

## Cook Islands GEF 7 Project ENUA

### 3rd Quarter Progress Report 2025

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## Table of Contents

<b>SECTION 1: SUMMARY OF PROGRESS AND HIGHLIGHTS.....</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1 University of Newcastle Catchment Audit Assessments.....	3
1.1.2 Training provided to NES on probe for water quality monitoring .....	4
1.2 Catchment Coordination.....	4
1.3 Conservation Area and Biodiversity Initiatives .....	5
1.3.1 TCA MOA signed and funding agreement for activities.....	5
1.3.2 Suwarrow Biodiversity Monitoring Supplies, Equipment and Resourcing .....	5
1.4 Gender and Social Safeguards .....	5
1.4.1 Recruitment of Gender Safeguards Consultant.....	5
1.4.2 Gender Action Plan and Workshop (TPVM).....	6
1.4.3 Gender & SESA positions contracted.....	7
1.5 Reporting and Stakeholder Engagement .....	8
1.5.1 PIR 2025 reporting completed & submitted.....	8
1.5.2 Koutu Nui AGM presentation .....	8
1.5.3 Rarotonga Southern Passages Environmental Management Plan Feedback .....	9
1.6 Knowledge Management and Educational Initiatives .....	10
1.6.1 TIS & KO Children's Book Discussions.....	10
1.7 Capacity Building and Travel Support .....	10
1.7.1 Support provided for travel (Sidney, Brennan, and Ana) .....	10
<b>SECTION 2: OUTPUT RESULTS DESCRIPTION &amp; TRACKING .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>SECTION 3: INDICATOR RESULTS DESCRIPTION &amp; TRACKING .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>SECTION 4: FINANCIAL SUMMARY AND PROGRESS .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>SECTION 5: STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT &amp; GENDER.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>SECTION 6: LESSONS LEARNED, GOOD PRACTICES &amp; SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING.....</b>	<b>21</b>

## SECTION 1: SUMMARY OF PROGRESS AND HIGHLIGHTS

### 1.1 University of Newcastle Catchment Audit Assessments

#### 1.1.1 University of Newcastle Ongoing Catchment Audit Assessments



*Associate Professor Troy Gaston from the University of Newcastle collecting water and sediment samples in the Avana catchment as part of the ongoing audit assessment for subsequent analysis and testing.*

In early July, the University of Newcastle team visited Rarotonga for their third round of catchment audit assessments, including discussions around Tiny Forests as a pilot initiative for upcoming community grants. Their objectives were to meet with NES to plan the week, conduct catchment sampling and surveys with Dr. Alex Callen, engage with MEC, KO, Agriculture, and Tourism for collaboration, and discuss strategic actions to improve aquatic ecosystem health, including lagoon sampling across four priority catchments. The team held productive meetings with MEC and KO, completed successful catchment sampling, and received an interactive nutrient data map from Troy Gaston, which includes



historical data dating back to October 2024. During the visit, discussions were also held with MEC and KO regarding their roles as catchment coordinators, and MEC is now in the process of being contracted as consultants to lead catchment coordination for Avana and Turangi. In parallel, discussions on Tiny Forests as a pilot for upcoming community grants progressed, and Brennan Panzerella has been engaged to apply for a PhD with the University of Newcastle focused on Tiny Forests in Rarotonga; he has been working closely with Dr. Callen and Troy Gaston on this initiative. Current activities include collecting field data, reviewing the nutrient data report, planning the University of Newcastle student trip scheduled for 16–29 November, and coordinating with NES for executive-level discussions. Action points for ecosystem improvements have been captured, and follow-up meetings with Dr. Callen and Troy Gaston are underway. In the coming weeks, the team will prepare a trip summary report for partners and the ENUA team, finalize logistics for the November visit, and develop a catchment restoration action plan that incorporates potential Tiny Forest pilot sites.



*Meeting at Muri Environment Care Nursery with the Ministry of Marine Resources, University of Newcastle, and National Environment Service Project Enuu team to discuss ongoing water quality initiatives.*

For more details, please [see the article](#).

