

# State of the Media: Tuvalu



# *State of the Media: Tuvalu*

*This study was led and designed by ABC International Development (ABCID), informed by our Pacific partners. The University of Adelaide's (UoA) Stretton Institute were implementation partners across the 12 countries studied. Fieldwork and data analysis was conducted by Pacific researchers. We would like to thank all the expert advisers and study participants for their time and generous contributions.*

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*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, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation or the University of Adelaide.*

*Photos in this report are from ABCID programs, ABC staff, and ABC archives, unless otherwise specified.*

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*Funafuti Island.*

# ACRONYMS

**4G** fourth-generation mobile network  
**ABC** Australian Broadcasting Corporation  
**ABCID** ABC International Development  
    **AI** artificial intelligence  
    **AM** amplitude modulation  
**BBC** British Broadcasting Corporation  
**CBO** community-based organisation  
**CEDAW** Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women  
**EKT** Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu  
    **FM** frequency modulation  
**GAD** Gender Affairs Department  
**GEDSI** gender equality, disability and social inclusion  
    **ICT** information and communications technology  
**LGBTIQ+** lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and other sexually and gender diverse people  
    **N/A** not applicable  
**NASA** National Aeronautics and Space Administration  
    **NGO** non-government organisation  
    **PCBL** Pacific Cooperation Broadcasting Limited  
**TANGO** Tuvalu Association of Non-Governmental Organizations  
**TNCW** Tuvalu National Council of Women  
**TNYC** Tuvalu National Youth Council  
**TPUM** Trans Pacific Union Mission  
    **TTC** Tuvalu Telecommunications Corporation  
**TuCAN** Tuvalu Climate Action Network  
**TVBC** Tuvalu Broadcasting Corporation  
**UNCAC** United Nations Convention against Corruption  
**UNDP** United Nations Development Programme

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a snapshot of Tuvalu's media landscape in 2024. Tuvalu's media sector consists solely of the national broadcaster: Tuvalu Broadcasting Corporation (TVBC) which operates Radio Tuvalu and Tuvalu.TV. There is no private media so diversity of news content and views is limited. The following themes were identified in the research.

## **Radio as primary source of public interest information for Tuvaluans**

Radio remains the main media platform for the dissemination of information, including emergency and disaster information, and has the widest reach. Local news and world current affairs programs translated into Tuvaluan language, are broadcast via radio to the population in the capital Funafuti and to the outer islands of the archipelago.

## **Infrastructure improvements have led to high-speed internet coverage**

The telecommunication network and internet coverage have improved with the establishment of new infrastructure. Kacific, a broadband satellite operator managed by the Tuvalu Telecommunications Corporation (TTC), has provided high-speed broadband internet connectivity since 2020, enabling a strong ICT environment for businesses and communities. At the time of writing, the Tuvalu government is in the process of granting a licence for the deployment of Starlink, an internet service that provides high-speed internet via low orbit satellites even to remote areas, is anticipated to boost internet connectivity; findings show that residents in the outer islands are already using Starlink unofficially. With improved network coverage and internet access, it is expected that Tuvaluans will rely more on streaming services.

## **Declining pay TV subscriptions are impacting media viability**

Monthly subscription fees have been one of TVBC's main sources of revenue since the establishment of Tuvalu.TV in 2019. Respondents noted that pay TV subscriptions have decreased as TV decoders have malfunctioned or been damaged.

## **Climate change threatens communications infrastructure**

Tuvalu's susceptibility to sea-level rises and associated climate vulnerabilities reinforces the need for a resilient and effective communications system. Radio remains one of the most effective means of communication, and maintenance of radio infrastructure is crucial to ensure a robust information ecosystem for disaster preparedness and messaging. Tuvalu has shown its willingness to embrace digital technology in the face of existential climate threats, through projects such as the Digital Nation project, which seeks to recreate its land, history and cultural heritage in a digital format.



# 1. INTRODUCTION

*Tuvalu is a Polynesian country located halfway between Australia and Hawaii. It has a total land area of 26 km<sup>2</sup> across three reef islands and six atolls.<sup>1</sup> Tuvalu has a population of 9,816 as of 2023,<sup>2</sup> half of whom live on Funafuti Atoll, which is also the capital. Tuvalu became independent from the United Kingdom in 1978 and is a constitutional monarchy, with a unicameral 16-member parliament. Tuvalu has a small diaspora, although this is likely to increase due to the Australia-Tuvalu Falepili Union, which will provide Tuvaluan citizens the choice to migrate to Australia – temporarily or permanently – to live, work, and study as permanent residents.*

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<sup>1</sup> Tala Simeti and Allan Mua Illingworth, [United Nations Development Program - Accountability Ecosystems Political Economy Analysis](#).

