues related to social justice, exploitation of the poor, inequality, women’s rights, land shortage, constitutional amendments and corruption.

Table 11: Executive Branch

Office	Name	Since
King	Taufa’ahau Tupou IV	16 December 1965
Prime Minister	Dr. Feleti Sevele	March 2006
Deputy Prime Minister	Dr. Viliami Tangi	May 2006

Source: Women’s Development Centre, Prime Minister’s Office

Its executive branch includes the prime minister and the cabinet, which becomes the Privy Council when presided over by the monarch. In intervals between legislative sessions, the Privy Council makes

ordinances, which become law if confirmed by the legislature. The monarch is hereditary, the prime minister and deputy prime minister are appointed for life by the monarch, the Cabinet is appointed by the monarch.

Table 12: Last Electoral Results—Summarized First 10 out of 31 Candidates for the Tongatapu District

Candidate	Sex	Total Votes	Position
Samuela 'Akilisi Pohiva	Male	11,225	1
'Isileli Pulu	Male	8,110	2
Fred Vaka'uta Sevele	Male	7,585	3
William Clive Edwards	Male	3,619	4
Fuiva <i>Kavaliku</i>	Female	3,219	5
Mateitalo Mahu'inga	Male	2,960	6
Lopeti Senituli	Male	2,888	7
Semisi Kailahi	Male	2,013	8
Semisi Tapueluelu	Male	1,586	9
Simione Silapelu	Male	1,569	10

Source: Langafonua 'a Fafine Tonga, Voters Education Project

Out of a total of 31 candidates in the Tongatapu district (which is a three-seat constituency), there were three female candidates including Fuiva *Kavaliku*, Alisi Pone Fotu (who came in at 12th place with 998 total votes), and Sela Kasinga (at 14th place with a total of 522 votes). The 31st placing went to male candidate Sione Mataele with a total of 89 votes.

For the Vava'u district there were a total of 18 candidates. There was one female candidate on the Vava'u Electoral List. However she was disqualified prior to voting due to debts that she owed, reducing the number of candidates from 19 to 18.

For the Ha'apai and the Niua district, there was one female candidate in each of the districts. However in the by-elections following the appointment of the two People's Representatives, Dr. Fred Sevele and Peaufi Haukinima to Ministerial posts, Lepolo Mahe Taunisila registered as a candidate in the Niua Electorate and won her seat in Parliament as the Niua People's Representative. There were no registered female candidates on the 'Eua electoral roll.

Table 13: Number of Votes Per District, 2005 Tonga General Elections

District	Number of Villages / Towns	Total Number of Registered Voters
Tongatapu	51	51,780
Vava'u	34	14,428
Ha'apai	TBC	TBC
'Eua	11	2,563
Niua	10	1,272

Source: Langafonua 'a Fafine Tonga, Voters Education Project

Table 14: Voters by Sex, Tongatapu District, 2005 General Elections

Male voters	Female voters	Total votes	Invalid votes	Total no. of votes from outer islands	Total no. of valid votes
7,995	8,558	16,553	37	744	17,260

Source: Women's Development Centre, PMO

Based on the above results for the Tongatapu district's votes by sex, female voters outnumbered male voters by 563 votes. The department responsible for collecting electoral results does not use sex-disaggregated data, making it difficult to access meaningful data.

The 2005 election recorded the highest number of woman candidates, a total of 6.

The following electoral results were provided through the kind assistance of the Women's Development Center of the Prime Minister's Office.

3.4 Results from past elections

Table 15: 1999 Summary of Voters Per District

1999	Registered voters	No. registered who voted	No. registered but did not vote	% registered who voted	% registered who did not vote
Tongatapu	31,003	14,181	16,822	46	54
Vava'u	10,863	6,195	4,668	57	43
Ha'apai	7,557	4,027	3,530	53	47
'Eua	3,735	2,194	1,541	59	41
Niuas	1,754	1,270	484	72	28

Source: Women's Development Centre, PMO

No. of Candidates—1999 General Elections

Tongatapu 22 (1 female)

Ha'apai 9 (1 female)

Vava'u 12 (1 female)

Niuas 8 (1 female)

A total of 4 female candidates stood in the 1999 General Elections, however the 9 seats contested for by the candidates were all won by men.

Table 16: 1996 Summary of Voters Per District

1996	Registered voters	No. registered who voted	No. registered but did not vote	Total population	% registered who voted	% registered who did not vote
Tongatapu	27,853	14,201	13,652	70,500	51	49
Vava'u	10,144	6,384	3,760	15,300	62	38
Ha'apai	6,745	3,996	2,749	7,700	59	41
'Eua	3,502	2,208	1,294	4,460	63	37
Niuas	1,586	1,159	427	2,410	73	27
Total	49,830	27,948	21,882	97,070		

Source: Women's Development Centre, PMO

No. of Candidates—1996 Electoral Roll

Tongatapu	23 (3 women, 20 men)
Vava'u	10 (all men)
Ha'apai	14 (1 woman, 13 men)
'Eua	6 (all men)
Niuas	8 (1 woman, 7 men)

1996 recorded a high number of women candidates. Tongatapu alone had 3 women standing—the highest number compared to previous elections. A total of 5 women stood in the 1996 elections. None of them succeeded in obtaining one of the 9 People's Representatives seats.

The previous election term 1993-1995 had one woman in Parliament, 'Ofa Fusitu'a, who won the Niua People's seat. 'Ofa ran again in the 1996 election year and was unsuccessful.

Table 17: 1993 Summary of Voters Per District

1993	Registered voters	No. Registered who voted	No. Registered did not vote	Total population	% registered who voted	% registered who did not vote
Tongatapu	27,177	14,726	12,451	68,214	54	46
Vava'u	9,757	6,264	3,495	15,269	64	36
Ha'apai	7,068	4,380	2,688	7,944	61	39
'Eua	2,987	2,047	580	4,336	68	32
Niuas	1,498	1,098	400	2,407	73	27
Total	48,487	28,515	19,614	98,170	49.3	19.9

No. Of Candidates—1993 Electoral Roll

Tongatapu	15
Vava'u	13
Ha'apai	10
'Eua	9
Niuas	8

Sex composition of 1993 candidates was not available at the time of finalising this report. However this is the election year that 'Ofa Fusitu'a was first elected as the Niuas People's Representative to Parliament.

Table 18: 1990 Summary of Voters Per District

1990	Registered Voters	No. voters	No. did not vote	Total Population
Tongatapu	23,424	12,934	10,490	66,000
Vava'u	8,268	5,959	2,309	15,300
Ha'apai	6,393	4,290	2,103	8,200
'Eua	2,485	1,923	562	4,400
Ntt/NF	1,310	1,121	189	2,405
Total	41,880	26,277	15,613	96,000

No. of Candidates—1990 General Elections

Tongatapu	21 (20 men and 1 female)
'Eua	6 (all men)
Niuas	9 (all men)
Vava'u	12 (all men)
Ha'apai	7 (all men)

In the 1990 General Elections, there were a total of 55 candidates, of which one was a woman standing in the Tongatapu District. Again, the attempt for a woman to secure one of the 9 seats was unsuccessful.

Before the 1990 General Elections the last time a woman had been in Parliament was during the 1978-1980 Parliamentary term was Papiloa Foliaki. The previous Parliamentary term 1975-1977 recorded the first ever woman Parliamentarian, Princess Si'ilikutapu. Since women were given the right to vote and stand as candidates in 1951, it had taken 24 years before the first woman got into Parliament.

During the following Parliamentary terms—1981-1983, 1984-1986, 1987-1989, and 1990-1992—a total of 12 years, there were no women in Parliament. After 'Ofa Fusitu'a's term in 1993-1995, during the following Parliamentary terms—1996-1998, 1999-2001, 2002-2004—a total of 9 years, there were no women in Parliament.

2005-2007 recorded the 4th women member of Parliament in Tonga's Parliamentary history, Lepolo Taunisila. During the same Parliamentary term, in May 2006, the first ever Woman Minister was appointed, 'Alisi Taumoepeau as the Minister of Justice.

4. Previous research and consultations on gender issues and women's representation in decision-making

This section aims to collate the recommendations from a series of workshops and consultations held in Tonga over the past 12 months that dealt directly with increasing women's participation in politics and decision-making. A recent research on CEDAW undertaken by the United Nations Volunteer Project in collaboration with the Catholic Women's League is also summarised.

4.1 CEDAW Tonga research

Tonga is one of the three Pacific countries yet to ratify CEDAW.

The UNV CEDAW Tonga Survey of 2005 carried out a scoping exercise among 1,600 women throughout Tonga and the outer islands. The exercise aimed at briefly informing each of the respondents about the 15 substantive articles of CEDAW and then proceeded to ask each respondent to highlight or identify the top five articles that they personally felt were critical to address in the advancement of women's development in Tonga.

The following table gives the overall results of the exercise.

Table 19: Top Critical 5 Articles of CEDAW as Indicated by 1,600 Respondents

Area/Issue of Development	Article	Ranking
Policies to Stop Discrimination	2	1
Health Care	12	2
Political Public Life	7	3
Full Legal Status	14	4
Nationality	9	5
Work	11	6
Basic Human Rights	3	7
Social, Cultural Attitudes & Behaviour	5	8
Marriage Life	16	9
Education	10	10
Economic & Social Benefits	13	11
Participation at the International Level	8	12
Rural Women	14	13
Prostitution	6	14
Temporary Special Action to reach Equality	4	15

(Source: UNV CEDAW TONGA Report 2005)

4.2 Interim committee looking at increasing women's political participation in Tonga

November 2005—1st Meeting at International Dateline Hotel, 2nd Meeting at the Langafanua 'a Fafine Tonga Meeting Room¹³

The interim committee on Women's Representation in Politics was formulated following the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and UNIFEM Joint Consultation on *Gender Equality* with Tongan Parliamentarians. The interim committee's main objective is to increase women's political representation in Tonga by using an affirmative action framework to push for a temporary policy of safe/reserved seats.

The proposal will undergo two specific activities to be carried out by the group:

1. **Legal:** to look at the development of a policy draft to introduce the temporary affirmative action of reserving 6 seats for women over three Parliamentary sessions
2. **Strategy:** to look at the strategies that will be undertaken from 2006 up until the next elections (2008) to lobby and advocate for the new policy to take place. These strategies will include community consultations, media campaigning, leaders' forum and awareness on the advantages of affirmative action.

An extensive source of literature regarding affirmative action and quotas has been collated by this group and ongoing research such as this report will assist in their proposal to be submitted to Parliament during the 2006 session, as well as community consultations to eliminate negative attitudes towards women participating in politics and decision-making processes.

4.3 First women's round table on political reform

October 2005, Tonga National Council of Churches

The women's round table on political reform was an initiative brought on by the Tonga Women's Action for Change (TWAC) Network of professional women to bring together a group of women from various backgrounds to talk about the low level of women's representation in Parliament and politics as a whole. The aim was to start creating a roadmap towards the next general election in 2008 by looking at strategies and action plans to increase women's participation at the political level.¹⁴

Summary of discussion:

- Issues that we are passionate about as women are at most times not taken seriously by men, such as the right to be dealt with by female police officers in situations of family violence.
- Women are also human so our rights are human rights, which means we have the right to talk about and take part in decision-making regarding issues that affect all aspects of our lives.
- For many years, many of us thought that women had a fair deal in Tonga compared to the other countries in the Pacific until CEDAW made us think and analyse the real situation in Tonga.

