

## Slide 1

The declining populations on our small islands is of increasing concern to leaders in the Pacific

It has been claimed that the chief export of the Pacific Islands is human resources. Small island states are becoming depopulated as working age people migrate to bigger job markets mainly in Australia and New Zealand.

But of course what it does for those who remain, is that it depletes their island of resources and workers and the remaining population are increasingly aged, and services are greatly reduced.

On one of the outer islands a telecentre has recently been established not only to help to bridge the divide between families separated because of economic opportunities overseas, but also to help the reduced population to take advantage of the internet to improve services on the island and to hopefully create their own economic opportunities, and what other support is required to make this not only possible, but sustainable.



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Two islands in the Cook Islands – Aitutaki, Mangaia.

Aitutaki, the jewel in the crown for the Cook Islands – one of the most popular tourist destinations.

But what about Mangaia?

## Aitutaki - Mangaia

 <p>Land mass 18 sq km (7 sq miles)</p> <p>The distance around the outside of the reef is 74 kms. Highest point is 123m above sea level.</p> <p>Has broadband and wifi. Mobile access.</p> <p>Population – nearly 2000</p>	 <p>Geologically 18 million years old</p> <p>Land mass 52sq kms (20 sq miles)</p> <p>Distance around the island is about 40 kms</p> <p>Highest point is 4750m above sea level</p> <p>Has broadband, and wifi. Mobile access currently being installed</p> <p>Population – about 500</p>
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Basic information about both islands



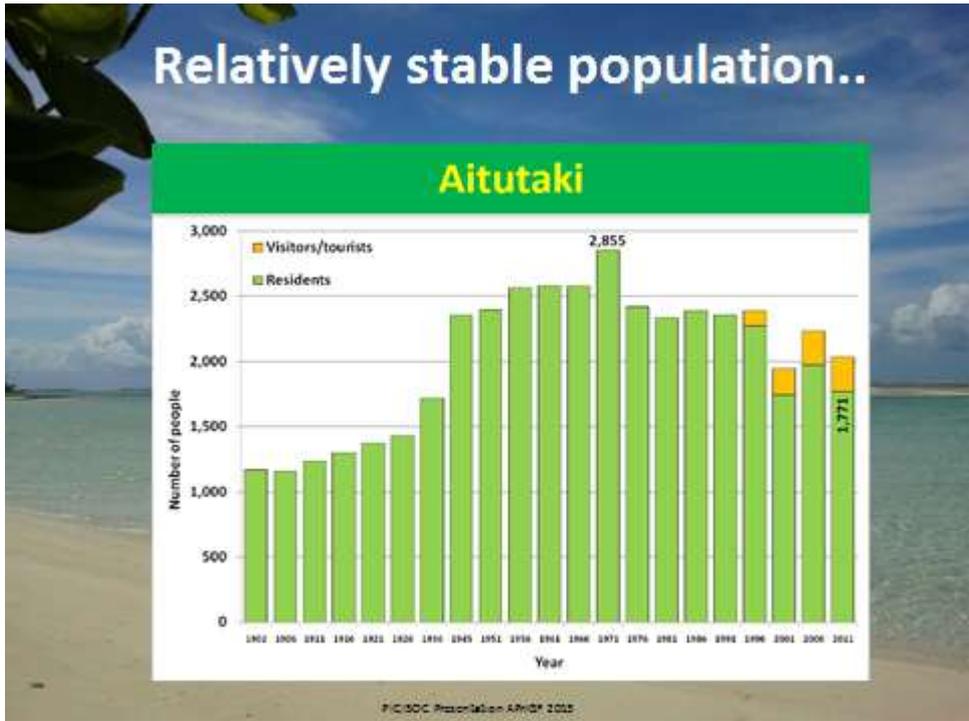
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Aitutaki – tourist resort



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Mangaia - volcanic eruptions in its history has raised it three times so that the island is covered in cliffs and caves and its terrain is mainly rocky but still beautiful in its own way.