<sup>2</sup> [World Bank Group, Data - Tuvalu Population](#).



*Temese Teloko presents in the Tuvalu Broadcasting Corporation studio.*

The media sector in Tuvalu is small: only the government-owned TVBC operates radio and television broadcasting, and there is no print media. The narrowness of the media sector, combined with capacity limitations, has, according to respondents, undermined the ability of the media to perform its role as the fourth estate in Tuvalu's democracy. However, improved internet access across the country has allowed more Tuvaluans to access news and information online.

This report provides a detailed, up-to-date snapshot of the state of the media in Tuvalu. It is part of the State of the Media project, which comprises 12 country reports and one regional report. These reports serve as an accessible resource for media, civil society, and government organisations in support of development goals in the region. In addition to Tuvalu, the countries studied are: Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Fiji, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), Nauru, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Vanuatu.



## 2. METHODOLOGY

*The study's methodology was guided by core research questions identified by ABC International Development (ABCID) and was designed to foreground the expertise of Pacific researchers and media professionals. Data collection, analysis, and report drafting were conducted by Pacific researchers.*

The research team began with a desk-based review of primary and secondary literature. Additionally, three media practitioner interviews were conducted. At each step, feedback and advice were sought from the Tuvalu country media expert adviser, Puaseiese Adrienne Pedro, who cross-checked the accuracy of findings and co-authored this report. The research was approved by the University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee, and steps were taken to mitigate risks to all research participants, including maintaining their anonymity.

A more detailed discussion of the project methodology is contained in the regional report.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> [ABC International Development - Research.](#)



*Outrigger canoe, Tuvalu.*

# 3

## 3. MEDIA ORGANISATION FOOTPRINT

### Radio and television

*The only media organisation operating in Tuvalu is the government-owned Tuvalu Broadcasting Corporation (TVBC). Until 2015, the organisation was the Tuvalu Media Department (TMD) and from 1999-2007 the Tuvalu Media Corporation, during an earlier period of corporatisation. Established by the Public Broadcasting Act 2014,<sup>4</sup> TVBC is a public broadcaster operating Radio Tuvalu and the television channel Tuvalu.TV,<sup>5</sup> which started in 2019. There is no private media in Tuvalu.*

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<sup>4</sup> [Government of Tuvalu - Tuvalu Public Broadcasting Act 2014 PDF](#).

<sup>5</sup> [Tuvalu TV-Facebook page](#).



The team from Tuvalu. TV. (Facebook: Tuvalu.TV)

Table 1. Radio and TV

Platform	Organisation	Ownership/ Funding	Language	Website/Social media	Sector
Radio	Radio Tuvalu (TVBC)	State	Tuvaluan/ English	N/A	Government
Television	Tuvalu.TV (TVBC)	State	Tuvaluan/ English	Facebook	Government

Radio Tuvalu, which has existed since 1975, transmits via 621 AM and 100.1 FM. Most Tuvaluans consider Radio Tuvalu's AM broadcast to be the primary source of public information for cyclone warnings.<sup>6</sup> Radio Tuvalu's AM transmission extends across all nine islands of the archipelago. The Funafuti AM transmitter has a back-up generator to support continued transmission during power loss.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Yusuke Taishi, Medium, UNDP-Connecting Islands, *Weathering Storms article*, October 13, 2017.

<sup>7</sup> United Nations Development Program - Effective and responsive island-level governance to secure and diversify climate resilient marine-based coastal livelihoods and enhance climate hazard response capacity, Project Document PDF.

