

How men and women use their time in Tuvalu: A time use study

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Introduction

To address some of the adverse effects of climate change, Tuvalu has identified seven priority areas that are embedded in its National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) framework. These areas include: 1) increasing the resilience of coastal areas and settlements to climate change; 2) increasing pit-grown *pulaka* (swamp taro) productivity through the introduction of a salt-tolerant *pulaka* species; 3) adapting to frequent water shortages by increasing household water capacity; 4) improving water collection accessories and water conservation techniques; 5) strengthening community health through the control of vector borne and climate-sensitive diseases; 6) promoting access to quality potable water; and strengthening community-based conservation programmes on highly vulnerable nearshore marine ecosystems. Ensuring the adaptation to nearshore coastal shellfish fisheries resources and coral reef ecosystem productivity, and strengthening community disaster preparedness and response potential are other important areas of concern.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in partnership with the Government of Tuvalu are currently implementing a Global Environment Facility-administered Least Developed Country Funds Project entitled “Increasing resilience of coastal areas and community settlements to climate change in Tuvalu”, including the Australian Agency for International Development-funded up-scaling initiatives which began in June 2011.

This project aims to address the coastal, agricultural and water priorities out of the seven priority areas. The project was implemented over four years, beginning in November 2009. However, due to a number of institutional realignments with complementary baseline programmes, actual investments by the project only started in 2010. The lead executing agency is the Department of Environment under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trade, Tourism, Environment and Labour, where a Project Management Unit provides general coordination and oversight for the project. The project receives high-level guidance and oversight from a Project Board, which is chaired by the Director of the Department of Environment.

This time use study was conducted as part of the external mid-term review commissioned for the Tuvalu climate change adaptation project. At the time of the study, the project was under way on all islands of Tuvalu and focused mainly on three types of activities: installing and repairing water tanks, supporting home gardens, and coastal protection measures.

The objective of the study was to gather evidence on how men and women use their time during a typical day in various locations of Tuvalu. In most countries, men and women tend to engage in different types of activities, due to social and cultural roles, and such differences were expected to be seen in Tuvalu as well.

Methodology

Interviews were held in three locations — Funafuti, Niutao and Nanumea — in April 2013.

The approach involved one-on-one interviews, recording what the person did for every half hour throughout a 24-hour day. Activities considered were chosen mainly to reflect livelihood options commonly found in Tuvalu and which are affected by climate change. Almost everyone interviewed reported on the same day, which was a regular weekday — in most cases the previous Thursday. Each interview took approximately 10–15 minutes.

Activities included: cooking, washing or cleaning (*cleaning*); caring for children, elderly or sick relatives (*care*); tending to family garden, poultry and animals (*gardens*); office work (*office*); farming for commercial sale (*farming*); fishing on boat or in deep ocean (*fishing*); gleaning reefs or mangroves (*gleaning*); tending *pulaka* (*pulaka*); travelling for work, studies or other activities (*travel*); leisure and/or relaxing and meals (*leisure*); sleeping (*sleeping*); studying or schooling (*study*); and other activities (*other*).

The majority of interviews were held in the Tuvaluan language and conducted by a Tuvaluan researcher (the Project Assistant) as this was considered more comfortable for those being interviewed. The data gathered were double-checked and verified to correct any minor mistakes.

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During the time use study, 101 people were interviewed; of these, 51 were women and 50 were men. Ages ranged from 18 to 82 years, with a median being 44 years. Interviews were distributed equally between each of the three locations: Funafuti, Niutao and Nanumea. Equal numbers of men and women were interviewed in each location.

This time use study was conducted so that based on this information the project could be adjusted to make sure that both men and women, and various age groups, have valuable and worthwhile participation in project activities. Once gathered, the data were analysed in terms of implications for the project's scope and activities, and detailed recommendations were made on how to correct any shortcomings of the project.

Results

There are notable differences in the way that men and women in Tuvalu use their time during the course of the day (Figs. 1, 2 and 3), but there are also considerable similarities in the way women in the three survey locations use their time; this is also the case for men among the three survey locations (Figs. 4 and 5).

Women spend substantially more time cooking, washing and cleaning than do men (Figs. 1, 2 and 3). Men spend an average of 47 minutes each day on these tasks, while women spend an average of 3 hours and 42 minutes. These are the main activities that require the use of water. Women spend somewhat more time caring for children, elderly and sick relatives, but overall, little time is dedicated to this activity by anyone: women spend on average 1 hour per day on this task, while men spend on average 10 minutes per day.

