



SUCCESS STORY

On the Front Line of Climate Change

Coastal communities on Manus Island take action against rising seas



Community members of Lopahan show off mangrove shoots from their mangrove nursery that they are using to resist the encroaching lagoon

Photo: © USAID CTSP / Tory Read

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– Francis Tapo, Deputy Chairman, Lopahan CBO

When the sea is literally at your doorstep, you’re likely to focus on why this is happening and what to do about it. Three neighboring villages on Manus Island in Papua New Guinea—affected by coastal erosion and salt intrusion in their gardens and water sources—are facing this challenge with support from USAID’s Coral Triangle Support Partnership (CTSP) and the PNG national Coral Triangle Initiative for Coral Reefs, Fisheries, and Food Security’s (CTI-CFF).

The community of Lopahan, hard hit by sea-level rise and an unusual high tide event that flooded the village, reached out to CTSP for help. “We saw the downfall of the shore and very big erosion taking place and saw the effects of climate change, especially at the King Tide. So we decided to get along with the process for the good of future generations,” said Francis Tapo, deputy chairman of the Londra Community-Based Organization. Members of Londra (named from the two neighboring villages: Lopahan and Ndrakot) are writing a joint resource management plan addressing the problems sea level rise is creating in their communities. They received training to enhance their traditional conservation methods that is helping them adapt to the effects of climate change on their shores and water supply.

The people of Lopahan have jumped wholeheartedly into climate change adaptation activities. Forty-five young people are now tending mangrove seedlings and replanting deforested mangrove areas. Meanwhile, the women in the village are tackling food security issues using a variety of techniques, including atoll farming, planting new taro and sago, removing trash from mangrove areas to allow crabs and fish to flourish, composting sea grass and leaves to enrich the soil, and filling in flooded areas with household waste to create new garden land.

A national Learning and Training Network, one of the national activities mandated by and now supporting PNG’s National Plan of Action is offering training. Several community members previously trained now teach others and organize the activities. Chris Tapo heads the mangrove and sago efforts and has run three awareness trainings for area villages. He knows his stuff and shares his knowledge, and he has even drafted a proposal to fund the mangrove project. “If we don’t act now, it will be too late,” he explained.

All of these efforts are yielding positive results. Taro, sago, and garden vegetable supplies are increasing, fish and crab stocks are recovering, and erosion is slowing down. Neighboring villages of Ndrakot, and Powat are paying attention. Powat is adopting many of the same adaptation methods as Lopahan and seeking further training. Together, these three villages are helping Manus adapt to climate change-induced environmental problems and are increasing food security for their growing populations.

The Nature Conservancy is the lead implementing partner of USAID CTSP in Manus, Papua New Guinea.