



GEF7 PROJECT ENUA **GENDER ACTION PLAN** **2025**

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Acknowledgements

This Gender Action Plan for GEF7 Project ENUA was developed by Te Puna Vai Mārama | Cook Islands Centre for Research, for the GEF7 Project ENUA team at the National Environment Service.

We would like to thank the Director for NES, Mr. Halatoa Fua, Manager Environmental Partnerships Mrs. Hayley Weeks, and their staff who provided insight, information and advice in the formation of the GAP.

We would also like to acknowledge Infrastructure Cook Islands, Cook Island Tourism Corporation and the Secretary for Agriculture Mrs. Temarama Anguna-Kamana, and their staff for taking part in interviews and the Training and Dialogue, and providing insight and information towards the GAP.

Finally, we would like to thank the Global Environment Facility, supported by the United Nations Development Programme, for providing funding support towards the development of the GAP.

List of Acronyms

BCI	Bank of the Cook Islands
BTIB	Business, Trade and Investment Board
CIT	Cook Islands Tourism Corporation
CIQA	Cook Islands Quality Assured programme
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
GSTC	Global Sustainable Tourism Council
ICI	Infrastructure Cook Islands
KAPS	Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices Survey
KBA	Key Biodiversity Areas
KO	Kōrero o te 'Ōrau
MEC	Muri Environment Care
MFEM	Ministry of Finance and Economic Management
MMR	Ministry of Marine Resources
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NEIS	National Environment Information System
NES	National Environment Service

NHT	National Heritage Trust
PA	Protected Area
PACS	Protected Areas Classification System
PAMP	Protected Areas Management Policy
PIR	Project Implementation Report
REA	Rarotonga Environment Authority
STAR	Survey on Tourism Attitudes of Residents
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Math
TCA	Takitumu Conservation Area
TIS	Te Ipukarea Society
TPVM	Te Puna Vai Mārama
TTA	Te Tiare Association
TTV	To Tātou Vai
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UoN	University of Newcastle

1. Introduction

The Gender Action Plan (GAP) for the GEF7 Project ENUA (Enhancing Nature's Unique Areas) provides a strategic framework to ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment are systematically integrated into all aspects of project design, implementation, and monitoring. In accordance with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) requirements, the GAP operationalises gender mainstreaming as both a safeguard and a means of enhancing the overall effectiveness and sustainability of project outcomes.

Recognising that women and men often experience distinct roles, responsibilities, and impacts in relation to natural resource management, the GAP sets out measures to address gender-differentiated needs, data and capacities in the implementation of Project ENUA. By embedding gender-responsive approaches into institutional arrangements, policy development, and community-based conservation initiatives, the plan aims to strengthen equitable participation, ensure fair distribution of benefits, and mitigate potential risks of exclusion or marginalisation.

This document serves as a guiding instrument for the National Environment Service (NES), Infrastructure Cook Islands (ICI), Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), and Cook Islands Tourism Corporation (CIT), as well as community and private sector partners, in advancing gender-responsive biodiversity conservation through Project ENUA. The GAP thus provides both a compliance mechanism and a practical pathway for achieving inclusive, resilient, and more equitable outcomes for the environment and society.

2. Background

As part of the initial project design for GEF7 Project ENUA, a Gender Analysis and Action Plan was developed in 2021 to align with UNDP and GEF requirements for gender mainstreaming. The plan provided a strong conceptual framework, linking global commitments on gender equality and women's empowerment with national policy frameworks such as the Cook Islands National Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment 2019-2024. It highlighted the importance of women's participation in biodiversity conservation and included a wide range of recommended actions such as gender-sensitive policy development, training, awareness raising, integration of gender in environmental management planning, and mechanisms to address gender-based violence. The earlier plan also usefully mapped the readiness of key ministries and outlined how gender considerations could be embedded in project outputs across agriculture, infrastructure, tourism, and environment sectors.

While the document remains an important reference, experience has shown that it was primarily theoretical and not sufficiently adapted to the operational and institutional realities of implementing agencies. Many of the recommendations were broad in scope and difficult to translate into day-to-day practice. Key ministries and community partners found it challenging to use the plan as a practical tool to guide implementation, monitoring, and reporting. As a result, gender considerations were acknowledged but not consistently or systematically applied across activities.

This updated Gender Action Plan therefore builds on the foundation established by the earlier work, but is designed to be more practical, targeted, and implementable. It prioritises actions that are realistic and within the capacities of government partners and communities, it provides clear responsibilities and timelines, and ensures stronger alignment with project management and reporting systems. By doing so, it aims to move from high-level principles to actionable steps that can deliver tangible outcomes for gender equality and biodiversity conservation in the Cook Islands.

3. Data

The following sections present sex-disaggregated data and qualitative insights across tourism, agriculture, infrastructure, and environment sectors. This information provides the evidence-base for identifying gender-differentiated roles, needs, and opportunities within the project context. By highlighting where women and men participate, benefit, or face barriers differently, the data informs both the analysis and the practical actions in the Gender Action Plan that follow. Together, these findings ensure that the Gender Action Plan is grounded in local realities and responds to the lived experiences of women and men in the Cook Islands.