### 1.1.2 University of Newcastle Studies - Combining work and study



*Terena, in her final trimester at the University of Newcastle, shared her second assignment — a 3-minute presentation and 15-minute discussion on nature-based solutions, global examples, and Australia's efforts.*

Terena is currently in her final trimester undertaking a Postgraduate Certificate in Environmental Management and Sustainability at the University of Newcastle online. She is enrolled in the ENVS6555 Applied Natural Resource Management course, where her ongoing work with Project ENUA has provided practical experience directly relevant to her studies. Activities such as catchment assessments, community engagement, and environmental monitoring have enhanced her understanding of applied natural resource management and the integration of scientific, cultural, and community perspectives in environmental decision-making.

The knowledge and skills gained through her participation in Project ENUA are expected to provide long-term benefits, including strengthening her professional capacity in environmental management, supporting evidence-based conservation initiatives in the Cook Islands, and enabling her to contribute



effectively to sustainable ecosystem management and policy development upon completion of her studies.

### 1.1.3 Training provided to NES on probe for water quality monitoring



*Fred trained the compliance team on using the water quality testing probe.*

In June, the National Environment Service (NES) purchased an AQUA 75 Water Quality Multiprobe to strengthen national capacity for water quality monitoring within key catchment areas. Members of the Compliance Division participated in a hands-on training session designed to build practical skills in the use of this equipment. The session provided a step-by-step guide on the operation of the multiprobe, including procedures for data collection and transfer of data to mobile devices such as phones and tablets. Participants were also introduced to the general functions, parameters, and maintenance requirements of the equipment. The AQUA 75 is the same model used by the University of Newcastle (UoN) during their previous visits to the Cook Islands to conduct catchment audits, ensuring consistency in water quality monitoring approaches. During UoN's next visit, NES Compliance Officers will accompany the research team in the field to conduct water testing using the AQUA 75, providing an opportunity for practical application of their training and further developing their technical proficiency. This hands-on experience will enable the Compliance Division to independently undertake regular water

testing and monitoring activities, contributing to more robust environmental management and reporting within the catchment management framework.

## 1.2 Catchment Coordination

### 1.2.1 MEC Catchment Coordination Contract

Several discussions were held with the Muri Environment Care (MEC) group regarding the Catchment Coordinator Agreement to ensure alignment with the specific outcomes of the project activities. The Catchment Coordination contract with MEC was signed on 7 October 2025.

Under this agreement, the catchment coordination team will be responsible for:

- Developing and submitting a detailed work plan.
- Preparing draft catchment management plans for Avana and Turangi separately.
- Finalizing the management plans and submitting them to NES for review and approval.

This work contributes directly to Outcome 2 of the project, with management plans expected to be completed by approximately July 2026.

MEC has also engaged Jo Holley as Project Manager to support the Catchment Coordination team. Key activities underway since the contract signing include:

- Commencement of the work plan.
- Confirmation of community engagement with Community Coordination.
- Baseline capture and mapping (non-technical).
- Information management and media narrative pilots, including household interviews.

## 1.3 Conservation Area and Biodiversity Initiatives

### 1.3.1 TCA MOU signed and funding agreement for activities

Takitumu Conservation Area (TCA) Executive signed new contract with NES/GEF7 Project Enuu on Wednesday 24 September 2025 at NES, to engage the Project Manager with the support of the TCA technical committee to deliver services for GEF7 Project Enuu ( Enhancing Natures Unique Area). The scope of the work is to safe guard key biodiversity and habitats in line with the Project objectives and planned outcomes and the TCA Management 2020-2030, to include management Framework to effectively conserve national protected areas, monitoring and enforcement of PA. Developing TCA Environment Management plan updated/developed and operational in targeted protected areas, with several activities including the continued eradication of RATS program.





*Left to right: Ana Tiraa, Ian Karika, Noeline Browne, Paul Maoate, and Edward Karika, members of the Takitumu Conservation Committee, with Project ENUA's Lydia Sijp following the signing of the MOU between TCA and NES.*

#### 1.3.2 Suvarrow Biodiversity Monitoring Supplies, Equipment and Resourcing

The team met with the three rangers prior to their departure to Suvarrow to ensure they had all the necessary equipment and resources required for Karen to conduct her research, which includes a variety of biodiversity surveys. Project ENUA was able to assist by providing funding to support this. Regarding the biodiversity surveys and the required equipment, we also discussed that these surveys will serve as the start of baseline data, as there is currently no readily available or online data for this area.



