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Climate Change Cook Islands
Office of the Prime Minister

Lifejackets for Palmerston Islanders

Residents on the tiny island of Palmerston finally received their long awaited safety sea lifejackets. The lifejacket project was requested by the Island Council and EO Mr Arthur Neale to SRIC. The SRIC Palmerston Island Focal Point Melina Tuiravakai immediately acted upon the request to source for the lifejackets. The lifejackets were purchased from New Zealand and eventually delivered to the residents of Palmerston Island.



Palmerston is highly at risk to cyclones due to its geographical position on the cyclone path. Its elevation of just above 2mtrs of the mean high level water mark deems it high risk to natural and slow onset disasters.

In everyday life there is always high risks associated with high seas when fishermen go out to fish especially beyond the reef.

However, the risks of lives is higher on boat days when wind direction and strength can suddenly change to create bad weather conditions affecting the unloading of precious cargo to the islands and vice versa. Particularly since the cargo boat only frequents the island once in three or four month intervals. On these occasions the people continue to work intensely to unload cargo off the boat and load freezers of fish for the Rarotonga market as this is their only means of income.



Earlier in February this year we were on the Lady Moana and witnessed the offloading and loading of cargo on these tiny islands during bad weather conditions. It was a frightening experience as well as over whelming in admiration of the skills, the experience and the confidence people had of working in such rough conditions. The people

on these islands accept these difficult conditions without questioning the hardships and life threatening events to their lives. To them, it's a job to be done, so get on with it. It is hoped that the lifejackets provided by the SRIC project through the Adaptation Fund, will prevent future mishaps and provide reassurance to the people on Palmerston Island during cyclones and rough sea conditions.



The Pitaka Project on Penryhn Island

Dr Micheal White reported from Penryhn Island that the work on Te Hare Natura on motu Mangarongaro is really taking shape and progressing well. The men who volunteered their time to work on the project continue to make good progress with the building. This is also helped with the good weather they are having on Tongareva.

Here is Thomas Taime working on Te Hare Natura photo by Dr White



Dr Micheal White envisage the building will be completed by the end of this month.

Next phase of the project will be the planting of tamanu trees on the motu as part of the coastal protection initiative and reforestation of the motu with indigenous trees.

This will certainly create ideal nesting conditions for turtles as well as breeding and home grounds for other species.

Keep up the great work in Penryhn and we look forward to more photos and thanks Dr White and Thomas Taime for the regular updates.

Planning for a sustainable Aitutaki



Residents on Aitutaki Island commenced working on their Community Sustainable Development Plan led by the Pa Enua Unit Director Odi Tangianau and SRIC Programme Manager William Tuivaga. To assist with the work was workshop facilitator Anne Herman-Fua.

The team of three were in Aitutaki for four days where they held a community consultation in the Fishing Club over the four days. About 30 people attended the workshop including the newly elected Island Mayor and Executive Officer who will eventually be responsible for the implementation of the island plan.

Interns doing Reef Monitoring



First there was one and then two, Annabelle joined our office in October to do her internship on marine biology under the guidance of Dr Teina Rongo. In November James Kora a graduate Cook Islander joined the team to assist with the coral reef monitoring.

Pictured here are Annabelle Phillips and James Kora analysing data collected from their dives. Their stories below.

Kia Orana, my name is James Kora. I have recently returned home from New Zealand and have just completed my studies at the University of Auckland. I studied a Bachelor of Science degree with a major in Psychology. My interests remain in the overall scope of science, which includes areas such as Anthropology, Geography and Marine Biology. I studied a few papers in these areas and it was this background that enabled me to adapt and learn about reef ecology and climate change during the coral reef survey with Teina Rongo. The experience from this survey is invaluable and second to none as it has taught me about the importance of monitoring the reef health and assessing these impacts of the state of the reef. Prior to this survey, I had little experience in terms of identifying coral species.



I had worked in Manihiki and in Aitutaki conducting an invertebrate surveys. Manihiki was focused on *Paua* for annual *Paua* export and Aitutaki was focused on *Rori* export also. Studying various coral species, various reef fish species and further expanding my knowledge on invertebrates.