ABC Radio Australia has been broadcast in Tuvalu, via 102 FM, since June 2024 – a 24-hour service.<sup>8</sup>

Since 2019, Tuvalu has had its own television channel, Tuvalu.TV, operating Tuvalu's first digital terrestrial TV platform and broadcasting one local channel and ten cable channels.<sup>9</sup> In 2023, Tuvalu.TV joined Pacific Cooperation Broadcasting Limited (PCBL), enabling it to access the 24-7 Pasifika TV channel.<sup>10</sup> A collaboration between Trans Pacific Union Mission (TPUM) and Tuvalu.TV also saw the Hope Channel, a Christian TV channel, begin broadcasting free to air across Funafuti in October 2023.<sup>11</sup>

International satellite television channels can be accessed via a monthly satellite subscription with Tuvalu Telecommunications Corporation. A satellite dish and decoder set top box are required to be able to receive the transmission.<sup>12</sup>

## Online

Tuvalu.TV has an active Facebook page where it livestreams parliamentary meetings and sessions. It also posts updates about the country's development projects and shares Tuvalu.TV's daily local news bulletin. TVBC does not maintain a website.

Social media platforms are regularly used by government ministries and civil society entities to inform Tuvaluans about government development programs. Civil society organisations maintain Facebook pages (with varying regularity) that are key influencers of public discourse, especially around climate change and the role of young people.<sup>13</sup>

Tuvalu's government framed the country as the world's first digital nation through its Australian-produced Future Now project campaign and viral videos in 2022.<sup>14</sup> The project promises to produce digital content archives that document Tuvaluan artefacts, language and oral histories in the future.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>8</sup> [ABC - ABC Signs MOU and Launches ABC Radio Australia in Tuvalu](#), June 20, 2024.

<sup>9</sup> [Tuvalu TV, Launch video - on Facebook](#), December 25, 2019.

<sup>10</sup> [Pasifika TV, Tuvalu.TV Joins Pasifika TV Broadcasting Village](#), September 14, 2023.

<sup>11</sup> [John Tausere and Juliana Muniz, Adventist Record - Hope Channel Launched in Tuvalu](#), October 31, 2023.

<sup>12</sup> [Tuvalu Telecom - Our Products homepage](#).

<sup>13</sup> Simeti and Illingworth, Accountability Ecosystems, 16.

<sup>14</sup> [Campaigns of the World - Tuvalu, the First Digital Nation: Rising Sea Levels Propel the Pacific Island Nation Towards the Metaverse](#), May 31, 2023.

<sup>15</sup> [Tuvalu Government's Ministry of Justice, Communications and Foreign Affairs - The First Digital Nation](#), accessed December 2024.



*Tuvalu Broadcasting Corporation's studio.*



## 4. MEDIA CONTENT COVERAGE

*Tuvaluans in Tuvalu and the diaspora have access to local news and other public interest programming via Tuvalu.TV. The most popular content on Tuvalu.TV relates to culture and tradition, as one media practitioner respondent states: “People are more attracted to cultural programs than government issues or current affairs” (Tuvalu 01). Tuvalu.TV also covers government and community news; disasters, weather, and climate change; health, development, and infrastructure; and meetings and events of various kinds (Tuvalu 03).*



*Tuvalu flag painted on a wall in Funafuti.*

Program content is produced and presented in the Tuvaluan language, but subtitles are sometimes provided for non-Tuvaluan viewers, and some programs are produced in English.

Feedback on radio and TV programs or news is usually given via Facebook posts or comments, or by phone call to the media office; sometimes feedback is given by email. Since Tuvalu is a small country, feedback may also be given face-to-face.

Radio remains the main media platform both in Funafuti and the outer islands.<sup>16</sup> As a media practitioner respondent stated: “radio is the number one form of communication in media because it has a wide coverage, it reaches a huge audience across the islands” (Tuvalu 02). Local news and world current affairs are translated into Tuvaluan broadcast on radio. Reporters working for Radio Tuvalu usually obtain news stories by making appointments or attending events and conducting interviews. Parliamentary news, climate change and development, and issues affecting people with disabilities are some of the popular news topics covered.

Given its reach across the country, Radio Tuvalu is pivotal in delivering public awareness programs and emergency broadcasts, as Tuvalu grapples with the impacts of climate change. For example, radio is the primary means of educating the population on saline intrusion resulting from rising sea levels and its effect on water quality and availability.<sup>17</sup>

There are broad concerns about the independence and effectiveness of TVBC in its role as the fourth estate. The Government or Tuvalu itself recognises the challenge of media independence in the Te Kakeega III National Strategy for Sustainable

<sup>16</sup> [The Global Climate Change Alliance Plus Initiative - World Water Day: Recognising the Importance of Groundwater in Tuvalu](#), accessed 14 August 2024.