## 1.4 Gender and Social Safeguards

### 1.4.1 Recruitment of Gender Safeguards Consultant

We have successfully contracted Te Puna Vai Mārama to deliver gender-related services under Project ENUA (Enhancing Nature's Unique Area). The consultancy agreement between the National Environment Service (NES) and Te Puna Vai Mārama was signed on 11 July 2025, with the work scheduled to run until 30 September 2026.

Under this agreement, Te Puna Vai Mārama will serve as the Gender Safeguards Consultant, responsible for the following key tasks:

- Developing a comprehensive Gender Action Plan (GAP) aligned with GEF and UNDP requirements.
- Facilitating capacity-building workshops and training sessions to support gender mainstreaming within project implementation.
- Providing ongoing technical advice and contributing to gender-related monitoring, reporting, and evaluation, including quarterly progress reports, the midterm review, and terminal evaluation.
- Reviewing and providing feedback on project documents to ensure gender considerations are consistently applied.

The consultancy will produce a series of deliverables, including an Inception Report, Draft and Final Gender Action Plan, Workshop and Training Reports, and Recommendation Reports summarizing stakeholder feedback.

### 1.4.2 Gender Action Plan and Workshop (TPVM)

As part of the Gender Safeguards consultancy under Project ENUA, a Gender Action Plan (GAP) Training and Dialogue Session was held on 2 September 2025 at the University of the South Pacific (USP). The Session was facilitated by Merita Tuari'i and Prof. Heather Worth from Te Puna Vai Mārama.

The workshop provided a safe, open and engaging space for participants to discuss gender dynamics in biodiversity and natural resource management in the Cook Islands, including in environmental and key sector governance, in the workplace, and traditional land and natural resource use. Perspectives on equity, cultural dynamics, education and how women and men use biodiversity differently were shared, providing important insights for the development of the GAP, such as gender and ecological education; gender in political ecology; and gendered roles and expectations within tourism, agriculture, environment, infrastructure and other areas such as traditional leadership.. Participants were also encouraged to share experiences and raise any gender-related issues relevant to their work and communities.

As part of the training, participants were also provided a manual developed to support understanding of the vital connections between gender, biodiversity conservation, and key development sectors — infrastructure, tourism, and agriculture. These three sectors are central to the Cook Islands' national growth and community wellbeing, while also directly influencing how natural resources are used, conserved, or depleted. The manual highlights that women and men interact with biodiversity and these sectors in distinct ways, bringing unique knowledge, roles, and priorities that affect both conservation outcomes and economic development.



*Merita Tuari'i, Senior Research Fellow at Te Puna Vai Marama, presenting the draft Gender Action Plan to stakeholders at the USP campus.*

#### 1.4.3 Gender & SESA positions contracted

During Q3, Te Puna Vai Mārama was contracted to provide Gender Safeguards support for Project ENUA. They developed a Gender Action Plan and held a workshop at the University of the South Pacific



(USP) with relevant government agencies and local non-governmental organizations to review the plan, gather feedback, and build capacity for implementing gender-sensitive practices across the project. The Social and Environmental Safeguards consultancy is still in progress, with the team actively working with the Chief Technical Advisor to fill this position. Once established, this role will help ensure that social and environmental safeguards are consistently applied across all Project ENUA activities, supporting sustainable and responsible project implementation. SESA contract not yet finalised due to applicant declining the contract offer. Recommendation to re-advertise the position.

## 1.5 Reporting and Stakeholder Engagement

### 1.5.1 PIR 2025 reporting completed & submitted

The second Project Implementation Review (PIR) for the ENUA project covers the period from July 2024 to June 2025. Overall, the project's development goal is rated Moderately Satisfactory. Three outcomes, strengthening governance and policy, protecting biodiversity, and sharing knowledge are on track. One outcome, restoring ecosystems in priority areas, is off-track, mainly because catchment audits and management plans are still being developed.

