

Cook Islands GEF 7 Project ENUA

3rd Quarter Progress Report 2024

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Full Project Title:	Enhancing biodiversity considerations and effective protected area management, to safeguard the cook islands integrated eco-systems and species

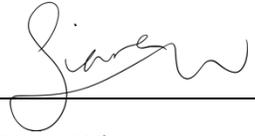


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SECTION 1: SUMMARY OF PROGRESS AND HIGHLIGHTS

1.0 Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) Survey

Four University of Newcastle (UON) students accompanied by their supervisor Dr Sascha Fuller arrived in Rarotonga in July to assist the Project ENUA team in conducting door-to-door surveys for the the Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) Survey. This is to set a new baseline for indicator 14 as well as inform future project communications efforts to target key areas for increased public awareness and understanding relating to the project's primary issues and objectives.

Over the course of one week, the team successfully completed the KAP Survey, gathering a total of 123 responses with 67 fully completed. The UON team shared the QuestionPro Results Dashboard and raw data in Excel for the team to review and are in the process of finalising a full report.

As part of our ongoing efforts to engage with and gather insights from the community, we launched an accessible online survey focused on capturing key knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP). The survey was made available through multiple channels, encouraging widespread participation and helping us understand the current perceptions and behaviors related to [topic]. This initiative aligns with our goal to ensure that our communications strategies are data-driven and responsive to the needs of our audience. The data collected will inform future initiatives and enhance our communication strategies.



The graphic is a survey invitation for Project ENUA. It features a circular logo at the top with the text 'PROJECT ENUA' and the tagline 'Enhancing Nature's Unique Areas'. Below the logo, it says 'You are invited to participate in the Project Enea survey questionnaire:'. A green rounded rectangle contains the title 'Biodiversity Conservation in Rarotonga Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices'. Below this is a URL: 'https://tinyurl.com/ENUASurvey'. A list of five bullet points provides survey details. At the bottom, there are logos for NES (National Environment Service - Cook Islands) and The University of Newcastle Australia. The background of the graphic is a light green circular pattern with a leaf-like design.

PROJECT ENUA
· Enhancing Nature's Unique Areas ·

You are invited to participate in the Project Enea survey questionnaire:

Biodiversity Conservation in Rarotonga
Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices

<https://tinyurl.com/ENUASurvey>

- Must be 18+ years
- Must be citizen or permanent resident of the Cook Islands
- The survey requires 20 minutes of time
- One response per household
- If unsure or don't want to answer – can skip through.
- Please complete until the end so it gets submitted.

NES
NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT SERVICE
TUANGA TANGA PONGI
COOK ISLANDS

**THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEWCASTLE
AUSTRALIA**

1.1 NBSAP Workshop

The National Environment Service (NES) in its government capacity, hosted the Cook Islands National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) workshop at the Crown Beach Resort on 16 August 2024. This was an opportunity for NES to update the existing NBSAP developed in 2002 which is now out of date and no longer fit for purpose. The Project ENUA team attended this workshop to learn about how national biodiversity priorities are being captured and considered, provide project perspectives, and become more familiar with how these align with the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).

1.2 Project ENUA Project Implementation Report (PIR)

The 2024 project implementation report (PIR) highlights the key achievements that Project ENUA has accomplished over the course of its first full year of implementation. The report was the result of collaborative efforts of Fred and Hayley along with the UNDP team, who played crucial roles in completing the online form required for documentation. This report served as a significant opportunity to capture the project activities from project inception to present, ensuring that key developments and milestones were accurately documented and challenges or set-backs noted. It also allowed for enhanced reporting practices to be implemented, which should facilitate a smoother reporting process for the next PIR in 2025.

1.3 Catchment Audits with University of Newcastle

In anticipation of the upcoming Catchment Audit assessments with another team from University of Newcastle (UoN) scheduled for October (Q4), Hayley and Terena held a productive Zoom meeting with Troy Gaston from UoN. During this meeting, they discussed the objectives and scope of the audits, aiming to ensure that all necessary preparations are in place for a thorough evaluation of the catchment areas. Hayley and Terena made sure to clarify information and gather insights on the data collection process, which will be a crucial component of the audits' success. The collaboration with Troy facilitated a deeper understanding of UoN's goals for the catchment audit and how they can best support the project team and NES in these project activities.

