



UNITED NATIONS
FIJI, SOLOMON ISLANDS,
TONGA, TUVALU AND
VANUATU



COUNTRY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN TONGA 2025-2027

I. Declaration of Commitment and Signature Page

This **Declaration of Commitment** affirms the shared dedication of the **Government of Tonga and the United Nations (UN) System** to the successful implementation of the **Tonga Country Implementation Plan (CIP) 2025–2027**. Grounded in national ownership, accountability, and mutual partnership principles, this commitment reflects a joint resolve to drive **sustainable, inclusive, and impactful development** aligned with **Tonga's national priorities, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and other international development frameworks**.

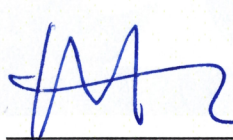
The **CIP is firmly embedded in national priorities and governance structures**, ensuring alignment with **Tonga's development agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.

Through this declaration, both parties **pledge to maintain a well-coordinated, data-driven, and impact-focused approach** to implementation, ensuring that all interventions contribute meaningfully to **advancing sustainable development, gender equality, social inclusion, and climate resilience**. This declaration also underscores a shared commitment to **internationally recognized human rights principles, environmental sustainability, and ethical governance** throughout the CIP's implementation.

By signing below, representatives of the **Government of Tonga and the UN System in Tonga** formally **endorse the Country Implementation Plan (CIP) 2025–2027** and pledge to work collaboratively toward the **achievement of the intended outcomes**.

Signatures

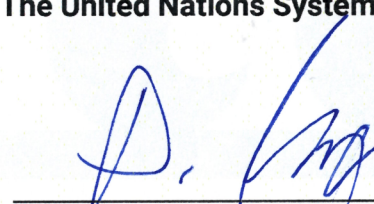
The Government of Tonga


Hon. Dr. 'Aisake Valu Eke
Prime Minister and Minister for
Finance



Dated: 03-Sep-2025

The United Nations System in Tonga


Mr. Dirk Wagener
United Nations Resident Coordinator
for Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu
and Vanuatu



Dated: 03-Sep-2025

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II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **Tonga Country Implementation Plan (CIP) 2025-2027** outlines the UN's strategic engagement to support Tonga in achieving the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, and the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for Small Island Developing States. This plan is guided by Tonga's **national development priorities** as outlined in the Tonga Strategic Development Framework III (2025-2035) and the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, focusing on **economic resilience, social equity, environmental sustainability, and governance strengthening**.

Scope and Focus

The CIP serves as a framework for **UN-Government cooperation**, providing targeted interventions across **climate resilience, economic diversification, education, healthcare, gender equality and social inclusion, youth empowerment, tourism, migration, governance, and digital transformation**. It aligns with the Pacific **UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework** to drive **sustainable and inclusive growth** while addressing Tonga's **unique geographic, economic, and climate vulnerabilities**.

Key Interventions and Expected Outcomes

- **Economic Diversification and Resilience:** Strengthening **sustainable fisheries, agriculture, and eco-tourism** to reduce dependency on imports and external aid.
- **Climate Adaptation and Disaster Resilience:** Implementing **coastal protection, renewable energy solutions, and sustainable land-use practices**.
- **Education and Workforce Development:** Expanding **vocational training, family life education, digital literacy, and education infrastructure**.
- **Health and Well-being:** Strengthening **primary healthcare access, children, adolescents and youth friendly health services, NCD prevention, protection, mental health and psychosocial support, and water and sanitation services**.
- **Governance and Social Inclusion:** Enhancing **public administration, gender equality policies, and statistical capacity** to ensure evidence-based decision-making.

Alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and SDG Acceleration

The CIP is fully aligned with the **UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for the Pacific**, ensuring **regional coherence and resource optimization**. By leveraging UN expertise and technical assistance, the Country Implementation Plan contributes to **SDG acceleration**, particularly in **poverty reduction (SDG 1)**, **health (SDG 3)**, **education (SDG 4)**, **gender equality (SDG 5)**, **economic growth (SDG 8)**, **climate action (SDG 13)**, and **peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG 16)**.

Challenges and Opportunities

Tonga faces **persistent challenges**, including **climate change impacts**, **limited private sector growth**, **high reliance on external aid**, **gaps in healthcare**, **protection**, **education**, and **gender inequalities**. However, the CIP identifies key opportunities for **leveraging blended finance**, **expanding digital transformation**, **strengthening public-private partnerships**, and **enhancing regional cooperation** to overcome these barriers.

Funding² and Partnerships

- **Required funding:** A sum of US\$20.4million is required to support the CIP 2025-2027.
- **Available Funding:** The UN has mobilized **significant financial and technical resources** to support the CIP implementation, with currently available funding of US\$11.8 million covering **a substantial portion of planned activities for 2025-2027**.
- **Funding Gaps:** There is a funding gap of US\$8.6 million (42%), required particularly for **infrastructure development**, **healthcare expansion**, **protection services**, and **climate adaptation**.

² Based on projections provided by UN agencies, funds, and programmes operating in the Kingdom of Tonga, the funding figures are preliminary estimates only and outlined for the 2025–2027 period. Please note that these figures may be adjusted during the implementation phase of the Country Implementation Plan.

- **Partnerships for Success:** The Tonga CIP fosters **multi-stakeholder engagement**, including **government ministries, UN agencies, regional institutions, private sector actors, and civil society organizations**, ensuring a **collaborative and sustainable approach**.

Conclusion

The Tonga CIP 2025-2027 sets a comprehensive pathway toward sustainable development, improved livelihoods, and economic prosperity by strengthening governance, enhancing service delivery, and building climate resilience. The UN remains committed to working alongside Tonga to ensure **inclusive, innovative, and impactful progress** toward achieving the **2030 Agenda and national development goals**.

III. KEY DEVELOPMENT TRENDS AND COUNTRY PROGRESS TOWARDS 2030 AGENDA

Political and Economic Context

Political Trends

Tonga's political and governance systems continue to evolve. While the pace of change since 2010 has been measured, it is widely acknowledged that the country is undergoing a complex transformation that must be balanced with Tonga's strong cultural values and deeply rooted traditions. Any further constitutional reform will require inclusive dialogue and ample time for national consensus-building.

Tonga's governance model reflects a unique fusion of modern democratic and traditional structures. The Legislative Assembly comprises 17 members elected by universal suffrage and nine noble representatives elected by their peers. Since 2010, while the elected representatives have not always reached consensus on appointing a Prime Minister, the noble representatives have occasionally played a pivotal role in government formation. There is only one woman (5.9%) among the 17 People's Representatives, and no women among the 9 nobles. Since the PM can appoint up to four non-elected individuals to Cabinet, there are only 2 women in the 11-member Cabinet (18.2%).

His Majesty retains important constitutional responsibilities, including through the Privy Council, which oversees appointments to key institutions such as the judiciary, police, and statutory commissions. Some of these appointments may occur independently of consultation with the Prime Minister or Parliament, in keeping with Tonga's constitutional arrangements.

Tonga has taken important steps to strengthen transparency and combat corruption. The establishment of the Anti-Corruption Commission in 2024 is a milestone in the country's integrity framework, mandated to investigate allegations of corruption and promote accountability across government institutions. While still in its early stages, the

Commission's work is a reflection of national efforts to build public trust and uphold the rule of law.

Gender disparities in political representation remain a challenge. Following the 2021 election, only two women held seats in Parliament. Women's leadership at the subnational level also remains limited. Like elsewhere in the Pacific, Tonga is considering measures to promote more inclusive political participation and support women's leadership.

Opportunities for structured civil society engagement in policymaking are still developing. However, civil society actors continue to contribute significantly, particularly in disaster response, gender advocacy, youth empowerment, protection and good governance.

Youth engagement is emerging as a key national priority. Many young Tongans express a sense of exclusion from decision-making processes and face economic and social barriers. Expanding avenues for youth participation as active agents of change and youth employment is seen as vital for Tonga's long-term development and social cohesion.

Advancing good governance in Tonga will require continued efforts to enhance transparency, accountability, gender equality, public financial management, and inclusive civic engagement.

