

FROM THE 9TH PACIFIC ISLANDS CONFERENCE ON NATURE CONSERVATION AND PROTECTED AREAS

The 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation Conference and Protected Areas is hosted by the Government of Fiji in partnership with the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, the Pacific Island Roundtable for Nature Conservation and IUCN Oceania.

This media coverage is a partnership supported by the Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS), SPREP, University of the South Pacific (USP), Fiji National University (FNU) and the Pacific Island News Association (PINA).

MSG and SPREP seal partnership

The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat today signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to provide a framework of co-operation between the two partner organisations.

The signing comes during the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas being held this week in Suva, Fiji,

Within this framework, the Parties will consult each other to improve coordination and foster collaboration on the focal areas they have agreed to under the MOU.

The MOU serves to formalise and strengthen a partnership to foster regional cooperation to address the varied issues faced by the SPREP and MSG membership. The agreed focal areas of partnership under this MOU are:

- Environment Conservation and Protection;
- Biodiversity and ecosystem management;
- Climate Change adaptation and mitigation;
- Environmental monitoring and governance;
- Trade;
- Economic development; and
- Sustainable development

The MOU provides both organisations with direction as they work together to ensure Environmental Sustainability in the Pacific. They aim to do this by enhancing



SPREP Director General Mr. David Sheppard and Mr. Stanley Wapot, the Environment and Climate Change Analyst, MSG, at the signing of the MOU.

and complementing each other's efforts while building on their individual natural strengths and areas of primary expertise underpinning the principles of the 'one team' approach for the Pacific; sharing relevant information to assist each other to achieve the objectives of this MOU; developing the needs and priorities of the mutual Member countries; the work of both organisations will be as mandated by their respective governing bodies and at relevant meetings of their Ministers and Leaders; when both organisations are involved in the same priority area of work, a joint approach will be defined through a collaborative process that respects the core functions of each organisation and

the strategies or approaches that have been defined by their respective governing bodies.

MSG Director General, Mr. Peter Forau said, "the MSG welcomes the MOU and we look forward to collaborating more with SPREP on the implementation of global and regional priorities, and in particular the terrestrial commitment and blue carbon initiatives under the MSG Leaders Declaration on Environment and Climate Change and the MSG Green Growth Goals relating specifically to environment and climate change issues."

For more on this go to:
<http://tinyurl.com/SPREP-MSG>



**9th PACIFIC ISLANDS
CONFERENCE ON
NATURE CONSERVATION
AND PROTECTED AREAS**

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Some of the volunteers helping out with the logistics of the conference.

Volunteers keep conference moving

By **JOSEPHINE NAVULA**

Second-year journalism student at FNU

Helping out at such a big environment conference is a wonderful opportunity to learn and contribute, said 20-year-old Ms. Victoria Rupeni.

Ms. Rupeni is one of 40 volunteers at the weeklong 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas in Suva, Fiji.

"I am really enjoying a lot and, most of all, I'm really learning a lot, especially how these big conferences are held and how we volunteers help out," she said.

Adi Manasia Nasedra, 17, had similar views.

She said this was the first time for her to be at such a large conference and was glad

she signed up as a volunteer.

"This is my first workshop and I'm really learning a lot, especially meeting new people from all around the region," said Adi Manasia.

Mr. Lote Rusaqoli, Fiji's Acting Principal Environment Officer, said the team of youth volunteers were passionate about their work, and this made working with them enjoyable.

Mr. Rusaqoli, who was coordinating the volunteer team, said the volunteers were assigned to take care of the plenary sessions, exhibition booths, seating arrangements and passage ways.

"So far they have been doing great work and I am really impressed by that," he said.

The volunteers, who were drawn from

the Fiji Red Cross Society and Ministry of Youth and Sports' networks, underwent one day of training in preparation for the conference.

Mr. Rusaqoli added that transport was provided for all the volunteers to help them in their work.

Josephine Navula is a member of the Media Team providing coverage of the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas from 2 to 6 December in Suva, Fiji. This is a partnership between the Fiji National University (FNU), University of the South Pacific (USP), SPREP and Pacific Islands News Association (PINA) whereby a team of 10 journalism students are mentored by senior reporters as they cover the conference. This activity is funded by the Pacific Assistance Media Scheme (PACMAS).

