

# Gender Equality in Tuvalu



Screenshot



Findings from the Beijing Platform  
for Action Review +30 and Combined  
5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Periodic CEDAW report  
2024 Situation



In 2024, Tuvalu conducted a comprehensive review of its progress in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BpA) +30, highlighting achievements over the past five years. Additionally, the country prepared its combined 5th and 6th periodic report on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which Tuvalu ratified in 1999. The reports reveal that, while significant progress has been made in areas such as health and education, important challenges remain in fully upholding the human rights of women and girls. This summary highlights both our achievements and the critical areas where further efforts are essential.

## Progress towards gender equality

### COVID-19 Response

Tuvalu's government successfully protected its population from the pandemic, achieving over 90% vaccination and reporting no deaths, a significant accomplishment for a small island nation. This helped reduce the burden on women, who are the main caregivers during health crises.

### Girls' Education

Despite challenges like limited transport and communication infrastructure, Tuvalu managed to keep girls in school during the pandemic. In the past five years, girls have consistently performed well academically, and dropout rates for girls remain lower than for boys.

### Economic Empowerment

Initiatives such as loans for women entrepreneurs by the Development Bank of Tuvalu and the creation of the Tau Maketi have improved women's access to financial resources.

### Addressing Domestic Violence

Civil society organizations continued to play an important role in asking for better services and developing counselling support for victims. The annual "16 Days of Activism" campaign against domestic violence have increased awareness and dialogue around these issues.

### Legal Reforms and Policies

Tuvalu has made some progress in integrating gender equality into its national legal framework, including through revisions to the *Constitution* and the *Family Protection and Domestic Violence Act (2014)*, which provides protection against domestic violence. Additionally, the *Marriage Act* was amended in 2015 to raise the legal age of marriage to 18, ensuring greater protection for girls. Furthermore, the *Labour and Employment Relations Act (2017)* introduced provisions to protect women's rights in the workplace, including maternity leave, equal pay, and protection against sexual harassment.

The *National Gender Equity Policy* further reflects Tuvalu's commitment to gender mainstreaming across all sectors. This policy outlines strategic goals to enhance women's representation in decision-making and leadership roles, address gender-based violence, and ensure that a gender perspective is embedded in all government programs and services.

### Increased Representation of Women in Leadership in Some Areas

Significant advancements have been made in increasing women's representation in government and public life. Women now hold 37% of senior positions in the government and make up 53% of the judiciary. In international representation, women constitute 55% of Tuvalu's diplomatic workforce. Moreover, there has been a notable increase in women's leadership within religious institutions, with three women elected as ministers in the Congregational Christian Church of Tuvalu.

# Challenges

## Domestic Violence

Too many women in Tuvalu remain unsafe in their own homes, with 44% having experienced violence from an intimate partner. Addressing this issue is challenging due to deep-rooted cultural beliefs about gender roles, limited support services, and significant delays in the justice system. Although the Family Protection and Domestic Violence Act provides a legal framework, its implementation has been inadequate. There are no permanent shelters, and many cases go unreported due to cultural stigma and a lack of protection services. The judicial process is also hindered by prolonged delays, leaving numerous cases unresolved for years.

## Political Participation of Women

Women's participation in politics remains a significant challenge, with no women elected to Parliament in the 2024 elections. Cultural beliefs and traditional practices continue to impede women's political engagement. The Committee recommended the adoption of temporary special measures, such as reserved parliamentary seats for women, to accelerate gender equality in political representation. However, resistance from communities, including from women, has hindered the implementation of these measures.

## Economic and Social Barriers

In terms of economic participation, women are still disproportionately engaged in informal and low-paying sectors. Limited job opportunities, particularly for women, and high living costs continue to create hardships. Overcrowded houses add additional stress, with many women expressing concerns about living conditions. Lacks social protection for women and families facing hardship. The absence of financial support programs, combined with rising costs, puts many women and children at risk of poverty.

## Harmful Gender Norms

Cultural practices often limit women's roles in leadership, particularly in traditional governance structures, where decision-making is typically controlled by men. These barriers make it difficult for women to fully participate in community and national leadership roles.

## Climate Change

As a small island nation, Tuvalu faces significant threats from climate change. However, there is little analysis of how climate change in Tuvalu impact women differently. Without this information, it is unclear how women benefit from or are affected by climate resilience programs. Tuvalu has integrated a gender perspective into its *National Climate Change Policy (2021–2030)* and disaster preparedness plans, ensuring that women are involved in decision-making processes. However, women in the outer islands remain particularly vulnerable to climate-related risks, and their participation in planning and decision-making needs further strengthening.

# What's Next?

Over the next 5 years, the Tuvalu's plan to empower women and progress gender equality include:



Improving data on women's experiences to create better policies.



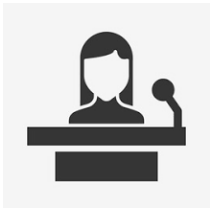
Reducing non-communicable diseases and improving access to healthcare, including reproductive health services, is a priority to support women's health, but also to reduce the burden of unpaid care work.



Expanding access to credit and business training and exploring new economic opportunities in areas like the blue and green economies, will support women to be financially secure.



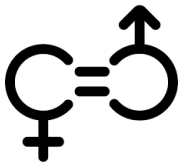
Addressing housing issues and providing social safety nets for women and families in need is critical to build our resilience.



Building capacity and support women leaders will help increase women's participation in decision-making.



Working closely with civil society organizations will continue to be essential for leveraging resources, expertise, and community engagement.



Empowering women and taking into account their needs and rights across government programs and services will support women in developing their full potential and fulfil their aspirations.



Establishing systems to track progress and hold institutions accountable for their commitments to improving the lives of women and girls.