

Pa Enea Consultation 2019 — Summary

Background

The Government has started work on an Economic Development Strategy designed to address cross-cutting economic issues — both challenges and opportunities — with the aim of creating a favourable economic setting that encourages sustainable economic development over the next 10 years. The Strategy will have a broad focus that recognises that economic development will not be sustainable without addressing relevant social and environmental challenges.

A major focus of the Strategy will be on driving sustainable economic development in the Pa Enea — addressing economic challenges or constraints on the one hand, and identifying realistic economic opportunities or prospects that are worth pursuing, on the other. At the same time the Government is opening the telecommunications market — landline and mobile phones, and broadband internet — to competition.

A series of meetings were held on each of the Pa Enea (except for Palmerston) to hear firsthand community views on these two major policy proposals. The communities were invited to share their experiences with the current telecommunications service— landlines, mobile phones (calls and data) and broadband internet services — and their expectations for the future. They were also invited to share their views on the challenges and opportunities they face in their daily lives as well as with running and operating a business on each of the islands and what they perceive as possible solutions to fixing challenges identified and potential business opportunities worth examining further.

This paper provides a summary report on the key issues raised by the Pa Enea communities during the consultation.

Penrhyn Island



The meetings in Penrhyn were held on the islet of Omoka and attended by approximately 40 residents. While the majority of the attendees were from Omoka, there were also a few from the islet of Tetautua, with age groups well represented from the young through to the elderly.

Airport

The current condition of the airport runway is viewed as a major hindrance to economic development and growth, especially with the local airline company's inability to fly in larger planes to service the Northern Group islands, impacting on the affordability of air fares with costs being too high to travel to and from Penrhyn. The airport is regarded as the key to creating economic opportunities for the people of Penrhyn. It is their view that an airport upgrade will result in improvements in other sectors such as tourism and tourism related activities, for example women can export woven goods to Rarotonga and other markets.

Shipping

Another key priority area the community would like addressed is shipping. The remoteness of the Northern Group islands means that they are dependent on shipping to ensure a regular supply of food, building materials and other basic necessities. There are many issues with the current service provided to Penrhyn which includes irregular shipping, damaged goods upon arrival, food smelling like hydraulic fuel and no separation of cargo. In addition to this, they expressed their difficulties in seeking reimbursement for damaged goods as well as the costly freight charges that are being charged by the shipping company.

Water

Another critical issue is water storage for the island. Although there are water projects being implemented, people expressed their concerns that this was sufficient as they can go many

months without water and therefore require much larger water storage facilities to cater for these drought periods.

Other areas of concern for the people of Penrhyn would like to see addressed include:

- Upgrade of roads – current road conditions worsen after heavy rain fall.
- Boating repairs – people are dependent on fishing boats to catch fish as well as means of transportation therefore a boat repairs programme needs to be carried out to fix all boats that are currently damaged.
- Coastal protection – coastal erosion is more prominent in some areas than others and work needs to be done in this place to strengthen resilience to changes in climate and sea level rise.
- Lagoon navigational lights – these need to be put in place to improve safety of travelling between islands at night as well as for emergencies.
- Health – a full time doctor needs to be placed on island.

Telecommunications reform

In general, the people on Penrhyn are supportive of the telecommunications reform proposals and welcome the improvements and benefits that these legislative changes will bring to their livelihoods; especially improved service in key areas of business as well as the safety of their fishermen. Their frustrations with the current service have resulted from ongoing connectivity issues, no responses to complaints when lodged, billing issues, not being able to connect to network for days and still being charged full price.

Manihiki Island



The Manihiki community meeting was attended by over 40 people ranging from the young to middle-aged working group and the elderly. The meeting was represented by both communities from Tauhunu and Tukao.

Pearl industry

A farmer shared his experience about how costly it is to operate a pearl farm on Manihiki with cost of fuel, labour and living expenses, these costs are compounded if the farmer is not Rarotonga-based with additional costs for rental homes, rental shops and living expenses. The pearl industry as it is now is not profitable, however there are a handful of pearl farmers that are still hanging in there and fending for themselves. Although pearl farming is labour intensive, farmers have had to learn to make value-added products such as jewelry to generate revenue other than sales from loose pearls.