Men spend more time than women tending to home gardens and feeding pigs and poultry — activities that use small amounts of water. Only men are engaged in *pulaka* pit tending and fishing from boats. Gleaning from reefs or mangroves was carried out only by people on Funafuti. Tending *pulaka* pits was, in fact, reported to be done currently only by men on Nanumea (Fig. 2). Neither men nor women engage in commercial farming (Figs. 1, 2 and 3).

The incidence of simultaneous activities was quite low. However, it is interesting to note that when reported, these were gender-differentiated. Men reported fishing and travelling simultaneously, and women reported cleaning or washing while at the same time looking after children, or tending to small livestock.

Other activities reported outside of the established categories were also gender differentiated; women reported engaging in weaving and handicrafts,



*From top to bottom:
Boys playing on airport runway on Funafuti.
A woman making a traditional broom.*

while men reported building houses and canoes, repairing fishing nets and screen printing. Almost all reported half an hour or slightly more in prayer devotion daily.

Both men and women have substantial leisure time, and so are available to engage more in project activities. Excessive overall workload (comprising paid and unpaid work) does not seem to be an issue of concern for most people, only for some individuals. However, in this regard, Funafuti has a somewhat different pattern to the other two islands.

Overall workload was found to be heavier on Funafuti. As compared with the other two islands, both men and women of Funafuti are getting half

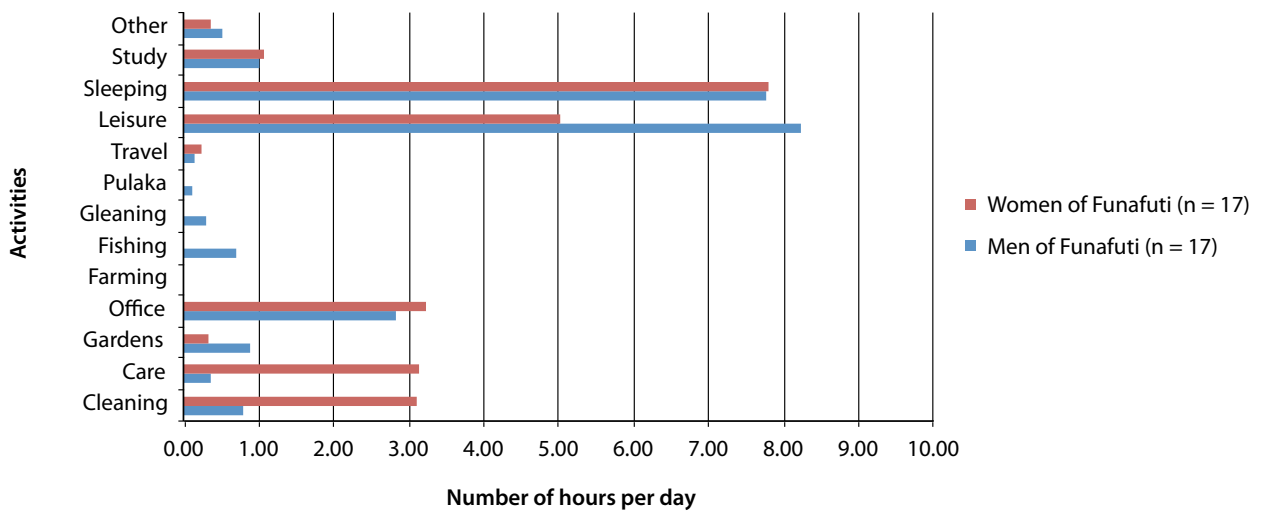


Figure 1. Time spent on specific activities by men and women of Funafuti (men’s age range: 18–75; women’s age range: 18–82).