#### Key achievements during the reporting period include:

- **Biodiversity and Protected Areas (Indicators 1–3, 13):** The Takitumu Conservation Area remains a flagship achievement, recognized as the first Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measure (OECM) in the Pacific. Rat eradication interventions progressed at Takutea, showing substantial reductions in rat populations, with post-control monitoring planned to confirm eradication. Suwarrow continues to be monitored, and additional eradication plans are in development with support from international consultants. Two sites are now confirmed rat-free.
- **Knowledge Management and Outreach:** Significant engagement through NES platforms, including over 22,000 website views, and the development of children's books, riparian guidelines, videos, and newsletters, demonstrates strong progress in raising awareness and disseminating lessons learned. The Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) survey is being revised and updated in collaboration with the University of Newcastle to provide a more accurate baseline and inform future community engagement.
- **Project Governance and Stakeholder Engagement:** Three Project Board meetings and an inception workshop facilitated active engagement from government agencies, UNDP, NGOs, and regional partners. Stakeholder engagement has been enhanced through workshops, media, and communications in both English and Cook Islands Maori. Gender mainstreaming has been integrated, with equal representation on the Project Board and inclusion of gender-disaggregated data in surveys.

### 1.5.2 Koutu Nui AGM presentation

Senior Project Officer and Project Officer delivered a presentation to the *Koutu Nui* on the GEF-7 Project ENUA, outlining the project's key components and current progress. The discussion covered the following areas:

- **Takitumu Conservation Area:** A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been signed, and the partnership agreement and project budget have been finalized. Research collaboration with the University of Newcastle (UON) and planned capacity-building initiatives will continue under the finalized agreement.
- **Cloud Forest Initiative:** Discussions have been held regarding the recognition of the cloud forest and engagement with landowners to support conservation outcomes, and the forthcoming consultancy and capacity-building activities.
- **Catchment Management:** In July 2025, the University of Newcastle visited Rarotonga for a week to conduct the third round of catchment water quality testing. The purpose of the visit was to engage with relevant environmental agencies involved in water monitoring, ensuring coordination and the sharing of necessary data. A meeting was held with Cook Islands Climate Change (Matt Blacka) to identify areas across the island where ministries currently monitor and collect water quality data. Meetings were also held with the Muri Environment Care group and Korero o te Orau regarding catchment coordination. Currently, the process is underway to contract MEC as the catchment coordinators for Avana and Turangi, after which Korero o te Orau will be approached to confirm their interest in becoming catchment coordinators for Avatiu and Takuvaie. These activities aim to inform future restoration priorities and management planning.
- **Rarotonga Southern Passages Environmental Management Plan:** The public consultation period for the Environmental Management Plan was conducted over four weeks, from 18 June to 18 July 2025. During this period, community members were invited to provide input via a JotForm, allowing them to share feedback on proposed management actions. This consultation aimed to ensure that conservation measures are aligned with local priorities and support sustainable use objectives.

### 1.5.3 Rarotonga Southern Passages Environmental Management Plan Feedback

The Rarotonga Southern Passages Management Plan was shared for public input from 18 June to 18 July. Following this consultation period, Siana and I reviewed all feedback received and developed a Consultation Feedback Report, which was subsequently shared with the NES Senior Management Team. A total of 21 responses were received, including 15 online forms, three emails (one being a group submission from the inshore team at the Ministry of Marine Resources), one in-person submission, and one analytical report. Feedback was carefully analyzed, and key themes were identified, including



habitat degradation, biodiversity protection, enforcement and compliance, monitoring and evaluation, and cultural governance (ra'ui). Stakeholders highlighted the need for baseline data and independent monitoring, stronger enforcement and fair regulation, clear indicators for adaptive management, and operationalizing ra'ui to integrate cultural governance. Overall, there was broad support for the plan, with a call for greater precision in its implementation. The team is now progressing to the next steps, which include reviewing recommendations, revising the plan with edits and updates, establishing a management committee and presenting the final version under EA 37(2), setting up internal monitoring and enforcement systems, presenting the plan to REA for endorsement, and publicly sharing the final plan, including communications, training, and awareness initiatives.

## 1.6 Knowledge Management and Educational Initiatives

### 1.6.1 TIS & KO Children's Book Discussions

The team is collaborating with Te Ipukarea Society (TIS) to leverage their expertise in local biodiversity, environmental education, and Cook Islands Māori cultural knowledge. The purpose of this collaboration is to develop an engaging and educational resource that introduces children to the Cook Islands' native, endemic, endangered, and invasive species, while fostering an understanding of the ecosystems they inhabit and the importance of conservation.

The activity book is designed for children aged 5–12 and will include interactive and age-appropriate content, including illustrations, activities, and storytelling that integrate Māori legends and cultural practices where relevant. It aims to promote positive environmental behaviours, biodiversity stewardship, and awareness of ecosystem services such as coral reefs, wetlands, native forests, and endemic bird species.

