Climate Resilient Islands Programme

Tonga

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The goal of Climate Resilient Islands

To strengthen community resilience to the impacts of climate change through nature-based approaches. The program is working with rural communities in Tonga, Vanuatu, Fiji, Tuvalu, PNG and Solomon Islands.

Project Timeline: April 2021 - March 2025

Climate Resilient Islands supports the New Zealand Government's Resilient Ecosystems for Climate Change Adaptation (RECCA) program.

Programme Outcomes

Communities engaged in Climate Resilient Islands will develop a community resilience profile that reflects their lived experience concerning ecosystems, natural hazards, resilient food systems, market opportunities and priorities for the future.

This profile is the foundation for the communities to determine their priorities and the pathways to strengthened resilience through three interconnected nature-based systems outcome areas:

1. Protection, restoration and maintenance of ecosystems
2. Climate resilient food systems
3. Strengthened preparedness to intensified natural hazards

The Climate Resilient Islands Programme then provides the following potential pathways for communities:

- Intergenerational Indigenous knowledge sharing
- Payments for ecosystems services (PES) models
- Protected marine and conservation areas
- Restoration and strengthening of Indigenous resilient local food systems
- Access to small grants to strengthen or establish community livelihoods

Nature-based Solutions

Investing in nature creates jobs and brings economic benefits. Nature-based solutions increase the resilience of countries to climate change, help reduce the risk of disasters, protect human health and improve water and food security.

Nature-based solutions include restoration of forests, mangroves and wetlands; coastal restoration programs; creation and maintenance of ecosystems and the sustainable management of land and sea.

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Brief rationale for site selection

The project will focus in three identified locations; Vava'u, Northern Ha'apai and 'Eua. The majority of the focus will be in Vava'u. Surrounded by deep oceanic waters, Vava'u has a wide range of marine habitats and species, most notably its coral reefs and migrating humpback whales which are attracted by the sheltered deep lagoons. About 15,000 people live in Vava'u, with around 3,447 households.

Much of the original native forest cover of 'Uta Vava'u (main island) and the adjacent smaller islands has been removed during the three millennia of human occupation of this group, but remnants of mature forest are still present in some areas that are too steep or rocky for cultivation, including steep coastal slopes and inland scarps and knolls, and on some of the smaller cliff-bound islands (e.g. Kitu, Kulo and Luamoko). Areas of mature native forest have also persisted on some of the small, low, southern islands (e.g. Maninita and Taula), and in some more gently sloping parts of 'Uta Vava'u, most notably on coastal terraces and beach flats in the vicinity of Utula'aina Point and Vai-utu-kakau.

The Vava'u Archipelago is a prime example of where communities live closely connected to the natural environment. Dependence on the goods and servicesprovided by marine, coastal, and terrestrial ecosystems remains high. Freshwater, timber, fish and agriculture are important for subsistence purposes and a major component of national economies, especially tuna fishing, cash crops, and commercial logging.

The processes and functions of natural ecosystems are the building blocks of household livelihoods and human well-being. Ecosystems provide a wide array of benefits, such as food, shelter, and treatment of human wastes, and facilitate or support recreational, spiritual, and cultural activities. The full value of the human benefits from nature's goods and services is not often recognized and relationships between natural ecosystems and communities, households, and businesses are often poorly understood or taken for granted.

We will also focus on the main inhabited islands in the north of the Ha'apai Group. Existing SMAs exist in the island communities of 'O'ua, Ha'afeva and'Uiha in the central Ha'apai's. We will use the successes and key learnings from these SMAs to enhance other Ha'apai communities. 'Eua, closer to the main population centre on Tongatapu, has the existing potential to protect established forested ecosystems with significant ecological importance.

Sites	Ecosystem
Pangai, Fotua, Lotofoa, Ha'ano/ Muitoa, Ha'apai district	Coastal
Pangaimotu, 'Utungake, 'Utulei, Talihau, Ha'alaufuli/Ta'anea, Tu'anekivale, Holeva, Koloa, Vava'u district	Coastal/forest
'Ohonua, Houma, Mata'aho, 'Eau district	Coastal/forest

Work Programme Focus

The Climate Resilient Islands work programme for Tonga will be based on the Activity Framework and focus on delivering additional 8 Special Management Areas (SMA) in the targeted coastal communities and deliver livelihoods outputs in Forest Products, Agro-Forestry and Fisheries.

The SMA will be pursued through our longstanding partnership with Ministry of Agriculture, Food, Forests and Fisheries.

Stakeholders

- Ministry of Agriculture, Food, Forests and Fisheries(MAFFF)
- Ministry of Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Cilmate Change and Communications (MEIDEEC)
- National Emergency Management Office (NEMO)