

SPECIAL PROJECT



2012-2013



“Disability and Development”

Our project this year, takes in the Disability, Spirituality & Faith Network see <http://www.dsfnetwork.org/> and initiatives in Tonga through:

1. AMA TAKILOA programme, which provides good leadership both within groups and the wider community run by the Tonga Community Development Trust.
2. Economic development (credit union, training and capacity building, setting up small business)
3. Water and Sanitation (maintenance and repair of water tanks, water testing)
4. Disaster Preparedness (traditional coping mechanisms, food & water storage, disaster response plans)

Life is complex. All around us, there are people coping with a multitude of problems caused by poverty, or disability, congenital, or developed later in life. As Christians, we like to think that we notice problems and do our bit to help, but sometimes, with the best intentions in the world, we miss the situation. CWS has its finger on the pulse in Tonga. DSF is poised to prepare a publication entitled “Welcoming Churches” to help us to be more aware of areas where we can be more helpful. We will fund this publication, up to \$18,000 and the remainder of the money which we raise will go to CWS for the initiatives in Tonga.

As we think of disability and the need for development where funds and resources are limited, we tend to think that we are aware of people who are struggling and know how best to help. Sometimes, we get it wrong! Think of a young woman who drove with a disability card displayed on her windscreen, into a disability car park. With feelings of righteousness, a bystander chided her for using the card illegally. Our driver didn't have the energy to argue – she got out of her car and limped on her artificial leg into the shopping mall. (She was born with an apology for a leg and has been fitted with an artificial limb since she was a toddler!)

A week after the Edgecumbe earthquake a group of temporarily disabled by their situation, lacking the energy to think too much about food for the journey, drove to Te Puke and joined a crowd travelling by train to an event in Hamilton. They found their carriage and made themselves comfortable somewhere in the middle. At the same time, a group from a service organisation which had received accolades for their help in Edgecumbe, entered the carriage. They decorated the whole carriage with ribbons of their organisation's colours then looked for seating as a group. They had chilly bins of carefully prepared food for their team, so felt that it was important that they should be seated together! The Edgecumbe folk separated when requested and watched while the service group ate their abundant food, blissfully unaware of the situation!

Our thanks go to Jacqui Ryan of CWS, and Gillian Bell, Pete Cowley and Rosalie Sugrue of DSF and the use of their website, for helping us bring together this year's special project material

For speakers on the Ama Takiloa Project, please contact CWS: Ph. 0800 74 73 72 or cws@cws.org.nz

A PowerPoint display (on CD-rom) will be available from October 2012.

Regarding DSF, consult the website, or people you might know who are disabled, or working with the disabled.

Please send your financial contribution for the project to your national MWF treasurer or Presbyterian Women's treasurer by **June 30th 2013**

MWF Co-coordinators

Mataiva Robertson: 20 Calverts Rd, Mataroa, New Plymouth, 4310, mdrobertson08@gmail.com 06 263 4484

Laiga Etimani, 2 Hinau Street, Inglewood, 4330 letimani@yahoo.com 06 7566 539

Presbyterian Women Aotearoa NZ Missions Dept

Joan Roberts: 149 Heta St, New Plymouth. 4312 syjob@xtra.co.nz 06 757 5267

Rae Simpson: 12 Kotanui Ave, Army Bay, Whangaparaoa 0930 lestrsimpson@xtra.co.nz) 09 424 4274

Disability, Spirituality & Faith Network

<http://www.dsfnetwork.org/>

Aims and Objects.

1. To encourage and promote dialogue within and between the faith and disability communities.
2. To provide a forum for disability communities to explore spirituality.
3. To advocate for disability issues within faith communities
4. To engage in theological reflection on disability within Aotearoa NZ .
5. To promote discussion on ethical issues including those that affect human rights (To identify and discuss the ethical and human rights issues impacting on people with disabilities)

In 2008, the network published for sale “Oh Light”, a book of poetry, prose and heartfelt emotions, edited by Anna Gilkison., which picks up day to day situations and is designed to help us through our darker days. This book has since been made into a talking book.

The next project is to produce a publication called "Welcoming Churches".

To this end the network would : review current resources and tie them to the legislation (including building and disability codes.) with the aim of producing an illustrated, comprehensive guide and check-list towards making all churches fully accessible and welcoming to everybody.

There are 3 broad aspects to accessibility:

- a) Physical and sensory aspects of the environment.
- b) Attitudes that, welcome, include and respect disabilities as family in Christ.
- c) Theology that does not denigrate the humanity of people with any sort of disability.

The writers will be very careful not to re-invent the wheel but produce an up to date, relevant publication which will be straightforward and easily readable but which will have creative and practical solutions.

Such a publication is expensive to produce. Prayerfully, our Methodist and Presbyterian organisations will be able assist greatly with the cost.



