

# Climate Resilient Islands Programme

## Case Study: Community Resilience Images, Tonga

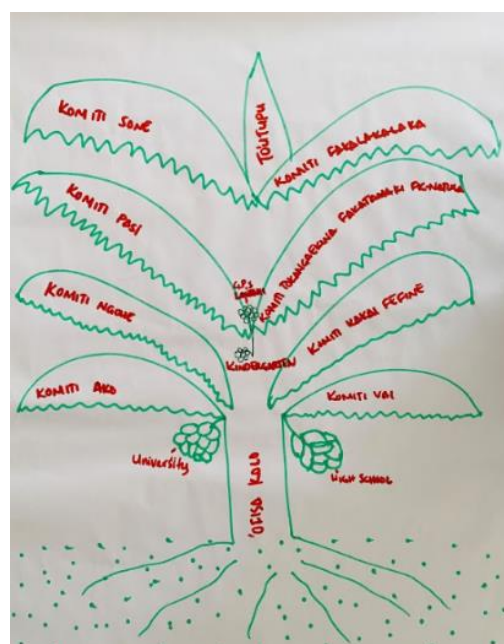
Each community participating in the Climate Resilient Islands programme was asked to discuss and agree on an image that symbolises the community's resilience. This symbol is closely linked within the Community Resilience Profiles to resilience visions (what future resilience will look like). This case study gives examples and explanations of resilience pictures from the fourteen participating communities in Tonga.

Levels of community resilience are related to their capacity to deal with threats. Capacity is related to local systems rather than just individual resources. Conceptualising systems is a way of thinking about the community holistically, and symbols are a helpful way of summarising these systems, in a way that is different to fact-based or scientific capacity analysis. A fishing net is an example given to communities of a resilience image that emphasises strong connections. Resilience images chosen by the communities will serve as reminders of goals of communities throughout the resilience planning process.

### Choices and meaning of symbols

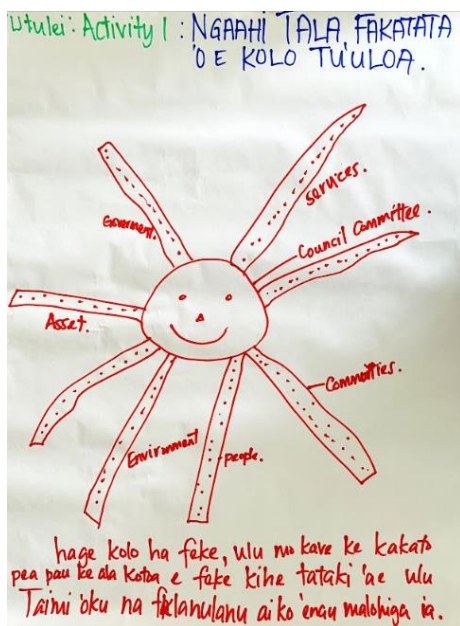
The participating CRI communities in Tonga were generally focussed on resilience as a holistic and complex concept, and their choice of resilience symbols often reflect this. Resilience for these communities usually spans a variety of assets and values, and the building of resilience in Tonga is seen as covering income, community infrastructure, community presentation, tradition, cooperation and governance, and rejuvenation of land for agriculture and mitigation of the effects of climate change, such as coastal protection.

Trees were the top choice for resilience images, with five communities choosing this symbol. With branches (or fronds), trunk and roots, a tree symbolises the various groups within the community that are needed to work together for resilience. The understanding of this was common across communities, with many





mentioning the various committees and town officers that help organise and direct community activities. Resilience activities in the CRI programme requires working with local committees and leaders, sometimes forming or revitalising committees.



Trees further symbolise resilience because, from the coconut to the feta'u tree to the pandanus, trees are important means of income, through providing resources such as fruit and craft materials, important for the continuation of traditional culture through weaving and tapa making, and important for the restoration and maintenance of coastal areas against erosion. This last factor is a particularly important issue related to ongoing resilience for the Ha'apai island group, and communities there are undertaking tree planting activities that provide coastal protection from storm surges, king tides and rising sea levels.

