



*This Project is executed by the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund,
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Progress of the Dugong & Seagrass Conservation Project in Solomon Islands

3rd Executive Project Steering Committee meeting

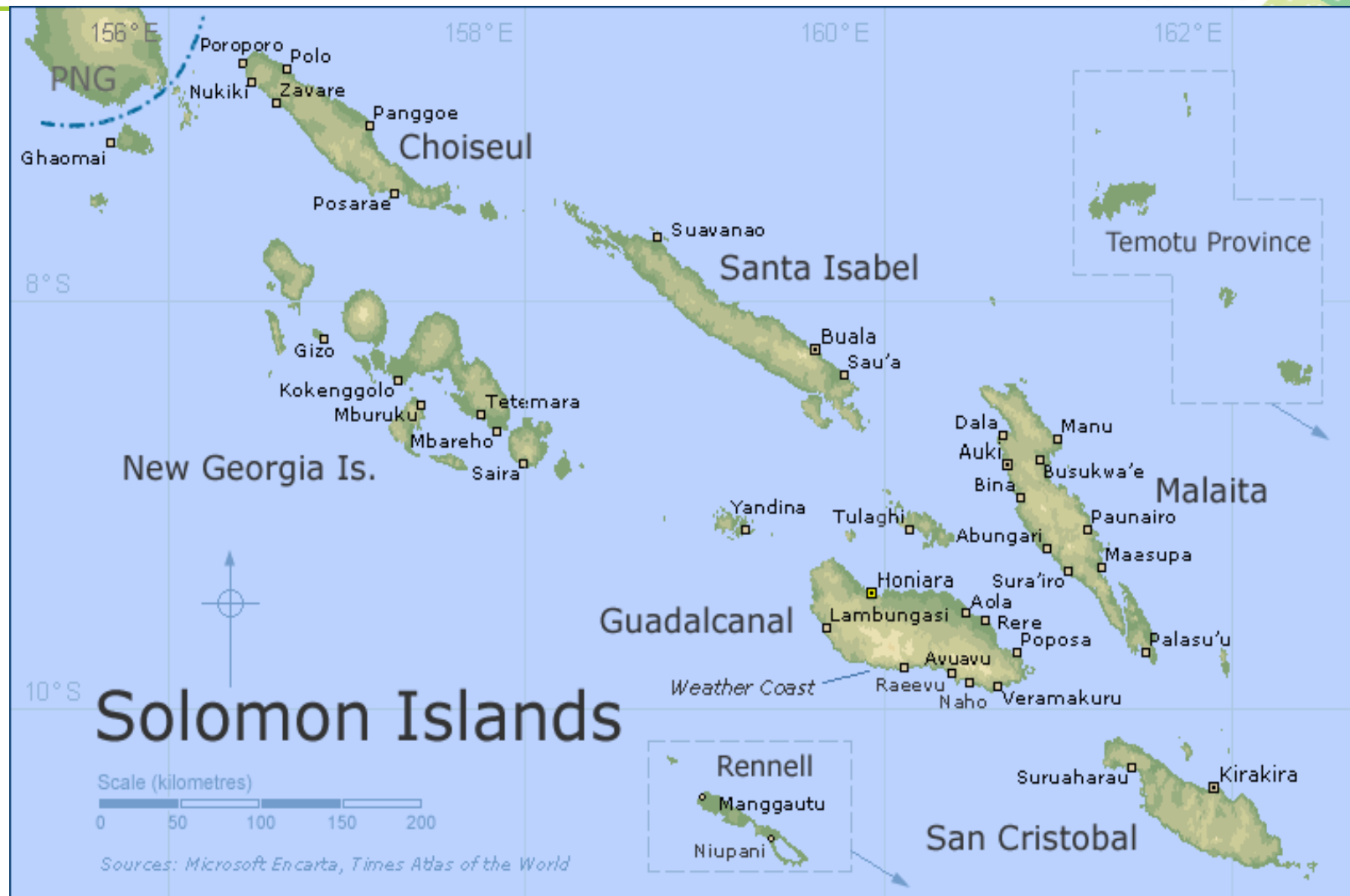
21-23 November, 2017

Trang, Thailand



SICCP
Solomon Islands Community
Conservation Partnership

Solomon Islands



Past, present and future of dugong and seagrass conservation in Solomon Islands



Baseline in 2015

- Dugongs: Data based on survey done in 2009
- Seagrass: latest data was in 2004. Data found 10 spp in SI
- Communities: community-based monitoring/ management structures exists but not integrating dugongs
- Incentives: No incentives
- Policies: No policies or regulations on seagrass and dugong specifically

Progress by 2017

- Dugongs: indigenous book on dugong, threats occurrence for all project sites
- Seagrass: maps/ data on composition, distribution, use and abundance for few sites in Lau lagoon
- Policies: Draft regulation on dugong selling ban in MFMR
- Communities: 1 community participated in CMS dugong questionnaire
- No incentives for communities under project

Targets for 2018

- Dugongs: national database to be managed by...; status identified and communicated;
- Seagrass: national database and provisioning ecosystem services valuation; status
- Policies: A regulation in place for banning dugong selling
- Communities: 20 communities participate in monitoring/ management of dugong/ seagrass hotspots

Results from dugong research

- Our dugong research questions: find out more about dugong capture and sighting.
- CMS Dugong Bycatch Question
- Dugong hotspots - Lau Lagoon, Tetepare
- Sightings of dugongs since 2015 – 2 dead and 5 live cases (anecdote report)
- Top 3 threats to dugongs: fishers, logging companies, OBM - monitoring and awareness.
- Data on dugongs hosted by MECDM
- 2018: continue dugong research
- Explore further hotspots and breeding sites of dugongs in Solomon Islands.



