

**SPORT**

*Eagles'* beloved son



\$20

July - September 2017



# Malaita Star

Issue No. 7

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE

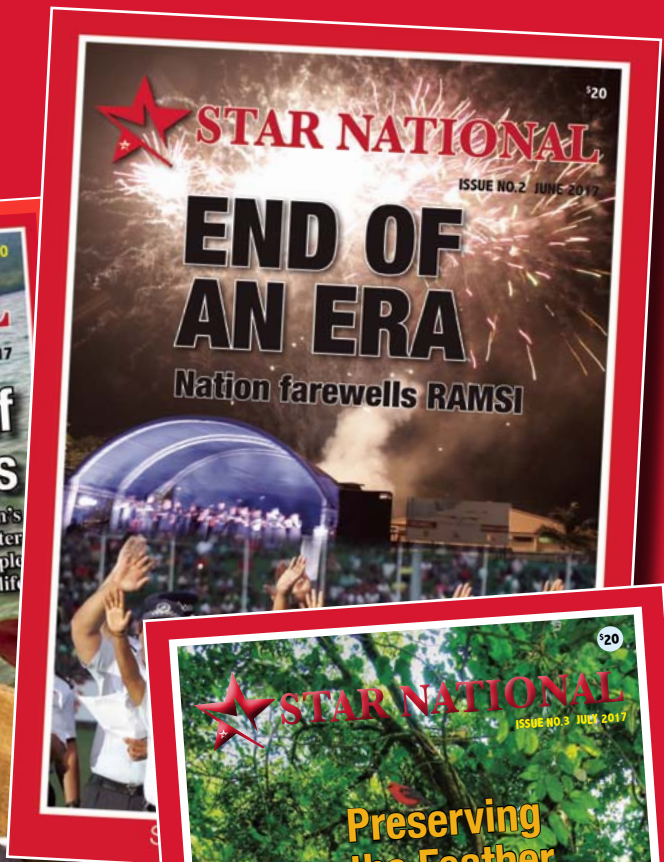


# BIG CATCH

Reaping the fruits of conservation

# STAR NATIONAL

## Monthly Magazine



**Your No.1**  
**National News Magazine**

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## Editor's Letter

## Benefits of conservation

**W**ELCOME back!

We are thrilled to bring you the third issue of this quarterly publication for this year.

Thrilled because this issue spotlights conservation efforts communities in Malaita are taking to preserve their land and sea resources.

Like our sister provinces, Malaita faces a lot of challenges.

One is increasing population, which has put significant pressure on the province's limited resources.

Malaita is the most populated province, with more than 137,000 people.

This means there are more mouths to feed in Malaita than elsewhere in the country.

Malaitans depend on their sea and land resources to feed their families.

But as its population increases, the fight over resources becomes imminent.

This had resulted in unsustainable levels of harvesting and prevailing family and tribal disputes.

Traditional fishing grounds that villagers depended on for decades simply run out of fish and sea shells.

They now have to paddle further out into the ocean to make enough catch to feed their families.

Trees that people need to build their houses are no longer there.

They have to walk further in-land to find suitable trees or dig deeper into their pockets to purchase timber for their homes.

The situation looks terribly bad for the province until recently when WorldFish moved in and established its office in Auki.

WorldFish is an international non-government research organization with the mission to strengthen livelihoods and enhance food and nutrition security by improving fisheries and aquaculture.

Today, WorldFish is assisting communities across the province to manage and preserve their marine resources.

It is also helping communities to work together replant trees that they could use to build their homes.

Already, a number of communities are reaping the fruits of their conservation efforts.

Read for example about Timothy Frank and Maerabi Williamson in East Kwaio who convinced their relatives, friends and neighbors to protect the mangroves and reefs around their village.

Read about Dominic Tuita and Betty Koidi on Manaba Island who temporarily closed the reef for fishing and are now reaping the benefits.

Read the story of Osanty Luda in Takwa who is experimenting with new farming techniques to improve yields, nutrition and incomes.

Or read about Regina Horopua in West 'Are'are who decided to sell her own timber.

Building on their rich history and cultural traditions, people throughout Malaita are taking their future in their own hands.

One thing stood out of the work these communities are doing.

It is this: when people work together, they can achieve more than they could have ever imagined.

Working together to conserve the resources of Malaita is the way forward for the province.

# Malaita Star

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## FOREWORD

# Community-based Natural Resource Management on Malaita

**W**HEN reading the newspaper it is easy to despair.

Every day, we read about logging companies plundering the forests.

We read about snails and beetles destroying the gardens.

We read about king tides eroding the islands and plastic polluting the ocean.

We read about land disputes blocking development. And we read about the financial crisis paralyzing the government.

But that is only one part of the story.

Yes, Malaita faces enormous environmental challenges.

The island is the most densely populated of the country, with more than 137,000 people.

Most of these people depend directly on what nature provides: roots from the soil, fish from the sea and nuts from the forest.

But these natural resources are under increasing pressure. There are more and more mouths to be fed.

And people need more and more money to pay for school fees, to buy sugar or to read the *Star*.

All too often this leads to the depletion of the soils, the overharvesting of the reefs and the selling-off of the forests.

The other part of the story is that throughout Malaita people are taking action to address these environmental problems.

Read for example about Timothy Frank and Maerabi Williamson in East Kwaio who convinced their relatives, friends and neighbors to protect the mangroves and reefs around their village.

Read about Dominic Tuita and Betty Koidi on Manaoba Island who temporarily closed the reef for fishing and are now reaping the benefits.

Read the story of Osanty Luda in Takwa who is experimenting with new farming techniques to improve yields, nutrition and incomes.

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Building on their rich history and cultural traditions, people throughout Malaita are taking their future in their own hands.

This special section aims to tell that story, the good part of the story.

The Solomon Islands government recognizes the pivotal role of communities in the protection of the country's environment.

It made 'Community-Based Natural Resource Management' the guiding principle of environmental policies and laws.

In this vision, the role of the government is to support communities in making wise decisions on how to use their land, water and sea.

Clearly, this will only work when people organize themselves and take action.

This special section of the *Malaita Star* documents the efforts of people to safeguard Malaita's natural heritage, wealth and beauty.

Enjoy reading. And never despair!

**Jan van der Ploeg**  
WorldFish

By **BIRA'AU W. SAENI**

**A**FTER witnessing the benefits of managing their marine resources, men, women and youths of Fumamoto'o vow to continue to protect their locally managed marine area.

Over-harvesting of marine resources such as fish, trochus, sea cucumbers, and clam shells, is now a problem of the past for this community on the island of Manaoba in Lau Lagoon.

*Malaita Star* Chief Writer BIRA'AU WILSON SAENI visited the community this year and interviewed the chairman of the Manaoba Locally Managed Marine Area, Dominick Tuita, about the efforts of the community since 2013 to protect their marine resources, the benefits of doing so, and what the future looks like for the community.

According to Mr Tuita, Fumamoto'o is like any other coastal communities in Malaita province.

The people depend heavily on their sea for income and food.

The island of Manaoba is well known to the Tobaita people, Mbaelelea people and Baegu people as the main provider of fish and other sea food.

But Mr Tuita revealed that the harvest of marine resources for food and income has taken its toll.

After years of over-harvesting, the people of Manaoba started to realize that the resources on which they depend heavily on were running out.

They clearly had to do something about this.

In 2013 the community formed a committee with the aim to set up a Locally Managed Marine Area.

"There are two areas where we restricted fishing, one is a total marine protected area

and the other is open-and-close area," Mr Tuita explained.

In the marine protected area fishing is banned. In the close-and-open area harvesting is allowed once a month.

"We usually open it at the end of each month to allow villagers to fish for income or for community gatherings.



Right on target.

# the resources management



communities came and fished together.

"When we open the open-and-close area, we invite fishermen from near-by communities to come and fish. During harvest day, everyone is welcome to fish."

As a result of their management, the proud chairman said fish is now available in great numbers and sizes.



**Dominick Tuita**

Some fish species like the red Bubu, which they thought were extinct over the years, have returned to the fishing ground.

"The marine protected area and the open-and-close area made a big difference," Mr Tuita stated.

The women of Fumamato'o also benefited greatly from the locally managed marine area as testified by Betty Koidi in an interview with the *Malaita Star*.

Mrs Koidi said that fish is now available in big number and sizes, which greatly helps in the marketing of the fish.

She said that the women of Fumamato'o can sell one fish for \$10 and above.

Before the locally managed marine area was put up they struggled.

There was not enough fish and the fish that was caught was small in size.

"We women will strive and work together with the men and youths of this community to maintain the open-and-close area for our benefit," she added.

According to the FCMPA chairman Mr Tuita, the Manaoba locally managed marine area has clear rules and regulations.

"If we find you fishing in the marine protected area you will pay a fine of \$500," he said.

Mr Tuita said a group was caught fishing illegally in the area at the beginning of the year.

They paid a fine of \$500 and a live pig.

He said the surrounding communities now know about the rules and are now working together with Fumamato'o.

"At first other communities found it hard to accept, but as they learn about the benefits of the marine protected area, they start to work together with us", he said.



A Fumamato villager showing his catch.



Before you hardly catch fish of these sizes, but today it is possible.



Fumamato men fishing in the open and close area.



The fish species that the boy is holding vanished from the fishing ground some years back, but after the community conserve the area it comes back.

## Fishers turn to sea weed farming to make money

By BIRA'AU W. SAENI

**S**EA weed farming is a good source of income for people on the island of Manaoba in North East Malaita.

For Robinson Gwalu of Hatodea, seaweed farming is a solution.

Now in his seventies, Mr Gwalu no longer has the physical strength to work in the garden.

When seaweed farming was introduced at Manaoba 12 years ago in 2005, Mr Gwalu decided to have a go at it.

He influenced his wife and both of them became actively involved in seaweed production.

This year *Malaita Star* visited Manaoba Island and interviewed Mr Gwalu about why he became involved in seaweed farming.

Mr Gwalu revealed that he is farming sea weed because it is easy.

"We live in a village next to the sea. This makes it easy for an old person like me to farm seaweed," he said.

"I stopped working in the garden some years back when I realized that I no longer had the strength.

"When seaweed farming was introduced, my wife and I decided to have a go. Twelve years later we still farm seaweed," he said.

"The benefits of sea weed are that you don't have to feed it like pigs or chicken, all you need are ropes, which are provided by the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources to us farmers.

"Sea weed is now the main source of income for me and my wife.

"With the income from sea weed, we manage to meet our household needs and wants.

"It stops us from asking other people for help. We generate our

own money from our sea weed farm.

When The *Malaita Star* visited his home on Hatodea, his wife Evelyn Gwalu was drying sea weed and preparing it for the shipment to Honiara.

Mr Gwalu said he is now working on a much bigger farm, which will earn him and his wife more money.