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But the population on Aitutaki is still relatively stable (after the initial drop in 1976 – when the International Airport on Rarotonga opened. All the outer islands suffered population loss after that major event in our history)

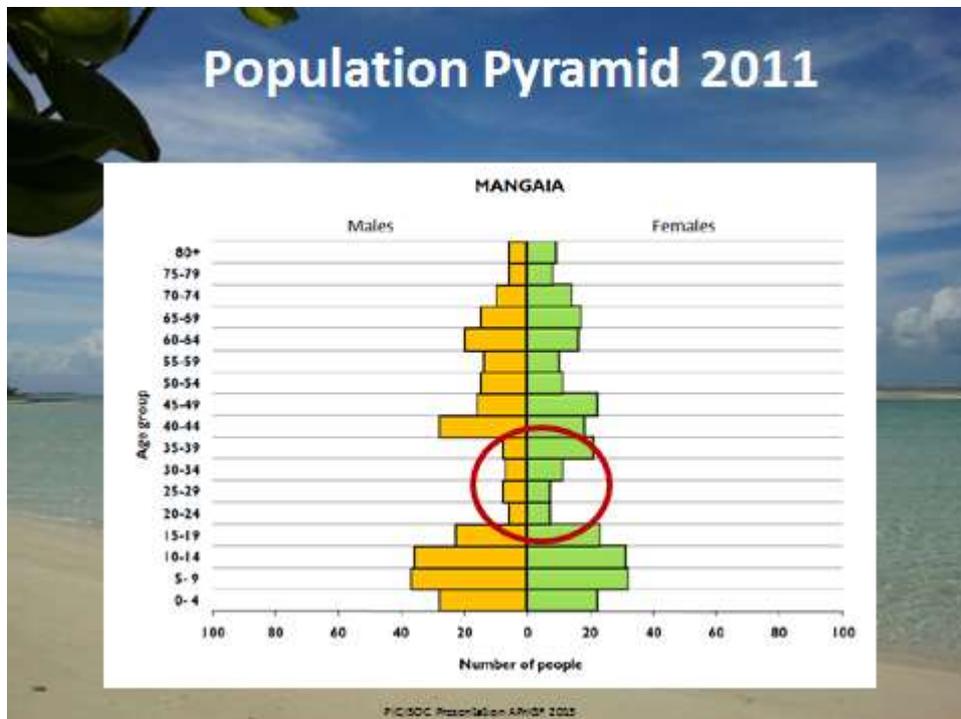
One reason could be attributed to its being a government priority for funding and intervention when anything threatens the livelihood of the island.



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However when we look at the population trend on Mungaia we see a completely different story.

There was a big drop in population in 1976, but it continues to fall...