Dugong sighting in Lau Lagoon



Results from seagrass research

- Our seagrass research question:
What seagrass species distribution and density is found in 12+ regional sites.
- Method: Seagrass Watch (mapping and monitoring).
- 21 local sites for research area for seagrass in Lau Lagoon
- Threat-development on land-
Sedimentation runoff
- Important research results: – First seagrass mapping sites at Lau Lagoon sites.
- All data on seagrass hosted by MECDM
- 2018: Current data from project sites are with partners and this will be analyzed before sharing



Project policy response to dugong & seagrass conservation needs in Solomon Islands



- Policy needs in 2015: a regulation on seagrass or dugong specifically.
- Key policy gaps by 2017 : A policy gap analysis has been carried out by WorldFish, but not specific on both species.
- 3 key results by 2017
 - ✓ A policy gap analyses by WorldFish
 - ✓ MFMR working on a draft regulation for banning dugongs from being sold, WorldFish working on a policy brief on dugongs.
 - ✓ DSCP Network of NGOs & Ministries (NFC)
 - ✓ Concept note on National Strategy on DSG
 - ✓ Lau Lagoon (Dugong & Seagrass) proposed priority site for GEF 7
- Dugong Management strategy will be finalized in early 2018

Community-based stewardship of dugongs and their seagrass habitats

- In 2015, community work in 7 regional sites, but not focus on dugongs
- In 2017: Confirmed sightings of dugongs in 2 regional (Tetepare & Lau Lagoon), 30+ local sites
- Community needs: Awareness on dugongs & seagrass
- Common threats : overfishing & sedimentation; hunting in Gizo.
- Follow up by MECDM & DSCP
- 3 key results: 30+ communities integrating DSG in their management sites. LMMA established in 4 sites. SIRA supporting sites, Participatory mapping
- CBRM training on women, men, youth- est.20 to 30 people per community
- Tetepare had more women involved in monitoring of seagrasses in managed areas.
- 2018: Working model of community-based seagrass management
- Unaddressed community needs: Funding for SIRA



