Climate Resilient Islands

Fact sheet: Tuvalu

Climate Resilient Islands aims to strengthen community resilience to the impacts of climate change through nature-based approaches. The programme is working with rural communities in Vanuatu, Fiji, Tonga, Tuvalu, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea, from April 2021 to March 2025. Climate Resilient Islands supports the New Zealand Government's Resilient Ecosystems for Climate Change Adaptation (RECCA) programme.

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
- Protected marine and conservation areas
- Restoration and strengthening of Indigenous resilient local food systems
- Disaster risk reduction and planning
- 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 average elevation of Tuvalu is just 1.83m above sea level, making it vulnerable to salt intrusion and rising seas. It has already suffered severe damage due to climate change and is extremely vulnerable to its low-lying topography and geographic location. On islands and atolls, water and soil quality are generally poor, affecting access to fresh water and locally grown food, and there is widespread coastal erosion and degradation.

The country's small and dispersed population is highly dependent on fragile marine and terrestrial environments for sustenance. Given that its islands are small, communities live in close proximity to the coastal zone, and are therefore especially vulnerable to the direct effects of climate change.

A dominant perspective from Tuvaluans is that conversation surrounding climate has taken place at a broad global level, defining major climatic changes and disaster risks, but has fallen short in providing clarity over day-to-day solutions and adaptations. As such, there is a strong case for capacity building in these localities using nature-based solutions, underscoring stronger resilience in areas identified by the Tuvalu Government, technical experts and communities themselves.

There is an extensive tapestry of Indigenous knowledge in Tuvalu that is yet to be mobilised to solve key environmental problems caused by climate change. This includes knowledge of protecting coastlines, growing food and protecting drinking water. Focus on leadership and confidence-building, which includes the use of Indigenous knowledge and the local Falekaupule traditional systems, would fill a current gap in Tuvalu's responses to climate change and would lead to strengthened systems and capabilities. There is a Falekaupule on each island and they are central in coordinating community initiatives and implementing government programs. This project will be embedded in the local Falekaupule system.

Sites/communities	Ecosystem
Funafuti	Atoll/coastal
Nukufetau	Atoll/coastal
Papaleise	Atoll/coastal
Vaitupu	Atoll/coastal

Work programme focus

The work programme will be based on the Activity Framework. Activities will align with national climate change and development strategies and approaches including those identified in the Island Strategic Plans. Activities will include:

- Indigenous knowledge systems and practices being integrated into coastal management and restoration
- communities using improved techniques, technologies and infrastructure to increase food crop output and stability.

Stakeholders

- Falekaupule
- Ministry for Local Government and Agriculture
- Kaupule for Infrastructural Development
- Kaupule for Natural Resources

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