# ACTIVITY REPORT: CTI-CFF WOMEN LEADERS' FORUM - Women and

Nature, Tingting blong Me

August 3, 2015, Heritage Park Hotel, Honiara, Solomon Islands



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## Report by Agnetha Vave-Karamui and Lysa Wini-Simeon

This publication was prepared to support the implementation of the CTI-CFF Regional and National Plans of Action.

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Front cover photo: CTI-CFF Women Leaders Forum Group Photo (Credit: ECD/MECDM)

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#### I. INTRODUCTION

The six Coral Triangle countries – Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Solomon Islands, and Timor-Leste - came together in 2007 to form a multilateral partnership to safeguard the marine and coastal resources of the Coral Triangle region. This landmark initiative is now known as the Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries, and Food Security (CTI-CFF). Under the CTI-CFF, the Coral Triangle countries adopted a Regional Plan of Action with five goals: 1) strengthening management of seascapes; 2) applying an ecosystem approach to fisheries management; 3) developing and strengthening the management of marine protected areas; 4) implementing climate change adaptation measures; and 5) protecting threatened marine species.

The CTI-CFF Regional Plan of Action Guiding Principles recognises the role of women and girls in the pursuit of its marine conservation and sustainability goals:

Principle #1: CTI should support people-centred biodiversity conservation, sustainable development, poverty reduction, and equitable benefit sharing; and, Principle #8: CTI should be inclusive and engage multiple stakeholders.

#### The CTI-CFF and the Role of Women in Marine Conservation and Sustainability

Threats to the Coral Triangle, and efforts to address these threats, may impact men and women differently. Men and women have different skills and perspectives to contribute in addressing these threats. Programs and projects that don't factor in gender risk are inappropriate or inaccessible for a large proportion of target communities, and may even amplify existing social inequalities within these communities. The Coral Triangle community already includes a large number of women in leadership roles, both within the Coral Triangle countries, CTI-CFF partners, and the broader stakeholder community.

In the 9<sup>th</sup> CTI-CFF Senior Officials Meeting in November 2013, the CTI-CFF called upon Coral Triangle countries to actively engage and incorporate the perspectives of women and girls towards achieving its Regional and National Plans of Action goals and targets. The CTI-CFF encourages the CTI bodies and its six member countries to clearly demonstrate their engagement with and reflect upon the role of women and girls as stakeholders in CTI activities, and document these actions to provide testament to and serve as a model for gender integration. The 10th CTI-CFF Senior Officials Meeting in November 2014 further affirms its endorsement of the WLF planned activities for 2015.

This WLF activity in Solomon Islands is part of the efforts to achieve gender appreciation and reflection on how women can continue contributions to achieving the objectives of the CTI-CFF. This is the third country event held by the CTI-CFF countries under the WLF auspices.

The purpose of the activity is to:

- Seek perspective of women who are actively engaged in resource management at the community, provincial, NGOs, private sector and Government levels within Solomon Islands.
- 2. Provide an avenue where resource management practitioners can dialogue with other women who are experienced or are interested in resource management. It is a safe space

- to talk through challenges, what works and how best to ensure women participate in relevant decision making processes required to achieve CTI-CFF objectives.
- 3. Provide an update on the established Regional CTI-CFF Women Leadership Forum and possibly gauge interest of fellow women leaders and practitioners to join the network and thus able to connect and share information, stories and experiences with other women leaders and practitioners in the Coral Triangle Region.

#### 2. ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

The CTI-CFF Women Leaders' Forum: Women & Nature –Tingting Blong Me, was held at the Heritage Park Hotel, Honiara, Solomon Islands on August 3<sup>rd</sup> 2015. This was a one-day event with a number of sessions conducted by the organizers/facilitators.

The event was organized by the Coral Triangle Center (CTC), Solomon Islands National Cordinating Committee (SINCC), Women Leadership Forum (WLF) Working group, Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology (MECDM) and the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources (MFMR).

Participants – Women leaders from Isabel Community, Western Province, National government agencies and NGOs, and development partners and other sectors represented by almost 30 women. Representatives of the SINCC facilitated the overall program supported by the two resources personnel from CTC.

#### 3. ACTIVITY PROCEEDINGS

Welcome and Opening facilitated by Agnetha Vave-Karamui

Participants were welcomed to the forum followed by the opening prayer made by Moira Dasipio. The keynote addresses were delivered by Mrs Keithie Saunders, US Consular to Solomon Islands and the Director of the Environment and Conservation Division, MECDM, Mr Joe Horokou (See attached Speeches)

The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs (MWYCFA) was invited however was unable to attend the opening session.



Guest speakers: Mrs Keithie Saunders and Mr Joe Horokou, speaking at the WLF Opening Session.