Next, the team from UON will prepare the final desktop report incorporating stakeholder feedback, update the field plan to reflect current discussions, and create a presentation for key stakeholder meetings upon their arrival. Additionally, they will compile a list of important questions for consultations and provide relevant maps for meetings, ensuring they are printed in the appropriate sizes for enhanced engagement. The catchment audit assessments are the first stage of a series of project activities to better understand our catchment areas, their current threats and how these can be mitigated and environmental health strategically improved throughout the life of Project ENUA.



1.4 Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM)

Project officer, Fred recently presented the draft Grievance Redress Mechanism animation video to the team, outlining the project's key GRM components and the necessary steps to take in order to address any potential project complaints. After the presentation, he collected feedback from the project team, who provided valuable suggestions and highlighted important considerations. Fred is now in the process of reviewing this feedback and carefully finalising the content to ensure that the GRM animation is both informative, effective and comprehensive.

1.6 UNDP Training

UNDP recently visited the Cook Islands for a week in September to conduct training focused on Project ENUA and other national UNDP projects. During their visit, they engaged with the local project teams, including Project ENUA, to enhance understanding of project management considerations and UNDP processes and policies. This training helped provide useful insights and resources to support the successful implementation of Project ENUA, including preparation

of the 2025 annual work plan. The team extend their gratitude and appreciation to UNDP for this in-person support and will continue to liaise remotely on project implementation efforts.

1.7 Survey validation focus group for Muri Lagoon Project

Te Puna Vai Marama (TPVM) is collaborating with Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Stanford University to evaluate ecosystem service valuations in Muri Lagoon, with a professor from Griffith University conducting the technical analysis. Members of the project team participated in the focus group given its linkages to Project ENUA activity sites (Avana & Turangi catchments), and had the opportunity to evaluate the draft choice experiment survey and provide constructive feedback. Engaging in discussions about the social preferences of both Cook Islanders and international tourists will be crucial for enhancing our understanding of the lagoon's importance and relevance to its main users, as well as ways to enhance its management and protection.

1.8 Rarotonga Turtle Management Passage Drone and observation survey

Over the course of 1 week, from 17 July 2024 to 23 July 2024, project officers Terena and Fred and NES staff Sandee conducted observational and drone surveys in the southern Rarotonga passage of Avaavaroa to supplement the current development of the management plan for the area being led by Project ENUA. The intention of the surveys was to ground-truth and verify some of the self-reported information captured from tour operators during the course of the management plan consultations.

The team recorded an average of 66 people in the passage at a given time, along with 5 paddleboards, 4 boats, 4 floats, and 2 kayaks. Determining the total number of tour operators per day was challenging due to the difficulty in differentiating the operators from each other, or even from the guests. Passage conditions during this week ranged from calm to rough, suggesting that in more favourable conditions, there are likely to be a higher number of people in the passage (max recorded was 80 on the first day). These numbers are rough estimates as aerial footage was only captured on three of the seven days due to unfavourable weather conditions, with the remaining observations made visually from the beach.

Whilst these limited observations cannot be considered as rigorous data, they were useful to help corroborate and support aspects that will be included in the draft management plan to help better manage currently unregulated tourism in the area for enhanced environmental conservation.



1.9 Factsheets development in partnership with Tourism, Agriculture & Infrastructure

Through Project ENUA, our team has been actively reaching out to key project stakeholders, including Infrastructure Cook Islands, Cook Islands Tourism, and the Ministry of Agriculture, to gather essential information for the development of awareness-raising pamphlets. To ensure effective collaboration, Fred, Lydia, and Terena have each been assigned a specific ministry to work closely with. This targeted approach allows each team member to engage directly with their assigned stakeholders, gathering relevant data and insights to include in the pamphlets. By working together with these ministries, the team aims to create informative materials that promote sustainable practices and raise awareness of the environmental impacts of various sectors, focussing on key elements that Project ENUA seeks to address throughout its collaborative activities with these key partners.

2.0 ONE Health Workshop, 5th-9th August 2024 in Nadi, Fiji

Delegates from the Cook Islands including Project ENUA's Lydia Sijp (NES) alongside others from the Ministries of Health and Agriculture, attended the One Health Workshop from August 5-9, 2024, in Nadi, Fiji. This inception meeting was a collaboration to prioritize actions to improve cross agency responses to common environmentally related health, agriculture, security and threats. This was a major milestone in enhancing holistic health coordination, by integrating human, animal and environmental care to develop a unified ONE Health plan across sectors, including Climate Change impacts on health. For the Cook Islands, this collaboration will

enhance surveillance systems to monitor and respond to threats across the human, animal and environmental health sectors.



