SPC
Secretariat
of the Pacific
Community

TONGA
Country Profile

September 2008

Prepared by SPC Strategic Engagement, Policy and Planning Facility

Tonga Country Facts[1]	
Country or territory official name	Kingdom of Tonga
Capital city	Nuku'alofa
Government and legal status	Constitutional monarchy
	The monarch is hereditary and appoints the prime minister and deputy prime minister
Head of state	King George Tupou V
Head of government	Prime Minister Dr. Feleti Sevele
Land area	650 square kilometres
Exclusive economic zone (EEZ)	700,000 square kilometres
Population (mid-2004 estimate)	98,300
Population density (mid-2004 estimate)	151 persons per square kilometre
Annual intercensal population growth rate	0.3 per cent
GDP (2004)	USD190 million
GDP per capita (2004)	USD1,893
Real GDP growth (mid-2004 estimate)	1.4 per cent
CPI annual change (2007)	5.8 per cent
Exports (2006)	USD10 million
Imports (2006)	USD126 million
Trade balance (2006)	-USD116 million
Crude birth rate per 1,000	26.7
Crude death rate per 1,000	6.0
Total fertility rate	3.8 children per woman
Infant mortality rate per 1,000	12.0
Male life expectancy at birth	69.8 years
Female life expectancy at birth	71.8 years
Urban population	32 per cent
Dependency ratio (15-64)	88
Median age	19.9 years
Youth (15-24)	20.2 per cent
Male labour force participation rate (2003)	74.6 per cent
Female labour force participation rate (2003)	52.7 per cent
Religions	Free Wesleyan Church, other Christian
Languages	Tongan, English
Official currency	Pa'anga (TOP)

[1] Principal source: SPC Statistics and Demography Programme (and its Pacific Regional Information System – PRISM www.spc.int/prism)

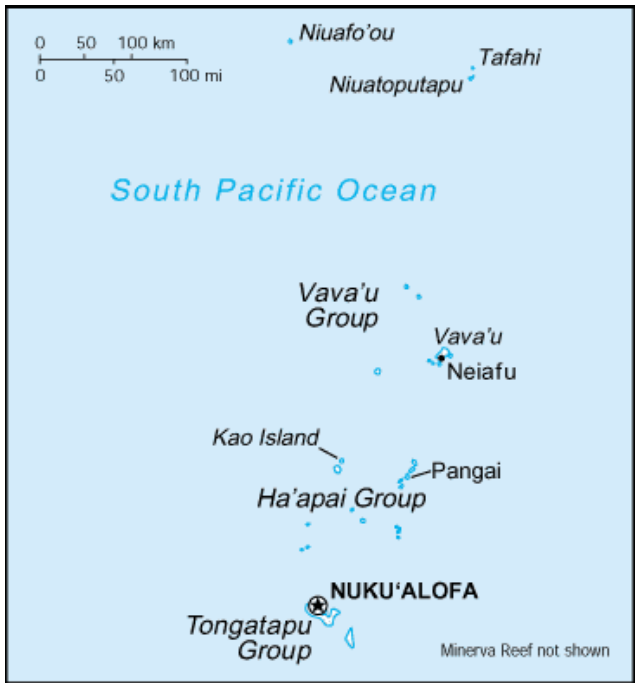
Introduction to the Country Profile

SPC country profiles document the nature and extent of the organisation's services to individual members.

The country profile presents basic country facts and a synopsis of Tonga's development background and a narrative summary of the Secretariat's assistance during 2008. Annexes include specific country activities and human resource development activities.

Tonga Development Background

Archaeological evidence suggests that Tonga was settled more than 6,000 years ago by people from the Santa Cruz Islands, which are now part of the Solomon Islands. Tonga is the only surviving monarchy in the Pacific. While European contact dates back to the seventeenth century, the Kingdom of Tonga is the only Pacific island state never to be formally colonised. It became a British protected state in 1900, and this status continued until 1970, when it joined the British Commonwealth.



In recent decades, Tonga has undergone rapid social, political, economic and demographic changes which have resulted in significant changes to the situation of its people. The effect of these changes are realised by government, and strategies to minimise the negative impact of these are reflected in the Kingdom's current national development strategy, known as the Strategic Development Plan Eight (SDP8).