GROWING THE GOOD IN TONGA

Methodist and Presbyterian Women's Special Project 2012-2013

in association with Christian World Service



The project in a nutshell:

Malo e lava mai!

Welcome to the **AMA TAKILOA** programme run by the **Tonga Community Development Trust**. The programme aims to improve health and increase food security, self-sufficiency and income generation by:

- ✘ Reinigorating and strengthening the Ama Takiloa network in Tongatapu and the four outer island groups of 'Eua, Ha'apai, Vava'u and the Niuas;
- ✘ Providing training and support to Ama Takiloa groups on family nutrition, organic vegetable gardening, home based piggery and poultry, income generation, budgeting, small business development, credit unions and sanitation and water supply;
- ✘ Improving and increasing the informal sale of traditional/cultural products such as tapa and fine mats to family and community members living overseas, and to the growing tourism market;
- ✘ Integrating disaster risk assessment and preparedness into the programme's activities by providing workshops and enhancing traditional coping mechanisms.

The Ama Takiloa 'a e Fefine Tonga began as the Village Women's Development programme in 1975, and was incorporated into the work of the Tonga Community Development Trust (TCDT) in the late 1990s.

The goal of the AMA TAKILOA programme is: *to empower women by encouraging them to actively participate in development through*

- ≈ food security
- ≈ environmental protection
- ≈ good governance
- ≈ leadership development
- ≈ human rights.

This involves practical assistance, as well as training, on a variety of areas requisite for the good health of the family including nutrition, hygiene, maternal health, environment, food production, gardening, water and sanitation, money management and self-help education.

The Ama Takiloa programme focuses on the most needy groups, typically those on the outer islands. There are 320 active village-based women's groups, a total membership of 3,802:

Vava'u – 204 groups with 2,534 members
Ha'apai – 67 groups with 647 members
'Eua – 44 groups with 508 members
Tongatapu – 8 groups with 113 members (villages of Popua, Lapaha and 'Ahau).

How the Ama Takiloa programme functions

Most Ama Takiloa groups have between 8-12 members, who participate in activities planned and prioritised by the group members themselves. Female Extension Officers (EO), recruited locally by TCDT, help facilitate and support these activities in an advisory and technical capacity through visits and 3-monthly inspections. Each group submits their report to the EO who, in turn, submits all group reports to the TCDT, providing an overall view of projects being undertaken across the country. The approach advocated by Ama Takiloa is experimental, participatory, practical, and coupled with training.

Making a Difference

Tonga Community Development Trust spokeswoman, 'Oketi Faletau, notes that Tongan health and wealth are both improving in areas where people heed the call to revert to old ways.

'Oketi reports that "the core financial support from CWS for our programme is helping the Trust to improve the quality of life for Tongans, particularly in the outer islands."

The Trust's approach has been to learn from the past and return to simpler, cheaper and sustainable ways of living. It runs workshops on traditional diets and support home garden projects to strengthen self-reliance. Fortunately, Tongans are traditionally entitled to a set amount of land for farming. This has helped make the move to revive old ways of growing food possible.

Many Tongans have become dependent on remittances for cash to buy imported food which has detrimental health impacts. Obesity, diabetes and heart diseases have been some of the on-going results of imported foods on Tongan life. Elders are delighted to see people reverting to a simpler, healthier diet way of life. Their advice would be a step up from our own, "eat your vegetables". A 104 year old woman advised people to "eat your seaweed."

'Oketi: "It is much healthier for us to have our own traditional foods. The smartest children in the schools are those who eat traditional diets. Those who stuck with the diet live longer."

'Oketi and her co-workers work via a mix of education, advocacy and practical hands on workshops, and have assisted more than 2,000 Tongan women to reclaim the power of older, better ways of living. The Trust also encourages women to use their newly rediscovered agricultural skills to grow pandanus grass and mulberry bark used for making woven mats and tapa. Woven mats and tapa are an integral part of Tongan culture and are presented as gifts for weddings, birthdays, for the birth of a first born, and at funerals. Women no longer have to buy the finished products or materials, reducing the need for cash. They come together to weave, an important social function and way to share information. They are also increasing income opportunities by selling tapa and woven mats both locally and to Tongans living overseas.



Vava'u mat weaving



The work of the TCDT is not just about returning to old ways - it is about improving traditional techniques in a low cost, low tech manner. For the vegetable and crop growing lessons an important innovation has been the teaching of soil education such as compost-making techniques. Compost had not been an established feature of Tongan agriculture but its introduction is helping improve crop yields and food quality.

The results of CWS-backed workshops have spread through communities as the benefits of more self-determination have become apparent. Women on the outer islands have reported that they have been empowered by the programmes and have made such a difference to their household budgets that they have been able to afford to build 'palagi' (Western) style homes. When they took this step they were then freed from yearly maintenance on their homes which effectively meant rebuilding them. This in turn gave the women time for other more useful forms of activity, economic and social.