- Only women can represent women's perspectives adequately and offer insights that are more equitable compared to most male Parliamentarians.
- Women's own interest and priorities are most of the time not important on the political agenda.
- As women, we need to strengthen our solidarity in pushing our issues forward, otherwise, if we stand alone, our issues can get lost among male dominated issues.
- We need to work with women voters and convince those at the grassroots, rural areas and throughout Tongatapu that as women we need to identify what we need, to identify the gender inequalities in our country, political issues that affect our everyday lives, our economy etc., and how its affect us and our children.
- Take pride in career opportunities for our young women who wish to take on politics as a career.
- Politics is power and control—we need to empower the women of Tonga in the area of participation in politics, whether it be raising awareness on voter's education or encouraging and supporting women as electoral candidates.
- Need to form a larger network among various women professionals to look at enhancing the area of women in politics and our participation in the entire political reform processes.
- As women we have been groomed to act and behave as delicate and well-respected females, and any sign of aggression meant that we were going against our culture and tradition.
- Some women feel that by going into Parliament you risk losing your dignity as a Tongan woman because you are prone to arguing and saying things that women usually do not say.
- There is a need to change negative social and cultural attitudes and behaviours towards women.
- Women need to get involved—it shouldn't be just an option for women—with the whole political reform process under way, as women we need to put our agenda on the political table.
- We should be involved in everything social, economic and political regarding this country.
- True democracy is allowing the equal participation of men and women in the decision-making processes of our country and ensuring that neither group is disadvantaged
- Projected statistics estimate that as women we outnumber the male population in Tonga, so we shouldn't be satisfied with the current male-dominated Parliament—we have the driving force and the power to start participating.
- The system we have in place now doesn't really discriminate against women—if we think about it carefully it is really us women who discriminate against each other and fear the success of a woman succeeding far greater than that of a man.

Recommendations:

Several debates were held on how women's participation and representation in politics could be increased. A series of recommendations were made ranging from voter education programs in the villages, electoral candidate mentoring and support programs, media campaigning for women's solidarity, to young women's awareness programs on the importance of participating in decision-making processes and politics.

The most discussed recommendation was the proposal to lobby for reserved seats or safe seats for women in the next 2008 general elections. The proposal was taken from one of the three Proposed Models for Reform presented by Lopeti Senituli. It was also an initiative taken on by an interim committee of women formed after the September 2005 Commonwealth Association Parliamentary/UNIFEM Consultation on Gender Equality held at the International Dateline Hotel attended by Members of Parliament, Nobles and Heads of Women's Organisations.

The initiative taken by the majority of the participants who had attended the first Women's Reform Consultation and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association/UNIFEM Consultation was to support the proposal to introduce an Affirmative Action Policy that would reserve 6 safe seats for women over the next 3 Parliamentary Sessions (2008-2010), (2011-2013) and (2014-2016) and to be reviewed thereafter or until such time that politics is no longer perceived as a male's domain.

Some of the opposition to the initiative was that this would eliminate a 'fair' playing field and that women should face the music and work harder as have the past four women who have been elected into Parliament. This view has been taken on by Clive Edwards in his model of reform where he proposes a fully elected base of MPs.

It is clear that there needs to be more education on the affirmative action policies and how it goes further than just formal equality of opportunity to look at outcomes. Treating women and men equally under the law does not automatically ensure that they obtain equal outcomes and benefits. As this report also deals with structural factors such as social and cultural barriers to women's participation in politics and decision-making in Tonga, it is vital that affirmative action policies are discussed in detail with government and CSO/NGO leaders, Parliamentarians and other stakeholders in order to gain a better understanding as to how they works and why it is a non-discriminatory action.

Recent developments have integrated the three models, as passed by a committee commissioned to oversee its development at a public meeting held at the International Dateline Hotel in November 2005. One of the major concerns of the November integration is that the proposed 6 reserved seats for women under Lopeti Senituli's model was removed and declared by Clive Edwards as a discriminatory action that goes against a fair playing field. Those in attendance at the meeting voted for the removal of the reserved seats for women. This is despite the fact that the reserved 9 seats for Nobles are only eligible for men as nobility can only be inherited by males.

Figure 4: Three Proposed Models for Political Reform, Laki Niu, Clive Edwards & Lopeti Senituli

<i>Current system of Government</i>	<i>Model 1—Laki Niu</i>	<i>Model 2—Clive Edwards</i>	<i>Model 3—Lopeti Senituli</i>
Tongan Monarchy & Privy Council	Tongan Monarchy & Privy Council	Tongan Monarchy & Privy Council	Constitutional Monarchy
Legislative Assembly	Legislative Assembly	Legislative Assembly	Legislative Assembly
Premier—King appointed	Premier—King appoints from people elected	Premier—nominated from the 39 people elected Parliamentarians	Privy Council: 3 King appointed, 3 Premier appointed and 3 people selected
Cabinet/Ministers: 12+2 Crown appointed	Cabinet/Ministers—King appoints deom people elected	Cabinet Ministers—Premier appoints from the people elected	Premier: King appoints Representative from popular elected
9 Nobles elected by 33 Nobles	9 Nobles—elected by 33 Nobles	6 Nobles—elected from the Nobles	Cabinet / Ministers—King appoints from total numbers of People elected
9 Peoples Reps—general public elected	30 Peoples Reps elected by general public	33 Members: all people elected: 20 Tt, 7 Vv, 4 Hp, 1 'Eua and 1 Niuas	9 Nobles People elect from Nobles list
			30 members: all elected by the people: 9 Nobles, 6 Reserved Seats for Women 15 to peoples reps to be distributed geographically

4.4 Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) & UNIFEM Parliamentary Perspective on Gender Equality

September 2005, International Dateline Hotel

A two day workshop with Tongan Parliamentarians (as well as observers from various Government and non-government women's representatives) was organised by the CPA and UNIFEM, focusing on enhancing the capacity of Tonga's Parliamentarians to implement and promote legislative processes and strategies that would advance democracy and gender equality. The workshop resulted in the following eight recommendations;

1. To initiate the immediate ratification of CEDAW
2. To consider conducting a feasibility study on the various options, including the establishment of a separate ministry to secure gender equality
3. To consider reserving 6 reserved seats for women in the Legislative Assembly as a quota for women at least for the next three elections
4. To consider changing all laws that discriminate against women and children
5. To consider that all Government Ministries should consider gender responsive budgeting
6. To increase human and financial resources for gender equality initiatives and programs
7. To hold a Women's Parliament for Tonga in 2006 or as soon as possible.

All those who attended the two day workshop passed the 8 recommendations.¹⁵

4.5 Young Women's CEDAW round table discussion on the 15 substantive articles

April 2005, CWL Conference Room, Ma'ufanga

The Young Women's CEDAW Roundtable (YWCR) was organised in urgent response to the general elections held in March 2005. As clearly stated in the Millennium Development Goal #3, Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, one of the indicators is that by 2015 the number of women holding seats in Parliament should have significantly increased. This is related to the Tonga Government's Gender and Development Plan under the Policy governing Gender & Politics (Article 7(b) of CEDAW)—for women to be able to participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof, and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government—and the Beijing Platform for Action.

Unfortunately, all the women candidates standing for Parliament in the March general election were unsuccessful, despite programs supporting the participation of women in politics, such as the Voters Education Project of the Langafonua and strong campaign efforts of the Tongatapu women candidates. It wasn't until the by-election that a woman candidate was elected as the Niua People's Representative.

Around the same time of the election, the 49th session of United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW 49) was convened in New York, where the Tonga Government was represented by a delegation led by the Hon. Deputy Prime Minister, Cecil Cocker. In a press release broadcast from the UN headquarters in New York, the Hon. Cecil Cocker was quoted as saying in their national statement, “women are highly under-represented in decision-making forums, politics and at high level committees... there is a need to strengthen the national women’s machineries to ensure progress is not only made but also done rapidly...we (Tonga) wish to reiterate our affirmation to the Beijing Platform for Action and our commitment to its full and effective implementation...”

As a response to the various commitments of the Tonga Government from the MDGs right through to the Hon. Minister’s comments at CSW 49, the YWCR was a collaborative effort between Civil Society and Government to create a space for the ‘next generation’ of women leaders by targeting the specific age group of 18-35.

The idea was to invite young women leaders from both government and civil society to the YWCR with the following four main objectives:

- To create a safe space for young women to discuss social, economic, political and cultural issues affecting them;
- To encourage critical thinking;
- To enable young women to actively participate in the promotion of CEDAW, MDGs GAD and the Pacific Plan of Action using creative and effective methodologies; and,
- To create a support group for young women's active participation and sharing of critical thinking.

The intended outcome of the YWCR was that these young women would be encouraged to act as agents of change by using peaceful methods based on CEDAW advocacy, MDGs, GAD and the Pacific Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality (PPA).

One of the changes envisaged is that by the next general election (2008) the participation and representation of Tongan women in politics will have significantly increased.

The YWCR brought together 33 young women leaders to discuss the theme “young women’s development” based on the 15 substantive articles of CEDAW.¹⁶

The two day roundtable looked at various articles presented under the United Nations Convention and healthy debate on women in politics ensued resulting in the following points and recommendations;

Some of the Issues:

- Young girls are not encouraged to take on politics as a career—they are pushed towards career options such as administration, teaching, or nursing.
- Young women are judged more harshly for the way they live and behave and if they step out of the cultural norm, they are seen as unworthy of higher positions in the workplace and in society, and are often isolated from youth groups
- Young women are rarely asked about their opinion at home and are not encouraged to take part in family decision-making processes
- Young women are not encouraged to stand for what they believe in and to assert their

rights—if they do so they are seen as uncontrollable and their mothers are deemed to have failed in their duty of raising them

- Within the classroom context, young children are not encouraged to question the teacher or offer other insights—it is a straight dictation and recording writing exercise

Main Recommendations:

- To support career opportunities for young women who want to take up politics as a career and to teach subjects that relate to politics in school.
- Offer leadership programs for young women so that they are able to effectively participate in decision-making processes at home, in the community and the country as a whole without fear and without stepping on any one's toes (e.g. Youth Parliament).
- Civil society as a whole to encourage the participation of young people, particularly young girls in discussions and decision-making processes.
- Establish a young women's working group to work towards the achievement of the MDGs (particularly Goal 3) and the ratification of CEDAW, the implementation of GAD, the PPA and the Beijing Platform of Action.
- Look at actions to stop discrimination, particularly through a communications strategy.
- Programs to help young single mothers.
- Dramas and programmes to change negative social, cultural attitudes and behaviours (this came up several times).
- Awareness of basic human rights.
- Empowerment of women through creative and effective ways.
- Create spaces for women to speak and raise their issues.

5 Research findings

Due to the limited quantitative and qualitative data available on the status of women's political participation in Tonga, it was decided that a short survey be conducted among 250 women spread throughout Tonga in order to get an indication of why representation of women in the political arena is so low. The idea was to focus on the main decision-making processes that women are faced with on a daily basis, and within the community or workplace.

Questions were formulated to look at *why* women's numbers as candidates are low however, many there may be as registered voters. The questions aimed to show the linkages between the various areas where women's representation and participation are low.

The survey also aimed at demonstrating the crucial need for more quantitative and qualitative data to be conducted on the status of women's political participation and representation. It is hoped that this would encourage government leaders and Parliamentarians to develop effective strategies to enhance the political participation and representation of women in Tonga by enabling a more facilitating environment, even if it means thoroughly re-looking at the norms of culture and tradition that often lead to the negative stereotyping of men and women, particularly in the area of politics.

The 250 women surveyed are largely represented by grassroots and working-class women. This was particularly important because women professionals from both the private and public sector were given the opportunity to present their views through the individual interviews and the discussions that have been held around this issue since April 2005.