Education & Awareness about dugongs and seagrass



- **Audience- 1). Schools, 2) Coastal Communities 3) Policymakers- need awareness materials on seagrass and dugongs.**
- **results from education & awareness:** Lau maps distributed to schools, NGO's & Govt. Ministries, Presentation & awareness booth during Solomon Islands National Resource Management Symposium, Radio shows every Wednesday on Seagrass & Dugongs.
- **Effectiveness and sustainability of education & awareness activities-** Training of volunteers to carryout dugong questionnaire, distribution of posters & involvement of Govt. officers in awareness and training.
- 2018:
 - ✓ Carry out dugong questionnaires in provinces, Ministries to disseminate information to rural communities in the provinces.
 - ✓ Communications strategy disseminated to public and ministries, children's book on dugongs published



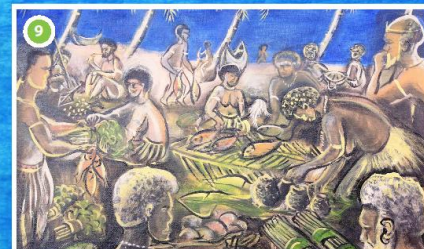
SAFEGUARDING LAU LAGOON

Lau Lagoon is the largest seagrass area in Solomon Islands. Dugong, fish and people depend on the seagrass. Support the efforts to save the lagoon: (1) protect dugongs, (2) respect fishing closures, (3) refrain from using trammel nets, (4) safeguard fish spawning aggregations, and (5) properly dispose plastic waste.



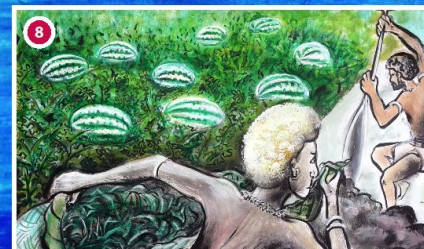
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Many communities in the lagoon are actively managing their fisheries. People place several sticks on the reef or the seagrass bed to signal that fishing in these areas is temporarily prohibited. This is an effective way to conserve marine resources. It is important to support these initiatives to ensure that fisheries in Lau Lagoon meet the needs of the people, now and in the future.



9

Fish plays a central role in the diet, economy and culture of the Lau Lagoon. Since ancient times, the 'saltwater people' have hunted fish for root crops on the markets on the mainland. But, it is much harder for people in the lagoon to find fresh fruits and vegetables. This is a particular concern for the health of women and children.



8

Seagrass is not only important for fishers, but also for farmers. Watermelons are an important agricultural commodity in North Malaita, and the watermelons from Lau are famous for being the sweetest in the country. Farmers collect seagrass on the beach and use it to improve the soil fertility of their gardens. This leads to bigger and sweeter melons.



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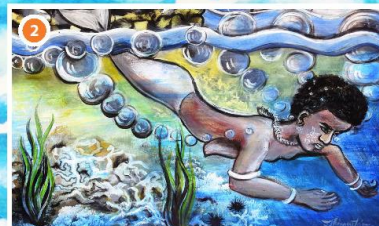
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Paintings by John Limalto



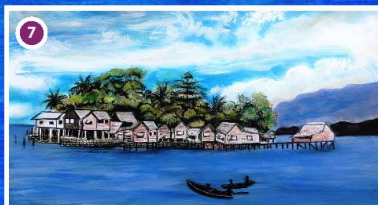
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The dugong is a large animal that lives in the sea. Dugongs are also sometimes called 'sea-cows', because they mainly eat seagrass. Dugongs can be found in shallow areas near the coast. They can live for more than 50 years. Females give birth in the water, usually to only one calf. The calf stays close to its mother for several years, because it takes a long time for these animals to raise their calves, hunting has a big impact. In many parts of the country the dugong has disappeared. But this special sea animal still lives in Lau Lagoon.