Primary beneficiaries of this initiative include school-aged children, teachers, and community education programmes, with the book also intended for wider public engagement. Individual master pages will be made available online for teachers and community leaders to use in classrooms and educational programmes, supporting both formal and informal learning about local biodiversity. The project is currently in the conceptual stage, with further development and agreement with TIS to be confirmed.

## 1.7 Capacity Building and Travel Support

### 1.7.1 Support provided for travel (Sidney, Brennan, and Ana)

Funding support was provided for three participants (Sidney, Brennan Panzarella, and Ana Tiraa) to attend relevant conferences and learning exchanges.

**Ana Tiraa**

Ana, representing the Takitumu Conservation Area (TCA) Management, requested and received funding support to attend the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Abu Dhabi from 9-15 October 2025. A total budget of NZD 5,000 was approved to cover travel, accommodation, and incidental expenses.

Upon her return Ana will prepare and submit a Back-to-Office Report (BTOR) and deliver a short presentation to share key learning and experiences with NES, community groups, and the TCA Management Committee.

### **Brennan Panzarella**

Brennan represented the Cook Islands at the IUCN Intrapacific Learning Exchange in Auckland (23–30 August 2025), which brought together Pacific Island representatives, conservation NGOs, and regional partners to share knowledge and strengthen capacity in protected area management. Key outcomes from his BTOR include:

- Facilitated the exchange of knowledge across Pacific countries and territories.
- Strengthened capacity for effective management of protected areas.
- Shared lessons on community-based conservation approaches.
- Built regional networks for ongoing collaboration and support.

The exchange included workshops, mock proposals, and field visits focused on the global “30 by 30” conservation target, embedding indigenous values, promoting youth involvement, and developing tools for community-led environmental management. Insights will be shared with NES and local community groups to inform ongoing projects.

For more details, see Brennan’s [trip report](#).

### **Korero o te Orau Youth - STEMtastic Adventures with Young Pacific Leaders**

NES provided funding of NZD 1,900 to support Sidney from Korero o te Ōrau to attend the STEMtastic Adventures with Young Pacific Leaders regional event in Fiji. This opportunity aimed to build skills, cross-cultural exchange, and experience in science, technology, and environmental stewardship. Participants are expected to submit a report using the NES template, deliver a short presentation to share learnings with Kōrero o te Ōrau and the AKTT program, and use NES and Project ENUA logos when referencing the trip.

A travel report from Ana Tiraa is pending. Sidney’s report has been received and will provide detailed insights to inform NES, community groups, and ongoing regional initiatives.

For more details, see Sidney’s [trip report](#).



## 1.8 Other major activities and outputs

**Indicators 3 and 4:** Work commenced on developing a standard Table of Contents (ToC) for resource documents and management plans for the five target Protected Areas (PAs) / sites: Suvarrow, TCA, Takutea, Rarotonga Forests, and Manuae (the latter is covered under KPI #3).

**Indicator 7:** A *Guidance Note for Resource Reports and Management Plans* was developed to provide guidance and direction for the outputs to be prepared for the five target sites. This guidance note includes a standard ToC for resource reports and management plans.

Consultant Terms of Reference (ToR) were developed for the site-specific resource reports and management plans as follows:

- #18 – Suvarrow NP
- #19 – Takutea
- #29 – TCA
- #23 – Rarotonga Forests
- Activity design and ToR were completed, and approach and interactions (via email, Teams calls) with the prospective consultant were initiated.

**Indicator 9:** The CTA led meetings with NES, ICI, CIT, and MoA regarding the implementation plans for the Capacity Development Scorecard (CDS). Meeting reports were compiled for ICI, CIT, and MoA, and a detailed capacity implementation plan was developed for NES.

**Indicator 11:** Dialogue with CIT initially focused on the CDS for CIT, followed by further discussions around Mana Tiaka and CIQA 3.0. Future efforts will focus on strengthening CIQA 3.0, particularly concerning CTO guidelines and accreditation for operations in PAs/MPAs.