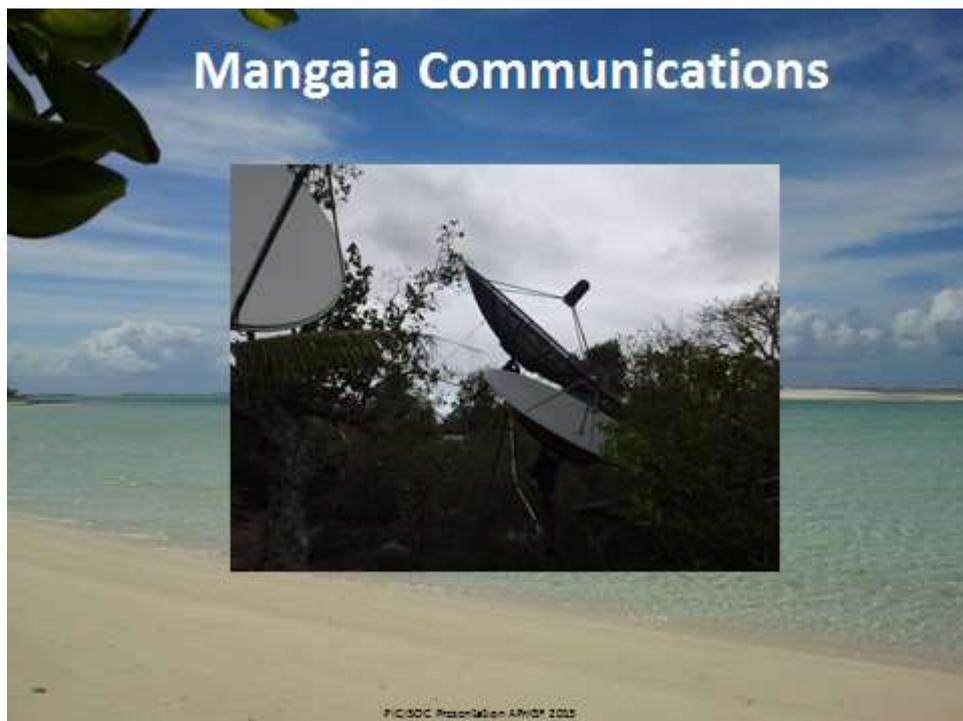


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And the reason is highlighted in this population pyramid

The greatest loss is in the 20-40 year olds so that it is confirming what has been described as our greatest export - human resource.

What we are left with are two distinct generations – the old and the young.



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Because of its isolation as the southern most island of the Cook Islands, Mangaia has been targeted by Telecom Cook Islands for improved telecommunication services despite the significant decline in population.

Mangaia is being given an opportunity to look at how it can utilise the internet to kick start economic opportunities for those who are left behind.

Telecom Cook Islands is investing in costly infrastructure to help Mangaia use and build on the potential of the internet

#### **When O3b service is switched on in November**

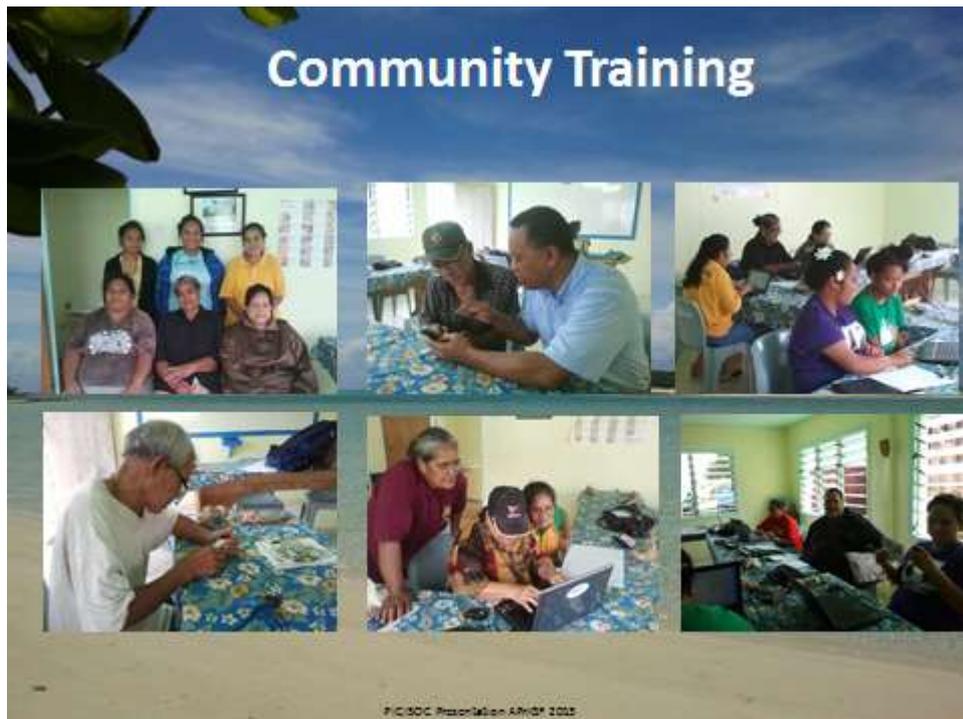
- Mangaia will experience much faster Internet service and get more data for the same price.
- The vastly improved service will make e-learning viable and video calls etc. should be very good quality.
- Smartphones in range of a wifi will be also able to access data at a similar rate to 3G.
- Businesses and tourism and government and health etc could all benefit from the enhanced service



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In January I had an opportunity to visit the island and attend four village meetings with the Island's Secretary and his local government officers as part of their community consultation programme as they prepared for their budget for the new financial year.

