

SUCCESS STORY

A Law, A Plan, A Team

National framework for marine conservation established in Solomon Islands



The national coastal and marine conservation structure will protect the livelihood of this artisanal fisherman in Saeraghi on Ghizo Island, where Solomon Islanders are creating the country's first Marine Protected Area.

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— Shannon Seeto, country manager for WWF

There ought to be a law. That’s what Solomon Islanders said when they started to get serious about modern marine conservation. They saw the need for a legal framework that defines and supports protected areas as well as a governmental structure to regulate them. The 2010 Protected Areas Act, which gives legal protection to communities who register protected areas and commit to using various traditional and modern conservation measures, was already in the works when USAID’s Coral Triangle

Support Partnership (CTSP) supplied essential support to the Ministry of the Environment to get the law passed. CTSP funded the legal work required to write the act and supported government officials who shepherded the legislation to approval.

With CTSP support, Solomon Islanders also formed a National Coordinating Committee (NCC) to oversee integrated marine conservation work. NGO participants, government officials and outside observers agree that the NCC has radically altered the way conservation issues are handled in Solomon Islands. The NCC serves as a forum for intra-government dialogue by bringing the Ministries of Finance, Planning and Foreign Affairs (among others) into the mix and encourages better communication and collaboration between NGOs and government. Shannon Seeto, country manager for World Wildlife Fund (WWF), called the committee “a huge success in promoting

communication between everyone involved in marine conservation.” As Bianca Priest, an Australian volunteer working with the NCC, observed, “Conservation is really about relationships.” The new relationships formed through the NCC bode well for marine resources in the Solomons.

The Solomon Islands government also created and committed to a National Plan of Action on marine conservation as part of their participation in the Coral Triangle Initiative-Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security (CTI-CFF). The Plan has supplied a framework for resource management planning and a set of goals to work towards. It “has gained enough traction to remain a guiding document for the country,” said Anne-Maree Schwarz of WorldFish in Honiara. “Other donors recognize it and are now stepping forward to fund parts of it.”

With a law, a structure and a plan for national coordination in place, communities, government and NGOs can now work together to establish protected marine conservation areas across the country.