<sup>17</sup> [Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme - Coastal Inundation from Sea Level Rise Identified as Main Risk to Water Quality and Availability in Tuvalu](#), March 28, 2024.

Development 2016 to 2020. The strategy states that since the media is run by the government, staff are “compliant with passive government broadcast restrictions”, resulting in journalists rarely holding the government, its officials, or politicians to account – in part due to cultural reasons.<sup>18</sup> The ineffectiveness of media was also noted in a Tuvalu country study that examined the political economy of accountability ecosystems. The study found that, while TVBC’s legally defined role is of a watchdog that is independent from the government, the organisation “operates as a government-run entity”. It does not report on government spending, matters of national interest, or government misconduct.<sup>19</sup>

The church holds a central role in Tuvalu’s spiritual, social, and cultural life. Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu (EKT) is the largest faith-based organisation in the country.<sup>20</sup> Respondents noted that the introduction of a church-owned media outlet under the auspices of EKT – whether in the form of a newspaper, radio, or online could reinforce Tuvaluan values and culture and ensure traditional knowledge and stories continue to be told.

## Gender equality, disability and social inclusion

The stakeholder interviews with media practitioners aimed to capture top-level themes including gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) representation in media content coverage in Tuvalu. The findings below should not be viewed as exhaustive due to a small sample size. Rather, these insights provide an indication of potential trends in media practitioner perceptions of GEDSI issues.

The government is a primary source for media’s gender-focused stories. The government’s Gender Affairs Department (GAD) has an online portal which serves as an information hub, including news and publications relating to gender issues, programs and services, and the latest government policies relating to gender equity.<sup>21</sup> Tuvalu launched its first National Gender Equity Policy in 2014, and in May 2024, launched the revised national gender equity policy “Te Paagatasi”, which outlines priorities such as women’s economic empowerment, participation in public life, elimination of gender-based violence, and gender mainstreaming across all sectors.<sup>22</sup>

Tuvalu also has a national policy for persons with disability (2018), which implements Tuvalu’s ratification, in 2013, of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The policy focuses on inclusivity and empowerment of people living with disability, especially girls and women, in decision-making. The Fusi Alofa Association is the NGO representing the voice of people with disabilities. Respondents advised that TVBC prioritises coverage of issues affecting people with disabilities.

Regarding LGBTIQ+ communities, media practitioner respondents commented that LGBTIQ+ people in Tuvalu are sometimes represented in the media. One respondent elaborated: “We have [diverse communities] here, but we don’t promote [sexuality]. We do acknowledge the [communities], they are part of our local content, but we do not promote their sexual orientation” (Tuvalu 01).

18 [Government of Tuvalu, Te Kakeega III - National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016 to 2020 PDF](#).

19 [Simeti and Illingworth, Accountability Ecosystems](#), 16.

20 [Simeti and Illingworth, Accountability Ecosystems](#), 17–18.

21 [Government of Tuvalu, Gender Affairs Department - homepage](#), accessed 14 August 2024.

22 [Tuvalu Gender Affairs Department - Tuvalu National Beijing +30 Review Report, 2024, PDF](#).



Production equipment at TVBC.

## 5. MEDIA BUSINESS RESILIENCE

*TVBC's revenue comes from government grants, advertising, birthday request charges, fees for sponsored/commissioned documentaries, and monthly subscription fees. However, a media practitioner respondent indicated that subscriptions to pay TV channels have decreased as TV decoders [set top boxes] are damaged or malfunction. Currently, there are no spare decoders [set top boxes] on standby to replace malfunctioning ones, so subscriber revenues have decreased (Tuvalu 03).*



*Editing TVBC's news for television.*

TVBC was established as a non-profit public broadcaster independent of government in 2014 under a financial model combining direct public subsidy for infrastructure and commercial income covering staff and production costs.<sup>23</sup> While there was an earlier attempt to corporatise TVBC (then the Tuvalu Media Department) in 1999, this was abandoned in 2008 because the organisation was not commercially sustainable.<sup>24</sup>

One media practitioner respondent fears the government might de-corporatise TVBC again due to its difficult financial situation and the high cost of replacing ageing equipment: “We need [the international community’s] support urgently to improve the performance of the media before government do a review and de-corporatise our media” (Tuvalu 03). The same respondent hopes support from international partners, including “funds, trainings, equipment, technical assistance to work with the management and board to plan and set out duties and responsibilities including finance”, will help sustain basic operations and facilitate new endeavours that are critical to ongoing viability, such as a website (Tuvalu 03).