► 3.1 Tourism Sector

Tourism is a major employer of women in the Cook Islands, with higher proportions of women than men working in accommodation, restaurants, arts, and recreation services. Despite this, workplace safety and equal opportunities remain concerning: assessments found only average to low national performance on training, employment, and enforcement of human rights provisions. Furthermore, sexual harassment by customers was identified as a persistent issue affecting job satisfaction and retention. While some businesses are engaged in eco-certification or conservation schemes, overall reinvestment of tourism revenue into conservation is limited, and monitoring of visitor impacts on natural sites is weak. A survey on Tourism Attitudes of Residents also found that men and women differ in their perceptions of the impacts of tourism, with men tending to agree more than women that the benefits from tourism outweigh the negative impacts. Leadership in industry governance bodies shows relatively good gender balance, with women occupying senior roles in both the Cook Islands Tourism Industry Council and the Cook Islands Chamber of Commerce.

3.1.1 Tourism employment

Higher proportions of women than men work in the tourism services sector in the Cook Islands. In the last Census conducted in 2021, 21% (776 people) of women over 15 years of age in employment were employed in the Restaurants and Accommodations

sector, with an additional 4% (157 people) employed in the Arts, Recreation and Other Services. This is compared to 14% (565 people) of men employed in the Restaurants and Accommodations sector, with an additional 4% (144 people) employed in Arts, Recreation and Other Services (Cook Islands Government, 2021a).

In the 2024 Project ENUA KAP (Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices) survey undertaken by the National Environment Service in collaboration with the University of Newcastle, 21% of respondents said they were tourist accommodators, all were women (Fuller, 2025, pp. 9).

For work satisfaction, safety and opportunity for women in the Cook Islands tourism sector, the Cook Islands scored average to low on indicators in the Global Sustainable Tourism Council's destination assessment of the country in 2025. The Cook Islands scored 2 out of 3 for training and employment opportunities promoted to and taken up by local people, including women, young people, minorities, and people with disabilities; 2 out of 3 for the country's laws around human rights, prevention of exploitation, discrimination, and harassment, and 1 out of 3 for communication and enforcement of those laws, including amongst tourism enterprises and with visitors; 1 out of 3 for regular analysis of human rights issues in the sector; and 0 out of 3 for key tourism players as signatories to the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism (Global Sustainable Tourism Council, 2025).

Additionally, a qualitative study which explored experiences of sexual harassment of tourism employees by customers found sexual harassment to be a common and problematic experience that impacted employee job satisfaction, employee turnover and resignation (Sadaraka, 2017).

3.1.2 Tourism impacts

The GSTC destination assessment scored the Cook Islands 0 out of 3 for monitoring visitor flows and impact on natural sites. The report noted that only two tour companies were known to return revenue into conservation efforts, which were Ocean Toa Ltd and Go Local Cook Islands Ltd.

Other tourism businesses have indicated they are members of or affiliated with conservation schemes or organisations. In the Cook Islands Tourism Business

Confidence Index Report 2023, Twenty seven percent of respondents said they are members or affiliated with Te Ipukarea Society and the Mana Tiaki Eco-certification, while 4% said they are members of or affiliated with Kōrero o te 'Ōrau (Zhu, Bai, Kim & Orams, 2023). In addition, there is some concern amongst tourism businesses around environmental degradation. Thirty three percent of respondents saw climate change or environmental degradation as a major challenge for Cook Islands businesses in the next 5 years, and 56% of respondents saw a major disruptive event such as a tropical cyclone as a major challenge for Cook Islands businesses in the next 5 years. In rating the importance of key investment dimensions, respondents rated “Focusing more on sustainability and conservation” as 4.5 (on a scale of 1 - “Not at all important” to 5 - “Extremely important”).

A survey on Tourism Attitudes of Residents (STAR) conducted by Te Puna Vai Mārama found that men tended to agree more than women that the positive benefits of tourism (such as local economic growth and increase in employment opportunities) outweigh the negative impacts (such as strain on water resources and environmental degradation) (Turner, Tiraa, Worth & Lorimer, 2024, p. 16). Men and women also differed on their views about the ideal number of tourists visiting the Cook Islands, with a higher proportion of men saying that there are not enough tourists and a higher proportion of women stating that there are too many. This same difference has also occurred in previous STAR surveys.

3.1.3 Governance

Leadership in two of the major industry Boards is relatively gender balanced, the Cook Islands Tourism Industry Council has three women and two men on its executive committee, with a woman as its President and two men sharing the Vice-President role. The Cook Islands Chamber of Commerce has six women and three men on its Board, with women in the roles of Chair and Vice-Chair.

3.1.4 Data gaps

Sex-disaggregated data may be available on land use for tourism, however data sets may be under different Ministries or agencies in the Cook Islands Government and require consolidation for a practical analysis.