Giving grassroots and working class women the opportunity to participate in the report will breathe life into the lived realities of women and what they think about decision-making, women leaders and women in politics in general.

5.1 Results

Figure 5: National representation of women respondents

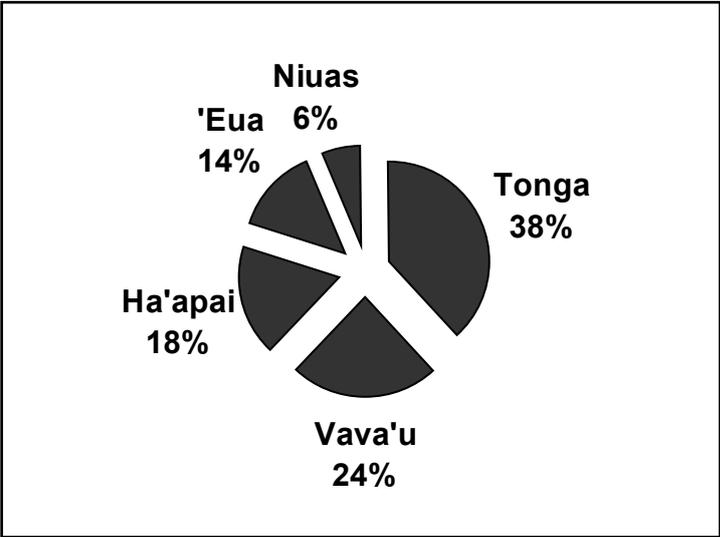
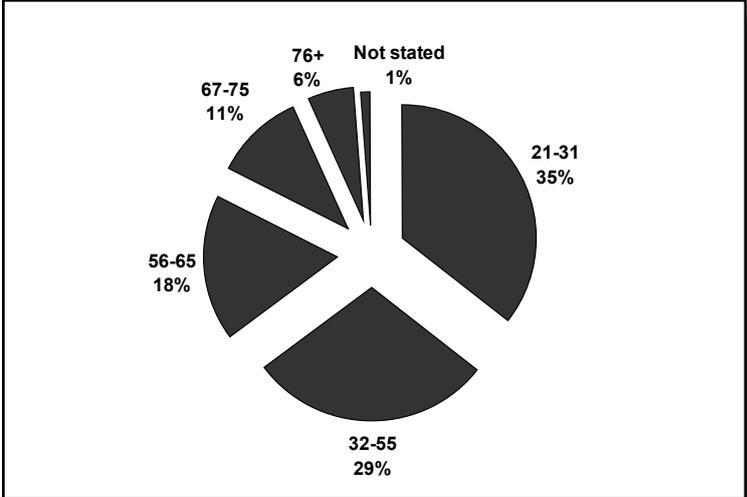


Figure 6: Respondents by age groupings

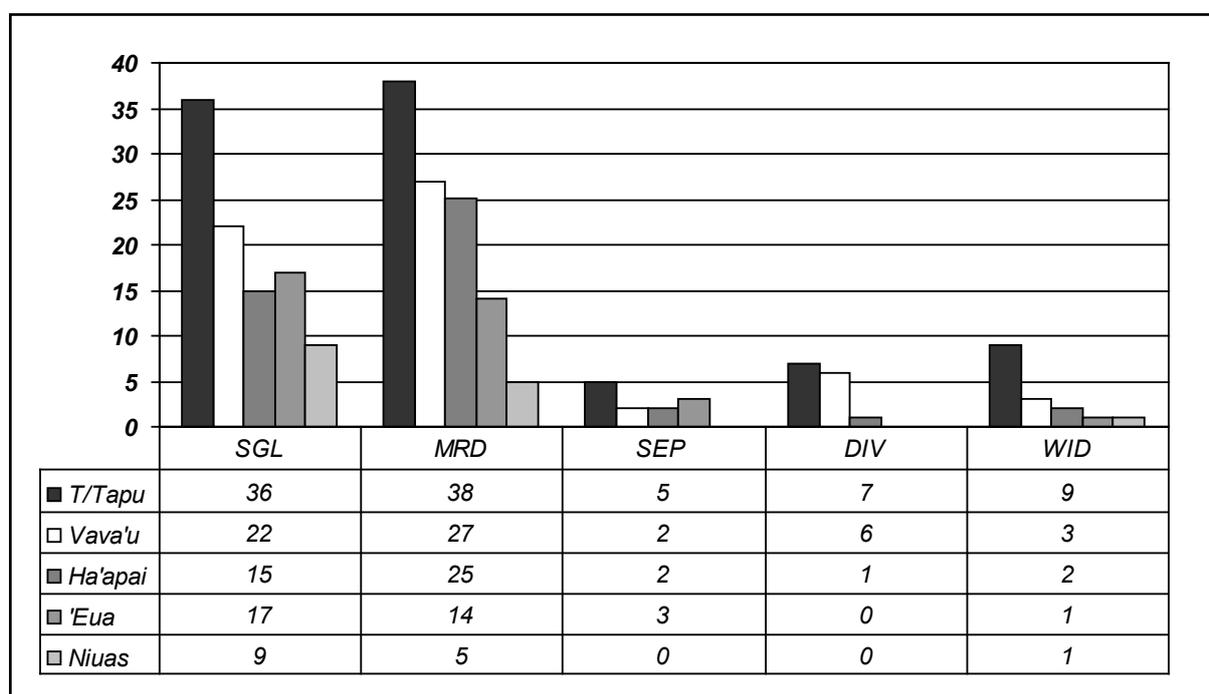


Only respondents 21 years of age and above, as of February 2006, answered the questionnaire. The majority of respondents fell into the 21-31 and the 32-55 age brackets. Three respondents did not state their age.

A simple three-page questionnaire, with a total of 20 questions, was formulated for the collection of general qualitative data. As noted earlier, questions were designed with the assumption that there are strong linkages between women's participation and representation in decision-making processes in the home, work place and other institutions, with that in formal decision-making processes. A total of 250 randomly selected women answered the questionnaire. Figure 2 shows the coverage of the 250 respondents by island groups, with Tongatapu women constituting the majority with a total of 38 per cent.

It would have been ideal to reach a greater number of women throughout Tongatapu, but budgetary and time constraints prevented this.

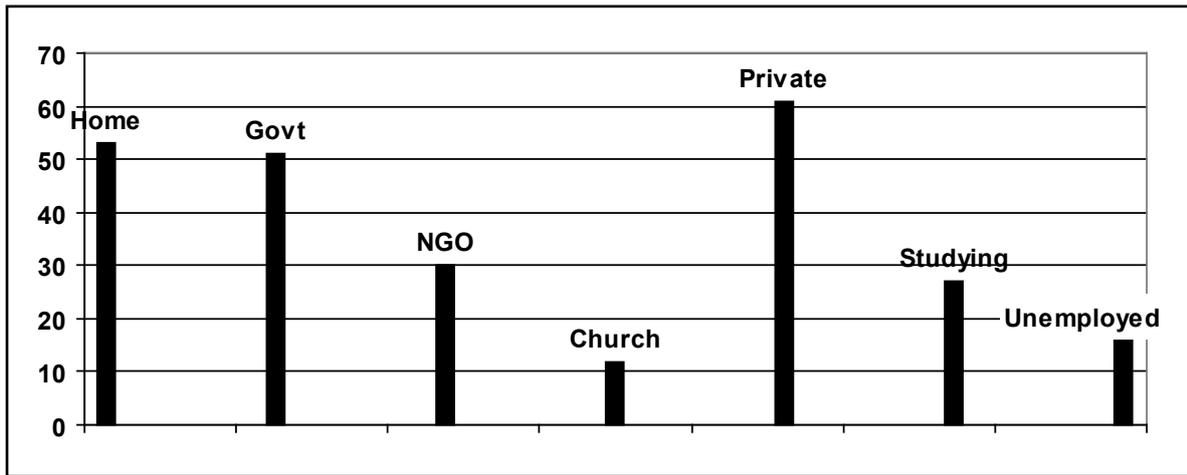
Figure 7: Respondents by marital status



Key: SGL = Single, MRD = Married, SEP = Separated, DIV = Divorced, WID = Widowed

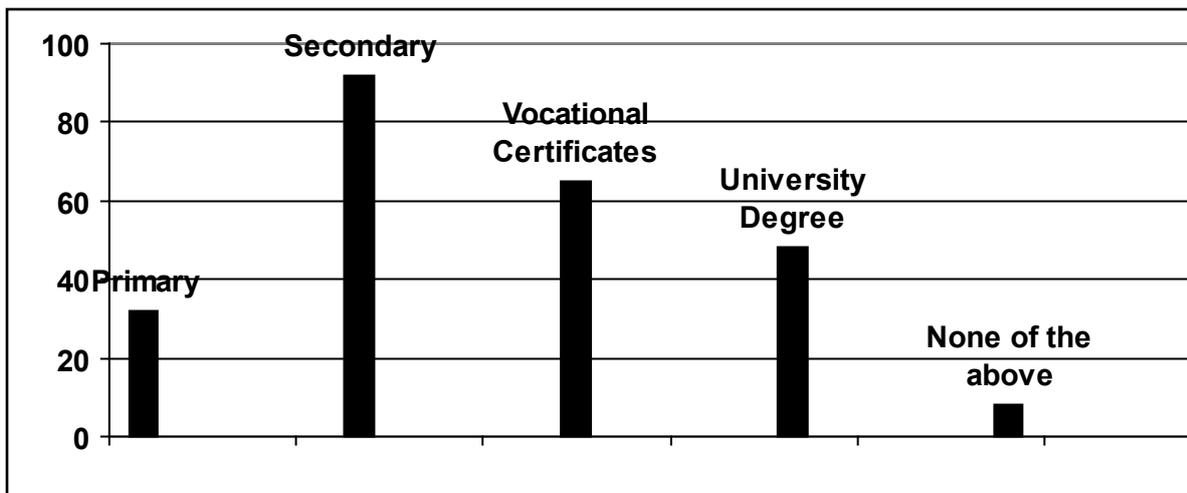
A question regarding the marital status of the respondents was helpful in predicting of the type of household and family context the women were living in. Being single in Tonga does not mean flatting or living independently. It is common and also the accepted cultural practice that young single women remain at their family home until they marry or emigrate even when well over 21 years of age. Almost all of the respondents who indicated that they were separated, divorced or widowed remained at their husband's family home with the paternal family (in the case that the husband had left) or had returned to their family home. None of these women had acquired independent housing or accommodation.

Figure 8: Respondents employment status



The majority of respondents indicated that they were employed in the private sector with home careers and civil servants following closely. The private sector includes shop assistants, company administrators, executives, business owners etc, but the majority of respondents in this category were low- to middle-level private sector employees with only a few high-level private sector (employer or business executive).

Figure 9: Respondents' Highest Level of Education



The majority of respondents had completed secondary level. Others had attained vocational certificates (secretarial courses, technical courses, short courses) with university degree holders following in third place.

Table 20: Who makes most of the decisions at home regarding the following: (Out of 250 respondents who answered the questionnaire)

	Myself	Both my husband and I	Only my husband	Paternal Family	Maternal Family	My Father	My Mother	Both Parents
Children	87	65	51	39	11	43	143	64
Financial	52	77	99	12	5	128	48	67
Social & Cultural Obligations	73	94	22	52	12	13	81	152
Political Issues	51	83	101	7	3	156	41	53

When it comes to decision-making in the home, many would argue that women or the ‘mother’ has a very strong position. However when this was put to the test among the 250 respondents, they clearly identified just how much influence they had when it came to various types of basic decision-making in the home.