SECTION 2: OUTPUT RESULTS DESCRIPTION & TRACKING

<i>Output</i>	<i>Activity</i>
<p>Component 1: Mainstreaming safeguards to conserve biodiversity and maintain ecosystem services across key development sectors.</p>	
<p>Outcome 1: Biodiversity and ecosystems services safeguards embedded in national and island governance frameworks, and policies, and institutional capacities strengthen across key development sectors (i.e., agriculture, infrastructure, tourism)</p>	
<p>Output 1.1: National Legislation, policies, strategies and plans amended or created to include gender issues and safeguard KBAs and ecosystem services from unsustainable land use activities of key development sectors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● University of Newcastle Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) survey. ● NBSAP Workshop ● Rarotonga Turtle Management Passage Survey ● ONE Health Workshop

<p>Output 1.2: National Environment Information System (NEIS) developed and institutionalized to support intersectoral coordination, monitoring and integration of biodiversity and ecosystem safeguards in land use planning development processes.</p>	<p>No activities conducted this quarter directly contributed towards this output.</p>
<p>Output 1.3: Execution and communication of the catchment audits</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● NBSAP Workshop
<p>Outcome 2: Ecosystems services restored, maintained and enhanced, and globally significant biodiversity safeguarded in priority catchments and managed areas</p>	
<p>Output 2.1: Audits completed for priority catchments, with key pollutant sources (including nutrients) and responsible parties identified and interventions prescribed (linked to output 1.1).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● University of Newcastle Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) survey ● University of Newcastle Catchment Audits ● Rarotonga Turtle Management Passage Survey
<p>Output 2.2: Intersectoral catchment management plans and a management plan for the Manuae Managed Area developed and implemented in partnership with key stakeholders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● University of Newcastle Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) survey ● Rarotonga Turtle Management Passage Survey
<p>Output 2.3: Improved gender sensitive natural resource management in priority catchments and the Manuae Managed Area achieved through adoption of innovative practices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● University of Newcastle Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) survey ● Rarotonga Turtle Management Passage Survey ● ONE Health Workshop
<p>Component 2: Improving the management framework to effectively conserve a national protected areas system representative of Cook Islands biodiversity.</p>	
<p>Outcome 3: Globally significant biodiversity protected across Cook Islands through effective selection, design, management, monitoring and enforcement of its PAs systems</p>	
<p>Output 3.1: Management plans updated / developed and operational in target PAs, with legitimate governance structures in place that are inclusive of traditional management systems (i.e. House of Ariki),</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● University of Newcastle Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) survey ● Rarotonga Turtle Management Passage Survey

<p>gender mainstreaming objectives, and collaborative arrangements with landowners and local communities.</p>	
<p>Output 3.2: Management capacities in target Pas strengthened through application of PAC, PAMP, and tools (e.g., NEIS), and training and systems on biodiversity conservation, surveillance and monitoring.</p>	<p>No activities conducted this quarter directly contributed towards this output.</p>
<p>Output 3.3: Effective community conserved area demonstrated through a newly established Rarotonga Cloud Forest PA with collaborative agreements involving government, traditional leaders and communities.</p>	<p>No activities conducted this quarter directly contributed towards this output.</p>
<p>Component 3: Raising awareness, managing knowledge, mainstreaming gender and monitoring, evaluating and disseminating project results.</p>	
<p>Outcome 4: Greater understanding of values of conserving Cook Islands biodiversity and ecosystem services; adaptive management informed by M&E results; and dissemination of knowledge gained, and lessons learned.</p>	
<p>Output 4.1: Gender-responsive Knowledge Management and Communications Strategy developed and implemented, including annual action plans with targeted public awareness programmes to promote the values of biodiversity and ecosystem services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NBSAP Workshop • Project ENUA Project Implementation Report (PIR) • UNDP Training • Rarotonga Turtle Management Passage Survey • Factsheet Development for Stakeholder Awareness
<p>Output 4.2: Gender-sensitive knowledge and information products on processes, best practices, innovations, lessons learned, and project findings developed and disseminated to stakeholders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NBSAP Workshop • Project ENUA Project Implementation Report (PIR) • Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) Animation Video • UNDP Training • Rarotonga Turtle Management Passage Survey • Factsheet Development for Stakeholder