Nguna-Pele does Vanuatu proud

By **ERONI TUINACEVA**

Journalism student at FNU

A community-based solution to conservation in Vanuatu has received recognition at the inaugural Pacific Islands Environment Leadership Awards in Suva, Fiji, on Monday night.

Vanuatu's Nguna-Pele Marine Reserve took home the Community or Group category in the Ratu Aisea Katonivere Leadership Award.

They were honoured for their innovative leadership in Vanuatu, especially for its green turtle conservation programme and its marine park of over 3000 hectares of managed reefs, sea grass beds, mangrove forests and intertidal lagoons. In addition, Nguna-Pele has been instrumental in the implementation of 'taboo' reef systems and forests, which would remain permanently off-limits, as well as assigning community representatives to conduct reef surveys, tag sea turtles, plant coral and run ongoing environment awareness across the two islands. Most impressive is the reserve's take on invasive species, organising a crown-of-thorns starfish catching competition in 2010 that saw over 10,000 of the creatures being collected.

Accepting the award on behalf of Nguna-Pele was Chairman, Mr. Ronneth John.

"I would like to express our tribute to the coordinating partners for making it possible for the organisation to attend these awards. I also want to thank the volunteers we have worked with for submitting the application for this award," Mr. John said.

"I would also like to thank SPREP for acknowledging the work of Nguna Pele by giving us this award. I also want to thank all the people of Nguna-Pele and especially the Department of Environment, for also helping us in doing a lot of eco-conservation around Vanuatu," Mr. John said.

Nguna-Pele Marine Reserve was founded in 2002 and engages the 16 communities on the islands of Nguna and Pele.



Nguna-Pele Marine Reserve Chairman Mr. Ronneth John receives the award on behalf of his group from Fijian Attorney-General Mr. Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum.

Nguna-Pele Marine and Land Protected Area Network, Vanuatu – Community/ Group Category of the Ratu Aisea Katonivere Award for Excellence in Community Leadership in Environmental Sustainability and Conservation

The Nguna-Pele Marine and Land Protected Area Network, established in 2002 by four traditional community chiefs, is a non-governmental organisation which brings together 16 indigenous communities on the islands of Nguna and Pele in the Republic of Vanuatu. The initiative promotes the sustainable use of marine and terrestrial resources in 3,000 hectares of community-managed reefs, sea grass beds, mangrove forests and intertidal lagoons, coordinating a network of fishing communities in conducting biological monitoring, environmental education, waste management, and alternative livelihood projects.

The network has set up an efficient and replicable method to build more resilient marine and coastal ecosystems, by implementing community managed marine protected areas. Agreements signed with Vanuatu's Department of Fisheries and the Department of Environmental Protection and Conservation have already strengthened the involvement of the network in national policies.

The network's achievements include protection of turtles, with the number of green sea turtles and other species observed in the area increasing. The community-based approach has also been effective in the struggle against invasive species. Over 10,000 crown-of-thorns starfish were collected during a 'clean-up campaign competition' coordinated by the network in 2010. This major threat in the past is now well managed by communities who also use the dead crown-of-thorns starfish as a great organic fertiliser for gardening.

Marine protected areas now play a major role in the island's economy with a doubling of the average income for those who shifted from fishing to ecotourism. New projects on food security through a solar drying process, organic fertilization and tree planting already provide benefits by diversifying sources of revenue.

The Samoan teenager who leads a growing chorus of Small Voices

By **MARYANN LOCKINGTON**

Second-year journalism student at USP

Fifteen-year-old Brianna Fruean was one of the young environmentalists who travelled to Suva for the regional nature conservation forum this week.

It does not take long to figure out that Ms. Fruean is not your average teenager, having already formed an organisation of her own in Samoa.

Ms. Fruean was always interested in environmental issues and started a children's eco-group called Small Voices with her friends at Vaiala Beach School when she was 11 years old.

"My mum and sister help me out a lot. My dad is my main inspiration and he was the one who taught me how to speak," she said.

Ms. Fruean lost her father in March this year and lives with her sister and mother in Samoa.