► 3.2 Agriculture Sector

Agriculture in the Cook Islands reflects strong gendered differences in participation, recognition, and access to opportunities. While women are active in horticulture, floriculture, gardening, livestock care, and handicrafts, much of their work remains unpaid or undervalued, and is often excluded from official data. A survey on farmers' experiences with changes in the weather showed women tend to grow more culinary and medicinal crops and contribute significantly to cultural and household needs, yet they remain underrepresented in the formal agricultural labour force and decision-making roles. Understanding these dynamics is critical to ensuring that women's contributions, knowledge, and needs are fully recognised and integrated into agricultural development and biodiversity conservation efforts.

3.2.1 Farming

Women's work in agriculture and horticulture is not recognised due to norms around what counts as farming and agricultural work. The work that women do in floriculture is important for cultural obligations, but is not measured in any research or data collection around agriculture (L. Sijp, personal communication, 7 August, 2025). Furthermore, pest control is considered men's work, despite women in floriculture and horticulture being actively involved in pest control for those sectors (T. Anguna-Kamana, personal communication, 15 August, 2025).

Data from a Farmers Survey conducted in 2024 by Te Puna Vai Mārama in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture further suggests that women were growing more horticultural or culinary crops. For example 40% of women compared to 19% of men said that they grow herbs. In adapting to changes in the weather, lower proportions of women than men reported that poor infrastructure (22% of men compared to 7% of women) and land availability (22% of men compared to 7% of women) were major issues to adaptation.

Furthermore, 82% of participants said that they have noticed either an increase in pests, or the number of pests have been inconsistent due to changes in the weather. The majority of participants did not make any changes to their pest management practices (Tairea, Turner, Worth, Iorangi, Kamoe & Rasmussen et al., 2024, pp. 14). However 14 out of 174 participants (8%) said that they had changed their pest management methods due to changes in the weather, three were women, and 11 were men. These participants all stated that they changed their pest management to more organic or eco-friendly methods such as mulching, crop rotation, homemade recipes, use of eggshells, and biological pesticide Neem DC, reflecting a very small uptake amongst Rarotonga farmers in organic pest control.

In the 2021 Cook Islands Census higher proportions of women indicated they do gardening (45%) and tend to livestock (13%) as unpaid work. Proportions of women tending to livestock as unpaid work increased to 29% for women living in the Pā 'Enua (outer islands).

There remain far fewer women in the agricultural sector than men. Only 17% of respondents to the Farmers Survey were women (Tairea, Turner, Worth, Iorangi, Kamoe & Rasmussen et al., 2024). In the 2021 Census only 1% of employed women over 15 years of age listed "Skilled Agricultural, Forestry or Fishery" as their main occupation, compared to 4% men. This increased slightly to 1.5% for employed women over 15 living in the Pā 'Enua, and 8% men.

3.2.2 Ecosystem or natural resource dependence

According to the Cook Islands Gender Profile Report 2012, women tend to be more involved in the handicraft industry than men, and local products are preferred for crafting (Cook Islands Government, 2012, pp. 43). The 2021 Census reveals 10% (606 people) of women in the Cook Islands over 15 years do handicraft making as unpaid work, compared to 5% (264 people) of men over 15 years. This increased to 17% for women in the Pā 'Enua over 15 years old, and 8% for men in the Pā 'Enua over 15 years old, indicating the higher natural resource dependence in the outer islands (Cook Islands Government, 2021a). Ei Maire (neck garland made of *alyxia stellata* leaves) production is predominantly done by women, particularly on the island of Mauke. Maire are sold locally and internationally, women assist in meeting export demand (Upoko, 2006).

The 2024 KAP survey highlighted the importance of Cook Islands plant species in traditional medicine, particularly amongst women. Participants discussed the medicinal benefits of gardenia (tiare māori), the young coconut (nu, particularly for babies), barringtonia ('utu tree), and cordyline (rautī) (Fuller, 2025).

► 3.3 Infrastructure Sector

The infrastructure sector in the Cook Islands is highly gender-segregated, with women concentrated in the administrative and support services while men dominate technical, regulatory, and civil works roles. National labour force data shows women's participation in construction, utilities, and waste management remains very low compared to men, reflecting persistent gender norms and barriers to entry. Governance structures within infrastructure committees also demonstrate limited female representation, with women holding only a small proportion of decision-making positions. At the same time, gaps in sex-disaggregated data make it difficult to fully understand gendered differences in infrastructure use and impacts. Addressing these imbalances is essential to ensuring that women are included in planning, management, and benefit-sharing within this sector.

3.3.1 Infrastructure Labour Force

An internal workforce assessment conducted by Infrastructure Cook Islands in 2017 indicated that its Corporate Services has a relatively equal gender distribution, but Regulatory Services, the Planning and Design Division and the Civil Works staff are all male (Infrastructure Cook Islands, 2017).

