

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

The 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation 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).



**Cook Islands Prime Minister Hon. Henry Puna addressing the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas in Suva.**

# Cook Islands pushes for renewable energy

**By ERONI TUINACEVA**  
*Journalism student at FNU*

**A**lthough they are least responsible for the causes of climate change, the Cook Islands and the other Small Islands Developing States are continuing to push for investment in renewable technologies.

Political will is key to this said the Prime Minister of the Cook Islands, the Hon. Henry Puna as he addressed delegates at the Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas.

"In terms of renewable energy and the transformation of our power use, for instance, political will has been a vital starting point in establishing national priorities, targets, roadmaps, and development projects.

"Improved levels of energy security will better define the merits of our collective approach and gain much needed relief from the debilitating influences and harmful impacts of fossil fuel, right across the Pacific."

The Cook Islands has an electricity target of 50 per cent renewable energy by 2015 and 100 per cent by 2020.

Prime Minister Puna also acknowledged

that despite set-backs and delays, the Cook Islands remains committed to the main objective of securing and sustaining necessary financial aid to support sustained development in the Energy sector.

"I am confident that even in the face of daunting local conditions and ambitious targets, we will succeed in breaking down the barriers to economic growth and demonstrate leadership in the clean and green region we want this to be," Prime Minister Puna said.

Prime Minister Puna was the keynote speaker on day four of the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas.

*Eroni Tuinaceva 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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# PNG focus of Pacific mangrove initiative

By **SHAHANI MALA**  
Journalism student at FNU

Papua New Guinea is the focus of a Pacific mangrove initiative where several stakeholders have joined forces to address climate change issues in mangrove forests.

Delegates to the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas were enlightened on the work done in this area by MARSH – a partnership between communities, the Government, NGO and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Oceania Regional Office.

"The goal of MARSH is to empower communities and increase capacities of

national institutions in the rehabilitation and management of mangrove forests to increase resilience to the impacts of climate change," said Mr. Eric Verheij of IUCN, who is responsible for the MARSH Project.

He told delegates: "The purpose of the MARSH project in PNG is to help communities rehabilitate their mangroves in order to deal with climate change impacts and improve resilience of ecosystems to deal with climate change problems."

At a presentation in Suva, Mr. Verheij said the project had been implemented in at least 30 sites in five "priority provinces" in PNG.

"I hope the communities are aware

about the roles of mangroves and they really need some technical support so that they know how to rehabilitate the mangroves in a proper way and need financial support to set up the mangrove nursery," said Mr. Verheij.

There are plans to work with the University of Papua New Guinea to put the issue of mangroves high on their curriculum so they can pass on knowledge about mangrove management development and other coastal techniques.

The project is earmarked for implementation in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu next year.

*Shahani Mala 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.*

## Project to enhance coastal protection

By **CAROLYN KITIONE**  
Journalism student at USP

A high-risk community in Kiribati has started the replanting of mangroves, as part of other land management activities in its efforts to reduce vulnerability to climate variability.

Kiribati national focal point for the Global Environment Facility's Small Grants Programme (SGP) Mr. Komeri Onorio said the Rurete community was at high risk of coastal erosion and seawater inundation of land properties.

"Indications are that changes in climate change and variability are continuing and increasing, severely impacting the Rurete communities who are at their most vulnerable status right now," said Mr. Onorio during a panel discussion at the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas.

Activities carried out include replanting of mangroves, efficient waste management disposal, and increasing ecosystem resilience by promoting sustainable land management.

"GEF SGP CBA (community-based



adaptation) projects can transform lives and lead to adaptive measures, sustainable solutions, improved environmental practices and more secure food, water and livelihood options," he said.

A two-year community-based adaptation project began last year which saw the need to strengthen capacity of community to respond to the climate variability and change.

The project, which received US\$45,000 from the SGP, has helped the 500 people living in the Rurete community.

The SGP CBA project is a collaborative work between GEF, UNDP, AusAid and United Nations Volunteers (UNV).

The SGP provides financial and technical support to projects in 126

countries that conserve and restore the environment while enhancing people's well-being and livelihoods.

The main objective of the Rurete project is to enhance the community's capacity to cope with the increasing natural threats such as drought and adapt to climate change.

Mr. Onorio said that the Rurete Project was the first Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) CBA in Kiribati and has the potential for replication in 164 outer-island villages in Kiribati.

"The Office of the President in Kiribati is now developing a National Framework for climate change, so there is potential for collaborative work in this area particularly, in developing a national vulnerability risk assessment training module to be used throughout Kiribati."

*Carolyn Kitione 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).*



*Participants at a parallel session of the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas at the University of the South Pacific's Laucala Campus in Suva this week.*

# Success of Fiji's marine sanctuaries spreads

**By PRIYA CHAND**  
*Journalism student at USP*

Community support has played a crucial role in the success of nature conservation in Fiji, said marine conservationist Mr. Semisi Meo.