## Artificial intelligence

In the media sector, respondents said they are aware of AI and have experimented with it, but it is not a staple part of their workflow. As one interviewee commented: “We are aware of AI, but we haven’t used AI for our content. We haven’t really seen how we can use it in our local content” (Tuvalu 01). Respondents acknowledged that there is much to explore in terms of the utility of AI in streamlining reporting processes, but it is an area that requires further research and knowledge gathering for media practitioners in Tuvalu.

<sup>23</sup> *Tuvalu Public Broadcasting Act, 2014.*

<sup>24</sup> *Australian Broadcasting Corporation - 2013 State of the Media and Communications Report, Tuvalu.*

# 6. MEDIA POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE ENVIRONMENT

## Freedom of expression

*The Constitution of Tuvalu protects freedom of expression, including the “freedom to receive ideas and information” and “to communicate ideas and information without interference”.<sup>25</sup> This corresponds with article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, on the protection of freedom of speech and the media. There is no express provision in the constitution for media freedom.*

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<sup>25</sup> [Tuvalu Consolidated Legislation - The Constitution of Tuvalu](#).



Radio Tuvalu Studio 2.

The Public Broadcasting Act establishing TVBC is intended “to promote and guarantee the independence of the public service broadcaster from political or commercial interference within a framework of accountability to the public.”<sup>26</sup> This legal frame alone has not enabled a culture of media independence and freedom and the broadcaster aligns strongly with the government’s news agenda.<sup>27</sup>

Respondents feel that TVBC citizen voices are not always heard or part of interactive public debate and discussion within TVBC programming. Cultural obligations were identified as a reason why the media does not probe the actions of public figures. As one media practitioner respondent observed:

People working in the media cannot freely practise their freedom of disseminating information that is sensitive to the government because they are part of the government. Thus, it’s hard for them to practise the freedom of information and expression. We also respect our elders, we respect our leaders [and don’t want] to invade their privacy, even though they are public figures.  
(Tuvalu 02)

<sup>26</sup> *Tuvalu Public Broadcasting Act, 2014*.

<sup>27</sup> *Simeti and Illingworth, Accountability Ecosystems, 17–18.*

## Accessing official information

Tuvalu does not have a right to information law or policy, but it is a party to the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), which requires public reporting, including publishing information on corruption.<sup>28</sup>

The Public Records Act 1979 provides for the availability to the public of records held in the Tuvalu National Library and Archives.

## Broadcast media

The Public Broadcasting Act 2014 mandates and regulates TVBC's role as a public broadcaster, accountable to the population through the parliament. As a public broadcaster, TVBC is expected to encourage and promote local content and serve "all the people of Tuvalu, taking into account ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity."<sup>29</sup> TVBC has a duty to maintain its independence from government, through producing impartial and balanced news and programming. In practice, story angles tends to follow government narratives and reporting focuses on government developments and achievements.

TVBC may engage in advertising, limited to 25 per cent of its total revenue, and it is prohibited from carrying advertisements for a political party or candidate. TVBC has an internal complaints procedure, to handle complaints from the public in the event of a breach of broadcasting practice code. TVBC's performance against its mandate is monitored by the minister for transport, energy and tourism.

## Telecommunications

The telecommunication sector and services are regulated by the Tuvalu Telecommunications Corporation Act 1993. TTC is responsible for "the business of supplying telecommunication services and establishing and developing telecommunication systems".<sup>30</sup> The Tuvalu Telecommunications Corporation Act has most recently been revised in 2022.<sup>31</sup>

## Online

The Tuvalu Telecommunications Corporation Act (2022) addresses cybercrime offences, such as offensive, indecent, obscene, or threatening messages sent via telecommunications. Tuvalu does not currently have cybercrime legislation but reportedly has a Draft Cybercrime Bill pending approval, at the time of writing.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>28</sup> [United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime - United Nations Convention against Corruption \(UNCAC\) PDF.](#)

<sup>29</sup> [Tuvalu Public Broadcasting Act 2014.](#)

<sup>30</sup> [Tuvalu Sessional Legislation - Tuvalu Telecommunications Corporation Act 1993.](#)

<sup>31</sup> [Tuvalu Sessional Legislation - Tuvalu Telecommunications Corporation Act, Revised Edition 2022, PDF.](#)