She is also one of the youngest participants of the Pacific Youth Environment Network (PYEN).

"I came to help out as a facilitator for PYEN so that I can be involved in a youth network that spreads across the Pacific," she said.

Ms. Fruean first represented Samoa in 2009 to the United Nations Environment Programme Tunza conference in Daejeon Korea and also in Nagoya, Japan in 2010.

In 2010 she helped initiate a tree-planting event as a way to raise awareness.

"Samoa had pledged to plant one million trees and I thought we could contribute by planting trees," Ms. Fruean said.

She was then referred to the CEO of Environment who helped her get the event started.

The organisation for children called Small Voices in Samoa has now spread to at least five other schools since it was founded in 2010.

"The cool thing about Small Voices is although not all members will go into environmental studies, whatever they do, they'll always have a green mindset," she said.



Brianna Fruean (on left) during group work at the Pacific Youth Environment Network workshop this month.

Ms. Fruean said that she was hoping to expand Small Voices in the future.

"Once Small Voices gets established fully in Samoa, I'm thinking to start one in Fiji," she said. "I want to make it a good-size network that can continue when I leave."

Maryann Lockington is a member of the Media Team providing coverage of the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas from 2 to

6 December in Suva, Fiji. This is a partnership between the Fiji National University (FNU), University of the South Pacific (USP), SPREP and Pacific Islands News Association (PINA) whereby a team of 10 journalism students are mentored by senior reporters as they cover the conference. This activity is funded by the Pacific Assistance Media Scheme (PACMAS).

Invasive species risk to address 'capacity gaps'

By **EDWARD TAVANAVANUA**
Journalism student at USP

4 December 2013, Suva, Fiji

The increasing threat of invasive species to the region's marine ecosystems is a great concern because of the lack of capacity to manage the growing risk.

This was raised at the 9th Pacific Island Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas.

Findings from the State of Conservation in Oceania assessment revealed that Fiji had the highest rate of invasive species in the Pacific, said SPREP's PILN Network Coordinator Dr. Posa Skelton.

He said the main issue for Fiji was the lack of capacity and knowledge to manage the threat of invasive species at its ports.

"The good news is the marine invasive species are confined only inside the harbour and ports; very little are found in surrounding areas," Dr. Skelton said.

"The bad news is that the more we degrade marine areas around local communities with developments, like wharfs and ports, we are giving marine invasive species the opportunity to enter and damage these environments."

He said a SPREP training in 2009 to

monitor marine invasive species in the Suva Harbour established the high level of marine invasive species within the harbour.

This was mostly likely caused by ballast water stored in ships or on the hull or attached to the side of ships, said Dr. Skelton.

He encouraged seafarers to clean and maintain the conditions of their vessels more carefully.

"If we don't take measures to manage our marine invasive species, they will adapt to our waters and with local species, and negatively affect the livelihood of surrounding communities," he said.

SPREP has established a regional framework throughout its 21-member countries to improve invasive species management in the Pacific, of which six have implemented National Invasive Species Strategy and Action Plans.

Edward Tavanavanua is a member of the Media Team providing coverage of the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas from 2 to 6 December in Suva, Fiji. This is a partnership between the Fiji National University (FNU), University of the South Pacific (USP), SPREP and Pacific Islands News Association (PINA) whereby a team of 10 journalism students are mentored by senior reporters as they cover the conference. This activity is funded by the Pacific Assistance Media Scheme (PACMAS).



Dr Posa Skelton at the conference.

What nature conservation means to me



By **CAROLYN KITONE**
USP Journalism student

I've always understood the importance of nature conservation. Or at least, I thought I did.

My whole perception of what nature conservation meant was tremendously shaken during a recent workshop where I met some of the most outstanding environmental youth activists in the region.

What I learnt then, and what I continue

to learn at the conference, is that the basics to understanding what the whole deal with nature conservation is, you need to understand 'biodiversity'. Sounds easy enough. But what does it mean?

If we want to get all technical about it, fine. Biodiversity is the degree of variation within the living world.

But this is too broad! There's a whole science to biodiversity but getting down to the point, we have to accept that every single organism, from the giraffe down to the plankton, play an important role in maintaining a sustainable ecosystem.

