

In small groups read this story. Discuss the decisions and long-term arrangements Lesieli will need to make.



A recent visit to Ha'apai

One of the Caritas staff recently visited Tonga. On this trip she flew to the northern group of islands of Ha'apai. There she met Lesieli Kava.

Lesieli has lived in her home on the coast in Ha'apai for 30 years but because of extreme sea level rise, it's time to move. Five to seven metres of beach have been lost due to rising sea levels. Lesieli weaves with pandanus leaves which are first tied to sticks and soaked in seawater. The sticks in the sea outside her house are about where the beach used to end.

As it is dangerous to live so close to the sea, Lesieli has been told she must move to the other side of the road to get further away from the waves, which would smash her house in storms or if a tsunami came.

She needs more money to rebuild her home. However, in order to get a loan to rebuild she must get a survey map from the government. Lesieli and her family have travelled to the capital, Nuku'alofa, many times to visit the Land and Survey Department to get a survey map of their new site, but without success. This has cost her savings too.

For now they are stuck living too close to the waterline and watching for the day when she cannot live in her own home any more.



With your group discuss the causes and effects woven into this sad story. Eg:

- Sea is inundating the garden that is a source of income.
- Lesieli needs to move to higher ground. She would lose her income.
- There is no higher ground in these low-lying islands.
- Authorities suggest moving to another piece of land or another island but offer no compensation or practical help.
- Moving to another place means giving up a lot of aspects of her traditional life and family ties.

What can she do? Can you offer any solutions?

Compose a prayer for Lesieli which demonstrates your empathy with her difficult situation.

