

Through NZAID, all New Zealanders are making a difference in the lives of some of the poorest people in the Pacific, Asia, Latin America and Africa.

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| NZAID making a difference in Cook Islands

NEW ZEALAND'S DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

NZAID snapshot

- NZAID is the Government's international aid and development agency within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- In 2008/09 NZAID spent approximately \$471.3 million on overseas development assistance
- Over half of NZAID's expenditure is spent in the Pacific
- NZAID's total support for the Cook Islands in 2008/09 was \$15 million
- NZAID's allocation to the Cook Islands will increase significantly over the next three years to support an increased focus on sustainable economic development
- NZAID has been managing Australia's programme in the Cook Islands since 2004.

The facts

- There are 15 islands and atolls spread over two million square kilometres
- The total population is approximately 22,000 and half live on the island of Rarotonga
- The Cook Islands is a self-governing country in 'free association' with New Zealand, meaning its citizens have New Zealand citizenship and unrestricted access to residence and work in New Zealand
- The average income is comparatively high in the successful tourist-based economies of Rarotonga and Aitutaki, relative to the other outer islands. Tourism currently provides

about 50 percent of the Cook Islands Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

- Other main exports are fish, black pearls, and fruit.

The issues

- The Cook Islands has limited natural resources and is particularly vulnerable to natural disasters such as cyclones
- The population movement from the outer islands to Rarotonga and overseas has a negative impact on outer island economies
- The main economic potential is in tourism particularly on Rarotonga and Aitutaki
- The outer islands are affected by limited access to basic services such as health, education, transport and potable water.

NZAID in the Cook Islands

The programme focuses on four main areas, which are aligned to the Cook Island Government's own prioritised development objectives:

- supporting economic growth
- infrastructure development
- investing in people (health and education)
- good governance (including civil society).

Carolyn Nimmo
NZAID Development Programme Manager
Private Bag 18-901
Wellington, New Zealand

Tel. +64 (04) 439 8142
Email. carolyn.nimmo@nzaid.govt.nz

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nzaid

New Zealand's International
Aid & Development Agency

NEW ZEALAND'S DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

Supporting economic growth

New Zealand and the Cook Islands Government are in the process of developing a programme of support for small and medium sized enterprises, which may comprise small grants or loans to ensure business viability in the current global economic crisis.

Marine resources have potential to be a major source of income for the Cook Islands. NZAID's continuing support for the marine resource sector is focused on increasing returns from the tuna and pearl industries, and environmental protection for inshore fisheries resources (lagoon ecosystems).



Checking a parau (black pearl oyster shells) line on Rakahanga.

Developing infrastructure

The Cook Islands Government and NZAID are completing a series of major infrastructure projects over the next two years. This includes harbour development, power and water supply, cyclone shelters and sanitation projects.

Looking forward, Rarotonga and Aitutaki will be a focus for NZAID's infrastructure investment in order to preserve eco-systems to promote tourism and protect the health of local people.

Cyclones have caused a significant amount of damage to existing infrastructure in the Cook Islands. To alleviate this NZAID is working with Emergency Management Cook Islands and the Red Cross to improve disaster response and risk management.

Investing in quality education and health

Quality education and health services in the Cook Islands are essential to ensure sustained economic development, as well as to stem the tide of outward migration. NZAID supports the Ministry of Education's 'Master Plan' which focuses on:

- numeracy and literacy projects
- improving the number and quality of teachers
- vocational and technical training programmes
- a school refurbishment programme.

In the health sector NZAID funds the medical specialist visits scheme.

Improving governance and civil society

The joint NZAID/AusAID bilateral programme is assisting Cook Islands government departments to increase their effectiveness and overcome gaps in specialist skills.

The programme includes:

- advisory support and training to the Cook Islands Police
- short-term technical assistance to the public service in areas such as economic policy and auditing, legislative drafting and human resource planning.

Providing support to community initiatives and to Cook Island non-government organisations is proving an effective way to build the capacity of the Cook Islands people and support economic independence. NZAID supports community-focused groups such as:

- National Council of Women
- Cook Islands Red Cross
- Punanga Tauturu Counselling Centre
- Creative Centre Trust for the Disabled
- a disability action team.