If we can get committed enough to learn the knowledge of the "past" and apply it in this modern age, then maybe we can find a satisfying answer in how to use our natural resources responsibly enough for economic growth.

In the words of SPREP Director-General Mr. David Sheppard: "The loss of biodiversity is a crisis, with long lasting consequences for sustainable development and livelihoods in our region."

Carolyn Kitone is a member of the Media Team providing coverage of the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas from 2 to 6 December in Suva, Fiji.

One man's journey from Pakistan to the Pacific



Mr. Hamza Malik, from Pakistan, works at WWF in Fiji to develop an eco-internship programme.

By MARYANN LOCKINGTON

Second-year journalism student at USP

When Mr. Hamza Malik left Lahore in Pakistan to come on an internship at the World Wide Fund for Nature South Pacific Office (WWF-SP) in Suva, he knew he was coming for new experiences, especially as it was his first time to be over the ocean.

Mr. Malik hails from Bahawalpur in Punjab, a city of about 800,000 people located in the central western region of Pakistan, several hundred kilometres away from Karachi and the Arabian Sea.

Mr. Malik was among those who gathered in Suva this week for the regional nature conservation conference.

He is working in Fiji to develop the eco-internship programme at WWF-SP. He spoke about his experiences recounting

some highlights of the past two months.

When shooting his documentary in Yadua Taba Island in Bua, Mr. Malik said the first turtle they caught was named after him.

The lead up to meeting Hamza the turtle began around Mr. Malik's passion for photography and documentary filming. During his two months in Fiji, Malik has travelled to at least six islands including Yadua Taba, Yaqaaq, Kavea and Yadua.

"Camera work here was a challenge because I had to learn how to film in the tropics," he said.

He was a part of the team that went to Yadua Island for turtle monitoring so he shot some footage for his documentary film.

"I learnt how to tag turtles," he said. "We also did sea grass monitoring because that is their main diet."

Mr. Malik filmed scenes during the turtle-tagging and the first big turtle tagged was named after him. He was also part of the team that carried out beach profiling at Yadua Taba Island for the turtle nesting grounds.

"We went to Yadua Taba and that was also a sanctuary for crested iguanas," he said.

Mr. Malik said he loved working with young people and got the opportunity to work with tertiary and high school students.

"It is fascinating how youth here are so aware of their environment compared to other parts of the world," he said. "It is very important to work with students because we need to instil these values in them so that they can be our future ambassadors."

At the conference, Mr. Malik has been immersed in listening to the speakers and talking with those interested in the WWF-SP's display booth. Mr. Malik said education on environmental awareness and civic responsibility is important.

"It is the first time for me to see NGOs on a single platform and I think it is important that we work in a partnership as a family," he said.

He also talked about some of his experiences in Fiji and meeting new friends.

"I enjoy the night grog sessions and eating fish every day," he joked. "It's been a lifetime experience and I have my first-ever snorkelling gear."

Mr. Malik expressed his love for the culture, food and the people.

"It's been fascinating having hands-on experience with island communities," he said. "Conservation is important and I've learnt about rain water storage and water management."

Mr. Malik will be leaving in February 2014 and he hopes to make use of what he has learnt here in Fiji when he returns home.

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Award named in honour of Fijian chief

By **WATI TALEBULA**

Second-year journalism student at FNU

In a tribute to the late paramount chief of Macuata Province in Fiji, Ratu Aisea Katonivere, a photo book in his memory was launched this week to serve as a reminder of his championing of marine conservation issues.

A special award in the late chief's name was given to those who championed marine conservation during the inaugural Pacific Islands Environmental Leadership Awards on Monday.

Ratu Aisea was a marine conservationist who strongly believed in the protection of traditional fishing grounds so that it would be sustainable for future generations.

Fiji Locally Managed Marine Areas (FLMMA) network Coordinator Mr. Semisi Meo is quoted in the book as saying Ratu Aisea tried to rally the chiefs of Fiji's 14 provinces to convince them of the importance of nature conservation.

