

# Tuvalu

## FACTFILE

**Title** Youth Clinic and Resource Centre for Sexual and Reproductive Health Services and Information for Young People

**IPPF Member Association** Tuvalu Family Health Association (TuFHA)

TuFHA is the country's leading non-governmental organization promoting and providing sexual and reproductive health services.

**Aim** To improve the accessibility and use of quality sexual and reproductive health services among young people aged 15 to 24.

**Duration** Five years: 2003–2007

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

▶ A clinic opened five days a week offering a small range of youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services.

▶ A youth resource centre was set up, regularly used by young people for meetings, workshops, life skills training, sports, music and watching videos.

▶ TuFHA trained government nurses stationed in outer islands to distribute condoms and information, education and communication materials.

▶ The project used the media to reach populations in outer islands, particularly through a weekly radio show. Peer educators were involved in writing scripts and producing the programmes.

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

### Geographical and demographic challenges

Tuvalu's geography, as a dispersed archipelago, presents clear challenges to reaching young people with information and services.

In addition, education is limited, resulting in movements of young people abroad to access better education at both secondary and tertiary levels.

**“Peer education has helped me to understand myself better, to learn about adolescent sexual and reproductive health and this has helped me to make responsible decisions in protecting my life, and to help my peers in the same way. Because of these developments, my parents and family are very happy with the changes in my life.”**

Female peer educator

### Opening the door to youth-friendly services

The government's public health policy supports sexual and reproductive health. The project therefore supplemented the existing programme by setting up a resource centre with an integrated clinic offering youth-friendly services – the only centre of its kind in the country run by a non-governmental organization.

By providing easy access to information, education and youth-friendly services, particularly targeting the 15 to 24 age group, the project aimed to safeguard the reproductive health of

## KEY PROJECT STATISTICS

**477** sexual and reproductive health services were provided to **young people**.

**Number of condoms distributed: 21,802.**

The project reached **5,073 people** with sexual and reproductive health communication – through **peer education workshops, inter-personal channels and drama** – covering issues such as teenage pregnancy, alcohol abuse, sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS and condom demonstrations.

Young people developed and distributed **1,840 information, education and communication materials**.

**900 young people** accessed the youth centre for indoor games in 2007, and **16 youth groups** used the centre.

young people by promoting better health-seeking behaviour and practices, and by emphasizing responsible behaviour and practices to prevent unplanned teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

### Effects of stigma and conservatism

Tuvalu remains fairly conservative about openly discussing sexuality and reproductive health issues. Young people are embarrassed to seek information, counselling and services.

Young women lack the confidence, skills and empowerment to negotiate sex. In many cases, the social discrimination and stigma associated with pregnancy outside marriage means that unplanned teenage pregnancies result in early marriages in order to conform to societal acceptance.

Many cases of sexually transmitted infections are only partially treated as such infections continue to be stigmatized.

The project therefore worked hard to foster a supportive political and socio-cultural environment to implement sexual and reproductive health initiatives.

## Wide-ranging roles for skilled peer educators

The peer education programme proved an effective tool for reaching other young people in a conservative setting.

Peer educators disseminated and communicated information and messages to other young people using a peer-to-peer approach and community outreach, both in communities and schools, running weekly workshops at the youth centre, raising awareness through drama activities, distributing condoms, and referring peers who needed counselling and other services to the youth clinic.

## Effective use of the media to get messages across

Radio and the print media were two of the main tools used to disseminate information. Every Thursday night, TuFHA aired a 30-minute radio programme on sexual and reproductive health issues, using drama and debate. This was the most effective way to reach a public audience spread across a large geographical area of often hard-to-reach islands.

Feedback from young people confirmed that they learned about sexual and reproductive health from listening to the programmes and

### LESSONS LEARNED

**A risk approach strategy could identify groups of young people who are more vulnerable and at greater risk, and offer them special outreach activities that encourage them to use the clinic services.**

**The role of peer educators could be explored to improve health-seeking behaviour among young people.**

**Maximizing youth participation could engage young people more actively in project development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.**

**Experienced peer educators could receive further training to become peer counsellors.**

**The concept and principles of advocacy could be introduced to TuFHA.**

became more aware of TuFHA's services. The programmes stimulated public debate about issues not normally spoken of openly, such as living with HIV.

## Complementing and supplementing government services

TuFHA is the only non-governmental organization working on sexual and reproductive health and rights, and its position is well recognized among partners.

TuFHA is active in a local network of non-governmental organizations, in the national committee on HIV/AIDS and in its links with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Home Affairs.

**"I believe that young people are still reserved about coming to a clinic for sexual and reproductive health services. People all know that TuFHA provides contraceptive services, and when young people come around to the clinic, they are often regarded as sexually active. Tuvalu is so small and people easily identify others' movements."**

Clinic nurse

## Project continuation and sustainability

The government is supportive of TuFHA's work, and has given financial support to the Association.

The clinic and youth centre are already part of TuFHA and therefore sustainability is assured.



## COUNTRY STATS

**Population is 10,000 with 36 per cent under the age of 15.**  
(2008, Population Reference Bureau)

**Average life expectancy at birth is 64 years.**  
(2009, Population Reference Bureau)

**The infant mortality rate is 35 per thousand live births.**  
(2008, Population Reference Bureau)

**The total fertility rate is 3.7 with only 29 per cent of married women aged 15–49 practising modern family planning.**  
(2009, Population Reference Bureau)

**100 per cent of births are attended by trained personnel.**  
(2009, Population Reference Bureau)