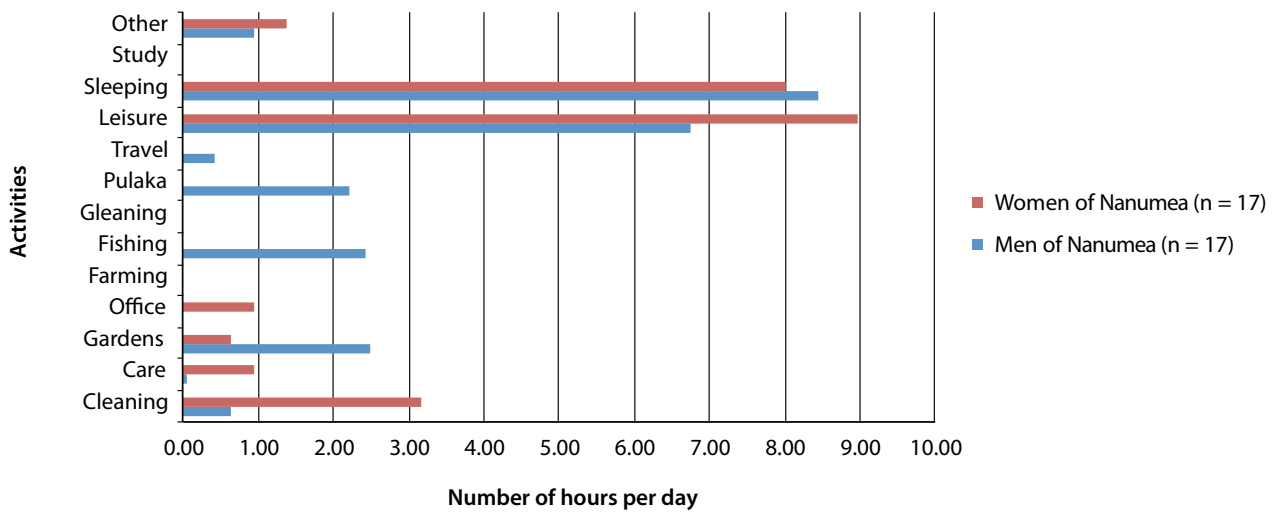


Figure 2. Time spent per day on specific activities by men and women of Nanumea (men’s age range: 19–73; women’s age range: 21–81)

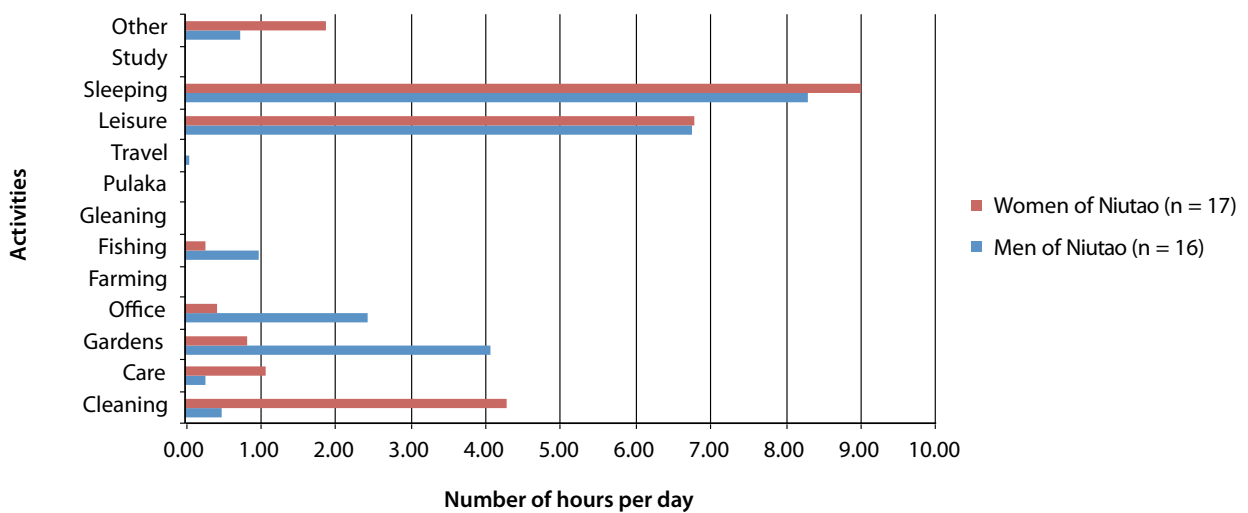


Figure 3. Time spent per day on specific activities by men and women of Niutao (men’s age range: 22–60; women’s age range: 22–80).

