

**SOLOMON ISLANDS**  
**THE PACIFIC YEAR OF DUGONG (PYOD) 2011**  
**REPORT**



MECDM Headquarter, Vavaya Ridge, Honiara, Students and Participants at the Launching event. *(Photo by MECDM, 2011).*

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## PYOD<sup>1</sup> 2011 Launching Theme: *“Respect and Protect”*

### **PYOD 2011 Launching Objective:**

- **To commemorate and support the regional initiative –Pacific Year of Dugong 2011 campaign - by SPREP, UNEP CMS and Range States.**
- **To support and acknowledge past, current and future actions by the Government, NGOs individuals and communities to protect Solomon Islands dugong population.**
- **To raise awareness on the value and importance of dugongs for better management.**

### **NATIONAL LAUNCH**

Solomon Islands have joined other Pacific Range States in commemorating 2011 as the Pacific Year of Dugong. This is not only in response to the regional campaign but as an on going effort in promoting the need for protecting and managing our marine and coastal ecosystems, resources and biodiversity. The awareness activity of the programme is an ongoing effort on the importance for national actions. The program is so far been very complimentary to other activities in



Fig 1. PYOD launching in Solomon Islands

Solomon Islands and should be sustained through cooperation and support of all key stakeholders.

The Solomon Islands National Launch on the Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2011 at the Ministry’s Head Quarter, in Honiara was formally opened on behalf of the Honorable Minister, Mr John Moffat Fugui by the Permanent Secretary Mr. Rence Sore. Other representatives including partners, government staffs, conservation NGOs, school teachers, students and the public witnessed this launching.

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<sup>1</sup> PYOD- Pacific Year of Dugong.



Fig 2. Permanent Secretary, Mr Rence Sore is opening the Solomon Islands launch 2011

Solomon Islands Government through the Ministry of Environment Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology (MECDM) has taken the lead in organizing this launching to commemorate the Pacific Year of Dugong 2011. There is already recognition towards this important campaign and it is expected to continue in the future with many more awareness programs and activities including conducting

surveys, population development of plans and having national priorities that may be reflected in relevant legislations. The program has seen the success through the cooperation and support of line Government Ministries, NGOs, Schools, Media and interested individuals.

The event was addressed by Permanent Secretary Mr. Rence Sore followed by several activities. These included awareness talks involving all participants, especially the schools students. The day was enlightened with awareness talk from Environment and Conservation Division (ECD) officers. This drew a lot of interest from the schools and invited participants to ask questions and gain knowledge and understanding about the value and significance of dugongs and its habitats. Posters and fact sheets were also given out.

Quizzes and prize give-aways were also undertaken. Schools were engaged in a competition-like activity in which questions were based on the dugong information sheets given and the presentations during the day. Answers were credited with school stationary packages and PYOD promo T-shirts Students expressed the need for such specific programme in schools.. In addition they considered having this sorts of information be included in the school's curriculum and as part of their learning materials.

The campaign awareness is also expected to continue during the World Environment Day, June 5 celebrations.

## **ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED**

There are number activities that have been implemented so far these include:

- SIBC Radio Promotion and Awareness talk leading up to the National Launch.
- Brochures, Posters and Written information handouts to schools and public
- National Launching(attached programme)

The activities were part of national support towards the campaign. Most



Fig 3. School students engaging in quiz activities during the launch.

of these activities were however done in and around Honiara. It was anticipated that information and awareness talks would reached Provinces and communities through radio programs and reach out.

## **FUTURE ACTIVITIES**

There are a number of activities planned for the upcoming World Environment Day in June. Some of the proposed activities for this event include:

- Promotional and awareness talks to the public on importance of dugongs and its habitats and other natural resources (Marine and Terrestrial)Brochures, Posters and Written information handouts to schools and public
- School Competitions – Quizzes, drawings,
- Possible Drama, Role-plays and Documentation (media)

## **INDICATIONS OF SUCCESS**

Commemorating 2011 as Pacific Year of Dugong with activities being planned and some already executed in Solomon Islands have some indicative results. Overall there are lots of interests shown as a result of this campaign so far.

One of the main intentions was to continue and pursue influence on Government policies and strategies that could support and sustain such campaign. Also to allocate separate budget lines to cater for such programs in the future. The launching has been very successful with the Ministry of Environment budgetary support towards this launching.

Participating organizations and partners, especially schools have taken active roles in this campaign. Many stakeholders have this focus as part of their on going programs while others have discovered as (their) important role that they should have engaged. For example, Solomon Island Broadcasting Corporation (SIBC), Wan News television and schools are beginning to realize themselves as powerful avenue and advocators for the campaign.

The campaign also affirms the Ministry's programs in protecting and conserving marine mammals, especially dugong .It also calls for leading organizations to provide more support to do ground work with the rural communities. Communities are important as they are the primary users that rely heavily on these resources for daily living. On the same note, having received the right messages via such awareness programs, it will help boost their understanding in valuing these limited resources and explore further into conserving and managing their resources and use it in a sustainable manner.

It is anticipated that any further activities of the campaign should reach the communities in order to achieve best outcomes. Awareness raising through this campaign should improve knowledge and understanding of resource owners on the importance of dugong conservation and management.

In conclusion the PYOD has been successfully launched in Solomon Islands and that number of activities planned to mark the declaration of 2011 as Pacific Year of dugong will bring positive outcomes in protecting, conserving and managing Solomon Islands dugong population and the rich biodiversity that enrich the nation as a whole.