Agnetha Vave Karamui then outlined the program for the day and listed the three key objectives for the program. This was followed by Hesti Widodo and Susantry Sihombing presentation on the background of CTI-CFF Women Leaders Forum, its aims and intentions to embed the principles of the increased women participation in marine and coastal resource management, conservation and development.

#### Session I – Setting the Context facilitated by Agnetha Vave-Karamui

An overview on Marine Resource management, conservation and development in Solomon Islands was given by Deputy Director of Policy, Planning and Project Management Division, Ms Ronnelle Panda and Deputy Director of Inshore Fisheries Division, Ms Rosalie Masu from MFMR. Their presentation provided an overview of the roles and responsibilities of the Ministry and the opportunities and support available for communities and stakeholders. They highlighted the number of marine and coastal resources management issues and challenges that the Ministry is faced with and emphasized the number of initiatives the Ministry is implementing in Solomon Islands (See presentation I).

This was followed by stories from two community women leaders. Mrs Moira Dasipio who is Vice-President of the Isabel Mothers Union in Isabel Province. In 2014, Mrs Dasipio was awarded the CTI-CFF WLF grassroots award, a nominee for her excellent effort in supporting conservation activities in Isabel Province. Working in partnership with The Nature Conservancy, her work was instrumental in implementing key environmental education and awareness for traditional chiefs, women groups, youths, schools and communities. Dasipio shared her powerpoint presentation on the number of initiatives she has done in partnership with traditional leaders, church women groups and communities in Isabel Province (See presentation 2). These included awareness and education outreach of the impacts of current development activities such logging and prospecting for mines and other environmental issus such as waste management. She also shared that in the process, working with TNC, they have initiated the establishment of 14 potential locally managed marine protected areas. She also stressed that it is important to continue working and teaching women and children.

Mrs Alice Kopa also shared her experience as a member of the Saeraghi Marine Protected area management Committee. She has worked with her community and assisted communities on the western side of Ghizo Island in Western Province to manage their seaweed marine area. These communities supply seaweed to the Gizo Market. With better harvesting regulations, developed by the Community with guidance from WWFSI staff, women in the communities are finding out that their seaweed farms are of better quality, supplying to a growing market in Gizo and even to Honiara. Mrs Kopa also highlighted the importance of having a strong management committee and having female representation to achieve better resource management.

A representative from MWYCFA was invited to present on "Gender from a national perspective", however was not able to attend.

Participants were encouraged to discuss and comment on these presentations and stories. Key comments/questions raised:

- A question was asked about how effective the monitoring of the management measures established by MFMR and are there studies conducted to see how effective these management measures are. MFMR representatives pointed out that it is a challenge for MFMR however, they are actively promoting the implementation of the Community Based Resource Management (CBRM) plan, revived the radio awareness program and ensured that the newly established Fisheries Act 2015, provided communities with the practical mandate to create their own community by-laws. This include currently reviewing the regulations to ensure communities are well informed about them and can benefit from managing their fisheries resources.
- The presentations by Ms Dasipio and Ms Kopa were inspiring. Participants acknowledged the initiatives taken by these community women leaders and commended their hardwork. Such commitment must be recognised and taken into consideration by stakeholders in that women

leaders have a critical role to play and must be included in any community engagements or activities.

- A participant raised the questioned on sustainability relating to Ms Dasipio's experience working in Isabel Province how were meetings organized around communities schedules, did the communities appreciate the need for sustainability, how are men involved in initiatives led by women. Moira shared that though key support were from an NGO, in this case, TNC, especially for transport, supply of awareness materials etc., there is a strong network of Mothers Union members in each communities around the Island. Good communication and commitment by these members are central to the success of these activities conducted by the women. There also is an existing relationship with the traditional chiefs and elders. Prior to these programs, Moira and her team had to present the overall program to the community leaders through the Isabel Council of Chiefs network. Moira believes that there is sure continuity in the working with the existing networks already in the Province however acknowledged that sustainability is always going to be a challenge.
- Participants discussed and agreed that for such community initiatives ALL key stakeholders must be involved in planning and implementation of activities, including men. This will avoid men being sidelined and become spoilers of activities. This will also ensure sustainability of projects.
- Participants agreed that women must strengthen networks by knowing who is where and by taking time to understand the national processes and systems. These will lead to women being able to appreciate their challenges but have the ability to create solutions to these challenges. It was reiterated that women are "movers and shakers" and are effective change-makers in their communities and even families.

#### Session II – Tingting Blong Me Panel facilitated by Lysa Wini-Simeon

Six panelists were invited to present on a series of topics (See Speakers Profiles). Only five panelists presented their 10-15 minutes presentations (See copies of presentations). Lysa Wini-Simeon facilitated the session.