**Indicator 13:** The CTA reviewed literature on previous rat control and eradication efforts in the Cook Islands, with a particular focus on the five target sites within the project scope. The review also covered rat eradication and UNDP SES requirements (as outlined in the ProDoc). Early advice was provided to NES regarding priority areas for eradication, specifically:

- Assess the current status of rats at Suvarrow motus and Takutea; if rats are still present, complete eradication at these locations.
- Pending the above and available budget, propose initial knock-down efforts at Manuae.
- Conduct strategic control at TCA and Cloud Forests.

## SECTION 2: OUTPUT RESULTS DESCRIPTION & TRACKING

This quarter's activities contributed towards the following project components, outcomes and outputs:

Output	Activity
Component 1: Mainstreaming safeguards to conserve biodiversity and maintain ecosystem services across key development sectors.	
<b>Outcome 1:</b> 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)	
<b>Output 1.1:</b> 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>1.2 Recruitment of Gender Safeguards Consultant</b> – This enables work on integrating gender into legislation, policies, and plans.</li> <li>• <b>1.4 Gender position contracted</b> – This position, which is responsible for ensuring that gender and social/environmental safeguards are applied, directly contributes to the output.</li> <li>• <b>1.3 Rarotonga Southern Passages Environmental Management Plan Feedback</b> – Provides input to plans that safeguard ecosystems (KBAs) from unsustainable land use.</li> </ul>
<b>Output 1.2:</b> 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>1.1 University of Newcastle Catchment Audit Assessments</b> – Provides key environmental and biodiversity data that feed into NEIS for monitoring and planning.</li> <li>• <b>1.9 Water Quality Probe Training provided to NES staff</b> – Builds capacity for environmental monitoring, which can feed into NEIS.</li> <li>• <b>1.11 MEC Catchment Coordination</b></li> </ul>



	<b>Contract</b> – Supports local-level coordination and information collection relevant to NEIS.
<b>Output 1.3:</b> Execution and communication of the catchment audits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>1.1 University of Newcastle Catchment Audit Assessments</b> – This is the core activity, as it involves conducting the actual audits.</li> <li>• <b>1.11 MEC Catchment Coordination Contract</b> – Supports coordination at the local level and helps communicate audit findings with catchment coordinators.</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome 2:</b> Ecosystems services restored, maintained and enhanced, and globally significant biodiversity safeguarded in priority catchments and managed areas	
<b>Output 2.1:</b> Audits completed for priority catchments, with key pollutant sources (including nutrients) and responsible parties identified and interventions prescribed (linked to output 1.1).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>1.1 University of Newcastle Catchment Audit Assessments</b> – Core activity that conducts audits, identifies pollutant contributors, and proposes interventions.</li> </ul>
<b>Output 2.2:</b> Intersectoral catchment management plans and a management plan for the Manuae Managed Area developed and implemented in partnership with key stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>1.1 University of Newcastle Catchment Audit Assessments</b> – Provides essential baseline data for developing catchment management plans.</li> </ul>
<b>Output 2.3:</b> Improved gender sensitive natural resource management in priority catchments and the Manuae Managed Area achieved through adoption of innovative practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>1.2 Recruitment of Gender Safeguards Consultant</b> – Enables integration of gender considerations into NRM practices.</li> <li>• <b>1.4 Gender &amp; SESA positions contracted</b> – Directly supports adoption of gender-sensitive practices in priority catchments.</li> </ul>
<b>Component 2:</b> Improving the management framework to effectively conserve a national protected areas system representative of Cook Islands biodiversity.	
<b>Outcome 3:</b> Globally significant biodiversity protected across Cook Islands through effective selection, design, management, monitoring and enforcement of its PAs systems	

<p><b>Output 3.1:</b> 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), gender mainstreaming objectives, and collaborative arrangements with landowners and local communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>1.3 Rarotonga Southern Passages Environmental Management Plan Feedback</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Output 3.2:</b> 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 direct progress was made on updating or developing management plans in target Protected Areas this quarter.</p>
<p><b>Output 3.3:</b> Effective community conserved area demonstrated through a newly established Rarotonga Cloud Forest PA with collaborative agreements involving government, traditional leaders and communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>1.6 METT Implementation plans completed by CTA</b></li> </ul>
<p>Component 3: Raising awareness, managing knowledge, mainstreaming gender and monitoring, evaluating and disseminating project results.</p>	
<p><b>Outcome 4:</b> Greater understanding of values of conserving Cook Islands biodiversity and ecosystem services; adaptive management informed by M&amp;E results; and dissemination of knowledge gained, and lessons learned.</p>	
<p><b>Output 4.1:</b> 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"> <li>• <b>1.12 TIS &amp; KO Children's Book Contract</b> – Production of educational materials that communicate biodiversity and ecosystem values to the public.</li> <li>• <b>1.3 Rarotonga Southern Passages Environmental Management Plan Feedback</b> – Sharing findings and updates contributes to broader knowledge management and awareness.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Output 4.2:</b> Gender-sensitive knowledge and information products on processes, best practices,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>1.5 PIR 2025 reporting completed &amp;</b></li> </ul>