Pearl farmers need support for a 'middle man' to market and sell pearls on their behalf, which was supposed to be the function of CIPPA, however it wasn't functioning as it should have. CIPPA should be its own body however restructured to carry out its role to support the farmers. The inability of farmers to be able sell pearls online due to limitations with customers being able to purchase pearls online is an issue that needs to be addressed.

Farmers are also finding it difficult to sell pearls as jewelers are buying from Tahiti where pearls are cheaper and supply is consistent. Labour shortages continues to be an issue, the Kiribati worker's scheme didn't work out due to reasons such as language barriers, no experience in working pearl farms, difficulties with being separated from families and seasonal workloads. At the moment government workers are able to assist however only when they have free time.

Education

The Manihiki school programme teaches up to Year 10 (Form 3) and then the children either go to Rarotonga for further education or remain on island and work. In most cases when children have to move to Rarotonga for school, entire families move as well causing depopulation issues on island. Another major issue that is faced is housing for children on Rarotonga as well as the difficulties that these children face when being separated from their families as well as adjusting to the Rarotonga way of life are also challenges. The education programme on Manihiki should be tailored to include programs that are relevant and suited to living on Manihiki, for example improving skills to suit pearl industry work.

Economic opportunities

The people on Manihiki shared their views on ways to diversify economic opportunities, a key priority is to tar seal the airport runway. The people believe that many opportunities will arise as a result starting with eco-tourism opportunities with experiences to include Maroro, Tuna and Reef fishing with proper controls in place to ensure its sustainability.

Other opportunities which they identified include:

- Capitalising on fishing industry whereby fishing vessels should give bycatch to nearby islands where they are fishing.
- Processing of pearl shells as a value added product and an alternative income stream for pearl farmers. An example is one farmer on island will be exporting 20 tonnes of shells to an overseas buyer.
- The costs associated with weaving hats and other crafts are too high, other issues include shipping costs as well as difficulties in sourcing markets.

Shipping

The shipping service being provided to the Pa Enea has worsened over the years with one individual stating that shipping was better in 1986 than it is now. The irregularity of shipping to Manihiki have resulted in fuel shortages to the extent where fuel is rationed per family, long periods without particular foods for example no rice for months and cartons of chicken selling out within half an hour of landing on island. In some instances, goods being received are damaged however the damaged cargo are not being replaced.

The freight subsidy scheme that Government has in place is supported however it is not working as the prices are still the same and no reductions have been made over the past months. The operation of the barge was good as projects on island could be implemented due to regularity of shipping schedule as well as goods arriving on island as it was packed by supplier.

Other areas of concern for the people of Penrhyn that they would like addressed are:

- Need for a centralized building for government agencies as land there are land issues where current building exists as it hasn't been surveyed or leased to Crown.

- Water tanks on island are in need of repair, the SRICC project only repaired 3 of the 6 water tanks on island.
- Heavy machinery required to work on projects such as jetty.
- Fueling stations need to be established on island for fuel and LPG gas.
- Cost of living is an issue as average income on Manihiki is \$300/fortnight however cost of goods are expensive, KAIYOU is the way of life. Need to review minimum hourly rate.
- Regular servicing of boats is required as it is the main transportation on island.

Telecommunications reform

The people on Manihiki expressed their frustrations with the current telecommunications service provided to the Pa Enea and feel that because of their location they are treated as 'out of mind out of sight'. Furthermore, the level or quality of the telecommunications service provided on Manihiki does not match the prices that are being charged. People were also concerned with the approaching cyclone season and no longer having access to AM radio, not being able to pick up FM radio and the poor quality of the internet service provided. They welcome the changes that the telecommunications reform will bring and have suggested the following to be included in the Pa Enea Service Plan:

- Service provider to share 'know how' with Island Administration on how to fix transmitter for Radio and TV.
- Service provider to send out alerts to people via text messages in the event of pending/approaching disasters e.g. cyclones.
- Extension of mobile network coverage to a minimum 5 miles.

Rakahanga Island



The Rakahanga community meetings saw approximately 30 people from the local community in attendance, with the majority representing the middle-aged working group.