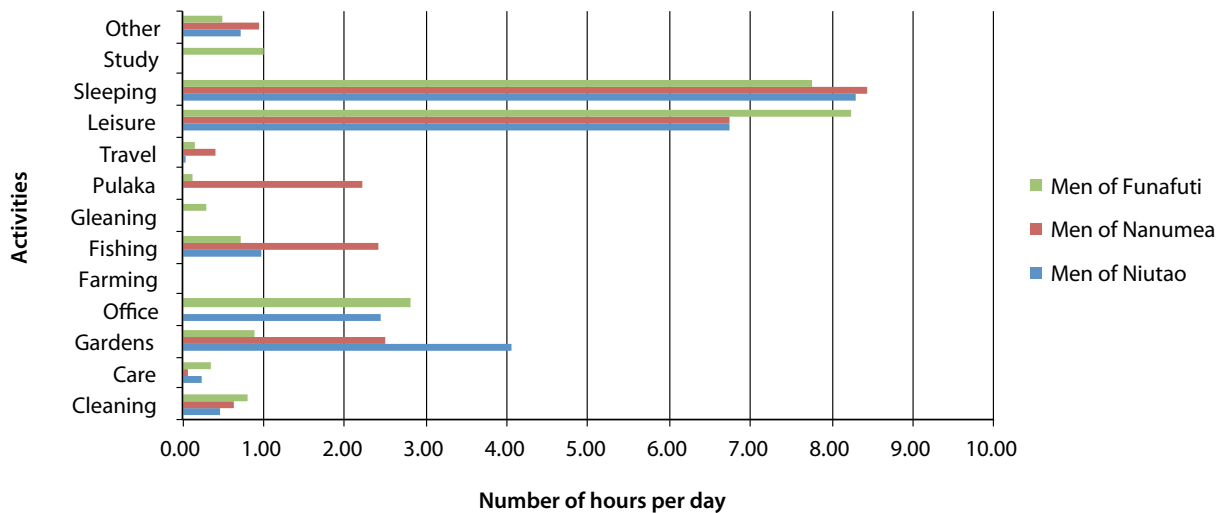


Figure 4. Comparison of time spent by men on specific activities on the three islands of Funafuti, Niutao and Nanumea. In total, 50 men — ranging in age from 18 to 75 — were interviewed on the three islands.

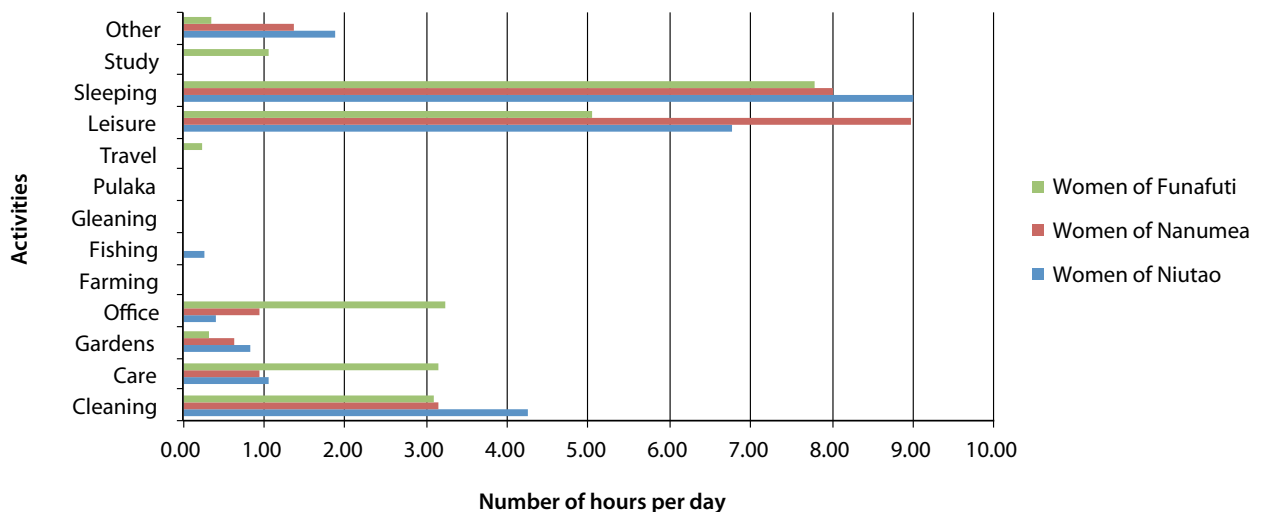


Figure 5. Comparison of time spent by women on specific activities on the three islands of Funafuti, Niutao and Nanumea. In total, 51 women — ranging in age from 18 to 82 — were interviewed on the three islands.

an hour less sleep (Figs. 4 and 5). Also, notably on Funafuti, men appear to have twice as much leisure time (approximately 6 hours) as do women (approximately 3 hours), whereas in the other islands, this is more equitable (Figs. 4 and 5).

Youth have approximately 1.5 more hours of leisure time on average than do older people. After leisure, youth spend the majority of their time on menial tasks such as cleaning, washing and cooking (more than 2 hours per day), and to a lesser extent taking care of small livestock and home gardens (Fig. 6).

