

# **USING ART AS A TOOL TO MOBILIZE SUPPORT FOR DUGONG CONSERVATION IN SOLOMON ISLANDS**



**By Chelcia Gomese & Jan van der Ploeg  
WorldFish Solomon Islands**

*Mimato'o*







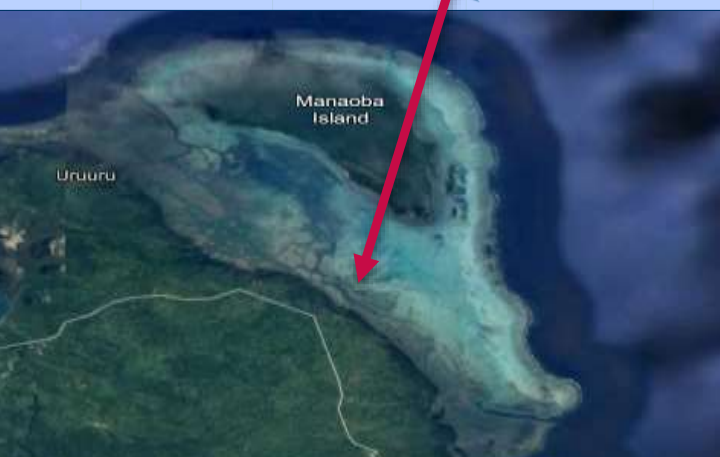
# Threats to dugongs and seagrass

- Opportunistic killing (dugongs not legally protected)
- Sedimentation (logging)
- Lack of awareness
- Weak governance





# The Saltwater People Lau Lagoon, Malaita





# ***The woman called Faifu***





# SAFEGUARDING LAU LAGOON

Lau Lagoon is the largest lagoons in the world. It is a unique habitat and people depend on the lagoon for their livelihoods. The lagoon is a rich source of food and income for the people of Lau. The lagoon is also a source of inspiration for the people of Lau. The lagoon is a source of pride for the people of Lau. The lagoon is a source of joy for the people of Lau. The lagoon is a source of life for the people of Lau.



Many communities in the lagoon are actively managing their fisheries. People place several fences on the reef or the mangroves to limit fishing in these areas. 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.



Fish plays a central role in the diet, economy, and culture of the Lau Lagoon. The lagoon provides a source of food and income for the people of Lau. The lagoon is also a source of inspiration for the people of Lau. The lagoon is a source of pride for the people of Lau. The lagoon is a source of joy for the people of Lau. The lagoon is a source of life for the people of Lau.



Seagrass is not only important for fish, but also for farmers. Fishermen are an important occupational community in Lau Lagoon, and the watermen from Lau are famous for being the best 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 fruits.



The dugong is a large animal that lives in the sea. Dugongs are also sometimes called manatees. They are mostly found in shallow waters. Dugongs can be found in shallow waters near the coast. They can live for more than 50 years. Female dugongs in the water usually have only one calf. The calf stays close to its mother for several years. Because it takes a long time for these animals to reach their calves, finding a big insect. In many parts of the country the dugong has disappeared. But this species still grows in Lau Lagoon.



Some tribes in Lau Lagoon consider dugongs to be sacred animals. People tell the story of a woman called Fala who was lucky to find her mother-in-law. One day, Fala could not find her mother-in-law. She asked her husband to look for her. Her husband found her mother-in-law in the mangroves and they moved into the mangroves. One week later, the father and the young boy started to fish. At night, a dugong came to the beach. Fala's husband found the dugong in the sea. Since then, many people in Lau Lagoon will not hunt or eat dugongs.



In the past there were a lot of dugongs in the lagoon. They grazed on the seagrass beds near the shore. With their constant movements and grazing, the dugongs made a clear channel through the seagrass. People used this channel to go 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.



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 organisms. Also, seagrass keeps the water clean and protects the coast. The mangroves, or the mangrove forest, are an important habitat for people in Lau Lagoon. Dugongs depend on the seagrass beds in the lagoon, where they eat seagrass, seagrass and seagrass that live in the sea.



Another fish that depends on the seagrass in the lagoon is the milkfish, or dusky seabream. It is a large fish with two bones. Milkfish from large groups to breed. In these so-called spawning aggregations, the female release millions of eggs that are fertilized by the male. The fertilized eggs then sink into the ocean. After several months, several schools of juveniles come back to the lagoon.



Lau Lagoon is famous for its man-made islands. These settlements are built by manually loading and piling up coral rocks on shallow reefs or in the mangroves, often more than 2 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.



The freshwater people depend on fish and other marine resources for food and income. But fisheries in the lagoon are under increasing pressure. Overfishing is threatening important commercial species such as sea cucumbers, trepang and hump head parrotfish. The use of trammel nets, or bag nets, is impacting the sustainability and resource base. And the cutting of mangroves is disrupting nursery grounds and exposing the coast to storms. Several communities in Lau Lagoon have taken steps to save their marine resources more safely. The village of Pamanakali, for example, has declared a locally managed marine area.



Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Forestry Development & Sustainable Development  
P.O. Box 111  
Suva, Fiji  
Fiji 1001

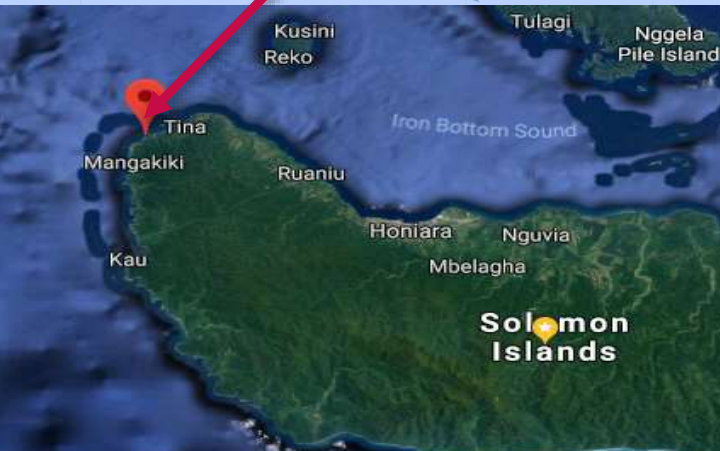
Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources  
P.O. Box 111  
Suva, Fiji  
Fiji 1001





# The Kidipale Tribe

## Naro, West Guadalcanal



# Conclusion

---

- Art is an effective tool to engage people in community-based resource management: reflects and reinforces values, priorities and worldview of people
- Cultural values are context specific: but conservation message resonates widely
- Up-scaling: how to reach 6000 coastal communities?
- Biocultural approach cannot solve all problems: f.e. logging







Illimailo



# Thank you

