

## Scaling Up Pacific Adaptation (GCCA+ SUPA)

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



Cleaning and preparing the brood stock clams before they are injected with serotonin to induce the spawning process.



**Project focus:** Marine resources



**Project timeframe:** 1 January 2019- 30 June 2023



**Project site:** Aitutaki and islands in the Southern Group



**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 scaled up the monitoring and management of marine resources in the Southern Group of the Cook Islands and refurbished the Aitutaki Marine Research Centre. Integrating traditional knowledge into the management of marine resource systems and analysing the impacts of past, completed projects were other key components of this project.

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

- Climate change is affecting the livelihoods of residents in the outer Cook Islands, who depend on natural resources for food security and income. To address this, the project was implemented to build the capacity of the Ministry of Marine Resources and expand the marine monitoring programme in Aitutaki.
- The project also focused on enhancing skills in climate resilience for island council members, community leaders, and young Cook Islanders. Traditional knowledge was incorporated into the project's climate resilience activities.
- The aim was to improve the livelihoods of island residents and promote sustainable use of natural resources through a people-centred approach.
- The Cook Islands is one of the four countries testing the full methodology for analysing the impact of completed climate change adaptation projects.

#### How did this project scale up climate change adaptation in Cook Islands?

- Scaling up previous measures that had elements of sustainability:** After reviewing past projects, including the Pa Enua Action for Resilient Livelihoods (PEARL), Ridge to Reef (R2R), Pacific Regional Oceanic and Coastal Fisheries Development Programme (PROCfish), and GCCA: Pacific Small Islands States project, the GCCA+ SUPA project continued to enhance capacity development at the Aitutaki Marine Research Centre.
- Link to national priorities:** The project is linked to the Cook Island National Sustainable Plan 2016 – 2020 (Goal 10 and 12) and the Ministry of Marine Resources Strategic Plan (2017 – 2021).
- Socio-economic benefits for communities and the most vulnerable groups:** This is evidenced by enhancing livelihoods derived from marine resources and tourism, implemented through a people-centred approach especially involving elders, youth, fishers and marine resource users.
- Maintenance of the newly scaled up infrastructure:** The project supported the development of a 5-year development and operational plan for Ministry of Marine Resources and maintenance of the infrastructure is the responsibility of the relevant government agencies.

# CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION IN COOK ISLANDS



Students and teachers in Mauke with the crown of thorns starfish (Taramea) collected from the reef



Refurbished land-based clam spawning nursery at the Aitutaki Marine Research Centre

## Key Project Highlights

### Enhancing marine resource monitoring

- Expanding marine monitoring programmes in the Pa Enua to include indicators of climate change such as water quality, biodiversity resource surveys, coral health, aquaculture and presence of crown-of-thorns starfish.
- Upgrading the Aitutaki Marine Research Centre to include the land-based clam nursery and the saltwater intake system. This provides the foundation for leveraging further funds to complete the laboratory, storage area and tourism Cable.
- Provision of marine monitoring equipment, laboratory supplies, IT and electronic equipment for the Aitutaki Marine Research Station.
- Training of fisheries officers on clam management, aquaculture and management of marine managed areas.
- Induction of a giant clam spawning event with the release of 68,000 juvenile clams along the Aitutaki lagoon ridge.
- Development of standard operating procedures for the spawning of giant clams.

### Building community resilience

- Integrating climate resilience and traditional knowledge into extra-curricular school programmes in Aitutaki, Atiu, Mauke and Mitiaro.
- Training teachers to deliver the climate resilience and traditional knowledge programmes together with local marine resource fishers and users and providing lesson plans.
- A guide on Improving the traditional fishing knowledge of the southern Cook Islands for the purpose of educating young people was prepared.
- Enhancing the community outreach role of the Aitutaki Marine Research Centre through partnerships with the Aitutaki Island Council.

### Strategic planning

- Analysing the impacts of past climate change adaptation projects focusing on water security and marine resource management in Mangaia yielded important information for the development of the impact analysis methodology. The results can now be applied to national strategic planning.
- Integrating traditional knowledge into the Marae Moana spatial plan provides for the retention and continued application of this knowledge source.
- Developing a five-year operational plan for the Aitutaki Marine Research Centre and incorporating it into the Ministry of Marine Resources' Business Plan provides for the further development of the centre.

## Activities meet the following SDGs:



### About the GCCA+ 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- June 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.