Economic opportunities

There is a need to create opportunity so people will remain on island. People are of the opinion that economic development needs to be driven by the Island Administration. Some of the suggestions that from the community members included:

- Fish processing plant for when there is an abundance of fish including materials for handling to ensure hygiene standards are met. There is opportunity for tuna jerky (dried fish) which is sold in 250 gram packs for \$10 each or \$40/kg, there is a potential to produce 100 kg per month to send to Rarotonga, however a ‘middle man’ is needed to sell product and irregular shipping is also an issue. There is also interest to supply fish to be processed out of Samoa, still in discussion phase.
- There is an abundance of coconut, nu and uto on the island so there is an opportunity send this to Rarotonga to sell. There is a need for a market to sell women’s craft.
- Financing is also required to start up business. Two businesses on island have sought financing through BTIB’s concessional loans to build and expand business operations.

Shipping

There are many issues with the current shipping service to Rakahanga and there is no choice but to utilise this service. The issues currently experienced include melted frozen goods due to broken freezers, missing cargo due to unpacking of crates, goods are not received in same condition as when packed by supplier, most of the time they’re damaged and it is difficult to get these items replaced or reimbursed. The irregularity of the service provided needs to be

improved as this impacts development on island. The cost of boat fares are too high especially with the service that is being provided and conditions on board the boat.

Infrastructure

There is a need to improve key infrastructure on island such as:

- Airport – there is a need to build an airport on Rakahanga to reduce cost of travelling to and from island. Land issues continue to persist and hinder progress on this project.
- Wharf – the current wharf is incomplete and needs to be completed as it is dangerous to enter especially when the sea is rough.
- Cyclone shelter – the island needs a cyclone shelter.
- Renewable energy – increased usage has resulted in capacity issues with the current system not being able to keep up with demand, as a result generators are running 4-6 hours daily utilising 1,000 litres of fuel per month.
- Sewage treatment/septic – there are 25 households on Rakahanga and they require assistance to improve sewage systems so it doesn't impact fish stocks.

Depopulation

There are three main reasons for people leaving the island of Rakahanga and these need to be addressed:

- Health – people are leaving island due to health issues so there is a need to introduce educational programmes to promote healthy eating/lifestyles for instance growing vegetables in schools.
- Education – the education system on Rakahanga only goes up to Year 9 (Form 2) then students are sent to Rarotonga for further education and when they leave their homes they don't perform as well and likely leave school when they turn 16. There are some students that remain on island and do not complete school, some families decide to accompany their children overseas for school. CITTI has not been introduced on Rakahanga.
- Finances – working for island administration is the main way to make money on island therefore there is a need to increase other economic opportunities.

Telecommunications reform

Rakahanga has to connect to the network via the Manihiki dish, it is timely that we have our own dish. The internet connection is poor and we can go days having no connection, this has an impact on online education courses and meeting necessary deadlines. The service that is currently being provided is bad compared to before for instance we pay monthly charges however can only connect for two weeks, purchase promotions however cannot connect to network. Service needs to improve also need to extend promotions to more than three days. Cannot access FM radio and rebroadcast radio is not working. There is a need to broaden inshore coverage.

Pukapuka Island



The community meeting was held in the village of Roto and there were approximately 70 people from the community in attendance ranging from the young to the elderly. The majority of the attendees were representative of the middle-aged working group.

Shipping

The shipping service needs to be improved as current service is irregular. Freight charges are too expensive for example, the cost of a drum of fuel previously was \$500 per 200 litres and now price has risen to \$740, also the landed price of a carton of chicken on Pukapuka will have tripled from price paid at supermarket. People feel that the cost of goods should be the same as Rarotonga and are questioning why there should be paying more.

The conditions on the boats is not suitable for people to travel however it is the cheaper option at \$750 per adult and \$600 for a child.

Cost of living/employment

The cost of living is too high in comparison to the annual salaries earned for Pukapuka/Nassau residents, with the salary disparity the cost is more to the people of Pukapuka.

The beautification programme is beneficial for the island as it provides the main source of income for most families as the work is rostered on a rotational basis so that income is shared with each employee earning an annual income ranging from \$600 to \$1,200 per annum.