innovations, lessons learned, and project findings developed and disseminated to stakeholders.	<b>submitted</b> – A formal knowledge product summarizing project progress, lessons, and outputs for stakeholders.
<b>Output 4.3:</b> Participatory monitoring and evaluation, including gender mainstreaming, informs project implementation, decision-making and lessons learned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>1.5 PIR 2025 reporting completed &amp; submitted</b></li> <li>• <b>1.2 Recruitment of Gender Safeguards Consultant</b></li> <li>• <b>1.4 Gender &amp; SESA positions contracted –</b></li> <li>• <b>1.1 University of Newcastle Catchment Audit Assessments</b></li> <li>• <b>1.9 Water Quality Probe Training provided to NES staff</b></li> <li>• <b>1.11 MEC Catchment Coordination Contract</b></li> </ul>

## SECTION 3: INDICATOR RESULTS DESCRIPTION & TRACKING

53% (8/15) of project indicators.

Indicator #	Indicator Description	Progress
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Indicator 1	<p>Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cloud Forest</li> <li>- Suvarrow</li> <li>- Takutea</li> <li>- Takitumu Conservation Area</li> </ul>	<p>Consultants have been hired for the Gender Safeguards and SESA positions. Keith will return in November to provide more training and guidance. Another Project Steering Committee (PSC) meeting took place in September to review progress and finances. Community feedback on the Rarotonga Southern Passages Management Plan has been reviewed and included in the draft, which is now with the senior management team for their review.</p>
Indicator 2	<p>Marine protected areas created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Suvarrow</li> <li>- Takutea</li> <li>- Manuae</li> </ul>	<p>No changes this period; ongoing efforts continue to support management and conservation at Suvarrow, Takutea, and Manuae marine protected areas.</p>
Indicator 3	<p>Area of landscapes under improved practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Avana</li> <li>- Turangi</li> <li>- Avatiu</li> <li>- Takuvaine</li> </ul>	<p>Improved practices are being tracked across Avana, Turangi, Avatiu, and Takuvaine. MEC's catchment coordination agreement, covering Avana and Turangi, has commenced, while a contract with Kōrero o te Orau is being developed for Avatiu and Takuvaine.</p>
Indicator 4	<p>Area of marine habitat under improved practices to benefit biodiversity (hectares; excluding protected areas)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Avana</li> <li>- Turangi</li> <li>- Avatiu</li> </ul>	<p>No progress has been made yet in improving marine habitats outside protected areas.</p>



	- Takuvaine	
Indicator 5	Greenhouse emissions mitigated.	No specific greenhouse gas mitigation activities reported this period
Indicator 6	Number of direct project beneficiaries disaggregated by gender as a co-benefit of GEF investment	Project ENUA continues to engage local teams and stakeholders through training and consultations. A gender safeguards consultant has been engaged to review new consultancies where necessary, ensuring gender considerations are integrated and beneficiary data is disaggregated by gender as part of ongoing project monitoring.
Indicator 7	<p>Legislation, policies and safeguard measures adopted and under implementation in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- catchment management plans;</li> <li>- PA management plans; and</li> <li>- Island Environment Management Plans (IEMPs, within Island Development Plans [IDPs]).</li> </ul>	Rarotonga Southern Passages Management Plan is now undergoing internal review within NES to progress toward implementation.
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.	In June, Keith visited and held meetings with all key stakeholders to review project activities, assess progress, and identify any capacity gaps. Follow-up actions are being implemented to strengthen capacities across NES, CIT, MOA, and ICI, ensuring ongoing improvements in key development sectors.

