



Rauti Para Project Manihiki May 2015



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Office of the Prime Minister**



Acknowledgements

We thank the Adaptation Fund, UNDP Samoa office and SRIC CC programme for solely funding this phase of the Rauti Para Tablet Training project for the islands of Rakahanga and Manihiki with implementing partners, Climate Change Cook Islands and ICT Divisions of the Office of the Prime Minister in conjunction with the Rauti Para Kumiti (NGO).

A big 'Meitaki Korereka' to the Executive Officer of Manihiki, Jane Kaina and her wonderful staff for organising all logistics arrangements on Manihiki and travel to Rakahanga for the team. We also thank the caterers for providing the wonderful lunches for the workshop and the welfare officer of Manihiki Emily Tepano for requesting the training for the island targeting the Rauti Para.

To the Mayor, Mrs Ngamata Napara, Deputy Mayor, Island Council and all the people of Manihiki, we sincerely express our gratitude in appreciation for the warm hospitality and generosity extended towards the Rauti Para team and for embracing the project whole heartedly in the two villages of Tauhunu and Tukao.

Meitaki Korereka!



Introduction

The Rauti Para Project Team finally arrived back to Manihiki on Tuesday 19th May after spending seven days in Rakahanga. On arrival, the team was greeted by the Manihiki Executive Officer Jane Kaina, the Deputy Mayor and members of the Island Council. The team met with the Island Council to discuss the purpose of the Rauti Para project and to confirm the tablet training program. Manihiki was the last island to receive the Rauti Para tablet training project in the Northern Group which was solely funded by the Adaptation Fund through the SRIC CC and implemented by Climate Change Cook Islands and ICT divisions of the Office of the Prime Minister and the Rauti Para Kumiti (NGO).

Background

The legend of Maui who fished the atoll of Manihiki is a popular folklore that the people of Manihiki like to depict, sing and dance about as a reminder of their beginnings. The people of Rakahanga and Manihiki tell stories when Rakahanga was the main settlement and people travelled to and fro between the two islands mainly to forage for food on Manihiki. However, this practice was discouraged by the missionaries because canoes were getting lost at sea, and so they encouraged the people to settle permanently on the two islands.

Manihiki is a coral atoll with a total land area of 5.4 square kilometres within a lagoon area of 4,063ha with the highest point above sea level under 4 metres. Main vegetation is coconut, padanus, *tamanu*, *ngangie*, *toa* and breadfruit. The closest island is Rakahanga with a distance of 44 kilometres. Stable diet is mainly fish and sea foods supplemented with frozen meat products imported from Rarotonga. Rice is widely eaten since agriculture land is very limited with only small patches of taro and puraka still remaining. There is a hydroponics on Tauhunu that supplies some leafy vegetables for the island but at times it is unable to meet the demands of the population particularly those from the village of Tukao.



<https://www.google.co.ck/search?q=map+of+Manihiki+island>

Manihiki was the heart of the black pearl industry in the eighties and nineties generating lucrative economic benefits for the people, however, the devastating tragedy of cyclone Martin in 1997 reversed the whole environment causing many people to move away where some never returned. Today the pearl industry on Manihiki is reduced to a handful of farmers who are striving to revive the industry back to its former vibrancy and prosperity.

Population Trend

Manihiki is one island that has always had a high population regardless of its smallness. It is the only island that reached over a thousand people in the Northern Cook Islands with 1,006 people in 1961. This is attributed to the then profitable copra industry in the fifties and sixties, however, when this collapsed the population also dived only to increase again when the pearl industry picked up in the late eighties and early nineties. The 2011 Census report epitomize the lowest population in the history of Manihiki consisting of 239 people mainly made up of children under fifteen and the over forty five age groups.

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Source: Census Report 2011

Transport

Manihiki is fortunate to be the only island in the Northern Group to have regular fortnightly flights. However, the shipping services is the same as all the other islands which is inconsistent and irregular throughout the year.

