PACMAS
Pacific Media Assistance Scheme

Tonga
STATE OF MEDIA & COMMUNICATION REPORT
2013

International Development
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Australian AID

Mapu'a 'a Vaca Blowholes at Tongatapu. Photo by PACMAS.

The study was undertaken by Jo Tacchi and Heather Horst at RMIT University, Australia; Evangelia Papoutsaki at UNITEC, New Zealand; and Verena Thomas and Joys Eggins at the University of Goroka, Papua New Guinea. The research data for this report were collected by a team of researchers who conducted both desk-based research and interviews in person, by telephone and/or email while in Tonga and New Zealand. Researchers for Tonga included Sandra Kailahi and Jessica Noske-Turner; Sandra Kailahi completed interviews in Tonga in October 2012. This report also benefits from verification completed by the Panel of Expertise members.

Any opinions represented in this report are those of the authors and research participants and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government or the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

The findings are presented in three sections:
1. Country Context
2. State of Media and Communications
    • Media and Communications Platforms
    • Media and Communications Landscape
3. Summary of Findings

Contents

Kingdom of Tonga Country Context

The Kingdom of Tonga is an archipelago consisting of 176 islands, 26 of which are inhabited. Tonga is a sovereign state with a constitutional monarchy. The current monarch, King Tupou VI, is a direct descendant of the first monarch. Tonga's GDP is $US 3,543 (per capita), and the royal family and other nobles own many of the main sectors of the economy, including telecommunications and satellite services. Tonga's net migration rate (per 1000 people) was 16 between 2005 and 2010, and the country's economy is heavily dependent on remittances from Tongan family members living primarily in Australia, New Zealand and the United States.
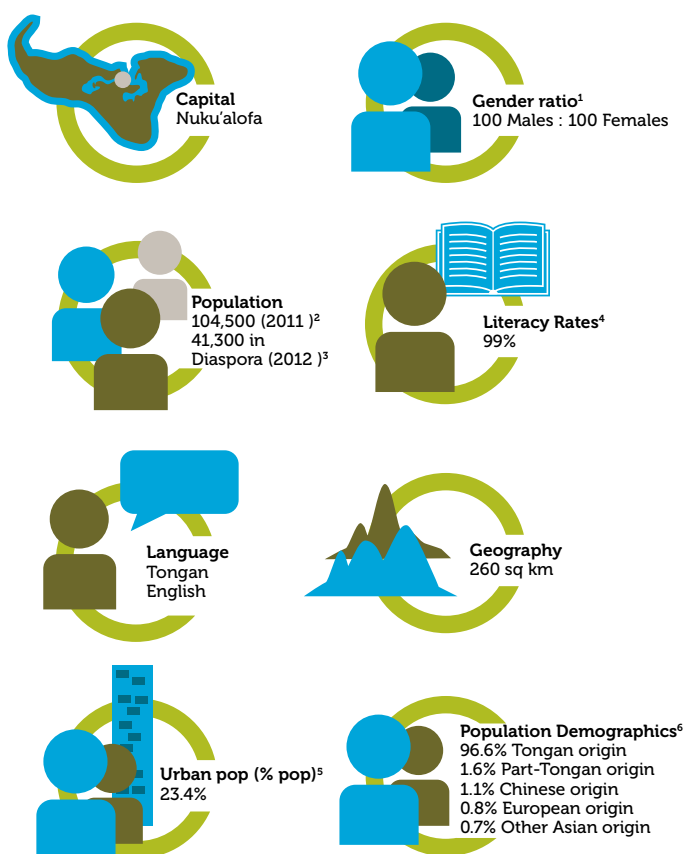
Key Insights

Transnational Connections and Media

Tonga has strong transnational relationships across the Pacific region, especially with Australia and New Zealand but also Samoa, Fiji and the US. A contributing factor for Tonga's regional presence is its strong diasporic population, which is predominantly found in New Zealand, Australia and the US. Media content and communication flows from Tonga across the Tongan diaspora into New Zealand and the US. This also includes websites, such as Matangi Tonga Online[7] and Kaniva Tonga News[8]. There is a strong awareness of the different audiences' needs, desires and capabilities, especially for those Tongans living in other countries. Formal and informal relationships with China, India, Japan and the US also emerged in the interviews.

Media Convergence

Mobile communication in Tonga has been transformed since Digicel entered the Tongan telecommunications market. There are 60,000 mobile phone subscriptions with coverage on all islands (with the exception of Niuas). Alongside communication, Digicel introduced Digicel Mobile Money and there are indications that Tonga could become a key country for mobile financial services in the region. Digicel Mobile Money facilitates remittances and other financial transactions within Tonga and between Tonga, New Zealand and Australia. In addition, Digicel piloted 'Beep & Go' in Tonga, the first for the region, which uses the phone as a Near Field Communications-based (NFC-based) card to pay for goods and services[9]. A weekly talkback show on Digicel's television channel called 'Hot Seat' is hosted by Finau Afeaki and

Table l.1   Basic Country Data

Capital
Nuku'alofa

Gender ratio[1]
100 Males : 100 Females

Population
104,500 (2011)[2]
41,300 in Diaspora (2012)[3]

Literacy Rates[4]
99%

Language
Tongan
English

Geography
260 sq km

Urban pop (% pop)[5]
23.4%

Population Demographics[6]
96.6% Tongan origin
1.6% Part-Tongan origin
1.1% Chinese origin
0.8% European origin
0.7% Other Asian origin