Community nurseries provide traditional and medicinal plants for the women's groups.

Strategies for the Future:

Improved Sustainable Income Generation

Assist people to reduce the habit of spending and consumption and instil a culture of small investment that contributes to self-reliance by working with the Government's Credit Union. This provides Ama Takiloa groups with the ability to:

- access savings to support group activities
- access small loans for emergencies.

Develop a marketing strategy for traditional items, clothing (lavalava), home-grown fruit and vegetables, pandanus and mulberry bark for local and international tourist markets.

This involves an extension of the *katoanga* system where women's groups in Tonga are matched with women's groups from the same village now living in other countries (e.g. New Zealand and Australia). The type and quantity of items to be produced are agreed, including price. Those living in New Zealand fly to Tonga and during the *katoanga* the exchange of products and money takes place. A win-win situation for all.

Reduced Risks from Natural Disasters

Women and children are more vulnerable than men in times of natural disaster. TCDT works with communities to establish natural disaster preparedness plans. These include:

- ≈ workshops on disaster risk assessment
- ≈ producing a poster on 'best practices' associated with disaster preparedness
- ≈ growing root crops (giant taro) which will survive a cyclone and can be preserved and stored; and harvesting fruits which can be dried and preserved.

These have been very popular as they focus on the traditional foods that had a role in the past for helping people survive the cyclone season.

Good Quality Drinking Water

Ama Takiloa has contributed to improving the community's access to clean drinking water. Families and communities learn how to care for the tanks by cleaning them out regularly, test the water quality, and undertake minor repairs themselves.

The hygiene and sanitation programme has been very successful, with the focus on encouraging fencing around the toilet for privacy, and a water source with soap for washing hands nearby. Sometimes this is a plastic water container with a tap on a stand, or in a tree near the toilet.

Ama Takiloa also engages communities on sustainable rainwater harvesting techniques.



Improved concrete rainwater harvesting tank replace old plastic containers like these.

About Tonga

Geography

Situated east of the Fiji Islands, Tonga (called the Friendly Islands) consists of some 160 islands, of which 36 are inhabited. Most of the islands contain active volcanic craters; others are coral atolls.

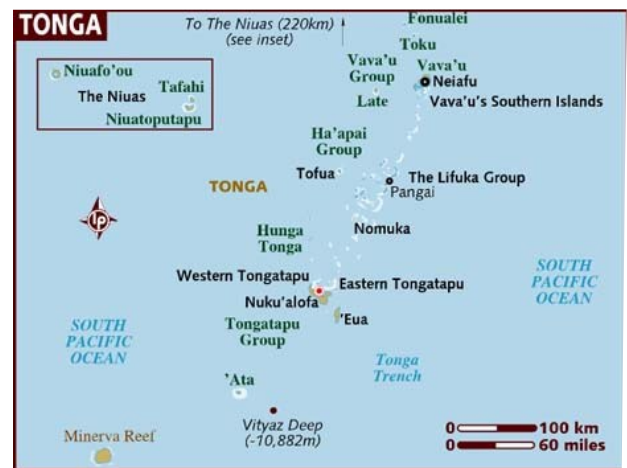
History and Government

Polynesians have lived on Tonga for at least 3,000 years. The Dutch were the first Europeans to explore the islands in 1616. British explorer James Cook landed in 1773 and called them the Friendly Islands.

The current royal dynasty of Tonga (the third line of royal rulers) was founded in 1831 by Taufa'ahau Tupou, who took the name George I. In 1900, the country became a British protected state.

Tonga became independent on 4 June 1970. The government was largely controlled by the king, his nominees and a small group of hereditary nobles until the reign of the late King George V who made some changes. Since the 1990s a movement began aimed at curtailing the powers of the monarchy,

hence the Tongan Pro-Democracy Movement (TPDM) was created. Some significant changes occurred as a result of the democracy movement, for example, Feleti Sevele became the first elected commoner to serve as the country's Prime Minister in 2006. The current Prime Minister is the Hon. Tu'ivakano. In March 2012, King George Tupou VI acceded to the throne.



Some Statistics

Capital and largest city: Nuku'alofa

Ethnicity: Polynesian, European

Religion: Christian

Population (2010 estimate): 122,580

Languages: Tongan, English

Literacy Rate: 98% (Tongan)

Land area: 750 sq kms

Arable land: 20%

Unemployment: 13%

Natural Resources: fish, fertile soil

Income: Exports (agriculture/fish); Remittances; Tourism

Agriculture: squash, coconuts, copra, bananas, cocoa, coffee beans, vanilla beans, ginger, black pepper.



Resources

Please contact CWS to order a PowerPoint Presentation about the Tonga Community Development Trust.

Malo 'aupito

(Thank you very much)

Thank you for your support of this important women's project.

