

Challenges of Urbanization in micro atoll island countries: TUVALU

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Funafuti

Vaiaku

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1. GENERAL INFORMATION - Tuvalu

- Population (mini census 2017) – 10,645
- Land Area: 26 Sq km
- Location – approximately 650 NM north of Fiji islands
- Race - Polynesians
- Language – Tuvalu and English
- Religion – 86% affiliated with the Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu (EKT) Christian church, remaining other denominations accounts for 14%
- Political System – Westminster, No political parties (Govt vs Opposition)
- GDP per capita 2016 - USD3,537.00
- Weather; Wet (Nov-March) and dry (April- Nov) season
- 3 reef islands and 6 atoll islands
- EEZ covers an oceanic area approximately 900,000 km²

2. Population growth and pressures of urbanisation

- About 2/3 population live in the urban centre, Fongafale, Funafuti
- Urban drift in Tuvalu is due mainly to the movement of people from the outer island to Fongafale in search of work, medical and education.
- The growing number of people living on Fongafale, the urban centre impacts weighty pressures on;
 - a. Urban planning (poor)
 - b. Scarcity of land resources for housing and crops (food security)
 - c. Water and sanitation
 - d. Education and resources
 - e. Health service
 - f. Overcrowding
 - g. Transportation
 - h. Infrastructure



3. Government Policy/Legislation

- Tuvalu's National Development Strategy, 2005-2015 and 2016 – 2020, known as 'Te Kakeega II and III' specifies priority for outer island governance and development
- E.g TKIII "Falekaupule and Island Development;
building rural development capacity
improve transport and communications to the outer islands
'Migration and Urbanisation'
improve economic and social services to urban populations
improve the provision of economic and social services to the OI
- To counter urbanisation and the deteriorating economies in the OIs, the Falekaupule Trust Fund was established.
- The Falekaupule Act 1998 enabled local Falekaupule through their Kaupule (Executive arm of the Falekaupule) to administer their own affairs

4. Critique

- Te Kakeega III, Tuvalu's National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016 to 2020, pro urbanisation, maintains status quo and pay only lip service to OIs
- There are only one or two mentions of policies and strategies directly affecting OI
- The OI have always been regarded as the heart of the nation, however since political independence in 1978, the heart has become weaker.
- The Local Government Act, whilst a little resolved by the Falekaupule Act still remains outdated and irrelevant. Responsibilities have not been matched with sufficient finances and this has resulted in poor service delivery and diminished confidence by local communities in the ability of local governments to deliver. This remains arguably a major constraint to improve local governance.

5. Proposals to increase and strengthen the voices of, and engagement with the outer islands

- The practice of holding nation-wide consultations on national development strategies continues and with greater frequency
- To include/involve representatives from each of the OIs during the nation-wide consultations programmes
- To boost development of the OI to slow down the wheels of urbanisation as a deliberate development policy of the government
- To decentralise some of the core government functions/departments to OI, e.g Agriculture and Education were previously on Vaitupu Island
- That consideration be given to transferring the seat of government to an OI, (may be Nukufetau island) whilst Funafuti remains the centre for commerce & trade.

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- That decentralisation and the development of the OI become a compulsory and cutting theme for all development programmes and planning purposes (like for many development partners, the inclusion of gender analysis on all projects)
- That all government agencies provide Parliament with their annual reports detailing how each government departments has engaged with the OI, and what measures/policies/strategies its is doing or have done and accomplished to develop the OI. (this could be made a compulsory requirement)
- That transportation and communications infrastructure with, and on the OIs be drastically improved, including exploring the reintroduction of an Inter-Island air service

6. Local Constituencies- Are they being heard?

- In my opinion efforts by past Government through the various policies and legislations did give the opportunities for the voices of our local constituencies to be heard,
- UNFORTUNATELY for Tuvalu it has larger economic and social forces at work that continues to challenge local developments;
- E.g the highly scattered nature of the islands and atolls of Tuvalu made worsen by inadequate shipping, transport and communication infrastructure
- It is vital to improve OI boat harbours for the safety of our vessels and passengers, improvement of OI roads etc
- Low skill capacity of Kaupule staffs in the areas of financial management, town planning to complement the Falekaupule Act

7. CONCLUSION: What is the role of Parliament?

- Parliament has a very important role to play
- Parliament's legislative function empowers it to make laws that skilfully regulate urbanisation while keeping a virgilant eye on the decentralization process and policies
- Enforcement is vital, Parliament must question the extent to which the executive branch has progressed on the implementation of regulated urbanisation as well demand answers on the achievement of OI development goals
- Parliament has the power to approve or disapprove the National budget, therefore it is well in its powers to set conditions that will subject the national budget to allocating the required financial muscle necessary to achieve regulated urbanisation and decentralisation, it is also within its powers perharps in a bipartisan way encourage donors to support OI in a way that will have direct effect on reducing unwanted consequences of urbanisation

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Thank you