

Cook Islands National Lessons Learnt Meeting

Global Climate Change Alliance: Pacific Small Island States (GCCA: PSIS) project

New Hope Church

15th February 2016



Workshop Objectives

1. To share information about Cook Islands' GCCA: PSIS project's key result areas and exit strategy.
2. To discuss successes and challenges faced in implementing the climate change adaptation project in Cook Islands.
3. To develop recommendations for improving future projects and discuss ways of sharing these nationally.

Workshop Chair: Mr Teina Rongo, Climate Change Cook Islands, Mr Teariki Rongo, Ministry of Marine Resources

1. Opening, Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was opened by Ms. Elizabeth Koteka, Chief of Staff, Office of Prime Minister. In her opening remarks she noted that Cook Islands was pleased to be a part of the GCCA: PSIS project, which had, among other things, strengthened the capacity of the Office of the Prime Minister. This meeting was a time for reflection on the project's achievements and challenges.

Gillian Cambers, SPC Project Manager, described how this workshop fits into the overall project's aim to share lessons learnt, which started with the Regional Lessons Learnt Meeting in Yap State, Federated States of Micronesia in September 2015. The other eight countries have already completed their Lessons Learnt discussions and it was now the turn of the Cook Islands.

The workshop agenda is presented as Annex 1.

There were 15 participants representing MMR, CC-CI, MFEM, Manihiki Pearl Farmers Association and individual pearl farmers. Participants introduced themselves. (List of participants presented as Annex 2).

2. Viewing of Cook Islands' Lessons Learnt Video

This video was shown to present the project background.

The meeting focused on the climate change adaptation project “Environmental Monitoring to Enhance Community Livelihoods and Build Resilience to Climate Change in Low-Lying Atolls of the Cook Islands”.

Other GCCA: PSIS project activities such as the senior citizen training, the proposal preparation training and the preparation of the application for accreditation to the Adaptation Fund were discussed separately with key stakeholders and are reported on separately.

3. Discussions

3.1 Presentations

Teariki Rongo gave a power point presentation that provided an overview of the main achievements for each of the project's four key result areas:

KRA 1: Communications and awareness

KRA 2: Enhancing environmental monitoring

KRA 3: Marine resource assessments in the Northern Group

KRA 4: Revision and implementation of the pearl farming management plan

Dorothy Solomon presented the background to the project:

- At the project's inception all ministries were invited to propose project concepts. The proposal from MMR was the only one received.
- The approval process was quick (2 months).
- The project had a good project manager – an essential part of any project.
- The project plan had flexibility built in.
- It was beneficial to collaborate with different projects.
- The project worked closely with the Island Government.
- One of the major successes was having a Pearl Biologist stationed in Manihiki – this allowed for the transfer of knowledge directly to the stakeholders who were then able to contribute positively to the project's outcomes.

Koroa Raumea then gave a short outline of the marine resource surveys

- It is necessary to allow sufficient time for these surveys, and 2 weeks is not enough, a more realistic time period is 4-5' weeks.
- With SPC's support they were able to include the economic component in the surveys.
- It is necessary to respect the way things are done in the outer islands.

Teuru Passfield gave a powerpoint presentation on her experience as the Pearl Biologist in Manihiki

- Her position allowed her to work with the farmers, provided the opportunity for the sharing of knowledge, and helped them become compliant with the Pearl Management Plan.
- Working with the schools to involve the students in the water quality monitoring also provided an opportunity for science training.
- The research collected showed the benefits of regular cleaning of the shells.

Hilary Ayrton described her role in training of students in open water diving in Penrhyn.

- Safety was a prime concern because of the distance from any decompression chamber.
- Some of the students found the theoretical aspects of the training challenging, but all passed after a lot of hard work.

After these presentations there was a short tour of the biological and chemistry laboratories.