Most respondents felt that making decisions about children was their domain, and even though their husbands or father would have a say, the ultimate day-to-day decision-making is carried out by the mother. Single unmarried respondents indicated that it was their father who controlled and made the major financial decisions:

“Yes, it’s true that my father would ask my mother like what are the bills of the month and how much food we require for the week, school fees etc, but he would be the one who would divide the money and then give it to my mother to pay the bills, but whatever is left over is really up to him how he spends it. He goes *kava* drinking a lot and so some of the money goes there, as for the rest he just keeps it with him until we ask for specific things.” (19-year-old respondent)

Decisions with respect to social and cultural obligations were dominated by both parents, as indicated by single unmarried women. It was also a joint decision as indicated by married women.¹⁷

Decisions about political issues were mainly made by the father as indicated by single and unmarried respondents who said that ‘they rarely hear their mothers talking about politics at home’. It was noted that discussions about politics were dominated by their fathers, especially those who participate in *kava* drinking. Married respondents indicated that the political opinion in the household was dictated by their husbands although a high number also indicated that they were also involved in forming their own political views.

Table 21: Decisions made at the workplace/institution or groups

	TRUE	FALSE	NOT SURE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are more men in higher positions at my workplace/institution than there are women 	82%	11%	7%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most of the decisions made at work or in my organisation are made by men 	78%	9%	13%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are more qualified men at my workplace than there are women 	22%	71%	7%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There should be more women at the decision-making level at my workplace 	42%	23%	35%

It is interesting to note that there are large number of responses in the NOT SURE category. The majority of responses fell in this category because the respondents noted that although they acknowledged that women were capable and qualified for higher positions at their workplace and/or in other institutions, whether more women should be involved in decision-making really depended on who the woman is and her character because “some of them couldn’t be trusted”:

“Most of the arguments that happen at work are in the departments that are dominated by female staff—and most of these women (believe it or not) are well educated and have really good qualifications but when it comes down to daily operations, most of them can’t handle most situations and are too personal about things at work, that’s why, even though I would agree that most of the men at work are idiots, they are more effective at daily management operations—because they don’t cause major fights among other workers and their job gets done at the end of the day.” (Government Civil Servant)

During individual interviews (as presented later in this report) some participants noted that women were unfairly judged by other women compared to how they viewed male candidates for higher positions. For example, women judged other women workers more harshly, analysing past personal and professional accounts. If, say, a women who was well qualified and skilled for a higher position, but was known for having an affair with a married man, she would be frowned upon despite all her credentials. A man with a similar background, however, would be “let off the hook” because as they say “that’s his personal life and he’s a male which is typical!”

Despite the high percentage of qualified and skilled women, the majority of respondents indicated that the highest positions were still being obtained by their male counterparts.

Table 22: The groups in my Village or Town who participate most towards its overall development.

GROUPS	PARTICIPATION (%)
1. Town / District Officers	58%
2. Churches	87%
3. Men's Groups / <i>Kava</i> Clubs	69%
4. Women's Groups	87%
5. Youth Groups	81%
6. Business / The Wealthy	82%
7. Nobles	21%
8. Other	54%

The top 5 groups indicated by the respondents were (1) Churches, (1) Women's Groups, (2) Business / Wealthy, (3) Youth Groups, (4) Men's *Kava* Clubs, (5) Town & District Officer

Table 23: Decisions made at the Village level or Town Setting (Rating 1 = most to 8 = least)

Town/District Officers	Churches	Men's <i>Kava</i> Clubs	Women's Groups	Youth Groups	Business /the wealthy	Nobles	Other
1	2	5	6	7	3	4	8

In the ratings of which groups has the most influential position in the decision-making processes of a village or Town setting the respondents highlighted the following top 3:

1. Town and District Officers
2. Churches
3. Business People

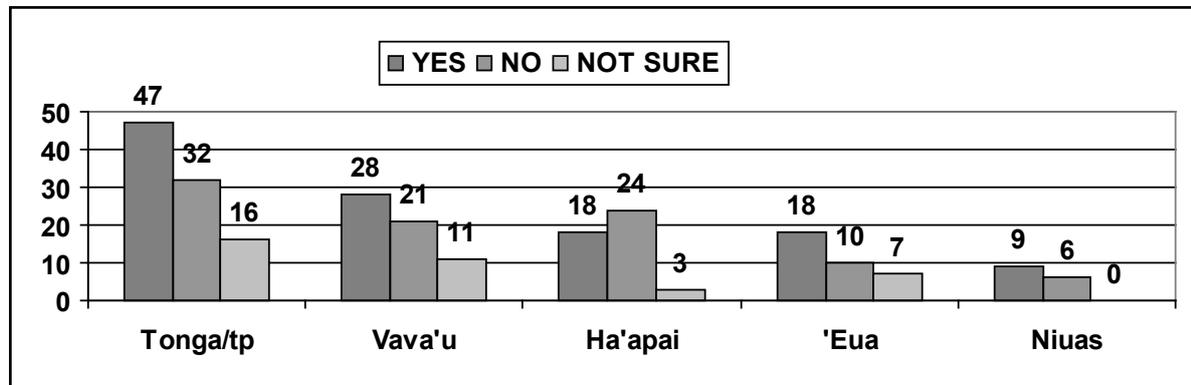
Women's groups rated 6th place while youth groups rated 7th. Some respondents selected 'other' on the forms and noted that other groups not listed are overseas village committees, *matapule* (talking chiefs) big land owners, and highly-educated people. This is despite the fact that Women's Groups rated an equal first with Churches in their work to develop the village and Town / District Officers rating 5th place.

Based on discussions with several of the respondents, village decisions would include cultural obligations, land issues (bringing Nobles to 4th rating), project activities such as water supply, criminality, business activities, renovations and construction of new church buildings / community halls, maintenance of historical places. Consequently, respondents also acknowledged that when it came to implementing initiatives, women and youth were the most actively involved;

"It always happens that way, whatever is decided at the village *fono* where majority are men, is then relayed back to us women by either our husbands or the Town and District Officers and then we are really the ones who make it happen, we women will push and push until the initiative is achieved...and our children, our youth are the ones who are the first to help us." (Questionnaire respondent, Mataika)

Most of the village *fono* are held in the main hall where the *kava* club is held and are followed by a *kava* drinking session. Most of the respondents felt that this deterred them from attending and left it to their husbands to bring the outcomes of the meeting home after the *kava* club.

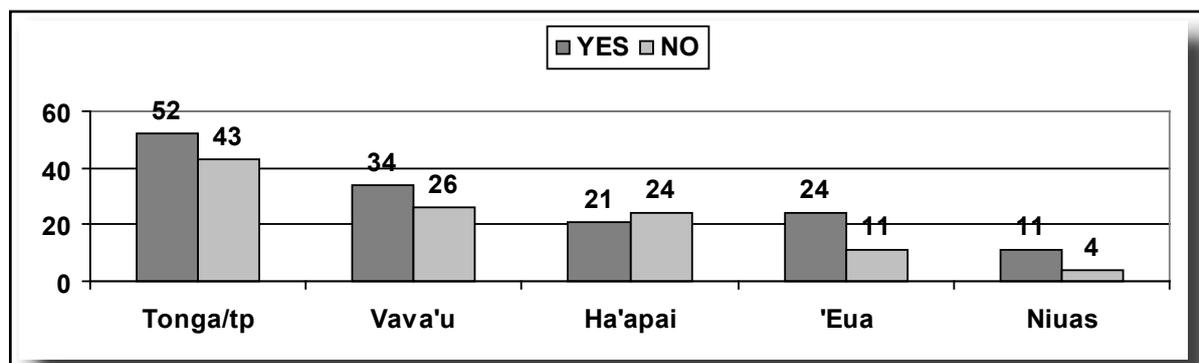
Figure 10: Have You Ever Registered Before in the Tonga Elections?



Ha'apai recorded the highest number of respondents who have not registered to vote in the Tonga General Elections at 24 per cent from a total of 60 respondents who took part in the questionnaire from Ha'apai. Other outer islands including Tongatapu, indicated higher percentages that have registered to vote.

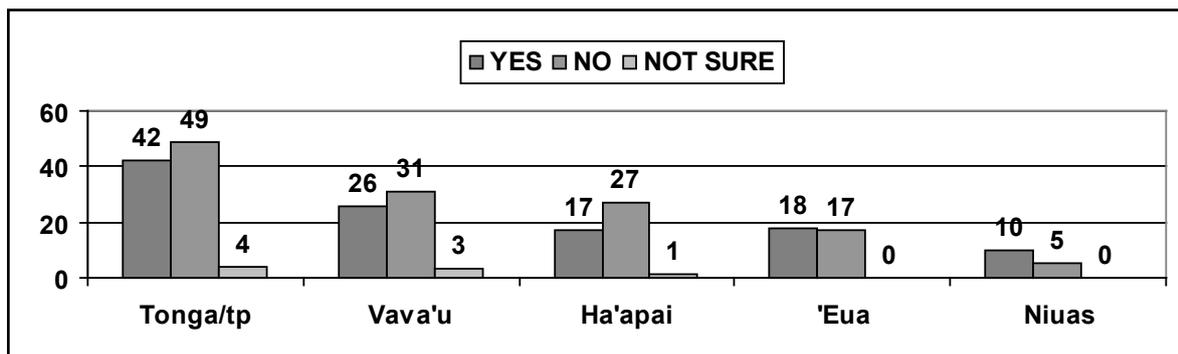
Some of the older respondents, who couldn't remember if they had registered, further indicated that they also don't remember voting before but that they do remember the voting taking place in their villages. A lot of the respondents also could not recollect if they had registered, and when asked if they had ever voted before, indicated that they had not.

Figure 11: Do Respondents Know How and Where to Register?



Apart from Ha'apai, other island groups indicated that the majority of people questioned there, knew how to register and where to vote. (The places to register as an elector in each district are as follows: **Tongatapu:** Prime Ministers Office, **Vava'u & Ha'apai:** Governor's Office, **'Eua & Niuatoputau:** Magistrates Office). (Officers also visit villages and Towns).

Figure 12: Number of Respondents who have voted in any Tonga General Election



Surprisingly, there was a greater percentage in the Tongatapu, Vava'u and Ha'apai districts who indicated they had never voted in the Tonga General Elections. Most of these respondents made the following comments:

1. People's Representatives don't really make a difference anyway—they are always outvoted in the house
2. The King appoints the real decision makers, i.e. the Ministers of the Crown and he never appoints any women even though there are many highly educated-women
3. Need to change form of Government first before I vote
4. Over the last two Parliamentary sessions the Human Rights Democracy Movement has got their members in by landslide votes—so what's the use?
5. I was overseas at the time
6. I just couldn't be bothered even though I was registered
7. I wasn't registered so I couldn't vote

Figure 13: Based on your most recent vote, did you vote according to your own decision?