1   UNICEF. 2006. Tonga. A Situation Analysis of Childre, Women & Youth. http://www.unicef.org/pacificislands/TONGAN_SITAN.pdf Accessed April 2013
2   World Bank. 2011. Tonga. http://data.worldbank.org/country/tonga Accessed April 2013
3   OECD. 2012. Tonga. In Connecting with Emigrants: A Global Profile of Diasporas. OECD Publishing. DOI: 10.1787/9789264177949-22-en
4   UNICEF. 2006. Tonga. A Situation Analysis of Childre, Women & Youth. http://www.unicef.org/pacificislands/TONGAN_SITAN.pdf Accessed April 2013
5   UNICEF. 2006. Tonga. A Situation Analysis of Childre, Women & Youth. http://www.unicef.org/pacificislands/TONGAN_SITAN.pdf Accessed April 2013
6   UN Statistics Department. 2011. Media Release: Tonga National Population Census 2011; Preliminary Count. http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sources/census/2010_PHC/Tonga/release.pdf Accessed April 2013
7   Matangi Tonga Online website http://matangitonga.to/
8   Kaniva Tonga website http://www.kanivatonga.co.nz/
9   Clark, Sandra. 2012. Tonga gets commercial NFC payments service. NFC World, May 14, 2012. http://www.nfcworld.com/2012/05/14/315674/tonga-gets-commercial-nfc-payments-service/

Kitione Mokofisi in English and Tongan; the show answers questions about Beep & Go mobile money. In addition to mobile communications, fibre-optics and satellite back-ups are slated for introduction in 2013, and facilitated through the fibrelink with Fiji. In addition, a process called Conrads combines all services for telephone, TV, etc. into one device. Because Tonga uses satellite, the Tonga Communications Corporation (TCC) has a limited capacity, however Conrads will change TCC's strategy by integrating communication platforms.

Public-Private Partnership and Coordination

Tonga has developed public-private partnerships in a range of areas, including the provisioning of telecommunications, assistance with disaster preparation and response, and social issues such as Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs). There are positive aspects of these partnerships and many noted they would prefer Non Government Organisations (NGOs) and international organisations to invest in private media rather than government-supported media. However, there remain a number of challenges with respect to co-ordination, equity and the broader social good. Digicel, for example, is involved in the coordination of emergency broadcast systems through their rollout of mobile communications across Tonga. They provide back-up service, equipment, supplies and disaster response processes, but Digicel is not required to provide public services and their disaster plans favour their employees. In addition, the strength of the partnerships varies, with different organisations duplicating efforts. Lack of co-ordination in NCD awareness programs was also mentioned. There is a general sense that the government bodies, NGOs and local community businesses and groups do not work together effectively.

State of Media and Communications

Media and Communications Platforms

Tonga has a substantial and dynamic media industry with depth across television, radio, print and, increasingly, online and mobile media. Tonga is one of the leaders in the region for the convergence of media across different platforms. The Tonga Broadcasting Commission (TBC) runs English language news service and reports local news. There is one English newspaper available in Tonga, but concerns about the quality of the writing persist. As our interviewee TONGA16 observes, *'we're not an English speaking media so ... even though our guys can write a very good story in Tongan they'll be swimming if you ask them to write it in English'.* Interviewees expressed concern about the growing influence of foreign programming and media, but a vibrant Tongan-language media industry appears to be maintaining its foothold among the Tongan community around the world.

Television

The TBC is the main public service broadcaster with 68 fulltime staff and a number of contractors; TBC has no local production team and relies on replaying old programs and programs donated by other organisations and countries, such as Japan[10]. From February 2013, TBC began streaming live on internet radio, Tonga One, between 4pm and 12 midnight daily. TBC is governed by three acts: the Tonga Broadcasting Commission Act, the Public Enterprises Act, and the Communications Act 2000. The broadcaster's core mandate is to educate, inform, entertain and comfort the public during natural disasters. Since the 1970s the government has ceased to allocate a budget, but TBC is permitted to sell 50 per cent of total airtime for advertising. TBC has agreements to re-broadcast programs with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and China Central Television (CCTV). The TBC is currently working on migration from analogue to digital TV with the assistance of the Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting and Development (AIBD), Asia Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU) and the Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS). In addition to TBC, DigiTV is a new cable television service with 20 channels.

---

10   Tonga Government Portal. 2013. Japanese TV programs handed over to Tonga Broadcasting Commission. February 1, 2013. http://www.mic.gov.to/aid-programs/aid-japan/4233-japanese-tv-programs-handed-over-to-tonga-broadcasting-commission

Table 1.2 Media and Communication Platforms: Television

Platform	Organisation	Ownership/ Funding	Language/ Content	Sector
Television	Tonga Broadcasting Commission	Commercially funded (advertising)	Tongan English Foreign and local content Live Streaming of Television Tonga 1: 4:00pm-12:00am daily	Government
	DigiTV	Subscription	20 channels, including Mobile Money Channel	Commercial
	Tonfon Pay TV	Subscription	Foreign content	Commercial
	Trinity TV-Christian broadcaster		Foreign content	Church
	Oceania Broadcasting Network	Owned by Christopher Racine, operated by Tokaikolo Christian Fellowship	Christian focus, no local news but some local panel discussion programs. Also rebroadcasts some Australian and other international TV channels	Church

Radio

Radio is widely used in the Kingdom, with a greater number of options for listening. Radio Tonga is run by the TBC. Radio programs run from 6am to noon, and from midnight to 6am with online streaming of selected programs. Radio Tonga has a programming arrangement with the ABC. A3Z, a division of TBC, broadcasts a mix of English and Tongan language programs. With its community development focus, broadcast time is available to most community groups. Some of the most popular programs are the church news, sports and college programs, as well as live broadcasts of festivities. A3Z rebroadcasts world news programs by the ABC's Radio Australia, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), and Radio New Zealand. FM 89.5 (the only station staffed 24-hours) runs programs on NCDs and climate change. It also streams programs online and has between 40,000-50,000 listeners outside of Tonga. Several other private, church and commercial media outlets also exist.