Furthermore, the 2019 Cook Islands Labour Force Survey indicated that 4.3% of employed women worked in the industrial workforce (construction, mining etc.), compared to 17.6% of employed men. Table 1 below provides labour force data for the industrial sector by sex:

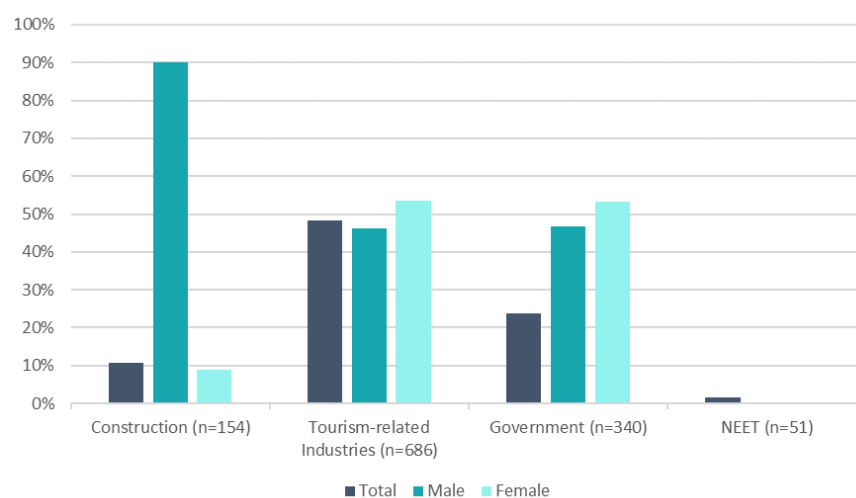
Table 1. Cook Islands Infrastructure Labour Force, disaggregated by sex

	Male (%)	Female (%)
Construction	9.1	0.6
Manufacturing	5.1	2.3
Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	1.9	1.1
Water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	1.2	0
Mining and quarrying	0.3	0.3
TOTAL	17.6	4.3

3.3.2 Careers

There is very little data available on school-leaver career paths, however Census data shows that a significantly high proportion of young men and boys enter the construction sector, while higher proportions of young women and girls are in tourism and government (CIG, 2021a) (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. *Proportion of 15-30 year olds in selected industries by gender for 2021 (N=1,424)*



Note: 1.7% of the 15-30 year old population are in the category of not in employment, education or training [or NEET].

Furthermore, slightly higher numbers of men and boys compared to women and girls study trades at the Cook Islands Trades and Tertiary Institute (CITTI), particularly in construction, automotive engineering, electrical engineering and plumbing. Women and girls dominate in hospitality and business management courses (Cook Islands Government, 2021b, p. 34)

3.3.3 Governance

In 2024, the Cook Islands Government Infrastructure Committee had a total of six members, with one woman and the remaining five, men. The Cook Islands Solid and Hazardous Waste Committee consists of the Secretary of Health, Secretary of Infrastructure, and the Secretary of Environment, making the gender component two men and one woman.

3.3.4 Data gaps

Neither the 2016 Feasibility Report and Waste Audit nor the 2020 Waste Audit Report disaggregate data by sex. Gendered differences in waste management, at the household level in particular, are unclear.

► 3.4 Environment and Conservation Sector

Available data in gender in environmental conservation is limited, with few sex-disaggregated figures collected to date. The KAP survey undertaken in 2024 by the National Environment Service and the University of Newcastle provides useful insight into how Rarotonga communities value biodiversity. It highlighted that waste and pollution place disproportionate burdens on women, particularly through household and community clean-up responsibilities, and that aesthetic values linked to biodiversity are more strongly expressed by women. While community members generally value inclusivity in conservation, fewer respondents saw the inclusion of women and other marginalised groups as a priority benefit compared to broader community participation. It is of note that the drop-out rate for women was high, with the majority (89%) of uncompleted surveys being started by women. The survey took an estimated 45 to 52 minutes to complete, which likely explains the high drop-out rate. These findings underscore both the need for more systematic sex-disaggregated data collection and for greater recognition of women's roles and perspectives in conservation management.

3.4.1 Impact of Waste

The survey highlighted the importance of aesthetic value as a biodiversity value for respondents, and the burden of community and household clean-up and waste management being placed on women. The survey report noted that:

Aesthetic value is largely a gendered value. Waste and pollution have a greater impact on women's lives as it is women who note the impact of waste on their aesthetic values and workload.

Fuller, 2025, pp. 29

3.4.2 Conservation Benefits

Most participants chose "Increased inclusion of landowner and local communities in biodiversity conservation" as the most important conservation benefit (57%). "Increased inclusion of women, youth, disabled people, and other vulnerable groups" was the least important conservation benefit (11%) (pp. 44-45). Just under half (48%) of respondents

agreed that environmental management on Rarotonga is inclusive of gender, disability and other marginalised groups (pp. 38).

3.4.3 Careers

Over the last five years, nine students graduated under the government's higher education scheme *Te Reinga 'Akata'unga'anga* with a Bachelor of Science, and one with a Master of Conservation Biology. Undergraduate majors varied from the biological, environmental and marine sciences. Currently, six students are studying for a Bachelor of Science under the scheme. There is high interest from school leavers wanting to study a Bachelor of Science, with around 30 applications each year to study science under the scheme. However, there are often major barriers to school leavers attaining the scholarship and/or completing a degree, including the high cost of Bachelor of Science degree courses, expensive accommodation, and lack of family support (A. Piri, personal communication, May 23, 2024). Ministry of Education data also shows that higher proportions of women graduate under the scheme compared to men (Cook Islands Government 2021b, p. 33).