Speaking at the weeklong nature conservation conference today, Mr. Meo, who is also the coordinator of the Fiji Locally-Managed Marine Area Network (FLMMA), applauded local communities for their appreciation and value of their environment.

"Building resilient communities addresses that community's capability gaps, enhancing the catalyst of partnership, building strong communities in the face of nature challenges," he said.

"As a result, 12 out of 14 coastal provinces in Fiji are recognised as part of the FLMMA."

FLMMA comprises all stakeholders, namely the government, non-government organisations, private sectors, and communities.

Mr. Meo said the local communities involved were the backbone of the network.

He said in Vuya, Bua Province, the community planted mangroves as mitigation in response to coastal erosion.

Another example of community-based management is in Totoya, Lau Province.

Totoya chief Ratu Roko Cinavilakeba said they had taken several steps to ensure the protection of their resources.

"We have also banned the use of scuba-diving in our community and also established a marine protected area because of over-harvesting," he said.

"And we have seen good changes in the community and in the resources that we have."

Ratu Roko, who is also the director of a non-profit environment organisation called the Pacific Blue Foundation,



**FLMMA Network  
Coordinator Mr. Semisi  
Meo.**

said they also conducted workshops to empower villagers and raise their awareness on environment issues.

By 2015, we want to Totoya to become a certified organic island and that is what we are working on," he said.

"We want to ban the use of fertilisers and weed killers and re-introduce traditional farming."

He added that it was important to take care of the environment for the quality livelihood of future generations.

*Priya Chand 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).*

# Conservation efforts 'must benefit all'

By **MARYANN LOCKINGTON**  
*Journalism student at the USP*

Management efforts for conservation should benefit as many people as possible, says a representative of the Wildlife Conservation Society.

WCS programme director Dr. Stacy Jupiter said it was important to consider village communities for sustainable development.

"One of the things we really need to think about is managing as holistically as possible, so thinking about how you can design management interventions that will offer the most benefits for the most people."

Dr. Jupiter said areas like the Vatu-i-Ra passage in Fiji were really important for driving productivity, providing nutrients and habitats for the fish and marine life and should be managed well.

WCS worked with several communities including in the Bua, Lomaiviti and Ra provinces, especially with protected areas.

"Each area has their own complementary plans and we can think about not just the community interest but also how you overlay that with economic development in a sustainable way," she said.

Dr. Jupiter said some challenges in communities included lack of information.

She said people were conscious that marine protected areas would shut out activities, not realising it was mainly about ensuring the activities in the area were sustainable.

"You don't want to put logging directly upstream from fresh water sources that people use for drinking water because it compromises the ecosystem that people really need."

Dr. Jupiter said the 9th Pacific Islands



**Dr. Stacy Jupiter attending the CBD COP10 in Nagoya, Japan.**

Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas was a good opportunity to improve national and international policies on the environment.

"One of the most important things to recognise is that Fiji is still at an advantageous position compared to other places in the world because things are still in good shape," she said.

She said that the conference was valuable because it brought governments and NGOs on board for a collaborative discussion on sustainable development.

"It's good; this is really a place where you get to meet people from all across the Pacific who are responding to the same issues and its valuable for the exchange of ideas."

*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).*

## Protected areas buttress communities

By **JUSTINE MANNAN**  
*Journalism student at FNU*

People living in healthy ecosystems have a high chance of protection from natural occurrences such as floods, tidal surges, storms or desertification if they protect their natural surroundings.

Mr. Nigel Dudley, the researcher at the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Commission on Protected Areas and Equilibrium, highlighted the benefits of protected areas and options for integrating ecosystem services at a workshop in Suva yesterday.

"Protect a mangrove, protect an area of forests - that will safeguard against landslides or protect an area of desserts so we can cover natural vegetation and reduce dust storms, protecting water shed so that it can absorb flood water or protect forests along-side rivers to stop flooding," Mr. Dudley said.

He stressed the need to create more protected areas which in turn would benefit the environment and limit natural disasters, improving management effectiveness and possibly change management or have new management priorities.

Mr. Dudley made his remarks at a workshop on Tuesday discussing protected areas, during the Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas.

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# Concerns grow over deep sea mining

By **STEVE POGONOWSKI**

Pacific island communities and conservation groups are concerned about potential environmental damage from deep sea mining, attendees heard at the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas.

Though only two seafloor mining permits have been issued - in Papua New Guinea and the Red Sea - and no mineral extraction work has begun, limited research completed so far predicts wide-ranging implications for marine benthic organisms and indirect impacts on fishing, tourism and coastal communities.