**Barbara Pwaisiho** from the Honiara City Council presented a brief overview of health status of women and children in Solomon Islands. She highlighted that health problems faced by children and women are effects of poor diet and hygiene. She related that good health habits are important for healthy living and communities. A key concern with recent data on the number of proper toilets in communities (only a limited ~18% of coastal communities access proper toilets) is sanitation and the obvious use of surrounding ecosystems (mangroves, beaches) as toilets. This has significant health and environmental impacts (e.g diarheaa and marine pollution). A challenge is peoples attitudes and behavior thus there is always a need to educate and even put in place strong legislative measures with strong enforcement by authorities to address these challenges. She concluded saying, that the solution to our health problems is around us – our natural environment and our attitude towards the environment we live in.

**Kristina Fidali** from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Honiara gave a moving and personal presentation on her experience working with communities especially women and children affected by climate change. She pointed out that to these women, issues of climate change is real and the need for information is eminent. For example, women are usually blamed by their husbands and communities and seen as lazy when there is poor garden yield. Their families would not associate that the causes of poor yield/produce may be caused by high temperatures or even saltwater instrusion. She strongly emphasized that it is now time that adequate resources are allocated to assist women faced with the realities of climate change – a

challenging thought that if the Government is placing the 2015 budget as the Peoples budget, it should be one that is gender-responsive to realities on the ground that are evident in the problems faced by women in the communities. She also emphasized that international/national climate change frameworks must be translated into actions meaningful to men, women and children in the rural communities otherwise it will be futile in achieving its objectives. She concluded with a challenge to fellow participants — Do you know your narrative? Is your story about yourself? others or your community? Is it about all of us shaping our future, effectively managing our natural environment? Is your narrative embodied in our policies?

Robyn James from The Nature Conservancy (TNC), presented why women must be involved in planning and decision making. She provided case studies from mining communities in Isabel and Choiseul Province. She shared that mining development is a new extractive option for the government and it has significant and sensitive notions for social, economic and political reasons as its opportunity to create and change Solomon Islands economy. She emphasized that communities must learn from the logging developments, where benefits are promised yet not satisfactory to landowners, communities and especially women. She noted that development is inevitable but it is when people are not fully informed and lack the ability to negotiate benefits that this becomes an issue. It was highlighted that during consultations, women would be the ones concerned about improved services and infrastructures, however because they are not included in discussions, their concerns were not considered thus women are finding out that they are more impacted by developments e.g access to clean water and fertile soil for gardening. She stressed that women MUST be involved in the process of deciding and planning for this new development.

Rose Isukana from Pacific Leadership Partnership (PLP) gave a talk on women, economics and nature. Rose reminded participants that women and girls face a number of social (e.g domestic violence) and economical challenges (e.g. access to bank loans). Rose highlighted that it is common for women engaged in business to think about nature friendly businesses, for example, seaweed farming ad aquaculture as women/girls always work with the heart. But a huge challenge for women is the limited capacity to be economically sound. She shared her ting-ting on how to better manage natural resources and that much effort must be focused on womens economic empowerment and sharing key knowledge and information to women/girls is a must. Examples from some savings clubs (AreAre and Western Province) were shared to showcase some of the good lessons that involve women in economic initiatives. Knowledge brings income - thus calls on the Ministries and relevant agencies to continue sharing key information and skills for women/girls. She also encouraged participants that as mothers, women should be the first educators in homes. She pointed out the need to work with Provincial governments and other key stakeholders to improve the national/provincial frameworks to improve womens economic status, availing better services and resources for them. Rose ended her talk saying, women are important stakeholders for positive development, but they must first be economically stable and empowered to then fully participate.

**Duta Bero-Kauhiona** from the Expanding of CBRM Outreach Project hosted by the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources shared her views on communities and resource management. She focused her talk on what it means to do community-based resource management, the challenges faced by women in the communities and how best for them to participate in good management processes. She emphasised that most communities are sometimes unaware of the problems they face, therefore, continuous awareness and education must reach these commutities so they can be informed and knowingly participate in important decision making processes for better resource management. She also pointed out the importance of linking customary tenure systems to modern management regimes and building on the strong traditional

knowledge that people/communities have of their place and surroundings. For existing management initiatives, this may be a challenge as there needs to be clear definitions by current legislation and policies on marine boundaries and the roles of communities, provincial and national government to manage these areas. She cautioned participants that careful considerations must be taken, in particular for future generations to still benefit from these marine and coastal resources.