Economic Trends

The prospects of development for Tonga are highly constrained by its small size (landmass of 749 square kilometers), remoteness from key markets and susceptibility to natural disasters and climate change. Tonga has about 104,597 inhabitants, with 52.6% females, 55.4% under 24, and 77% residing in rural areas. Tonga's geographical size imposes inherent challenges for long-term economic development. It implicates limited opportunities for economies of scale and diversification as well as very high input costs that would reduce the competitiveness of Tonga's exports in the global market. Agriculture and tourism are key to the economy, though Tonga faces a large trade deficit and dependence on external financial flows, while it has endured a series of disasters, including the 2022 volcanic eruption and tsunami, and recurrent El Niño events.

GDP Growth and Employment: The Asian Development Bank projects Tonga's GDP growth at 2.5% in 2025 and 2.3% in 2026, up from 1.6% in 2024, driven by recovery in agriculture, tourism, and ongoing reconstruction.

Tonga faces challenges related to debt management and the country is at high risk of debt distress. To mitigate this, the government has implemented fiscal anchors, since the fiscal year 2018, limiting public external debt to 50% of GDP and avoiding non-concessional external loans since fiscal year 2011. In 2023, the public debt represented 43.3% of GDP and is expected at 37.8% in 2024.

Personal remittances made up 50% of Tonga's GDP in 2024, while net official development assistance was 54.3% of GNI in 2022. Foreign direct investment was only 1.4% of GDP in 2024, suggesting fundamental challenges to achieving self-sustaining economic growth.

Tonga's labor force participation rate was 51.7% in 2024 (63.95% male, 41.74% female), with low overall unemployment (2.2%). The service sector led employment in 2023 (46.3% total; 51.4% female, 42.3% male), followed by industry (27.4%; 20.1% male, 36.8% female) and agriculture (26.3%; 37.6% male, 11.8% female). Informal jobs accounted for 58.9% of employment. Unemployment, while low overall, was higher for women (2.8% vs. 1.7% for men) and youth (6.3%).

More than half of the population in Tonga is below 25 years of age and young people in the age group of 10-24 years make up 32% of the population. This youth bulge provides Tonga a window of opportunity for harnessing a potential demographic dividend by investing appropriately in health, education, employment and empowerment of young people.

Inflation and Cost of Living: After recording inflation rates of 10.2% in 2023 and 4.6% in 2024, Tonga has seen a substantial decline, driven by easing global prices and reduced weather-related disruptions. For the next two years, inflation is projected to moderate at 3.2% in 2025 and 3% in 2026, which could ease pressure on household budgets.

Public Investment and Infrastructure: Tonga is investing in agriculture, fisheries, and tourism to boost economic growth, focusing on infrastructure, connectivity, and a new

tourism roadmap for sustainable, climate-resilient development. In 2022, Tonga reached universal electricity access.

SDG Progress and Key Gaps

Tonga has made progress in poverty reduction, food security, healthcare, WASH, renewable energy, and reducing inequalities. However, challenges remain in gender equality, protection, labor market opportunities, climate action and governance/institutions.

SDGs Showing Progress

- **SDG 1 (No Poverty):** Extreme poverty fell from 3.1% in 2000 to 0.0% in 2021 and multidimensional poverty declined from 27.0% in 2015 to 24.0% in 2021.
- **SDG 2 (Zero hunger):** Significant progress in the efforts to end hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture by 2030. Food insecurity in the population, prevalence of stunting, and prevalence of malnutrition have decreased, while official flow for agriculture has improved.
- **SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being):** Infant and under-five mortality rates improved significantly, reflecting enhanced healthcare access and quality. Tuberculosis incidence declined, and universal health coverage expanded, supported by a fivefold increase in health-sector ODA that also bolstered emergency preparedness.
- **SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation):** Tonga has improved domestic wastewater treatment, advanced integrated water management, and enhanced water and sanitation services, resulting in less open defecation.
- **SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy):** By 2022, 100% of the population had access to electricity. The proportion of people primarily relying on clean fuels and technology reached 90.1% in 2023. The share of renewable energy in total final energy consumption increased, and renewable electricity capacity surged in 2023.
- **SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities):** The share of the population below 50% of median income fell, reflecting fairer wealth distribution. Effective fiscal policies narrowed

income gaps, as shown by a lower Gini index. Remittance costs also dropped, easing burdens on families.

- **SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production):** Between 2015 and 2023, Tonga made significant progress in sustainable consumption and production, reducing environmental impact and improving resource efficiency. No fossil fuel subsidies were provided during this period.

SDGs at Risk of Falling Behind

- **SDG 5 (Gender Equality):** Women's parliamentary representation remains low, and the proportion of women in managerial positions has dropped significantly. According to the 2019 Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey, 28% of ever-married women aged 15-49 years experienced various forms of violence (physical, sexual and/or emotional) in their lifetime. Of those women aged 15-49 years who have experienced any physical or sexual violence, only 18 % sought help to stop violence, and 59% never sought help or told anyone about the violence.
- **SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth):** Informal employment, unemployment rate, and the proportion of youth not engaged in education or employment (NEET) increased, while average hourly earnings declined. These suggest worsening labor market conditions and diminishing opportunities, particularly for young people.
- **SDG 13 (Climate Action):** Local governments implementing DRR strategies halved, from 66.67% in 2019 to 33.54% in 2022, increasing communities' vulnerability to cyclones and sea-level rise.

Climate and Environmental Challenges: Key Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Strategies

Tonga's long-term development is threatened by climate and environmental crises due to its geographic vulnerability, limited resources, and reliance on climate-sensitive sectors.

The impacts of tropical cyclones, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, and flooding have increased in frequency and severity, placing immense strain on infrastructure, food security, water

resources, and the wellbeing of people, including increasing risks for gender-based violence. Rising sea levels, intensified coastal erosion, and saline intrusion jeopardize both the physical landscape and livelihoods, particularly in rural and outer island communities. Increased internal migration and displacement associated with extreme weather events are placing additional pressure on urban infrastructure, service provision and emergency response capacities, and leading to challenges over land use and land ownership, as well as heightened protection risks.

In addition to increasing arable land being transformed into residential areas, due to migration from the outer islands to the mainland, food insecurity is worsened by climate shocks that disrupt agriculture and fisheries. Rural and female-headed households, along with persons with disabilities, are particularly at risk of being left further behind because of climate shocks. The livestock sector is highly vulnerable to disasters, which require resilient farms and genetics of livestock able to withstand disasters, and capacities to prepare and respond or evacuate livestock during emergencies.

Despite challenges, Tonga remains committed to adaptation and mitigation through key policies like the 2016 Climate Change Policy and JNAP 2 (2018–2028), aiming for resilience by 2035. Strategic interventions focus on disaster risk reduction, community resilience, clean energy, and addressing vulnerabilities. Tonga's priorities in the climate space also include its Low Emission Development Strategy (2021-2050) and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

In 2017, the ADB and the Tongan Government launched the Climate Change Trust Fund to support small-scale community projects.

The Pacific Resilience Facility (PRF), domiciled in Tonga, is a Pacific-led financing initiative designed to strengthen climate and disaster resilience across the region. It aims to address challenges in accessing global climate finance by offering funding for small-scale community projects, its operations are expected to begin in 2026, which will also contribute to further strengthening resilience of Tonga to climate and disaster shocks.

Progress in institutional adaptation includes increased public awareness, integration of climate change topics in school curricula, and technical training through the Coping with climate change in the Pacific Island Region (CCCPIR) programme.

Tonga has advanced national disaster risk reduction strategies aligned with the Sendai Framework, but further efforts are needed to ensure these policies lead to effective local action and stronger community resilience, including utilizing the framework's gender and inclusion lens.

Gender and social inclusion are to some extent addressed in government strategies by recognizing the greater impact of climate change on women, children, young people and groups at risk of discrimination or vulnerability, and incorporating their needs into planning and emergency response, including efforts to respond, mitigate and prevent gender-based violence, but more work remains to strengthen this area.

Despite the minimal contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions, Tonga is pursuing decisive steps in mitigation. The country has recorded substantial growth in renewable electricity capacity and is working towards achieving 70% renewable electricity by 2030 as outlined in the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and 100% renewable electricity by 2035, as outlined in the Tonga Energy Roadmap 2021-2035 (TERMPLUS). The absence of fossil-fuel subsidies, alongside declines in material consumption intensity and the improvement in the population's reliance on clean fuels and technologies for cooking, highlight a commitment to a low-carbon, climate-resilient and gender inclusive development pathway.