2

Some tribes in Lau Lagoon consider dugongs to be sacred animals. People tell the story of a woman called Fafu, who was badly treated by her mother-in-law. One day, Fafu could no longer bear the insults. She asked her husband and son to meet her after seven days at the seaside, and then jumped into the water. One week later, the father and the young boy waited for Fafu. At noon a dugong surfaced, from now on Fafu would live in the sea. Since then, many people in Lau Lagoon will not hunt or eat dugongs.



7

Lau Lagoon is famous for its man-made islands. These settlements are built by manually hauling and piling up coral reefs or in the mangroves, often more than 3 meters high. There are around 55 artificial islands in the lagoon. Over the past century many people have left the artificial islands. They settled on the mainland where access to roads, gardens, markets, schools and freshwater is easier.



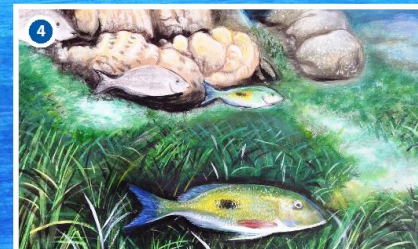
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The 'saltwater people' depend on fish and other marine resources for food and income. But fisheries in the lagoon are under increasing pressure. Overharvesting is threatening important commercial species such as sea cucumber, trochus and hump-head parrotfish. The use of trammel nets, or 'magnet nets', is impacting the rabbitfish and emperor fisheries. And the cutting of mangroves is degrading nursery grounds and exposing the coast to storms. Several communities in Lau Lagoon have taken steps to use their marine resources more wisely. The village of Fumamoto'o, for example, has declared a locally managed marine area.



3

In the past there were a lot of dugongs in the lagoon. They grazed on the shallow seagrass fields near the shore. With their constant movements and grazing, the dugongs made a deep channel through the seagrass. People used this 'dugong channel' to paddle to the mangroves. But when people killed the dugongs for their meat, the channel filled up with mud. Now, it is difficult for people to reach the mangroves during low tide.



4

Dugongs, turtles and many other animals depend on seagrass for food and shelter. Seagrass is important because it provides a nursery ground for fish, shells and other marine resources. Also, seagrass keeps the water clean and protects the coast. The *hatamela*, or thumbprint emperor, is an important fish for people in Lau Lagoon. Emperors depend on the seagrass beds in the lagoon, where they eat snails, worms and urchins that live in the sand.



5

Another fish that depends on the seagrass in the lagoon is the *mu'u*, or dusky rabbitfish. It is a tasty fish with few bones. Rabbitfish form large groups to breed. In these so-called 'spawning aggregations' the females release millions of eggs that are fertilized by the males. The fertilized eggs then drift into the ocean. After several months, dense schools of juveniles come back to the lagoon.



Solomon Islands lessons learned

- **What went well and why?**
 - DSCP Participation at the 1st Solomon Islands National Resource Management Symposium
 - Participation in Seagrass Monitoring and dugong questionnaire training in Port Villa Vanuatu
 - CMS Questionnaire Training for at least 18 personnel's are key hotspot sites within the SICCP Partnership Network and beyond.
- **What went wrong and why?**
 - Low performance in projects as a result of poor communication between stake holders and poor delivery of reports.
- **How can we do better?**
 - Constant communication between PCT, partners and NFC
 - Improve reporting



Next steps



SB2

SICCP has subcontracted local Community Based Organization to conduct a series of awareness sessions at their respective sites

SB3

- Book on Traditional children's story
- Produce maps on seagrass in in sites esp. Lau
- Produce several maps on transects, seagrass species composition & density of seagrass

SB4

- Complete and finalize at least two (2) LMMA sites within the SICCP Partnership Network
- Incorporate seagrass and dugong Conservation into Tetepare Island Management Plan-to be able to deliver an Integrated Management Plan

SB1/5

- Facilitate NFC meetings (On going)
- Prepare for 2018 Dugong & Seagrass regional workshop
- Coordinate partners progress for the remaining months of the project



Thank U Tumas



