

Climate Change Cook Islands Newsletter Office of the Prime

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SRIC project under the realm of manager Willie Tuivaga is moving progressively since the beginning of the year. The team has visited Mangaia, Atiu, Mauke earlier this year for the purpose of mobilising and gaining island input and support for the project on each island. The first phase of the project was the identification of a suitable person from each island to take on the role as focal point for the SRIC project. The second phase of the plan is to bring these people to Rarotonga to undertake specific training that will empower them to successfully perform their roles as the focal point for the SRIC project. Thus far eight people have been recruited representing one from each of the islands and will commence training in May. These representatives are from; Aitutaki is Shelley Tavai, Tepuaroa Tetava from Mitiaro, Nga Takai represents Rakahanga, Tere Marsters from Palmerston, Anna-Marie Takaiti from Atiu, Eimoana Taia from Mauke, John Mcleod of Manihiki and Pa Epi Mana of Mangaia. The rest of the Pa Enea focal points are yet to be confirmed and will undergo their training at the latter half of the year.

Emergency Management Cook Islands unveils new portal



Michelle Forster presenting the portal during the launch of the site at the Council of Women in Takuvaine (picture taken from <http://www.cookislandsnews.com>).

An online database of projects to reduce disaster risk was launched on 18 May 2013, at the Council of Women venue in Tauae, Takuvaine. The database or 'portal', which can be found at www.drrprojects.net, is a pilot project in the Cook Islands that includes information on 988 projects in the Asia Pacific region, including 108 in the Cook Islands. Director of Emergency Management Cook Islands (EMCI), Charles Carlson, said the aim is to get all the ministries in the Cook Islands on board with this project. The concern raised was that climate-related information are scattered within government ministries and there is a need to collate them in one location. Disaster Information Officer Michelle Foster, who helped collate the information for the portal, said that having the information available within the portal makes it easy to use.

Projects listed on the portal are largely focused on cyclones, fires, floods and heat waves. The projects can be sorted by location, what hazard they focus on, when the project is running, plus a number of other filters as well. Disaster risk projects within the region are also listed, which will be useful for future

planning in the Cook Islands. Furthermore, this could also give organisations here in the Cook Islands an idea of the potential donors for future projects. Information and Database Management Advisor Jutta May, who is also the Adviser Information and Database Management/PDN team leader at SPC and has been involved with the development of the portal from the beginning, indicated that the site will not only have information on past projects and where information is sufficient, but will also have a list of areas where information is lacking. Although the portal will allow users to add information, additions will not be available on the site until it has been approved by EMCI.

New York Meeting



The American Museum of Natural History, New York, USA.

From 14 - 17 February 2013, the American Museum of Natural History's Center for Biodiversity and Conservation together with partners organized a symposium that brought together local resources managers, researchers, educators, policy makers, and other leading conservation practitioners to present and discuss real world resilience case studies. The *Milstein Science Symposium*, which is an annual event, was held at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, USA. Dr. Teina Rongo from the Climate Change Cook Islands (CCCI) Division attended the symposium along with 60 participants from countries throughout Asia, the Caribbean, and the Pacific. The objective of this symposium was to understand resilience – the ability of ecological and social systems to absorb, resist, or recover from stressors and adapt to change while maintaining critical ecosystem functions and benefits.

Through sharing lessons learned and fostering networks of island managers that are addressing similar challenges, the symposium deepened manager insight into how to promote the resilience of coastal systems, particularly in tropical small island nations. It also strengthened networks among island leaders, international scientists, and policy makers– paving the way for ongoing collaboration in the future. The *International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)* criteria for measuring the resilience of reefs was heavily discussed. This document outlines a protocol that is one attempt at defining some basic resilience indicators that can be quantified using rapid assessment methods. Dr. Rongo indicated that coral reef monitoring in the Cook Islands needs to be revived and the IUCN criteria should be integrated.

On Day two of the symposium, Dr. Rongo presented part of his Ph.D. dissertation, which was his most recent publication in the peer-reviewed scientific journal *Toxicon* (Issue 64, pp. 87–95). The title of his presentation was “The effects of natural disturbances, reef state, and herbivorous fish densities on ciguatera poisoning in Rarotonga, southern Cook Islands”. According to Dr. Rongo, while most research presented at the symposium examined the benefits of a healthy coral reef ecosystem and the consequences of a degraded ecosystem, none have examined the impacts associated when a system is caught in the transitional state (i.e., between a healthy and a degraded state). His research showed that ciguatera poisoning can result when a system remains in a transitional state for a prolonged period.

Korea Climate Change training

I had the privilege of being nominated to attend the Pacific Islands Forum training on climate change in Korea. The training duration was three weeks which was based in Incheon and Seongnam, South Korea from the 7-27 April at the height of the tensions between North Korea and the rest of the world. However, on arrival to South Korea, we were assured of our safety by the Government which was a big relief for all of us participants from the Pacific region. We were hosted and accommodated at the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) training centre, which is Korea’s training institution for delivering its Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) to developing countries. Korea’s climate change training program for Pacific Islands is a recent initiative being three years since inception and the second time for the Cook Islands to participate. The training included classroom delivery, sight visits with lots of walking and practical application of the theories through group work. Program delivery was divided into four modules; Low-carbon green growth, Understanding of climate change, Environment Health and Responding to climate change. The outcome of the training was the presentation of an Action Plan on an issue pertinent in the Pacific that is likely to escalate due to climate change. Participants from our group chose to address the elimination of malaria on Isabel Province in the Solomon Islands (Presentation available on request).

Kura-Kuriri

It is with regret that the Climate Change office has seen the sudden departure of the coordinator Rerekura Teaurere and of course baby Sau. We acknowledge and thank Rerekura for her great work and ingenuity in carrying out her role and the tasks required of her as climate change coordinator which she has performed superbly for the last year. Rerekura and baby Sau has moved back to New Zealand to be with family, and we wish them both a bright and happy future.

Acknowledgement

Meitaki Maata to Celine Dyer and Teina Rongo for putting this newsletter together.