► 3.5 Gender Issues and Themes

The following themes were derived from a Te Puna Vai Mārama workshop held with Project ENUA key stakeholders in August 2025, these provide further insight into gendered roles, expectations and realities in the Cook Islands.

3.5.1 Gender Roles and Expectations within Key Sectors

Environment and conservation are viewed as women's sectors. Within NES itself, the compliance division is male dominated, which could derive from a societal belief that individuals or communities might comply more if enforcement is done by men.

Tourism, particularly hospitality and marketing, are perceived as feminine areas, despite tourism governance in the Cook Islands being male-dominated.

The infrastructure sector is male dominated, particularly in traditional male roles or physical work such as engineering and civil works, while administration is female dominated. There is a need to ensure a career pathway for women and girls to enter and remain in STEM careers in the Cook Islands, not just through university-degree pathways but also through trades training.

Governance leadership (Governing Boards, Committees etc.) across sectors tend to be male dominated, and are perceived as men's spaces.

Traditional leadership has had strong representation by women in the Koutu Nui, that has had an impact on decision-making around the environment, such as rā'ui. The successful enforcement of rā'ui has been an ongoing challenge, however.

3.5.2 Gender Roles and Expectations in Cook Islands Communities

Men are expected to conduct the “hard”, physical work, such as cutting trees, grass-cutting, and crop planting. There is concern that men working in this space do not consider beautification and conservation as important, particularly in public spaces. The perception is that this type of work is tiring, potentially contributing to disregard for aesthetics, and focus on “just get the job done”.

Women dominate floriculture, ornamentation or aesthetic work. Women also tend to be at store fronts or doing the sales work. Akava'ine (transgender women) have traditional roles in biodiversity use, and have made contributions to medicinal and floriculture practices for a long time, but are under-acknowledged.

In Pukapuka, women plant and care for taro, with taro patches passed down from mothers to daughters. Women are disproportionately impacted by climate change, as high tides have caused salination of taro swamps. Men conduct deep ocean fishing.

On Palmerston, the distribution of harvested tavake (red-tailed tropic birds) are conducted solely by men. Men also harvest parrot fish, whereas women conduct the filleting and preparation for export.

3.5.3 Gender in Ecology and the Role of Education

There is a need for an ecological approach to nature in the Cook Islands; or looking at nature as a whole system where everything is connected, rather than separate pieces independent of each other. There is a gap in intergenerational knowledge on local biodiversity services, which appears to be limiting self-sufficiency in Cook Islands youth. Technology could be integrated more into youth interaction with biodiversity.

3.5.4 Political Discourse & Dialogues

Key sectors impacting the environment, including the environment sector itself (i.e. REA composition), are dominated by male values around the economy rather than protection and safeguarding nature, biodiversity and ecosystems for future generations.

4. Gender Issues Matrix

The following matrix (page 21) provides a structured framework aligning Project ENUA activities with gender considerations across the components and outcomes of the project (please see GEF7 Project ENUA Project Document for full outcomes wording). The integration of current activities also ensures that gender mainstreaming is not treated as an add-on, but embedded within national biodiversity conservation, governance, and ecosystem management processes. It also ensures that women's knowledge, roles, needs, access to resources, and communication channels are systematically addressed in the Gender Action Plan. This integration alters gender from a compliance requirement to a driver of inclusivity in the project and its key sectors.