In their priorities, telecommunications followed in importance after problems the island was having with water and electricity and also the poor condition of the roads. As much as the communities acknowledged the importance of communication services, particularly for the young, meeting the basic needs of the community had to take priority.



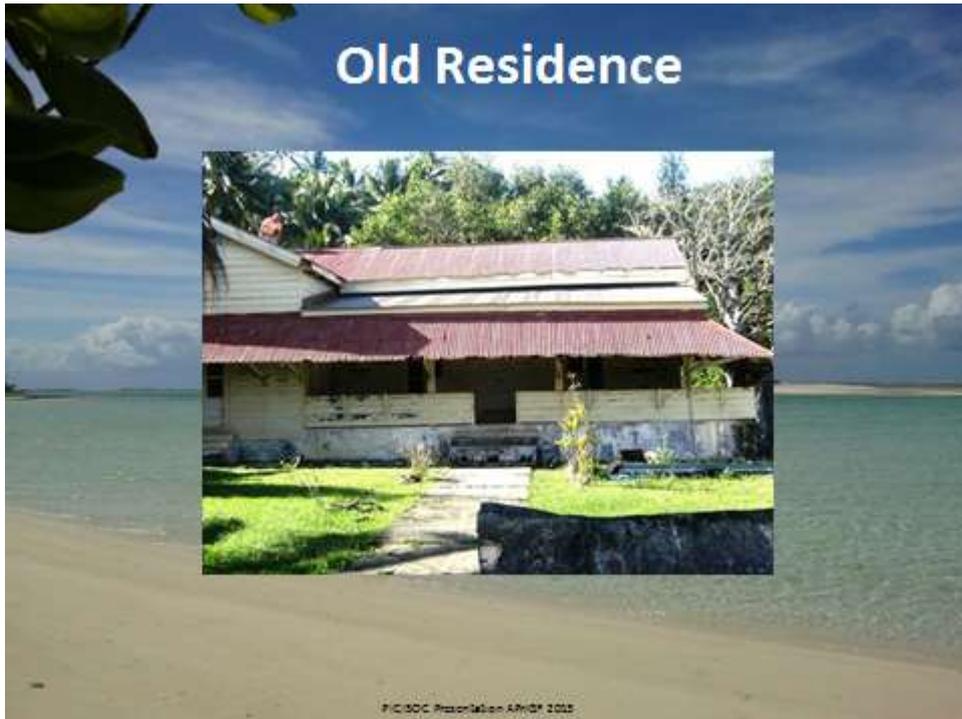
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Nevertheless, when I offered community training in the use of the internet for individuals, businesses and government departments.

It was really interesting to see that the ones who were the most keen were the elderly folk on the island, who wanted to know how to send an email to their children and grandchildren who lived overseas.