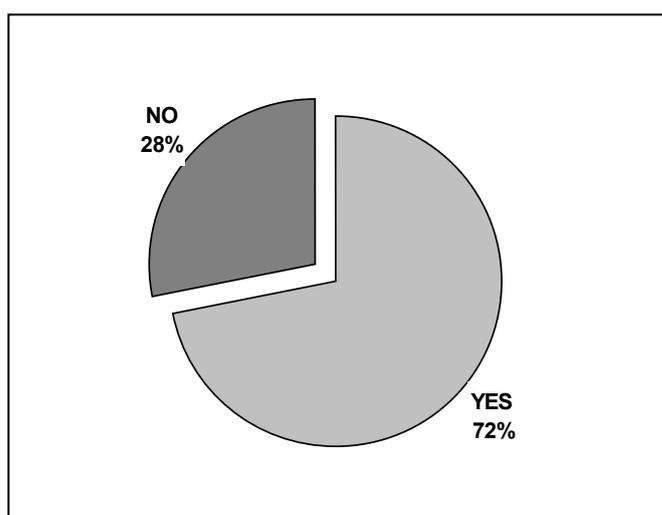
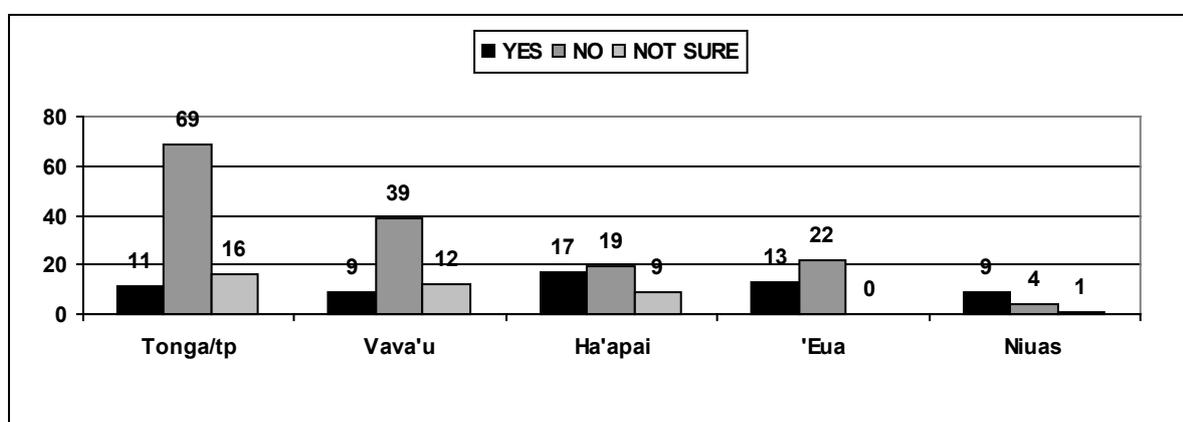


Table 24: What your vote depends on

	Tongatapu Rating	Vava'u Rating	Ha'apai Rating	'Eua Rating	Niuas Rating
The qualities of the candidate and what the candidate goals / vision / mission are	1	2	5	1	1
The relationship I have with the candidate (e.g. a relative of family friend)	7	7	9	6	5
The village or Town where the candidate is from	9	8	8	8	9
The contributions that the candidate makes to my village, family or institution	4	1	3	4	2
The personal life of the candidate	3	3	2	2	3
The history / family / religion of the candidate	5	4	4	6	6
The education of the candidate	2	5	1	3	4
Whether the candidate is male or female	8	9	6	7	8
What my husband / father / male head of the family or male partner thinks of the candidate	6	6	7	5	7
Other (respondents indicated things such as past performance, campaign tactics, what the media says about the candidates, what friends say)	10	10	10	10	10

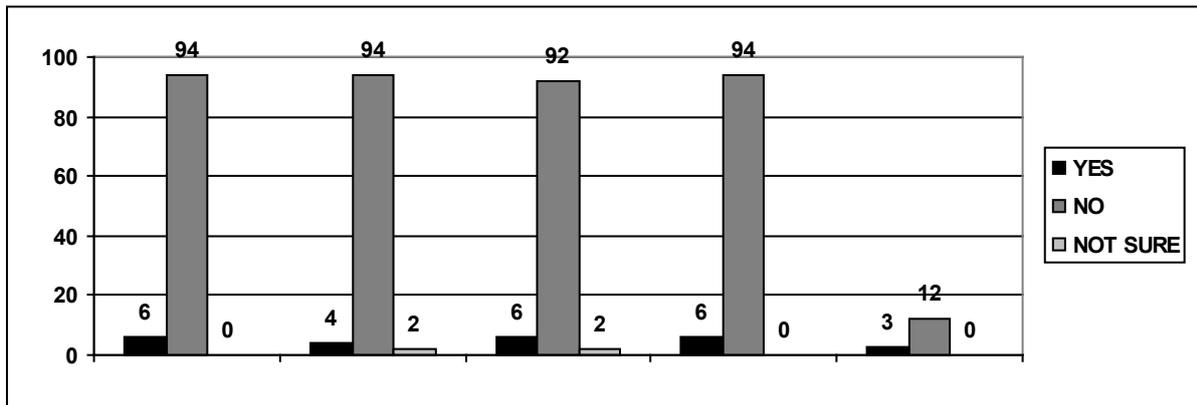
Figure 14: Is the registration process too difficult to understand for you as a woman?



A large majority of respondents indicated that they did find the registration process difficult. Those who did mentioned the following barriers:

- Transportation to the registration office if they have missed the village or town registration
- Did not want to register in the village that they currently live in
- Was going to register in the outer island district
- Too lazy to register
- Not interested in voting at all so didn't want to register

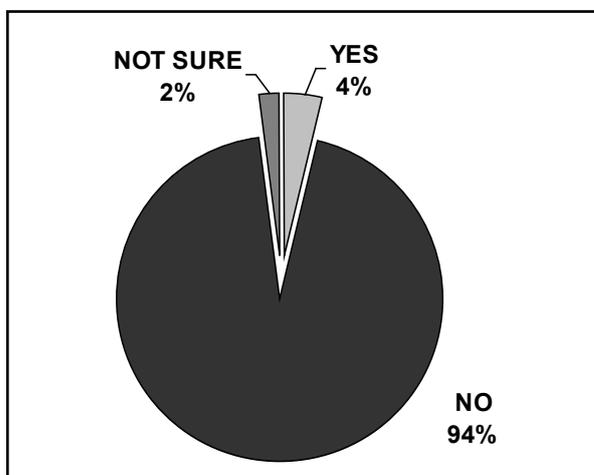
Figure 15: Is the process of casting your vote on the day of voting too difficult for you as a woman?



The large majority of respondents who had indicated that they had voted before in the Tonga General Elections said that they found the processes of voting on the actual day of voting straightforward and accessible. Respondents also indicated that the ballot paper was easy to follow and comprehend.

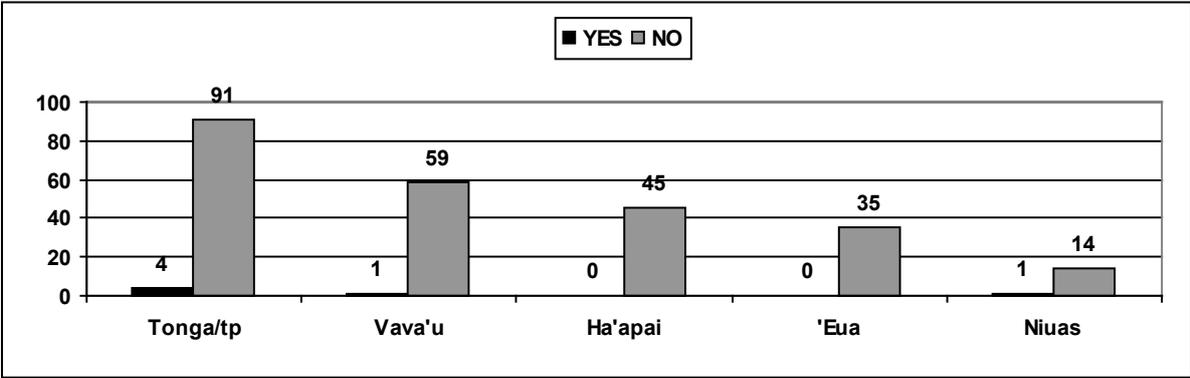
The very few who indicated that they found it difficult, were those whose husbands did not approve of them voting or were not able to leave the home due to their other responsibilities, such as washing, cleaning and preparing family meals.

Figure 16: Does the entire Tonga voting process, both registration and actual voting processes on the day deter women from participating?



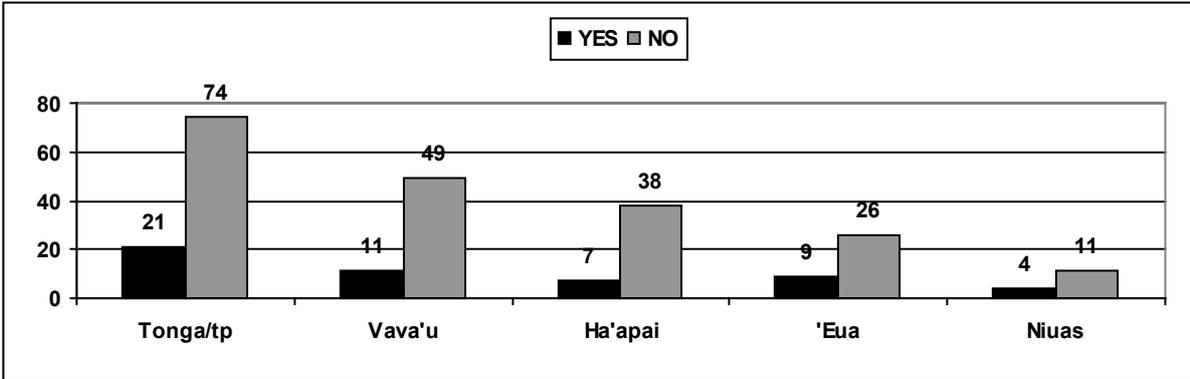
94 per cent of respondents indicated that voting procedures did not deter women from voting. The 4 per cent who did indicate there were barriers, highlighted issues such as having to vote between the hours of 9-4pm which were not ideal, especially if they had chores to do around the house. They suggested the time be extended to 5-6:00pm.

Figure 17: Percentage of respondents who have previously registered to stand as a candidate in the Tonga Elections



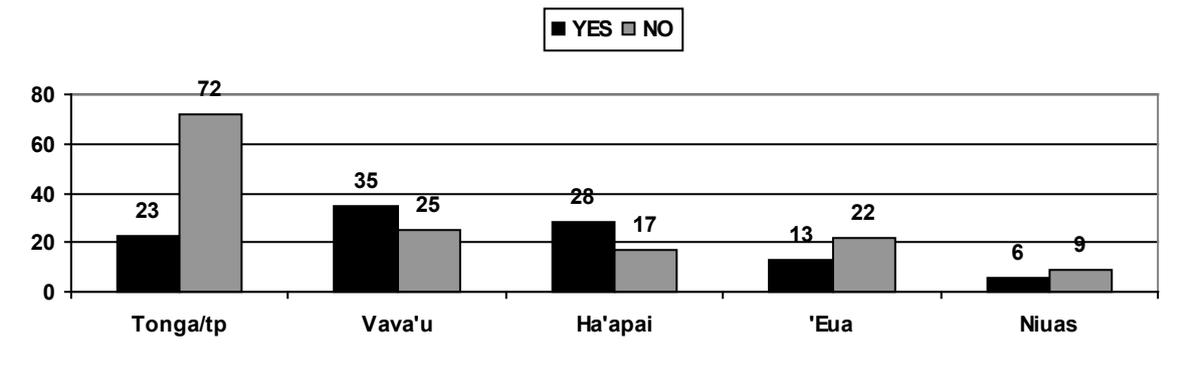
A low percentage of respondents indicated that they had registered before as an electoral candidate. In the case of Ha'apai and 'Eua there were no previously registered candidates.