Gender Issues Matrix

Project Enua Components & Outcomes				
Gender Issues	Component 1 Mainstreaming safeguards to conserve biodiversity and maintain ecosystem services across key development sectors		Component 2 Improving the management framework to effectively conserve a national protected areas system	Component 3 Raising awareness, managing knowledge, mainstreaming gender, M&R and dissemination
	Outcome 1 Biodiversity and ecosystem services safeguards embedded in national and island governance frameworks	Outcome 2 Ecosystems services restored, maintained and enhanced	Outcome 3 Globally significant biodiversity protected across Cook Islands	Outcome 4 Greater understanding of values of conserving Cook Islands biodiversity and ecosystem services
Women's Knowledge and Expertise	Women's and akava'ine ecological knowledge feed into gender mainstreaming modalities, particularly those from the Pā 'Enua (related to Activity 1.1.5)	Include women's and akava'ine traditional water, land use, and ecological knowledge and practices in catchment management plans (related to Activity 2.2.1 and 2.2.2)	Case studies of women's roles in participatory Protected Area management	KAP surveys capture women's knowledge, attitudes and practices, are inclusive and adapted to reduce high female drop-out rates and enable gender analysis; Case studies of women's traditional ecological practices (e.g. floriculture, medicine, handicrafts etc.) are documented (related to Activity 4.1.1 and 4.1.2)
Women's Involvement and Roles	Women's ideas, issues and/or opportunities recorded in consultations and input into Island Environmental Management Plans (related to Activity 1.3.1)	Engagement of women's groups and youth in creating or engaging in innovative biodiversity conservation practices and contributing to eco-tourism (related to Activity 2.3.4)	Past and current women stakeholder input in gender-responsive Protected Area management plans (related to Activity 3.1.1 and 3.2.1)	Women and youth are included in citizen science programmes and school holiday programmes (related to Activity 4.1.6)
Women's Strategic Needs	Project governance is inclusive, including rotation in decision-making roles	Address the gender stereotypes that exclude women from formal pest management work and decision-making	Capacity building for women in UNDP Social and Environmental Safeguards, gender standards and national safeguards (related to Activity 3.1.2)	Address GBV prevention and sexual harassment in communications workshops (related to Activity 4.1.5)
Utilisation of Resources by Women	Access to environmental data systems designed to be inclusive for women (related to Activity 1.2.1)	Women trained in financial management, and given access to low-value grants for soil, water and climate adaptation practices (related to Activity 2.3.3 and 2.3.4)	Women have access to Protected Area management processes, training opportunities and decision-making roles	Ensuring information on websites, social media platforms, and knowledge products include women and are accessible to women (related to Activity 4.1.3, 4.2.1 and 4.2.2)
Communications for Women	Training workshops and awareness activities designed with particular focus on accessibility for women, especially those undertaken in the Pā 'Enua	Catchment factsheets and awareness campaigns adapted for women, women's groups and communities with input from all key partners	Workshops/seminars on gender in Protected Area management targeted at local communities include women landowners (related to Activity 3.2.1)	Campaigns are targeted towards women's groups, youth and other vulnerable groups; Case studies of women in conservation (Activity 4.1.1 and 4.2.3)

5. Gender Action Plan (GAP)

The following Gender Action Plan (pages 23 to 26) translates the findings from the data collected and the priorities identified in the preceding Gender Issues Matrix into concrete activities that align with Project ENUA outputs (see GEF7 Project ENUA Project Document for full output text). Each action has been designed to directly address the gender-differentiated roles, needs and opportunities highlighted in the preceding sections and through key partner discussions, ensuring that practical measures are grounded in evidence. By also focusing on current funded activities the Gender Action Plan provides a clear and implementable pathway for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment across biodiversity conservation, agriculture, infrastructure, and tourism, enabled through GEF7 Project ENUA.



GEF7 Project ENUA Gender Action Plan 2025

Output	Action	Responsible Actor	Potential Partner Orgs.	Deliverables, Indicators & Targets	Timeline / Budget
Output 1.1 National legislation, policies, strategies and plans	Conduct participatory consultation and workshops on women's views on new regulations on EIAs, protected areas policies, and pesticides registration system (Agriculture); integrate into legislation, policies, and regulations	NES, MoA, ICI, Island Councils	Women's Groups, Puna Committees, TIS, TPVM	Deliverable: Consultation and workshops held and women's knowledge captured and incorporated within regulations and policies Target: At least 50% of workshop participants and consultation submissions are women; 100% workshop venues are accessible to women of all ages	2026-2027 / within project budget
Output 1.2 National Environment Information System (NEIS) developed and institutionalized	Ensure NEIS system is able to capture and produce gender-disaggregated data; ensure NEIS consultancy terms of reference includes the above as a deliverable	NES + consultant(s)	TPVM	Deliverable: Feasibility report includes NEIS ability to capture and provide gender-disaggregated data Indicator: NEIS system can disaggregate data by gender	2026 / within project budget
Output 1.3 Regulatory and policy frameworks to safeguard KBAs, Island Environmental Management Plans, catchment management plans and PA management plans	Ensure IEMPs include women's and 'akava'ine input from consultations, capturing women's and 'akavaine use of biodiversity and ecosystems whether for food, cultural practices, tending to livestock, floriculture, medicine and making handicrafts or other	NES, TCA, Island Councils, MEC, Kōrero o te 'Ōrau	TTA, Pride Cook Islands, TPVM	Deliverable: IEMPs include gender sections reflecting women's roles and needs Indicator: 50% of workshop/consultation participants are women	2026-2027 / within project budget
Output 2.1 Audits completed for priority catchments	Ensure women's participation in audit assessments and at community meetings	NES, UoN, MEC, Kōrero o te 'Ōrau	MMR	Target: At least 50% of participants in audit assessments and at community meetings are women	2025-26 / within project budget
Output 2.2 Intersectoral catchment management plans and a management plan for the Manuae Managed Area	Ensure women's and available land, water, and resource use included in catchment management plans (Rarotonga) and Manuae island management plan; ensure consultant TOR includes capturing women's resource use in catchment areas and Manuae; hold separate women's and 'akavaine focus groups or one-on-one interviews for contributions to the plans	NES, MEC, KO + consultants	MoA, ICI, TTV, TTA, Pride Cook Islands, TPVM	Targets: At least 50% of participants in workshops and consultations are women; at least 2 women's focus group sessions conducted; 100% of plans include documentation of women's uses	2025-2026 / within project budget
Output 2.3 Improved gender sensitive natural resource management in priority catchments and the Manuae Managed Area	Ensure women and girls participation in capacity building workshops on innovative natural resource management practices	NES + consultants	Au Vaine, TPVM	Target: At least 50% of participants are women; at least 2 women or girls implementing innovative natural resource management practices	2026-2028 / within project budget