Table 1.3 Media and Communication Platforms: Radio

Platform	Organisation	Ownership/ Funding	Language/ Content	Sector
Radio	Radio Tonga 90 FM (Kool FM 90)	Commercially/ donor funded; run by TBC's AZ3	Main source of local broadcast news, Tongan and English	Government
	Radio FM 89.1	Owned by Semi Vea	Airs pop music, broadcasts in English and Tongan	Commercial
	Radio FM 88.6	Family business (name unknown)	Pop music (commercial). Plays Religious music on Sundays. Has stations in from Nuku'alofa and Vava'u	Commercial
	FM 93.1	Christian radio, operated by the United Christian Broadcasters	Christian content	Church
	Radio FM 1 (name unknown)	Private owner (name unknown)	Only broadcasts to Vava'u	Commercial
	FM 89.5	Broadcom Broadcasting		Commercial
	Radio FM 88.1	Taimi Media Network		Commercial

Newspapers and Newsletters

Tonga possesses a dynamic newspaper industry that has seen the emergence and expansion of new formats and frequency as well as the closure of a number of newspapers, the most prominent closure being the government-owned *Tonga Chronicle* in 2011. Commercially-owned papers such as *Taimi 'o Tonga* have increased their circulation. *Taimi 'o Tonga* was established in 1989 and was Tonga's first independent newspaper. Owned by Kalafi Moala and originally published in Auckland, New Zealand, the newspaper received attention from the Tongan government and, in 2004, was banned under the Media Operations Act, which prohibited foreign-owned publications; Kalafi Moala is Tongan-American. After a legal case, the Tongan Supreme Court overturned the ruling and issued the newspaper a media license. *Taimi 'o Tonga* is now published in Tonga twice weekly, and is published out of New Zealand weekly for distribution to Tongan communities in New Zealand, Australia, and the US.

Table l.4 Media and Communication Platforms: Newspaper and Newsletters

Platform	Organisation	Ownership/ Funding	Language/ Content	Sector
Newspaper	Taimu'a Lelei	Catholic Diocese of Tonga	Tongan and English published every 3 weeks	Church
	Taimi 'o Tonga (Times of Tonga)	Part of the Taimi Media Network. Owned by Kalafi Moala	Published in Tonga twice weekly; published out of New Zealand weekly for distribution to Tongan communities in New Zealand, Australia, and the US	Commercial
	Kele'a	Po'oi Pohiva	Tongan and English, tabloid news Weekly	Commercial
	Tohi Fanongonongo	Wesleyan Church	Broadsheet news Monthly	Church
	Ofa ki Tonga	Tokaikolo Church (a break-away from Wesleyan Church)	Tabloid news Monthly	Church
	Talaki	The 'Akau'ola family	Tabloid news Weekly	Commercial
	Ko'e Kelea		Tongan and English Bi-monthly	Commercial

Online and Mobile Media

Tonga has an active online community, especially among the diaspora who access Tongan news and other content. This also includes the use of online social networks (e.g. family websites with large networks are an emergent phenomenon). Internet access and using email are common ways for families to stay connected. The media industry has a well-developed sense of the needs and desires of the Tongan diaspora's use of online and mobile media. As a participant observed, *'The programs are streamed live [for the past 2 years...via phone rather than internet. ...The Tongan people in America ... dial the number and they listen to us. ...] Most of the people there, they say they just hang the phone on their neck and put the speaker on and they work. Whatever they do, in the yard or whatever, and listen to our radio station'* (TONGA03).

Table l.5 Media and Communication Platforms: Online and Mobile Media

Platform	Ownership/ funding	Language/ content/ updated	Website	Sector
Matangi Tonga	Owned by Vava'u Press	English/ online news service/ updated daily	http://matangitonga.to/	Commercial
Taimi Media Network/ Taimi Online	Taimi Media Network	English Tongan	http://www.taimionline.com/	Commercial
Planet Tonga	-	English, online forums, news	http://www.planet-tonga.com/	Community
Social Media	Facebook	English Tongan	Facebook Guttenbeil Family Facebook Website for members only http://www.facebook.com/messages/?bookmark_t=app#!/groups/97850461827/?bookmark_t=group	Community (uses)
Kaniva Tonga News	Privately owned and operated by Kalino Latu	Tongan and English	http://www.kanivatonga.co.nz/	

Other Communication Platforms

Word-of-mouth (known as the *coconut wireless*) remains an important method of communication, one often used by Tongan health and crises centre members who circulate regularly in different Tongan communities to send messages. Village council meetings are also important spaces where much communication and decision-making takes place. Schools often feature dance, shows, movies, concerts, or other forms of entertainment for young people and community members.

Table l.6 Media and Communication Platforms: Other Communication Platforms

Other Platforms	Language/Content	Organisation	Sector
Word-of-mouth (*coconut wireless*)	Tongan and English	Informal	Community
Performance	Tongan	Schools and village associations	Community
Council Meetings	Tongan	Village Council Meetings	Community

Media and Communications Landscape

Figure 1: PACMAS official launch in 2011, at the International Dateline hotel. Photo by PACMAS.

This section of the report focuses on Tonga's media and communication sector across four key areas: policy and legislation, media systems, capacity building and content. It provides an overview of the state of media across these four areas and aligns them with PACMAS program components, as defined by the six PACMAS strategic areas: Technicians, Pacific Emergency Broadcast Systems (PEBS), Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVETs), Media Associations, Climate Change and NCDs. Media Systems includes a focus on Technicians and PEBS; Capacity Building includes TVETs and Media Associations; and Content looks at Climate Change and NCDs. It provides an overview of media and communication across these areas and aligns them with PACMAS program components.