Leaving No One Behind: Vulnerable Populations and Social Inclusion

Structural and systemic barriers continue to hinder the full inclusion and development of vulnerable populations across Tonga, notably women, children, young people, persons with disabilities, older persons, LGBTQIA+, and migrants.

Women and Girls: Women continue to be underrepresented in parliament and excluded from inheriting noble titles. They are also predominantly in the informal sector, relying on

the tourist handicraft industry for their livelihoods. Their heavy reliance on remittances exposes them to greater risks from remittance disruptions and economic downturns. Women and girls are particularly exposed to gender-based violence (GBV) and harmful practices, including high rates of Child, Early and Forced Marriage and increasing risks of trafficking and technology-facilitated GBV. Access to justice, sexual and reproductive health and protection and support services has improved but remains uneven, especially in remote areas. Adolescent girls face a higher NEET rate, stigma, early pregnancy, and inadequate access to reproductive health and education services.

Children make up at least 40% of Tonga's population. They face violence, including domestic violence and a range of forms of gender-based violence and sexual abuse, and labor exploitation. Such cases are significantly underreported due, in part, to stigma and a lack of accessible and adequate services. Physical discipline is widely accepted, particularly in the home. Statistics from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey show that violent discipline is common with 87% of children aged 1-14 years experiencing violence.³ There are also high vulnerabilities due to increased climate emergencies and digital connectivity. There is a high prevalence of child labor with close to 50% of children aged 5 to 14 reported to be working. These children are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation. While the Government has ratified the ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour in August 2020, it has not established a mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor. There is a clear need for the full implementation and follow-up of CRC recommendations, accompanied by qualitative monitoring of children's lived experiences within justice, education, and protection systems. Furthermore, the following areas should be prioritized: child labour, corporal punishment, inclusive education, protection from violence, and child participation.

Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) make up 7.6% of the population, but face discrimination and, due to limited accessible or specialized transport, have restricted access to healthcare, education, protection services and employment opportunities. PWDs are at risk of being

³ Tonga MICS 2019, UNICEF data, data.unicef.org

exploited at work and excluded from safety and health regulations and disaster-related preparedness. Women with disabilities are more likely to experience all forms of Gender-based violence. Children with disabilities are prone to encountering stigmatization and physical abuse at home. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has expressed concerns over limited access of children with disabilities to inclusive education, as well as rehabilitation, early identification and referral programmes and other related services. While the Constitution prohibits disability discrimination, there are no specific legal protections or requirements for reasonable accommodations or accessibility for persons with disabilities.

LGBTQIA+ individuals in Tonga lack legal protection, as there are no laws against Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE)-based discrimination and hate crimes. A recent legislation explicitly prohibits same-sex unions and sexual relations between men and cross dressing is criminalized, though not actively prosecuted. Ongoing stigma discourages reporting of violence or discrimination.

Outer-island and rural communities face the highest poverty, protection risks and food insecurity, limited infrastructure, poor public services provision and opportunities. These challenges drive labor migration, increase risks of GBV, human smuggling, trafficking, and vulnerability among returning migrants.

Key groups at risk of discrimination or vulnerability

- Adults and children with disabilities
- Older persons in need of care
- Out of school and unemployed youth
- People at higher risk of gender-based violence and other forms of violence and discrimination
- Households and communities at risk of climate and natural hazard related disasters
- Labour migrants
- SOGIESC/LGBTIQA+

Strategies to Address Social Inequality

The Tonga Ministry for Internal Affairs developed its Corporate Plan 2022-2025 following the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Corporate Plan aligns with the Tonga Strategic Development Framework II (TSDF II) and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, emphasizing inclusive development and resilience. The Ministry's mandate is to improve social services, employment, and community welfare, especially at the grassroots level with the following key areas:

1. Strengthen disaster preparedness and resilience, especially in light of recent natural hazards and the ongoing impact of COVID-19.
2. Enhance protection frameworks to ensure marginalized groups have access to essential services and improved living standards.
3. Promote women's economic empowerment and enforce policies to combat gender-based violence, including domestic violence, aligning with national gender equality goals.
4. Expand overseas employment programs while mitigating associated social impacts, and support local entrepreneurship to boost grassroots economies.
5. Invest in youth development initiatives that foster responsible citizenship, peace, and economic participation.
6. Leverage sports and faith-based partnerships to unify communities and promote national well-being.
7. 7. Successfully institutionalize both out-of-school and in-school family life education programmes, ensuring alignment with international guidelines as well as cultural and religious values.

Tonga is a state party to two out of nine core human rights conventions, namely the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial discrimination. However, Tonga has not ratified several key international conventions, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the Convention on the Rights

of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). This is limiting legal protections for the most vulnerable groups.

Extensive consultations on CRPD ratification have been completed and it is now pending Cabinet approval. The government has also increased the disability allowance and extended it to caregivers under the Disability Welfare Cash Assistance Scheme.

Tonga has been implementing The National Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality Tonga (WEGET) Policy and Strategic Plan of Action 2019-2025. Furthermore, the National Committee on Gender and Development (NACGAD) has continued to meet regularly to monitor Tonga's implementation of the national, regional and international gender equality commitments. The WEGET Policy and the Strategic Plan of Action (2019–2025) recognize domestic violence as a major issue and outline steps to address it.

Other measures include the Tonga Service Delivery Protocol for GBV survivors, the establishment of the Family Protection Legal Aid Center in 2018, the rollout of registered counsellors in 2020, and the 2021 launch of an online platform for domestic and GBV survivors. Several key services are also in place to support victims and survivors of family violence.

Decentralizing services has improved support for communities beyond Tonga's main island. The Women and Children Crisis Center (WCCC) and the Tonga National Center for Women and Children (TNCWC) have opened offices on 'Eua and Ha'apai, while the Family Protection Legal Aid Centre opened a branch in Vava'u in January 2022, improving women's access to justice.

IV. NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND PLANS, GAPS, AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SDG ACCELERATION

National Priorities and Plans

National development in Tonga is guided by the Tonga Strategic Development Framework (TSDF).

The current TSDF II covers the period 2015-2025. TSDF II envisions a more progressive Tonga that supports a higher quality of life for all. While TSDF II is still under review, this vision will carry forward into TSDF III, covering the period 2026-2036.

The national priorities for TSDF III have been identified by the Government of Tonga and the UNSDCF 2023–2027 and the Country Implementation Plan (CIP) 2025–2027 align with these national priorities. These priorities include:

1. **Economic Growth:** focusing on agriculture, fisheries, tourism/hospitality and private businesses and entrepreneurship.
2. **Social Development:** focusing on health, education, culture, mobility and migration, gender inclusion, and community and groups.
3. **Governance:** focusing on Constitution and Rule of Law, political power (Legislative Assembly, Judiciary and Government), and public service and leadership.
4. **Infrastructure and Technology:** focusing on public infrastructure, IT advancement and communication.
5. **Natural Resources and Environment:** focusing on ocean, land and biodiversity.
6. **National Security:** focusing on military and policing, cyber security, border security, economic security, data security, health security and food security.
7. **Climate Action and Disaster Resilience** that is crosscutting across all national outcomes.

Under the UNSDCF 2023–2027 framework, Tonga prioritizes Prosperity as the main driver of development (1. Economic Growth, .4 Infrastructure and Technology, followed by People (2. Social Development, Peace (3. Governance, 6 National Security) and Planet (5. Natural Resources and Environment, 7 Climate Action and Disaster Resilience). In addition to these national priorities, the Government Budget Statement 2025-2026 highlights key lessons learned from TSDF II, which will be addressed and strengthened in TSDF III:

- Government responsibility and accountability in public service delivery
- A strong governance structure for the TSDF
- Integration of Tongan culture, research, innovation, and demographic and migration trends into national outcomes
- Addressing gaps in the TSDF cascading structure
- Investment in a more systematic and evidence-based approach
- Clear articulation and practical implementation
- Establishment of a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) unit

Operationalization of the Tonga Strategic Development Framework

Each year, the **Government Priority Agenda** (GPA) is outlined in the Budget Statement. This agenda reflects the key priorities of the current administration and serves as a critical interface between the national priorities identified in TSDF II and their implementation.

