

Mitiaro Rauti Para Report
3 – 7 February 2014

Mitiaro was the second island to receive the Rauti Para tablet training for seniors in the southern Cook Islands, which is funded by SPC EU GCCA: PSIS in partnership with the SRIC CC Adaptation Fund, Telecom Cook Islands, Cook Islands Marine Park, ICT Division of the Office of the Prime Minister, and Rauti Para (NGO).

Mitiaro is special in its own way, but like Mangaia the island is a raised makatea with razor sharp coral fossils surrounding the coastal fringes. In the middle of the island is the largest freshwater lake in the Cook Islands teaming with tilapia, freshwater eel (*itiki*), and a variety of other freshwater fauna. Although Mitiaro is the fourth largest island in the Cook Islands with a total land area of 2,230 hectares, only 120 hectares are suitable for agriculture.



Dr. Teina Rongo checking out the various life forms within the roto nui lake of Mitiaro, 2014 (photo by Celine Dyer).

Mitiaro has four villages (Atai, Auta, Mangarei, and Takaue), however the residential areas are located on the leeward exposure of the island. Although the population of Mitiaro has generally declined in the last few decades, the population has remained relative stable in the last ten years. According to the most recent census of 2011, 101 people were recorded on the island. Interestingly, the population demography reflects a bimodal distribution consisting of children and mature adults with very few youth between the ages of 20 – 34 (see Table below).

The Rauti Para Project team landed on the tranquil island of Mitiaro about 3.30pm on Monday, 3 February, via Air Rarotonga, and were welcomed by the SRIC Focal Point Mr Tepuaroa Tetava and hostess Vivian. After checking in at their accommodation, the team visited the training venue and the Telecom office to purchase Wifi vouchers. Unfortunately, it was late in the afternoon and all private and government offices were closed. Through

lessons learnt from the previous Mangaia experience, the team wanted to ensure that the venue was big enough with strong internet reception.

Mitiaro demography as at 2011

Years																		
17																		
16																		
15					15													
14																		
13																		
12				12														
11																		
10			10							10								
9		9							9									
8												8						
7																		
6																		
5								5			5							
4						4												
3													3		3	3	3	
2							2											
1								-							-			
Age group		<5	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	>78

Information from Census 2011 report.

Delegation

The team consisted of five members: the Climate Change Advisor Dr Teina Rongo (team leader), ICT Director of the Office of the Prime Minister Ms Pua Hunter, Celine Dyer and Alanna Smith from Climate Change Cook Islands, and film maker Ted Nia.

Logistics

All logistics arrangements were organised by Rob Matapo from the Climate Change Cook Islands in collaboration with the SRIC Focal Point Mr Tepuaroa Tetava of Mitiaro.

Methodology

A tablet training workshop for seniors was conducted over four days. Running parallel to this were video interviews and questionnaire surveys around the whole island (see Appendix 1 for questionnaire survey). The target age group for the questionnaire was from 20 years and older, while those interviewed on video were 60 years and older. People were only interviewed once, meaning that those who were interviewed on video were not interviewed via the questionnaire survey and vice versa.

Day 1

Upon arrival, the team met with the SRIC Focal Point Mr Tepuaroa Tetava to finalise the program for the next four days, and also visited the training venue to determine the strength of the Wifi reception. While reception was determined to be weak, the trainer also indicated that accessing the internet simultaneously by the participants during the training may be problematic. After the meeting, the team toured the island and visited the Vai Nauri water cave for a nice cool swim.



Day 1: team members cooling off in Vai Nauri water cave, Mitiaro 27 Feb 2014 (photo by Celine Dyer).