The entitlement for annual leave for government workers is 20 days per year, however when Pukapuka residents take annual leave half of this time is taken up by travelling to and from

Rarotonga therefore need to apply for leave without pay for extended travel. The irregularity of transport also leads to delays in returning to the island. The policy needs to be amended to reflect the situation in Pa Enea.

Infrastructure

The access roads to the cyclone shelter needs to be improved because during sea surges the access ways gets flooded resulting in people having to swim across taro swamps to get to the shelter.

The Pukapuka airport needs to be upgraded. This includes upgrading the airport runway as well as the need to strengthen border security (Biosecurity/Immigration/Customs) for consideration of direct flights from Samoa. People are of the view that if the runway is upgraded this will result in cheaper fares to and from the island.

Both Pukapuka and Nassau harbours need to be improved. Currently, there is a ship sitting right at the entrance of the harbor and this needs to be removed for safety of fishermen.

There are heavy machinery items on island that need to be disposed of as they are no longer in use. It is difficult to replace parts for machinery even though information and photos of machines are sent through however response from ICI is very slow, it has been 3 years now.

The emergency sirens needs to be fixed as the current process during emergencies is for the Administration staff to drive around warning people in community.

Agriculture

An opportunity exists to export fish and taro to Rarotonga due to an abundance on island, however a market is required on Rarotonga. Uto is being produced and exported to Rarotonga. The average sack has about 70 uto and sells for \$60-100 per sack. Freight charges range from \$10-\$30 depending on rates provided by the shipping company. Currently the responsibility for Agriculture sits with the Island Administration, people are of the view that if this shifts back to Ministry of Agriculture then this will improve industry. People need seeds such as watermelon to plant fruit as well as vegetables on island.

Other areas of concern for the people of Pukapuka include:

- The scholarship schemes for students to study in Rarotonga usually results in their students not returning to Pukapuka.
- There is a need for a full time doctor to be stationed on Pukapuka. People are concerned that their children born on Rarotonga lose their Pukapuka registry on passport.

Telecommunications reform

The people are supportive of the changes especially if this results in better service and reduced prices for both Pukapuka and Nassau. The quality of the current telecommunications service provided is poor with issues ranging from overseas calls getting cutoff midway also not being

able to hear the person on the other end, internet connection only lasting a few minutes and then cutting out, no internet connection for three-four days especially in Nassau with no connectivity. The service provided does not reflect the prices that is charged which is too high. Two years ago a request was made to replace the Pukapuka/Nassau dish however nothing has been done. Telecommunications service was better under previous ownership. People voiced if the new Pa Enea Service plan can include island wide coverage so that network can be accessed while on the lagoon in case of emergencies.

Aitutaki Island



The Aitutaki meetings were attended by approximately 50 people from the community ranging from the youth to the elderly. The community were represented by members from the Aronga Mana, Island Council, Members of Parliament, Economic Committee Members, local businesses as well as grass roots level.

Water

The water shortage issue on Aitutaki is of serious concern for the people. Water is necessary for tourism business operators, residential use as well as agricultural development. The water problems have resulted in instances where operators have to tell tourists to minimise water usage activities and wastage. The local growers also experience difficulties where their plantations have no access to water from the mains which has led to finding alternative sources of water via water holes.

Development cannot take place if there is no water. The water and wastewater project that was supposed to be implemented on Aitutaki 3 years ago, is still waiting as nothing has been done yet. The water tank subsidy program should be implemented in Aitutaki to resolve water shortage issues. The Government subsidy provided in this scheme will make water tanks more affordable. Repairs on water tanks needs to be carried out as it is starting to crack. There also needs to be guarantees in place for donor funded projects in the event that damages occur.

Waste management

The wastewater project for Aitutaki receives a budget allocation year after year however no work is being carried out. The progress of work on Aitutaki shouldn't be dependent on a solution from Rarotonga.

A better waste management system needs to be put in place to protect the lagoon. It is the main draw card for tourism and already we can see the impacts that the increased in activity is having on it. People also raised their concerns about the day tour operators on the lagoon and questioned about the treatment of the waste that is being generated, suggesting that lagoon use be regulated.