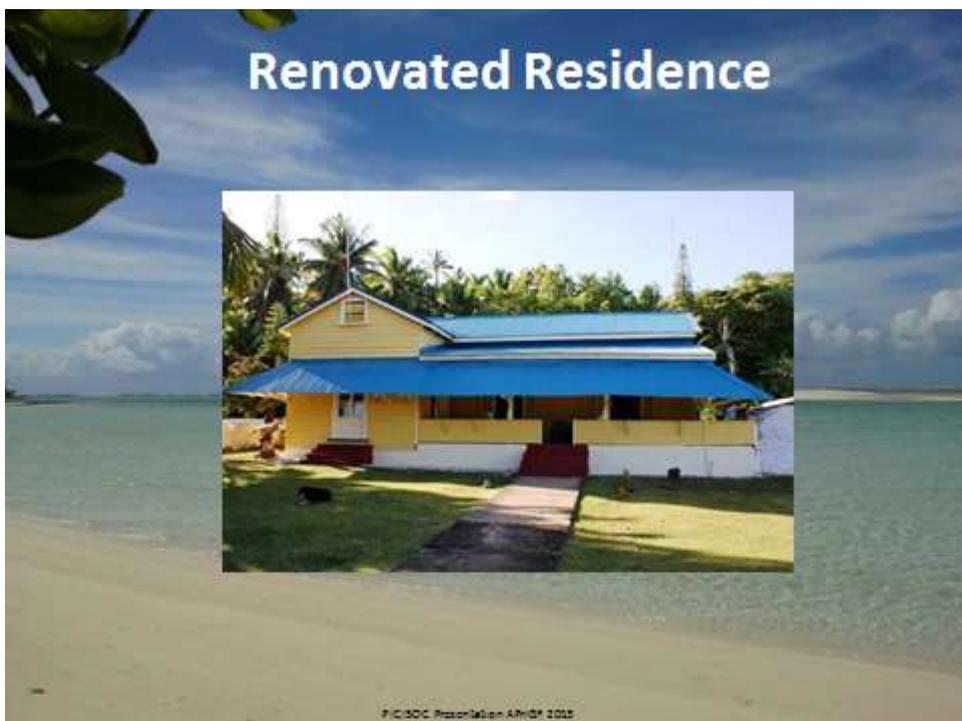
For them, communication provided them with reassurance that families were OK and that they could keep in touch, and they spent hours on the typing tutor trying to improve their typing speeds.

One gentleman just wanted to know how to send texts.. But first of all he had to buy a mobile phone and we showed him how to use it.



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This is what their Community Centre looked like initially.



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Over the last year, great strides have been made by the community to revive the residence and make it more useful as a Tourism Office and Community Centre.



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Telecentres have been established in the Pacific over the years with varying degrees of success.

It is hoped that this model will be more successful because it is multi-purpose and will have multi-stakeholder ownership.

The community centre will serve the community for information, tertiary learning, community training, tourism advice, business enterprise, economic development, as well as provide an internet service for the community – with free service for the elderly and the disabled.

1. The USP Centre has been sponsored by the University of the South Pacific, based in Fiji, to encourage young people to take up distance learning studies that will lead them to qualifications that will enhance their opportunities for employment.

2. The Telecentre has been sponsored by NZAid and the Cook Islands Internet Action Group, to enable access to internet services for those who do not have internet connection in their homes. It will be available to the general public and visitors on a user-pays basis, but a condition of the sponsorship is that the local government must sponsor elderly and disabled users, so that they can use internet for free.



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3. The museum already has a vaka that has been restored and placed inside the area that will be transformed into a storehouse for old artefacts that depict the history of Mangaia. Digitised archives will also be available.

4. And the whole complex will be managed by the Tourism Office and a multi-stakeholder Board, whose role will be to work together to maintain their new building and facilities. This will offer the locals an opportunity to engineer their own solutions to create income to cover their responsibilities.

For the development of the Telecentre, Ano and I from the Internet Action Group would like to thank NZ Aid for sponsoring the furniture, computers and other equipment which is still arriving on the island, and which will convert the Telecentre into a small training facility as well as an internet café for the community and the island's visitors.



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Very recently community centre was used to gather the community together to relearn an ancient craft – to make tapa cloth. Both men and women joined in to relearn this traditional skill. It is hoped that more of these classes will rejuvenate the production of local crafts for sale by the islanders.



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1. The most popular internet resource for the people of Mangaia is the Facebook page “Voices of Mangaia” which gives updates about what is happening on Mangaia for those who are not on the island, but who want to keep in touch.
2. It updates Facebook users of events that locals are involved in, and it is mostly written in their local language – to encourage those overseas to continue using their language
3. It also reminds people of customs on the island, this one relates to a day when food is shared among the families in the village – this follows on from old traditions that ensured that everyone in the village was fed and looked after.



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Thank you