In terms of the coral reef survey, I focused on the invertebrates which included your *Rori*, *Taramaea*, *Kina*, *Vana*, *Paua*, *Ariri*, *Ungakoa* and anything else found within our transect. The data for this would then give us indicators on reasons why invertebrates may be high or low in certain areas and we can cross check this with the data from fish and coral species. We will be able to examine and infer reasons and ask questions such as why and how the state of the reef is the way it is relative to climate change. This coral reef survey extended my knowledge of the marine environment and opened my eyes to what really occurs over the reef. I have also gained a broader understanding of the local knowledge in terms of how our elders used to live subsistent lifestyles and how sustainable they were in utilizing the marine resources. From this experience, I intend to further my studies in the area of Marine Biology in the future as the relevance of this I believe is highly important in problems we are facing today. *by James Kora.*

Kia orana! My name is Annabelle Phillips and I studied at Brigham Young University-Hawaii. I have a Bachelor of Science



degree in Marine Biology. During my time at BYU-Hawaii I was a part of several research projects including studying the migratory patterns of the Pacific Golden Plover in Alaska, I was a research assistant on a biodiversity project in Saipan, and I studied the coral disease, Porites Trematodiasis, in the reefs around the North Shore of O'ahu. I came to the Cook Islands in October as an intern for

the Climate Change Division of the Office of the Prime Minister. What I knew of my original responsibilities as an intern



was that I was going to be part of a coral survey. However, the experience that I have had in Rarotonga has exceeded my expectations and has inspired me to pursue more knowledge of the marine environment to aid the world in protecting its marine resources.

I have grown in a variety of ways during my time in Rarotonga. Due to the coral survey conducted, I have learned to identify

over 25 genera of corals whereas before I arrived in Raro, I was able to identify only three. Not only has my knowledge of the marine environment expanded, but I have gained invaluable field and research skills that will aid me throughout my career. The survey has taught me to take on many responsibilities at once such as: photographing coral species and marine invertebrates, quickly examining the benthic community and recording my findings, adapting to the environmental conditions while doing research, and working with a crew that is from a different culture other than my own.

My internship was done under the supervision of Teina Rongo, who has become a great influence in my life. Not only does he have a vast amount of knowledge of the ocean, but he also sees the connection between the environment, the people, and the animals. While in Raro I have helped to take care of the environment and in return it has taken care of me. I have enjoyed eating trochus, *rori tape*, and fruits of all kind. The sustainable lifestyle that I have observed here has inspired me to teach people back home what I have learned and to continue practicing sustainable techniques in my life. The Cook Island people have so many assets, such as the land and the ocean, and I hope that they will always prioritize caring for it and being an example to the world by being wise stewards of the resources that they have been blessed with. Rarotonga is not a paradise to me because of its tropical climate, the beaches, or the constant sunshine, but it has become my paradise because of its people. *by Annabelle Phillips.*

Gretta was appointed the SRIC Focal Point for Mitiaro and is on two weeks training in the Climate Change office.



At the moment Gretta is working on 24 project ideas from community groups and individuals of Mitiaro. This is the first time an island has come up with a vast array of proposal ideas. However, not all of them will be funded, as they will be vetted against the climate change criteria to ensure they meet climate change specifications and fall under the allocated amount for funding.

Gretta is loving her time working from the climate change office. We extend a hearty warm welcome to Gretta, and a Cook Islands farewell to Annabelle,

Aere ra Annabelle, Kia Manuia!



Geo-portal Workshop

This workshop was held on Tuesday 29 November at the Vaine Tini headquarters in Tauae. It comprised of participants from Seabed Minerals, National Environment Services, Police, Health, Cook Islands Disabilities Council, the Cook Islands National Council of Women, Emergency Management Cook Islands and Climate Change Cook Islands.

The geo-portal is housed under EMCI and is an integral tool in information management systems particularly where information becomes a critical resource in times of emergencies and disasters.

The workshop was a hands on training for

agencies who collect data as part of their responsibilities. Bringing these agencies together enabled them to share their experiences with data management and furthermore, to identify areas of synergies where they could work together to collect and manage information that is relevant, useful and adds value to users. Thus far, EMCI and ICI have collected information from all islands in the Southern Group except Aitutaki and Rarotonga which are yet to be completed. The data collected is analysed and spit out in graphs, and available to ministries on the geo-portal. All up seventeen people participated in the one day geo-portal training workshop which was part of the Third National Communications initiative to bridge gaps, harness synergies and encourage collaboration.

More photos from the Aitutaki consultation



Kura-Kuriri

**WE WISH ALL OUR READERS
AND FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS
A JOYOUS AND BLESSED
FESTIVE SEASON.**

TILL NEXT TIME KIA MANULA