The Kingdom is divided in four major island groups Eua, Haapai, Vava'u and the two Niuas. The island is volcanic and coral in nature, and highly fertile. Tonga is well endowed with agricultural and marine resources.

Tonga has a small formal economy that is heavily reliant on remittances from Tongans living abroad, as well as foreign aid, to fund large current account deficits. Annual remittances exceed USD100 million, approximately 42% of GDP and is the major source of foreign exchange earnings. Remittance enables families to invest in education and assets, and is the main source for improving the income of poor households. In recognition of the importance of remittances, the government has created a special department within the Prime Minister's Office to cater for the needs of Tongans living overseas.

Tonga has a large non-monetary sector. Rural people largely rely on plantation and subsistence agriculture and fishing to sustain their living and for some, supplemented by remittances. The major cash crops are vanilla beans, bananas, yams, taro and cassava. Pigs and chickens are the major types of livestock. In recent times, the export of squashes to Japan has brought some relief to a struggling economy, but growers are increasingly wary of this market, owing to fluctuating prices and the financial risk involved.

According to the 2006 Census, Tonga's total population is approximately 101,000. Although Tonga has a relatively low population growth, averaging 0.3 percent for over two decades, a relatively high human development index and is expected to stride through the MDG indicators, Tonga does have a number of social development challenges. These include a high youth unemployment rate and a high prevalence of non-communicable diseases, amidst persistent fiscal constraints.

Tonga's 2001 Household Income and Expenditure Survey in 2001, indicated that approximately 5 percent of Tongan households receive income below the Food Poverty Line of T$703 per year and some 23 percent received income below the Basic Needs Poverty Line of T$1466 per head per year. This essentially means that Tongan families face periodic difficulties in meeting the cost of living for food and other essential expenditure, such as access to transport and education.

With a large public sector, Tonga's emphasis on macroeconomic stability has been maintained as the driver for prudent monetary and fiscal policies. In 2002, the government embarked on a comprehensive economic and public sector reform programme to ensure sustained macro-economic stability. Fiscal controls have protected core services for the public and a successful programme of revenue reforms is nearing completion.

One of major aim of the revenue reform programme is to end reliance on taxes on international trade as the main source of government revenue. The revenue reform effort also enabled Tonga to meet its international obligations under the WTO regime, following ratification in August 2007.

Much of the small business activity, especially retail, is now the province of recent Chinese immigrants. Commercial business activities are dominated by the same large trading houses that operate elsewhere in the Pacific. The manufacturing sector, which consists of handicraft production and a few other small-scale industries, contributes only about three percent of GDP. Tourism is also a modest contributor.

Tonga's Strategic Development Plan Eight (SDP8) emphasises good governance as the key to encouraging growth in private sector activity, improving agricultural productivity, revitalising the squash and vanilla bean industries, further developing tourism, and improving the country's communications and transportation systems. A small but growing construction sector is developing in response to the inflow of aid money and remittances from Tongans living abroad. Development is being accelerated by recent changes in the immigration laws that allow overseas Tongans to hold dual nationality.

Whilst relatively undeveloped, tourism is identified by the Tonga government as Tonga's priority sector for growth. It is one of the few sectors that offer a realistic prospect of sustainable growth in incomes and employment. The government recognises that this industry can play a major role in economic development, and efforts are being made to increase its contribution. Cruise ships now make regular stops in Nuku'alofa, and Vava'u is becoming known worldwide for whale watching, game fishing and surfing. Other ways are being sought to further develop the economy. Research has demonstrated that sufficient stocks of tuna pass through Tongan waters to support a fishing industry. Another potential development activity is the exploitation of native forests, which cover around 35 per cent of the land area. However, this potential is decreasing as land is cleared for farming and settlement and other development opportunities.

Highlights of SPC's Assistance to Tonga 2006-2008

Over the past three years, SPC has contributed towards Tonga's effort to accomplish its development priority strategies. SPC's core programmes have been active in assisting members to develop local capacity to improve policy making and planning.

