

# Project Pontifex

## Tonga Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship Conference

**NUKU'ALOFA, 17 November** - Tonga Government, Public & Private Sectors, NGOs, Community Leaders and Youth Organisations representatives came together at Fa'onelua Convention Centre in Nuku'alofa, to address the challenges of Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship. The conference was the first public announcement of the new Project Pontifex initiative. The purpose of the conference; to raise the awareness about youth unemployment, share Project Pontifex's approach for impact and emphasise on the important role of Government, Public & Private Sectors, and NGOs in creating jobs for young people, and challenge them to come up with new ways for training young people and helping them to set up businesses themselves. The issue of youth employment is very close to the heart of Project Pontifex, which highlights the need to collaborate with Employers in all sectors.

Project Pontifex is a significant and unique initiative aims to transform a growing need into action and impact by working together, and with you, to unlock the tremendous potential for Tonga's disadvantaged young women and men to grow, prosper and lead.

Every young woman and man in Tonga deserves that opportunity. With the right opportunities and support, young people can make great contributions to social, political and economic development of Tonga.

Project Pontifex believes that with strategic partnerships, collaborations and innovations are the ways forward for sustainable socio-economic development here in Tonga.

The conference was hosted and organised by Project Pontifex. The opening service was led by Dr. Siotame Havea, Principal of Sia'atoutai Theological College, and the Master Ceremony of the day, Ms Lolinda Maue who is also a Project Pontifex Board Member. "We need to develop strategies that will give all young people the opportunities, and provide them with the right support to find decent and productive work, allowing them to establish new businesses and become independent and responsible citizens. All of us - in Government, public institutions, in the private sector, in civil society - have a responsibility to help this new generation fulfil its incredible potential", said Lusua Latu, Founder of Project Pontifex.

Youth employment is not only a national challenge but it is also a global challenge. Creating opportunities, full and productive employment for young people is key to promoting sustained economic growth, alleviating poverty and delivering the Millennium Development Goals. It is also critical in addressing the issue of young people's growing alienation from society. Encouraging and supporting youth entrepreneurship is a central element in promoting youth employment. Working together, business, Governments and civil society can unleash the capacity of young

people for business start-ups and growth, which stimulate broader economic development.

The issue of youth employment has been highlighted at this conference. It made an explicit recommendation to the Training Providers to expand the work and to engage the private, public sectors and NGOs in generating employment opportunities, and demand-led training here in Tonga with growing populations of young people. These themes were picked up in this important conference with Project Pontifex seeking potential partnerships to work together to implement and promote positive change here in Tonga.

Much has been said on the challenges and critical importance of youth employment, but action is still needed to maximize tangible impacts on the ground. The private sector is absolutely critical to this action that addresses youth unemployment, as well as making good business sense.

Is the market big enough to take in all the youths and give them jobs? “We can’t just give up and do nothing because we think that there aren’t enough jobs now... This is not a simple issue that any organisation can take alone. It is something that needs to be addressed on a national scale and we need every help and collaboration that we can get from the Government, business sector, NGO’s and development partners”, Tevita K Ha’apai, Project Pontifex Executive Board Member commented during his presentation.

The conference includes business leaders, civil society, representatives of the Government, Finland Consul in Tonga; Adilola Fifita Latu, Youth Organisations and a moving presentation by the young Miss Heilala 2013-14 identifying the challenges of youth employment. The Guest Speakers of the day were:

<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Ms Sita	Tu’ihalamaka	Head of Youth Ministry of Internal Affairs <i>Deliver on: Framing of Tonga’s Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship</i>
Ms Vanessa	Lolohea	Executive Director Tonga Youth National Congress <i>Deliver on: Barriers and challenges to Entry</i>
Miss Rosemarie	Fili	Miss Heilala 2013-2014 <i>Deliver on: Barriers and challenges to Entry</i>
Commissioner Grant	O’Fee	Commissioner of Tonga Police <i>Deliver on: Impact and consequences of rising youth unemployment</i>
Ms Lesila	To’ia	Women Children Crisis Centre (WCCC) <i>Deliver on: Impact and consequences of rising youth unemployment</i>
Mr Sio’	Tu’iano	Kolomotu’a Town Officer <i>Deliver on: Impact and consequences of rising youth unemployment</i>

Ms Lesieli Tufui	Faletau	Deputy Secretary National Planning & Economic Development Division Ministry of Finance and Planning <i>Deliver on: Approach from Government on youth unemployment</i>
Mrs Vaimoana	Taukolo	CEO Ministry of Commerce Tourism Labour (MCTL) <i>Deliver on: Approach from Government on youth unemployment</i>
Mr Tevita	Palu	CEO Palu Aviation Services & Real Tonga <i>Deliver on: Approach from Employer on youth unemployment</i>
Mr John van	Brink	CEO - Tonga Power Ltd <i>Deliver on: Approach from Employer on youth unemployment</i>
Mr Ronan	McGrane	CEO - Digicel Group Tonga <i>Deliver on: Approach from Employer on youth unemployment</i>
Ms Leta Havea	Kami	CEO - Tonga Development Bank <i>Deliver on: Approach from the Bank on keys to money</i>
Mr Tevita Kilisimasi	Ha'apai	Executive Board Member Project Pontifex <i>Sharing the Project Pontifex Approach from for Impact</i>
Ms Lusua	Latu	Founder Project Pontifex <i>Sharing the Project Pontifex Approach from for Impact</i>

It is one of Project Pontifex's objectives to establish its own hub where it will become an online and physical platform to provide all its services from, recruit its new staff members and train them to become valuable assets of the new Project Pontifex operational non-government organisation, before opening its doors to the public to commence serving Tonga's disadvantaged youth next year 2015.

"We need your support and help, we need to work together, we need to look at the issues of youth unemployment in a joined up way in order for us to serve the young people of this nation to the best of our abilities. Let's be encouraged to become the change we want to see in Tonga and the world", said Lusua Latu.

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