Figure 18: Percentage of respondents who have thought about standing for the Tonga General Elections



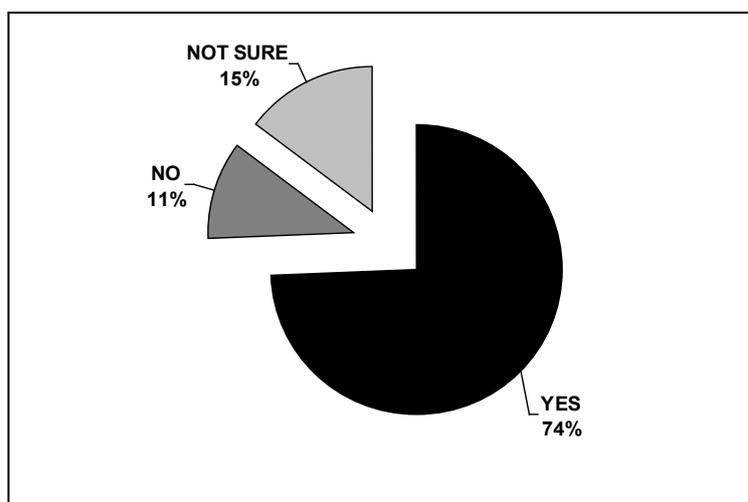
There was a surprising response in the number of respondents who indicated that they had thought about standing as candidates in the Tonga General Elections at one point in their lives. 52 respondents out of a total of 250 respondents indicated that they had thought about standing as an electoral candidate.

Figure 19: Are men more suited to being politicians than women?



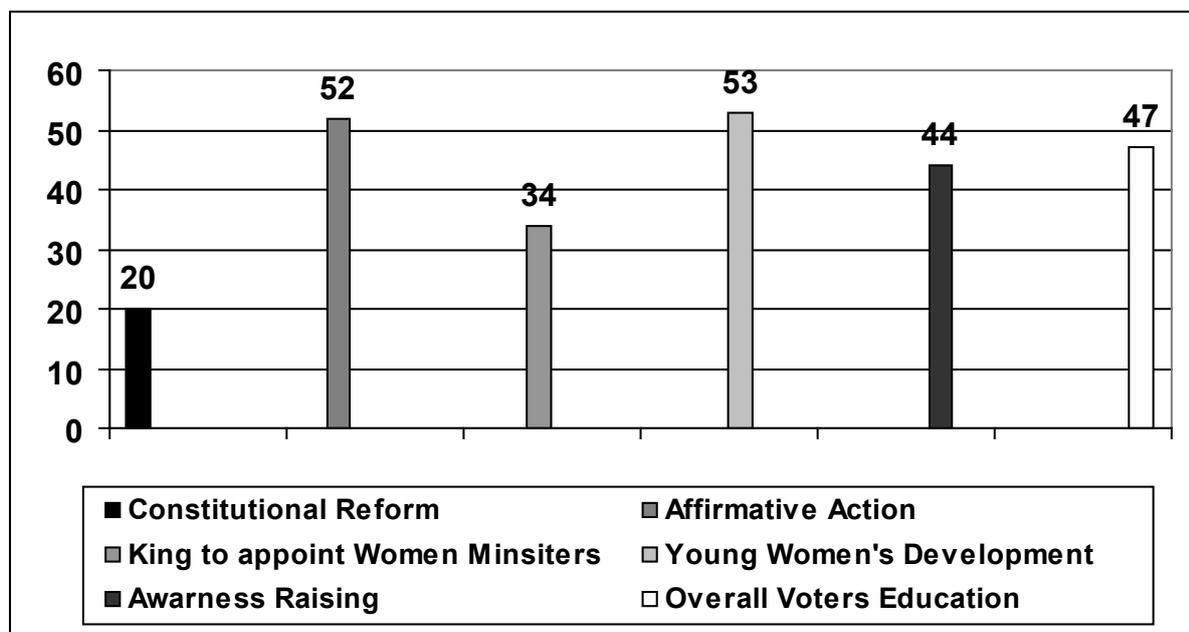
The overall response for the Tongatapu, 'Eua and Niua districts was that men were not more suited to being politicians than women. In Vava'u and Ha'apai however there was still quite a high response that men were better suited.

Figure 20: Should there be more women in Tonga's Parliament?



- The majority of respondents (74 per cent) indicated that there should be more women represented in Parliament, not only as People's Representatives but also as Ministers of the Crown.
- 15 per cent indicated that they were not sure, and a large number of these respondents noted that they were hesitant to indicate whether there should be more women because it might turn out to be "a total disaster". Most of the respondents acknowledged that it is a new initiative and it should be thought about carefully.
- There was a small percentage (11 per cent) who answered negatively. The majority of reasons were due to neglecting motherhood and the responsibilities of the home if more women were to get into Parliament. As one respondent put it, "women's place is at home to look after and take care of things there, like the children and husband etc.... If she gets into Parliament there's no saying what will happen in households..."

Figure 21: How can women's political participation be enhanced?



5.2 Individual interviews

Tongatapu / Vava'u / Ha'apai / 'Eua & The Niiuas District interviews

Representatives of the following organisations were interviewed individually:

Tonga Business Association, Citizen's Advocacy Committee, Human Rights and Democracy Movement, Catholic Women's League, Tonga Women's Action for Change, Women's Development Centre PMO, Tonga Trust, Anglican Church, Tonga Development Bank, Westpac Bank of Tonga, Central Planning Department, Friendly Island Teachers Association, Tonga National Youth Congress, Centre for Women & Children, People's Representatives to Parliament, National Reform Committee, Langafonua, District and Town Officers, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Health, Tonga Family Health Association, Department of Statistics, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Justice, Crown Law, Electoral Office PM.

A pool of individuals was also invited to take part in an interview about women's political participation in Tonga and the processes of registering and voting under Tonga General Elections.

The outcomes of the 5 district interviews are summarized in the following tables:

Issue 1: Registering to Vote

POSITIVE	NEGATIVE	RECOMMENDATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both men & women can register to vote • Free to register for either district currently living in or district originally from • Registering is relatively easy and its good when officers visit villages and towns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The timeframe for voting is not clear especially for people who do not have access to such information • Eligible voting age is too high—should allow 18+ years to vote 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More awareness on the importance of registering for both men and women via all forms of media • Target age groupings that are found to be least participative • Campaign targeting women only on the importance of voting

Issue 2: Registering as a Candidate

POSITIVE	NEGATIVE	RECOMMENDATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If one has a police record or in debt they are disqualified • Open to both men and women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough voters education for women to look at electoral candidates and calling for more women to stand as candidates • Voters education is not aggressive enough via the media to attract more women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold community consultations on the importance of gender equality in Parliament and decision-making processes at all levels

Issue 3: Voting on the day

POSITIVE	NEGATIVE	RECOMMENDATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voting booths in village districts easy to access • Voting ballot form easy to comprehend • Booths offer privacy for the voter • Hours for voting offer flexibility for voters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travelling to Nuku'alofa to make votes for Outer Island Electorates can sometimes deter residents from far away villages from participating • Doesn't offer citizens who are working / studying / temporarily living overseas the opportunity to vote from overseas posting • Not enough ads on media such as TV and Radio reminding people of the voting booths and times and the importance of voting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special media campaigns for youth and women to remind them that their every vote counts • Establish overseas posts in the main centres with high number of Tongan citizens such as NZ, Australia and USA

Issue 4: Campaigning of Candidates

POSITIVE	NEGATIVE	RECOMMENDATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$10,000 limit for each candidate to spend on his or her campaign—this will avoid corruption and bribery • Not based on party system where the candidate is supported by a party—should be on his or her own merit and standing like we have now 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Majority of campaigning is concentrated towards <i>kava</i> clubs • Voters education for women not representative enough—too much focused on women who already have access to information • Absence of Party based system—candidates are left to campaign on their own—becomes too personal based • Some candidates buy their votes by way loaning money to people and making huge donations to village or Town activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to establish mentoring program for women candidates and support base information • Start a young women's program early • Community awareness programs on bribery and what it is and how you can tell (this could perhaps see more women getting into Parliament because they don't have money to splash around)

Issue 5: Election of 9 People's Representatives

POSITIVE	NEGATIVE	RECOMMENDATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An opportunity for the people to vote for their Parliamentary district reps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 seats compared to 24 seats appointed by the King is not enough for the people. 3 votes for Tongatapu is not enough should be increased to 5 maybe this will increase women's participation because the 3 votes over the last two Parliamentary sessions have gone to the same candidates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce affirmative action such as reserves seats for a temporary time frame only • Increase the number of seats in Parliament so that you can have quotas in each district • Community awareness on Gender Equality

Issue 6: Parliamentary Makeup

POSITIVE	NEGATIVE	RECOMMENDATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> King remains at the top—important to maintain our monarchy as it's the only monarchy in the Pacific 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Favours male dominance by way of structure—women only have a hope of getting in if the King appoints a female Minister (which had never happened before 2006) or via the 9 seats for People's Reps The seats reserved for Nobles and the two governors are for men only The dominance of male in Parliament and the King's appointment of only males gives wrong messages to the young generation in that only men can handle politics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to look at reform to current Parliament structure —might be a good idea to hold national referendum to see if people want a change from our current governing structure and then move from there Need to lobby the King to appoint a female Minister as a positive message to the younger generation—if not one maybe two or three Push for the affirmative action initiative for reserved seats for women temporarily so that women can get used to the idea of women being in Parliament

Issue 7: Women's participation in politics

POSITIVE	NEGATIVE	RECOMMENDATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will ensure gender lenses are placed on the political agenda Will ensure gender equality Empowerment of Women vis-à-vis access to decision-making processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some of the women who might get voted into Parliament may have no interest in women's issues Faces sexual and degrading comments about women's issues in Parliament—need to have a hard stomach to bear these comments Having only one woman in Parliament can mean very little because your issues get drowned out by the male dominated house This makes people think that as a woman you didn't really achieve anything so they refrain from voting for women in the next round Women get judged much more harshly by other women about their moves in Parliament 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create support programs for women MPs and a network to constantly feed women MPs with information and issues Develop gender equality and non discriminatory practices for Parliament Ensure reserved seats policy so that a greater number of women enter Parliament until such time the negative attitudes of women and politics is changed by awareness and workshop programs

Issue 8: Women’s place is in the home not Parliament with the ‘big boys’

POSITIVE	NEGATIVE	RECOMMENDATIONS
NO COMMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A women’s role at home is often jeopardised by her participation in politics—often marriages can be at stake • Schools do not encourage career opportunities in the area of politics for young girls and boys • Girls are encouraged to follow traditional career options that have been always looked upon as female occupation such as nursing, secretarial administration, teaching or careers that traditionally encouraged such as lawyers and professions—a career as a politician is never placed on the table • Young women are trained from a very early age at home, church, youth groups to aim at becoming very good mothers—with motherhood comes the duties of looking after the home and so fourth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to start early and introduce politics as a career option or politics as a study subject in the schools at least at the senior level • Create leadership programs for young women so that they can identify the qualities and skills that they possesses • Encourage young girls to take part in decision-making processes at home, school and youth groups—you don’t have to be too aggressive about it • Women MPs to carry out more talks about their career choices and the challenges of being a women in politics—highlighting the advantages for women

Issue 9: Women fearing other women succeeding

POSITIVE	NEGATIVE	RECOMMENDATIONS
NIL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discourages women from standing knowing that women’s votes are hard to obtain • Further reiterates to society that politics is not a place for women because they rarely get into Parliament • Reinforces social and cultural attitudes that women have to prove themselves twice as hard in order to get recognized 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a national campaign looking at strengthening women’s solidarity and reaching out to the grassroots level throughout Tongatapu and the outer islands promoting politics as an option for women • Look at value and belief systems that are culturally embedded and that lead to discrimination and create strategies to eliminate these negative social and cultural behaviours • Look at concentrating on the young women generation to encourage solidarity and strengthening young women’s leadership skills