	Awareness
Output 4.3: Participatory monitoring and evaluation, including gender mainstreaming, informs project implementation, decision-making and lessons learned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NBSAP Workshop • Project ENUA Project Implementation Report (PIR) • UNDP Training • Survey Validation focus group for Muri Lagoon Project • Rarotonga Turtle Management Passage Survey • Factsheet Development for Stakeholder Awareness

SECTION 3: INDICATOR RESULTS DESCRIPTION & TRACKING

This quarter's activities contributed towards the following project indicators:

Indicator #	Indicator Description	Progress
Indicator 1	Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cloud Forest - Suwarrow - Takutea 	No activities conducted this quarter directly contributed towards this indicator.

	- Takitumu Conservation Area	
Indicator 2	<p>Marine protected areas created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Suvarrow - Takutea - Manuae 	<p>Project ENUA team member Terena joins monthly meetings for the SPREP/IUCN Bioscapes Programme to discuss Marine Spatial Planning for the Cook Islands and other related activities aimed at improving marine conservation and sustainable management.</p>
Indicator 3	<p>Area of landscapes under improved practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Avana - Turangi - Avatiu - Takuvaine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The team is currently in the process of developing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the TCA, in collaboration with NES, to continue efforts in conservation and sustainability. This partnership will support ongoing activities such as bird surveys and rat baiting programs, helping to protect and enhance the local ecosystem. • The UoN team visited and worked with us to conduct catchment audit surveys in the four priority catchments, as well as coastal marine surveys. The UoN Catchment Audit team will return in March 2025 to continue the assessments.
Indicator 4	<p>Area of marine habitat under improved practices to benefit biodiversity (hectares; excluding protected areas)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Avana - Turangi - Avatiu - Takuvaine 	<p>The UoN team visited and worked with us to conduct catchment audit surveys in the four priority catchments, as well as coastal marine surveys. The UoN Catchment Audit team will return in March 2025 to continue the assessments.</p>

Indicator 5	Greenhouse emissions mitigated.	No activities conducted this quarter directly contributed towards this indicator.
Indicator 6	Number of direct project beneficiaries disaggregated by gender as a co-benefit of GEF investment	The team met with a total of 325 people across various events. Of these, 183 were women, making up approximately 56.3% of the total. For further details, please refer to Section 5 of the report.
Indicator 7	Legislation, policies and safeguard measures adopted and under implementation in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - catchment management plans; - PA management plans; and - Island Environment Management Plans (IEMPs, within Island Development Plans [IDPs]). 	A Technical Advisor and local NGO consultant team to develop a management Plan for the Southern Passages of Rarotonga (within Rarortonga's Marae Moana marine protected area) to improve biodiversity and ecosystem conservation of the area.
Indicator 8	Regulations developed or updated to reflect strengthened biodiversity and ecosystem safeguards.	No activities conducted this quarter directly contributed towards this indicator.
Indicator 9	Improved capacities of key development sectors, as measured by improvements in capacity development scorecard assessments of (a) NES, (b) CIT, (c) MOA, (D) ICI.	The team has been actively working with key partners to raise awareness and share important biodiversity and Project ENUA related information. Once the Chief Technical Advisor is onboard strategic plans will be developed on how to improve capacities more effectively.
Indicator 10	Priority actions in the intersectoral catchment management plans reflected in the work programmes/budgets of NES, MOA, ICI, and CIT by the end of the project.	No activities conducted this quarter directly contributed towards this indicator.

Indicator 11	Increased adoption of sustainable natural resource management, as measured by (a) number of innovative practices piloted in the priority catchments; (b) reduction in the use of glyphosate, paraquat, and imidacloprid, and (c) number of tourism operators certified under the Mana Tiaki Eco-Certification Scheme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNDP is currently in the process of recruiting a CTA to assist with progress in these areas. • CIT are currently redesigning their Cook Islands Quality Assurance and Mana Tiaki Eco-accreditation scheme, which may require amendments to be made to part c) of this indicator.
Indicator 12	Improved science-based protected area management, as measured by information on biodiversity resource inventories and vegetative area/cover systematically compiled.	No activities conducted this quarter directly contributed towards this indicator.
Indicator 13	Biodiversity threats reduced, as measured by the number of sites reporting absence of invasive rats after eradication interventions.	No activities conducted this quarter directly contributed towards this indicator.
Indicator 14	Level of agreement to the following statement: Conservation areas/Ra'ui have improved the status of ecological systems in the Cook Islands.	The UoN team visited to conduct the KAP surveys, which helped us gain a better understanding of public understanding and awareness as to which areas of the environment are being most impacted by key development sectors. This information will guide us in identifying the areas that need the most attention and improvement. Associated midterm and end of project targets will require revision based on the updated KAP survey once the final report is received.
Indicator 15	Increase in flow of knowledge and information on best practices, as measured by (a) the cumulative number of visits to the NES website and social media platforms, and (b) the number of knowledge products generated and	

disseminated (case studies, factsheets, short videos, guidance documents, etc.)

