



Climate Resilient Islands



Case study: CRI as an ecosystems intervention

The Climate Resilient Islands Programme is one of the work packages contributing to the Ecosystems Intervention Area within MFAT's Climate Change Programme. This was established in 2019 as a multi-faceted response to



Pacific requests for support with the goal of boosting Pacific resilience to climate change. The goal of the Ecosystems Intervention Area is to Restore and protect ecosystems services that support development outcomes and adaptation to climate change.

Climate Resilient Islands, along with all other work that has gone towards the Ecosystems Intervention, was evaluated in 2023 by MFAT to understand the progress made so far towards the goal of the Ecosystems Intervention Area. This case study is a short summary of their assessment of CRI.

Live & Learn's impact Ecosystems resilience

CRI is overall an effective activity in achieving the aims of the Ecosystems Intervention Area. "The on-the-ground Work Packages such as CRI...appear to be highly effective as these are being driven by local context. The CRI Work Package as part of the Ecosystems Resilience Activity has enabled more awareness of issues and possible solutions through the workshops led by implementing partner Live & Learn." Some specific successes included:

- The formulation of community-specific calendars combining ecosystem information with traditional knowledge
- The drafting of Resilience and Ecosystem Management Plans (mentioned in Tonga's 15 communities specifically)

- 123 of 470 community members (at the time) having been trained in resilience planning
- Progress made with governments, NGOs and other stakeholders across the region integrating CRI work into national plans and policies and being provided with knowledge on how NbS funding and delivery can improve in the Pacific
- Communities being educated about growing plants for food and medicine to improve resilience

“Communities are better informed about the importance of climate resilience and ways to look after the health of their ecosystems.”

Connections with communities and in-country stakeholders

CRI has largely aligned with the bottom-up approach of this Intervention Area, the focus prioritised due to it being regarded as “sustainable, inclusive, and strengths-based” by project partners and Pacific stakeholders. This approach was deemed successful by the evaluation, saying it has “enabled progress to be made at the community and local level. This is most prevalent in the CRI Work Package”, thanks largely to the community cooperation in developing resilience plans. “The



core focus of the CRI project is rooted in a community-based approach which has empowered landowners and local communities to voice their opinions and concerns. This inclusive method has ensured that community stakeholders do not feel excluded or overlooked.”

Specific benefits of CRI’s prioritisation of community engagement and relationship building include community mapping, gender analysis and the incorporation of traditional knowledge into NbS. Examples like Tuvalu’s work to create 200-year visions of sustainability with their communities, and Vanuatu’s close work with mothers, are both noted as being important contributors to a longer-lasting impact of the CRI programme.

“Inherent in the project is understanding the community context and building on localised and Indigenous knowledge which helps the activities within the project to be sustained after the work is finished.”

Stakeholder relationships

This community engagement has led to further benefits in local stakeholder relationship building. CRI “has influenced local governments and other NGOs to come on board with the work,” including building capacity in government offices to aid the integration of CRI into official systems, specifically noting the efforts of Tuvalu and Tonga in bringing CRI into alignment with government priorities and island plans. The success of the Fiji team in working with the Ministry of Fisheries is also mentioned; this has resulted in the Ministry reaching remote communities and the establishment of a communal fishing business in one community. Vanuatu has had similar success partnering with the Ministry of Finance, local trades and development agencies, which are “creating connections that will support them beyond the life of the project.”

One additional benefit of CRI was also that it is building relationships outside of MFAT's usual network, as CRI is "also working with the European Union's food programme, making them a valuable partner with connections in the Pacific which MFAT may not have had the chance to make or partner with."

Culture and traditional knowledge

Incorporating traditional knowledge into the ecosystems work is a major component of all MFAT's Ecosystems Intervention activities and it has been a high priority for CRI. One example is of a community in Fiji that was able to overcome divisions caused by religious



differences and a perceived overshadowing of traditional customs by bringing in an Indigenous Knowledge revival expert to reaffirm the importance of traditional customs and practices to them. Another success was "reviving and elevating dormant traditional knowledge", resulting in "younger generations in Tuvalu and Tonga expressing a rejuvenated interest in their heritage since the inception of this project, such as through high participation in CRI workshops and trainings."

Social inclusion

Climate Resilient Islands was noted as being a leader in gender equality, disability and social inclusion among their Ecosystems Intervention Area activities. Led by the in-country teams, GEDSI was contextualised locally and programme staff emphasised the importance of including women, youth, people with disabilities and LGBTQ+ community members in programme activities. The resilience profiling process was helpful in ensuring the inclusion of representatives from these parts of the community.

"Of all the work packages evaluated, CRI offered the most evidence of approaches to incorporate GEDSI."

Conclusion

Overall, the strengths of CRI noted throughout the evaluation seem to have had some impact on the report's recommendations for future work activities. Most notably, these include:

- Continue the focus on and prioritisation of Indigenous knowledge
- Invest more time engaging with communities
- Invest in more longer-term projects
- Enhance inclusion through more deliberate expectations

Climate Resilient Islands aims to strengthen community resilience and adaptive capacity to the impacts of climate change through nature-based solutions working with rural communities in Vanuatu, Fiji, PNG, Tonga, and Tuvalu. The project is a New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade initiative implemented by Live & Learn Environmental Education.