3.2 Discussions

The participants preferred to discuss all the questions as one group. The key questions were:

- What would we do the same
- What would we do differently
- What are we most proud of
- What did not go as planned
- How to share the lessons nationally

Perspectives from the Pearl Farmers present

- For some, this meeting was the first opportunity to understand the full scope of the project.
- Having the Pearl Biologist based in Manihiki was very beneficial and they would like this arrangement to continue.
- Appreciation of the application of the data e.g. the advice received to not handle the shells because of the present high sea temperatures. One pearl farmer noted that this allowed her to spend time in Rarotonga and focus on pearl marketing since the advice from the Pearl Biologist was not to handle the pearls until after April.
- Farmers want to expand in the use of best practices such as regular cleaning of the shells which they did not do previously.
- Having a laboratory available for the pearl farmers was also useful. But the cost of the airfares to Manihiki was prohibitive.
- Farmers are getting more organised and moving to comply with the Pearl Farming Management Plan.
- There used to be about 200 pearl farmers and now there are about 20 and these farmers have adapted to the new conditions, including climate change. These farmers are now acting as farm managers.
- One pearl farmer also said there was still need for more dialogue about the Pearl Management Plan and more public meetings in Manihiki.

Involvement of Island Councils

- Island governments have become much more powerful and it is important to involve and educate the mayors. (It was questioned why the mayors of Manihiki and Penrhyn were not at the meeting since both were in Rarotonga).
- Recognising the mayors are elected officials their involvement and education has to be an ongoing process.

Water quality monitoring buoy

- One pearl farmer asked whether it was worth continuing with the water quality monitoring buoy since it had only provided about 4 months data over two years.
- MMR agreed that lessons need to be learnt from the experiences with the monitoring buoy.
- Translating the monitoring data into useful information for pearl farmers has been a key success of the project.

Websites

- The development of the MMR website has been delayed and this is a serious shortcoming.
- While there is an MMR facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/MinistryofMarine>) where information is regularly posted, this is not an organised website.

Data feedback to farmers and stakeholders

- Some farmers would still like to see more direct feedback and explanation about the monitoring data they provide to MMR.
- Pearl farmers would also like to see applications of the resource surveys that were conducted.
- Some of the outputs of the climate change awareness work carried out by the Climate Change Office needs to be fed back to the national level for planning purposes.

General comments about the project

- Overall the GCCA: PSIS project and the donor (EU) were very flexible with project management arrangements preferring national systems to be used.
- The project also provided for building the capacity of MMR staff in areas outside of their normal scope of work e.g. climate change.
- There is a need for improved interaction between MMR and the Development Coordination Division

Moving forward

- The Pearl Biologist position in Manihiki is funded through 2016 by the CC-SRIC project, but this project ends in 2017, so sourcing funding to extend this position needs to be an urgent priority. As one pearl farmer said “*It is a scary prospect if the Pearl Biologist position in Manihiki is not continued.*”
- Database development by MMR.
- Website development by MMR.
- Information packages for the pearl farmers to be developed by MMR.

4. Conclusion

The Secretary of MMR expressed thanks for the project and although the project is closing the work is not finishing and many of the activities developed through the project will continue. Special thanks were expressed to Teariki Rongo, Project Manager.

Annex 1 Agenda

Cook Islands National Lessons Learnt Meeting
Global Climate Change Alliance: Pacific Small Island States project
Supported by the European Union &
Implemented by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community
15 February, 2016

Objectives:

1. Share information about Cook Islands' GCCA: PSIS project's key result areas and exit strategy.
2. Discuss successes and challenges faced in implementing the climate change & marine resources project.
3. Develop recommendations for improving future projects and discuss ways of sharing these nationally.

CHAIR: Teina Rongo, Teariki Rongo

VENUE: New Hope Church

Topic
Opening and Welcome
Group Photo
Introductions
Viewing of Cook Islands Lessons Learnt Video
Short presentation/overview on the project outputs
Morning Tea
Group work session 1: Climate change and marine resources project and Technical Assistance What would we do the same? What would we do differently? Report back in plenary Discussion
Group work session 2: (All activities) Climate change and marine resources project and Technical Assistance What are we most proud of? (choose 3) What did not go as planned/ did not work well? (choose 3) Report back in plenary Discussion
Group work session 3: How can we share the lessons nationally? (All activities) Report back in plenary- 3 minutes per group Development of Action plan for how the project can share and apply the lessons nationally
Closing and Evaluations
Lunch

Annex 2 List of Participants

Name	Gender	Agency	Email
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