Day 2

Although the team was at the training venue at 8:30 am ready to start the day, the SRICC focal point Mr Tetava had organised a formal welcome and opening for the workshop. The Mayor welcomed the team to which Dr Rongo responded with an acknowledgement of the island executives and traditional leaders for the warm welcome. He also reiterated the purpose of the project, the funding bodies and partners, and introduced the team members. After the formalities, morning tea was served. Although a few individuals attended the opening ceremony, twenty five turned up when the tablet training commenced after morning tea. While the tablet training was facilitated by Mrs Hunter, Dr. Rongo and Mr Nia conducted video interviews with an elderly while Ms. Dyer and Ms. Smith went door-knocking in the villages for the questionnaire surveys. However, they soon discovered that most of the homes surrounding the area were empty as individuals were attending the training. Therefore, they decided to conduct the survey at the workshop during breaks.

Day 3

Morning tea was served before the training started, and to Mrs Hunter's surprise there were new additions to the training. Apparently word got out how exciting the training was so people just turned up, increasing the number of participants to 30 (see Appendix 2). This became a slight issue as there were only 26 tablets available, therefore some individuals had to share. Again, while the training was underway, the research team continued with both the video interviews and the questionnaire surveys. To get more interviews, the team was innovative in their approach and decided to hang around the only store on the island to interview individuals that came to store on the spot.

Day 4

After morning tea, Mrs Hunter took the training to the harbour area behind the Telecom office where the internet reception was better. Fortunately, there were picnic tables with seating already there and only a few extra

tables and chairs were needed to accommodate everyone. This change of venue was welcoming considering the open and cool ocean breeze experienced at this site. Dr Rongo and Ms Smith went out diving with their underwater cameras to check out the coral reefs on the western end of the harbour. The rest of the team continued with the questionnaire interviews.

In the evening, Dr Rongo gave a presentation in the local language on the various types of climate phenomena and their impacts within the region and how they relate to the Cook Islands. In the presentation, Dr Rongo also reported back to the people on the state of their reefs from the Marine Park research expedition throughout the southern Cooks in 2013 that also visited Mitiaro. The people of Mitiaro was proud to learn that their reefs were the healthiest within the southern Cook Islands. In addition, Dr. Rongo also gave some explanation on some of the observations that people gave during the interviews. For example, he suggested that the loss of salt crystals on the reef flat of Mitiaro that were often observed in the past may confirm the effects of sea level rise due to global warming.



A fore reef colony of *Pocillopora verrucosa* and damselfish *Chromis agilis* observed near the harbour on the leeward exposure of Mitiaro (photo by Dr Rongo at 50 ft).

Day 5

The day started at the usual time with the training again held at the harbour. Because the flight to Rarotonga was scheduled to leave at 2:20pm, the team had to ensure that the program was on schedule. At the end of the tablet training, the island Executive Officer Mr Ngametua Tama presented certificates of completion to the participants. Subsequently, Dr Rongo presented four tablets for Mitiaro to the Telecom officer Mr Itu and thanked everyone involved with the workshop and interviews as well as the Mitiaro community for hosting the team. This was followed by the formal closing of the workshop and farewell by the island Mayor Mr Fred Tereva.

Outcome

- ❖ There were thirty people who completed the tablet training workshop.
- ❖ Seven people were interviewed on video and 31 people responded to the questionnaire surveys.
- ❖ New climate indicators were recorded to confirm the effects climate change.

Feedback from the tablet training

- ❖ The young people on Mitiaro also joined in the training.
- ❖ There were two speech- and hearing-impaired attendees (a plumber and a automobile mechanic) who both thoroughly enjoyed the training.
- ❖ People brought their grandchildren to the training.
- ❖ The internet reception was weak at the venue and so the training was transferred outdoors close to Telecom office.
- ❖ People didn't like sharing tablets!
- ❖ Participants acclaimed this as the best training ever held on the island targeting the mature-aged.
- ❖ Participants claimed the training was most relevant to the outer islands, which are usually neglected or deprived of such opportunities.
- ❖ People also put their names down to purchase their own tablets.
- ❖ There was a request for another follow-up workshop on climate change.
- ❖ This was the worst workshop conducted in the island because no graduation celebration was included in the program.

