

Cook Islands In-Country Training and Short Term Training Award Review Report

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Report Title	Cook Islands: Review of In-country Training Programme and Short-term Training Award Scheme
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Background

Improving the delivery of basic social services by enhancing and strengthening human resources is one of the agreed priority thematic areas outlined in the New Zealand Official Development Assistance Cook Islands Strategy (2001-2007). The human resources development programme comprises four projects: In-country Training (ICT), Short-Term Training Awards (STTA), New Zealand Development Scholarships (NZDS) and Pacific Regional Scholarships that combine Australian and New Zealand Regional Development Scholarships (ARDS, NZRDS).

ICT aims to build human resource capacity and enhance the performance of people in the private sector, public sector and civil society in the Cook Islands. Since 2004, ICT has been funded through a tripartite arrangement between the New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID), the Cook Islands Department of National Human Resource Development (DNHRD) and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, with the DNHRD in Rarotonga having overall management responsibility.

STTA was designed to meet the high priority human resource development needs of the Cook Islands through the provision of New Zealand-based training. It is administered through a Management Services Consultant (MSC), Training and Technology Transfer. Since 2004, STTA has been jointly administered by Training and Technology Transfer and DNHRD.

Previous studies on human resource development include a training needs analysis, DNHRD operational planning, an NZAID review of STTA, and Cook Island tourism industry training needs. This report also recognises relevant developments in the education sector, such as the draft education sector strategy, proposal to merge the Ministry of Education and DNHRD, and proposal for a sector wide approach to donor funding.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the review was to help set the future direction of STTA, ICT or similar programmes, within the context of the Cook Islands National Sustainable Development Plan and the Joint Cook Islands Government/NZAID/Australian Agency for International Development Country Strategy. The Terms of Reference included three components:

- A retrospective assessment of the contribution of the ICT and STTA to human resource development in the Cook Islands; project achievements, benefits and beneficiaries

- An assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of the management arrangement between NZAID and DNHRD
- A prospective assessment to help set the future direction of STTA, ICT or similar programmes, within the context of the Cook Islands National Sustainable Development Plan and the Joint Cook Islands Government/NZAID/Australian Agency for International Development Country Strategy.

Main Findings

ICT: this programme is designed to ensure that people with limited opportunities, especially in the outer islands, have greater access to training that might improve the quality of their life as well as ensuring that the human resource development needs of the Cook Islands are addressed. Vocational, trades, professional or second-chance training are provided in the Cook Islands, including university study, through a USP local campus, UNITEC, Open Polytechnic of New Zealand and accredited overseas tertiary institutions by correspondence.

The current process involves advertisements in local papers for project proposals, assessment of proposals received against criteria for the ICT Steering Committee to approve or decline, orientation for approved courses, information and budget sent to Aid Management Division for each course; implementation of the course; monitoring process visits by DNHRD; evaluation at the end of the course by student and trainer, report by DNHRD at the completion of the project. The documentation reviewed shows that this programme is being delivered as designed.

Between 2004-2006, 68 proposals for training were approved and six declined. The courses covered a range of priority areas (education, trade, health, marine, tourism). At least 22 of the approved courses focus on trades training, which is a major part of the training opportunities offered for Cook Islands people. Outer Islands participation is high, accounting for 980 (65 percent) of the 1488 participants involved with training programmes. There was only one targeted youth programme (Sports Education New Zealand).

DNHRD manages and implements the ICT programme. A defined process is in place, but would benefit from having all documentation (policies, procedures, forms) in one booklet. Calls for proposals are advertised. Proposals are assessed against set criteria and the Steering Committee approves or declines them. Funding is based on course requirements—approved proposal budgets are forwarded to the Aid Management Division which administers the NZAID funding. Courses reviewed operated within budget (but some were under budget and two over budget). Approved course providers receive orientation, and information is sent to the Aid Management Division. As the course is implemented, DNHRD makes monitoring visits. Courses are evaluated by students and trainers, with a final completion report sent to DNHRD.

While the ICT programme has been successful in the range of training opportunities offered, and trainer and trainee evaluations were positive overall on both content and delivery of the courses, the impact of the programme is not always visible. Post-training monitoring is needed. Some respondents said that the programme

contributes to a more mobile workforce (from outer islands to Rarotonga, or to New Zealand). Overall, the programme appears to be effectively providing opportunities for Cook Islanders to train and up-skill, but there is a lack of opportunity for youth in post-secondary opportunities.

STTA: these are part of an NZAID regional scheme to enable people from selected developing countries to undertake vocational training (for up to one year) in New Zealand. In the Cook Islands, DNHRD deals directly with the MSC for the STTAs, based in New Zealand. The Cook Islands STTA objective is to promote human resource development through skills based training based on national priorities. Applications for these awards are considered under the NZAID STTA Operating Guidelines manual. On the whole, these guidelines were adhered to by DNHRD. Applications are pre-appraised on six criteria, and forwarded to the Steering Committee for approval or not. Successful applicants complete a second form for the MSC to find a training placement. The MSC takes responsibility from this point, with the MSC providing support in New Zealand as well as monitoring progress and reporting back to DNHRD. Feedback from trainees on the MSC was positive. All expenses related to short-term training awards are paid by NZAID on invoice from the MSC as outlined in contractual arrangements and STTA Operating Guidelines. From the reports viewed as part of the review there was a direct correlation between the national priority awards granted and their budget allocations.

Over the period for this review, 60 awards (42 percent to females) were approved for various skills-based training placements in NZ. Training varied from desk-top publishing, waste management to plumbing and hair cutting. The ages of awardees ranged from 19 to 63. Only two awardees were from the outer islands. The information gathered and the interviews conducted suggest that overall the scheme is going well. The management arrangement between DNHRD and MSC is working efficiently. The numbers of attachments awarded are exceeding expectations from DNHRD and MSC. There is a quicker turnover of processing of proposals now than previously which is seen as a success. Awardees interviewed have been more than pleased with the arrangements that have been made for them and the skills learned. They felt that the attachments met their needs in developing their skills in whatever context it happened to be. Similar issues arose for STTA about the risks associated with the mobile workforce as for the ICT programme.

Recommendations:

1. DNHRD develops a single comprehensive Management Policy and Procedural Manual for both programmes
2. DNHRD continue to develop their electronic data system
3. Cook Islands Government commission an up-date of the training needs in the Cook Islands for future strategic direction
4. DNHRD consider a single steering committee for both STTA and ICT programmes
5. DNHRD promote post-secondary training and education targeting youth
6. NZAID continue financial support of the ICT and STTA programme under a newly formed funding arrangement

7. Cook Islands Government with assistance from NZAID commission an Impact Assessment Analysis of these two programmes.

Key Issues and Learning for NZAID

Participation of youth and outer islanders

The review identified two issues related to targeting: few opportunities targeted at youth in the ICT programmes and extremely low participation of people from the outer islands in STTA. Gaining an understanding the reasons behind low participation of outer islanders in STTA would be the first step to addressing the issue.

Training and Migration

The review suggests that training makes it more likely that trainees will leave home (either from outer islands to Rarotonga, or on to NZ).