<sup>32</sup> [Council of Europe, Octopus Cybercrime Community - Tuvalu, accessed 14 August 2024.](#)



*Broadcast satellites outside the news building of TVBC*

## 7. MISINFORMATION AND DISINFORMATION

*In Tuvalu, misinformation (more so than disinformation) has been attributed to the expansion of social media use by members of the public and civil servants. There are approximately 6,000 Facebook users in Tuvalu.<sup>33</sup> According to media practitioner respondents, social media users speculating online about public issues without verifying the reliability of sources is what causes misinformation to spread. (Tuvalu 01).*

Sometimes civil servants seek to challenge or verify the claims. In other instances, civil servants inadvertently share unverified information. Respondents suggested this behaviour highlighted the need for a civil service policy or code of conduct on social media use (Tuvalu 02).

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<sup>33</sup> Simon Kemp, [Data Reportal-Digital 2024: Tuvalu](#), February 23, 2024.



Presenter Temese Teloko reads the news in the Tuvalu Broadcasting Corporation studio.

Respondents cited recent examples of misinformation regarding the Australia-Tuvalu Falepili Union treaty as an issue. The government is responding with an information campaign to quell fears that have arisen in the community as a result.<sup>34</sup>

Respondents highlighted the role that media should play in combating misinformation. One respondent explained that TVBC social media skills need to improve to support this work:

“It is important for the media in Tuvalu to keep up with the current trends especially in social media. Currently, there is a lot of misinformation circulating. It is the role of the media to ensure that information shared are not misinforming the public, instead of relying on misinformation on social media. Thus, the media needs to improve in this regard seeing Tuvalu has only one media organisation” (Tuvalu 02).

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<sup>34</sup> [Radio New Zealand - Tuvalu to Launch Information Campaign on Treaty with Australia Due to Misinformation, article, May 10, 2024.](#)



## 8. MEDIA INFRASTRUCTURE

### Telecommunications

*Tuvalu Telecommunications Corporation (TTC) is the sole telecommunication provider in the country. TTC provides fixed telephone, mobile and internet services. Every island in Tuvalu “relies on TTC for the use of a satellite dish for inter-island telephone communication and internet access”, and TTC also “provides mobile phone services in Funafuti, Vaitupu and Nukulaelae”.<sup>35</sup>*

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<sup>35</sup> [United Nations Conference on Trade and Development \(UNCTAD\)](#)  
- Tuvalu Rapid eTrade Readiness Assessment PDF.



*Headquarters of Tuvalu Broadcasting Corp.*

Each island in Tuvalu is equipped with a text message-based communication device and an external antenna for satellite phones, and each household has a solar-powered radio to access information during an emergency.<sup>36</sup>

Tuvalu's high-speed broadband connectivity across its nine islands is provided via satellite by Kacific Broadband Satellites Group. The infrastructure for the project includes 60 satellite dishes, 40 outdoor wi-fi access points, and 11 antennae.<sup>37</sup> Media practitioner respondents interviewed noted that an added boost to internet connectivity is expected as the Tuvalu government is, at the time of writing, in the process of granting a licence for the formal deployment of Starlink – although interviewees confirmed that Starlink is already being used unofficially by residents in the outer islands.<sup>38</sup> As one respondent stated:

Internet connectivity is faster with the presence of 4G network on Funafuti and two other islands. Faster internet connectivity also allows people to access media coverage by TVBC via streaming on Facebook without having to watch TV. In addition, most of the residents in the outer islands have access to internet via Starlink. (Tuvalu 02)

<sup>36</sup> *Taishi, "Connecting Islands."*

<sup>37</sup> [United Nations Conference on Trade and Development \(UNCTAD\) - Tuvalu Rapid eTrade Readiness Assessment PDF](#), April 30, 2022.

<sup>38</sup> [Government of Tuvalu - National ICT Policy 2021 PDF](#).

In December 2024, Tuvalu was connected to the undersea Bulikula cable system via the Tuvalu Vaka cable.<sup>39</sup> Tuvalu expects the connection to enable improved and cheaper internet connectivity.<sup>40</sup>

Tuvalu's top-level domain name country-code.tv is an increasingly important revenue source for the country under an agreement signed in 2022 that links revenue to individual purchases of the domain, which is globally popular.<sup>41</sup> Even prior to the new agreement, a flat annual licencing fee for the domain reportedly earned the country around one-twelfth of its annual gross national income.<sup>42</sup>

## Broadcast transmission

According to a media practitioner respondent, media infrastructure – in terms of broadcasting equipment – has improved with the introduction of the television station in 2019. Currently Tuvalu.TV is broadcast in Funafuti and certain surrounding islands, and there are plans to expand the service to other islands in future.