Mining companies have recognised the potential of deep sea areas for extracting large quantities of key minerals such as seafloor massive sulphides (SMS), manganese nodules and cobalt-rich crust.

Drivers for the increased interest in deep sea mining included high global metal demand, rising metal prices and improvements in marine mining technology.

Mr. Akuila Tawake from the Pacific Islands Applied Geoscience and Technology Division (SOPAC) in the Secretariat of the Pacific Community said the difficulty for less wealthy countries with large mineral deposits offshore could be keeping a balanced view.

"For some Pacific islands countries, deep sea minerals may present the only exploitable natural resource sector apart from fish," Mr. Tawake said.

"Deep sea mining may bring much-needed economic development opportunities."

The richer mineral content of deep sea ore was also an attractive proposition, as whole land-based SMS ore prices were between US\$50-180 per tonne, deep sea ore could be worth US\$500-1500, Mr. Tawake said.

SOPAC deep sea mining legal adviser Hannah Lily said key mining areas were outside most national jurisdictions of the exclusive economic zones and were governed by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

She said mining companies still required the approval of the country or territory bordering the potential mining site, which meant relevant laws and policies needed to be designed to protect Pacific communities.

Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme environmental monitoring and governance director Mr. Sefanaia Nawadra suggested external organisations could assist small countries in writing environmental impact assessment guidelines and terms of reference for mining.

One of the many impacts expected from deep sea mining was the damage caused by mechanical extraction of minerals to hydrothermal vent ecosystems, World Wildlife Fund Australia marine policy manager Mr. Paul Gamblin said.

"This could damage the potential for future scientific, medicinal or recreational opportunities in unique vent ecosystems. We believe this is one of the biggest gambles to happen on the planet for marine ecosystems," Mr. Gamblin said.

## Today I learnt ...

We hear from the journalism students providing you with coverage of the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas

**Ms. Josephine Navula, 21 years, journalism student, FNU**

"...Fiji's most invasive plant species are the Mimosa Pigra, mile-a-minute and African Tulip."

**Mr. Edward Tavanavanua, 19 years, journalism student, USP**

"... its important to manage my time."

**Ms. Priya Chand, 22 years, journalism student, USP**

"...that closing the gap between faith-based groups and conservationists is easier said than done."

**Ms. Justine Mannan, 24 years, journalism student, FNU**

"... invasive species are really annoying."

**Ms. Carolyn Kitone, 20 years, journalism student, USP**

"...how to communicate with someone who doesn't speak the language I do."

**Ms. Wati Talebula, 22 years, journalism student, FNU**

"...about conservation success case studies in other Pacific Island countries."

**Ms. Maryann Lockington, journalism student, USP**

"...the importance of renewable energy and waste management."

**Ms. Shahani Mala, 20 years, journalism student, FNU**

"...how to deal with issues on the green and blue economy through a presentation which I attended today."

*The students make up 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).*

# Participation ‘key to birdlife protection’

By JUSTINE MANNAN  
Journalism student at FNU

Local participation is the focus of BirdLife International's work in the Pacific Islands.

BirdLife International is one of the world's largest nature conservation partnerships, teaming up with over 100 countries to protect birds around the world.

In the Pacific, they have the Local Empowerment Programme, working closely with local people and organisations, as the loss of biodiversity does not only affect the environment but also people's livelihoods will be diminished such as food, clean water and recreational areas.

Ms. Morena Rigamoto, Program Manager for BirdLife International, highlighted how important it is to work with the local people in Pacific island countries and get them involved in protecting their environmental surroundings in areas where birds are endangered.

"Basically the Local Empowerment Programme looks at engaging with people at sites that are critical for birds

and biodiversity and also working with local organisations, empowering local groups, learning from local groups and local people and how they depend on nature and their natural resources and working out ways whereby a meaningful partnership could be established for the benefit of the people and also the benefit of nature conservation and biodiversity," Ms. Rigamoto said.

The Local Empowerment Programme is currently set up in the Cook Islands, French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Palau, New Zealand and Fiji.

The BirdLife International secretariat works with governments and NGOs in these Pacific Island countries.



**BirdLife International staff at their display booth at the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas.**

## Sourcing funding for biodiversity work

By JUSTINE MANNAN  
Journalism student at FNU

A lack of funding for biodiversity work in the Pacific is a major hurdle for countries trying to safeguard their environment but a five-year-old initiative is helping address this gap.

A funding partnership called LifeWeb Initiative was launched in 2008 at the 9th Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

LifeWeb Initiative works to facilitate financing to conserve biodiversity, secure livelihoods, and address climate change.

Mr. Charles Besançon, the LifeWeb Initiative Coordinator, made a case for how to secure funding for natural solutions to biodiversity challenges during a presentation at this week's 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas.