Objectives of the Rauti Para Project

There are three components to this project:

1. To deliver the Tablet training targeting the Rauti Para (seniors)
2. To receive feedback on the climate change indicators documentary
3. To promote climate change awareness

Tablet Training

The Cook Islands national vision of *'Te Kaveinga Nui'* elaborates the desire of the government of the Cook Islands... *'to enjoy the highest quality of life consistent with the aspirations of our people, and in harmony with our culture and environment'*. This dream is further echoed in the Cook Islands National Sustainable Development Plan 2011 – 2015 under *Goal 5: Resilient and Sustainable Communities*, and *Goal 6: Environment for Living*. The Climate & Disaster Compatible Development policy 2013 – 2016 also mirrors these views through its strategic objectives of building *'...climate and disaster resilient development...'* as well as *'building capacity of people through education and training'*. The tablet training for the mature-aged population in the *Pa Enua* aims to address some of these ambitions.

Since the mature-aged remain in the *Pa Enua* with some caring for their grandchildren, it becomes a priority to up-skill these seniors as in this instant they are the lifeline for the survival and sustainability of their particular island, their culture, and their future generations. Although they possess local and traditional knowledge and practices that have worked in the past, their knowledge and skills may not be sufficient to meet or overcome the impacts of climate change. Thus, introducing them to accessible information via the tablet will allow seniors to build upon their existing knowledge and practices. The

training will certainly open new horizons for them to communicate with their families and friends living abroad while encouraging the sharing of information.

The Rauti Para project is a valuable and an historical moment for seniors in the *Pa Enua* as previous computer training have focused largely on Rarotonga; the *Pa Enua* are often overlooked due to funding restrictions. It is arguable that the existence and future survival of these islands may not depend on government or foreign aid, but rather on the ability of the *Pa Enua* seniors to interweave their traditional knowledge and practices with new knowledge that will ensure a more resilient population to both economic hardship and particularly the impacts of climate change.

Documentary

Documenting the experiences of seniors are useful to capture their thoughts and lifetime skills and local knowledge that otherwise will be lost. The video documentary was shown to the community in order to get their feedback on the information presented from their island to ensure the relevance of the information.

Survey on Climate Change Indicators

The climate change awareness component is very important for the Pa Enua (outer islands) as they are at the receiving end of the adverse impacts of climate change. Therefore, sharing information, discussing climate change issues and helping the communities understand climate change in Maori is assisting to build capacity and resilience against the adverse impacts of climate change.

Methodology

The tablet introduction workshop was conducted over four days, two in each village of Tauhunu and Tukao. Those in the Rauti Para category was taken by Celine Dyer whilst Mitchell Tutangata took the rest of the class. The Rauti Para climate change documentary was also shown to the community to receive community feedback and endorsement of the information presented in the documentary. Climate change awareness presentations was held in Maori by Dr Teina Rongo in the two villages. The two schools on the island was also visited where Dr Rongo talked about climate change to the senior students.

Delegation

Team leader was Dr Teina Rongo the Climate Change Advisor from Climate Change Cook Islands, Celine Dyer from Climate Change Cook Islands and Mitchell Tutangata from ICT, both divisions of the Office of the Prime Minister.

Logistics

All logistics were organised by Celine Dyer from Climate Change Cook Islands and Jane Kaina Executive Officer of Manihiki assisted by Angela Tobia the administration officer for Manihiki.

Outcome

Tablet Training - Tauhunu village

Thirty one people attended the workshop with ages ranging from seventeen to eighty one years.

Most people haven't had previous experience with using the tablet and were excited to learn and handle the tablet for the first time.

Mitchell Tutangata explained the operational features, the different applications and the many uses of the tablet.

People were intrigued particularly the Rauti Para with the different functions of a tiny machine.

Everyone wanted to have an email address so they could communicate with their families living overseas.

Many were excited to read about their island on the internet and amazed with the vast number of information available on the internet and the many different functions that is possible at the touch of the fingertips.

Tablet Training - Tukao village

The highlight of the training in Tukao village was watching papa Tobia Tobia the oldest person on the island walking from his home to the workshop. There were five Rauti Para who attended the workshop and all up twenty one people attended the training including government workers who wanted to improve on their computer skills. The senior students from Tukao school also participated in the workshop and were able to assist with training the Rauti Para.



The age group range was from thirteen to eighty seven.

