

Widow, 75 Years Old:

I am 75 years old. My father worked as a salesperson in the Niutao Fusi. I lived on Niutao ever since I was born. I got married at the age of 17 and joined my husband at Ocean Island where he was employed as a phosphate worker for 12 years. We have 13 children. Three are living on Funafuti and the rest are overseas. My husband died at the age of 36 while our children were still very young. They all attended school and I had difficulties paying their school fees. My brothers were very supportive and understanding; they paid for my children's school fees. In 1990, I came to live in the capital as three of my children got jobs here. Life here is very different to that of the outer islands. Everything costs money, nothing is free. There are 13 of us, six adults and seven children, all living in a 12 x 6 meter thatch-roofed house with a raised floor made of timber. We have a water tank, fridge, and kerosene stove. Two of my sons work with combined earnings of just over A\$200 a week. My daughter-in-law receives remittances from one of my sons overseas and she gets \$100 a month. Life is basically expensive for us, as we have to buy all our food from the shops except fish. My sons fish for our family. We are not able to plant any crops or put up a farm around our house because there is no space — it is too crowded around our house. Ever since I came to the capital we have often experienced water problems. We collect very little water because we have a thatched roof. We do not have any toilet in the house and therefore we use the lagoon or the sea. Since it is a public place, we can only go to the toilet in the evenings. At my age it is very difficult to use toilet and bath in the sea especially at night. When we run out of water we get help from our neighbor. There is no water project in our village like the other villages. A government water truck can be hired but it will cost us \$15 for 500 gallons. This is quite expensive and we cannot afford it. I hope the government or someone in our village can take the initiative to get a water project for our village to address the problem.

Woman, 30 Years Old:

I was born in Kiribati and have been living here in the capital for 29 years. I have 3 sisters and no brother. All my sisters were married and then divorced by their husbands. My education level was only up to Class 6 as I was not able to pass the entrance examination to Motufoua Secondary School. I have 3 children with different fathers, 2 girls aged 11 years old and 7 months old. My only boy is 6 years old. I have never worked since I left school because there are no jobs available and to make it worse I did not complete the minimum requirement of Form 6. I am a singer locally (not professionally). I never thought or was told that my talent could be developed into an opportunity. All along I have wanted to work, but caring and looking after my children is a real problem because my mum is 73 years old and sickly so she can't look after them. I look after my mum, my children, and my sister's children. I clean the house, cook, and wash for the family. The father of my youngest daughter is supporting her by sending money every month. My father and my two sisters, with their two children, are all working. Their total income a week is about A\$370. There are 17 of us all living in one house that is about 11 x 4 meters wide. We do not have a water tank, so we fetch our water from the community tank. We do not have a fridge or washing machine. We only have a kerosene stove and stereo. We live mainly on food bought from the shops for we cannot grow any crops outside our house because the soil is poor and the land does not belong to us. Our father is too old to go fishing so we buy our fish from the market too.

- Asian Development Bank, "Testimonies of the Women of Tuvalu" (2003) excerpt