Feedback from the climate change indicator research

- ❖ Information collected from Mitiaro was consistent with those collected from Mangaia pertaining to sea level rise, loss of some marine species, and a significant change to the terrestrial fauna and flora that appear to be a combination of both climate- and human-induced factors.

Recommendations

- ❖ Open the training to those willing to learn as this may be the only opportunity in their lifetime to do this type of training, particularly in the *Pa Enua*.

Considerations

- ❖ To be mindful in taking on the impaired so that they have the capacity to partake in the workshop activities.
- ❖ Ensure that internet reception is strong to cope with congestion.
- ❖ Increase catering funds allocated on the last day to cover for a graduation celebration.
- ❖ Similar training for young people in the outer islands, particularly school leavers, should be considered.

Conclusion

- ❖ The number of participants who attended the tablet training was an unexpected outcome from an island with the smallest population in the southern Cook Islands. Young people learning alongside the mature-aged accentuated the lack of opportunities for young people in the *Pa Enua*, suggesting the need to target young people in future projects if we are to keep them on their islands.
- ❖ Suggestion on training for young people in the *Pa Enua* includes: coral reef monitoring, climate change monitoring, terrestrial resource monitoring, weather monitoring and reporting, agriculture, and value-added entrepreneur products. Train them on skills that are useful to them on their respective islands.



Graduates of the Mitiaro Rauti Para tablet training workshop 27-31 February 2014 (photo by Celine Dyer).

Acknowledgements

We thank all the people who participated in the workshop including the children, the island Mayor Mr Fred Tereva, island Executive Officer Mr Ngametua Tama, Julian Aupuni representative of the Aronga Mana, SRIC CC Focal Point Mr Tepuaroa Tetava, the caterers and our hosts Vivian and Tati, the school and those who took part in our surveys and interviews. Meitaki Ranuinui for your participation and assistance in producing a remarkable outcome from Mitiaro!

Appendix 1. Quantitative questions

1. Have you heard of climate change?
2. Rank your understanding of climate change on a scale of 1-10 (10 being good)
3. Do you think that we are vulnerable to climate change impacts (e.g., cyclones, drought)?
4. Do you feel that outside assistance, such as financial support, is critical for us to cope with the impacts of climate change?
5. Is there a need to increase the awareness of climate change?
6. What seasonal resources on your island have you noticed have changed (e.g., fruiting season, spatial distribution) and how?
7. Do you know of any plant or animal on both land and sea that have declined or increased in abundance? (indicate a time period when this happened)
 - marine
 - land
8. Have you noticed any climatic changes e.g., rainfall, temperature etc.) on your island
 - Pre 1980s?
 - Post 1980s?
9. Have you noticed any hydrodynamic (e.g., currents) or tidal changes in the marine environment?
 - Pre 1980s
 - Post 1980s

Appendix 2. List of participants

PARTICIPANT	GENDER	AGE
Tungane Pokoati Hodson	F	72
Rouruina Raeputa Tangatapoto	F	74
Julian Aupuni Jnr	M	49
Turangatira Turangatira	M	61
Maara Taia	M	40
Ngarouru Tou	F	48
Ngametua Kimiora	F	59
Turua Murare	M	45
Akeunga Pouao	F	70
Tepamarangai	M	46
Nooroa Pouao	M	62
Matauri Ngatuakana	M	34
Peter Tereva	M	22
Tony Tapuni	M	18
Kimiora Pouao	F	65
Tuavai Taee	M	51
Tangata Turangatira	M	42
Pepe Murare	F	18
Charlie Petero	M	18
Tereau Nootai	M	52
Teata Tetava	M	52
Maara Kimiora	M	43
Das Tangatapoto	M	30
Miimetua Turangatira	F	22
Tepuaroa Tetava	M	64
Toru Ngatoko	F	66
Mata Nootai	M	45
Cecilia S. Kimiora	F	42
Geresoma T. Nootai	F	39