

17 000 remote islanders take action against climate change



Children of Nusa Roviana will witness rising sea levels and more extreme rainfall events over the next 50 years.

THE 17 000 people of Roviana have a vision for their future.

It is a vision where the environment continues to sustain their lifestyle and culture.

Roviana is a remote saltwater lagoon area in the Western Province of Solomon Islands.

The people live in small villages dispersed along extensive coastlines. The majority have no access to modern transport or communication facilities.

The population is increasing, but land and marine resources are dwindling.

Commercial logging and fishing activities are growing. At the same time, less value is being placed on the traditional subsistence lifestyle.

All the while, rising sea levels, higher air and sea temperatures and more extreme rainfall events are threatening local food and fresh water supplies.

Australian researchers identify local strengths

Australian researchers have worked with the people of Roviana to identify ways to better adapt to the changes that local communities are experiencing.

Local communities are now surveying their coastlines to identify areas likely



Strengthening ourselves

Miri Taqu, program coordinator for the Roviana Conservation Foundation, says the people of Roviana are vulnerable but enthusiastic.



Promoting fish habitats

John Pitu, village chief of Nusa Roviana, says his village will plant coral to help promote fish habitats. 'The new coral will help keep the fish alive. I have to take some of the young children in the boat, and go and plant [coral].'



Fostering traditional skills

Sasamara Kera (*left*), team leader of a trial organic garden in Roviana, learns traditional cropping techniques from his mother Lois Kera (*right*) as well as organic farming techniques from the Kastom Gaden Association.

to be flooded by sea-level rise. They are trialling new organic garden systems to boost crop yields and reduce pests and diseases.

They are documenting traditional bush-food knowledge and forming partnerships with scientists, government and NGOs to improve knowledge-sharing and monitoring of changes within their environment and climate.

A major outcome of the research work was the development of the *Roviana Climate Change Resilience Plan 2013–2017*. The plan outlines actions that the community can take to help build resilience against the effects of climate change.

Actions from the plan will be overseen by the local Roviana Conservation Foundation.

Miri Taqu, program coordinator for the Roviana Conservation Foundation, explains that: 'Resilience means for Roviana people to be able to use their resources to enhance their life—to be able to sustain their lives, and their children's lives.

'The young people are enthusiastic. The [village] leaders have to attract the young people to come into these [resilience-building] projects', Ms Taqu says.

New tools help locals plan, ahead of climate change

Dr Simon Albert, research fellow at The University of Queensland, played a significant role in Australia's work in Solomon Islands. A unique land-based surveying tool he developed allows remote communities to calculate which areas of land are vulnerable to sea-level rise. This will help people plan for the future.



Photos: The University of Queensland

Dr Simon Albert (*centre*), research fellow at The University of Queensland, shows local people of Roviana how to use the ground-based survey technique he developed.

Dr Albert says: 'One opportunity that has come out of this climate change project in Roviana Lagoon has been to really bind the people together for a common cause'.

'Climate change has brought in a range of multidisciplinary issues ranging from garden crop issues, to fisheries issues, to sea-level rise. Climate change is such a cross-cutting issue; it has united a lot of separate initiatives under a common umbrella.'



Photo: Econnect Communication

Raising awareness

Roddy Maebule, chair of the Roviana Conservation Foundation, travels by boat to remote villages of Roviana to raise awareness about climate science. He says: 'Most important for Roviana is to improve the marine protected areas, because the only way we can save the future of our children is if we can control our resources in the sea.'

More information

The Australian Government funded research into climate change and community resilience in Solomon Islands as part of Australia's **Pacific Adaptation Strategy Assistance Program (PASAP)**.

For further information about the Solomon Islands community resilience research or other PASAP projects, go to www.tiny.cc/t5axxw or contact InternationalAdaptation@climatechange.gov.au



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