CONCEPT IDEA NOTE FOR CLIMATE RELATED ACTIVITIES THAT MAY BE FUNDABLE BY THE GREEN CLIMATE FUND AND OTHER FINANCIAL SOURCES

This Concept Idea Note is based upon the GCF Concept Note. It is designed to prepare any Concepts or Project Ideas with GCF financing in mind, however, can also be applicable to other financial institutions. Once the Concept Idea Note is completed please send to the CCCI office (as the GCF National Focal Point), where an assessment will be undertaken as to whether the Concept could be eligible for funding under the GCF or other financial source, or both. CCCI will then communicate the result of the assessment back to the proponent, and outline what will next happen to the Concept Idea Note, such as require more information to make a clearer assessment, the submitted Concept is GCF eligible for funding and the next steps, or a determination that outlines the Concept is not eligible for GCF funding but may get funding from another source.

Title of Concept OR Project Idea: Achieving a Resilient Ocean through the Establishment of Transparent and Sustainable Financing and through Strengthened Data and Information Management

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Indicate the areas for the Concept, which is based upon the CKI Country Program thematic areas	Mitigation: Reduced emissions from: ☐ Energy access and power generation ☐ Low emission transport ☐ Buildings, cities and industries and appliances ☐ Forestry and land use Adaptation: Increased resilience of: ☐ Most vulnerable people and communities ☐ Health and well-being, and food and water security ☐ Infrastructure and built environment ☒ Ecosystem and ecosystem services
Indicative total project cost	Main project: $1.5 million Deep Ocean research: $4.0 million TOTAL PROJECT AMOUNT: NZD $5.5 million_____

Project/Programme rationale, objectives and approach of programme/project (max 100 words)

Brief summary of the problem statement and climate rationale, objective and selected implementation approach, including the executing entity(ies) and other implementing partners.

Although Marae Moana is a multiple-use marine protected area over the Cook Islands marine space, its resilience depends on actions to manage the environment both on land and in the sea. The Marae Moana Action Plan, is consequently comprised of actions by multiple government agencies, NGOs and traditional leaders that address both terrestrial and marine environment issues. Four of the main challenges to achieving resilience under the Marae Moana framework are:

1. the unavailability or inaccessibility of spatial data and information for development planning and marine spatial planning;
2. the low level of awareness about the impacts of development on ecosystem resilience and the importance of integrated resource planning and management;
3. the scarcity of qualified and skilled human resources in-country; and
4. the low priority placed on financing ecosystem resilience.

The executing entity will be OPM with other Marae Moana partners involved as stakeholders.

Context and baseline (max. 2 pages)

Describe the climate vulnerabilities and impacts, GHG emissions profile, and mitigation and adaptation needs that the prospective intervention is envisaged to address.

The Cook Islands marine environment is suffering from impacts of climate change through ocean acidification, coral bleaching, harmful algal blooms and more frequent and intense cyclones, amongst other impacts. In addition to these, are impacts from plastic pollution, increasing fishing pressures, crown of thorns starfish infestations, soil runoff and pollution from liquid waste and contaminated stormwater. To address these issues, the Cook Islands established Marae Moana, a multiple-use marine protected area over the entire Cook Islands marine space which provides an integrated management framework for the protection, conservation and use of the Cook Islands marine environment.

Please indicate how the project fits in with the country's national priorities and its full ownership of the concept. Is the project/programme directly contributing to the country's INDC/NDC or national climate strategies or other plans such as NAMAs, NAPs or equivalent? If so, please describe which priorities identified in these documents the proposed project is aiming to address and/or improve.

This project will contribute to the achievement of several NSDP Goals, but especially **NSDP Goals 11 and 12**. It fits under Cook Islands Country Program **Programmatic Area 9** "Oceans Management and Climate Change" and **Programmatic Area 11** "Knowledge Research and Innovation". The project will also support several activities in JNAP II particularly **JNAP Strategy 3** 10 "Improve the conservation and management of marine and terrestrial biodiversity to increase resilience to the impacts of climate change."

The project will complement the PEARL project, funded by the Adaptation Fund, by implementing activities in **JNAP Strategy 4**, specifically 14 "Strengthen capacity to record and publish research to support effective policy development and improve decision making' as well as 15 "Strengthen coordination, sharing and management of information related to climate change and disaster risk for improved decision-making". These activities will also contribute to **Marae Moana Policy Objectives 6** "Marine Spatial Planning" and **12** "Research and Monitoring" as well as the **National Research Policy**.

To address the issue of the low level of awareness about the impacts of development on ecosystem resilience the project will implement activities that fall under **Marae Moana Policy Objective 11** "Education, Communication, Consultation and Commitment."

Finally the project will support **Marae Moana Policy Objective 13** "Sustainable Financing"

Describe the main root causes and barriers (social, gender, fiscal, regulatory, technological, financial, ecological, institutional, etc.) that need to be addressed.

1. Improving Spatial Data Management and Sharing

A situation analysis has been prepared that identifies barriers to spatial data sharing, one of which was the lack of a spatial data sharing policy. This policy is now being prepared in consultation with all GIS users, namely GeoSpatial Cook Islands (also known as the GIS Task Force in the PEARL project proposal). The users of this policy will need support for its implementation, in particular, IT expertise to provide the back-end support for the GeoPortal as well as GIS and software development expertise to develop the portal. One of the areas where the GeoPortal requires development is the application of a data licensing protocol, specifically the assignment of a confidentiality level to each layer of data. Applying such a protocol will enable data to be more accessible to the public as opposed to having no public access because of concerns over some data that is sensitive. The consultation required to correctly classify data for the portal will require the assistance of the GIS specialist (a coordinating position) from the PEARL project at EMCI.