Policy and Legislation

The Department of Communication is responsible for media and telecommunications policy, legislation, regulation and licensing. Relevant legislation includes the Cinematograph Act 1988; Communications Act 2000; Media Operators Act 2003; Newspaper Act 2003; Post Office Act 1988; Postal Regulations 1988; Prohibited Publications Act 1988; Protection from Abuse of Press Freedom Ordinance 2003; Radio Communication Act 1988; Stamp Act 1988; Telegraph Act 1988; Tonga Broadcasting Commission Act 1976 (Rev. 1988); Tonga Communications Corporation Act 2000; and the Tonga Telecommunications Commission Act 1984.

The Department of Communication regulates via the Communications Act 2000, Newspaper Act 2003, and the Media Operators Act 2003. Community radio or non-profitable AM radio stations also fall under the Communication Act 2000. However, there is no distinction between license fees for community and commercial stations. License fees are TOP 1000 (approximately AUD $660) for commercial FM and profitable AM stations.

The Newspaper Act and Media Operators Act 2003 licenses newspapers as well as broadcasters and includes a restriction on the importation and sale of foreign media. Most journalists follow the Media Council code of ethics, except the recently closed *Tonga Chronicle*, which operated under the government's code of ethics for civil servants. Publishers and editors are required to have a formal qualification in journalism and be Tongan citizens or a corporation under the amendments in 2003[11].

The freedom of the press is guaranteed in Clause 7 of the constitution. Freedom House reports that Tonga's media environment has improved in recent years with the election of a new government committed to strengthening press freedom[12], but others are less optimistic about change given the long history of media abuses and self-censorship[13]. There have been several cases of government suppression of media freedom using licensing laws (FM 88.1) and defamation law (Kele'a newspaper). There is no Freedom of Information legislation[14]. Amendments to the constitution in 2003 enabled government to restrict media freedom. The Communication Act 2000 allows the government to restrict or prohibit content, or particular types of content, and regulates the ways in which Tongan culture and identity are represented in the media. As TONGA01 observes, '*So the whole idea of media freedom and freedom of speech and all that, despite the fact that we've been talking about it and despite the fact that it's been in [the] Tonga Constitution [since] 1875, it's still a long way to go'*.

Tonga has a liberalised telecommunications market with the government's TCC competing with Digicel. The telecommunications market is not independently regulated[15].

Media Systems

Media systems take into consideration technical skills, support and infrastructure. It also covers emergency broadcast systems and experience from past disasters and crises in Tonga.

PACMAS Strategic Activity: Technicians

Like other countries in the Pacific, media and broadcast technicians operate in an environment with limited funds. For example, the Taimi Media Network (which publishes two newspapers and a website) does not receive funding for technical support from the government or external donors and TBC receives no external funding. Technicians typically rely upon bilateral assistance programs for donated (but usually old) equipment. Due to resource constraints, technicians are self-reliant and learn how to make do and mend broken or out-of-date equipment. As our research participant TONGA03 describes the process, '*I have to look at all the old junk equipment and find parts from there to replace the parts of the equipment. So, I had to make sure that I can fix it locally, before I order anything. Because, sometimes, when you don't know and you order you find out that it's not the right one'*. Ordering often takes place online, but technicians are mindful of where the equipment is sold and made. Technicians explained that New Zealand is the best place to purchase equipment as it is close to Tonga, which enables easier problem solving if there are issues with the product. In addition, technicians work to find a technology and a system less costly than the industry standard used (e.g., DALET, a French company). One technician described how they go online to access companies who sell automation software (e.g., a small New Zealand company called Station Playlist is used by TBC and others). Technicians also noted that it would be ideal for engineers in the Pacific to work together to consolidate budgets, buying power and share knowledge.

Organisational support and training come from a variety of sources including the Pacific Islands Telecommunications Association (PITA) and the Pacific Telecommunications Council (PTC). PITA comprises telecommunications company operators, menders and suppliers within the Pacific Islands, US territories, Europe, and Ireland. While PITA offers technical and human resource training sessions with information sharing occurring between members, technicians noted that PITA appeared to be primarily interested in selling services

---

11   Media Operators Act 2003
12   Freedom House 2012
13   Perrottet, A. & Robie, D., 2011. Pacific Media Freedom 2011: A status report. Pacific Journalism Review, 17(2), pp.148–186.
14   Perrottet, A. & Robie, D. 2011. Pacific Media Freedom 2011: A status report. Pacific Journalism Review, 17(2), pp.148–186.
15   Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. 2010. Review of Pacific Regional Digital Strategy; Part A Technological Capacity. http://www.forumsec.org.fj/resources/uploads/attachments/documents/Review%20of%20Digital%20Strategy_PartA.pdf Accessed April 2013

to members. With respect to training, a number of staff in radio and television received training at TBC or Tonga TV and once trained, they begin training other technicians in their organisation. Tongan technicians are sometimes sent overseas for up-skilling and special trainers are occasionally brought in from overseas. In some cases, technicians have taken advantage of scholarships offered to train in Fiji and India. They also maintain their connections and seek advice from other technicians overseas; few of these connections are formalised in associations and organisations (e.g., if there are technical issues, the chief engineer at the radio station calls technical advisers at Radio New Zealand, the ABC or TVNZ for advice). Technicians also reported they receive co-operation from CCTV in China.

PACMAS Strategic Activity: Emergency Broadcast Systems

Tonga has a high risk of natural disasters due to climatic, geographic and topographic factors. Cyclones and tsunamis are cited as the key disasters in policy and legislation. The Emergency Management Act 2007 covers mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery, based on risk management process primarily for natural disasters. The National Emergency Management Plan covers natural disasters such as cyclones, storm surges, tsunamis, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods, tornados; transportation events, hazardous material events, human disease epidemic, oil spills and events such as terrorism under 'All Hazards". There is also a draft Tsunami Plan - draft 2 is published on the Kingdom's National Emergency Management Office (NEMO) website - which was produced under the leadership of the National Tsunami Working Group and endorsed by the National Emergency Management Committee (NEMC). A draft National Emergency Coordination Centre (NECC) Standard Operating Procedure Document, revised in August 2011, is also available.

The National Emergency Management Plan (2007) outlines the roles of the TBC, TTC and NEMO. TBC's responsibilities include the provision of emergency related public information as advised by NEMO, and the broadcasting of Special Weather Bulletins and other information in conjunction with the Tonga Meteorological Service. For cyclones, TBC is expected to broadcast information about impact through live radio broadcasts which should continue through impact. The TTC's responsibilities include the maintenance of a national telecommunication capacity, including landline, mobile telephone, satellite telephone and Internet services and to provide advice to the government on capacity status during emergencies. NEMO provides automatic notifications to radio stations during a disaster.

The TBC is currently working on the Tonga Broadcasting Emergency Management Plan and will seek the endorsement of NEMO once completed; TBC currently has a risk management plan that states *'it's important for TBC to remain on air'* (TONGA13). TTC have a process and plan for what should be done during a tsunami, cyclone or fire that was revised in 2011. They also have a common sense agreement with commercial media to provide extra services and warnings during emergencies. Fixing landlines and mobile connections is the highest priority in emergencies.

Tonga depends on the Regional Meteorological Office in Nadi, Fiji for its weather bulletins. Information is transmitted to Tonga Meteorogical Office who then inform the TBC. The Meteorological Office tracks the development of weather events from 72 hours to one week ahead of a potential event. During an emergency, cyclone alerts levels are communicated via a colour-coded system via that indicates the level of risk. The main systems for early warning are TBC, AZ3 (Radio Tonga), TCC and Digicel (mobile network and radio). Radio Tonga, for example, receives weather warning information from the meteorological department and also lets listeners know when to contact the Ministry of Works, police, and army for further information. As a 24/7 broadcaster they constantly provide weather updates and inform listeners to stock up on water, batteries and other essential information; however, they are not staffed 24 hours a day.

Mobile networks are also used to communicate information, especially from midnight to normal radio hours. For example, when a media person receives information from the Meteorological Office via mobile or their home number, the media person then conveys the message to the nation. The efficiency of the system has been questioned during recent events when warning messages were not delivered early enough; TBC did not relay them for almost 25 minutes and people were already on their way to work and school. Another announcer (a contracted staff member who was unaware of policies) did not read the fixed read-out resulting in a poor interpretation. In addition, Digicel uses an SMS platform and has instituted a traffic light system – a yellow light indicates a low-level alert, and a red light indicates people should move to higher ground. New forms of early warning systems are also being discussed. Interviewees noted that the use of an audible warning system is in its early stages with a pilot planned for May 2013. Digicel is also in communication with the Tonga Meteorological Department. The meteorological association recently began discussing the possibility of mounting monitoring

and communication equipment on Digicel towers. However, while SMS messages can be sent out, the capacity (200 customers at once) is limited.

Communication towers (primary and back-up) are equipped with a generator and local power supply. There is also a 24 hour technical support team and back-end support in Fiji. Ninety-five per cent of power stations have a back-up system that can run for one to two days. A tsunami unit, funded by the European Development Fund (EDF), is being installed and, from July 2013, TCC is slated to have a submarine fibre cable linking Tonga with Fiji that will enable them to only use satellite for back-ups. In addition, there are extensive discussions about provisioning media and telecommunications sites for emergency management in case of disasters. A number of media organisations have not sought or received advice on a disaster plan or rebuilding strategies and they do not have an emergency plan. For example, Broadcom has a back-up (stand by) diesel generator for one day. Digicel managers carry a satellite phone in case of a disaster as well as competitors' network handsets. It also has approximately four months of fuel supplies for generators. TBC relies on the police and military to assist TBC staff.

Disaster preparedness and awareness is led by NEMO, which provides documents and brochures to all government offices and hosts a website with key information. NEMO conducts public information sessions in all areas of the Kingdom in Tongan and English. It disseminates media releases about the plan and updates disaster preparedness information pages in local newspapers at appropriate times. NEMO also conducts workshops with relevant industry groups and representatives; however, media outlets did not report training in disaster preparedness and communications. In addition to NEMO, information is managed by the National Disaster Management Office and disseminated through public education and awareness programs in the form of community workshops, TV/radio discussions, public speeches to schools, brochures, leaflets and posters. Students do a project on natural disasters in secondary schools, and during October there is a National Disaster Awareness week.

Capacity Building

Capacity building includes an understanding of the level of qualifications among existing media and communication practitioners, training and capacity building support, and organisations providing such support. It also takes into consideration media associations and TVETs in Tonga.

PACMAS Strategic Activity: TVETs

The Tonga Institute of Higher Education offers a Certificate and Diploma in Journalism over two years; the first year is to obtain a Certificate and the second year the Diploma. In 2011, the student cohort was 100 per cent female, who were mostly school leavers (although the first intake was mainly professionals). TONGA12 characterises the retention challenges as follows: *'for this year [2012] we have 15 students who started the Certificate program and six students who are doing the Diploma. In previous years we have had in the beginning a high number of students and towards the end of the year we have very few left. So we can look at some issues of retention along the two years.'* In terms of pathways, many students seek scholarships to further their studies, but our interviewees suggested that these pathways are limited.

