

The local government system in

Tonga



Key facts

POPULATION (Census 2006): 101,911
AREA: 747 sq km
CAPITAL: Nuku'alofa
LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONTRIBUTION TO GDP: -
CURRENCY: Pa'anga (TOP)
HEAD OF STATE: King George Tupou V
HEAD OF GOVERNMENT: Lord Tuivakan
FORM OF GOVERNMENT: constitutional monarchy
PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM: unicameral
STATE STRUCTURE: unitary
LANGUAGES: Tongan (official), English
NATIONAL ELECTIONS: last: April 2008
 turnout: - next: 2011
LOCAL ELECTIONS: last: April 2010
 turnout: - next: -

3. STRUCTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

3.1 Local government within the state:

Tonga has a form of local government which features district and town officers elected every three years in a local election similar to the parliamentary election.

3.2 Ministerial oversight:

District and town officers are by law required to submit regular reports to the prime minister on village and district activities, and to organise village or provincial meetings. They are also tasked to attend official and ceremonial functions of government.

3.3 Council types:

Along with their oversight duties, both district and town officers have other duties, such as the recording of births and deaths, inspecting and recording licences. As chairmen or members in most village committees they are also able to assist in the improvement of the local water supply, garbage disposal, increased cultivation and improvements to agricultural roads. In some villages, councils have been established to discuss matters of priority and to assist the town and district officers in the development of village life.

SUMMARY

Tonga is a constitutional monarchy with two levels of government, local and national. There is no constitutional provision for local government and the main legislative texts that cover local government are the Fonos Act 1988 and the District and Town Officers Act 1988. The district officer and town officer are elected by popular vote every three years and report directly to the prime minister's office, or the governor for Ha'apai and Vava'u divisions. The town officer is empowered to call a normal 'fono' (a community meeting to discuss matters of priority) and also a 'grand fono' where the prime minister or other government official may address the people.

1. CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

Tonga is a constitutional monarchy assisted by a privy council comprised of ministers of the Crown and the governors of Vava'u and Ha'apai divisions.

The cabinet is responsible for the overall administration of government at both national and local level. There is a unicameral parliament, the Fall Alea, which has 34 members. These are made up of 16 cabinet members (ex-officio), nine representatives of the population elected by universal suffrage of all adults aged over 21 and a further nine nobles of Tonga elected by themselves from amongst their number, which currently stands at 33.

2. LEGAL BASIS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

2.1 Constitutional provisions:

There is no constitutional provision for local government.

2.2 Main legislative texts:

These are the Fonos Act 1988 and the District and Town Officers Act 1988.

4. ELECTIONS

4.1 Recent local elections:

The most recent local elections took place in April 2010.

4.2 Voting system:

Elections must take place every three years for both town and district officers by popular vote of all over the age of 16.

4.3 Elected representatives:

No information provided for this edition.

4.4 Women's representation:

No information provided for this edition.



Table 1. Distribution of councils and population

Division	District	Village (Town)	Population (Census)	% Rural
Tongatapu	7	70	72,045	
Vava'u	6	41	15,505	
Ha'apai	6	29	7,570	
Eua	2	14	5,206	
Niuas	2	12	1,665	
TOTAL	23	166	101,991	76.8

5. SYSTEMS FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

5.1 and 5.2 Legal requirement and Implementation:

The Fonos Act 1988 makes it mandatory for any adult citizen to attend a fono, which is a meeting called within the town. The fono is classed as either normal or grand depending on the level of officials addressing the people.

5.3 E-government:

There is no e-government strategy for local government.

6. ORGANISED LOCAL GOVERNMENT

No information provided for this section of this edition.

7. INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

No information provided for this section of this edition.

8. MONITORING SYSTEMS

No information provided for this section of this edition.

9. FINANCE, STAFFING AND RESOURCES

Salaries and any allowances for district officers and town officers are provided by the government. There are no powers to raise taxes at the local level.

10. DISTRIBUTION OF SERVICE DELIVERY RESPONSIBILITY

The duties of the district officers include inspections for public health, agriculture and licence compliance and reporting back regularly to the prime minister (or the governor, for Ha'apai and Vava'u divisions), and informing the police should any breach of the law be identified. The town officer supports the district officer in public health, agriculture and license compliance inspections, as well as by announcing any fonos.

References and useful websites

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http://datasearch.uts.edu.au/site_manager_sites/clg/pdfs/TongaFonosAct.pdf
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