The Rauti Para were grateful for the opportunity to learn how to use the tablet so they could communicate with their children and families living abroad and to access information on the internet.

Government workers also expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to improve on their computer skills and the chance to ask questions on computer related problems to which Mitchell Tutangata the IT expert was able to help.

Participants were able to set up an email address and some went on facebook page, however, for the older Rauti Para they were amazed with the functions of a tiny machine. At this time roles were swapped between the elderly and the young where the young became the teacher teaching the elderly.



Student Tepaeru Tarau showing Papa Tobia how the tablet works.

Those who participated in the training requested for more time to practice on the tablet and so the team left five tablets for each village so people could continue learning and practising on the tablets after the workshop.

The Rauti Para particularly expressed gratitude for such training targeting their needs which they never had experienced before in their lifetime and appreciated that they were the target group of the training.



Tablet training in Tukao on Manihiki 22/25 May 2015 (Photos by Celine Dyer)

Climate Change Awareness

Dr Teina Rongo presented two climate change sessions, one in each village of Tauhunu and Tukao. People were interested to know and learn more about the impacts of climate change to the ocean and fish stock in their waters, to which Dr Rongo was able to explain the situation in Maori. The local Fishing Association also met with Dr Rongo to discuss a proposal they envisaged submitting to the SRIC project for funding. A group of passionate environmental enthusiasts also met with the team to discuss a proposal to address

the problems in the Manihiki lagoon. The climate change presentation with the two schools of the two villages generated interesting discussions and questions from the students which was a surprise to the teachers. A student from Tauhunu school gave a speech on climate change at the school speech day on Friday 22 May.



Dr Rongo presenting the SRIC hard drive to Faiteru Makira on behalf of Tukao School 25 May 2015 (Photo by Celine Dyer)

As part of the SRIC awareness program to the schools, Dr Rongo presented each school with a hard drive containing materials on climate change for teachers and students. He also spoke to the teachers about a senior students workshop that SRIC is anticipating to host at the upcoming Te Maeva Nui celebrations in July/August in Rarotonga since most people from the outer islands will be in Rarotonga. He asked that they start thinking about potential projects that is climate change related and useful in their respective communities for their proposal development in the workshop. Dr Rongo reiterated that the workshop will be tailored to the specific circumstances of the Northern Group islands to capture the students experiences in their unique environments whilst assisting to develop their capacity to merge local and scientific information and research skills to produce a project proposal with the potential for funding under the SRIC UNDP Programme. The workshop idea only targeting the Northern Group students created enthusiasm and excitement amongst the teachers and students alike.

Climate Change Indicators

The Rauti Para climate change indicators documentary of "A Lifetime of Change" was well received by both communities as they complimented on the reality of the information which is relevant to the current situation on the island. In addition they offered more information which they thought was not mentioned in the documentary such as the decline of the "pava" fish on Manihiki over the previous years but which is slowly starting to return.



After watching the Rauti Para documentary the people in both villages were able to verify the information it contained. Some also shared their own experiences similar to those depicted in the documentary.



Passionate enthusiasts sharing their thoughts with the team 25 May 2015 (Photo taken by Papa Williams)



Dr Teina Rongo presenting five tablets to the SRIC Focal Point Mr John MacLeod for the village of Tauhunu in order to continue their learning 25 May 2015 (Photo by Celine Dyer)

Recommendations

- In consideration of sea level rise and with the many young tamanu plants growing wild in Tauhunu village, perhaps the island should consider tree planting as a coastal protection and land reclaiming exercise
- Manihiki has ideal conditions for aqua farming and should be encouraged to develop
- There is a problem in the recruitment of young paua, this should be investigated and addressed before the situation escalates
- Hydroponics for Tukao village is long overdue and should be followed up to go ahead
- Research is needed to investigate the prospects of improving water flushing in the lagoon



Senior Students of Tukao School listening to a climate change presentation by Dr Teina Rongo 25 May 2015 (Photo by Celine Dyer)

References

1. Google <http://www.cookislands.org.uk/rakahanga> 25/1/2015
2. Census Report 2011, Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, Government of Cook Islands

More Photos from Manihiki

