

# CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION IN COOK ISLANDS



## Scaling Up Pacific Adaptation (GCCA+ SUPA)

### Enhancing a climate resilient marine sector in the Cook Islands



Monitoring of marine resources in the outlying islands- climate change adaptation in Cook Islands.

#### Project timeframe



1 January 2019- 30 June 2023

#### National implementing agencies



Climate Change Cook Islands,  
Ministry of Marine Resources  
and Ministry of Finance and  
Economic Management

#### Beneficiaries



Direct benefit: **7,500 persons**

Indirect benefit: **6,000 persons**

#### Project synopsis

The 'Enhancing a climate resilient marine resources sector in the Cook Islands' project will scale up the monitoring and management of marine resources in the Southern Group of the Cook Islands. Integrating traditional knowledge into the management of marine resource systems is another key component of the project.

#### How does this project address climate change adaptation in Cook Islands?

Livelihoods in the outer Cook Islands (Pa Enea) are closely tied to the natural environment and fisheries resources are the most important source of food security and income. The effects of climate change on temperatures, rainfall, weather extremes, sea level, lagoon salinity, reef sedimentation and ocean acidification is exacerbating the difficulties experienced by island residents in the harvesting of marine resources.

Given the geographical range of the Cook Islands, from 08-24 °S, the monitoring of the country's marine resources is extremely challenging. The project will build the capacity of the Ministry of Marine Resources to strengthen remote monitoring sites, and in particular the Aitutaki Marine Research Centre, such that it becomes more independent from Rarotonga and has sufficient technical capacity to operate on its own.

Focusing on the people living in Aitutaki, Atiu, Mauke, Mitiaro, the project will adopt a participatory and inclusive approach that addresses the vulnerabilities and the rights of all residents. Skills in climate resilience will be enhanced, particularly for island council members and community leaders.

Traditional knowledge plays an important role in the culture of the Cook Islands and especially in the management and use of terrestrial and marine resources in the Pa Enea. The project will work with young Cook Islanders in the southern group of the Pa Enea to adopt a hands-on approach to environmental conservation that incorporates traditional knowledge and builds climate resilience.



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The project will upgrade the Aitutaki Marine Research Centre to include a laboratory and will also provide training on clam management.

## Key Highlights

### Enhancing marine resource monitoring



- Expanding marine monitoring programmes in the Pa Enea to include aquaculture, water quality, biodiversity resource surveys, coral health and crown-of-thorns starfish.
- Upgrading the Aitutaki Marine Research Centre to include a laboratory and support facilities to reduce the Centre's dependence on Rarotonga and expand its operational and technical capacity.
- Providing training for fisheries officers on clam management, aquaculture and management of marine managed areas.

### Building community resilience



- Integrating climate resilience and traditional knowledge into extra-curricular school programmes and training teachers to deliver the programmes in Aitutaki and two other islands in the Southern Group.
- Building the capacity of community leaders and island council members in climate resilience through accredited training.
- Enhancing the community outreach role of the Aitutaki Marine Research Centre through partnerships with local partners including the Aitutaki Island Council.
- Increasing income-earning opportunities for local groups including women and youth groups by expanding the tourism potential of the Aitutaki Marine Research Centre.

### Strategic planning



- Assessing the impacts of past climate change adaptation projects and applying the results to national strategic planning.
- Integrating traditional knowledge into the Marae Moana spatial plan.
- Developing a five-year operational plan for the Aitutaki Marine Research Centre and incorporating it into the Ministry of Marine Resources' Business Plan.

### Activities meet the following SDGs:



### About the SUPA project

The Global Climate Change Alliance Plus Scaling up Pacific Adaptation (GCCA+ SUPA) project is about scaling up climate change adaptation measures in specific sectors supported by knowledge management and capacity building. The 4.5 year project (2019-2023) is funded with € 14.89 million from the European Union (EU) and implemented by the Pacific Community (SPC) in partnership with the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and The University of the South Pacific (USP), in collaboration with the governments and peoples of Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Tonga and Tuvalu.

The **Overall Objective** of the GCCA+ SUPA project is to enhance climate change adaptation and resilience within ten Pacific island countries. The **Specific Objective** is to strengthen the implementation of sector-based, but integrated, climate change and disaster risk management strategies and plans