He added: "The donors want to ensure these projects are really important to government and must be submitted by governments, however the reality is many projects are written by NGOs, budgets are constructed by NGO partners and the implementers of the projects are also NGOs. Governments must take ownership of the process, it must endorse and they must actually submit the projects."

Some larger projects which require more than one donor are put on roundtables where LifeWeb organises events and funds for participants.

"The potential recipient talks about what their needs are and donors present what their interests are in funding and developing partnerships right there on the spot," Mr. Besançon added.

"Donors want to know that the projects that you are proposing are not just a stand-alone, that they are actually important to a country, they are a priority and there

are many ways to demonstrate that they are a priority. It can appear in your national biodiversity strategy and action plan (NBSAPs), and in your research plan, national adaptation plan - these are the things the donors will be interested to know," Mr. Besançon said.

LifeWeb Initiative partners include Australian Aid, Japan International Corporation Agency (JICA), New Zealand Aid Programme, Critical Ecosystem and many more.

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## Samoa's successes in climate resilience

By **PRIYA CHAND**  
*journalism student of USP*

Samoa has many success stories in terms of building climate resilience, says Tusani Joe Reti, a founding member of the Roundtable on Nature Conservation in the Pacific.

Speaking at the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas, Tusani Joe said despite the focus of the 1985 conference on constraints, there were some success stories that could be learnt from.

"Organisations like SPREP, IUCN, Conservation International and TNC, to name a few, have all been very successful in their efforts to engage different sectors in the conservation movement," he said.

"There have been special training and awareness programmes conducted for the media people, the youth groups, the parliamentarians, the private sector and, of course, various agencies of governments."

Tusani Joe said regional campaigns effectively supported by national efforts had also been launched for the conservation of specific species and ecosystems over the years.

"For example, we had the Year of the



**Tusani Joe Reti**

Sea Turtle in 2006, the adoption of the Island Biodiversity Programme of Action during COP 8 and we had specific activities for the conservation of dugongs, whales and dolphins," he said.

"And, many Pacific Island countries have adopted the Convention on Migratory Species, the Pacific Invasive Learning Network (or PILN) and more recently the Ramsar Convention."

Tusani Joe also noted the commitment of several northern states through the Micronesian Challenge which aimed to

protect 30 per cent of their near-shore and 20 per cent of their terrestrial resources by 2020.

He said efforts in recent decades have been well documented and acknowledged, and that they had put the Pacific region on par with other regions of the world that had far greater capacity and resources to achieve their conservation goals.

"But we must not stop here," he cautioned.

"There is still a long way to go yet to ensure the achievements of today are not threatened by the challenges of tomorrow.

"The successes of today should provide us the impetus and courage to continue to move forward and these are lessons we need to take forward, not stored away to be unheard of again as we confront new challenges," he said.

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# Community support helps protect areas of high biodiversity

By STEVE POGNOWSKI

Protection of key biodiversity areas in Kiribati, Fiji and the Solomon Islands was linked to successful community engagement and marine planning at the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas.

Attendees at the Marine Spatial Planning parallel session held during the week, heard examples of protected area projects and the challenges faced in persuading governments and small villages on the long-term value of linked marine and land planning.

Mr. Willie Atu from The Nature Conservancy explained the use of the Ridges to Reef Approach in the Solomon Islands to meet the goals of the Coral Triangle Initiative.

Ridges to Reef aims to link terrestrial, freshwater and marine conservation planning to ensure a strategic approach, as demonstrated by successful projects in Choiseul and Isabel provinces in the Solomon Islands.

"We involved the community by giving them maps to show threats (to their livelihoods) and opportunities and their local knowledge of the province," Mr. Atu said.

"These provinces contain potential mining areas and their map of threats matched up with the (land-based) mining leases."

Kiribati has been seen as a test case where successful marine spatial planning is of vital importance, as the islands contain a land area of 810.8 square kilometres and an exclusive economic zone of 3.5 million square kilometres.

Nenenteiti Teariki-Ruatu from the Kiribati Government's Environment and Conservation Division said identifying and protecting key biodiversity areas across the 33 atolls of the Gilbert, Line and Phoenix groups required strong community involvement.

"We learnt from some projects that there was limited community involvement, engagement and participation. Protecting key areas is a priority in the outer islands where livelihoods and income are from the land and sea," she said.

"Eight key biodiversity areas are currently protected ... and North Tarawa has a proposed RAMSAR site that should offer further protection."

Wildlife Conservation Society Fiji program director Stacy Jupiter said speaking to community leaders in each province would be crucial to the success of the Kubulau District Marine Protected Areas Network in Fiji.

She said the lack of national legislation supporting marine protected areas in Fiji meant that involving the community and listening to their concerns on overfishing, poaching and coastal management was necessary to ensure local people would work to conserve local ecosystems.