While a TVETs program exists in Tonga, capacity building and training remains a challenge for media organisations. There is a broad perception that TVET training is inadequate. Representatives of the media industries report that students who have undertaken media internships have proved disappointing and have not demonstrated practical or technical skills. There are also reports that students do not have the 'right' skills or attitude. Language is identified as a central issue as few students are able to translate between English and Tongan.

The lack of resources, space (at times, classes are taught outside when rooms are not available), up-to-date materials and teacher recruitment, selection and retention represent a few of the challenges for TVETs training in Tonga. In particular, there is the perception that teachers are poorly paid and, as a result, qualified or skilled individuals are not encouraged to take on the positions. In addition, no-one from the media is involved in the selection process and there are reports of conflicts between those in the media and education sectors.

Regional training and support from the Pacific Islands News Association (PINA), the Tongan Media Council and other organisations is welcomed. One interviewee mentioned conversations with staff at Auckland University of Technology (AUT) to provide equipment to be used in the classroom or internships at AUT for students who complete TVETs training. TBC and others in the media sector stress the practice of training during employment.

PACMAS Strategic Activity: Media Associations

Media Associations play varied roles in the media landscape in Tonga. The Tonga Media Council (TMC) is

consistently referred to as defunct and *'fallen through the cracks'* (TONGA16). It appears to be inactive, lacking in funding with no regular meetings or training taking place, and its only role currently is to provide advice for complaints. The TMC does not have a website and there are few references to their activities. While noted for access to lawyers, the Taimi Media Network was also viewed as relatively inactive. The TBC receives support from the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association (CBA), PACMAS and AIBD (on a membership fee basis) and its staff has received training in the past from Asia Pacific Media Summit (APIBD), PACMAS, PINA and the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association General Assembly (CBA-GA).

The TBC is currently the only active member of PINA in Tonga. PINA members regularly receive the PACnews, but PINA's letters and bulletins are intermittent. A former PINA member, Kalafi Moala from *Taimi 'o Tonga*, left PINA to set up a new association, PasiMA, with Sano Malifa from the Observer in Samoa. PasiMA has 50-60 members primarily from privately-owned media around the Pacific. Membership fees are US$100 for individuals and include monthly communications (an email newsletter). The PasiMA Board meets three times a year. While some interviewees observed that PasiMA plays an important role in Tonga, others noted that few people were associated with PasiMA.

Figure 2: Jean Gabrielle Manguy and Viliami Lolohea with Tonga Community College media students. Photo by Jean Gabrielle Manguy.

Local politics and competition between different individuals and organisations,[16] coupled with a general perception of limited freedom of speech among journalists, play a significant role in the success or failure of media associations in Tonga. Despite these issues, there remains a desire to foster support and relationships between members of the media industry within Tonga more so than at a regional level. As TONGA14 concludes, *'we really need a media council, not only in terms with dealing with people with grievances but actually developing the skills and knowledge that working journalists should be having and assist media program with TVETs. I think we really need the media council to function and work and, maybe, do something for media in general.'*

---

16   Singh, S. 2010. Life under Decree No. 29 of 2010: The Fiji Media Development Decree. *Pacific Journalism Review* Vol 16(2) pp 147-162

Content

'The whole Tongan situation is unrecorded, unwritten, is hopeless really. We are not really producing enough, and we [are] just so bombarded with these overseas things, you know, but that's the way it is.' (TONGA01)

This discussion of media content focuses on communication platforms and programs and ways to address issues related to climate change and NCDs. Climate change and NCDs are two long-term strategic activities in the PACMAS program. Panel of Expertise members noted that different groups and organisations had access to public broadcasting to discuss issues of relevance and noted a number of programs concerned with development. Audience studies were noted by one member as taking place within commercial media but not (to their knowledge) by public service broadcasters or those in the communication for development (C4D) area.

The balance and quality of local news and content is a concern for members of the media industry. Foreign content is widely available on pay per view channels, and through a pirated DVDs trade wherein local shops sell new releases for about AUD $4. A number of independent production houses make videos and DVDs. Quality programs are associated with English and international programming, and interviewees expressed concern that 'local content' has been relegated to *'panel discussions and doing church programs'* (TONGA14). There are a few exceptions such as a television pilot for 'This is my village' (in Samoa and Tonga) written to tell stories specifically about the Pacific. Language and the use of local content represent key issues in Tonga.

PACMAS Strategic Activity: Climate Change

Tonga is part of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). As a member, Tonga is obligated to update the UN on its progress and participate in international forums. Tonga also participates in the Pacific Islands Framework for Action on Climate Change. There is discussion, reports and community engagement about climate change from the Ministry of Environment, Civil Society Forum of Tonga (CSFT) and Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environmental Programme (SPREP). Other activities include a National Environment Co-ordinating Committee, a fortnightly radio program run by the Department of Environment about climate change and, in the past, a TV panel discussion on climate change. The National Strategic Development Plan, the National Development Policy (2006) and the Joint National Action Plan of Climate Change Adaption and Disaster Risk Management are all available online.

Media and communication play a key role in climate change strategies. Tonga has a formal communication plan as part of the Pacific Adaptation to Climate Change (PACC) program, which is primarily about message delivery on climate change. The communication plan includes a PR strategy with 'key messages' and 'target audiences', although it is noted by interviewees that many of the messages about climate change need to be simplified, made locally and culturally relevant, or translated into Tongan. Scientific definitions and terms are believed to be especially difficult to translate into Tongan. Other activities include school visits (climate change has been a research topic for many high school students), and community workshops (e.g. the Tonga Community Development Trust Project), the development of websites and other awareness materials such as brochures and press releases.