An initiative that is being implemented by the Economic Committee that will come into effect on 1 October 2019 is the 'no plastic' initiative.

Economic opportunities

Aitutaki has an Economic Committee made up of members of its business community. There are many opportunities in Aitutaki for Private Public Partnerships.

The focus for Aitutaki is for higher value tourism. Currently, there is enough tourism operators on island however there is a need to improve the quality in order to maintain and preserve the island of Aitutaki. A tax fee or an environmental fee needs to be put in place to generate revenue for the island. There are 6 flights daily coming into Aitutaki and the day tourists that only come on island for a few hours, a portion of revenues generated should be reinvested back onto island. Improvements should also be made to public toilets for tourist use.

Tourism operators should also include 'Socially Responsible' aspects to their business. One of the larger tourism operator's preference is to purchase all ingredients locally and reduce imports into island, however current supply isn't consistent.

The focus for agriculture should be to supply the local market. In order to do this, there needs to be support from Government through the provision of machinery such as tractors and implements. Currently the community depends on private sector machinery, which is costly. Also, the quality of the machinery being provided by donor partners is not very good. There is also the opportunity to grow to supply the Rarotonga market. A possible export product is nono as it is growing wild around the island.

There is also potential for a tuna processing operation as there is interest for 20 containers per month. Discussions are currently being carried out with suppliers.

Cost of living/employment/education

There needs to be incentives in place for first home buyers/builders, and lower interest rates.

Labour shortage is also a major issue and this needs to be addressed. The preference is for local workers, however the reality of the situation is that young people don't want to work, therefore foreign workers are brought in to fill the gaps. Tax incentives need to be put in place to

attract Aitutakians as well as their descendants living overseas to return. Incentives should also be extended to returning Cook Islanders to assist them with housing.

The education syllabus needs to be changed to include life skills subjects, including financial literacy, tax literacy and work ethics so that when students leave school they have learnt things that will be useful in life.

Other topics that were briefly discussed include:

- There needs to be a system in place for repatriation of motor vehicles, every time a ship lands new vehicles arrive.
- Emergency response kits are needed in case of emergencies out in the lagoon, also need radio repeaters.
- Putting in place the community water stations has impacted water bottling business on the island as people are opting to refill bottles at the stations.
- Projects being implemented on Aitutaki are driven by Rarotonga.

Telecommunications reform

During the discussions on telecommunications, one person described the situation in Aitutaki as the 'horse has bolted' and are supportive of reform and welcome the improvements that will result from the installation of the Manatua Cable.

The current service provided on island is poor and it impacts businesses operations as well as limiting opportunities for online education. The service expectations with the switch to the cable are cheaper services as well as same service as that provided to Rarotonga. People also raised their concerns with the cable, including who bears the costs for any repairs to the cable, inclusion of local contractors in the project and the option to use other means of delivering bandwidth if new players do not want to use the cable. The Aitutaki people also stated that when selecting the project committee members, should include a representative from Aitutaki.

Mangaia Island



The meetings held in Mangaia were attended by over 50 people from the community. The meeting attendees were representative of private sector and public sector with the majority representative of the elderly population.

Infrastructure

The current infrastructure on the island is not up to the standard required to cater for the boom in tourism as well as the quality and quantity of water on the island to facilitate domestic supply of water to the households and the availability of water for planting. Improvements also need to be made to the roads around the island.

Economic opportunities

There are many opportunities for business development on Mangaia, however starting a business in Mangaia is difficult mainly due to irregular shipping, airlines and the cost of freight to bring goods across to the island. There is also a shortage of skilled workers – not enough carpenters, plumbers, etc. to facilitate infrastructure development and also the cost of transportation.

There needs to be more investment by government in agriculture. Agriculture workers should fall under MOA and not Island Administration. Labour shortage is a major issue on island, particularly in the agriculture sector.