Annex 3 indicates SPC's assistance to Tonga for the period 2006-2008, prompted by request from the country to support their development effort. This section summarises the prominent activities each of the SPC programme has delivered to Tonga for the period 2006-2008. The notable activities for each Programme for 2008 are presented in Annex 1.

SPC's Coastal Fisheries programme (CFP) and the Oceanic Fisheries Programme (OFP) has provided assistance to Tonga through the provision of technical assistance, training, fisheries information and research. The CFP also provided assistance to Tonga to draft the Aquaculture Development Plan, and to organise pearl shell carving workshop. With support from the EU the CFP in collaboration with Forum Fisheries, implemented by the DEVFISH project. Through the PROCFISH project, the programme works with the Tonga Ministry of Agriculture, Food, Forestry and Fisheries in carrying out a follow up socioeconomic survey in Haapai and Tongatapu. To improve local capacity for data collection, Tonga benefitted from the CSP training in finfish underwater visual census and survey methodologies.

The OFP also assisted Tonga in the area of tuna fisheries data management, tuna stock assessment and data management. The programme undertook the major review of the Tongan longline fishery resulting in the National Tuna Fisheries Status Report. Over the next three years, the OFP will continue to assist Tonga enhance the observer and port sampling coverage of their domestic longline fleet.

The Regional Maritime Programme (RMP) is at the forefront of assisting Tonga comply with specific international and regional safety codes and conventions that would allow both ships and seafarers to trade internationally. This has been achieved mainly through regular audits as well as compliance assistance to key maritime related agencies. Over the last year or so, the RMP has contributed to developing and strengthening Tonga's human resource capacity, to assist ensure that Tonga is aware of latest development in the maritime sector as well as to improve the capacity for policy decisions, management and operational efficiency of the sector. The RMP has delivered their assistance to Tonga in the form of on the on-job training, short term courses, workshops/seminars and technical advice.

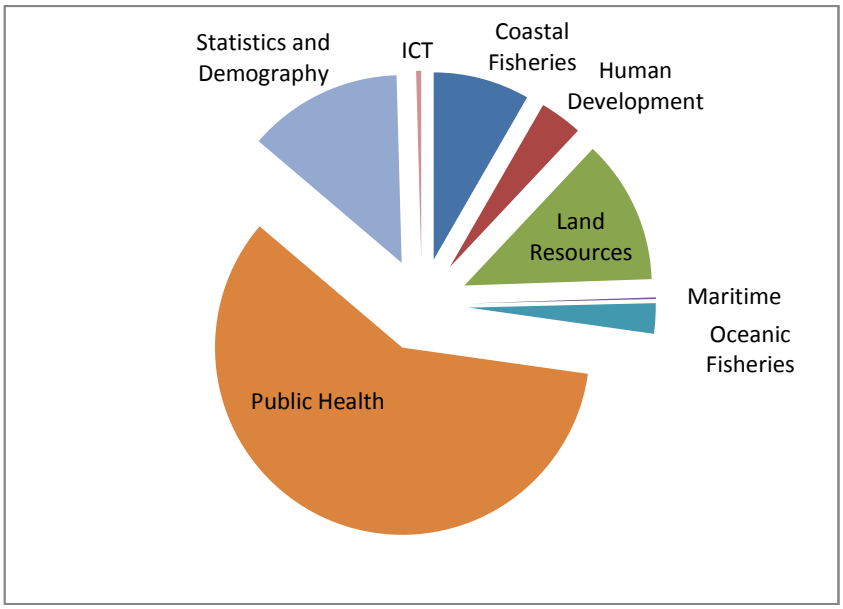
Some of the key activity highlights for the Public Health Programme (PHP) during 2006-2008 have included developing and upgrading Tonga's capacity to respond to the threat of an influenza pandemic. This has been achieved through the provision antiviral rapid test kits for diagnosis of avian influenza in bird stocks and personal protective equipment. The PHP also provided in country support to strengthen the implementation of national DOTs strategies, as well as assisting Tonga develop a national physical activity strategy. In the area of HIV/STI, the PHP facilitated approximately 26 female nurses for the Behavioural, Change and Communication Training (BCC), which resulted in a 60 percent increase in post-test results.

