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Local economy during and after the epidemic

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Tuvalu is lucky so far for it is yet to catch the Covid-19 virus. In what follows I will be sharing the government plans in the event of the virus reaching Tuvalu. I will also mention the plan for after the epidemic has landed and infection running havoc in the local economy.

First, the country has been declared a no-entry zone, banning entry of people except Tuvalu citizens who have been vaccinated against the Corona virus within the last 3 days prior to departure and show negative test results. On arrival travellers are quarantined for 14 days in special facilities provided by government and treatment provided if necessary. Commercial flights have been grounded except approved special flights that bring in medical supplies and returning citizens. Imported-food and fossil fuel are brought in by ships that are granted special passage by government to bring essential cargoes to the only port of entry on the capital island. The control and monitoring of the logistics (transport and movement of goods and people) is the responsibility of the National Covid-19 Taskforce that was appointed at the start of the epidemic in 2020. So far, the taskforce appears to be achieving its protection objective.

One defence against the infectious disease is self-isolation. Some 600 people on their own volition have moved to the outer islands at government expense. On the capital the local government has built new villages on the islands around the Funafuti lagoon hence decentralising the population from the main settlement. The fragile food supply that relies on transport and overseas suppliers has prompted locals to invest in local food gardening. On the outer islands local food gardening has always been there and the Covid-19 event has impelled them to produce for sale and improve the nutrition and food security in the country.

Covid-19 affects the way people live; it is becoming the 'new normal' and people are learning to adjust and live with the pandemic. Cost of living has increased because of

the restriction on transport to Tuvalu and the extra effort required to produce more local food as substitute for imported food. The rising cost effect reverberates through-out the local economy making services more expensive.

In future the lockdown terms will be relaxed and open to non-citizen. Quarantine time can be reduced to three days, meals, accommodation and treatment will be provided by the government. Isolation facility will be provided for low symptom cases and high symptom cases will be hospitalised.

The Health ministry has indicated that there is a lot to be done to bring the country up to speed for Covid-19 that will eventually come. For instance foreign staffs leaving at the end of their contracts left vacancies unfilled and necessitated recycling local staff from elsewhere in Tuvalu creating shortages there and reducing the overall quality of medical service in the country. Some of the outer islands are considering lockdown for their island when Covid-19 is officially in the country.