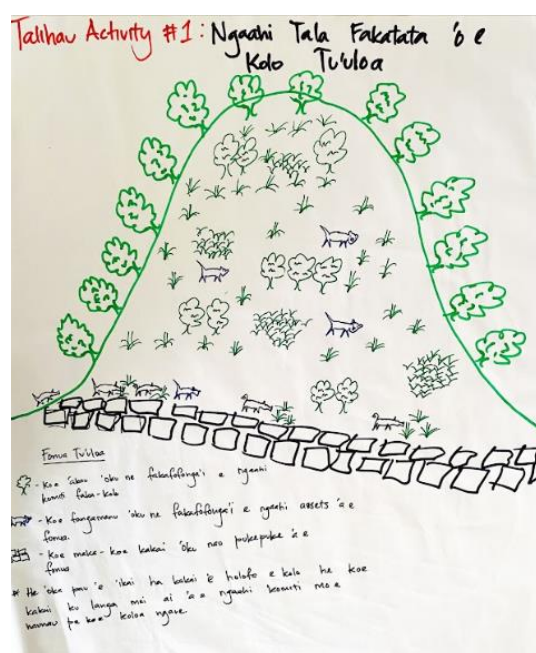
One community chose a happy octopus for their resilience image, and the image of an octopus with its eight arms again symbolises how many factors in the community need to be healthy and operate together for resilience. This community recognised the

importance of connecting the human and non-human world for resilience. They also recognised that, like the octopus, communities will need to be adaptable to fit a changing environmental context.

Several communities drew stylised pictures of their communities, or simply drew lists of these factors. Each community has a slightly different focus, but there are many generalities across the Tonga CRI communities. In the pictures, communities drew trees, animals and housing, marine environments and food gardens.

In their accompanying resilience visions, climate-resilient agriculture, roads, education, water supplies and strengthening traditions are all areas communities commonly listed as where resilience building activities can take place. The CRI programme will be, in particular, conducting wide-ranging climate-smart agriculture training across the CRI communities on the island of 'Eua. Communities have also recognised the importance of handicrafts for the continuation of traditions and for their importance to women in particular.

The woven mat is a symbol of women's craft. It also symbolises resilience for some communities because it contains different strands across different directions that make for a strong fabric. Here again we see communities envisaging the various individuals and groups, with different responsibilities, as well as the natural resources that surround communities, as creating a fabric of resilience when they are all healthy individually and working together.



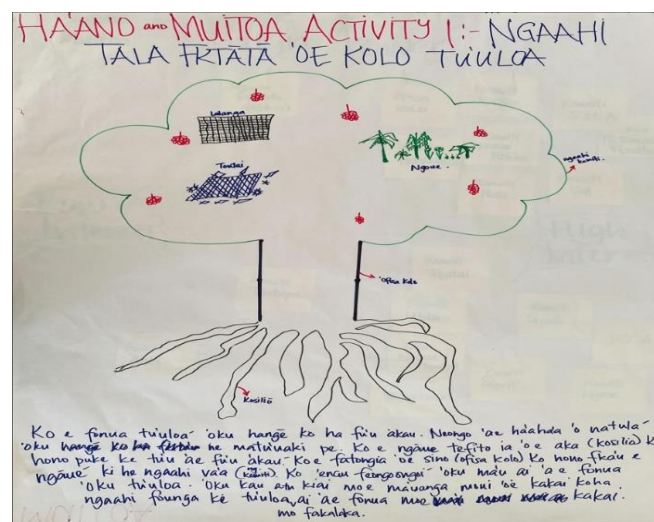
More literally, the strengthening of traditions of weaving and cloth making are seen as important contributors to resilience.

There is also an understanding in this community and others that building resilience through strengthening multiple areas of the community will take some time, just as the creation of woven mats, cloth and other craft products takes careful work over long periods of time.



## Resilience planning

Understanding how a community sees itself as resilient informs the next phase of the CRI programme – establishing community resilience plans, which involves noting assets most at risk, especially from the impacts of climate change, community capacity for making changes and strategies for increasing resilience.



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.