According to the 2025-2026 Budget Statement, seven GPAs are grouped under three high-level objectives and aligned with TSDF III Organizational Outcomes:

Objective 1: National Resilience

- **GPA 1:** Climate and Disaster Resilience [TSDF Outcomes: 4.4 Resilient buildings; 5.4 Climate change/disaster resilience]

- **GPA 2:** Combat Illicit Drugs [TSDF Outcomes: 2.1 and 2.3 Community and church engagement; 2.5 Improved healthcare; 2.8 Diaspora collaboration; 3.2 Law and order; 3.7 Regional cooperation]

Objective 2: Social Sector Development

- **GPA 3:** Reduce Poverty and Protect Vulnerable Groups
[TSDF Outcomes: 2.1 and 2.3 Community and church engagement; 2.7 Support for vulnerable groups]
- **GPA 4:** Quality Education [TSDF Outcomes: 2.4 Improved education and training]
- **GPA 5:** Quality and Affordable Healthcare [TSDF Outcomes: 2.5 and 2.6 Healthcare and addressing NCDs]

Objective 3: Economic and Public Sector Development

- **GPA 6:** Realizing Economic Potential to Boost Growth [TSDF Outcomes: 1.1–1.5 under the Economic Pillar and Pillar 4: Infrastructure]
- **GPA 7:** Public Sector Efficiency [TSDF Outcomes: 3.1 Efficient public service; 3.3 Appropriate decentralization; 1.1 Macroeconomic management]

Key Areas for Strengthening within CIP Pillars

During the CIP 2025-2027 technical stakeholder validation workshop with national technical partners, held on 21 May 2025, the following areas were identified for strengthening government-UN cooperation:

- **Planet:** More emphasis on biodiversity and disaster risk reduction.
- **People:** Greater focus on WASH in schools, child protection, gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health, adolescents and youth friendly health services, family life education, disability inclusion, and early childhood development
- **Prosperity:** Shift from economic growth to economic development; need for inclusive microfinance and digital access. Tourism remains a priority not yet addressed in CIP 2023–2024

- Peace: Broader stakeholder inclusion (e.g., prisons, immigration) and better alignment with the People pillar on trafficking and security

Government Commitment to Accelerated Development

The Government is strongly committed to redirecting resources toward impactful projects (which is the theme of the Government Budget Statement 2025-2026) and supporting new investment initiatives that can drive economic growth.

Key interventions include:

- Building resilience to shocks, disasters, and economic crises through climate-resilient debt instruments and innovative financing
- Prioritizing investment in infrastructure and human development (e.g., bridges, schools, hospitals and healthcare infrastructure, and protection programmes)
- Fostering partnerships with the private sector and communities to unlock growth and support key sector initiatives
- Promoting environmentally responsible practices in agriculture, fisheries, and tourism to diversify the economy sustainably
- Expanding access to finance by strengthening the credit environment, fast-tracking the Credit Registry Bill, and improving land administration and insurance access
- Deepening domestic financial markets through sovereign and ADB-backed bonds and developing a yield curve to attract investment

Opportunities for SDG Acceleration

To **overcome challenges and accelerate SDG progress**, Tonga can leverage **partnerships, innovation, and investment** in key areas:

- **Blended Finance and Climate Funding:** Mobilizing **Green Climate Fund (GCF), Global Environment Facility (GEF) and other global environmental vertical funds** and **private sector co-financing** to support infrastructure and energy projects.

The GCF is an operating entity of the financial mechanism of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and serves the 2015 Paris

Agreement. As such, the GCF is accountable to the United Nations. Tonga has three approved GCF Projects namely:

1. Tonga Coastal Resilience; Implementing Partner: UNDP (2024-2031), USD\$23,919,409
 2. Building the Climate Resilience of Children and Communities through the Education Sector (BRACE) covering among others Tonga (approved in 2025); Implementing Partner: Save the Children Australia (SCA), USD\$46,737,340
 3. Pacific Drinking Water Project covering Marshall Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea (approved in 2025); Implementing Partner: Asian Development Bank (ADB), USD\$45,860,000.
- **Digital Transformation and Private Sector Growth:** Expanding **e-government, fintech solutions, and digital jobs**.
 - **Regional and International Partnerships:** Strengthening engagement with **Pacific regional organizations, multilateral banks, and development partners**.
 - **Sustainable Blue Economy Investments:** Promoting **eco-tourism, marine protected areas, and sustainable fisheries** to drive economic diversification.
 - **Community-Led Development Initiatives:** Strengthening **civil society engagement and indigenous knowledge systems** in climate adaptation and governance.

By addressing **key gaps and leveraging opportunities**, Tonga can **accelerate SDG implementation** while enhancing **economic resilience, gender equality, social well-being, and environmental sustainability**.

V. The UN Development System Support toward Achieving the 2030 Agenda, the ABAS and other Priority Frameworks

United Nations Contribution to Tonga's National Development (2025–2027)

The United Nations is playing a vital role in supporting Tonga's national development priorities, particularly in the areas of disaster recovery, resilience building, and inclusive service delivery. This support is aligned with Tonga's development priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In May 2025, the Government of Tonga and the United Nations co-organized a technical stakeholder validation workshop in Nuku’alofa, comprising government representatives, Civil Society Organizations, academia, private sector and programming UN agencies, funds and programmes. The participants validated that existing priority areas for UN intervention as outlined in the CIP 2023-2024 remain highly relevant and aligned to Tonga’s development context. Additional areas for strengthening UN programming within the development context of Tonga have been identified and listed in section 4 of this document (*Key Areas for Strengthening within CIP Pillars*).

Funding Overview⁴

The planned budget for the CIP 2025-2027 is USD \$20.4 million with an available budget of USD \$11.8 million. The funding gap is USD \$8.6 million, which remains to be mobilized. Below is a detailed overview of funding by pillar:

Pillar	Required	Available	Gap
Planet	\$3,771,397.64	\$2,205,599.94	\$1,565,797.70
People	\$10,333,575.00	\$5,943,544.97	\$4,390,030.03
Prosperity	\$5,429,534.00	\$3,155,700.32	\$2,273,833.68
Peace	\$911,322.87	\$505,433.63	\$405,889.24

⁴ Based on projections provided by UN agencies, funds, and programmes operating in the Kingdom of Tonga, the funding figures are preliminary estimates only and outlined for the 2025–2027 period. Please note that these figures may be adjusted during the implementation phase of the Country Implementation Plan.

1. Planet Pillar

Total Required: \$3.8m

Available: \$2.2m

Gap: \$1.6m

UN agencies, funds and programmes: *FAO, IOM, ITU, OCHA, OHCHR, UNDP, UNDRR, UNEP, UNESCAP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women, WFP, WHO, WMO.*

Implementing Partners: *Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Health; Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Communications and Climate Change, Forestry Department, Ministry of Energy, Renewable Energy Agencies, Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Tourism, Public Health Institute, RedR, SPREP.*

Priority area 1: Ecosystem and Biodiversity Management

The United Nations will continue to support Tonga through a comprehensive set of environmental initiatives aimed at advancing sustainable development and resilience, specifically in the agriculture sector. Key actions include reducing chemical and waste pollution, promoting ocean health for a sustainable blue economy, and mainstreaming biodiversity across sectors. The UN will strengthen institutional capacity and stakeholder empowerment through policy support and capacity building, while ensuring the continuous operation of National Ozone Units and the implementation of multilateral fund projects. It will also promote sound chemical and waste management, phase-out ozone-depleting substances and advance implementation of the HCFC Phase-Out Management Plan, conduct verification of HCFC consumption, and support Montreal Protocol implementation. In addition, the UN will assist Tonga in implementing REDD+ strategies to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, while enhancing transparency and reporting systems to support the implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and the Low Emissions Development Strategy (LEDS).

The UN is supporting the government in strengthening environmental-economic accounting (SEEA) and statistics through technical support and capacity building, with a focus on tourism satellite accounts (TSA), Energy Balances and SEEA Land accounts. The UN will support strengthening policies for integrated waste management, including hazardous waste management and marine pollution and will continue to support institutions and communities to improve capacities to protect and manage ocean and land ecosystems. The UN will support the government in preserving natural and cultural heritage, through enhanced coordination, stronger scientific cooperation, and national capacity building, including safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in emergencies. The UN will also provide support to strengthen national and regional capacities for preventing, detecting, and managing pests and invasive alien species, aiming to protect biodiversity across terrestrial, freshwater, and marine ecosystems.