The Human Development Programme (HDP) continues to provide local capacity to member countries in order to contribute to the countries' development aspiration. Women from Tonga participated in the HDP skills development training in the area of small business, transformative leadership, management and business operation at the community level. Similarly, the HDP facilitated Tonga's effort to complete its national youth policy. Prompted by a need to address young people, the HDP also provided small grant assistance for income generating activities for disadvantaged youth of Pelehake. Assistance was also provided to facilitate Tonga's CEDAW ratification process.

SPC's Statistics and Demography Programme (SDP) has been instrumental in developing and strengthening the capacity of Tonga's Statistics Department to make informed policy decisions. The major highlight for the last three years has been the successful implementation of Tonga's population and household count. The implementation of the census ensued after extensive and careful preparation, provided by the SDP collaboration with the Tonga Statistics Department. As part of capacity development and enhancement in the area of data collection, analysis and management, the SDP hosted a professional attachment for a staff of the Statistics Department. The Programme also produced an analytical census report for Tonga, which has been endorsed by the government. To ensure effective utilisation of various types of data for policy and planning purposes, the SDP assisted Tonga update the PopGIS systems using the new census data for Tonga's 2006 census

Amongst the highlights of Land Resources Division (LRD) activities in the past three years in Tonga have included capacity building in the form of in-country training, attachments and national and regional workshops, in the area of sheep husbandry practices, diagnosis of pest, diseases and soil nutrition disorders for field officers and farmers. LRD assisted Tonga in reviewing its fruit fly surveillance programme, as we all advising on import protocols on poultry. LRD provide technical support in the area of bio-security information, including assistance to improve policy development.

SPC Assistance to Tonga 2008



Coastal Fisheries	99,052
Human Development	43,915
Land Resources	148,524
Maritime	1,706
Oceanic Fisheries	31,244
Public Health	702,790
Statistics and Demography	159,222
ICT	5,000
Total	**USD 1,191,493**

ANNEX 1: 2008 Notable Activities in TONGA by SPC Programmes

Land Resources Division
• DSAP on-farm trials demonstrated significant productivity increases for export squash by using Mucuna as cover crop. • A workshop was carried out with squash growers who were involved in mucuna on-farm trials. The growers shared knowledge and fiscal benefits they gained from being involved in these trails, while at the same time MAFFF researchers presented scientific results from the collaborative trials. This was done through an ACIAR project in partnership with DSAP. • The commercialisation of the paper mulberry in Hunga Island of Vava'u has resulted in the island community working together in other areas like vegetable growing for improved nutrition and growing vetiver grass hedgerows to prevent erosion. • Through DSAP, good linkages have been established between the health and agriculture sectors in addressing obesity and nutrition related diseases, through collaboration with the NGOs including Ma'a Lahi Youth Project, Tonga National Youth Congress, Tonga Trust, and Ma'ui'ui Organic. • Eleven organic gardens were established to demonstrate various DSAP organic pesticides and soil improvement technologies (composting, liquid manure, and mucuna fallow) and the bucket drip irrigation. • An enclosed screen house was erected for the Pelehake Youths in Tonga to trial vegetable production during the off-season. This activity trials the ability of an enclosed screen house system to physically stop insect pests from damaging vegetables and vegetable seedlings, and at the same time provide a cool environment to counter the hot summer months resulting in having vegetables during the off-season. • Two seed production trainings were conducted for women and youths. Some of the participants have started producing their own seeds. • One officer successfully completed his Masters programme in Forestry Genetic Resources at USP. • One officer participated in an Asia-Pacific training workshop on FGR conservation and management in Malaysia. • One officer participated in a study tour in Tasmania to look at forestry code implementation. • One officer undertook a study tour in Fiji to look at sandalwood research and tree improvement activities. • One participant attended the Pacific Regional CDM Forestry Awareness Workshop. • National consultation – issues discussed were the ITPGRFA and climate change. • Four officers attended the regional training on the use of the PCE tool in Tonga. • One officer attended the regional workshop on the draft ISPMs in Fiji. • Assisted with the biosecurity audit of port facilities as part of the PEST scoping study. • Continued liaison between the new owners of Tonga brewery and MAFF regarding the re-production of Tonga lure. • Continued assistance with the national adaptation of the regionally harmonised biosecurity bill.