Mr. Meo said the plea made other chiefs realise there was a threat to their way of life and it was already evident in the ocean around Cakaulevu or the Great Sea Reef, which Ratu Aisea had dominion over.

The Great Sea Reef is the third longest barrier reef system in the world, home to a high density of biodiversity and unique species, traversing the Macuata coastline for over 200 kilometres from the north eastern tip of Udu Point in Vanua Levu to Bua, across the Vatuira Passage, veering off along the way to hug the coastline of Ra and Ba Provinces and into the Yasawa Group.

In 2004, Ratu Aisea invited FLMMA to facilitate a consultation that would lead to the reef protection.

At his passing in April 2013, WWF South

Pacific Representative Ms. Kesaia Tabunakawai said Ratu Aisea had persuaded the chiefs of three other districts of Mali, Sasa, and Dreketi to join him in establishing the 59 square kilometres of the Macuata Marine Protected Areas Network, within the collective 1,344 square kilometre fishing ground.

The marine protected area, considered a model for the world, is the high chief's legacy of love to his people that challenged not only the region but the world as well.

"Our greatest success with the marine-protected areas is that we have been able to feed ourselves," Ratu Aisea was quoted as saying in an interview just before his passing.

"We started off with a dream, we pursued conservation and now that dream is a reality. It was our most important and best decision yet for it addressed our food problem. Now and ensured food security for the future as well."

For his outstanding leadership and commitment to marine conservation, Ratu Aisea won the Global Ocean Conservation Award in 2006.

Wati Talebula is a member of the Media Team providing coverage of the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas from 2 to 6 December in Suva, Fiji. This is a partnership between the Fiji National University (FNU), University of the South Pacific (USP), SPREP and Pacific Islands News Association (PINA) whereby a team of 10 journalism students are mentored by senior reporters as they cover the conference. This activity is funded by the Pacific Assistance Media Scheme (PACMAS).



The late Turaga na Tui Macuata Ratu Aisea Cavunailoa Katonivere in a picture taken several weeks before his death. Photo: Jurgen Freund/WWF

Prize for PNG conservationist

By **WATI TALEBULA**

Second-year journalism student at FNU

Dressed in his traditional Papua New Guinea dress, climate change activist Mr. Manuwai Matuwai walked up the podium to receive an award from Fiji's Minister for Environment Mr. Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum on Monday night.

Mr. Matuwai's sacrifice and contribution in promoting climate change in his country and the region was recognised when he was given a special award named in honour of the late Fijian chief Ratu Aisea Katonivere, who passed away earlier this year.

Mr. Matuwai sailed from PNG to the Solomons in a canoe that he built to promote awareness on climate change.

His tribesmen sailed with him on that journey.

The award is a great boost in his campaign towards climate change.

Mr. Matuwai, a fisheries officer, decided to change his course in life and advocate for something he believed in.

"I think I got this award because I worked in organisations that encouraged nature conservations and I think people voted for me based on the qualities they see in me," he said the day after he received the award.

"This award would not have been possible without the help and support of my colleagues, AusAid Climate Change, people of America and to the people of the South Pacific," he said.

"It will make people recognise me and in terms of getting financial support and it is an opportunity to convince donors of they are willing to support us on what we are undertaking."

He is committed to educating people on climate change, exploring local solutions around the adaptation of nature conservation and in search of answers for those who lose their cultural identity.

He plans to continue his journey next year around the Pacific region and hopes to educate people who he comes across. He hopes to visit Palau, Marshall Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Fiji.

"I hope to tell people that we need to work together because at the end of the day it is our life," he added.

He urged everyone to conserve what they are blessed with.



Mr. Manuwai Matuwai receives his award from Fiji's Minister for Environment Mr. Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum on Monday night.

"They should not wait. It's about time they respond to the changes that are taking place and not be spectators because we are responsible."

Wati Talebula is second-year student at Fiji National University and is a member of the Media Team providing coverage of the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas from 2 to 6 December in Suva, Fiji. This is a partnership between the Fiji National University (FNU), University of the South Pacific (USP), SPREP and Pacific Islands News Association (PINA) whereby a team of 10 journalism students are mentored by senior reporters as they cover the conference. This activity is funded by the Pacific Assistance Media Scheme (PACMAS).

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