Priority area 2: Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Change

The UN is building institutional and community capacities for climate change for enhanced resilience to human mobility in the context of climate change (climate mobility), including staying in place, planned relocations, displacement, migration and stranded migrants. The UN will work with the government to integrate a human rights-based and people-centred approach to climate-induced movement of people and communities (PCCMHS joint programme). The UN will enhance climate resilience by supporting integrated water-food security systems, strengthening the future resilience of communities and ecosystems to climate impacts, and establishing anticipatory action systems and financing mechanisms. The UN will support the Ministry of Health with safely managed climate resilient drinking water supply and strengthening the monitoring of household WASH services and improving household water quality and will continue supporting government efforts in strengthening coastal protection and adaptation to risks posed by climate change. The UN will support the government to develop climate-resilient policies and infrastructure for essential services, food systems, human mobility, and settlements. The UN will work with national stakeholders to ensure development and implementation of gender-responsive climate

resilience policies and strategies and to support generation and utilization of gender-disaggregated data to inform the policies and decision-making.

Priority area 3: Effective Disaster Management

The UN will continue the rollout of the Early Warnings for All (EW4ALL) and Anticipatory Action initiatives in Tonga and will be supporting anticipatory action systems to address climate impacts. The UN will be strengthening disaster risk management by supporting emergency response, WASH services, education, Health and Nutrition, and child protection. The UN will continue its support through humanitarian cash transfers, prepositioning of emergency supplies, and the establishment of child-friendly spaces that offer psychosocial support in case of emergency. Additionally, the UN will work towards improving health services, promoting mental health, and building inclusive systems to better protect children and adolescents during emergencies. The UN will support building institutional and community capacities for disaster risk reduction, will empower women and girls in crisis contexts and will strengthen gender-responsive humanitarian systems.

The UN will help the government to develop risk-informed governance and financing systems, as well as continue to enhance preparedness and response capacities to disasters and recovery needs. The UN will be advancing tsunami early warning systems and institutional capacity at all levels and support comprehensive risk assessments, data governance, and DRM policy implementation. It will also enhance hydro-meteorological monitoring, forecasting, and early warning systems through national and regional platforms.

It will ensure climate change and disaster resilient national VAWG response and prevention systems, including through multi-sector coordination, training and technical support for quality service provision.

UN agencies, funds and programmes will support the integration of sexual and reproductive health, gender-based violence services and coordination, disability inclusion and humanitarian data into disaster and climate strategies, backed by policy advocacy and research. The UN will strengthen national capacities in supply chain and emergency

telecommunications and continue to lead the Pacific Logistics and Emergency Telecommunications clusters and co-lead the Food Security cluster, supporting national emergency mechanisms upon request.

2. People Pillar

Total Required: \$10.3m

Available: \$5.9m

Gap: \$4.4m

UN agencies, funds and programmes: *FAO, IOM, IFAD, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNOPS, UN Women, WFP, WHO.*

Implementing Partners: *Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forests, Ministry of Education and Training, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Local Gender Equality Organizations, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health, National Meteorological Service, Pacific Island Farmers Organization Network, Rural Development Innovation Trust, Urban Planning Department.*

Priority area 1: Health, Nutrition and Education

The UN will support improved, affordable, and equitable primary health care (immunization supply chain and vaccination campaigns) and nutrition (tackling childhood obesity) services, including in emergencies. It will continue to support Tonga to deliver high-quality, people-centered health services based on PHC strategies and support to epidemic management and dengue prevention. The UN will support Prince Wellington Ngu Hospital Development in deploying a hospital infrastructure advisor to the Programme Management Unit of the Ministry of Health. It will strengthen climate- and risk-informed health policy and planning, support shock-responsive social protection, and enhance WASH services and hygiene practices in schools and healthcare facilities. It will continue to strengthen the capacities of the health and social sector workforce for meeting SRH/RR and protection needs, and intensify capacity development for the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) for Reproductive Health in Crisis Situations and Minimum Standards for GBV in emergencies programming. The UN will support supply chain management and emergency reproductive health and GBV services, align family life education with international guidance, and engage

women, youth cultural and religious leaders in advocacy to strengthen gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The UN will strengthen midwifery and Sexual, Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Adolescent Health (SRMNCAH) workforce capacity, scale up youth-friendly and disability-inclusive SRH and GBV services, and support policy integration of population data, SRH, GBV, and empowerment into national development plans.

It will support strengthened skills and opportunities for women, adolescents and youth to make informed choices about their sexual reproductive health rights and leadership for harnessing the Demographic and Gender Dividends.

The UN will support policies and programmes that improve livelihood opportunities and social protection for those at risk of being left behind and will continue to support efforts of Tonga to reduce HIV/STI and TB.

The UN will support the improvement of national nutrition programmes through the SAPI initiative. The UN will promote food safety education, regulations, and fiscal policies; strengthen enabling environments for healthy eating and lifestyles, especially in schools; and support sustainable, climate-smart, and gender-sensitive agri-food systems, including nutrition and agriculture data. It will also strengthen the collection and leverage of agriculture-related data and provide climate-smart agri-food systems, technology, and equipment to increase crop productivity and resilience. It also strengthens Farmers' Organizations and farmer-led enterprises to deliver economic services. The UN will support strengthened adaptive social protection through anticipatory action systems, while also providing mVAM and other tools and training to integrate food security and nutrition analysis into national systems, focusing on vulnerable populations and climate resilience. It will collaborate with Health Promoting Schools to improve nutrition, physical activity, and WASH, and is finalizing Emergency Operations Center (EOC) guidelines and reviewing SOPs to strengthen emergency response capacities and service continuity.

The UN will also support early childhood education, inclusive and resilient schooling systems, and multi-sectoral Early Childhood Development (ECD) policies. It will support Tonga's education systems have increased capacity to deliver equitable, inclusive, relevant,

quality schooling and pathways to develop resilient, engaged young people, including in humanitarian situations. The UN will continue to support the integration of Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship Education, promote lifelong learning through higher education, and facilitate knowledge sharing and capacity building via Pacific Heads of Education Systems.

Priority area 2: Gender-based Violence (GBV) and Violence against children

The UN will support the development and review of policies, laws, and strategies for the prevention and response to violence against women and girls (VAWG). It continues to provide technical expertise, capacity building, and promotes coordinated services for women and girls, including in crisis situations. The UN continues to provide last resort for coordination and response to GBV in emergencies. It will also support the holistic prevention of VAWG, for example through planning for a national prevention plan, linked with community engagement to promote social norms change for gender equality.

The UN will enhance government and civil society capacity to identify and provide rights-based and gender-sensitive protection and assistance to migrants in situations of vulnerability, including victims of trafficking. It will strengthen (through social welfare workforce strengthening) institutional capacity to prevent, mitigate, and respond to discrimination, harassment, GBV, and violence against children and persons with disabilities. It supports caregivers, communities (includes MHPSS for children and communities), and youth with tools and knowledge to foster gender-equal social norms and prevent and respond to violence, abuse, exploitation and harmful practices.

The UN will support the integration of GBV prevention and response into national data systems, Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) services, health and social services and empowerment programmes, will support human rights commitments related to ICPD, and promote positive masculinities and gender equality through strategic communications and public campaigns and social norms change programming.

3. Prosperity Pillar

Total Required: \$5.4m

Available: \$3.2m

Gap: \$2.3

UN agencies, funds and programmes: *FAO, ILO, IOM, ITC, ITU, OHCHR, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNESCAP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF.*

Implementing Partners: *Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Revenue and Customs; Ministry of Trade and Economic Development, Ministry of Infrastructure, Ministry of Internal Affairs; Ministry of Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Communications and Climate Change, Ministry of Technology, Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Trade and Economic Development, Sustainable Development Agencies.*

Priority area 1: The Blue and Creative Economy

The UN will promote investment in sustainable fisheries and agriculture for economic diversification and will continue to support the development of policy frameworks and financing mechanisms to leverage the potential of the blue/green economy, aiming for strategic planning, innovative financing, and partnerships to build a resilient and sustainable future. The UN will provide technical support to businesses, government agencies and civil society on responsible business conduct around development, including extractive industries, aligning with human rights principles and just transitions. It explores existing structures and mechanisms through multi-stakeholder discussions, assesses alignment with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and identifies opportunities to embed human rights safeguards in economic transitions.