Mangaia has a lot to offer in terms of tourism as there are many untouched places that tourist can see and experience, however the approach needs to be done in a sustainable manner so the preference is for eco-tourism. The main issues currently faced by this industry is that it is too expensive for tourists to fly to Mangaia with a \$500 a return ticket plus accommodation, transportation hire. Some of the tourist activities can be delivered locally, i.e. tours, site visits,

however it's a matter of getting the tourist to visit the island. Also, with tourism coming, they would also need reliable housing and also there is a need for a doctor and the health department on Mangaia to not only cater for tourists but also locals.

Water

The water supply is saline and needs to be purified before it can be consumed. The quality and quantity of water on the island to facilitate domestic supply of water to the households and the availability of water for planting is an issue. The major issue around water has been addressed in the island plan as one of the island's main priorities to improve on as well as the roads — 'Without water, you can't plant'.

Cost of living/employment

The availability of jobs on the island is scarce, making it difficult to provide for a whole family. There is an opportunity for employment in agriculture however this work needs to be supported by Government.

The cost of goods is very expensive on Mangaia and therefore makes things difficult for families living on island. There are businesses i.e. small shops, takeaways which have set up however it is very hard as there is hardly any people to sell to. The businesses open only a few days a week, due to the current population on the island, difficult to keep the shops opened regularly.

Depopulation

Depopulation is a major issue for all the islands with people migrating to Rarotonga or New Zealand for better opportunities, which are lacking on Mangaia. Although courses are provided through CITTI, the limitations in the courses offered may be the reason why youth are leaving. There are families that have moved to the island from Rarotonga, however they don't stay for long as there is no assistance provided to these families start businesses, particularly in agriculture. Issues around the availability of resources i.e. fertilizer as farmers are required to source their own supplier rather than being provided assistance from the Agriculture division. There needs to be incentives, opportunities available in order for people to stay on the island especially young people.

Students leave the island to go to Rarotonga to complete schooling there as Mangaia doesn't have the resources to enable students to complete school on island. Moving to Rarotonga also presents challenges for these students leaving the island and they struggle and tend to go astray. Youth see the benefits outside in bigger countries and need to start making implementing changes that were discussed years ago in order to keep the youth on the island.

Having good roads, good health system, water, electricity, availability of moving between the islands, easier access (transportation), availability of jobs, would significantly improve quality of life on island and therefore we can entice people to come back. But at the moment our young people go away because the opportunities are not available on the island.

Telecommunications reform

The quality of the telecommunications service provided in Mangaia including internet, landline and mobile services is very poor. The lack of a radio service on island means that people cannot hear discussions that goes on in Parliament, also they cannot keep up with updates in communities. The price for the quality of service is expensive. There aren't that many hotspots on the island. Applaud current operator's actions action to date, even though services not what it could be. Supportive of competition so prices can come down and perhaps the fast internet will help attract people back to Mangaia, however there are concerns as to whether this will work in a small remote market.

Mauke Island



There were approximately 45 people in attendance at the meeting held in Mauke. The majority of the attendees were from the older working group with a few members from the young and elderly generation.

Agriculture

The 10 year plan for Agriculture in Mauke is to be growing and selling produce to supply the Rarotonga market particularly CITC and Prime Foods. BTIB acts as the middle man for producers in Mauke. The current production on island includes vegetables, fruit trees such as oranges, pineapples and cherry tomatoes. There are currently some challenges experienced by the farmers and these include the water system not working very well for agriculture purposes, labour shortage, the lack of capital for youth to start farming and processes to access financing is complicated. The roads to access agricultural land and plantations need to be improved. In the meantime, discussions are underway with Air Rarotonga to reduce freight costs to enable farmers to afford to fly goods to outside markets.

Cost of living/employment

The cost of goods sold on island is very high which proves to be an issue for small communities, this also provides difficulties for the enforcement of any price control. There is also the issue of goods sold that are past the used by dates, these need to be monitored as well. Job

opportunities need to be created to combat depopulation, there is a lack of marketing and entrepreneurial skills on island.

Waste management

A proper system needs to be put in place for waste management. Also the waste that brought onto the island, need to look into ways to remove this from island.

Telecommunications reform

Telecommunication services need to be improved on the island. The lack of a quality service is impacting businesses operations on island where staff cannot contact main offices in Rarotonga. This also has an impact on education and accessing content online as well as participating in online courses for tertiary studies due to connectivity issues.