Marine Resources Division

- Provided port sampling operational support in Tonga and funding for 2 Tongan officers to receive port sampling observer training in Vanuatu.
- Reviewed needs for SPC aquaculture assistance in Tonga and agreed on an indicative programme
- Assisted Tonga in developing a fish poster and reprinting the "Molluscs of Tonga" poster
- Assisted in a survey of socio-economic aspects of reef fisheries in Tongatapu and Ha'apai
- Coordinated an economic modelling consultancy
- Organised a mother-of-pearl shell carving workshop in Vava'u
- Assisted with drafting the Tonga Aquaculture Development Plan
- Assisted in survey of socio-economic aspects of reef fisheries in Ha'apai
- Sent a simulator to Tonga for two months for training Class 4 Master level marine engineers
- Assisted an ACIAR pearl project in Tonga
- Supported 2 participants to the Ecosystems Approach (EACFA) and Aquatic Biosecurity meeting in Noumea
- A total of 16 people participated/trained in various maritime areas, as follows:
    - Substandard shipping seminar
    - Basic maritime auditors course
    - Search and rescue conference
    - Security drills and exercises workshop
    - Port management and engineering seminar
    - PacMA 12 conference
    - Pacific maritime security conference
    - Basic security auditors training course
    - Australian Certificate IV in workplace assessment and training
    - Business Excellence training course
- 2 participants attended a short course on fisheries statistics and stock assessment
- 1 participant attended a high level fisheries Policy and Planning Workshop
- Two participants attended a practical training course on finfish underwater visual census methodologies in Noumea
- 1 participant attended a fisheries Ecological Risk Assessment workshop
- 1 participant attended a subregional practical workshop on implementation and analysis of socioeconomic fisheries surveys
- 1 participant attended a special Heads of Fisheries Meeting to develop the Regional Coastal Fisheries Management Strategies
- 1 participant attended the second Tuna Data Workshop
- 1 participant attended a Tuna Fisheries Stock Assessment Workshops in Noumea

Social Resources Division

Public Health Programme

HIV/STI

- Technical support in development of 5 year national Strategic Plan for HIV & AIDS

Adolescent Health and Development Information and Education

- Life skills based Peer Education

- Community outreach education

Youth Friendly Services

- Youth Clinic Centres
- Integrated primary health care
- School based clinics

Innovative Activities

- Taking Youth Friendly Services to the outer islands of Vava'u

TB

- Monitoring and evaluation TB programmes
- Implemented contact tracing and conducted training in June 2008

Public Health Surveillance and Communicable Diseases

- Support for in country surveillance activities for influenza with immune – fluorescence testing, with sentinel surveillance activities
- PRIPPP – Procurement of antiviral and supplies for Rapid Containment
- Orientation to planning process and planned testing exercises processes
- Support of review of legal frameworks and policy implications for compliance (PRIPPP) with International Health Regulations (IHR) and APSED requirements

Global Fund (HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria)

- Undertook grant preparation and successfully concluded grant negotiations for two round seven HIV and TB proposals submitted to the global Fund with phase 1, 2 year combined value of $16.34 Million. Grants commenced 1st July 2008
- Technical, logistical and financial support to conduct the repeat second generation behavior, STI and HIV prevalence surveys