Issue 10: Increasing women’s participation by introducing safe seats/ reserved seats over a period of 3 Parliamentary terms (9 years)

POSITIVE	NEGATIVE	RECOMMENDATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will for a short period of time prove to the overall society that women can equally participate in politics as have men over the last 5 decades • Will send positive messages to younger women future leaders of Tonga and achieve MDG’s goal 3 by 2015 • Will eliminate discriminatory social, cultural attitudes and behaviours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some may think that its an easy access to Parliament and that its goes against democratic principles or proving a fair playing field for both sexes • Women need to go through the same system as men if hey want to prove themselves • Quota systems only show that women are incapable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness on the quota system and the framework of affirmative action so that eh general public thoroughly understands • Bring to the attention of MPs and the public a list of best practices of affirmative actions that have worked worldwide • Hold over a number of sessions only

Summary of main barriers to women’s participation

- Politics is not offered as career option at school—therefore young women do not consider politics as an option for the future
- Decision-making processes are still largely seen as the man’s domain, as head of the household
- Only recently have women started to share decision-making at home
- Within the community, village, work place and country as a whole—decision-making is still male dominated
- Being outspoken, assertive and “loud” as a woman is seen in a much different light—unfeminine and too aggressive for a real Tongan women. However, these skills are required to become a good politician
- What women think of other women is a total turn-off for many women thinking about standing as candidates
- The assumption that duties of motherhood and being a wife will be jeopardised if a women becomes and MP
- Women can’t talk politics—they talk personal issues
- The *faikava* circle is seen by many as the hub of information flow and therefore they depend on what their husbands and fathers tell them based on what was discussed at the kava circle
- Women fear other women becoming successful
- *Fahu* system = High in Rank (Women)
- *’Ulumotu’a* system = High in Power (Men)

- Politics is seen as a man's domain and this is further reinforced because no woman has ever been appointed by any Monarch to Ministerial Positions*
- Women's place is at home and if she gets the matters of the home right than the matters of the country will be right

* This changed after the interviews were concluded.

CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY 1

Fuiva Kavaliku—Close Call in the 2005 General Elections

As a mother of 16 children and the 'great woman' who stood beside her husband, Langi *Kavaliku*, former Deputy Prime Minister of Tonga and long time Minister of Education, Fuiva *Kavaliku* has been a great inspiration for many Tongan women.

Juggling the art of raising 16 children and supporting her husband, Fuiva still found time to actively participate in programs that aimed at the holistic empowering of Tongan women. Fuiva has contributed her skills to various charity organisations, NGOs and church groups, and has voluntarily worked for organisations such as World Vision International and the YWCA. She is now currently the Technical Advisor of the Langafonua 'a Fafine Tonga which is also the National Council of Women.

In the 2005 general elections Fuiva, with the full support of her husband, children and grandchildren took it upon herself to register as an Electoral Candidate after finding that very few women had registered as candidates (this was secondary to the fact that she was suitably qualified and skilled to be a member of Parliament).

Out of a total of 31 electoral candidates in the Tongatapu electoral district, there were 3 female electoral candidates. As an advocate for women's empowerment and holistic development, well known among many as a self-motivated individual, Fuiva's chances of getting into Parliament appeared bright. However, Fuiva's biggest challenge was overcoming negative social and cultural attitudes that claimed the woman's place is in the home and not in the house of Parliament. Despite these attitudes, Fuiva fought hard at changing these perceptions and at creating a new wave of thinking about women and politics as a whole.

Fuiva came in 5th overall out of 31 candidates with a total of 3,219 votes: a close call for a woman contesting in Tongatapu. The by-election was also another close call between Fuiva and Clive Edwards who won the third seat with Fuiva almost taking the seat. Fuiva believes that women need to be encouraged to vote for other women and to accept that politics is a place for both men and women—only then will we see more women getting into Parliament. One of the methods suggested by Fuiva is introducing reserved seats to show people women can make a difference in Parliament, and once it is positively accepted, the affirmative action measure can be removed.

CASE STUDY 2

Lepolo Mahe Taunisila –Support from her husband and family led her to become the 4th Woman MP in the 2005 By-Elections

Since moving to work in the Niuas, Lepolo's interest in politics increased significantly. Often seen as a very humble yet strongly opinionated woman, Lepolo found herself closely attuned to the needs of the people and thoroughly aware of their daily concerns.

Because radio is still the main form of media communication, Lepolo was able to follow politics as well as economic and social issues of the country on a daily basis as it was her only way of keeping in touch with what was going on in Tonga.

In 1985 Lepolo was an assistant teacher at 'Atele College and moved through various other government schools including being stationed at the Education office over the last 20 years. Her last teaching position was her 2000-2005 appointment at Niua High School, where both her and husband taught.

It never once entered Lepolo's mind that because she was a woman, it would hinder her chances of getting into Parliament. Instead, Lepolo concentrated on the qualities and skills required by a politician and the importance of understanding the issues and the needs of the Niua people. Lepolo's husband was very supportive of Lepolo's choice of career change and encouraged Lepolo in her vision of becoming the People's Representative for the Niuas. When the opportunity of the 2005 by-elections presented itself, Lepolo knew that she had to contest and quickly registered her name as a candidate. She immediately commenced dialogue with the community about her decision.

The support shown towards Lepolo, once it was known that she was an electoral candidate for the Niuas, was overwhelming. Lepolo and her husband's strong relationship with their community came to fruition. Many of the Niua people were certain that Lepolo was the perfect candidate for the position based on her ability to win the hearts of the people through her past commitments and passion about Niua's development overall. One of the voters who voted for Lepolo said that he voted for Lepolo because "she is a woman of her principles" Lepolo says that the many challenges she faces in Parliament as the only woman MP increases her will to continue to do what she is there to do. There are certain issues that other members of Parliament do not feel should be brought up in Parliament as they are closed doors issues such as domestic violence and rape, and Lepolo feels blessed that she is able to bring these issues onto the political agenda and make them national issues.

Lepolo aims at continuing as a Member of Parliament and will stand in the next election in 2008 and encourages more women who feel that they are capable to stand to do so.

CASE STUDY 3

Betty Blake—Pressured by a lot of people to stand as candidate but in the end she personally felt she wasn't ready

Betty Blake has worked with women's rights for more than 10 years. Her legal literacy program offers women from the grassroots level up to senior public and private sector women the opportunity to learn about the rights of women and human rights in general and how to apply these rights in their everyday lives—in order to eliminate violence, discrimination and acts of inequality towards women and children.

As a well known advocate for women's rights, Betty has been constantly approached by people in the community to consider standing as a candidate. As the pressure was increasing Betty started to weigh out the pros and cons. As it drew nearer to the 2005 General Elections, the pressure for Betty to stand as an electoral candidate reached its peak.

A group of community paralegals decided that they would help Betty in her campaign and assured Betty that they would assist wherever needed. Betty also received encouragement from high ranking officials and senior government workers.

Betty has always pondered being a Member of Parliament and knew that she possessed the passion for bringing women's issues onto the political agenda. At the same time, Betty was also passionate about her work with the Legal Literacy Project of the Catholic Women's League and the Regional Rights Resource team, Suva. She found herself pulled between the two and she knew that walking away from the legal literacy project was a big ask.

Betty found herself experiencing all sorts of mixed emotions as the deadline grew closer for candidates to register. Some of these emotions were the feeling that she wasn't ready and well equipped for Parliament, the feeling that she hadn't yet acquired a strong majority of supporters from women voters and members of the Catholic Women's League, to feelings of fear for the entire campaigning process.

Betty turned to prayer and meditation. She also discussed the issue with her husband and her children. Although they were all very supportive of whatever Betty would have decided, Betty was still not sure if this was the right calling for her.

In the end, Betty came to her final decision. She concluded that it wasn't yet her time to stand as a Candidate, however Betty feels positive about the next General Election of 2008 and acknowledges the importance of enhancing women's participation in politics and looks forward to standing as a candidate in the next elections.

CASE STUDY 4

'Ana Soakai (not her real name)—thought about standing for elections but was deterred from doing so by her family

'Ana attended Tonga High School from 1975 to 1979 before leaving to New Zealand to complete her 7th Form and eventually went on to study at Auckland University undertaking a Bachelor of Commerce. Due to onset of sudden illness of her mother, 'Ana immediately returned to Tonga during her first year of University to assist in taking care of her mother. 'Ana was the eldest of four siblings and her father was then working for the Government of Tonga. Following 'Ana's mother's death 3 months later, 'Ana decided to start her studies again the following year as she had missed a great majority of her classes that year. But towards the end of the year, 'Ana eloped and married. She never managed to return to NZ to complete her studies.

Today 'Ana has 5 children and she has been working for government for the past 20 years. 'Ana has always had a strong interest in politics and constantly follows the country's political and economic status. She is a very active member of the community and participates in several activities ranging from ex-student association, Parents Teachers Association, Church, and Women's Development Group to local government meetings.

'Ana casually raised the idea of standing as a candidate to her husband, her father and her other members

of her extended family. The majority of responses were discouraging and the constant reminder of her not completing her education was the overarching issue. Her father and her husband told her that because she wasn't qualified no one would vote for her and that she should save the family from embarrassment. Her father told her that if she hadn't eloped those many years ago she might have had a chance. Her husband reminded her that their children were still dependent on her and that she should re-think about her career change. 'Ana's husband's main concern was that 'Ana would have to resign or apply for leave without pay from her workplace in order to stand as a candidate and that meant the elimination of one pay packet which was too risky for the family—further more she didn't have any money to campaign.

'Ana thought about the discouragement she encountered from her closest family members and she knew that it was a no-win situation because she would desperately require the full support of her family members if she was to stand as an electoral candidate. 'Ana feels that even though her husband and father were not very supportive of her standing as an electoral candidate, she believes that she has the capability, skills and determination to become a member of Parliament. 'Ana says that even if she doesn't make it to Parliament she will definitely encourage her daughters to think of politics as a career option and will offer them the support and encouragement if they choose to do so.

CASE STUDY 5

Siva Fifita (not her real name)—registered to vote but couldn't vote

Siva had registered to vote with a colleague during a work day in Nuku'alofa. She had become increasingly interested in politics since she got her job in 2003. Prior to 2003, Siva had never really been interested in politics.

Siva says that her interest in politics increased while listening to other co-workers talk about issues that she never thought had direct connections to politics, such as the issue of pay and wages, electricity costs etc.

Although Siva was 24 years of age, she had registered for the first time to vote in the 2005 Tonga General Elections. She was so excited about the prospect of voting and had already decided who she was going to vote for after following electoral campaigns on the radio at her workplace and TV at home. Siva had also collected a few pamphlets from some of the candidates who had visited her workplace.

Siva mentioned her first-time registration to her husband who had noticed the political interest that had increased in her. That evening, he accused her of listening to men's conversation at her workplace instead of doing her work. Despite Siva's attempts to explain that everyone talks politics at her workplace, her husband quickly cut her off and told her to talk about something else.

Siva married her husband at the age of 19 and they now have four children, the youngest being 1 year old.

On the actual day of voting, Siva had run late for work after getting the kids ready for school and decided that she would vote after work. She asked her husband to pick her up from work one hour early so that she could return to their village and vote.

Siva's husband didn't pick her up until 6:00pm and told Siva that her vote wouldn't have counted for anything anyway.

Siva is now determined that she will plan better for the next election and will not waste her opportunity to vote. Siva believes strongly that every single vote does count!

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations have been collated from the results of the different methods of research undertaken– and specifically look at ways in which Tonga can create a better environment to enhance the political participation and representation of women. (Please note the recommendations are not listed in priority order).