Asked about how long it would take before sea weed can be harvested, he said it takes about six weeks.

In Hatodea there are about eight seaweed farmers.

A big problem is that no buyers are coming to the community to buy seaweed. This forces them to ship their harvests to Honiara themselves.

He said it will be better if buyers would come to the village. Sending their products to Honiara is very expensive.

Another challenge that he faces is the drop in the buying price of seaweed.

Recently the price has dropped from \$3 per kilo to \$2.4 per kilo.

In his last shipment to Honiara, Gwalu shipped up to 50 bags of sea weed, and earned over \$5,000, a big amount of money for him.

"You will not earn this amount of money selling fish in the local market; it is through sea weed farming that I manage to earn this big amount of money."

Asked if he will quit sea weed farming because of the price drop, he said that he and his wife will continue with the sea weed farming because it is the only source of income for them.

Mr Gwalu and Evelyn aim to be the biggest sea weed farmers on Hatodea this time around. A seaweed farm near Hatodea.



Robinson Gwalu showing his harvest.



Seaweed farm



Evelyn Gwalu drying the seaweed.

# The Dugong legend of Lau

By BIRA'AU W. SAENI

**T**HE dugong, or ia tekwa in the Lau language, is a taboo animal for the people of Bailangi and Buni tribes.

For ages, it has been forbidden to eat dugong.

This taboo is based on a legend of a woman, who jumps into the sea and changes into a dugong. Since then, people of the two tribes have refrained from eating dugong.

Not only that: relatives who ate the marine mammal after the incident suffered from swollen feet and painful bodies.

In a visit to Lau Lagoon this year the Malaita Star Chief writer BIRA'AU WILSON SAENI interviewed Chief Simon Ben who shared the story why the Lau people do not eat dugong and treat it as a taboo up to this day.

According to Chief Ben this is a true story that happened in Lau Lagoon long before the first European contact on the island Malaita.

The woman who changed into a Dugong was from a place called Bailangi.

She got married to a man from Gwaihareko.

The girl got married to the boy after several attempts of the boy's parent to find a bride for their son failed.

The boy's parent first negotiated with the Hunufou people, and tried to convince them to permit a girl from their tribe to marry their son.

But the girls from Hunufou refused the request.

In north Malaita, girls want to marry to a person who knows how to farm taro and yam and knows how to fish.

Those are the basic characters that young girls in the olden days were looking for in a boy before they decide to married.

The young girls from Hunufou saw nothing in this boy.

After this failed attempt, the parent left Hunufou and continued their search for a wife for their son in Bania, another village on the mainland.

But the Bania people wanted to know the character and capabilities type of the boy.

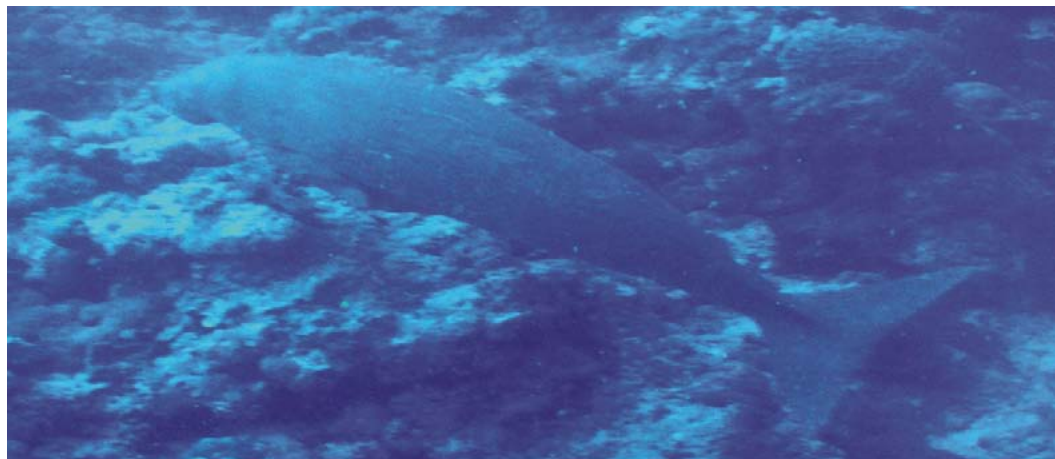
Then the parent went to Gounasu village which also located on the mainland. But the people of Gounasu also refused to give the boy's parent green light.

The parents then took a canoe and paddled across to the islands in the sea to a place call Walo to try to find a potential wife for their son.

At Walo someone by the name of Kilo said that if the boy is from the sea, they will allow a girl from Walo to marry him.

Unfortunately, the boy was from the bush, so the request was denied because the saltwater people want to keep to themselves.

The parents and their boy refused to give up, and turned back to the mainland once again. In Bailangi, a pretty young girl agreed and told her



Dugong in Lau Lagoon (WorldFish)



Chief Simon Ben the story teller and his wife

parent that she was willing to marry the boy.

Both sides agreed.

The boy's parent engaged the girl with two shell money strings.

This means that during the bride price day they would give up to 20 shell money as a form of bride price.

They settled the bride price and the girl turned into a woman. She came to the village of Gwaihareko to live with her husband.

They had good marriage: they didn't fight and cared for each other.

The couple conceived a child, a baby boy. The girl was working hard and very strong.

She was the type of a girl that every man would dream of marrying.

Whatever task her mother in-law would give her, she would finish it before the sun goes down.

She worked with dignity, passion and responsibility for her new family.

She was impressive in her duty as young mother.

After gardening, her mother in-law would always ask her to bring back some firewood.

Even if the load was heavy, she would carry it without resting and complaining.

She impressed her mother in-law with her strength. Her attitude towards work also caught the eyes of the community members.

But the mother in-law got jealous of all the attention that her daughter in-law got.

And one day her envious mother in-law decided to fool her daughter and test her strength in a very frosty manner.

After their work in the garden, the mother in-law prepared the load to take back home.

Without letting her daughter in-law know, she placed a heavy red stone known, locally as Mae Nagi, and put it

in her bag.

When the girl lifted her bag, she noticed that the bag was very heavy, but she refused to check it because that would show disrespect to her mother in-law.

So she just kept silent. She moved a short distance but had to stop and rest because of the excessive weight.

Normally she would never rest; she would carry the load on her back and go straight to the village without any stop along the way.

But this day, she rested many times along the way. She struggled to carry the bag to the village.

The nasty mother in-law watched her suffering.

Bit by bit she carried the heavy load to the village. Upon arrival she threw the bag down, and the red stone fell out of the bag.

The girl was very surprised when she saw the Mae Nagi hidden among the harvest and the firewood.

She got really angry when she realized that her mother in-law played a dirty trick on her.

She lost her trust in the family.

The bond that she created was ruined by the evil trick of the covetous mother in-law.

She did not work that evening. She cried and folded her traditional umbrella (Kaufe) under her armpit and walked down to the sea side.

Her husband begged her to stay and forgive his mother for what she had done to her.

He offered her compensation, a pig, shell money and dolphin teeth, but she refused.

She walked down to where the sea meets the land and sat down on a stone call Fou Sualana.

She cried in sorrow and wished to die so that the pain and grief would go away.

"After all the good things I have done, this is what your mother has

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## The champion farmer who grows king crops

By BIRA'AU W. SAENI

**M**EET Osanty Luda, a farmer from North East Malaita, who took an early retirement from a formal job as an accountant and decided to live a rural life.

Mr Luda has achieved many wonderful achievements in his farming career.

In Lau/Mbaelelea where he comes from, he is regarded as the main man behind the successful introduction of watermelon.

Whenever you come across watermelons from the northern region of Malaita, remember that it is the legacy of Mr Luda.

Passionate and committed, he developed new farming methods and techniques, and inspired a group called the BAETOLAU Farmers Association, a local association that supports farmers in Baegu, Mbaelelea, Tobaita and Lau.

In a recent visit to Takwa this year, *Malaita Star* chief writer BIRAAU WILSON SAENI managed to sneak an interview with Mr Luda who is now 67 years of age, but still going strong.

Mr Luda's decision to become a farmer was influenced by many factors but the obvious reasons are:

- i To earn money and shell money.
- ii To help his people have access to more garden food
- iii. And to come up with new farming techniques which will help his people to meet their family needs.

He said when he got back home in 1978 after he got married, many people had moved to Honiara.

"I found out that the gardens did not produce enough food. In the markets you could not find good quality food."

One of the common problems was that the soil was not good enough to produce high yields.

"Soil is a problem in my place which



Luda holding a king size yam. Photo by Tessa Minter/WorldFish

means that people are making big gardens. But when the harvest comes, the yield is low.

"Our people were desperate to earn cash so many left to Honiara.

"What should we do? I knew that I needed to develop new farming techniques in order to be successful."

"I started watermelon farming back in 1983 as my first project. It was very successful."

After his first trial, he shared his watermelon farming knowledge with Lau/Mbaelelea people.

"The knowledge that I shared is now put into good practice as local farmers who obtained the knowledge are now actively engaged in watermelon farming and earn their own money.

"In Malaita today, the biggest watermelon producers are the Lau Mbaelelea people.

"This is the legacy from my first

water melon project.

"After that, I decided that it's time to diversify, so I started to cultivate other crops like yam, sweet potato, taro, and ball cabbage.

"After five years of experimenting I found new ways to cultivate taro and yam.

"Culturally, yam and taro are very important in our society.

"There is a great need to safeguard these high status crops. So I came up with the idea of king crop development.

"The good thing about these crops is that they are in high demand on Malaita, especially in Northern region.

"I don't need to go to the market to sell them.

"People will still come to me with shell money to buy them when there is bride price ceremony or another feast.

"I developed new farming methods,

which are very different from the traditional slash-and-burn techniques."

That is not his only Mr Luda's achievement.

The farming association that he developed, known as BAETOLAU Farmers Association, now has more than 300 local members.

"We have members in South Malaita, East Are'Are, Baegu Asifola, Lau, To'obaita and of course Mbaelelea," he said.

"Lots of members benefit from the king crop farming system I introduced.

"I was also engaged by the Ministry of Agriculture to conduct lectures on king crop farming, not only in the country but also in Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Tonga.

"My ideas are based on my own research and experiment.

"I experimented for five years and I find out that something works, I pass it on to other interested farmers.

"People who wish to learn come and live with me and work on my farm.

"We share the harvest together. They work, live and learn on the farm, which is the most effective method of transferring the farming knowledge to them.

"This year is my 43rd year of farming and I still find it rewarding.

"Traditional agriculture is good and I share my knowledge with other people. Looking back, the decision to come back home was the right decision.

"I achieved my dream of earning money from my garden; I also achieved my dream of helping others to be become self-reliant.

"I earn about 10-20 shell money a year from my garden, and about \$30,000 to \$40,000 from cabbage and melon.

"This is a big profit from a village perspective and it makes me a champion farmer," Mr Luda added with a smile.

### From previous page

done to me" the wife told her husband.

"I will leave you so that your mother can look for a better girl to marry you and make her happy and satisfied.

"All my sacrifices are wasted; your mother doesn't accept me. If she can trick me this way, then most definitely she is capable of killing me."

She cried and started to draw different marine animals on the large stone.

First, she drew a turtle.

But she said she did not want to change into a turtle because it is very easy to catch it, and she didn't want to be eaten by her own people.

Second, she drew a dolphin.

But she said she did not want to change into a dolphin, because the dolphin lives in the deep blue sea and her husband would never see her again.

Third, she drew a spadefish.

But she said she did not want to change into it because people ate it.

Fourth, she drew a parrot fish.

But she said that this fish is too small and vulnerable so she continued drawing.

Fifth, she drew a rabbitfish.

But she said this is also not a good choice, because rabbitfish are small in size and a favorite dish for many people.

Sixth, she drew a needlefish. But she refused to change into it because the needlefish is very easy to catch with a net.

Then she drew a dugong.

She looked at the creature and was impressed by its size and strength.

The ia tekwa can destroy nets, and lives close to the shore so her husband could see it.

Moreover, the dugong looks much like a human: the female also has breasts.

When she was almost finished with drawing the

dugong, her husband showed up with the baby.

He told his wife to get up and follow him back home to breast feed the baby.

She refused and instructed her husband to go back and look after the baby.

She then told her husband to tell his mother to look for another wife for him, a girl strong enough to carry a stone on her back.

"Today I will go away from you; I will go into the sea and change into this animal," she saing pointing to the dugong that she had drawn on the stone.

She then jumped into the sea.

When she reappeared on the surface, she had turned into a dugong.

Her husband and son shed tears and walked back home, heartbroken.

All this happened because of the mother-in-law acted out of jealousy.

That is the reason why the two tribes, Bailangi and Buni, don't eat dugong.



# Restoring the forest

## Baegu people plant trees for the future

By BIRA'AU W. SAENI

**T**HE primary forest has gone and the only way to restore is to replant trees.

The inland people of Baegu in North East Malaita see reforestation as the only way forward to restore the forest that has been destroyed through farming and unnecessary cutting of trees.

Long before the arrival of knives, axes and chainsaws, Baegu land was covered with thick virgin forest.

Today the trees are no longer there.

When people got access to chainsaws in the 1970s the trees were chopped down.

Without much thought for the future generations, people chopped down trees in big numbers.

Some did it for farming purposes while others did it because they want to hear the sound of the falling trees along the hills.

50 years on, the actions of the past generation have truly impacted on the lives of the current generation.

The current Baegu generation is now looking elsewhere for timber to build their houses.

For the past twenty years Hudson Misikwi and his father Simon have been actively engaged in

reforestation.

Over the years Mr Misikwi planted over a thousands threes.

The trees are mainly local species like Vasa, Akwa and Baule.

Today he keeps on planting threes.

He is hoping to see Baegu regain its natural forest that was lost to farming and the silly action of the past people.

"I planted over a thousand trees already and I still keep on planting today," Mr Misikwi said.

"I don't want the future generation to look elsewhere for trees to build their houses like some of us did today," he added.

Mr Misikwi said he is not the only farmer involved in tree planting.

"The big trees are gone but the good thing is that we still have land to plant trees".

He said his dad is the one who started the idea of reforestation 20 years ago.

The trees that his father planted are now big.

"I just continued from where my father left and maybe 20 years from now, this place will be filled with trees.

"Our generation is unlucky because our past people spoiled the primary forest for no good reasons and now we are looking for timer elsewhere.



**Rensly Hata one of the young forest farmers in Baegu.**

"But our children and the future generation will be lucky because they will harvest the trees that we are now planting.

"We learn from the past. We will look after our trees and not to repeat the mistake again.

"Today we encourage every one to plant trees and we hope the future generation will continue with the practice".

Nowadays, in Lagoe community alone, almost everyone is a tree planter.

They only replant the local species that grows well in the area.

Ask if anyone has funded the tree replanting, the locals said they did it on their own because they see there is a great need to do tree replanting to make life easy for the future generation.



**Forest farmer Hudson Misikwi**



**Philip Sanga one of the local forest farmers**

# Restoring the richness of Ambitona reefs



Ambitona locally managed marine area.

By BIRA'AU W. SAENI

**A** COMMUNITY on the East-coast of Kwaio in Malaita province is looking after their marine resources.

Ambitona is a committed Seventh Day Adventists (SDA) community, which means they don't eat much of the sea resources except for fish.

However, nearby communities have taken full advantage and harvested just any thing eatable on the reefs of Ambitona.

Without any proper measures in place to safeguard the marine resources, they became scarce.

In an attempt to restore the richness of Ambitona reefs, a courageous community member Timothy Frank sees a way forward for his community.

*Malaita Star* meets up Timothy Frank lately in this home village of Ambitona where he shares his story about the Ambitona Locally Managed Marine Area.

"The idea was introduced to the community back in January this year," Mr Frank said.

"When the community heard about this conservation idea, they show great interest to persuade the idea forward," he added.

"We held a meeting on the 15th of January where we form a local committee to take the idea on board and lead the community.

"On the 29th of January we passed a resolution that we will conserve the area and on the



Timothy Frank showing part of the Ambitona locally managed marine Area.



Traditional feast in Ambitona to celebrate the declaration of the Locally managed marine area.

same day we put up the local management area by marking them with sticks."

He said they put up sticks to protect the area, three months after; they started to see difference in the protected area.

"Changes are now seen in the conservation area, fish that were extinct from the area like Katu Katu and Mu are now coming back, which is a surprise for us and even the community elders.

"Sea shell and sea cucumber are also available big in size and

numbers.

"We have kindly asked the other communities to respect the place and not to harvest any sea resources in the conservation area.

"The community saw many fish and they feel proud of the achievement.

"Some were really tempted to fish but we monitor the place and we all have great respect for the place".

Mr Frank said there are times that people request to fish but the committee, which consisted of mostly women, says no to the request.

"I see it is very important for communities to properly manage our sea resources because if we are not careful, our sea resources will run out forever.

"I want other communities in ward 17 and 18 to adopt the same concept so that their children will harvest the fruit of their action in the future."

Mr Frank believes involving women in community based resource management is the way forward for communities in East Kwaio.

"We men always think that we are the boss, but I think involving women is very important.

"I want women to play a role in this conservation and I want other people from other parts of Kwaio to involve women in community leadership because women are the backbone of any successful society."

# Building a community

By BIRA'AU W. SAENI

**C**OMMUNITY partnership is a way forward for Lagoe community in Baegu Asifola.

A helping hand from the community members is all it takes to ease the burden of survival in Lagoe community.

With the advent of modern education, money, and business, giving a helping hand to a community member for free is not a common practice anymore in most communities in Malaita province.

Lagoe as a community also experienced this shift in the late 1990s where help comes with cost.

However, in 2016 the community leaders tried to find ways to give people a helping hand for free.

The community leaders come up with a community work scheme, which is aimed to help each community member by eliminating the labour cost.

Community members reserve one day in a week, Wednesday, to help each other.

According to community leader and elder Stanley Biraga the community work scheme is the best thing that ever happened to his community.

Mr Biraga told the *Malaita Star* in an interview that the community work really helped old people who find it hard to build their own houses.

"The community work scheme has helped the old people who lack physical strength to build their own houses, it also helps young married couples who desperately need for a new house to settle down.

"All you need is to find housing materials then the community will build it for free."

## Product of the community work nearly completed

He said the community work is not focused on house building, but also on cleaning up, cleaning up lands for those who need a garden.

"Now we don't need money to hire labours because of the community work scheme".

Asked about the process involved before the community

members can help, he said the first thing is for the person who needs help to identify the type of help that he needs from the community.

The person then submits his/her request to the committee.

The committee members will announce the request after the Sunday prayer time to aware the community members.

By Wednesday on each week the community is already aware of the tasks required of them.

The good thing about this is that no request will be disqualified under any circumstances.

Lagoe community, the house with the red roof is also a product of the community work.

Mr Biraga said widows and the old people are happy with the community work scheme as they benefited from the end result of the community work.

He said the community work also created a sense of belonging that everyone in the community is proud of.

Community work is not only concentrating on the South Sea Evangelical Church (SSEC) community members, but also reaches out to the Seventh Day Adventist half of the community.

Asked if the community will abandon the community work scheme anytime soon, he said they will not dare to do that because they find it very helpful.



**Stanley Biraga who is very instrumental in the community work**



# Kwaio men listen to their women leaders

By BIRA'AU W. SAENI

**I**N East Kwaio men have no trouble listening to women giving instructions, as proven by Maerabi Williamson.

Maerabi is the vice chairman of the Ambitona Marine Protected Area.

She shares her experience with *Malaita Star* chief writer BIRA'AU WILSON SAENI in a visit to the community this year.

Maerabi told the *Malaita Star* that to be a woman leader in a society where men are dominant may seem hard.

However, when she took up the role to talk to men, women and youths about natural resource management, she saw men following her instruction.

It changed her thinking about the male-dominant Kwaio culture.

She said that those who think Kwaio men don't listen to women are wrong.

"Kwaio men respect women more than ever," Maerabi said.

"When men tell the community to stop fishing in the locally managed marine area, no one is really listening to them," she added.

"But when we women come out and tell people to stop fishing in the protected area, everyone listens to us.

"As a woman from Kwaio, I see Kwaio men listening to us women.

"I feel respected and honored because in our society women are not considered as leaders.

"Today, things have changed and some of us women are now involved in leadership roles



**ABOVE:** Maerabi Williamson



**LEFT:** Ambitona women celebrating the community locally managed marine area with a feast in June this year.

in our communities.

"This is a huge achievement not only for me but for women in Kwaio in general".

With that, Maerabi challenges other communities in East Kwaio to put women in leadership roles if they want to see change.

She said it is easy for men to follow instructions given by women leaders because in Kwaio culture women play a very important role at home and men know that very well.

She added that any decision made by women is good for the home, the children, the men and the community, because women are

the backbone of any successful society.

Maerabi, who is a mother of five children, said she is very thankful to play an important role in the management of marine resources.

The locally managed marine area is currently the pride of the village.

She said the protected area is for the good for the community, and also for the future generation.

Maerabi thanked the male population of Ambitona community for putting their trust in women and respecting their decision to establish a locally managed marine area.

# Conservation is nothing new

By BIRA'AU W. SAENI

**T**OME Arika from Ambu community, who is still holding on to the traditional kwaio ancient way of worshipping, revealed to *Malaita Star* during a recent visit to East Kwaio his point of view on the marine resources management concept where he also talks about the position of his community in relation to the marine resources management concept.

After attending awareness talk of the provincial fisheries office and WorldFish at Gwa Gwa community, Mr Arika testified that he now has a better understanding of the benefits of looking after their natural resources.

He said looking after marine resources is part of the Kwaio culture.

Modern ideas about marine resources management are no different from their traditional practices.

"Personally, I find this concept blends well with our traditional setting," Mr Arika said.

"Before we restricted these fishing grounds only for feast days, at that time this place was full of fish and turtles.

"I've seen it with my own eyes. But today people overharvest fish and shells."

Mr Arika said the increase in the coastal population has put so much pressure on the sea resources.

"Today you will hardly find fish in this fishing ground. There are fish but they are small in size and less in numbers.

"I think we are all in support of looking after marine resources because we want to make life easy for ourselves."



An elderly man of GwaGwa community speaking during the awareness talk.



GwaGwa and Ambu community members listening to the awareness talk at Gwa Gwa community.

# Conserving traditional taboo sites



Puriasi Management Area

## The Mararo story

By BIRA'AU W. SAENI

**T**HE Mararo Community Based Organization (MCBO) in East Are'Are has taken steps to conserve their marine resources and traditional taboo sites.

Over the years the community has actively engaging itself in looking after their Marine resources in an area called the Puriasi Management Area.

The management area is a unique place which contains traditional taboo sites.

According to Tony Atitete, the community put rules in place to safeguard the area from being exploited and scare potential intruders.

Mr Atitete told the Malaita Star in an interview during a visit to Maroro this year that the Puriasi Management Area is important for their tribe as it contains a taboo site that their ancestors used to conduct their traditional form of worship.

The Puriasi Management Area is now becoming a breeding area for marine life.

He said the the community aims to preserve the marine resources in the area for future generations.

The Puriasi Management Area rules include the following:

- No use of gill nets or catch nets
- No diving during day and night

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The Puriasi Management Area.

- No light fishing in the management area
- No fishing with bow and arrow and spear
- No harvesting of coconut or mud crab for three years
- No harvesting of trochees or crayfish for three years
- No use of mangrove trees for firewood
- No unnecessary cutting of trees

After the three years of ban, the taboo area will be opened only for 1 week for any special occasion and then will be closed again.

And if anyone found to have breached the rules, he or she must commit to the fines and penalty.

- Fine of \$500 if anyone breaks the Su'u Paura tabu area rules
- Fine of \$300 of anyone breaks the Puriasi management area rules

If anyone is found to have breached these rules, he or she must pay a fine of \$300.

He said the management plan has been developed and endorsed by surrounding communities.

The hill side of the Puriasi Management Area is covered with thick virgin forest, its shoreline with mangroves.

However, with the current logging operation at Rurata, which is not far from the Puriasi



Tony Atitete.

Management Area, Mr Atitete feared that the Puriasi Management Area, will most likely to be disturbed if the logging company comes to full operational.

He said the current logging operation at Rurata in near the Puriasi Management Area is the biggest threat to the management area.

# Why we worship sharks

## The West Are'Are tale

By BIRA'AU W. SAENI

**T**HERE are stories that certain tribes on the Island of Malaita worship shark.

One of these is the Rarata Tribe from West Are'Are.

According to Bob Horoto from Aiharai community in the West Are'Are lagoon, who is also the current chief of the Rarata tribe, sharks are their gods.

Mr Horoto, who witnessed shark worshiping led by his late father back in the 1950s told the *Malaita Star* about the importance of sharks to their tribe.

"In the past sharks are our gods, but today Christianity has changed everything and now we no longer worship sharks".

He said that whenever their past ancestors went out in the sea, they would call on the sharks to protect them.

Long before the modern maps were made available for Solomon Islanders, the ancestors already mastered the traditional crossing routes between the islands.

One of the common routes is the West Are'Are route to Marau on the Island of Guadalcanal.

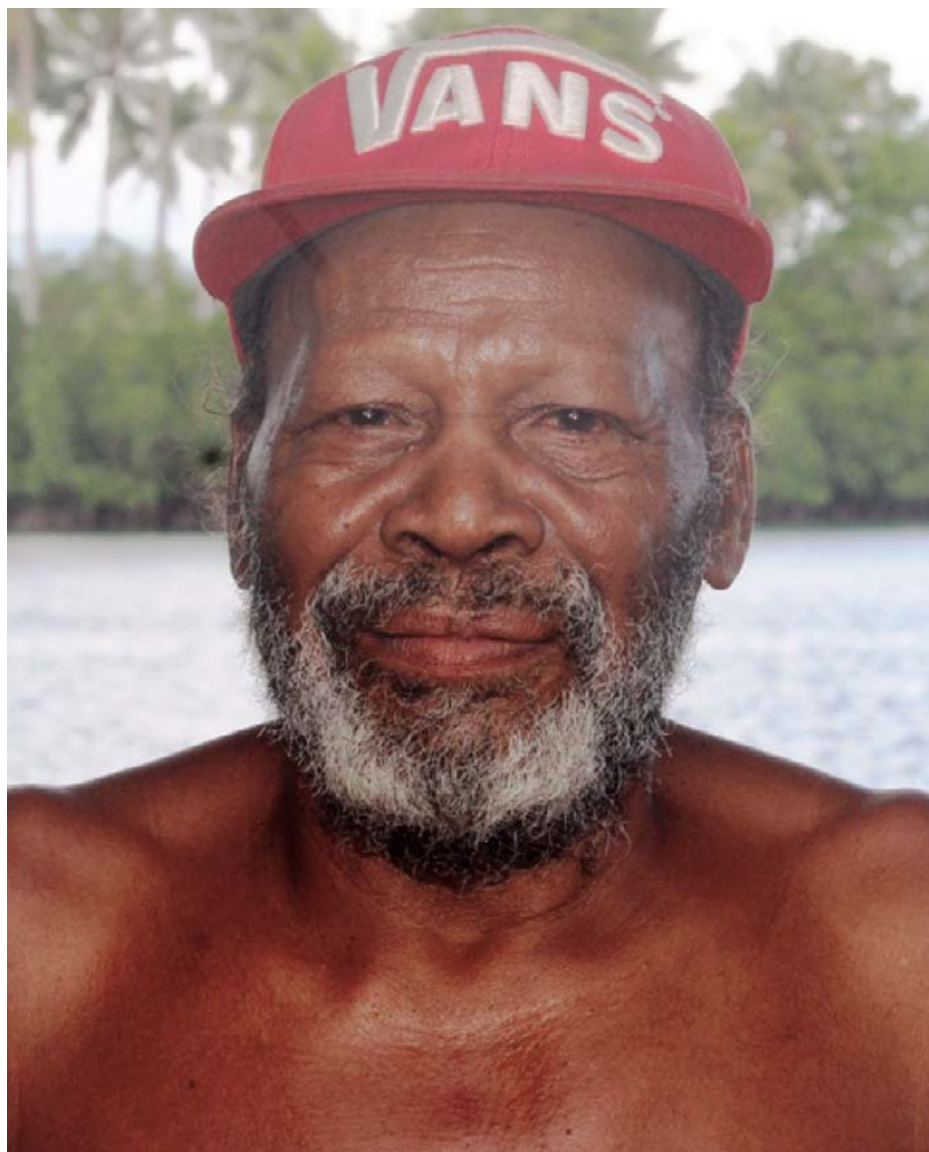
"Our ancestors use to paddle over to Marau.

"Before they set to sail out in the sea, they will worship our shark god, feed the shark with red coconut and offer shell money."

He said as a child, he witnessed the last time that his father send the shark to guide some relatives on their voyage to Marau back in 1958.

"I was there watching my father feed the sharks, the sharks are real and they really responded to the commands my father gave," he said.

"But it was always the shark that made the decision on which day to travel and who to travel. And no one should revoke the decisions made by the god shark.



Bob Horoto

"Only the priest can rightly interpret.

"I saw it with my own eyes; the shark came and swam under the canoe to select the people that could get on board.

"The shark spins the canoe around. Only the selected people can get on board.

"Normally a big shark will guide the canoe in deep sea.

"When they reach the passage before entering Marau, the big shark will transfer the responsibility to a smaller shark which will guide the canoe to the shore.

"The shark will also decide the duration of their stay in Guadalcanal. If they disobey and stay longer, they will encounter disaster at sea."

Mr Horoto said in this old tradition obedience is all we need to survive because if one disobeys the rule, disaster will strike any time.

1958 marks the last time that anyone from

the Rarata tribe sent the shark on a protection mission.

"Today we are no longer worshiping sharks because of Christianity, but in the past shark is our god.

"In our tribe, no one is allowed to say anything bad to shark.

"Today they are not offering to the shark anymore. However, if they curse anyone on shark, for sure the shark will kill that person."

Asked about the shark fining today, he said this is very disrespectful to their tradition and their tribe.

"Killing a shark is forbidden.

"Shark fining should be banned in Solomon Islands because it disrespects the traditional belief of many people on the island.

"It is a disgrace to our culture.

"In the past, the priest sends sharks to attack their enemies during tribal war."



Our Telekom Sales Manager Robertson Szetu.



Our Telekom staff during Our Telekom business update in Auki in last month .



Our Telekom Sales Manager Robertson Szetu doing a presentation for the stakeholders while the other staffs look on.



Our Telekom Sales Manager Robertson Szetu introduces the Auki branch new Manager Paul Elo to the stake holders.

# Our Telekom to install more 3G sites in Malaita

By BIRIAU W. SAENI

**B**Y the end of this year, Our Telekom will have more 3G sites installed in Malaita Province.

This major network upgrade and expansion will help boost telecommunications not only in Auki but also across the whole of Malaita Province right to rural communities.

A total of nine existing 2G sites will be upgraded to 3G network as part of Our Telekom major network upgrade in Malaita.

The existing sites that will be upgraded are as follows: Ata'a, Ofotabu, Afufu, Dala, Farau,

Gouna Hill, Pipisu, Rota'a and Upeni.

In addition to the nine 2G sites that will be upgraded to 3G, Our Telekom has already built another six new additional 3G sites in the province.

This means that at the end of 2017, Our Telekom will have a total of 18 3G sites in addition to the many 2G sites already in existence in the province.

Malaita has three existing 3G sites; Auki, Aligeo and Gwailiki.

The increase in 3G sites across Malaita will ensure more people in the rural areas have access





Our Telekom Stake holders in Auki Malaita province and Our Telekom staff.



Oldest runner in Our Telekom road race in Auki Moris Kiko congratulated by Our Telekom Sales Manager Robertson Szetu.



National runner Henry Mabe receives the second runner up prize from Our Telekom Sales Manager Robert Szetu.

to 3G services for the first time.

Our Telekom Marketing Manager Robertson Szetu said the challenge now is to open up our rural communities through the provision of modern communication services so that the rural people can also access quality communication services similar to those in urban areas.

“Our Telekom is currently doing that in Malaita as well as across other rural communities across the country,” Mr Szetu stated.

He added there will be some places on Malaita that will be difficult to cover but come end of 2017 Our Telekom is confident that more

people across the province will have better access to quality modern mobile services.

He said the construction of mobile towers requires big capital investment costing millions of dollars.

Not only that, most of our rural areas do not have the requisite economic capacity to ensure the kind of returns turnaround that private companies expect.

Regardless of these known challenges, Our Telekom believes in providing the basis for our communities to be able to overcome the inherent hurdles for economic activities.

One of those hurdles is to remove lack of access to communication.

The provision of improved mobile coverage will spur more commercial initiatives through ease of access to communication and information.

3G services will bring the World through the Internet with its wealth of information closer to our people.

With that, he said work to upgrade the 2G sites to 3G network is well in progress in Malaita.

# Ta'arutona fights over-harvesting

By BIRA'AU W. SAENI

**T**HE degradation of the West Are'Are Lagoon is becoming visible as the human population increases.

Each day more and more people harvest fish, turtles, crabs and shells in the lagoon, either to earn some quick cash or for daily food consumption.

The overharvesting of marine resources is a concern for the village elders.

The Ta'arutona community, located in the West Are'Are lagoon, is looking for ways to address this issue

The community is protecting their reef to allow the fish, crabs and shells to reproduce.

It will bring back the good old days when the lagoon was still rich with all sorts of life.

The Ta'arutona Community chief Michael Morania, who is now in his old age but still healthy and strong, told the *Malaita Star* in an interview that when he was just a child, he used to see lots of fish coming in the lagoon in big numbers.

"During those days, we used to play with the mud shells because there lots of them," Morania stated.

"Other shells were also present in large numbers," he added.

"Looking back now, I was very surprised how the lagoon lost its marine resource to over-harvesting.

"During our young days, the big tuna would swim into the lagoon after the small Katu Katu.

"We would just stand on the side and scoop the Katu Katu out of the sea.

"These days, that is very rare.

"I think we really need to do something about this so that our future generation would also enjoy these resources.

"We identified a site that we will conserve; the community is now making bylaws that will help to protect the site.

"Some of us elders of this community talked about the idea to close an area for fishing, but first community members did not understand what we are talking about.

"So we talked to them. Now they have a clear picture of what



Reef that the Ta'arutona community wish to protect.



Chief Michael Morania discussing with the WorldFish rep Van Der Ploeg at Ta'arutona community in West Are'Are.

will happen if we continue to harvest our marine resources in an unsustainable way.

"Everybody agrees that we should look after our reefs and

marine resources.

"We will close one area for fishing for a few months. And when we open the reef for harvest, we will close another area," he

added.

Besides over-harvesting of the marine resources, he said the on-going logging operation in the area is also contributing to the decline of the marine resources.

The logging operation has polluted some of the natural breeding sites of the lagoon.

"As a community we don't want any more logging to come to our area because it spoils the environment," he said.

"These resources are the future of our children and grandchildren.

"These important resources are disappearing fast.

"If we are not careful, some will become extinct in the years to come.

"I hope other communities in the West Are'Are lagoon will soon follow our steps."

He said a threat in one part of the lagoon is a threat to the whole lagoon.

Chief Morania is calling on other communities within the Are'Are lagoon to work together to restore the lagoon.



Village elders are involving young children in the discussion to make them aware of the importance of protecting the marine resources.



WorldFish Officer doing a presentation at Ta'arutona community.



Ta'arutona community elders looking at some of the marine species during the discussion with WorldFish.



Ta'arutona community members during the discussion with WorldFish.



Ta'arutona community members give local names to the marine resources.



Member of the Ta'arutona community taking part in the discussion with WorldFish.

# Empowering women through savings

## WARA: West Are'Are's success story

By BIRA'AU W. SAENI

**A** WEST Are'Are woman who joined the West Are'are Rokotanikeni Association (WARA) testified about the benefits of working together.

WARA was founded by Dr Alice Pollard, a local woman from Waisisi Bay in West Are'Are.

Malaita Star visited West Are'Are this June and caught up with one of the WARA faithful followers, Edlyn Hauona.

Edlyn has been a member of WARA since its official launching in October 1999.

Eighteen years after joining the women's group, she shares her experience as one of the WARA long-serving members.

Edlyn, who is the current WARA Zone 1 secretary, told *Malaita Star* in an interview in West Are'Are that WARA over the past years empowered women with trainings.

"These trainings helped women to become economically independent," Edlyn said.

"There is no more need to wait for cash from their partners and waintoks," she added.

Edlyn told Malaita Star that WARA is truly a voice of women in West Are'Are.

The association provides women with access to savings services, small loans and financial literacy training, including household budgeting, managing finances and basic bookkeeping.

She said these basic trainings are vital for rural West Are'Are women.

"These tranings have given us the knowledge and courage to economically involve in managing our household affairs in a more planned manner."

"WARA is like a light for us West Are'Are women.

"Through WARA we have access financial literacy trainings, which teach us how to do sav-ings, managing finances and do basic book-keeping.

"It is through the WARA saving clubs that most of us are able to afford our children's school fees, buy our children school uniforms and put them to school.

"Not only that, through the WARA saving club, we are now able to look after our own finances.

"We no longer depend heavily on our partners for finan-cial assistance.

"In Malaita women expect men to provide finance for the household, and this is a common thing here even in West Are'Are, but WARA help us change this mentality as most of us are now become self-reliant."

Edlyn said the trainings have helped women to lift their stan-dard of living in West Are'Are.

She encourages women to come along and join WARA to share the benefits.

"WARA helps us meeting our basic needs at home, and I hope to see other women who are still left out to join WARA.



Edlyn Hauona.

"They too can benefit from this women's group, especially with the life-skill training and saving club, which encourage women to save money and spend wisely."

WARA is not only helping women to save money, but is also encouraging them to work together in unity to uplift the stan-dard of living in West Are'Are.

WARA, which started with only 8 zones in 1999, has extended to a total of 13 zones and over 1,000

women members.

WARA membership is not only only restricted to West Are'Are women living in rural areas back home as it also accommo-dates West Are'Are women who live in Honiara and other prov-inces and also women from other places who married West Are'Are men.

For more details on WARA, contact WARA head office in Honiara on phone 7222489



One of the taboo sites leading up to the lake.



Waisisi bay leading up to the lake.

## Marapa tribe's efforts to protect ancient taboo sites

By BIRA'AU W. SAENI

**A**FTER waiting for the Waisisi Palm Oil Project to materialize, Marapa resource owners are giving up on the development project, and thinking about other ways to use their resources.

The Marapa trustees, who are one of the five core resource owners that registered their land for the much talked about Waisisi Palm Oil project, are especially concerned about their marine resources.

According to the Marapa tribal leader, Pastor Andrew Mahoro, the population is growing and harvesting of fish, crabs and shells is done in an unsustainable way.

"This is the very reason that forced the Marapa tribal leaders to look for ways to conserve some of our marine resources for our future generation," Mr Mahoro said.

"We the Marapa tribe wants to protect our marine resources," he added.

"Some marine species are now getting scarce because of over-harvesting, and as tribal leaders

of Marapa, we must do something about this to protect our marine resources."

The tribe decides that it is now time that they must take their responsibility to look after their marine resources from over-harvesting.

The area that the Marapa tribe is planning to protect is a mangrove area that the tribe treats as a sacred place in the Waisisi bay.

The place that the tribe wishes to protect contains a lake that connects Waisisi bay to Roihinari in West Are'Are lagoon.

The tribe will come up with bylaws to help protect the site.

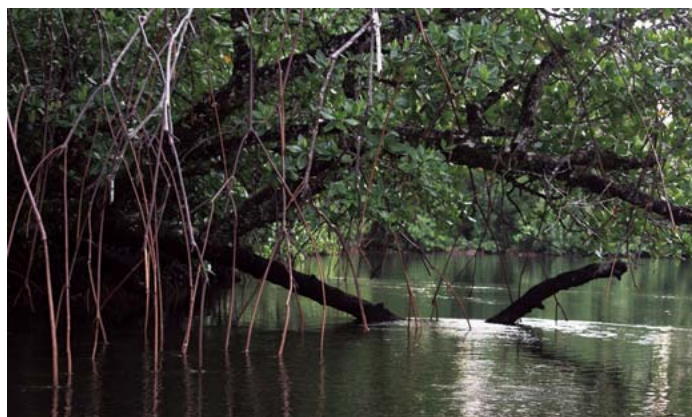
The idea is to protect the area as a breeding ground for fish, shells and crabs, in order to secure it for the future generation.

The site also has some taboo sites, in which the forefathers of the Marapa people used to worship and offered sacrifices to their shark gods.

Protecting the site will not only help to increase the number of fish and shells in the area, but also help to protect the taboo sites.



Saltwater lake.



Mangroveforest at the lake.



Marapa tribal leader Andrew pointing to the proposed marine protected site.



Marapa resource owners in a discussion.

# The 'Cubic Women' of Waisisi

By BIRA'AU W. SAENI

**A**GAINST all odds, women in West Are'Are have ventured into the timber trade.

The involvement of women in the timber trade in Waisisi Bay has attracted the admiration from local residents and visitors.

When logging started in the area in 2014, several brave women became actively engaged in timber trading.

They take advantage of the logging operation in the Waisisi Bay.

Rather than waiting for the royalty payments, which are often received and enjoyed by male population, they make a profit for themselves.

These women are locally known as the "Cubic Women", a slogan derived from their active involvement in cutting timber and selling it in cubic to timber buyers in Honiara.

In Malaita province, women and girls are often pushed aside when it comes to royalty payments.

The *Malaita Star* interviewed the cubic women in June at the Waisisi Bay on the reasons why they venture into the male-dominated industry.

Women feel that they always left out from the logging royalties.

One woman, who wants her name withheld from publication, told the *Malaita Star* that when men get money from the logging operations they turn a blind eye on their women.

"Sometime men get the money and forget about us women and children, some went to Honiara and spent all the money and returned home after they used up all the money in the city," the woman said.

"This is the reason why some of us actively involved in this cubic selling to get some money to help us women and our children."

Regina Horopua, an elderly woman from Surairo village in the Waisisi Bay, spoke to *Malaita Star* about her involvement in the male dominant timber trade business.

She said this year is the third that she is actively involved in the timber industry.

She told the *Malaita Star* with a smile that she is one of the cubic women in Waisisi.



Timbers ready to leave Waisisi Bay.

Mrs Horopua said the timber trade is not easy.

"This industry is dominated by men, and we are the first group of women that are involved in this business.

"We sometimes get teased by our male relatives, but it's not a big deal," she said.

Asked why she decided to trade timber, she said "if men can do it then we women can also do it".

"Men are benefiting from timber in Waisisi. How about us women? So I decided and started three years ago and I still continue today.

"We also have hands and legs just like men do," she stated.

"Involving in timber trade is one way that women can earn their own money.

"As a woman, I feel better about myself generating my own income and having control over my own spending.

"I showed interest in this timber trading since logging came in 2014," she said.

Inquired about how the timber trade started, she said one must have capital to start.

"First and foremost, you must have money to start, you will use the money to buy fuel, hire a chainsaw operator to cut down the trees and trim the log, hire



Regina Horopua one of the women who actively involved in the timber trade in Waisisi bay in West Are'Are.

the logging machines to pull the logs, hire a Lucas mill to cut the timbers, hire logging machines to load the timber into the ship and also to provide food for the labor."

All these processes required money and it is very important to have capital money before one could start venturing in this timber trading.

"Lucas mill hiring prices varies from \$1800 to \$2500 per day depending on the owner of the Lucas.

"We women don't have our own Lucas, so we have to spend money to mill our timber."

Mrs Horopua sends timber to Honiara.

"In the latest shipment this month, I sent 105 cubic of timber to Honiara.

"For those of us who involved in cubic timber selling, it stops us from going to other places to work and find money to support our daily life."

Asked about the expenses involved, she said sometimes she spent about \$3000 - \$5000 in expenses.

"It's hard work and the expenses are also big.

"But if you have many logs, it will help to cover the expenses. Under the agreement with the loggers, the timber of the resource owners will be shipped to Honiara for free.

"The loggers have failed to live up to the resources owners' expectations, but the free shipment has really helped us.

Mrs Horopua said she is willing to continue on with her cubic trade because it provides her family with income which helps them meet their needs.

"I know the villagers are calling us cubic women," she said with a smile.

"Who knows the timbers you buy from the timber yards in Honiara might come from these very cubic women from Waisisi Bay in West Are'Are," the old lady said this with a laugh at the end of the interview.

# Ramohia: conservation a perfect tool for Malaita

By BIRA'AU W. SAENI

**C**OMMUNITY-BASED Resource Management (CBRM) is a perfect tool to protect natural resource in Malaita Province, premier Peter Ramohia says.

Mr Ramohia told the *Malaita Star* that his government is working on a resolution that will encourage all 33 wards in Malaita to take care of their natural resources.

He said that over the years, Malaita's population has steadily increased, putting more pressure on the natural resources.

"If Malaitans are not careful about how they harvest these natural resources, the resources will run out soon," Mr Ramohia stated.

"CBRM is an important tool for Malaita because it ensures

that resources can be used by resource owners.

"It will help people to manage their resources in a sustainable way which will not only support the livelihood of the current generation but also the future ones.

"CBRM is not a new thing; we have been practicing this for a long time but on a small scale.

"When I was a boy growing up in my village in West Are'Are, our elders stopped villagers from fishing in a certain place to preserve it for a specific purpose, for example a feast.

"This closure only lasted for months."

Mr Ramohia said this method is still in practice today, but with the growing population and changing norms, it needs to be taken to the next level.

"It is very welcoming to see people taking a leading role in

looking after their marine and land resources in the province.

"The resources that we depend on are living resources.

"Commercial harvesting leads to over-harvesting.

"The only way to stop this is to make people understand the threats and support them to look after their resources."

Premier Ramohia said his government would pass a resolution soon that will call on all 33 wards in the province to establish a protected area, either in the sea or on land.

In the meantime, Mr Ramohia thanked the communities who are currently taking action to protect their natural resources.

He encouraged them to continue with what they are doing to ensure natural resources in the province are available for the needs of future generations.



Premier Peter Ramohia



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# Our sperm whale encounter



By BIRA'AU W. SAENI

**S**PERM Whale encounter in the waters of Malaita Island is something that eight of us on-board the Banana boat trip to Lau Lagoon will not forget even in a long run.

We left Auki wharf on the 1st of July on a fine sunny Saturday morning at around 8:30am to Lau Lagoon, an area located on the Northeast coast of the Island on a banana boat powered by a 40 horsepower Yamaha.

The trip was under the supervision of none other than the champion skipper Sepo.

On board we have with us scientists of WorldFish (Ronnie and Jan) members of the Ministry of Environment (Ezekiel and Chelcia) the boat skipper and of course a journalist who happens to be myself.

With the beautiful sunshine morning together with the fine seas after long cold rainy June, observing Malaita from the Northwest coast seems undisputedly stunning.

We left Bio point in West Kwara'ae aiming towards Manu point just before we cross the full length of the Northwest coast towards Mbitaama on the northern tip of Malaita Island.

With the marine scientist Jan sitting in front on the boat, whatever objects that appears on the surface of the sea needs an investigation and a closer look.

As we leave Manu point behind us, Kwarea harbor is just right below us and the next point is Mbitama, which is the northern tip of the island.

Knowing that our destination still approximately three hours away, the skipper and myself shared smoke, betel nut, snacks while cracking jokes as we enjoy the laughter.

On the horizon, an island appears above the sea level. It's called Ramos Island or Hano-gou in most Malaita dialects.

The Island contains two taboo sites, one belongs to the island of Malaita and the other one belongs to Isabel.

The Island quickly becomes the subject of discussion.

The island is regarded as a spiritual place guided by sharks and whales.

In Malaita, it is a common knowledge that if anyone happened to have destroyed anything on the island, he will be killed by sharks, whales or snakes and will not return alive to the mainland.

As the discussion gets interesting, funny but scary, something looks like three big logs floated towards the direction of the island.

Without hesitation, Jan instruct the boat skipper to turn the boat towards where the log-like objects appeared.

The move receives no objection from the whole team as we are all keen to know what the objects were.

When we get closer, the objects reappeared again on the surface and from the distance we can clearly tell that the dark objects are sperm whales.

The astonishing thing is that we've just mentioned the sharks and whales that protect Ramos Island in our discussion and all of a sudden, these group of whales appear on the surface giving us a shocking surprise.

For most of us, this is the very first time that we come close to a big number of whales in a given location.

While the excitement of taking pictures of the whales mounted, I got a bit cautious about

the idea that the whales might accidentally sink the boat.

This idea freaks the hell out of me, forcing me to put on a life jacket which is not a bad idea for a bushman like me.

We drew in closer and take few pictures and then the three whales' disappeared again in the deep blue ocean.

A minute later, they reappeared on the surface towards the Western side of the island which is a bit far from the position of the boat.

Jan looked to Sepo and signaled him that we should go after the whales to get a much closer look this time because it is a chance of a life time.

Without hesitation, Sepo changed directions back towards Manu point as we searched after the three whales.

When we get closer, the number of whales increased from three to four, not long another whale emerged out of the ocean just beside the four whales, increasing the head count to five.

Wow it's an incredible moment for the eight of us watching the biggest mammals of the ocean swimming alongside each other in a very friendly manner.

As the adventure continues, we were all full of surprises as we busy taking pictures of the whales which are just about 15-20 meters away from us.

The skipper switches off the engine because we don't want to scare them away as we paddled and get closer to the large creatures.

And as we get closer and closer, the whales appeared even bigger; they looked bigger compared to the size of the banana



boat we were travelling.

We fixed our attention to the five whales when two other whales suddenly surprised us as they surfaced less than five meters away from our boat.

It was a sensational moment for us being so close to the whales, but I have to admit that it was lucky that the animals did not surface under our boat; otherwise it could have been a totally different story.

They surfaced with big breaths releasing sea into the air.

It's a moment of surprise, excitement and anxiety.

We were all worried that the whales might lift the boat up or smash the boat with their tails.

Nonetheless, a little act of generosity sees the whale tilted its tail and body away from our boat which allows us to have a good clear close look at the sea mammal without causing any troubles for us.

Should it come in contact with our boat, it will be a totally different story. The appearance of the two whales meters away from us increased the head count to seven whales in total.

For our team, it is a dream of a life time sitting in a boat surrounded by seven whales, making the banana boat smaller in size compared to the size of the whales.

The seven whales drifted towards the West-coast of the island as we made our way up along the northern coastline of the island where we met yet another three sperm whales.

We had a stop over and enjoyed yet another photo session with the mammals, only this time it was more fun as the whales fiddle with their tails giving us one more stunning whale swim show for the beautiful Saturday morning trip.

The sighting of the 10 sperm whales just made our day and trip as memorable as ever.

For all of us, this is the very first time that we ever come across a big group of whales.

Some of us have had whale encounters before, but only with two or three, and some of us who only saw whales in pictures and films, this encounter is the very first and best ever.

The whales encounter on the Northwest

Mature whales average 16 meter in length and the animal is classified as VULNERABLE on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

This was only the second time that the animals were photographed on the Coast of Malaita Island.

They migrate, and it seems that they pass



Coast of Malaita Island on the 1st of July this year is just surprisingly incredible, which left us with nothing but surprises and excitement and good memories of the life-time encounter with whales in the waters of Malaita.

The scientific name of the sperm whale is *Physeter macrocephalus*.

through the Indispensable Strait in July.

Fauabu Bay seems an important area for them.

In other countries, whale watching is a major tourist attraction, but in Solomon Islands our tourism industry is yet to venture into whale watching as an attraction.





# Grace shares her story as a WorldFish officer

By BIRA'AU W. SAENI

**M**EET WorldFish officer Grace Orirana. She hails from Hunanawa village along the Maramasike passage in the southern region of Malaita.

Mrs Orirana graduated with a BSc in Marine Science from USP in Fiji in 2010.

She started working with WorldFish in 2012 and is currently working as Office Manager and Senior Research Analyst at the WorldFish office in Auki.

She shared with us what she is doing for WorldFish.

"As Office Manager I am responsible for all operations of WorldFish on Malaita. I act as focal point for government, communities, and international scientists in Malaita province," she said.

As a community facilitator, she plays a key role in helping communities to write up their marine resources management plans.

"A management plan is a short document that outlines the rules that the community has agreed upon to protect their marine resources."

Listed below are some of the tasks of a community facilitator:

Provide scientific advice to communities on fisheries and marine resource management.

Inform communities of national and provincial fisheries laws and regulations to ensure that rules communities select are in line with government regulations.

Share information on marine ecology.

Help to connect communities to each other and the provincial government to discuss bet-

ter ways to use and manage resources.

Community Based Resource Management, or CBRM, means that resource owners and local communities are managing their own natural resources in their own time and ways.

It is not a new thing.

"Our people have been using traditional management ways to manage their resources for a long time," Mrs Orirana explained.

"As population increases and people adapt to 'modern' ways, people's beliefs and values have changed," she added.

According to her observation, the traditional management systems have weakened and people no longer respect the old rules.

The increased demand for resources for consumption and income has led to over-harvesting and destruction of our marine resources.

Communities are seeking ways to sustain their marine resources.

This is essentially, what Community-Based Resource Management is.

The CBRM approach builds on the rights and responsibilities of communities.

It empowers them to be better stewards of their customary land and sea resources.

CBRM is the national strategy of the SI government to recognize local customary rights.

"I encourage communities to take action to manage their resources, and not wait for the government or other outside organizations," Mrs Orirana said.

"The successful implementation of CBRM is reliant on strong community ownership and local leaders taking responsibility.

"That is the spirit we want communities

to have; for communities to take the lead in managing their natural resources, and being able to share and spread their good work to neighboring communities."

## WorldFish

WorldFish is an international non-government research organization with the mission to strengthen livelihoods and enhance food and nutrition security by improving fisheries and aquaculture.

In the Pacific region, we work in Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Kiribati, and in Timor Leste. WorldFish has had a continuous presence in Solomon Islands since 1986 under an MOU with the Solomon Islands Government.

WorldFish's key partner is the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources. It currently has three offices in Solomon Islands - Honiara, Nusatupe (Gizo) and Auki.

The WorldFish Auki office was established in 2011 with a signed MOU with the Malaita Provincial Government. It was renewed in 2016 with the following objectives:

To generate scientific knowledge on small-scale fisheries and aquaculture to improve food security and livelihoods of people in Malaita province

In partnership with other stakeholders, build the capacity of communities in the province to manage and use small-scale fisheries

Align and link research and development initiatives in Malaita Province with policy at the national and regional level

The main implementing partner in the province is the Provincial Fisheries Department.



# East Malaita ready to roll out its **BIG PLAN**

By **BIRA'AU WILSON SAENI**

**W**ORK on East Malaita Constituency Development Center will commence soon.

Constituency Project Officer William Kwalemanu said work on the centre will start before the end of 2017.

Mr Kwalemanu told Malaita Star that the site for the centre was already identified and machines belonging to the Eastern Esteem Constructions, the business arm of the constituency, have already dug an access road to the proposed site.

He said the centre's site would also accommodate the Uga'abu Mini Hospital.

According to the East Malaita Member of Parliament Manasseh Maelanga, the proposed Uga'abu Mini Hospital is a priority project for his people.

Besides the Uga'abu Mini Hospital, the centre site will also accommodate a tourism center and a fisheries center.

The centre will connect to a newly built wharf along the Atori coastal area.

Mr Kwalemanu said work to make way for the centre is underway and the initial construction will commence before the end of this year.

"Currently a locally owned company the CHIEF Structure has been engaged in East Kwara'ae to do surveying and engineering work on the site," Mr Kwalemanu said.

He added the centre is a major project for the constituency.

"When the centre is completed, it will definitely change the face of East Malaita," Mr Kwalemanu stated.

He said Uga'abu Mini Hospital will bring the much needed health service to the people of east Kwara'ae, while the proposed Tourism Center, Fisheries Center, and the new Wharf will spur economic development in the region.

MP for East Kwara'ae Mr Maelanga told the Malaita Star that he is committed to the project.

He said he would make sure the project is delivered to the expectation of the East Kwara'ae people.

Other projects that are in their implementation stages in East Kwara'ae include the construction of the two new roads connecting the inland people of East Kwara'ae and the improvement of the Tatali clinic.

Currently, Talali clinic is being ungraded and now connected to water following the installment of three new water tanks.

As a result, the clinic has improved shower and ablation block, lighting system which provides light to the clinic premises at night, construction of a new walk-way, beautification and clearing up of the surrounding bushes.

It is the aim of the East Kwara'ae MP to improve current facilities in the constituency and to build more facilities for the people of East Kwara'ae.

According to Walter Pado of CHIEF Structure, who is currently working on the project site in east Kwara'ae, the proposed development centre will be a gift to the people of East Malaita.

Mr Pado said they have almost completed a guesthouse belonging to the constituency located just beside Talali clinic.

He said the guesthouse would accommodate technical people assign to work on the CDC project.

In the meantime, CHIEF Structure already has completed some of the major assessment on the development centre's project site.

He said by looking at the project, it will benefit the people of East Kwara'ae, the people of Malaita and the country as a whole.

He said centre would be a major boost to East Malaita as the building and landscaping on the site will be done according to modern standard facilities.

In the interim, Mr Kwalemanu said he is pleased with the initiative taken by the East Malaita MP to develop his constituency.

He said the development centre project is bound to change East Malaita for the better.



# CRISP rolls out in Malaita

By BIRA'AU W. SAENI

CRISP project roll out in Malaita has impressed the Provincial Disaster Management Office (MPDMO).

CRISP is a project that prioritizes Community Resilience to Climate Change and Disaster Risk in selected vulnerable provinces and selected vulnerable communities

The project is currently being implemented in Malaita at pre-selected communities across the province.

CRISP was aimed at addressing community resilience to climate and disaster risk reduction in the country, and Malaita is one of the beneficiaries of the project.

CRISP core objectives are to integrate climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction, strengthen emergency information and communication mainstreaming climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction across selected Solomon Islands Government sectors and supporting selected rural vulnerable communities build their resilience against climate change and natural hazards.

CRISP goal is to contribute to resilient and sustainable economic and social development in the Solomon Islands.

As part of the implementation of CRISP project on the island of Malaita, CRISP from the 23-26 August 2017, held a workshop in Auki.

The workshop is called Technical, Procurement and Financial Management Workshop Training for the first five communities CRISP will commence rain water harvesting schemes in.

The five selected communities that attended the workshop were Kelakwai, KwaOneOne, Toae, Alotaa and Fouuo.

Pearson Simi, MPDMO officer, was also part of the workshop.

Mr Simi told the Malaita Star after the workshop that MPDMO is pleased with the important partnership between CRISP and the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology (MECDM).

He said through this partnership, the five communities are now benefiting from the roll out of the project.

"The five communities are not the only beneficiaries of the project; other communities in Malaita will also benefit from the project roll out," Mr Simi explained.

"CRISP will fund two provincial led programs in Langalanga lagoon and Afio Sub-station in small Malaita.

"At Langalanga, a rainwater catchment project will be implemented, while Afio will get a new water supply system.

"CRISP also supports the NDMO/MPDMO with the installment of the early warning system at the Malaita Provincial Disaster Office and installment of a new seismic Station at Aligegeo as part of the national seismic volcanic tsunami monitoring network system."

Mr Simi said the CRISP project roll out is ongoing well in Malaita and more communities are expected to benefit from this roll out.

He said CRISP has bridged the gap that the province alone would not achieve given the lack of resources to reach out to the communities.

He added the best thing about this project is that it helps communities to engage in climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction, which is very helpful to rural communities in times of disasters.



**Chris Afable Jr**  
International Engineer.



**A Community Reps**  
speaking during the workshop held lately in Auki.



**Mirriam Apela**  
Assitant Financial Officer.



**Edrick Maeniuta**  
National Civil Engineer.



**Salome Pita**  
Environment and Social Safeguard Officer.



**Lency Olitisa**  
National Civil Engineer.



**Gareth Quitty**  
Climate Change Adaptation Officer.



**Mary Alalo**  
CRISP Project Coordinator.



**Community rep**  
contributing during the workshop.



**Community rep**  
speaking during the workshop.



**Malaita Provincial Secretary**  
Jackson Gege.



**Fouuo**  
Community Chairman  
Ketai.

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Management Office

# Helping farmers in Malaita

By BIRA'AU W. SAENI

**S**AMSON Tsu is Taiwanese national who is currently conducting training for Malaitan farmers and helping out in the Taiwanese Technical Mission (TTM) in the province.

He shared the story of his mission and achievements so far.

After arriving in the country in November 2013, Mr Tsu moved to Malaita on 3 March 2015.

The Taiwanese told the Malaita Star that his mission is to establish a new training farm for Malaitan farmers and assist the TTM projects in construction and execution.

"The Adaliua Training Center is a partnership program between TTM and Solomon Islands Government," he said.

"Under the partnership, TTM collaborated with the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock in order to raise stock and bulk crops to distribute improved stock and planting materials to farmers in Malaita," Mr Tsu added.

He said the land acquisition process for the project has taken a lengthy period of time, engaging a total of four registered land parcels namely Buma, Fiu, Asai and Kwainamono.

However, he said the negotiations failed due to disputes over leadership of the land parcels.

"Negotiation was only possible with landowners Adaliua where the project is now located and not the four parcels of lands the project was meant for earlier.

"Land clearing and other developments have commenced after a short term MOU was formulated and signed by the concerned parties, which was then followed by action on the ground.

"Currently, there are some infrastructures been constructed, including development of 3.2 hectares of farm land, digging of a 680 meters long drainage canal for a swamp area, construction of one bridge stride across the drainage canal, one drying ground, one agriculture storage shed, one livestock feed storage shed, and finally one piggery unit."

Mr Tsu said he is working under the Food Crops Improvement Project 2016-2019 which is one of TTM's five active projects in the country.

"This project is focused on five crops, including cassava, sweet potato, yam, taro and rice."

He said some new cultivation way to grow root crops has been introduced to Malaita where it succeeds over the extension area.

"The field cultivation technique was hosted about five times where 119 participants have attended.

"With regards to farm management workshops, I hosted it three times where a total of 99 participants attended.

"For farming coaching, I hosted it over



**Samson Tsu showing farmers how to cultivate the land before planting.**

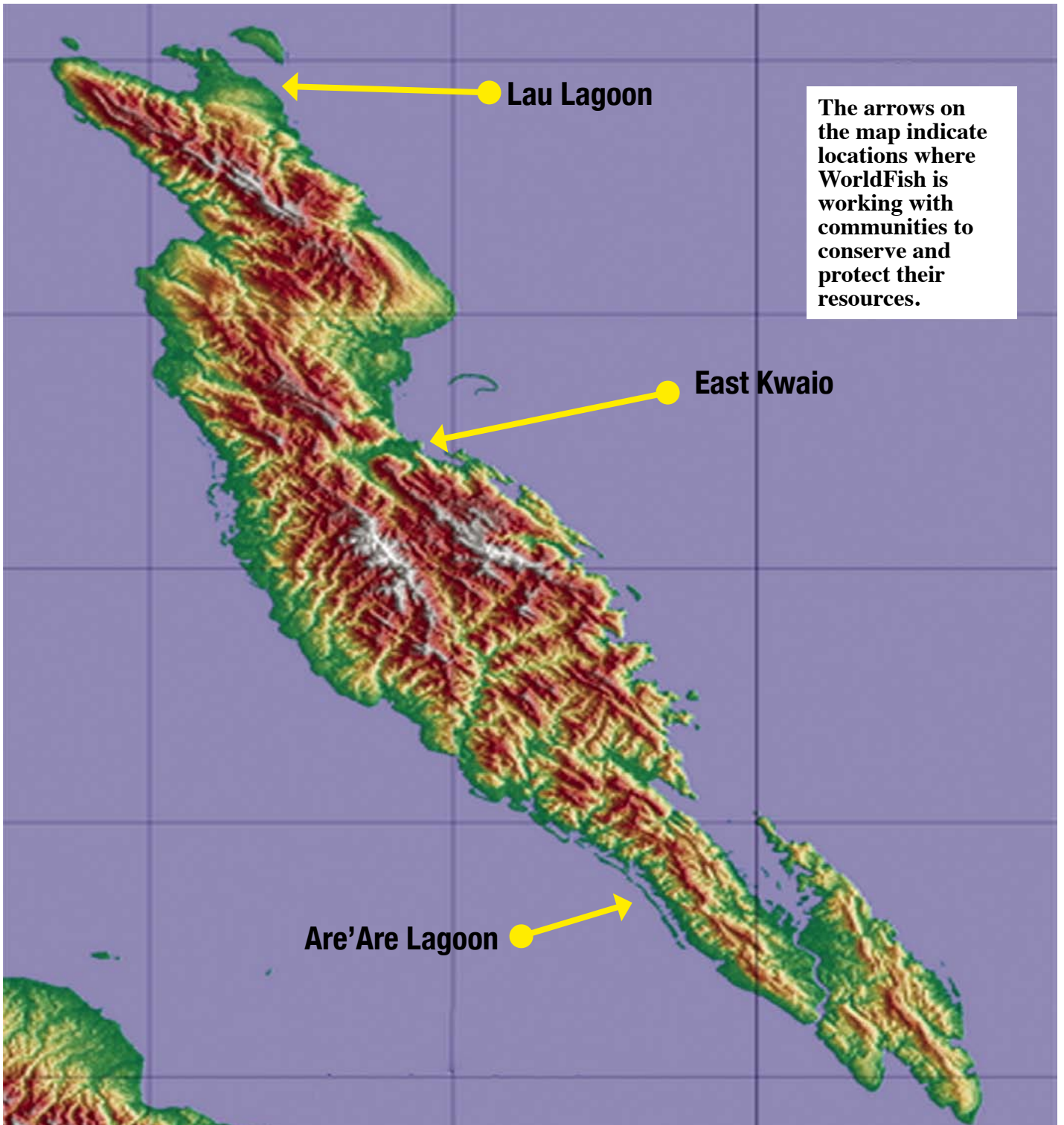
40 times which also include visit for land development and crops cultivation for the participants."

Mr Tsu said he is on the right track in persuading his objective in Malaita, adding the

implementation is going on really well despite the slow start.

He thanked his colleagues in the TTM for their support in making the project work.

EDUCATION	
1999-2002	M. S, Construction, Chaoyang University of Technology, Taiwan
1972-1977	B. S, Agriculture, Chia-Yi Agricultural Collage, Taiwan
EXPERIENCE	
1979 Oct.-1988 Dec.	Chang-hua Irrigation Association, Taiwan, Irrigation Engineer.
1989 Jan.-1996 Jul.	T.T.M. to Kingdom of Swaziland, Land development and Irrigation Engineering.
1996 Aug.-2006 Dec.	Chang-hua Irrigation Association, Taiwan, Director of planning and design Department.
2007 Jan.-2008 Dec.	T.T.M. to Bukina Faso, Land development and Irrigation Engineering.
2009 Jan.-2012 May.	T.T.M. in P.N.G., Land development and Agriculture Extension.
2012 Jun.-2013 Nov.	T.T.M. to Gambia, Irrigation Engineering.
2013 Nov. - NOW	T.T.M. in Solomon Islands, Land development and Agriculture Extension.



The arrows on the map indicate locations where WorldFish is working with communities to conserve and protect their resources.

Are'Are Lagoon



East Kwaio



Lau Lagoon

*This publication was made possible through the 'Strengthening Community-Based Natural Resources Management to safeguard food security in Malaita Province' project funded by the ADB.*

*If you want to know more about the project or community-based resource management in Solomon Islands, contact the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources (Ph: 39143), the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology (Ph: 26036), the Malaita Provincial Government (Ph: 40071) or WorldFish (Ph:25080).*



## Isihanua: coastal communities need to manage their resources

By BIRA'AU W. SAENI

**M**ATHEW Isihanua wants to see all coastal people in Malaita looking after their marine resources.

Mr Isihanua hails from West Are'Are.

He joined the provincial fisheries office in Auki in 2016.

He told the Malaita Star Magazine about his passion for the job and how he wants to help coastal communities in Malaita manage their marine resources.

He joined the Forum Fisheries Agency as an observer in 2003 after leaving school.

Eleven years on, he quit the tuna industry, and joined the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resource Management.

Mr Isihanua sees danger ahead if coastal communities continue to harvest marine resources at an unsustainable manner.

"I moved to Auki back in 2016 and since then I have been helping coastal communities in West Are'Are, East Are'Are, East Kwaio, Lau Lagoon, and also Langalanga Lagoon," he said.

"The challenge is to make people aware of the danger of losing their fish and shells, and shows them ways to manage their marine resources in a proper and sustainable manner.

"There are about 800 coastal communities



throughout Malaita province and I want to reach out to all of these communities.

"It is important to reach out to all of these communities to get them to collectively address the issue of overharvesting of marine resources.

"Coming from a coastal community in West Are'Are, I witness the fast degradation of our marine environment over the years.

"If we are not careful, we will find ourselves losing all our marine resources in the coming years.

"That is why it is important for us to reach out to the communities and do awareness talks to educate them on how to manage their resources."

Mr Isihanua stated the Malaita Provincial Fisheries Office in Auki is currently implementing its 2016-2018 work plan in the province.

The four key activities are:

1. Fishing management, this deals mainly with community-based resource management.

2. Aquaculture, this deals with how to improve tilapia and prawn farming in the province.

3. Compliance and enforcement, this deals with the implementation of the Fisheries Management Act and the Malaita Provincial Fisheries Ordinance.

4. Seaweed farming, this deals with supporting seaweed farmers throughout the province.

He said lack of funding is the reason why the Provincial Fisheries Office only deals with two key activities of the 2016-2018 work plans instead of four.

The partnership with WorldFish has helped the Provincial Fisheries Office implement two of its four key activities in Malaita this year.

Apart from that, the Provincial Fisheries Office this year also cracked down the illegal sea cucumber harvest in the Lau Lagoon.

He said the Malaita Provincial Fisheries Ordinance and the Fisheries Act are important regulations for people to follow.

"The second time was in 2009. I was very privileged to play with some of the big names in soccer in Malaita and Solomon Islands.

"In the 2009 team, I played with the likes of Nelson Sale, Batram Suri, Alick Mamae, Henry Fa'arodo, Kidston Billy and Jude Molea just to name a few.

"As a young player during the time, I enjoyed playing with the big names in our country who gave their time to mother land Malaita in the 2009 Solomon Cup tournament.

"With all the big names in the team, we won the grand final by trashing Guadalcanal 8-0 in the grand final.

"It was the first time that I ever tested goal medal victory after my first appearance with the Eagles back in 2006 was cut short by the determining West Honiara side at Lawson Tama."

Siuomea came close to securing his second gold medal with the men in red in 2013 during the Solomon Games, but were denied by the determining Western Turtles in the grand-final, having been beaten by Turtles 2-1 at Tulagi, Central Province.

He said he was not part of the 2016 Eagles team to the Solomon Cup due to school commitment.

The team performed quite poorly in the tournament that saw them missing out on any prizes, and attracting complaints and criticisms from their fans.

"You know when you pull up an Eagles jersey you must perform.

"From my experience, Malaitans always expect

any group of athletes who wear the Eagles jersey to live up to their expectation."

Siuomea said in 2017 after the Malaita Cup tournament, he was selected again into the Eagles side.

"This year I have the chance after I was selected into the team with other three boys from my North West Mbaelelea team".

"Knowing that am the only surviving player from the team that won the 2009 Solomon Cup eight years back, it's a great opportunity to try and defend the cup with this young generation of Eagles players."

The men in red entered the tournament as the defending champions, and defended the title superbly to keep the cup under their belt.

This victory gave Siuomea a second goal medal as an Eagles player.

"We entered the tournament and did our best, which saw us successfully defending the cup.

"The victory was my second with the Eagles team.

"This was a sweet victory and I wanted to dedicate it to all the Malaitans out there."

Siuomea said he loves playing for his province because he wanted to bring pride to his motherland.

"I will keep on playing for my province if the future Eagles management allows me a chance."

He said some Honiara-based clubs have shown interest in him, but he prefers to stay

back in Malaita and enjoy his football in his home land.

Ask about the difference between the 2009 and 2017 tournament, he said in 2009, most of the teams included national reps in their sides.

"So provincial-based players were basically playing under the shadows of the national reps.

"In 2017, the tournament was a battle of raw talents from all provinces.

"And the provincial players showed their potentials because they are not playing under the shadows of the national players," Siuomea said.

At home, Siuomea played for different clubs such as Malu'u United FC, Fasirus FC and Auki Kings.

He also stated that he was proud to see his three Eagles colleagues, Clement Baegeni, Clifton Aumaea and Andrew Rarangia picked up for national duties following their outstanding performance in the 2017 Solomon Cup.

He encourages young Malaitan footballers to consider playing for the Malaita Eagles in the years to come.

### Siuomea's record with the Malaita Eagles:

- 2006 – Eagles bow out in the quarter finals
- 2009 - Eagles won gold
- 2010 - Tournament held in Auki was postponed because of heavy rain.
- 2013 – Silver medalist at the Tulagi games
- 2017 – Eagles won gold again

# Eagles'

## beloved son

AT 28, Mickson Siuomea is perhaps the oldest Malaita Eagles player who had won gold twice and silver once in the five tournaments that he had represented his province.

He featured twice in the Malaita Eagles squads that won the Solomon Cup in 2009 and 2017.

In 2013 when the Eagles played in the Solomon Games, they were beaten in the grand-final by Western Turtles to settle for silver, and Siuomea was part of that squad, too.

When the Eagles appeared in the 2017 Solomon Cup, Siuomea was the only surviving player from the 2009 winning squad that won the tournament at that time.

So while the rest of the Eagles squad this year tasted victory for the first time, for Siuomea, this was his second gold medal.

He was truly the Eagles beloved son after he represented the province in five Solomon Cup tournaments' the latest being the 2017 Solomon Cup tournament.

Siuomea first joined the Eagles in 2006 in the Solomon Cup under-23 tournament, which was held in Honiara.

At that time, the junior Eagles were belted out of the tournament in the quarter finals by West Honiara.

In 2009 Siuomea was selected back into the Malaita Eagles team after a very outstanding Malaita Cup performance from the talented left-back defender.

"I started playing for the Malaita Eagles when I was just a teenager and the first tournament that I competed as an Eagles' player was in 2006 when we lost in quarter finals to West Honiara," he recalled.

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