**Appendix 1 Keynote Speech.**

**Solomon Islands Government**

**Ministry Of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management & Meteorology**

**Post Office Box 21, Honiara, Solomon Islands**

**LAUNCHING OF THE “PACIFIC YEAR OF DUGONG 2011”:**

**SPEECH BY THE PERMANENT SECRETARY FOR ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE, DISASTER  
MANAGEMENT AND METEOROLOGY.**

*Permanent Secretaries, Senior officers of Government Agencies, Members of the Partner Non-Governmental Organizations, Teachers & School students, Distinguished guests Media, Invited Guests, Ladies & Gentlemen*

I am deeply honored to join with you in the national launching of the Pacific Year of Dugong 2011. This is again a national event. This national event highlights the importance and significance of this mammal. Today in Solomon Islands, as we launch the Pacific Year of Dugong 2011, we share with other Pacific friends on the protection and management of dugong in our Pacific region.

In the region, dugong is found in the marine waters of only six South Pacific Regional Environment Program (or SPREP) members including Solomon Islands. Even some of the most important dugong habitats remain within this region. In Solomon Islands, this marine mammal is important in and to our traditions, cultures, stories and village life.

Dugongs have been in existence for millions of years but are now threatened. Their numbers have decreased in many areas and some populations have now completely disappeared. The dugong is considered vulnerable to extinction on a global scale and all dugong populations are listed in Appendix 1 of the Convention on Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), a convention of which Solomon Islands is also a party of. In the Pacific, the status of dugong populations is generally unknown. But I can be safe in saying that in Solomon Islands dugong population is considered threatened of near threatened with extinction at the national level due to human activities.

This regional initiative on ‘The Pacific Year of Dugong 2011’ by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), Range States and the UNEP Convention on Migratory Species(CMS) was in direct response to this endangered concern of dugongs. The Pacific Year of Dugong 2011 with the theme “Preserve

and Protect” is a regional campaign aimed at increasing protection of dugongs and their habitats by raising awareness, improving knowledge and fostering partnership for better conservation and management.

Solomon Islands in support of this campaign is marking this launch to ensure activities are engaged to achieve the following objectives:

- 1 Promote awareness and conservation of dugongs at site-level targeting key stewards and the fishing industry;
- 2 Reduce dugong mortality from human activities;
- 3 Improve status information and promote sustainable management of dugong populations and protection of their habitats at the national level through effective and practical national legislation and policies;
- 4 Advance partnerships and secure resources for long-term support for dugong conservation in the region.

That being said, I wish to inform participants that Solomon Islands is among Pacific Range States that supports the world’s largest remaining population of dugongs. Dugongs are culturally significant to communities in Solomon Islands and are used for meat, oil, medicine, amulets and cultural festivities. It plays a significant ecological role in maintaining coastal habitats. Although the animal is no longer hunted commercially, there are still reports of by-catches and threats to its population in Solomon Islands.

Today, it is equally important to remember that threats are exacerbated on the declining population of dugong. Some of these threats are due to coastal development including human settlement, nutrient runoff and pollution from land based activities, hunting for food, medicine and artifacts and incidental by-catch and vessel strikes. There are also many challenges that we face in managing and conservation of dugong which includes lack of data and information, absence and lack of long term research, very little surveys and monitoring programmes, limited public awareness and education programmes, limited national management mechanisms to protect marine animals and their habitat and lack of resources, including accessing sustainable funding for dugong conservation.

In recognition of these challenges, this Ministry in partnership with other Sectoral Ministries, Non Government Organizations and development partners is continuing to pursue its ongoing programmes for the conservation of dugong population. Solomon Islands signed the Memorandum of Understanding under the Convention of Migratory Species (CMS) on 9th September 2010 in Papua New Guinea for conservation and management of Dugong (specie name - Dugong dugon) and their habitat range. There are currently ongoing programmes on researches and surveys, reviewing relevant legislations for effective enforcements, more school and community awareness and capacity building for better management.

Essentially as a campaign tool, this national launching of the Pacific Year of Dugong 2011 is important for Solomon Islands for a number of reasons. The programme:

- Helps us to appreciate the importance and values of dugong;
- Reminds us that dugong population is vulnerable and can easily become extinct;
- Helps us appreciate that dugongs are threatened more by human-induced activities;
- Helps us to be responsible in our actions;
- Promote collaborative and cooperative efforts in managing dugong population;
- Inform participants about planned activities for the year in promoting the Pacific Year of Dugong 2011.

In closing, may I now take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank all invited colleagues, stakeholders and partner organizations for your presence and support towards the national launching of the Pacific Year of Dugong 2011. I believe that the support and partnership we have demonstrated in making this event possible - will not end today - but it will be an impetus for further development for the sake of protecting the country's rich biodiversity. This is a sense of belonging. It is a sense of responsibility.

It is indeed my pleasure to formally declare the Pacific Year of Dugongs open.

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for listening.



## **Appendix 2. National Launching Program**

### **PACIFIC YEAR OF DUGONG LAUNCHING 2011**

**Venue: MECDM Headquarter, Vavaya Ridge**

**Date: Tuesday 10 May 2011**

- 9:00 am      Arrival of PS, Invited Quests, Officers, Schools and the Public
- 10:00 am      Welcome & Introduction – Master of Ceremony, Ms Agnetha Vave Karamui
- 10:30 am      Keynote Speech (on Launch) – Permanent Secretary, Mr. Rence Sore  
(Press interviews for Permanent Secretary MECDM)

### **BREAK (Light Refreshment)**

- 11: 00 am      Awareness (Talks, Brochures and Posters)
- Pacific Year of Dugongs 2011?
  - What are Dugongs?
  - Dugong Habitats and Sea grass
- 12:00 pm      Quizzes and Prize Giving
- 1:00pm      CLOSE