GEF7 Project ENUA Gender Action Plan 2025

	Deliver tailored financial management and conservation training to women /youth	NES	BTIB, BCI, Au Vaine, TPVM	Target: 100% of women who received a sub-grant are trained in financial management	2026-2029 / within project budget
	Establish small grants for women to implement innovative practices in sustainable catchment management	NES, MOA	MFEM	Deliverable: monitoring of activities is disaggregated by sex Target: At least 50% of grantees are women, or involve women-led or women-focussed groups or organisations	2026 onwards / within project budget
	Develop and disseminate case studies on women's use of innovative practices, including lessons learned from women's perspectives; elevate women's voices in advocacy and for fund-raising for upscaling of innovative practices.	NES + consultants		Deliverable: Advocacy for fund-raising includes statements from women's experiences Target: At least 2 case studies developed and shared to a wide audience through traditional media and online/social media	2026 onwards / within project budget
	Ensure CIQA captures gender-disaggregated data of business ownership	CIT, NES		Indicator: Gender-disaggregated data on tourism business ownership can be extracted from CIQA	2026-2028 / within project budget
Output 3.1 Management plans updated/developed and operational in target PAs, with legitimate governance structures in place	Incorporate women's input and resource uses into gender-responsive PA management plans through consultations (Suwarrow, Takutea, TCA)	NES + consultant(s)	TCA Committee, Takutea Trust, Atiu Island Council	Targets: At least 50% of participants in consultations are women; at least 2 women's focus group sessions conducted; 100% of plans include documentation of women's uses	2026-2029 / within project budget
	Ensure rat risk assessment includes consideration of impact on women and their use of resources; ensure consultancy terms of reference includes the above as a deliverable	NES + consultant(s)	TIS	Deliverable: Rat risk assessment report includes gender section reflecting women's impacts/risks	2025-2026 / within project budget
Output 3.2 Management capacities in target PAs strengthened through application of PACS, PAMP and tools (e.g., NEIS),	Conduct key stakeholder workshops on gender and PA management, with targeted sessions for women and youth	NES + consultant(s)	MMR, Marae Moana, TIS, TCA	Targets: At least 50% of participants in consultations are women; at least 1 women's focus group session conducted Indicator: Participants' contributions disaggregated by sex and age	2026-2027 / within project budget
	Encourage women's and girls' participation in training tools, such as GIS, and other relevant capacity building	ICI, NES	TCA, TIS, Tereora College	Target: At least 50% of training participants are women and/or girls	2026 onwards / within project budget
Output 3.3 Effective community conserved area demonstrated through a newly established Rarotonga Cloud Forest PA	Ensure Cloud Forest information package includes benefits of the proposed PA to women	NES + consultant(s)	Koutu Nui, TIS, NHT	Deliverable: Cloud Forest information package includes gender section reflecting women's roles, uses, needs, risks and benefits	2026 onwards / within project budget
	Ensure equitable participation of women in any best practice learning exchanges	NES	Koutu Nui	Target: At least 50% of exchange participants are women	2026 onwards / within project budget



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	Incorporate women's input and resource uses into gender-responsive PA management plan through consultations; ensure Cloud Forest management plan consultancy terms of reference includes the above as a deliverable	NES + communities + consultant(s)	Koutu Nui, TIS, TPVM	Deliverable: Cloud Forest management plan includes gender section reflecting women's roles, uses and needs Target: At least 50% of consultation participants are women	2026-27 / within project budget
Output 4.1 Gender-responsive Knowledge Management and Communications Strategy developed and implemented	Ensure KAP surveys reduce female drop-out and include gender analysis	NES, UoN	TPVM, ICI, MoA and CIT	Deliverable: KAP surveys streamlined to ensure women's high drop-out rates are reduced (1x at mid-term 2026, 1x at end of project 2028), and methodology adapted to enable gender analysis	2026-2029 / within project budget
	Knowledge Management and Communications strategy addresses GBV prevention and women's engagement	NES	TPVM	Deliverable: Comms strategy adopted with sections on GBV, sexual harassment prevention, and women's engagement	2026-2029 / within project budget
Output 4.2 Gender-sensitive knowledge and information products	Produce case studies on women in tourism, agriculture, and infrastructure, as well as women's roles in participatory conservation and resource management; ensure accessible formats for Pā 'Enua	NES, CIT, MoA, ICI		Deliverables: 5+ case studies produced; inclusive website and factsheets developed	2026-2028 / within project budget
	Tertiary education support prioritises women's and girls' access to STEM education and career pathways	NES	UoN	Target: At least 1 woman or girl is supported in tertiary education learning and/or completion of formal qualification.	2025 onwards / within project budget
Output 4.3 Participatory monitoring and evaluation	Project M&E, data collection and reporting is gender disaggregated as much as possible	NES + consultants	TPVM	Deliverable: Project reporting includes gender-disaggregated data, and highlights gender engagement and gender specific activities or issues.	2025 onwards / within project budget
	Rotation of PSC Chair and Vice-Chair between men and women members; ensure PSC terms of reference includes the above as a deliverable	NES + consultants	TPVM	Deliverable: PSC TOR has PSC Chair and Vice-chair rotation between genders as a deliverable Target: PSC Chair and Vice-chair rotated between genders at least once during Project ENUA implementation	2025 onwards / within project budget
	The Gender Action Plan is implemented and mainstreamed through Project ENUA activities	NES + consultants	TPVM	Deliverable: The Gender Action Plan is implemented, reviewed and reported on regularly	2025 onwards / within project budget