The UN will promote sustainable tourism development under the PACER Plus programme by updating Tonga's Tourism Roadmap, integrating climate change adaptation, and fostering inclusive and long-term economic growth and job creation. It will continue to strengthen local capacities to implement the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of

Intangible Cultural Heritage and supports civil society and Pacific SIDS in promoting cultural diversity through dynamic and inclusive cultural and creative industries.

The UN continues to support the preparation of TSDF III through the established Technical Advisory Group and associated processes. This builds on earlier work undertaken to support the mid-term review of TSDF II and includes the provision of advisory services to help outline an approach for the development of TSDF III.

It also continues to support the government and migrants to ensure that labour migrants and their communities benefit from effective and well managed labour mobility for human development, including strengthened pre-departure assistance and sustainable reintegration support to labour migrants, and strengthened labour migration coordination systems. The UN will continue to promote decent work by providing technical support for the enhancement of labour market reforms through evidence-based national employment and apprenticeship policies and strengthened institutional capacities of employers' and workers' organizations.

Priority area 2: Agri-Food Systems

The UN will continue to support the development and implementation of climate smart, e-agriculture strategies and promote gender- and youth-sensitive digital products and services to strengthen agri-food systems.

Priority area 3: Macro-economic Management

The UN will improve trade facilitation and customs procedures, support harmonization of customs operations, and assist in the development of a National Single Window system through assessments and regional workshops.

It will strengthen government capacities to generate, analyze and use child-sensitive data (MICS) for planning, budgeting, expenditure analysis on social sectors and reporting to reduce multidimensional child poverty.

The UN in Tonga will support the harmonization of indicator production to support national monitoring such as the TSDF III, as well as global/regional reporting such as SDGs, 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent and Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS).

Priority area 4: Bridging the Digital Divide

The UN continues to promote availability of digital ICT technologies to enhance agri-food market opportunities, productivity and resilience and digital tools to enhance the inclusion of women and youth in agriculture, especially through its Digital Villages Initiative, as well as supporting the development of digital economy foundations and assessing internet accessibility using ROAM X Indicators.

It also supports digitalization and access to digital services with a focus on women, youth, and persons with disabilities, and addresses challenges related to applying a human rights-based approach to digital space, including to the right to information and freedom of expression, with a view to leaving no-one behind.

The UN supports strengthening the capacity of transport policymakers to utilize digital technologies to develop resilient and inclusive mobility policies and plans to improve public transport infrastructure and services in peri-urban areas. It will also support gender equality as part of digitalization through technical support to enhance protection from technology facilitated GBV, including through digital design and enabling legal and policy frameworks, and will promote the use of safe and ethical technology tools to increase access to sexual and reproductive health and rights information and services for women and youth.

4. Peace Pillar

Total Required: \$0.9m

Available: \$0.5m

Gap: \$0.4m

UN agencies, funds and programmes: *ILO, IOM, ITU, OHCHR, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNODC, UN Women*

Implementing Partners: *Anti-Corruption Commission, AG Office, Auditor General Office, Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), Ombudsman, Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Education and Training, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Justice, National Civil Society Organizations, Human Rights Defenders; Women Human Rights Defenders Network, Immigration Department.*

Priority area 1: Access to Justice, Rule of Law and Human Rights

The UN will support increasing the compliance of domestic laws in Tonga with international human rights standards and provide technical assistance to enhance monitoring, reporting and implementation of human rights commitments related to sexual reproductive health and rights across political, social and economic human rights frameworks. The UN will provide technical support to ministries on engagement with international human rights mechanisms, promotes abolition of the death penalty, and offers guidance to review laws and practices to reduce human rights violations. It will also continue to strengthen civil society participation in democratic processes and support duty bearers' commitment to human rights standards. It will be supporting increased capacities for state party reporting to human rights treaty bodies and assists governments in implementing, monitoring, and reporting on normative commitments to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.

The UN will promote and protect children's rights in Tonga through comprehensive capacity building initiatives focused on implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child and ensuring that a child rights-based approach is embedded in key sector such as Education, Health and Social Protection. It will continue to offer support around strengthening child-friendly justice systems through capacity building and development of SOPs and curriculum for police and courts. It will support child rights monitoring and reporting - capacity building, preparation and engagement on UPR and CRC.

The UN will be undertaking capacity building to improve access to territory and protection outcomes for refugees and asylum-seekers, and provides technical support for law and

policy reform. It will provide technical support to law enforcement and border agencies to combat transnational organized crime, including maritime and environmental crime.

The UN will continue to offer support to combat human trafficking and organized crime through support to law enforcement and border agencies. It will continue to work jointly to enhance rights-based climate related migration policy and regional governance mechanisms.

Priority area 2: Inclusive Political Structures and Processes

The UN will continue to help building resilient and inclusive state relationships, especially for women, youth, and persons with disabilities. It also supports gender-sensitive mechanisms to accelerate SDG achievement and monitor progress. It will strengthen civil society organizations' capacity to participate in democratic processes.

The UN will continue to support gender equality advocates' participation in global and regional intergovernmental fora and strengthen capacities for gender-responsive policy design and advocacy. It will strengthen political mechanisms and capacities to address discriminatory gender and social norms, promoting gender equality and bodily autonomy. The UN will continue to promote girls' and young women's participation in STEM through initiatives like International Girls in ICT Day.

Priority area 3: Strengthened Institutions

The UN will continue to support governance institutions to become more accountable and improve service delivery, including promoting responsive, participatory and transparent governance processes, and strengthening the capacity of national service providers to deliver well-coordinated quality, inclusive child protection services and survivor-centered GBV services. The UN will continue to engage with regional partners in supporting local authorities with the aim to establish a National Human Rights Institution. The UN will support capacity of government and service providers to deliver coordinated, survivor-centred services for GBV survivors and will support strengthening of administrative GBV

data management, and utilization of this data for evidence-based policy and improved service delivery.

The UN will support the strengthening of national data systems and evidence use for policy and programming in sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence, including strengthening institutional capacity in data science and cybersecurity.

Furthermore, the UN will continue to support economic and social planning in Tonga through the use of labour market information aligned with international labour standards (ILS) and the SDGs, contributing to more accountable, inclusive, resilient, and responsive governance systems that promote gender equality, climate security, justice, peace, and human rights protection. The UN will support enhancing border management infrastructure, technology, and institutional capacity to promote safe mobility, socio-economic development, security and migrant protection.

Priority area 4: Protection and Oversight

The UN will enhance information-sharing mechanisms and provides responsive support for new asylum-seeker arrivals, subject to Tonga's engagement. It will also support law enforcement and border agencies in fighting organized crime and corruption. The UN will promote and support the implementation of the right to live free from violence and strengthens national and community-level mechanisms for safety and protection, particularly for women, girls and young people in all of their diversity. It will support oversight through technical guidance and strategic advocacy for human rights compliance. It may support law enforcement with human rights training, as required.

Key UN Investment Pathways for SDG Acceleration

The UN system plays a critical role in accelerating **SDG progress** in Tonga through **strategic investments** in key sectors such as **food security, energy access, digital transformation, job creation, climate resilience, and social protection**. The UN's engagement is aligned with **Tonga's Strategic Development Framework, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable**

Development, and the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for Small Island Developing States (ABAS).

1. Food Systems

A major effort will be devoted to strengthening national capacity to identify and mitigate the risk of ciguatera and food poisoning, thereby enhancing food safety and public health. This includes FAO's support for National Codex Committees (NCCs) and national food control systems, contributing to the transformation of agrifood systems through improved regulatory frameworks and governance and food standards.

The National Statistics Offices (NSOs) and the Ministry of Agriculture will be supported to strengthen data collection on agrifood systems, sustainability indicators, productivity metrics, and SDG-related measurements. This will enable evidence-based policy development and cross-sectoral decision-making.

Additionally, support will be directed toward addressing non-communicable diseases (NCDs) by promoting transformed and resilient national agrifood systems. Through sustainable food production, improved nutrition, and healthier dietary practices, the initiative aims to enhance food security, reduce diet-related health risks, and strengthen community resilience, supporting long-term health and well-being in Tonga.

2. Energy Access and Affordability

A collaboration between UN agencies—FAO, IFAD, WFP, and UNICEF—will provide support to strengthen technical capacity for analyzing, predicting, planning, and responding to the global food, energy, and finance crisis and its impact on national food systems.

3. Digital Connectivity

UN support will seek to increase inclusion and safety in digital access across a range of interventions and sectors. The Government of Tonga will be supported in crafting a National e-Agriculture strategy to boost productivity, food security, and resilience through ICT. FAO's Digital Farmer Registry in Tonga centralizes farm and farmer data to support targeted

interventions, address food insecurity, reduce rural poverty, and enhance climate adaptation.

4. Education

Capacity building will be provided to equip all 46 government Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers with inclusive education training. Plans are in place to train service providers and host a national ECE event. Additionally, the Inclusive Education Policy will be disseminated.

Partnerships with the Ministry of Education will continue to integrate Family Life Education into the school curriculum.

5. Jobs and Protection

Adult Education and Learning (AEL): Tonga is part of the AEL-supported Pacific SIDS initiative, contributing to the development of the new AEL framework and the dissemination of the Pacific CONFINTEA consultation report.

Higher Education: Technical support continues for the ratification of Asia-Pacific Regional and Global Conventions on Higher Education through regional and national platforms.

Adolescent and Youth-Friendly Health Services (AYFHS) Guidelines: The AYFHS guideline was validated in late 2024 with implementing partners and relevant stakeholders. It is scheduled for launch and rollout in 2025. The draft Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child, and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) policy is also planned for revision and finalization in 2025, which include reducing risks of GBV and expanding access to protection related services for survivors.

MISP Working Group: Participants from the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) Training of Trainer (ToT) (met in 2024 to plan the re-establishment of the National MISP Working Group. As the meeting occurred late in the year, the re-establishment is scheduled for 2025. This group will support effective rollout of MISP trainings nationally and sub-nationally in Tonga, which incorporate protection from sexual violence and other risks related to gender-based violence.

6. Climate Change, Biodiversity Loss, and Pollution

The government will be supported in enhancing data availability for food security, nutrition, and livelihoods through mobile Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping. Support will be also provided to analyze and utilize Gender and Environment data in climate change biodiversity and waste management sectors and inclusion of gender and all the relevant sectors of NDC. Support will also be provided for the development of the National Sustainable Spatial Management Framework (NSSMF), in collaboration with local stakeholders. A National Project Steering Committee has been established to oversee the implementation of the PCCMHS Programme and ensure that climate change impacts are effectively managed across communities.

Integrated Approach Across Sectors

The UN ensures cross-sectoral coordination through **joint programming** across **health, education, climate, and economic development**.

Commitment to Inclusion and Human Rights

The UN system is committed to **leaving no one behind**, promoting **gender equality, human rights, and social inclusion** across all initiatives.

- The UN is working towards peaceful, inclusive, and accountable institutions which are foundational for human rights and gender equality. Strengthening governance structures—especially civic space, human rights institutions, and rule of law mechanisms—will foster participation, transparency, and resilience. Increasing representation of women and youth in leadership is essential for inclusive decision-making and effective governance.

Promoting Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

- The UN is working to provide inclusive services and social protection. Empowering people—especially women, adolescent girls, young people and marginalized groups—requires equitable access to essential services (education, health, water, sanitation, protection, housing). Inclusive, shock-responsive social protection

systems are vital, particularly in the digital age. Addressing gender-based violence, child marriage, adolescent pregnancy and child abuse, as well as food insecurity and malnutrition, is critical to achieving equality and resilience.

Community Engagement and Civil Society Participation

- The UN partners with **local NGOs, youth groups, and traditional leaders** to ensure **community-driven development approaches**.
- Participatory mechanisms facilitate inclusive decision-making, including citizen consultations and public-private partnerships.
- UN-supported civic education programs aim to **strengthen democratic participation and governance accountability**.
- The UN aims at improving delivery of UN programmes, projects and activities to the outer islands of Vava'u, Ha'apai, 'Eua and the Niuas.
- The UN aims at refining the alignment of UN programmes, projects and activities with the Outer Island Development Plan and Governance

Sustainability and Risk Management

The UN's development interventions in Tonga are designed for **long-term sustainability**, ensuring that investments yield enduring benefits.

Sustainability Measures

Climate Resilience: Effective climate adaptation and mitigation, alongside sustainable biodiversity and ecosystem management, are essential for enhancing the resilience of Tonga. These efforts must be community-driven, gender-responsive, and grounded in human rights. Protecting natural resources ensures current and future generations benefit equitably from land and ocean assets.

Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Development: A diversified, human-centered economy that leverages green, blue, and creative sectors can reduce poverty and inequality. This includes promoting decent work, equal pay, and sustainable agri-food

systems. Bridging the digital divide and ensuring sound macroeconomic and fiscal management are key to enabling long-term socio-economic transformation.

Risk Assessment and Mitigation Strategies

Economic Risks

The UN is addressing Tonga's economic vulnerability by promoting diversification strategies beyond fisheries and foreign aid. This includes enhancing trade in services and promoting inclusive foreign direct investment, with a focus on sustainable tourism development. The project supports the Government of Tonga in updating the existing Tourism Roadmap (2018–2023), addressing key sector challenges, strengthening local capacities, and attracting investment to drive growth. The updated roadmap prioritizes sustainable tourism practices and integrates climate change adaptation measures to ensure resilience.

Climate and Environmental Risks

The UN is supporting early warning systems and disaster preparedness planning. This involves building capacity on the role of ICT in climate change and e-waste management and conducting capacity building and awareness-raising activities on emergency telecommunication assessment. The initiatives also focus on strengthening disaster risk data governance, developing comprehensive risk and vulnerability assessments, and supporting the integration of intangible cultural heritage safeguarding into disaster risk reduction strategies.

Geopolitical Risks

UN advocacy for regional stability and diplomatic engagement helps Tonga navigate shifting geopolitical dynamics. This includes strengthening partnerships with feminist and women's rights-based organizations, promoting human rights standards, and supporting National Human Rights Institutions. The initiatives also involve strategic advocacy and developing partnerships to promote the abolition of the death penalty, and engaging with key

representatives of the Kingdom of Tonga to transform the existing de-facto moratorium on capital punishment towards a definite abolition.

Operational Risks

Strengthening local implementation capacity, ensuring efficient aid delivery, and monitoring mechanisms are key components of the initiatives. This includes building human capital in humanitarian supply chains and emergency telecommunications, enhancing inter-agency coordination for reproductive health and gender-based violence in emergencies, and supporting operational research to reinforce policy advocacy. The initiatives also focus on improving service delivery capacity and quality of healthcare facilities, enhancing healthcare system's capacity to respond to emergencies, and strengthening capacities to deliver child-sensitive and shock-responsive social protection.

VI. MAPPING PRIORITIES AND AGENCY CONTRIBUTIONS BY CF PILLARS

CF Strategic Pillars	CF Outcome	2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent	National Strategic Priorities, as outlined in the TSDF III	UN Contributions	UN Contributing Agencies
Planet	By 2027, people, communities and institutions are more empowered and resilient to face diverse shocks and stresses, especially related to climate variability impacts, and ecosystems and biodiversity are better protected, managed and restored.	Climate Change and Disasters	Climate Action and Disaster Resilience	School Disaster Risk Reduction planning, tsunami early warning, and climate-informed WASH systems, SRH and GBV in emergencies/DRR coordination and response systems; gender responsive NDC	IOM, UNDP, UNICEF, WFP, WHO, UNFPA, UN Women
		Ocean and Environment	Natural Resources and Environment	Ridge-to-reef resource management and ecosystem restoration	FAO, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO
		Ocean and environment	Natural Resources and Environment	Climate financing strategies and Measuring Reporting Verification systems support	UNDP, UNEP
		Ocean and environment	Natural Resources and Environment	Intangible cultural heritage and cultural heritage protection systems linked to environmental resilience	UNESCO, UNDP, UNESCO, OHCHR
People	By 2027, more people, particularly those at risk of being left behind, benefit from more equitable access to	People-centred development	Social Development	Sexual and reproductive health and rights and maternal health, adolescents and youth friendly health services, HIV/TB integration, adolescent wellness	WHO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNAIDS

CF Strategic Pillars	CF Outcome	2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent	National Strategic Priorities, as outlined in the TSDF III	UN Contributions	UN Contributing Agencies
	resilient, and gender-responsive, quality basic services, food security/nutrition and social protection systems.	People-centred development	Infrastructure and Technology	Digital learning, Early Childhood Education, family life education, inclusive TVET and climate-resilient infrastructure	ILO, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNOPS, FAO
		People-centred development	Social Development	Gender-based violence prevention and response, community-based awareness and service integration	UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women, UNICEF
		People-centred development	Social Development	Policy development and systems strengthening for inclusive services	IOM, UNICEF, UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UN Women, WFP
Prosperity	By 2027, more people, especially those at risk of being left behind, contribute to and benefit from sustainable, resilient, diversified, inclusive and human-centred socio-economic systems with decent work and equal livelihoods opportunities, reducing inequalities and ensuring shared prosperity.	Resource and economic development	Economic Growth	Support to green Medium Small Micro Enterprises, agricultural value chains and youth entrepreneurship; New comprehensive employment policy in place	UNDP, FAO, ILO
		Technology and connectivity	Infrastructure and Technology	Digital tools for livelihoods, market access and remote learning, TFGBV prevention / response	UNDP, ITU, FAO, UNFPA, OHCHR
		Resource and economic development	Economic Growth	Labour migration systems, reintegration and remittance support: Support to National Strategy on Reintegration	IOM, ILO, UNDP

CF Strategic Pillars	CF Outcome	2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent	National Strategic Priorities, as outlined in the TSDF III	UN Contributions	UN Contributing Agencies
		Resource and economic development	Economic Growth	Support to private sector innovation, responsible business conduct	UNDP, UNCTAD, FAO
Peace	By 2027, people enjoy and contribute to more accountable, inclusive, resilient and responsive governance systems that promote gender equality, climate security, justice and peace, ensure participation, and protect their human rights.	Political leadership and regionalism	Governance	Parliamentary development, civic engagement, legal identity systems	UNDP, UN Women, UNICEF
		Political leadership and regionalism	Governance	Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Convention on the Rights of the Child and Universal Periodic Review reporting, advocacy for ratification of other HR treaties, child justice, legal aid access, SRHR; Number of policy areas where the level of compliance of legislation/policy with international human rights treaties, including international labour conventions, has significantly improved (based on assessments carried out by ILO supervisory bodies and/or UN Treaty bodies, with UN support)	OHCHR, ILO UNDP, UNICEF, UN Women, UNFPA

CF Strategic Pillars	CF Outcome	2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent	National Strategic Priorities, as outlined in the TSDF III	UN Contributions	UN Contributing Agencies
		Peace and security	National Security	Support to asylum and trafficking response systems	IOM, UNHCR, UNDP
		People-centred development	Governance	Support to national integrity systems and public ethics frameworks	UNDP, UNODC

VII. UNCT CONFIGURATION

UN Presence and Capacities

Tonga is served by the Fiji **UN Multi-Country Office (MCO)** for Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu **based in Suva, Fiji**. As of January 2025, this office coordinates **10 resident and 14 non-resident UN agencies, funds and programmes** operating on the ground. Resident UN agencies, funds and programmes in Tonga include **FAO, IOM, UNCDF, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women, WFP, WHO and UNOPS**. These agencies, funds and programmes maintain a direct in-country presence, facilitating programme implementation, technical support, and engagement with national stakeholders to provide direct technical assistance and policy support and implement programming across various sectors.

Meanwhile, **non-resident UN agencies** deliver assistance remotely **through regional or headquarters-based mechanisms, providing technical expertise, policy guidance, and programmatic assistance**. These include IFAD, ILO, ITU, OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNCTAD, UNDRR, UNEP, UNESCAP, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNODC, WFP, and WMO. These agencies complement in-country operations through **in-person technical missions, virtual consultations, and strategic partnerships with government institutions and civil society organizations**. By integrating on-the-ground engagement with remote technical support, the UN ensures **coherent, well-coordinated, and impact-driven development interventions** across Tonga.

UN Staffing, Programmes, and Stakeholder Engagement

The UN's work in Tonga is supported by a network of technical experts, **regional advisors, national focal points, and project staff**, who collaborate closely with **government agencies, civil society, faith-based organization, and private sector stakeholders** to drive sustainable development. UN agencies implement **comprehensive programs** across various sectors, including **climate action, social protection, economic diversification, governance, health, education, and gender equality**, ensuring an integrated approach to national development priorities.

The UN system collaborates closely **with the Government of Tonga, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), private sector actors, and development partners** to foster participatory, inclusive, and high-impact implementation. Through these collaborations, the UN enhances national capacities, promotes knowledge-sharing, and mobilizes resources to advance the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** and Tonga's development agenda.

Operational Modalities for Effective Engagement

Given **Tonga's geographic and logistical challenges**, the UN employs a **multi-modal engagement strategy** to ensure **efficient program delivery and long-term impact**. A **hybrid remote and in-country support model** enables agencies to **leverage digital tools, conduct periodic technical missions, and establish localized partnerships** that enhance national implementation capacity. This approach ensures that technical expertise remains accessible while optimizing resource efficiency.

At the **regional level**, the UN coordinates efforts with institutions such as the **Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), and the Asian Development Bank (ADB)** to align programs with regional development frameworks and mobilize additional resources for enhanced impact. In parallel, the UN facilitates **decentralized program delivery** by working closely with **national agencies, NGOs, and community-based organizations**. This ensures that services reach **rural and vulnerable populations**, particularly those in remote/other island areas.

The UN also engages in **cross-border and thematic collaboration** through **multi-country initiatives under the UN Pacific Strategy**, leveraging **regional expertise and pooled funding** to address **shared development challenges** across **Small Island Developing States (SIDS)**. This integrated approach allows for the **scaling of best practices**, greater efficiency in resource allocation, and improved policy coherence among island nations.

Commitment to Safeguarding and Protection Standards

As part of its commitment to ethical and responsible engagement, the **UN upholds a zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA)**. All personnel, partners, and

service providers involved in UN-supported programs must adhere to **Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) protocols**, which include **mandatory training, strict reporting mechanisms, and safeguarding measures** to prevent misconduct and ensure accountability.

Through this **comprehensive, multi-faceted approach**, the UN remains a **trusted partner** in advancing **sustainable, inclusive, and transformative development outcomes** in Tonga.

VIII. GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

Implementation Oversight and Coordination

The **Tonga Country Implementation Plan (CIP)** will be governed by the principle of **national ownership**, ensuring strong collaboration among the **Tonga government, UN agencies, civil society, and private sector stakeholders**. This approach fosters inclusive decision-making, strategic alignment with national priorities, and enhanced coordination to drive sustainable development outcomes.

Joint Steering Committee (JSC)

The **Joint Steering Committee (JSC)** serves as the **high-level decision-making and coordination body** for the CIP and functions as the **primary governance mechanism** overseeing its implementation, alignment with national priorities, and inter-agency coordination. The JSC will be co-chaired by the **Minister for Foreign Affairs**, alongside the **UN Resident Coordinator (RC)**. Its membership includes key representatives from **government ministries and agencies, UN heads of agencies, civil society organizations (CSOs), the private sector, academia, and development partners**, ensuring a multi-sectoral composition that enhances inclusivity, coordination, and strategic coherence.

The JSC will convene biannually to provide strategic oversight for CIP implementation, ensuring alignment with **Tonga's National Development Strategy, the 2030 Agenda, and the ABAS framework**. It will monitor and review progress to enable adaptive programming, address implementation challenges, and coordinate resource mobilization efforts. By

fostering high-level collaboration and joint decision-making, the JSC will ensure that interventions remain relevant, effective, and aligned with national priorities.

Data and Reporting Systems

A strong data and reporting system will be implemented to track CIP progress, facilitate evidence-based decision-making, and enhance transparency in program execution. The **UNINFO platform** will be the primary tool for planning, monitoring, and reporting, enabling real-time tracking of implementation progress and supporting joint monitoring efforts across stakeholders. The CIP results framework will fully align with **national strategic outcomes, the UN Cooperation Framework, and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators** at both the output and outcome levels (see next section). This approach ensures coherence between UN-supported interventions and broader national development goals by embedding national indicators within the reporting framework.

Data-driven approaches will be at the core of CIP implementation, reinforcing transparency, accountability, and adaptive learning. Through systematic data collection, analysis, and visualization, stakeholders will be better equipped to assess progress, address gaps, and make informed policy decisions that enhance program impact. This integrated approach to data governance will ensure that **evidence-based decision-making remains a fundamental pillar of CIP implementation**, driving greater efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability in development outcomes.