

**GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY
UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME
SOUTH PACIFIC REGIONAL ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME**

**THE INTERNATIONAL WATERS PROJECT
IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGIC ACTION PROGRAMME (SAP) FOR THE
INTERNATIONAL WATERS OF THE PACIFIC SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING
STATES**

**THIRD MULTIPARTITE REVIEW (MPR-3)
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**COUNTRY STATEMENT
Cook Islands**

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IWP in the Cook Islands have come a long way over the last three years particularly in the last year.

Today IWP is readily recognised within the host community, and slowly gaining national recognition from its activities and efforts to bring social harmony to the host community in its effort to initiate activities for the protection of freshwater resources.

Since the last meeting in Tonga, IWPCOOKS have completed its PPA workshop and have taken a two phase approach to the project. The workshop revealed as a possible underlying root cause to the problem of freshwater contamination the need for coordination and leadership at the community level. This in turn has revealed that traditional and community protocols at the community level are under threat.

As a result of this revelation, the first phase of the project therefore has focussed on the development and the resurrection of existing community structures. This is of great importance to the project as it is a mechanism whereby projects from agencies such as the Public health and the Environment would be able to communicate with the every stakeholder in the community.

It also provides clear definitions of the roles of the different stakeholders in the community and how they can contribute effectively to the IWP objectives.

Since the emphasis of IWP is on community consultation and participation, the structure would be able to give greater responsibility to the groups identified to ensure their input. It is expected that when finalised with the leaders in the community, the structure will be presented to the community for their acceptance and endorsement.

Following the endorsement, IWP in the Cook Islands expects that in conducting the second PPA on the problems of water contaminations that a larger portion of the community population would participate and we expect the project to achieve most if not all of its objectives.

The Cook Islands is in the process of starting the second phase of the project which is the actual addressing of the focal area "Protection of Freshwater Resources" during this third quarter period where it is envisaged that the involvement of NTF members' will be more than just an administrative body. This means trying to integrate some of the objectives or activities of IWP into the work-programs of the various agencies represented on the NTF.

It is the Cook Islands understanding that while IWP is initially promoted as community based, given the situation now and changing lifestyle particularly of Rarotonga, there has to be intervention at the national level to support the intents of the community. This we believe then start at the community level through its political representative the Member of Parliament, the NTF members and government ministries represented on the NTF. It is therefore the task for the NC through these mechanisms to ensure full participation and involvement for the success of IWP. We welcome the support provided by the PCU to the NCs but at times the introduction of these new concepts for something old can be quite confusing and take considerable time to understand and accept and IWP is well known for this.

While the whole concept of IWP is complex and sometimes hard to understand, the project progress in the Cook Islands have somehow given some meaning to areas initially thought to be irrelevant in our opinion. For example, how relevant is "financial management training in the homes" to solving the problems of rubbish flowing into the streams or animal wastes flowing into the stream? As we discovered through the usage of the tool Participatory Problem Analysis (PPA), better financial management in the homes in some cases would eliminate or minimise the need to have more than one job for income therefore allowing some time for those individuals to attend community meetings to learn about freshwater contamination and what individuals can do to help out with the problem.

Therefore, while the project has only two years to go, I would urge the other countries as well as my own NC, to concentrate and get the project going at the community level now before we run out of time.

I would also like to urge UNDP, SPREP and PCU to look beyond the end of the project. This I mean, at this stage of the programme there is evidence that a number of pilot activities will be developed and implemented by the end of the project, however, the continuous sustainability of some of these activities will depend on availability of financial assistance. Therefore I ask that UNDP, SPREP and the PCU to start thinking about supporting some of these medium sizes to full size projects for GEF assistance beyond 2006.

I finish by saying that there has been substantial progress made by the Cook Islands and we further commit ourselves to achieving more in the year to come. Finally on behalf of the Cook Islands National Task Force and the Cook Islands Government we extend our sincere gratitude to UNDP and GEF for your continuous support of Environment protection activities in the region.

Kia Orana and God Bless.