



SUCCESS STORY

Meeting the Climate Challenge

Manus Islander canoes 1,000 miles to share knowledge



On Manuai Matawai’s voyage across the Bismarck and Solomon Seas he and his crew stopped at 21 communities to share best practices in climate change adaptation.

Photo: © CTSP / T. Read

“Climate change issues are real. You can’t wait for government and NGOs. You must find your own solutions. Be self-reliant.”

- Manuai Matawai, The Nature Conservancy

Manuai Matawai, from Pere community on Manus Island in Papua New Guinea, is a great communicator. His knowledge, enthusiasm, and personal charisma enable him to deliver clear messages to his audiences. Fortunately for the Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security (CTI-CFF), marine resource management is his chosen topic. Since 2004, he has evangelized for climate change adaptation and marine conservation.

Manuai, who began his career as a marine extension officer for the Manus provincial fisheries department, is the conservation coordinator for The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in Manus. TNC is a partner in USAID’s Coral Triangle Support Partnership (CTSP). Partly through his efforts, Manus Island is now at the forefront of Papua New Guinea’s marine management movement. Manuai has been TNC’s man in Manus since 2006, and he has been a consistent support to Pere Islanders since they first put their inshore marine areas under management to stop poachers who were harvesting fish for the Live Reef Food Fish Trade. With support from CTSP, Manuai and TNC are now working on steps that will help sustain and expand Pere’s efforts into the future, such as establishing a provincial version of the country’s National Plan of Action for marine conservation and enlisting local and provincial governments to fund and support

community-based organizations and their resource management plans. He wants to build their capacity to budget and run conservation activities, and he is video-documenting community “lessons learned” about climate change adaptation and marine protected areas to share with other communities.

In 2012, Manuai was inspired to take the message beyond Manus. “I dreamed up the idea of sailing the Pacific in a traditional canoe,” he said. “First, we thought we’d just explore, but then I saw the opportunity for some awareness activities. News got to TNC. They got interested.” With support from CTI-CFF partner AusAID, Manuai and his friends decided to sail to the Solomon Islands, stopping at communities along the way to share information about their culture, climate change adaptation, and marine conservation. On their three-month journey to Honiara and back on the Climate Challenger—a large dugout canoe he built himself—the crew made 21 stops. At each one, they performed a *garamut* drum and dance session to draw a crowd and break the ice, and they talked and showed videos and a slide presentation, answering questions about their three themes. Manuai shot footage of these encounters, and he is producing a video from this “as a tool to appeal to people of other nations about how climate change is affecting our lives, explaining that we are trying to do something about it and asking if anyone is willing to help.”

Manuai isn’t slowing down. He continues to work with local issues while planning the next Climate Challenger voyage to Palau. His message to the communities: “Climate change issues are real. You can’t wait for government and NGOs. You must find your own solutions. Be self-reliant.”