

# Evaluation of the Rauti Para tablet training in the southern Cook Islands



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## BACKGROUND

The tablet training that was part of the Rauti Para project funded by SPC EU GCCA:PSIS in partnership with SRIC CC has received much media coverage since it began in late January 2014. The training was a collaborative effort between Climate Change Cook Islands (CCCI) and the ICT divisions of the Office of the Prime Minister, Telecom Cook Islands, and Rauti Para (local NGO). The initiative was to up-skill senior citizens (60+ years) in the *Pa Enua* (outer islands) to confidently use a tablet to communicate and access information on the web to assist them with decision-making in building resilience to the effects of climate change. Because the demographic composition in the *Pa Enua* are largely seniors that are providing care for their children and especially grandchildren, up-skilling these seniors was the focus of this project. The training not only intended to help seniors access the internet and to be able to communicate with their families and friends abroad, but to also provide the opportunity for them to come together and share information on issues relating to climate change.

Following the training, four tablets were given to each island for seniors to use and were placed under the care of the Telecom office, except for Atiu where these were under the care of the SRIC CC focal point. With funding from the SRIC CC program and assistance from the SPC EU GCCA: PSIS project (through the involvement of the project coordinator), two individuals from CCCI carried out an evaluation of the Rauti Para tablet training commencing the second week of September 2014; Mauke was the first island visited on the 8<sup>th</sup>, followed by Mitiaro on the 10<sup>th</sup>, Aitutaki on the 15<sup>th</sup>, and Atiu on the 6<sup>th</sup> of October.

## METHODS

Several individuals who took part in the tablet training were interviewed to determine whether this training had any value, and if not, what could have been done to better deliver the outcome intended for the training. Others interviewed were those at the Telecom office who were given the responsibility to care for the tablets and the tablet trainer from the ICT division of the OPM.

## RESULTS

The following were comments and recommendations noted from the interviews for each island. Although the training included Rarotonga, Rarotonga was excluded from the evaluation because the focus of the training was largely for the outer islands.

### Mauke

- The Telecom officer indicated that seniors who were involved in the training have yet to approach them to use the tablets. In addition, the instructions given to the Telecom officer on who could use the tablets was unclear; there was interest from the younger ones who took part in the training, however they were not allowed as there was a general assumption that the tablets were for seniors' use only.
- The Telecom officer also mentioned that seniors who took part in the training were seemingly afraid to use the tablets because of the fear of breaking them.
- It was indicated that people were more interested in purchasing their own tablet. At the time of the training, the CCCI team suggested they could arrange a bulk order purchase for interested individuals. However, this did not eventuate because the price of the tablet was too costly for the *Pa Enua* seniors to afford.
- There was a general consensus that the duration of the workshop was too short.
- Government employees who took part in the training have indicated that the training helped with their line of work. For example, the principal of the school mentioned that she learned how to bluetooth and was able to teach the children how to do so as well.
- Some indicated that they were not aware that tablets were left behind for their use at the Telecom office.

### *Recommendations*

- Train someone on the island to run refresher trainings, which should be conducted over a period of at least three weeks so seniors could learn and retain the skills.
- Provide some assistance for participants to purchase their own tablet, perhaps by following through on the bulk order that was discussed with participants during the trainings.

### Mitiaro

- Although participants were queuing up at the Telecom office to use the tablets after the training had ended, this only lasted a few days. Since that time, only one mama has continued to use the tablet for the purpose of her tourist accommodation business.
- Almost all of the seniors that took part in the training forgot how to operate the tablet. However, the youth who participated in the training have taken the opportunity to utilise the tablets.
- Some wanted to take the tablet home so they can have more time to practice.
- Many individuals on the list generated for the bulk order have been waiting to hear more on this.

### *Recommendations*

- Because the Telecom office closes sometimes before 4 pm as the officer also works for Air Raro, it was suggested that the tablets be housed at one of the community halls under the care of the SRIC CC focal point.
- Train one of the youth on Mitiaro to carry out refresher trainings; this would allow the training to go over a longer period to benefit the seniors.

### Aitutaki

- Elders that participated in the training were very pleased with it.
- Although several did use the tablets immediately after the training at the Telecom office, there were only two seniors that continued several months after the training.
- The skills seniors obtained from the tablet training helped them use other similar devices that they purchased following the training such as cell phones.
- Some purchased their own tablet after the training.
- The training helped seniors connect with their families overseas.

### *Recommendations*

- The tablets should be housed at the trade school in Tautu where the SRIC CC focal point is located.
- Perhaps talk with Mereana Taikoko of the disability centre about the possibility of leaving the tablets with them. Currently, there are plans to construct a disability centre on Aitutaki.
- Some suggested that a follow-up training be conducted, but over a longer duration.

### Atiu

- The tablets were used post-training only until the credit left by the CCCI team with Telecom was exhausted.
- The time of the training did not work for some because they had other work commitments, and they preferred the training taking place after work hours.
- One individual indicated that the training helped with her business. She claims it has saved her a lot of money as she now can use email to place her orders instead of making costly phone calls to Rarotonga.
- Others indicated that the training gave them the confidence to use mobile phones.
- It was suggested that tablets be placed under the care of the school where there is internet, and also where students can assist seniors in using the tablets.

### *Recommendations*

- Carry out a follow-up training.

- Since people were reluctant to purchase their own credit, it was suggested that the government office of Atiu rent the tablets and the funds generated can go towards purchasing credit for seniors to use the tablets.

## CONCLUSIONS

Indeed the tablet training was valuable because it provided participants the foundation and the confidence to use similar devices such as mobile phones and computers. Some of the skills seniors acquired from the training were learning how to email, Bluetooth, surf the internet, use Facebook, and also Skype with families and friends overseas. Although some challenges in the trainings were island specific, most challenges were consistent for all islands. These included: 1) the time allotted for the trainings were too short for seniors to retain the information, 2) the costs of internet in the *Pa Enua* were above most people's budget, 3) internet was slow because of the limited bandwidth available, 4) not many people knew about the training because notices had limited coverage in the community, 5) the time of day for the training was not accommodating for some, and 6) there were not enough tablets to go around for participants on some islands.

Despite the four tablets left on each island for use subsequent to the training, seemingly people would rather have their own and hence they were excited at the prospect of getting one at a discounted price through the bulk order purchase suggested. However, the order was not placed because it was discovered that the price per tablet was more than the tablets used in the training due to upgraded versions available. The ICT didn't pursue this further at this point. Future training of this nature should consider giving the participants the options of purchasing their own devices.

While the training was to target the seniors, it was open to all ages on Mauke and Mitiaro. This was valuable because younger individuals also became handy in assisting the trainers. Considering the high cost associated for a trainer from Rarotonga to travel to the *Pa Enua*, a 'train-the-trainer' approach was suggested using select individuals from each island who will be available to assist.

Because the tablets left behind on each island were no longer used as the credit provided by the project was exhausted and the tablets were becoming a burden for the Telecom officers to care for, the team decided to collect the tablets and bring them back to the CCCI office in Rarotonga.

## Where to from here

There were several lessons learned from this project, and these will be taken on board to better deliver such training in the *pa enua*. Climate Change Cook Islands will retain these tablets, and with the assistance of the ICT division of the OPM, there are plans to utilize them for future trainings. Based on the interest, the success, and lessons learned from the southern group, the SRIC CC program is expressing interest to commit funds to expand this project to the northern group, and perhaps conduct a follow-up for the southern group. Because participants in the southern group indicated that they would like to own a tablet after the training, additional tablets will be sourced so that participants can purchase their own through this project.

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