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.	MEC has been contracted to develop the management plans for Avana and Turangi catchments, and we are working with Korero o te Orau to contract them for the Avatiu and Takuvaine catchments. The plans have not yet been completed, so their priority actions are not yet reflected in the work programmes or budgets of NES, MOA, ICI, and CIT.
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.	No major changes were observed this quarter in adoption of sustainable practices, chemical reduction, or eco-certification.
Indicator 12	Improved science-based protected area management, as measured by information on biodiversity resource inventories and vegetative area/cover systematically compiled.	No major progress was made this quarter in terms of NEIS development. The Chief Technical Advisor (Keith) continues to support the team with NEIS feasibility assessments, laying the groundwork for future integration of biodiversity and vegetative data to strengthen science-based protected area management.
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.	No activities conducted this quarter directly contributed towards this indicator.



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.)	The Project ENUA webpage continues to perform well on the NES website. Since the page launched, it has received a cumulative total of 857 visits from 484 unique users, with Q3 (July–September 2025) contributing 115 visits from 67 active users. Visitors are engaging with the content multiple times, demonstrating ongoing interest in project information. In addition, three eDMs were distributed this quarter, helping to further promote the page and drive engagement.
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## SECTION 4: FINANCIAL SUMMARY AND PROGRESS

On 21st March 2025 we received an in-country balance of NZ\$992,063.92

A summary of this expenditure across components and budget lines was initially reported to the Project Steering Committee (PSC) on 18th September 2025 and forms part of the endorsed PSC meeting minutes (refer to Annex 1), with a summary provided below:

Supplies	\$ 17,101.93
Trainings & Workshops	\$ 1,163.00
Contractual Services -Companies	\$ 24,525.00
International Consultants	\$ 58,488.99
Local Consultants	\$ 14,800.00

Contractual Services -Implementing Partner	\$ 22,725.69
Travel	\$ 5,000.11
AV & Print Production Costs	\$ 2,416.00
Transport, Shipping, Freight	\$ 350.75
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 146,571.47</b>
<b>Q3 Expenditure by Component</b>	
Component 1	\$ 77,599.06
Component 2	\$ 45,586.26
Component 3	\$ 11,375.44
M&E	\$ 5122.34
PMU	\$ 6,888.37
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$ 146,571.47</b>

## SECTION 5: STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT & GENDER

During Q3 (July–September 2025), the Project ENUA team held or participated in 26 meetings, with over 160 total attendances, including approximately 95 women. Some participants were engaged multiple times across the quarter. The team worked closely with partners and community groups to support environmental initiatives and ensure inclusive participation. Key activities included continued catchment audits in collaboration with the University of Newcastle and coordination of the Tiny Forests initiative, development of the children's book and biodiversity activity book, water testing probe training, and capacity assessment sessions across NES, ICI, and CIT. Regional knowledge sharing included a Fiji workshop on sea turtle protection, with lessons shared locally to improve local conservation efforts. Gender inclusion remained a priority, with Te Puna Vai Mārama contracted for the Gender Safeguards consultancy and the draft Gender Action Plan reviewed to align with the Project ENUA results framework. Additional training and workshops delivered included iNaturalist training and presentation of Health & Wellbeing Survey results. Briefings and coordination with MEC were completed, with agreements drafted and shared for implementation. Team members are encouraged to continue updating the meeting tracking sheet with notes, action items, and participant metrics to maintain a complete and accurate record for ongoing reporting and project decision-making.

In addition, two eDMs were distributed during the quarter to share project updates and engage stakeholders:

- **eDM #1:** University of Newcastle Returns for Third Catchment Audit Visit under GEF7 Project ENUA
- **eDM #2:** Cook Islands Represented at IUCN Intra-Pacific Learning Exchange in Auckland

## SECTION 6: LESSONS LEARNED, GOOD PRACTICES & SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING

Engaging with landowners for the Tiny Forests initiative has been a significant learning curve for the team, as navigating permissions and expectations requires careful coordination and may slightly delay project timelines. While the University of Newcastle team was still on-island, we engaged the Environmental Compliance team to apply for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the Parengaru Stream, the proposed site for the Tiny Forest. The team plans to hold a landowner consultation meeting, after which we hope to progress the project. This experience has reinforced the importance of early and ongoing communication with landowners, transparent project information, and clear processes to ensure long-term support and sustainability. Lessons learned from this engagement will inform future community-based restoration activities and help foster stronger local ownership of environmental initiatives.