One of the objectives of the national ICT policy (2021) is to use terrestrial broadcasting and internet streaming to expand TV and radio nationwide. Radio Tuvalu broadcasts via AM and FM; however, the FM transmission only reaches Funafuti, while the AM transmission extends to the outer islands.

Data shows that “small-scale ocean variability, storms, high tides and sea level rise are all combining to cause flooding in Tuvalu”,<sup>43</sup> underscoring the need for a resilient and effective communication system for Tuvaluans as they grapple with the challenges of climate change. Radio is one of the most effective means of communication; thus maintenance of its infrastructure is important.

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<sup>39</sup> [Submarine Cable Networks - VAKA Cable Lands in Tuvalu, the Nation's First Submarine Cable](#).

<sup>40</sup> [https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=pfbid02Fo28ReFbx8xXtQ8PyHTJYJE4866js31ayPYn6sdaQKA1XM8NuKSimKyj6yk3dEUHl&id=100050990597130](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid02Fo28ReFbx8xXtQ8PyHTJYJE4866js31ayPYn6sdaQKA1XM8NuKSimKyj6yk3dEUHl&id=100050990597130).

<sup>41</sup> [Washington Post - Tuvalu is a Tiny Island Nation of 11,000 people. It's Cashing in Thanks to Twitch](#), May 2, 2022.

<sup>42</sup> Lee, Alexander, [Washington Post - Tuvalu is a Tiny Island Nation of 11,000 people. It's Cashing in Thanks to Twitch](#), December 23, 2019.

<sup>43</sup> Pat Brennan, [NASA Sea Level Change - NASA-UN Partnership Gauges Sea Level Threat to Tuvalu](#), August 15, 2023.



# TUVALU VA CABLE



Celebrating the landing of Tuvalu's first internet submarine cable in December 2024. (Facebook: Tuvalu.TV)

# 9

## 9. RECOMMENDATIONS

*Drawing on interview and survey findings, the following recommendations are raised for strengthening the media sector in Tuvalu.*

### **Importance of independent public interest media**

Respondents highlighted the importance of, and ongoing need for, Tuvalu's media sector to be independent and focused on reporting in the public interest, regardless of its source of funding. There is a prevailing sentiment that TVBC could continue to build on its mandate to function as an independent entity under the Public Broadcasting Act 2014.

### **Diversity of funding streams crucial for media to remain viable**

The consensus among respondents was that TVBC needs to look at sustaining its financial viability through diverse funding streams rather than depending solely on government funding for its operations. It was noted that Tuvalu's media sector is very small and that the government is by far the largest employer. However, increased diversity of funding streams could be a crucial first step in preserving TVBC's viability and, more broadly, its editorial independence.



Tuvalu Broadcasting Corporation reporter Luiani Tioni.

## Greater support for developing fundamental journalism skills

Respondents highlighted that resourcing TVBC with better trained journalists will help the organisation adopt a more balanced approach to editorial coverage, rather than exclusively covering government events and press releases. Upskilling technicians and improving equipment will also support the organisation to be more efficient.

## Role of mainstream media in combating misinformation

Misinformation on social media is regarded by respondents as a challenge that needs to be addressed by a proactive media sector that is willing to critically check information sources and correct misinformed narratives.

## Introduction of church media to preserve and showcase Tuvaluan values

Diversification of media in Tuvalu might be possible through church media if Eklesia Kelisiano Tuvalu (EKT), the largest faith-based organisation in the country, would consider establishing a media arm. Respondents noted that this would help maintain cultural knowledge and support community cohesion.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, findings from this report highlight the pivotal role the national broadcaster, TVBC, continues to play in Tuvalu's media landscape, with radio being a primary source of information for Tuvaluans. While infrastructure improvements have enhanced internet connectivity, the decline in pay TV subscriptions poses challenges for media viability. Finally, as the people of Tuvalu face increasingly frequent and severe climate-related threats, maintaining a functioning communications system will be critical to saving lives.