PACMAS Strategic Activity: NCDs

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) country profile of Tonga, NCDs account for 74 per cent of all deaths. With 90 per cent of Tongans overweight, obesity is an important health issue. Tonga ranks in the top ten in the world for obesity and Type 2 diabetes sufferers (13+) are also increasing. Preventative health around NCDs is referred to as the first Key Result Area of the National Health Plan for Tonga, which suggests that this is a key health priority for the country. A number of organisations are involved in NCD awareness via subcommittees including the Ministry of Police, Health, Education, Tonga Red Cross, WHO and Tonga Health. Tonga Health System Support Program (THSSP) and AusAID are working to restructure health centres in order to provide access, screening and to develop a database. There are also consultants engaged in identifying and reviewing legislation, such as the Liquor and Tobacco Acts.

Media experts go to Tonga Family Health or the Government Centre for Women and Children - ***Ma'a Fafine mo e Famili*** - for information about NCDs. A two day media-training program was provided during the Pacific NCD forums in 2011 and 2012. However, participants remarked on the need to strengthen co-ordination between different departments and to have a national communication strategy. They also noted that public awareness campaigns might benefit from the recruitment of technical advisors and insights from people who

had successfully run health campaigns overseas. However, the Tonga Health Promotion Foundation does not undertake any media training and there is little knowledge of how to engage with the media or how campaigns should work.

NCDs are the focus of a number of communication efforts in the media including: television sports programs; TV; radio and newspaper coverage of events and messages; advertisements (full-page and cover) in newspapers and daily radio programs; weekly newspapers and on billboards; social media and stories about individuals

Figure 3: Miimama Mautairi from Cook Islands Television contributing to discussions at the PACMAS NCD workshop in Samoa in 2012. Photo by PACMAS

such as a woman who has her leg amputated as a result of diabetes. Radio and television programs are focused on morning time-slots since these times are the most popular. Radio 89.5 has been supportive and aired some Tonga Health Promotion Fund (THPF) programs, such as the netball tournament which had over 100 teams participating (e.g. 'Come on Tonga, Let's Play Netball'). TBC provides some airtime but rates are high. NCD communication and awareness is typically focused on tobacco control and alcohol reduction; avoiding unhealthy eating and obesity; providing ideas for individuals and groups to make healthier choices; promoting and changing perceptions of exercise programs and activities; as well as reaching out to marginalised groups through targeted advertisements and activities. THPF are also developing awareness and capacity building program for rural populations on Tonga's outer islands. The Women and Children's Crises Centre members and organisations such as Tonga Health have regular programs on radio and TV that are essentially health awareness messages with a discussion/interview format, talkback programs explaining NCDs as lifestyle diseases, and with health workers and doctors invited to discuss them with listeners. Information is also available on the internet.

Telecommunication companies have been particularly active in NCD awareness activities. Broadcom covers seminars on NCDs in news programs and through talkback programs involving experts. The Ministry of Health hosts and pays for a daily radio exercise program, and Broadcom FM89.5 invites listeners to call in order to establish how many are actively participating. Digicel communicates messages through newspapers, radio and TV (TBC) (e.g. text messages are sent to 40,000 people daily and every time a user checks their balance they receive a 110-character health message). This promotional campaign provided a data set for Tonga Health, which used statistical information to develop an understanding of the demographics of users and to gather information about the effectiveness of the messaging campaigns. Digicel also provide free texting credits to support community programs. Digicel sends messages to villages and is organising its own activities to promote health, such as providing $2 credits to participants who attend Friday morning exercise and *faiva*, a gathering where dances, shows, movies and other forms of entertainment occur.

Incentives and benefits also accompany awareness efforts. For example, there is a small grant scheme that supports health promotion activities for communities and groups, such as the 'Give Me Five' task force modeled on the New Zealand school food policy. Sponsorship of sports organisations and schools is provided in exchange for support for tobacco free zones, encouraging the drinking of water and reduction of junk food in schools. Some villages receive funds to pay community hall electricity bills if they agree to keep the hall tobacco free. Netball courts were established for a widely publicised and very successful one-day netball tournament (175 teams registered). Yet, despite these efforts, interviewees expressed concern that funds given to NCD organisations for media awareness either are used for other activities or not used at all. In addition, the organisations involved often work at cross-purposes by failing to coordinate their activities and communications strategies.

Interviewees described the current level of NCD awareness in Tonga as from low to medium. Although many see that the message of eating healthily and exercising 30 minutes per day is picking up traction, some individuals believe that an effective NCD awareness campaign requires a concerted national effort to develop a communication strategy.

Figure 4: Talita Mafi Sili from Tonga and Miimama Mautairi from Cook Islands at the PACMAS NCD workshop in Samoa in 2012. Photo by PACMAS

Crosscutting Issues: Disability, Gender and Youth

'I think that, at the end of the day, what we try to do here is ... to bring all the issues together and see how they inter-connect and why decision-makers should see it from the holistic point of view and address issues. For example, when government thinks of women in empowering her economically they think of small market enterprise loans. But actually decisions made at an early stage can affect ... impact on her economically...[such as] making the right decisions on relationships. If you don't get into the right relationship, you are not empowered.... So we're trying to connect all the issues ...[and] we try to use the media to communicate that.' (TONGA15)

There was no direct mention of disability, apart from the side effects of obesity, diabetes and youth depression. Gender emerged as a prominent issue in Tonga. Domestic violence, voice and participation in the political process and perceptions of women's roles in society represent the key issues for Tongan men and women. This has become particularly visible in the work on NCDs where Tonga Family Health and the government Centre for Women and Children provide information and awareness. For example, there have been a number of campaigns to encourage women between the ages of 15-45 to be physically active through their participation in sports. (e.g.