SECTION 4: FINANCIAL SUMMARY AND PROGRESS

A total of NZ\$214,254.63 was received in-country at the start of the year on 20th March 2024.

NZ\$42,055.51 expenditure was reported to UNDP and liquidated earlier in the year as part of the Q1 reporting, representing 20% total expenditure of available funds. This resulted in a balance of NZ\$172,199.12 remaining to be utilized against agreed project work plan activities.

NZ\$45,814.97 was utilized during Q2 activities, and NZ\$51,198.65 during Q3 activities, each reflecting 21% and 24% of total funds accordingly.

By the close of Q3 (end of September 2024), total expenditure is therefore NZ\$139,069.13 representing 65% of total in-country budget, with NZ\$75,185.50 (35%) remaining.

This remaining budget available will be fully expended, reported and liquidated with UNDP in the coming quarter (Q4).

<i>Narration</i>	<i>NZ\$ Amount</i>	<i>% budget</i>
Total amount received	\$ 214,254.63	100%
Q1 liquidation	\$ 42,055.51	20%
Remaining balance	\$ 172,199.12	80%
Q2 expenditure	\$ 45,814.97	21%
Remaining balance	\$ 126,384.15	59%
Q3 expenditure	\$ 51,198.65	24%
Remaining balance	\$ 75,185.50	35%

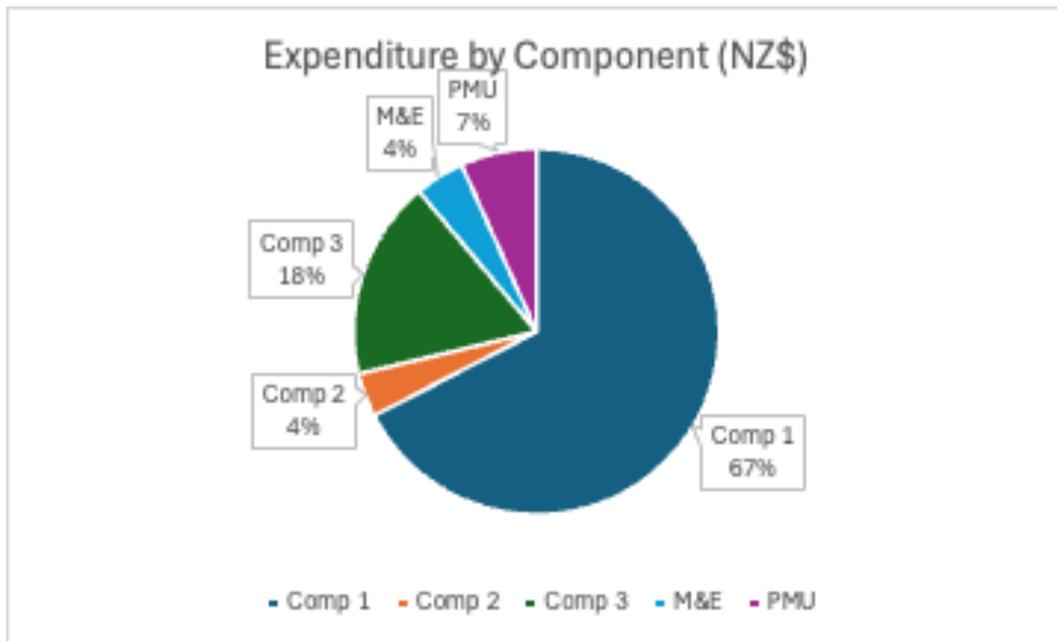
Whilst utilization of existing funds remains steady, the project is behind on overall expenditure based on the annual work plan. Key reasons for this continue to be delays in procurement of

technical consultants for the project, resulting in savings of consultant fees as well as delays in implementing the activities they are expected to help guide and drive.