Human Development Programme

- Business enterprise trainings

Statistics & Demography Programme

- HIES planning and fieldwork preparation
- HIES data processing

ANNEX 2: 2008 SPC Human Resource Development Activities for Tonga

SPC Programme/ Section	**Training subject area** (or course title)	**Month**	**Year**	**Duration**	**Type:** Workshop (course) Attachment at SPC or On-the-job (in-country)	**Location** (city/town, country)	**Number of Tonga Participants**	**Male**	**Female**	**Number person days**
LRD-Animal Health & Production	IATA Training	June	2008	3 days	Workshop course	Nadi, Fiji	2	2	0	6
LRD - Forests and Trees	Implementation of the Code of Harvesting Practice	July	2008	5 days	Training Workshop	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	1	1	0	5
LRD-Animal Health & Production	Paravet Training	May	2008	5 days	Workshop course	Nadi, Fiji	25	24	1	125
LRD-Development of Sustainable Agriculture in the Pacific	DSAP Strategies	April	2008	5 days	Workshop	Nadi, Fiji	2	2	0	10
LRD-Animal Health & Production	Paravet Trainers Training	April	2008	2 days	Workshop course	Nadi, Fiji	1	1	0	2
LRD - Forests and Trees	Implementation of the Code of Harvesting Practice	April	2008	6 days	Study Tour	Tasmania, Australia	1	1	0	6
LRD - Forests and Trees	Regional Awareness Workshop on CDM Forestry	January	2008	4 days	Workshop	Nadi, Fiji	1	1	0	4
SRD-Statistics & Demography Programme	UNSD-SPC Census 2010 Technical Workshop	February	2008	5 days	Workshop	Noumea, New Caledonia	1	1	0	5
SRD-Regional Media Centre	Digital Video Production	February	2008	10 days	Workshop	Suva, Fiji	2	2	0	20
SRD-Regional Media Centre	Graphics and Design	March/April	2008	1 week	Workshop	Suva, Fiji	3	0	3	15
SRD-Regional Media Centre	Radio Broadcasting	March-Sept	2008	1 classXwkX7months	Workshop	Suva, Fiji	2	0	2	
SRD-Regional Media Centre	Multi-media: GD/Radio Broadcast/DV Production	April	2008	1 week	Workshop	Suva, Fiji	2	0	2	10
SRD-Regional Media Centre	Media and Communications	April	2008	1 day	Workshop	Suva, Fiji	1	1	0	1
SRD-Regional Media Centre	Media and Communications	April	2008	1 day	Workshop	Suva, Fiji	1	0	1	1
SRD-Regional Media Centre	Graphics and Design	August	2008	1 day	Workshop	Suva Fiji	2	0	2	2
SRD-HIV/AIDS	Behaviour Change Communication Training	April/May	2008	6 days	Training	Nuku'alofa, Tonga	15	4	11	90
MRD-Nearshore	Start and Improve Your Fisheries Business (SIYFB)	August	2008	1 week	Training	Apia, Samoa	4	2	2	20

Fisheries Development & Training	Programme - Refresher (R-TOT) Seminar									
MRD-PROCFISH	UVC4 - Sub-Regional Training Workshop on Underwater Visual Census (Uvc) Methodologies for the Assessment of Reef Fish Resources	August	2008	1 week	Training	Noumea, New Caledonia	2	2	0	10
MRD-Oceanic Fisheries Programme	Stock Assessment	June/July	2008	5 days	Workshop	Noumea, New Caledonia	1	1	0	5
MRD-Oceanic Fisheries Programme	Ecological Risk Assessment	June/July	2008	2 days	Workshop	Noumea, New Caledonia	1	1	0	2
MRD-Coastal Fisheries Management	Training for Heads of Fisheries on Fisheries Policy		2008	tbd	Training	tbd	1	1	0	
MRD-Coastal Fisheries Management	Training on fisheries statistics and stock assessment – phase 2		2008	tbd	Training	tbd	1	1	0	
MRD-Coastal Fisheries Management	Training on fisheries statistics and stock assessment – phase 2		2008	tbd	Training	tbd	1	0	1	
MRD-Regional Maritime Programme	Australian Certificate IV in Workplace Assessment & Training	July	2008	5 days	Training	Suva, Fiji	2	2	0	10
MRD-Regional Maritime Programme	Business Excellence Training	July	2008	5 days	Training	Suva, Fiji	2	2	0	10
MRD-Regional Maritime Programme	Security Auditor Training	July	2008	5 days	Training	Suva, Fiji	1	1	0	5
MRD-Regional Maritime Programme	Port Management Training Course	September	2008	4 days	Training	Suva, Fiji	1	1	0	4
MRD-Regional Maritime Programme	ESCAP KMI SPC Workshop on Shipping Information	September	2008	1 day	Workshop	Suva, Fiji	1	1	0	1
MRD-Regional Maritime Programme	Advance Auditor Refresher Course	September	2008	5 days	Training	Suva, Fiji	1	1	0	5
MRD-Regional Maritime Programme	Pacific Maritime Security Conference	May	2008	3 days	Training	Nadi, Fiji	2	2	0	6