Atiu Island



There was a mix of young and the elderly people represented at the community meeting in Atiu, in total approximately 40 attendees.

Agriculture

A young planters program is set to begin soon to encourage and grow agriculture on Atiu. To support this program, the island is looking at setting up a crop bank set up and nursery. Some of the challenges that are currently faced is the wandering animals which need to be addressed, as well as trying to establish a middleman system so that farmers can concentrate on production. One person suggested using prisoners on Atiu to fill the labour shortage in Agriculture. The wandering animals on Atiu pose a problem to farmers and this needs to be addressed.

Economic opportunities/access to finance

The Atiu community discussed what they wished to see improved in the next 10 years, some of these improvements include an increased population to 1,000 residents in 5 years, increase tourist numbers to 10,000 in this time and improvements to infrastructure such as road, water and airport.

There are entrepreneurship opportunities for an individual to act as an agent between growers on Atiu and external buyers. Opportunities also exists for processing of seasonal fruits especially drying options. An increase in tourist numbers to the island will also result in opportunities for employment in this sector and may also attract Cook Islanders overseas to return. Access to finance is also important when trying to set up small business as well as support services with business plan writing, currently working with BTIB to get students to develop businesses.

There is opportunity for tourism however not at the expense of their environment. The approach to undertake is more conservative, looking at existing vacant housing and fixing these up and turn into holiday homes to cater for tourist.

Education

Accommodation needs to be put in place for students traveling to Rarotonga for school. Need to change education programs so they start teaching trades early while still at school to avoid reliance on government work. MOE not providing funding to purchase goods needed to build etc. CITTI reliance on the school to provide goods for students.

Telecommunications reform

The telecommunications service needs to be improved so that the networks can be accessed across the island. This will also improve communications during a natural disaster. There is a need for quality internet service for the schools as well as banking services as ATM machines breaks down regularly.

Mitiaro Island



There were approximately 30 people in attendance at the meetings in Mitiaro with the majority being elderly and a few youth.

Infrastructure

The view regarding infrastructure is that government needs to find a better way of delivering infrastructure projects on the island, especially communication and relationships with the line ministries needs to be more effective and efficient. The people are supportive of infrastructure development in water, roads, harbor, airport and access to machinery.

Economic opportunities

Create economic opportunities here in Mitiaro so that people will remain on island or come back to the island. Some of the challenges experienced are expensive shipping and air freight, labour shortage to name a few.

The opportunity for eco-tourism exists however before increasing tourist numbers to visit island there needs to be improvements in some areas in order for this to be sustainable. Firstly water, as there needs to be sufficient supply to cater of tourism numbers. Agriculture, as there needs to be sufficient produce available to be able to feed tourist as well as fishing to have enough supply of fish to be able to feed the tourist. Another area that needs to be improved is waste management as this is likely to have an impact on environment as well as the fresh water sources on island. Sandflies are also prevalent on island.

Agricultural opportunities exists on the island with the current production and sales of limes, maire ei's and dried banana (piere). Also, currently selling eggs on Mitiaro and Mauke. The challenges that are being experienced include cost of the freight to have this shipped to Rarotonga to sell, finding a suitable market to sell produce as well as a shortage of labour on the island. There is also a need for machinery for agricultural purposes.

Education

Quite often education is ignored, however it could be a solution to the depopulation issue that the islands face with students leaving to study on Rarotonga and not returning. The idea of a regional education hub for CITTI on the island of Atiu should be explored so young people from Nga Pu Toru can attend and study. Online education is not an option as the internet service provided. The focus of education should be in providing quality programs and not quantity.

Telecommunications reform

The view of the people in Mitiaro is that they would like to see an improvement in the overall telecommunications service. Currently, the quality of service provided on island is poor to the extent where network blackouts are common occurrences as well as costly. They support telecommunications reform if this leads to reduced prices and good quality services so students can access online courses. They have requested for their own mast so not dependent on Atiu. The island community relied heavily on the AM radio for news and updates on what was happening around the Cook Islands as well as around their community. However, the removal of the AM radio mast on Rarotonga has left the island community unsure of what is happening and has left the community vulnerable to climate disasters.