

# **RIGHT TO EDUCATION**

Submission to the Universal  
Periodic Review of the United  
Nations Human Rights Council

4<sup>th</sup> Cycle – 44<sup>th</sup> Session

## **Country Review:**

# **Tuvalu**

**March 2023**

**By Chiara Tomatis**



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**Broken Chalk** is an Amsterdam-based NGO established in 2020 that monitors and minimises worldwide human rights violations in education. We aim to promote universal and equal access to education for all.

We encourage and support achieving societal peace with our international sponsors and partners by advocating for intercultural tolerance, preventing radicalism and polarisation, and tackling educational inequalities.

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## 0. Introduction

1. Broken Chalk drafted this report to contribute to Tuvalu's Universal Periodic Review (UPR). This report discusses the main challenges Tuvalu faces regarding Education and issues which could be enhanced through Education. Finally, Broken Chalk will offer recommendations for Tuvalu in the field of Education based on the problems raised.
2. Tuvalu is a small island nation in the Pacific Ocean, with a population of about 11,000. Education in Tuvalu is compulsory for children between the ages of 6 and 15, and the government provides free education at all levels; the education system is based on the British system. The primary language of instruction is Tuvaluan, with English as a second language. There are four primary schools and one secondary school in the country. The secondary school is Motufoua Secondary School, located on the island of Vaitupu. Students who complete their secondary education in Tuvalu can enrol at universities in other countries to continue their studies.<sup>i</sup>
3. Although education is free, there are difficulties in providing quality education in Tuvalu due to limited resources, the remoteness of some of the islands, and an additional set of problems that will be addressed below. In addition, the country has limited funds for education, and there need to be more qualified teachers, especially in rural areas. This has led to a high student-teacher ratio, biased teaching materials, and technology access. However, the government has invested in education to improve its quality and increase education access for all Tuvalu citizens.<sup>ii</sup>
4. Despite the challenges faced by the country, there have been some positive developments in the education sector in Tuvalu in recent years. With the support of international organisations, such as the United Nations Development Programme, the government has worked to improve access to education by building new schools, increasing the number of scholarships available for students abroad, and focusing on improving the quality of education. Regarding results, the literacy rate for children in Tuvalu is about 99%, higher than the regional average for Pacific islands. However, the quality of education still needs to improve, with many students needing help to achieve basic literacy and numeracy skills. There is also a high drop-out rate, especially among girls, which limits their opportunities for further education and employment.<sup>iii</sup>

## I. Main issues in Education

### Main challenges

5. Tuvalu faces several challenges in the field of education, including limited resources, teacher shortages, climate change, language barriers, and limited access to technology. It is crucial to highlight the critical issues that exist to be able to analyse them and work on them since investing in education in Tuvalu is essential for the future development and success of the nation.<sup>iv</sup>

**Limited resources**

6. The country needs more schools and resources, making providing quality education to all students difficult. This affects the outer islands more, where there are fewer schools and resources than on the main island of Funafuti.

**Teacher shortage**

7. Another issue is the need for more trained teachers, significantly challenging the education system. Many teachers are recruited from abroad and may need more cultural and linguistic knowledge to teach children in the Polynesian island state effectively.

**Climate change**

8. Climate change is hitting this area of the world very hard, and many states are threatened by rising sea levels, putting the existence of this country and others at risk. This has a significant impact on the education system, as schools and other educational infrastructure can be damaged or destroyed by severe weather events.

**Language barrier**

9. Many Tuvaluan children speak Tuvaluan as their first language, which can create a language barrier in the classroom. Teachers may need to be more fluent in Tuvaluan because they are foreigners, making effective communication with students difficult. <sup>v</sup>

**Limited access to technology**

10. The geographical remoteness of the island results in limited access to technology, including computers and the Internet. Thus, making it difficult for students to access online educational resources and for teachers to use technology to enhance their teaching.

## **II. Recommendations**

**Promoting partnerships with international organisations**

11. Tuvalu could benefit from partnering with international organisations that can provide resources and expertise to improve education in the country.

**Increasing funds for education**

12. The Tuvalu government should allocate more resources for education, including funds for teacher training, classroom equipment, and school infrastructure.

**Improving teacher training**

13. Tuvalu's teachers should receive more training and professional development opportunities to improve their teaching skills and keep up with evolving educational

practices.

### Emphasising bilingual education

14. Tuvalu has two official languages, Tuvaluan and English. Bilingual education can help students develop proficiency in both languages and improve their academic performance.

### Using Technology to enhance learning

15. Technology can enhance learning and provide students access to resources and information that may not be available locally. This could include online courses, digital textbooks, and educational apps.

### Expanding access to early childhood education

16. Early childhood education is crucial in laying the foundation for future academic success. Tuvalu should prioritise increasing access to quality early childhood education programmes.

## III. References

Ministry of Finance Government of Tuvalu, 2019. *Tuvalu: follow-up of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries, 2019*

United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), Pacific Office, Suva, December 2017. *Situation Analysis of Children in Tuvalu.*

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<sup>i</sup> Ministry of Finance Government of Tuvalu

<sup>ii</sup> Ministry of Finance Government of Tuvalu

<sup>iii</sup> Ministry of Finance Government of Tuvalu

<sup>iv</sup> United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), Pacific Office, Suva, December 2017, pp. 55-67

<sup>v</sup> United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), Pacific Office, Suva, December 2017, pp. 55-67



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