



Briefing Paper: National Policy Framework Assessment on Nature-based Solutions for Coastal Resilience and Forestry Sector, Tonga

March 2026

Key Insights

This briefing paper provides a short synthesis of key findings and strategic priorities from the National Policy Framework Assessment Report on Nature-Based Solutions (NbS) in Tonga. The analysis focuses on forestry and coastal resilience sectors, with cross-sectoral linkages to national development, climate, and biodiversity frameworks.

Tonga faces increasing climate risks, land degradation, and ecosystem loss affecting agriculture, fisheries, and coastal systems. Nature-based solutions (NbS) offer a practical pathway to strengthen climate resilience by protecting and restoring ecosystems while supporting livelihoods and food security.

Tonga has a strong policy foundation supporting NbS through national frameworks such as the Climate Change Policy, National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), Joint National Action Plan (JNAP II), and Tonga Strategic Development Framework which demonstrate high readiness to scale ecosystem-based approaches. However, NbS remains inconsistently integrated across sectors and is not fully institutionalised in planning systems. Implementation is constrained by weak inter-agency coordination, unclear institutional mandates, land-tenure complexities, limited monitoring indicators, and insufficient enforcement capacity. Financing is the most significant barrier, with current initiatives heavily reliant on external funding and limited domestic or private-sector investment. Strengthening governance, coordination, monitoring frameworks, and sustainable financing mechanisms is therefore critical to scaling NbS in Tonga.

Recommended Actions

1. Government Decision-Makers

- Update and harmonise key policies (Forest Policy and Climate Change Policy) to incorporate NbS framing and standards.
- Develop a national land-use policy and zoning framework to support highlands to high seas ecosystem management.
- Strengthen national NbS coordination through NBSAP framework to improve collaboration between MAFF, MEIDECC, Fisheries, MLNR and other agencies.
- Create national NbS financing pathways including climate funds, ecosystem service payments, and blue-carbon opportunities.

2. Technical Officers

- Develop and apply standardized NbS indicators and monitoring systems aligned with the IUCN NbS Global Standard into agriculture, forestry, coastal management, and infrastructure planning.
- Facilitate partnerships between communities, NGOs, and development partners.
- Improve enforcement mechanisms and technical guidance for ecosystem restoration and sustainable land management through NbS Guidelines and educational programmes.

3. NGOs and Civil Society

- Support and implement community-based NbS initiatives including agroforestry, coastal restoration, and watershed management.
- Strengthen community awareness and training on NbS practices and ecosystem stewardship.
- Document and promote traditional ecological knowledge and locally proven NbS practices.

4. Development Partners

- Provide technical assistance to strengthen NbS policy integration, monitoring frameworks, and institutional coordination.
- Support national capacity building, research, and knowledge systems for ecosystem-based approaches.
- Invest in demonstration projects and community-led NbS initiatives.
- Expand financing for NbS through climate funds, blended finance, and regional NbS investment programmes to support NbS implementation.

Policy Reform Recommendations

Timeframe	Priority Actions	Description and Strategic Purpose
Short-Term (0–2 Years)	Update National Forest Policy (2009)	Align the policy with current climate frameworks and NbS principles
	Embed NbS in ongoing policy revisions (TSDf, NDC)	Ensure NbS is systematically integrated into national development and ocean governance frameworks
	Develop NbS indicators and monitoring framework	Establish Guidelines for measurable indicators, baselines, and reporting systems to track NbS outcomes.
	Establish NbS coordination platform	Create a national coordination mechanism through NBSAP to clarify mandates and ensure integrated implementation across ministries.
	Develop a Land use Policy	This should define zoning categories (protection, sustainable use, restoration, development) and resolves land tenure disputes through participatory mapping.
Medium-Term (3–5 Years)	Implement national NbS financing mechanisms	Develop sustainable financing pathways, including trust funds, PES, and climate finance instruments.
	Scale land to sea planning and zoning systems	Strengthen integrated land to sea management through spatial planning, zoning, and cross-sector coordination.
	Integrate NbS into infrastructure, agriculture, and fisheries	Mainstream NbS into sectoral systems by adopting green-grey infrastructure standards, promoting climate-smart agriculture, and strengthening ecosystem-based fisheries management.
Long-Term (5–10 Years)	Institutionalise NbS in national systems	Embed NbS into national budgeting, planning, and policy frameworks to ensure long-term sustainability and whole-of-government adoption.
	Position Tonga as a regional NbS leader	Leverage experience and best practices to lead regional NbS initiatives and influence Pacific policy and financing agendas.
	Scale NbS as a core climate resilience strategy	Establish NbS as a central pillar of Tonga's climate adaptation and development strategy, delivering long-term environmental, social, and economic benefits.

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Disclaimer

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