

Resilience through Land Management: Linking Land, Climate and People

Viliami Folau (Tonga)

SUMMARY

Tongans are coastal area people depending on the ocean for their everyday subsistence and wellbeing. The relationship between land and people has been known as one of foundation for human society and social life, security and prosperity. The Tongan constitution is divided into three parts, The Declaration of Rights, The Form of Government, and Land. Male Tongans at the age of 16 can apply for land for residential and for farming. It is a hereditary title passing from male heir to male heir. Women can also own land but through leases, and life estate as the widow of the landowner or a daughter of a landowner without sons, these have conditions. Foreigners cannot own land in Tonga but only through leases. Sale of Land is prohibited. With issues like climate change, the frequent and more severe natural disasters and hazards and with recent tropical cyclones, tsunamis and sea level rise, the government and overseas donors have spent millions of dollars in the relief and response effort for affected population at high risk, low-lying coastal vulnerable areas. The power of the Minister of Land and Land Act do not see eye-to-eye with other legislations such as Spatial Planning Act, Environmental Act and Disaster Act and so forth. These legislations does not restrict the power of the Minister of Lands but broadens its view when it comes to allocation and registering residential land and key infrastructures. Where we live is very important, our safety and safety of our families is paramount. A robust land Use Policy will not only continue to uphold the very essence of our Land Act but also ensure that climate change and natural disasters and hazards are addressed, it will ensure resilience for all.