



Pacific R2R Programme Workshop

Most Significant Change

The GEF Pacific IW R2R Project - Cook Islands



Community Ownership is Key

1. Tell me a little about yourself.

I belong to an NGO Environment group and we have done a lot of work in the community to address small issues as well as drawing the attention of government to bigger issues e.g. the pollution in our lagoon.

2. What has been your involvement with the R2R project?

Attended the storm water management feasibility study earlier on in the year.

3. Please tell me all the changes you feel have resulted from the R2R project since it started.

Personally, the workshop is confirmation of what we have been preaching to the community in the past however, was not taken seriously. The workshop was attended a good sector of people including those in the community where storm water is an issue due to the many infrastructural developments without proper laws to guide these.

4. From your point of view, which do you think is the most significant change and why? (Please try to describe the change in the form of a story.)

The most significant change is the mindset of people. In the past those educated on the environment would advocate to the community about improper practices of development such as building roads going uphill. Due to the tribal ownership of lands system in Rarotonga, it is difficult to advise people correct road building measures only to be told "it's my land and I can do whatever I want". Or "this stream is running through my land therefore it belongs to me & I can block so water runs elsewhere"

As climate change becomes intense, as seen in recent weather events, heavy rainfall has gone haywire not finding its' natural pathways as meddled with for the sake of development, more buildings for tourism and the likes.

The community is in shock "this has never happened before" government has to do something. This time, people are listening to advice, are listening more & speaking the same language on why the destructions are happening now. The government has hastened the public consultation for the Infrastructure Bill that has now been passed in Parliament that will address all the issues of development including managing storm water. In summary, the people are now in tune with what's happening with Mother Nature, why these are happening & what best practices they can adopt to save our environment.

5. Why did you choose this change in particular? Eg. Why was it significant for you?

This is a significant change because for any development to succeed, the community have to accept & receive it as in the past this has been very difficult as mentioned earlier, locals owned their lands, there have been no laws to prevent you from doing things on your land that affects other properties.