RECOMMENDATION	WHO'S RESPONSIBLE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ratify the United Nations Convention on Women's Rights 	Government of Tonga Women's NGOs, Women and Development Center (PMO)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To raise awareness of affirmative action best practices and what it can do to eliminate negative social and cultural attitudes towards women and politics and decision-making as a whole 	Education system Civil Society / NGO Churches Government (both local & formal)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To initiate a Young Women's Leadership Program 	NGOs, Churches, Government
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To include decision-making as a core component of the Life Skills Curriculum for both the formal and informal education system 	PTA, Ministry of Education NGOs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formulation of affirmative action policies to enhance the participation of women in politics 	NGOs, Crown Law Women and Development Center (PMO)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nationwide workshops on Eliminating Social, Cultural Attitudes that discriminate against women 	NGOs, Churches, Government
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of the policies as set out under the National Policy on Gender and Development 	Women and Development Center (PMO), NGOs, Churches, Government
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold Voter Education awareness nationwide (including media campaigns targeting women) to strengthen the importance of knowing how to decide as an individual and what campaigning practices are illegal 	Government, Civil Society / NGOs, Churches
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Age specific targeting—looking at which age brackets are lacking political participation by way of voting and registering (this can be carried out through the media and other forms of communication) 	Government, NGOs / Civil Society
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include Politics in the Career Day of secondary schools 	Ministry of Education, Parliamentarians, NGOs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness programs on Parliament and the processes that politicians undergo (as a way of promoting a place that both men and women can work together and to eliminate the thinking that Parliament is only a place for men 	Government, Civil Society

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To use Women politicians stories as success stories and to include thoughts from their husbands (a supportive case such as Lepolo's story) to encourage future female candidates 	Media, Government, Politicians
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Women's Leadership Skills Workshop or Convention to look at grooming future candidates 	Women's Development Center (PMO), NGO / Civil Society / Churches
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold a Women's Parliament once every two years or yearly that can be taken around the villages and outer islands to encourage women's interest in politics 	Government, NGOs Women's Development Center
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase the political will of Government to include this issue in the Government's Strategic Development Plan 	Government, NGOs Women's Development Center (PMO)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop a newsletter looking specifically at providing information about the country's political, economic and social issues to women especially in the outer islands—so that women have a constant flow of information about what is happening in the country and how women can make a change 	NGOs, WDC (PMO)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobby His Majesty to appoint Women Ministers who show exceptional qualifications and skills for the portfolio 	NGOs, WDC (PMO)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To encourage on going research on the status of women's political participation in Tonga 	Government, WDC (PMO)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smaller constituency system in each district 	GOVT/TNRC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase one seat to two seats in the Niua and Eua Districts to ensure Gender Equality 	GOVT/TNRC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish Parliamentary Committees 	GOVT / TNRC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To present recommendations of this report to the National Reform Committee before it submits its report to the Legislative Assembly in July 2006. 	Stakeholders of National Research

SUMMARY

During the compilation of this report, respondents and organisations which took part gave strong indications of their commitments towards ensuring that women's participation and representation in the decision-making processes, both at informal and formal levels of decision-making are enhanced through various actions as seen in the recommendations listed above.

There is an obvious call for *solidarity* among women to eliminate social and cultural barriers to women's participation in politics. There is also a move towards developing a framework of gender based career options for schools and to support and create leadership programs for young Tongan women, focusing on participation and decision-making.

Although Government has made several commitments towards the advancement and empowerment of women, the implementation of these goals will not be possible without the involvement of NGOs/CSOs. The strengthening of the National Women's Machinery through initiatives such as gender-based budgeting will ensure that these national, regional and international commitments are taken seriously.

As preparations are underway for the next 2008 General Elections, it is hoped that recent developments such as having two women in the House of Parliament for the first time ever in Tonga's history will continue to shape the framework of our future governments by allowing *Gender Equality* to be mainstreamed into our everyday lives—through our thinking, our actions and the journey towards the advancement of women and politics in Tonga.

Appendix 1 Sections of Electoral Legislation

1. (1) This Act may be cited as the Electoral (Amendment) Act 1992.
- (2) The Electoral Act 1989 is in this Act referred to as the Principal Act.

PART II Organisation

“The Roll”

(3) Every Tongan upon attaining the age of 21 years shall, unless disqualified under clause 64 of the Constitution, within 3 months of attaining that age or 3 months of **his** return to the Kingdom if not already registered or within 3 months of becoming a naturalised Tongan subject, apply to the supervisor in Form 1 of the schedule to be entered on the roll for the district in which **he** is then residing. Upon registration of any elector, the Supervisor shall issue a certificate in Form 2 of the Schedule.

PART III Elections

“Candidates”

- 9 (1) On the day and at the place fixed, the returning officer's shall attend between the hours of 10:00am and 3:00pm and receive the nomination of any duly qualified candidate or candidates for the seat or seats to be filled.
- (2) Every candidate shall be nominated in writing in accordance with Form 4 of the Schedule signed by 50 persons who are qualified electors for that electoral district. The candidate shall assent to the nomination and make the declaration therein in writing by fixing **his** signature to the nomination paper
- (3) At the time of nomination the candidate shall deposit with the returning officer the sum of \$200 and shall receive from the returning officer a duly signed Government revenue receipt therefore. On the completion of election a candidate receiving more than the prescribed percentage of the total votes polled in that electoral district shall be returned the sum of \$200 on presentation of the receipt at the Treasury of Sub-Treasury, together with a certificate from the returning officer that the candidate is entitled to the refund. A candidate failing to receive the prescribed percentage of the total votes polled in that electoral district shall forfeit his deposit, and the sum so forfeited shall be paid into General Revenue on the certificate of the returning officer.

Section 12 of the Principal Act is deleted and substituted by the following:

“Procedure
on voting”

- 12 (1) The ballot paper shall be in the general form of Form 5 of the Schedule hereto and shall show on the face of it the names and town or village of the candidates. the order in which the names of the candidates are printed on the ballot paper shall be determined by ballot conducted by the Returning Officer in each district immediately upon the close of nominations in presence of such of the candidates as are present, and a police officer.
- (2) No identification, such as occupation, title, honour, or degree, shall be included on the ballot paper in addition to any candidate’s name.
- (3) After checking against the final roll that the elector is entitled to vote the returning officer shall mark against the elector’s name on the roll the same number as is marked on the ballot paper and then hand the ballot paper to **him**
- (4) The elector shall retire to a voting cubicle or some private space in the voting area and mark his ballot paper with a “√” against the names of the candidate or candidates for whom **he** wishes to vote.
- (5) After marking **his** ballot paper the elector shall fold the paper and deposit it in the ballot box.

Notes

- 1 At the time of finalizing this report Lopeti Senituli had been appointed as the Prime Minister's Political Advisor.
- 2 The *fabu* system is a cultural acknowledgement in its highest form of a 'sister' who is revered as highest in rank in the family structure. See in particular the work of Kerry James for further information on the roles of sister and brother in Tonga.
- 3 Town Officer is a local government position at the village and town level. Each Town/Village has its own Officer and each District its own District Officer. Town officers are responsible to their District Officers and are in charge of the day-to-day operations of the village or town.
- 4 The informal *kava* circle (known as *faiokava* or *kalapu kava* Tonga) can be seen as the Tongan equivalent of Western men getting together and drinking in a bar. It's a place where they socialize almost 4 nights out of the week and share discussions on everything from politics to entertaining stories. The formal *kava* circle is carried out during royal and important social / cultural obligations.
- 5 Government positions are graded from Level 1—14—Level 1 being the highest one can attain
- 6 In the recent 2005 elections, the late King made changes to the way he elected his Ministers by electing two Ministers from the pool of 9 People's representatives voted in by the people. These Ministers are currently Dr. Fred Sevele and Peaufi Haukinima.
- 7 Women cannot own land. If a woman is widowed the land may be lost to her husband's brother unless she bears a son
- 8 The Brother and Sister tabu is a strict Tongan custom where respect is the main principle of any brother and sister relationship, eg no foul language spoken, dress code is strict and places of socialization is limited
- 9 The traditional Tongan *fale* was one big room partitioned by pieces of material or tapa to indicate the rooms of the house
- 10 Politics of Tonga, Wikipedia
- 11 A full transcript of draft 5 is attached to this report in the annex
- 12 Sections of the Electoral legislation are attached in the annex
- 13 The following people attended: Fuiva *Kavaliku*, Salote Fukofuka (USP), 'Eseta Fusitu'a, Polotu Fakafanua, 'Amelia Siamomua, 'Alisi Taumoepeau, Vika Fusimalohi, 'Aivi Puloka, Betty Blake, Elaine Howard, Amelia Siamomua, Amelia Pasikala, Lepolo Taunisila, Uheina Kalaniuvalu, 'Ofa Simiki, Robyn Kaho, 'Ativeniana Pomana and 'Ofa Guttenbeil-Likiliki.
- 14 Those attending the meeting were: Ministry of Health, Transam Shipping, Anglican Women, 'Ofa, Tui moe Amanaki Center, Anglican Training Center, Tonga Human Rights and Democracy Movement, Tonga National Council of Churches, Catholic Theological Institute, Langafanua 'a Fafine Tonga, Lepolo Taunisila MP, Tonga Small Business Association, Tonga Family Health Association, Catholic Women's League, Friendly Islands Teachers Association, Dr. Supileo Foliaki Foundation, Alcohol & Drugs Awareness Center, Tonga Women in Sports Association, Talaki Newspaper, Kele'a Newspaper, Tonga Women's Action for Change, Tonga Communications Corporation, Tonga Development Bank.
- 15 Attendees were: Hon Veikune—Speaker of Legislative Assembly, Tevita Palefau—Minister of Education, Lepolo Taunisila—MP Niuas, Sunia Fili—MP 'Eua, Samiu Vaipulu—MP Vava'u, Fineasi Funkai—MP Ha'apai, 'Isileli Pulu—MP Tongatapu, Siaso 'Aho—Minister of Law, Hon Tu'ivakano—Minister of Works, Salote Fukofuka—USP Tonga, Polotu Fakafanua Paunga—Head Women and Development Center, Vili Helu—MP Vava'u, Elaine Howard—Director Tonga National Youth Congress, Joyce Kaho—Prime Ministers Office, Manitasi Leger—Tonga National Youth Congress, 'Uheina Kalaniuvalu—Langafonua, Fuiva *Kavaliku*—Langafonua, Balwyn Faotusia—Ministry of Finance, 'Ativeniana Pomana—Friendly Islands Teachers Association, Lesina Tonga—Lawyer CWL, Betty Blake—Legal Literacy Project, Senolita Vakata—Caritas Tonga, Lavinia Palei—National Center for Women and Children, Hon. Tangipa—Nobles Representative Niuas, 'Ofa-ki-levuka Guttenbeil-Likiliki—UNV, Hon. Tuilakepa—MP, Hon. Tu'ihateiho—MP, 'Eseta Fusitu'a—Prime Ministers Office, Viliami Tangi—Minister of Health, Hon. 'Akauola—Governor of Vava'u, Hon. Fielkepa—Minister of Lands and Survey, 'Amelia Siamomua UNIFEM Pacific.

- 16 The following organisations attended this meeting: Catholic Youth, Anglican Youth, Kolomtu'a Youth Group, Bahai Youth Group, Langafonua 'a Fafine Tonga, Tonga Family Health Young Mother's Program, Tonga National Youth Congress, TWAC, Halaleva Youth Group, Ma'ufanga Youth, Tonga Trust.
- 17 Married women also includes widows and separated women