SRD-Regional Rights Resource Team	Monitoring Civic Education & HIV and Human Rights	August	2008	5 days	Workshop	Suva, Fiji	1	0	1	5
SRD-Human Development Programme (CETC)	Community Development	March - Oct	2008	7 Months	Training - Cert in CD	Suva, Fiji	3	0	3	420
LRD SRD MRD	Land Resources Division Social Resources Division Marine Resources Division					Total	87	58	29	805

ANNEX 3: SPC assistance to Tonga for the period 2006-2008

Sector/Type of Assistance	Cost by Year (USD) 2006	2007	2008*	Total cost (USD)
Coastal Fisheries				
Technical assistance	21,150	950	11,252	33,352
Training activities (national, regional and attachments)	39,950	54,000	60,800	154,750
Research activities	0	0	12,000	12,000
Direct financial grants	7,000	0	7,000	14,000
Participation at meetings, workshops, etc.	116,448	256,634	8,000	381,082
Sector Total	184,548	311,584	99,052	595,184
Human Development				
Technical assistance	183,440	0	18,300	201,740
Training activities (national, regional and attachments)	28,690	101,640	19,440	149,770
Direct financial grants	2,500	0	0	2,500
Participation at meetings, workshops, etc.	9,170	8,140	6,175	23,485
Sector Total	223,800	109,780	43,915	377,495
Land Resources				
Technical assistance	14,604	28,049	67,613	110,266
Training activities (national, regional and attachments)	25,185	30,012	41,012	96,209
Research activities	21,092	17,404	19,404	57,900
Direct financial grants	0	0	2,000	2,000
Participation at meetings, workshops, etc.	11,650	22,428	18,495	52,573
Sector Total	72,531	97,893	148,524	318,948
Maritime				
Technical assistance	5,039	0	0	5,039
Training activities (national, regional and attachments)	17,495	6,797	0	24,292
Research activities	0	0	0	0
Participation at meetings, workshops, etc.	2,494	2,671	1,706	6,871
Sector Total	25,028	9,468	1,706	36,202
Oceanic Fisheries				
Technical assistance	8,508	4,784	5,668	18,960
Training activities (national, regional and attachments)	14,840	7,757	6,000	28,597
Research activities	0	0	5,000	5,000
Direct financial grants	9,982	9,982	9,982	29,946
Participation at meetings, workshops, etc.	2,594	0	4,594	7,188
Sector Total	35,924	22,523	31,244	86,691

Public Health				
Technical assistance	12,530	8,200	22,000	42,730
Training activities (national, regional and attachments)	6,102	7,000	49,000	62,102
Research activities	55,400	7,940	48,000	111,340
Direct financial grants	58,928	132,634	578,790	770,352
Participation at meetings, workshops, etc.	8,911	3,420	5,000	17,331
Sector Total	141,871	159,194	702,790	1,003,855
Statistics and Demography				
Technical assistance	19,559	6,656	9,000	35,215
Training activities (national, regional and attachments)	2,553	8,193	15,028	25,774
Direct financial grants	0	0	119,688	119,688
Participation at meetings, workshops, etc.	7,000	5,867	15,506	28,373
Sector Total	29,112	20,716	159,222	209,850
ICT				
Technical assistance	0	10,000	5,000	15,000
Participation at meetings, workshops, etc.	0	8,000	0	8,000
Sector Total	0	18,000	5,000	23,000
Grand Total	712,814	749,158	1,191,453	2,651,225

Please note that this table includes only the direct cost of SPC assistance. It does not include major expense items such as the cost of SPC personnel (e.g. salaries). The total financial value of SPC assistance is therefore significantly higher than shown in this table.