2. Maximising benefits from Research

In addition to issues with spatial data sharing, there are also issues surrounding the management of research by visiting researchers. Firstly, access to information about how to conduct research in the Cook Islands is limited, particularly due to the absence of a research website. Secondly, there is limited access to information generated by visiting researchers because the index is unavailable online and reports are often provided only in hard copy form. Thirdly, the research permitting system has no legal basis, presenting issues with both liability and accountability. Finally, research topics are sometimes irrelevant to the Cook Islands priorities and this particularly presents problems when the research requires Cook Islanders to contribute time either as the subject of the research or as facilitators and providers of information. This project will assist by establishing a research website, reviewing the research policy, developing legislation and developing a national research agenda.

3. Building Knowledge on Deep Ocean Ecosystems

For the achievement of ocean resilience, a National Marae Moana Spatial Plan will help to allocate appropriate areas for protection and use. As soon as the Marae Moana Act is passed, the Marae Moana Technical Advisory Group must commence the development of this plan. One of the constraints to producing this spatial plan is the lack of spatial data on the biodiversity of the deep ocean, as well as details on the bathymetry and environmental parameters. This project will support the collection of this data for input into a Marae Moana database and sharing via the EMCI GeoPortal.

4. Developing Smarter Communications

The barriers to improved education and awareness are technical, institutional and financial. The technical expertise required for an effective ecosystem resilience awareness program is scientific (expertise in environmental science or climate science) and communications (expertise in journalism and social media with an awareness of video production, print publication, radio messaging, exhibitions and website development). The scientist needs to have the ability to write in layman's terms and this is a rare skill. Communications work is more productive when it's done on a contractual output-basis as opposed to a full-time staff position. Despite the importance of education and awareness, it is typically under-funded. This project will contract expertise to communicate scientific information about ocean resilience and to implement a communications strategy. The project will also work with the Ministry of Education scholarship program to offer a scholarship for a double degree in environmental science and journalism. It will seek to inspire secondary school students by running a workshop with them during World Maritime Day.

5.   Attracting Human Resources

The Cook Islands has a limited human resource base due to the small and declining resident population. Reasons given for choosing to move overseas include higher pay overseas, family living overseas and more opportunities abroad. People also leave for improved health services and education. The human resources gap that emigration creates has a direct impact on the Cook Islands ability to manage and control the impacts of development. For example, there is insufficient technical expertise to enforce legislation and establish and maintain information management systems. There is also a loss in traditional knowledge which is critical for resilient livelihoods. As the Cook Islands develops, and health and education services improve, there is reason to now look into the possibility that migrating overseas is actually less beneficial than some people anticipate. There also appears to be a lack of awareness amongst qualified and skilled Cook Islanders abroad that the Cook Islands is a place of opportunity. This project will support research to determine and then communicate the costs and benefits financially and socially of living in the Cook Islands compared with living in New Zealand or Australia.

6.   Financing Ecosystem Resilience

The low level of awareness of the ecosystem impacts of particular development interventions as well as flaws within the national budget process are the root cause of funding constraints. There are cases where funds are allocated to addressing only one of the causes of the environmental problem and solutions to address other significant causes are inadequately funded. This project will research information to support the development of a sustainable financing mechanism that will ensure a consistent and strategic approach to addressing environmental problems. This work will complement the study being done under the GEF-UNDP Ridge to Reef project.

Where relevant, and particularly for private sector project/programme, please describe the key characteristics and dynamics of the sector or market in which the project/programme will operate.

Engagement among the NDA, AE, and/or other relevant stakeholders in the country (max ½ page)
Please describe how engagement among the NDA, AE and/or other relevant stakeholders in the country has taken place and what further engagement will be undertaken as the concept is developed into a funding proposal.

Preliminary discussions have been held with ICT at OPM, Geospatial Cook Islands, the Research Unit at OPM and EMCI at OPM. Workshops with both Geospatial Cook Islands and national research stakeholders have revealed a number of deficiencies. Further discussion is needed with a wider range of stakeholders to develop a proposal.

Sustainability and replicability of the project (exit strategy) (max. 1 page)
Please explain how the project/programme sustainability will be ensured in the long run and how this will be monitored, after the project/programme is implemented with support from the GCF and other sources.

The project will depend largely on short term contracts that will produce outputs which when combined, will lead to outcomes in the long term. Other areas where ongoing funding is needed beyond the life of the project e.g. short term contracts to produce education programs and awareness campaigns, will be funded through the sustainable financing mechanism that will be established under Marae Moana Policy Objective 13.

The Marae Moana Coordination Office, Technical Advisory Group and Council have the responsibility of providing oversight for the management of Marae Moana and will have the role of monitoring the sustainability of outcomes beyond the life of the project. This will be done by adapting the Marae Moana Annual Reporting template to reflect outcomes achieved as a result of this project.

For non-grant instruments, explain how the capital invested will be repaid and over what duration of time.

Assessed By and Date:

Recommendation: