

- Women in Papua New Guinea lead the way in saving mangroves
- Pacific Island Countries Pledge to Plant Millions of Trees to Combat Climate Change
- The Future of the World's Largest Tuna Industry

\*\*

**“Our commitment today must be to bequeath to our children an environment that is better than the one we inherited – much better.”**

**~ Hon Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama**

\*\*



## **WOMEN IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA LEAD THE WAY IN SAVING MANGROVES**

The women of the remote community of Poukama village in Hallsound Bay of the Kairuku Hiri District in Central Province are restoring the country's most diverse mangrove forest.

The community used to cut down mangroves, not realising they were not sustaining a valuable resource. But in 2014 a group of 25 local women met and agreed to start the local mangrove replanting program. For half a day once a fortnight they do a general clean up and plant mangrove seedlings from their nursery, and by 2020 they had planted over 3,000 mangroves.

Poukama village resident Marie Helen Mamei says it's a major change for the community. "We normally just go ahead and cut anything you know."

She is the chair of Women in Mangrove Management (WIMA), the group set up to replant mangroves in the Kairuku Hiri District of Central Province in Papua New Guinea and has seen an incredible transformation in the mangrove forest surrounding her home.

"When we started planting we saw a lot of changes in our area, we saw more fish coming in and some things we didn't expect were also coming into our area. Crabs were just coming in left, right and centre," she said.

"Before we started there was a bit of erosion and the beach had been washed away by the sea so we took the initiative to do something to protect our village from erosion."

The project began with the help of local non-profit organisation, Papua New Guinea Centre for Locally Managed Areas. Now the community has taken the project into its own hands and hopes to pass on knowledge about mangrove rehabilitation to other coastal communities in PNG.

Across the world, mangrove forests are under threat from rising sea levels and land clearing. Mangroves provide a natural barrier between the water and land, serving as a defence for coastal communities. They also store carbon from the Earth's atmosphere, helping reduce global warming. "We didn't know that mangroves were going to be important to protect our environment."

Marie Mamei said locals have also become more in tune with changes in the mangroves. "They have senses. Like they sense the weather, so as soon as they feel there's wind coming or there's going to be a big storm, they put down their roots to protect themselves. That helps hold the soil near the beaches, so we don't have so much soil erosion due to climate change."

The women plan to continue planting mangroves into the future.

"We do this voluntarily with the help of our husbands and children. We want this to continue because we know that in the future it will benefit our children and the future to come," Marie said.

She also says they are fully aware of the importance of biodiversity and conservation, something they knew little about a few years back.

"Before when we did not have this rehabilitation area there was not much fish, crabs and shells, but now with this project we see a lot of this marine lives living in the mangrove." The project has also provided an income source for the community, which sells sustainably-caught crabs and fish at markets in Port Moresby and to international exporters.

Maxine Anjiga, executive director for Papua New Guinea Centre for Locally Managed Areas, said the model had huge potential for increasing gender equality in PNG. But she said working with male chiefs from Poukama was crucial for achieving female participation.

"Normally women would not have the chance to come out and do what they are doing. They would follow the instructions of the male leaders," Ms Anjiga said. "Because we got permission from the men, he allowed his wife to come and participate."

"Now women are leaders, women are speaking, women are doing this rehabilitation. Women are doing everything they're doing because we went through the male leadership," she said. "We feel like we made a breakthrough and we used the traditional system for the women to participate and take the lead and we are looking for ways to replicate this in other mangrove communities."

*Sources: Women Guardians of the Mangroves, The Nature Conservancy, 31 May 2020; PNG villagers revive shrinking mangroves by Benjamn Kedoga, Pasifika Environews, 9 November 2020; Mangrove revegetation program helping improve a Papua New Guinea coastline, and it's all driven by local women, ABC, 17 June 2022.*

\*\*

## **PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES PLEDGE TO PLANT MILLIONS OF TREES TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE**

### **Samoa's 3 Million Trees Planting Campaign**

In May 2022 Samoa's National 3 Million Trees Planting Campaign was officially launched by the Minister for National Resources and Environment, Toeolesulusulu Cedric Schuster.

Toeolesulusulu emphasised the need for a sustainable future through conservation and sustainable use of Samoa's natural resources. Because there is a decline in Samoa's major forests, Toeolesulusulu said the new tree planting campaign will prioritise reforestation of native and endangered trees and planting for commercial use timber as well as long term crops.

The 3 Million Tree Planting Campaign is an extension of the 2 Million and 1 Million Tree Planting Campaigns. It is part of a national initiative to help advance the cause for sustainable forest management, rehabilitation of degraded land area, preservation of water resources, protection of biological diversity whilst contributing to mitigating the impact of climate change. The national campaign is coordinated by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment through its Forestry Division working in partnership with its various key stakeholders. A \$1 million grant is offered annually by the Government for national forest replanting, supporting the National 3 Million Tree Planting Campaign from now until 2028.

### **Fiji's 30 Million Trees in 15 Years Initiative**

In a speech on 7 November 2022 Fiji's Prime Minister and Minister for Forestry Hon Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama emphasised the value of conserving the nation's forest to minimise the adverse effects of climate change. This year the Government has injected \$3.3 million in tree planting to continue Fiji's landscape restoration program through the planting of trees and mangroves under Fiji's 30 Million Trees in 15 Years initiative.

Since its inception in 2019, through Fiji's national tree-planting program, Fijians and visitors have helped plant 12.5 million trees and mangroves. It reflects the Government's commitment to cleaner and greener Fiji. Co-ordinated by the Ministry of Forestry the campaign aims to expand Fiji's forest cover and restore degraded forest areas. The initiative is one of Fiji's main platforms to address climate change because trees are scientifically proven to be among the best nature-based solutions for capturing carbon.

"Each generation is given stewardship of this beautiful environment – to nurture it, care for it, and pass it on to the next generation. Our commitment today must be to bequeath to our children an environment that is better than the one we inherited – much better," Mr Bainimarama said.

### **Tree Farming in the Solomon Islands**

Where eight years ago Aruligo in Northwest Guadalcanal hot winds were drying out the grasslands in the rain shadow of Mount Popomanaseu, now there is six hectares of forest with over 6,000 varieties of trees, some of which are already up to 30 metres tall. The Isi Akson Theatre Art Trust created an afforestation project and received funding from the UN Development Programme Small Grants Programme. The community group, founded by Francis Koria in 1988, uses plays to raise awareness among both literate and illiterate Solomon Islanders about issues touching their lives.

The Isi Akson project was completed in December 2020. Since 2014 said Frances Koria, "not only have the trees grown, so has the knowledge based on how to farm them in the arid climate." The people working on the project have had eight years of experience in farming and managing trees. It is hoped in the future that the project will provide casual employment opportunities for participating families.

"We also learned about the challenges we have faced and the need to extend the planting of trees to cover more areas of land within the region and assist other community members on tree planting."

The trees conserve soil and water, provide shade and reduce CO2 emissions, and improve the biodiversity of the creatures which live in them. It is hoped that this project will not only boost natural forest farming, but also help the fight against climate change.

*Sources: National 3 Million Trees Planting Campaign launched by Adel Fruean, Samoa Observer, 25 May 2022; Govt Injects \$3.3M in Tree Planting, Ministry of Forestry, Fiji 23 July 2022;*

*Natewa Villagers Actively Engage in Reforestation, Ministry of Forestry, Fiji 19 November 2022; Trees shade the way to positive change, UNDP Pacific Office, 8 March 2022.*

\*\*

## THE FUTURE OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST TUNA INDUSTRY

At the beginning of December 2022, the 26 member countries and participating territories of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) met in Vietnam. It was the first in person meeting since 2019, and the first ever in hybrid form, as about a third of participants joined virtually. The membership of WCPFC, also known as the Pacific Tuna Commission, is made up of the Pacific Island countries – owners of the tuna resources – and the foreign fishing nations whose fleets travel thousands of kilometres to fish in the tuna-rich Pacific waters. These include the United States, China and members of the European Union.

The commercial species most coveted is South Pacific albacore, which is one of the more at-risk tuna species in the region. According to a WCPFC report there has been no stock assessment of South Pacific albacore since 2015, and the commission's Scientific Committee report expressed concern that there is a 20% risk that South Pacific albacore stock could fall below a desirable level if fishing continues at today's rate.

The chief executive officer of the Tonga Ministry of Fisheries, Tu-ikolongahau Halafihi believes that the Pacific Island countries and countries fishing in their waters need to work together to protect the tuna for future generations.

“I think the main message from here is solidarity and cooperation, working together because we can't manage the resources by ourselves, we have to work together.

“National, regional and also international we have to work together, some kind of collective effort in order for us to manage the resources,” he said.

Tonga's tuna fishery, which brings in on average about \$US4.2 million a year, is an essential revenue for the Tongan people and the government, as well as providing food security. But most of the vessels operating in Tongan waters are Chinese or Taiwanese registered and working out of Fiji.

The executive director of the commission, Tuvaluan Feleti Teo, said that key issues to be addressed included a harvest strategy development and implementation, improving the efficiency and efficacy of the compliance and monitoring scheme, and a new or revised tropical tuna measure for 2023.

There was also a call to do more to improve working conditions on the fishing vessels in the Pacific. Recent research by the FISH Safety Foundation, non-profit organisation working for safe working conditions, found that the number of people killed working in the global fishing industry is more than 100,000 per year – much higher than previous estimates, making fishing the most hazardous industry in the world.

*Sources: Tonga calls for more unity in tuna conservation efforts by Koro'i Hawkins, RNZ, 1 December 2022; High stakes at Pacific tuna commission meeting in Vietnam by Koro'i Hawkins, RNZ, 1 December 2022; Why western and central Pacific tuna stocks must be safeguarded by Tom Pickerell, Executive Director, Global Tuna Alliance, World Economic Forum, 18 November 2022.*

\*\*

**Pacific Outlook is produced by** the Grail Global Justice Overcoming Poverty Network (Australia). Published in Sydney with 6 issues per year. Contributions to Pacific Outlook and responses to its content are welcomed via the Editor.

**Network Coordinators:** Alison Healey ([info@grailaustralia.org.au](mailto:info@grailaustralia.org.au)) and Mary Boyd ([maryboyd@live.ca](mailto:maryboyd@live.ca))

**Editor:** Rosamund Burton ([admin@grailaustralia.org.au](mailto:admin@grailaustralia.org.au))

**Design:** Thanks to Marian Kelly for her donation of time and talent.