



International  
Labour  
Organization

# The ILO in Tuvalu



## Key Facts and Figures

Population (2012): 9,561  
GDP per capita (2012): US\$ 2,516  
Labour force participation rate (2005): 58.2%

- 69.6% male
- 47.9% female

Employment to population rate (2002): 53.3%

- 64.8% male
- 42.8% female

Unemployment rate (2005): 6.5%

- 4.9% male
- 8.6% female

Tuvalu's economy is predominantly subsistence in nature, with agriculture and fishing accounting for 80 per cent of the national income. The per capita income in Tuvalu is significantly higher than in many other Pacific Island Countries, largely due to offshore income including maritime employment, remittances from seafarers and workers overseas and international aid.

Major development constraints include Tuvalu's smallness, dispersion and extreme isolation, and its limited natural resources. Due to its low-lying geography, Tuvalu is at immediate risk from natural disasters including cyclones and tsunamis and longer-term risk from rising sea levels related to climate change.

Tuvalu is isolated from world markets and internal transportation costs are also high. There is high import dependence, and large and continuous trade imbalances. The infrastructure is inadequate and the economic base extremely narrow.

The public sector is large and the government owns most enterprises, many of which require subsidies or concessions,

### Ratified Conventions

Tuvalu has ratified one ILO Convention:  
MLC - Maritime Labour Convention, 2006



while the private sector is small and underdeveloped and business opportunities are limited. There are high levels of under-employment in the labour force.

Currently, the main source of labour market data is the population census which is held every ten years and the most recent census was conducted in 2002. The capacity to analyse data is limited. The establishment of a central labour market database is essential to store labour market data and to disseminate the information to all stakeholders.

Tuvaluans have a tradition to work aboard foreign vessels as seafarers and fishermen. However, the number of Tuvaluan seamen on-ship has been declining due to increased competition from other source countries.

Since 2007, New Zealand has begun to employ people from Tuvalu and other Pacific Island Countries to work as seasonal workers in the horticulture and viticulture industries. Under "Recognised Seasonal Employer" (RSE) Work Policy, more than 5,000 workers from Kiribati, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Samoa and Tonga have worked in New Zealand.

Sources: ILO KILM.

## The ILO - Who We Are

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is the UN specialized agency dealing with work and workplace issues, and related rights and standards. Its overarching goal is to achieve decent work for all so everyone benefits from working conditions that offer freedom, equity, security and human dignity. In working towards this goal the ILO has four principal strategic objectives:

- To promote and realize standards, and fundamental principles and rights at work.
- To create greater opportunities for women and men to secure decent employment.
- To enhance the coverage and effectiveness of social protection for all.
- To strengthen the relationship between workers, employers and governments, and encourage social dialogue.

Founded in 1919, the ILO is the only surviving major creation of the Treaty of Versailles, which established the League of Nations. It became the first specialized agency of the United Nations in 1946.

# The ILO in Tuvalu

Tuvalu became a member of the ILO in 2008. The ILO Country Office for South Pacific Countries in Fiji manages ILO work in Tuvalu. The ILO and its Tuvaluan constituents are currently reviewing the country's labour laws and standards. Tuvalu is also working towards ratification of the Fundamental ILO conventions. The establishment of adequate labour law and labour administration is of particular importance in ILO's partnership with Tuvalu.

## Current areas of work

The Decent Work Country Programme (2010-12) details ILO's cooperation activities with Tuvalu and identifies the following priorities:

- Capacity building of tripartite partners.
- Improvement of the labour market information and analysis system.
- Improving overseas employment opportunities.

The DWCP has achieved the following outcomes:

- Strengthened the Labour Office's capacity to review and implement labour legislation.
- Enhanced social partners' capacity to engage meaningfully in policy development and implementation.
- Increased the capacity of production, analysis and use of sex-disaggregated labour market statistics.
- Increased the quantity and quality of migrant workers.



## Social partners

The ILO's social partners in Tuvalu are the Tuvalu National Chamber of Commerce (TNCC) representing the employers, the Tuvalu Overseas Seamen's Union (TOSU) representing the workers and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Labour in the Office of the Prime Minister representing the Government.

Given Tuvalu's recent membership in the ILO, a lot of efforts have been made to build capacities for the tripartite constituents. At the request of the Office of the Prime Minister, the ILO has helped to improve the capacity and services of the Labour Office, provide technical support for the development of a labour market information system, and improve the pre-departure training for RSE workers to New Zealand.

The ILO has supported the TNCC in the following areas:

- To develop a business plan in line with members' needs.
- To build its capacity to deliver better services to the members.
- To assist with establishing a database on businesses in Tuvalu which can be part of a larger labour market information system.
- To assist with supporting its members in identifying potential businesses.
- To assist with information dissemination on businesses to its members.

The ILO's assistance to TOSU include:

- To develop its capacity, particularly in the area of union management.
- To present TOSU as a credible partner of International Union Organizations.
- To assist with office equipment (e.g. fax, scanner).

Social partners in Tuvalu also participated a series of workshops and training in the Pacific region organized by the ILO, including:

- Workshop organized by ILO's Bureau of Workers' Activities.
- Community-based training for Rural Economic Empowerment organized by Youth Employment Programme in Vanuatu.
- Young Trade Union Leaders Training on Youth Employment, Decent Work and Labour Migration organised by Youth Employment Programme in Samoa.

## The International Labour Organization

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is the UN agency for the world of work. It was founded in 1919 as part of the Treaty of Versailles that ended World War I, to reflect the principle that universal and lasting peace can only be achieved if it is built on social justice. The ILO is the only 'tripartite' United Nations agency that brings together representatives of governments, employers and workers to shape policies and programmes for social justice and decent working and living conditions for all women and men. For this it was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1969. The ILO is also responsible for drawing up and overseeing international labour standards (Conventions and Recommendations). This unique arrangement gives the organization an edge in incorporating 'real world' knowledge about employment and work into its activities.

The logo features the text "DECENT WORK" in white, bold, uppercase letters on a dark grey rectangular background. Below this, a red horizontal bar contains the tagline "A better world starts here." in white, lowercase letters. The entire logo is framed by a white, overlapping geometric shape consisting of several rectangles.

**DECENT WORK**

A better world starts here.

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