The project team expect that with the contracting of the Biodiversity Specialist and Chief Technical Advisor positions, subsequent terms of references for additional procurement and implementation plans will be developed to help facilitate and enable increased expenditure rates and progress.

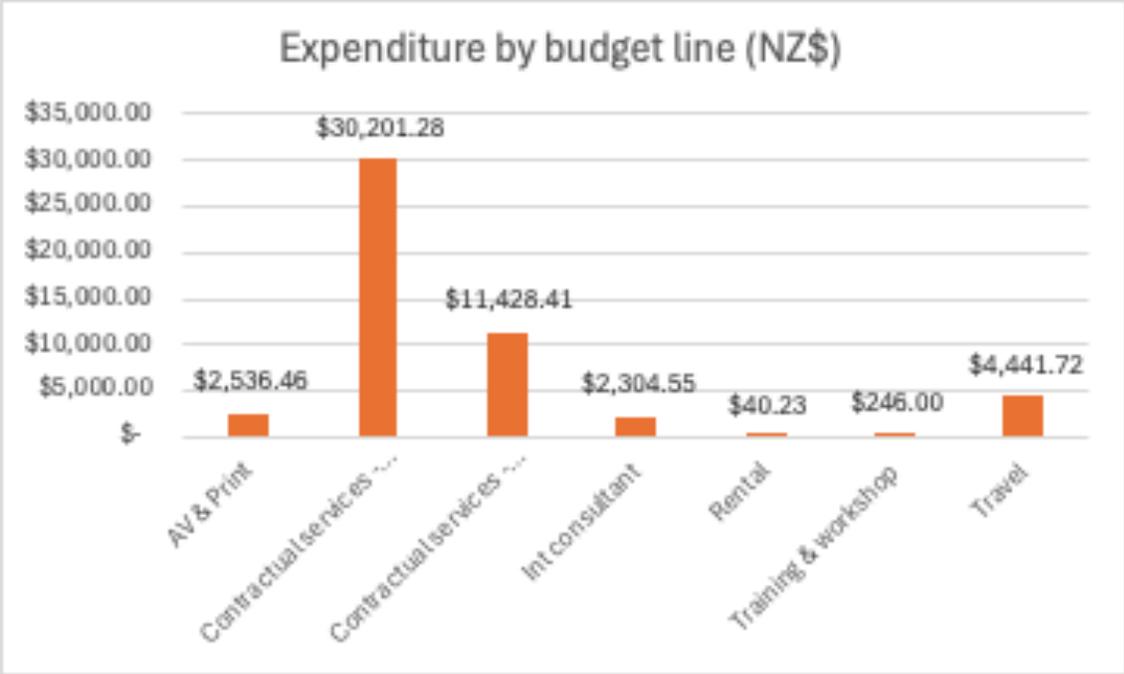
A breakdown of Q3 expenditure across components and budget lines is available in the tables and charts below:

Component	Expenditure (NZ\$)	%
Comp 1	\$34,501.88	67%
Comp 2	\$1,996.05	4%
Comp 3	\$9,012.96	18%
M&E	\$2,243.55	4%
PMU	\$3,444.21	7%
Total	\$51,198.65	100%



Budget line	Expenditure (NZ\$)	%
AV & Print	\$2,536.46	5%
Contractual services - company	\$30,201.28	59%
Contractual services - implementing partner	\$11,428.41	22%

Int consultant	\$2,304.55	5%
Rental	\$40.23	0%
Training & workshop	\$246.00	0%
Travel	\$4,441.72	9%
Total	\$51,198.65	100%



SECTION 5: STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT & GENDER

Between July and August 2024, several key meetings and activities took place related to environmental projects in the Cook Islands. These included workshops and media efforts for the University of Newcastle KAP surveys, updates to the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), and discussions on the Rarotonga Southern Passage Management Plan with Te Puna Vai Marama and Te Ipukarea Society. The team also worked on catchment audits, turtle management plans, and the Kakerori recovery program within the Takitumu Conservation Area. There were ongoing meetings with various stakeholders, including SPREP and UNDP, to ensure the success of these initiatives, with a focus on water quality monitoring, logistics for University of Newcastle’s upcoming visit, and coordination with local NGOs and government agencies. In terms of participation, 16 meetings involved 44 women and 29 men, giving a ratio of approximately 3 women for every 2 men.

SECTION 6: PROJECT RISKS AND ISSUES