After these presentations, participants gave feedback and comments on some of the issues raised:

- WLF participants agreed that to achieve a healthy environment, women must be involved in planning and decision making at all levels. All appreciate that development is inevitable. However women must continue to be engaged and be heard.
- Climate change impacts on the most vulnerable women, children, elderly, disabled and communities and can also exacerbate other social, economic and environmental problems within families and broader communities. Policies and strategies must be put to actions supported with sufficient financial/technical resources, education and information for women and their communities.
- as in the case of savings clubs. A participant shared her experience with market vendors and reminds all that majority of them have a constant income however need training on budgeting and even to establish their bank accounts for savings. Encourage stakeholders and development partners to seek new partnerships and collaborations to empower women in communities.
- Participants agreed that everyone's (men/women) existence is for a purpose, to inspire and motivate others and together shape the future. In managing resources, we must not just manage the stock of fish, forest or the species but also manage the people. Educate Educate and educate is a key recommendation to changing attitudes and also to invest in the next generations (schools/children).

As interim to these presentations, Hesti led and organised group exercises. She divided the participants to emphasize on:

(I) Team building: The right strategic teamwork and collaboration is important to achieve maximum benefits.



Three groups formed to play out the group exercise for Team---building

(2) Resource management plans: Each group selected a key species, its value to communities and the needed management actions. Groups were requested to list some knowledge/information and capacity needs required to manage some of these threats. Groups then presented back in the plenary on their discussions.



Group	Key species	Threats	Capacity needs: Knowledge and skills needed
I	Seaweed	- sedimentation - Overharvesting/unsustainable harvesting	<ul> <li>harvesting techniques and good management practices</li> <li>ecology/life cycle</li> <li>value-adding options for these resource.</li> <li>look and learn visits</li> </ul>
2	Seagrass	<ul><li>Coastal Development</li><li>Tourism</li><li>Poor water quality from logging</li></ul>	<ul> <li>Communication and negotiations skills</li> <li>Basic knowledge on impacts of coastal developments on habitats</li> <li>Knowledge on existing legislations and policies</li> </ul>
3	Mangroves	<ul> <li>clearance for logging/log ponds, collection for firewood and food, coastal development</li> <li>food security</li> <li>government policy eg carbon sequestration</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>community facilitation skills</li> <li>networking and advocacy</li> <li>research into Climate change policies and impacts</li> <li>Mangrove ecology</li> <li>Alternatives for firewood</li> <li>legislative framework for management</li> </ul>

(3) Women in Decision-making: A listing of relevant environment decision making bodies was posted on the wall, and participants were invited to fill in their names if they are members of the boards, for example, Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) or Management committees. It was evident from this activity that we are making progress in decision making roles. Women are represented but it is time we acknowledge these roles and be the voice for fellow women in our communities.



• Session III – Linking with CTI-CFF WLF facilitated by Agnetha Vave-Karamui Firstly a short video on WLF was presented to participants showcasing the number of activities involved under the WLF auspices of the CTI-CFF.

Then an open discussion and sharing of next steps and recommendations on how SI can organise itself with the given opportunity of a WLF was undertaken. Participants shared their views on possible next steps and stressed the importance of gathering more often to discuss environmental issues and continue to network amongst each other.

Participants agreed that women are vulnerable to change and development but as leaders in the various communities and organizations, women can be the voice of other fellow women ad children at the various platforms they represent.

#### 4. OUTCOMES

Key outcomes of the forum were:

- I) Participants expressed their appreciation for the space provided through the WLF event to gather together and discuss key issues facing Solomon Islands marine and coastal environment.
- 2) The core team to re-group and discuss the recommendations brought forward by participants and formulate a strategy in connecting with the regional CTI-CFF WLF network.
- 3) Participants emphasized the importance of involving the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs in such initiatives. MECDM and MFMR are encourage to follow up with the Ministry and liaise and share the WLF concept. In addition, encouraged organizers and the SINCC to continue with such initiatives and importantly to also extend invitations to other women representatives in future events.
- 4) Participants agreed to be included in an email listing as a first-way to stay connected (informally) prior to any formal structures established. MECDM through its CTI national work program and the WLF Working group will remain the key contact for WLF activities and as link to the regional WLF network.

In closing, Agnetha expressed, on behalf of the forum convenors, a vote of thanks to TNC, SICCP, WWFSI and WorldFish (participants did not manage to attend due to late flights into Honiara) who sponsored the participation of provincial/community based participants and to all women leaders who attended the Forum.

Participants were then invited to an evening cocktail reception hosted by the MECDM.

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# 6. ANNEXES

(Attach – program agenda)

(Attach – Program agenda)
(Attach – Opening Speeches)
(Attach – Presentation I by Moira Dasipio)
(Attach – Presentation 2 by MFMR)
(Attach – Speakers Profile)
(Attach – Panelists presentations)