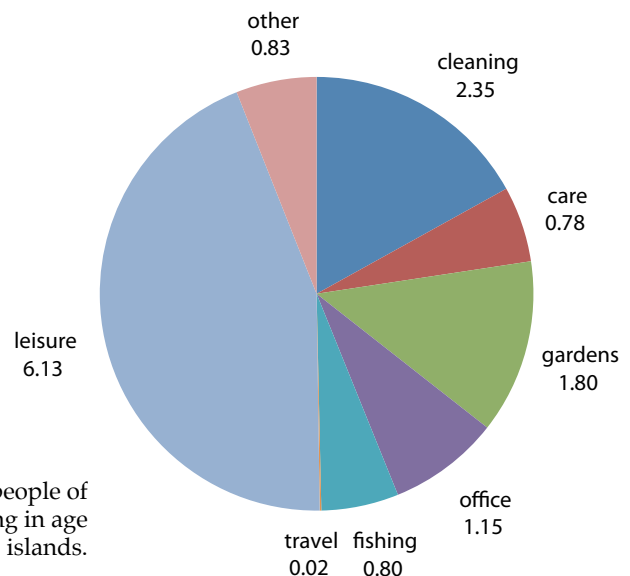


Figure 6. Time spent on specific activities by young people of Nanumea and Niutao. In total, 30 youth — ranging in age from 19 to 34 — were interviewed on the two islands.



Recommendations

In addition to the time use study, information was gathered from the community through focus group discussions. Participants were organised into separate groups for these discussions: one group each for older men, younger men, older women and younger women, so that all would be comfortable to speak freely. On the basis of this information, a number of recommendations were made for the project to ensure maximum benefits for both men and women, and ultimately a more effective and successful project. Some examples of recommendations include:

- ✓ Apply quotas of 50% for equitable participation of men and women in project activities and capacity building opportunities. This would entail a “ground up” approach, in which women’s active participation becomes habitual (for both women and men) and at the same time, through training and capacity building, women would acquire and exercise relevant skills that would in turn empower them.
- ✓ Designate certain project activities as primarily targeting the following subgroups, based on their interests: younger men, older men, younger women and older women. This will tend to ensure that all groups engage in the project in meaningful and appropriate ways.
- ✓ Project expenditures need to be monitored. For example, some equipment purchased under climate change adaptation projects, such as chainsaws, petrol and cement mixers, tends to be used for activities prioritised by men. Most likely, there is a need for projects to prioritise inputs, supplies and employment opportunities in response to the expressed needs and interests of women.
- ✓ Women stated that they are very interested in becoming more involved in home gardens; therefore, they should have consistent access to the basic resources and inputs required to do this. Materials and tools can be designated for the women and channeled via the local women’s group.
- ✓ Any training provided on home, gardening techniques and climate change impacts on agriculture should ensure the invitation and inclusion of women, with particular outreach to younger women.

From top to bottom:

Women taking part in a focus group discussion on Niutao.

Young men planting mangrove seedlings.

Boat traditionally used by men for fishing in Tuvalu.

Young women on Niutao.



Project team and collaborators.

- ✓ There is a need to establish a cash-for-work scheme. There could be modest compensation for planting trees along the coastline, using one work brigade comprising younger women, and one comprising younger men. This should be based on solid technical guidance and assessment of locations for planting and varieties of trees to use, to prevent failure of these activities. This activity would capitalise on young people's physical strength and energy in constructive ways, and would teach them valuable life skills such as a work ethic and productivity, as well as some technical competencies.
- ✓ Fishing is often considered to be a men's activity, yet women in the community expressed a clear interest in getting more involved in certain types of fishing. A boat could be designated for women's use to ensure their access. Several women stated that they would like to engage more in fishing from the shore (*sisi*); therefore, it is recommended to purchase basic fishing equipment, such as lines, rods and tackle; designate it for women's use only; and deliver it on island via the local women's group.
- ✓ Decisions on the optimal location of any new water tanks provided by the project should ensure that women's opinions and interests on this matter are solicited, obtained and documented, along with those of men. This is important because the time use study showed that women are more involved than men in daily activities requiring significant water usage (e.g. cooking, cleaning, washing and to some extent home gardens).
- ✓ Young women should be prioritised for technical skills training under the project; this may include monitoring water tanks, making climate observations, maintaining and operating desalination units, testing water quality, and other technical work. This would provide avenues for young women to access meaningful work involving skills development because many young women are often idle and/or occupied in menial labour, without any clear career prospects or personal development.
- ✓ Any project activities involving payment for work should be equitable. That is, equal numbers of men and women should be engaged in paid tasks (although the tasks may vary), and for the same rate of pay. Otherwise, socially prevailing inequities in opportunity and remuneration are reproduced by the project and there is no transformational change. Often, the temporary employment opportunities provided under projects (including this one) mainly benefit the men (as in tree planting and installing and maintaining water tanks).

Acknowledgements

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All pictures by Karen Bernard.