'Come on Tonga, let's play netball'). This campaign, which drew on focus groups for pre-testing of the messages and logo, stressed that sport is not just for younger people and unmarried women. Prominent Tongan figures like the Tongan princess, Mo'onia Gerrard (Mark Gerrard's sister and an international netball player) and Miss Heilala, winner of a Tongan beauty pageant, endorsed the program. In addition to celebrities, endorsement by men and church leaders has been important to the success of programs, in particular, physical activities and sport for women, as many women were afraid of being physically punished by their husband for participating.

Mainstream media has also taken notice of gender issues. Radio stations experienced a number of distressed women calling in to talkback radio programs, which has led TBC to organise a discussion group of key stakeholders (e.g. police, women's groups, school principals) on key women's issues. There are several organisations that focus on women's issues in Tonga, such as the Civil Society Forum of Tonga and the Women and Children's Centre. The Civil Society Forum of Tonga is an umbrella NGO with 75 members focused on working with youth, women and people with disabilities. A civil society group in Tonga made note of gender issues and are working to involve women and youth in their projects. Part of their role is to group all the NGOs and receive funding from the Pacific Leadership Program.

The Women and Children's Crisis Centre is an example of effective use of training and resources for women as well as for youth issues. The Centre produces a quarterly electronic newsletter covering awareness programs, which they view as a watchdog. It includes a popular feedback section and case studies. Due to lack of funding, however, this newsletter is not printed which thereby restricts its readership locally. It also engages in face-to-face communication when members go out to the communities. The centre also provides informal media training for NGOs and produces short issue-focused papers specifically targeting members of parliament, heads of ministries and department town offices. The centre, Tonga Health and other NGOs broadcast regular programs on radio and TV that are, essentially, health awareness messages and follow a discussion or interview format. The centre also produced a 15-minute video directed at candidates before the 2010 elections, which featured girls expressing their opinions on climate change and the rights of Tongan women. When one girl commented that she is 'worth nothing' as a citizen, it provoked reaction from people who thought it was too bold to put on TV. The centre's position was supportive in empowering these young women to express their voice and teach them how to vote and receive information about the political system and processes.

Youth are also the focus of a number of media and communication efforts. Community radio stations routinely report on topics addressing youth problems, and broadcast highly interactive talkback programs around spirituality, climate change and health issues. Because Tonga does not have a child protection network or organisation, the Women and Children's Crisis Centre is vocal in talking about children's and young people's rights and issues such as child diabetes, early marriage among young girls and lack of general skills and significant youth and mental health issues such as depression. In addition, the Tongan government is considering how to engage young people in decision-making. Despite indications these efforts are having some impact, the Women and Children's Crisis Centre and similar organisations are often viewed as groups with political or special interests. Once considered political, the flow of information and communication stops. This has created some frustration among organisations that see these issues as broader than special interest and deeply connected to socio-economic development in Tonga.

Summary of Findings

Tonga has a rich and complex media environment that has been shaped through its governance by a monarchy, and the relationships between Tongans within and beyond the island nation. The findings across the four areas of policy and legislation, media systems, capacity building and content are summarised below:

Policy and Legislation
- Freedom of the Press is guaranteed in Clause 7 of the constitution.
- Amendments to the constitution in 2003 enabled the government to restrict media freedom.
- The Communication Act 2000 allows the government to restrict or prohibit content or particular types of content, and regulates the ways in which Tongan culture and identity are represented in the media.
- The Newspaper Act and Media Operators Act 2003 licenses newspapers as well as broadcasters, and includes a restriction on the importation and sale of foreign media.

Media Systems
- Technicians typically rely on bilateral assistance programs for donated (but usually old) equipment.
- Technicians purchase equipment online from companies primarily based in New Zealand.
- Engineers are keen to work together to pool resources and training from abroad.
- Tongan technicians are sent overseas for up-skilling, and special trainers are occasionally brought in from overseas; they also maintain their own relationships and seek advice from other technicians overseas.
- The National Plan for Emergency Information was formulated in 2007 and is undergoing revision.
- The National Emergency Management Office works with the Red Cross for disaster preparedness.
- Digicel works closely with the Disaster Management Committee to broadcast information immediately via mobile (SMS) and television; Radio Tonga is also a significant player.
- In the most recent events where early warning messages were delayed, TBC did not relay them for almost 25 minutes, and people were already on their way to work and school.

Capacity Building
- The Tonga Institute of Higher Education has Certificate and Diploma courses in journalism; all of the students in 2011 were women.
- TVET training is perceived as inadequate, with students who have undertaken media internships lacking practical or technical skills.
- TBC is currently the only active member of PINA in Tonga, and PasiMA has emerged as a player for members of private media.
- Local politics and competition between different individuals and organisations play a significant role in the success or failure of media associations and organisations in Tonga.

Content
- The balance and quality of international content as compared with locally produced content represents a key concern for members of the media industry.
- Tonga has a formal communications plan as part of the Pacific Adaptation to Climate Change program (PACC) which focuses on delivery of climate change messages.
- Many of the messages about climate change need to be simplified, made relevant or translated into Tongan language and concepts.
- Media experts go to Tonga Family Health or the Government Centre for Women & Children - Ma'a Fafine mo e Famili - for information about NCDs.
- Tonga Health Promotion Foundation does not undertake any media training and has had little training on how to engage with the media or how media campaigns should work.
- Telecommunication companies (e.g., Broadcom and Digicel) have been particularly active in NCD awareness activities.

Research Partners