6. GAP Monitoring and Evaluation

The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the GAP will be fully integrated within the project's overall M&E system, in compliance with UNDP requirements as outlined in the UNDP Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures, the UNDP Evaluation Policy, and the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy. This ensures that gender results are monitored with the same rigor as environmental and development outcomes, while also feeding into national and global reporting requirements. It is also designed to avoid onerous reporting beyond current reporting requirements and be simple and practical to achieve.

1. Alignment with GEF7 Project ENUA M&E Requirements

- a) Progress on GAP activities will be reviewed and reported in the annual Project Implementation Report (PIR), ensuring gender equality results are captured alongside broader project outcomes
- b) Gender-specific data and results will also contribute to the GEF Core Indicators, including direct beneficiaries (people actively engaged) and estimated beneficiaries (indirect beneficiaries) disaggregated by sex, to monitor global environmental and social co-benefits.
- c) Independent evaluations - the Mid-Term Review (2025-26) and Terminal Evaluation Report (2028) - will assess gender mainstreaming as part of project effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability.

2. GAP-specific Monitoring Principles

Monitoring of the GAP will focus on both quantitative and qualitative measures as required under the Project M&E, including:

- a.** Beneficiary Targets (Indicator 6):
 - i.** *Mid-term:* 3,000 direct beneficiaries, of whom at least 1,500 are women
 - ii.** *End of project:* 9,588 direct beneficiaries, of whom at least 4,892 are women
- b.** Participation, Capacity and Representation Indicators (Indicator 9):

- i.** Proportion of women participating in training, governance roles, workshops, decision-making forums and roles (Chair/President, Vice-Chair etc.)
- c.** Policy and Institutional Change Indicators (Indicator 7, Indicator 10):
 - i.** Number of management plans, policies, and/or frameworks updated or designed to integrate gender equality measures
- d.** Knowledge and Attitudes Indicators (Indicator 14):
 - i.** Changes in awareness and acceptance of women's roles in biodiversity conservation, as measured through the final Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices survey.
- e.** Knowledge Products Generated and Disseminated (Indicator 15b):
 - i.** Number of knowledge products generated and disseminated that highlight women (women's roles, knowledge and work), include gender-disaggregated data, and gender mainstreaming (case studies, factsheets, short videos, guidance documents, etc.)

3. Data Collection and Disaggregation

All data collected under the project will be disaggregated by sex, and where possible by age, disability, and island location, to ensure an intersectional approach. Women's participation in surveys and consultations will be improved, including addressing barriers that have previously led to high female drop-out rates. Collection and disaggregation will be done through:

- a.** Routine project tools, namely training registers, surveys, workshop/consultation attendance sheets, consultant reports, consultant contract requirements and deliverables, number of interventions under implementation and others;
- b.** Accessible data collection formats, such as shorter surveys, focus groups or one-on-one interviews (particularly in the Pā 'Enua), community surveys rather than household surveys; and
- c.** Number of grants released to women entrepreneurs, women farmers, women-owned businesses, and women's groups.

4. Reporting and Learning

NES will include gender results in its reporting against the following core questions contained in the PIRs:

What results were achieved that increased gender equality and the empowerment of women?

How did these results address the different needs of women and men, and contribute to changing norms, values or power structures?

M&E findings will be used not only for compliance but also for **adaptive management**, informing adjustments to GAP implementation during Project Steering Committee meetings, mid-term reviews, and annual workplanning.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

- a.** National Environment Service will lead co-ordination of GAP monitoring and reporting
- b.** Ministry of Agriculture, Cook Islands Tourism Corporation, and Infrastructure Cook Islands will collect and report on sex-disaggregated data relevant to their activities.
- c.** Consultants & technical partners will be required to provide gender analysis and/or results in their deliverables.
- d.** Civil society organisations, and community partners will be engaged to share observations, feedback, and experiences that can inform monitoring and adaptive management.
- e.** Independent evaluators at mid-term and terminal stages will assess the extent to which gender equality has been advanced through the project.

6. Knowledge Sharing

Lessons learned from GAP implementation will be documented and disseminated through project knowledge products, case studies, and national reporting systems. This

will ensure that good practices in gender-responsive biodiversity conservation can be scaled up across other sectors and initiatives.

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