



### ISSUE 02 – MARCH, 2014



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In March of every year the SPREP community takes time to commemorate International Women's Day. This important date provides us with the opportunity to formally celebrate the vital role that women play, both within the organisation, and across our region.

On March 8 this year, I urge you to visit our website and Facebook page where we will be featuring profiles of some of the inspiring women who are environmental leaders in our region.

In this issue you can read about the work of SPREP's Christina Leala-Gale, and the ways in which the FINPAC project seeks to listen to women's voices and promote meteorology as a potential career for Pacific women.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *SPREP-Tok* – as always, we welcome your comments and feedback on this newsletter and our work in general.

David Sheppard  
**Director General**

### LATEST NEWS

#### SAMOA ADDRESSES WASTE ISSUES IN PREPARATION FOR THE UN SIDS CONFERENCE



© L.Bell / SPREP

From 1–4 September this year, Samoa will host the first United Nations Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Conference to be held in the Pacific region, estimated to bring over 3,000 delegates to Apia. A key challenge at the conference will be the management of waste. SPREP is committed to assisting Samoa to host the conference and is working in partnership with Samoa's Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE) to identify gaps that need to be addressed in order to responsibly manage waste during the conference. This will include a waste management audit of accommodation providers and conference facilities. [Read more...](#)

#### FUNDING BOOST FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY ACTIVITIES



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An additional one million dollars has been allocated for renewable energy activities in the Cook Islands, Kiribati and Samoa under PIGGAREP+, a Pacific regional project to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through renewable energy activities. These funds – which will help deliver practical projects in solar power, bioenergy and biofuel – have been made possible through the SIDS DOCK Support Program, a joint initiative of the UNDP and the World Bank, developed in close consultation with the Alliance of Small Island States and funded by the Government of Denmark. [Read more...](#)

## A STORY OF TWO VERY SPECIAL GREEN TURTLES



© S.Chape / SPREP

Visitors to the SPREP website have been following updates on the movements of two very special green turtles that were released in Fiji late last year, equipped with tracking devices. Adi Laumei Madiba and Bulou ni Laucala were released at the end of the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas to celebrate the work of the late Mr. Lui Bell and Mr. George Petro. The activity aims to highlight the migratory nature of green turtles and to emphasise the need for a collaborative approach to marine turtle protection. [Visit the SPREP website](#) to read regular updates and see maps of their travels.

## ARE WE 'WALKING THE TALK' WHEN IT COMES TO ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE?



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A stocktake on how well we 'walk the talk' is a key part of the Pacific Islands Framework for Action on Climate Change (PIFACC) – the Pacific island region's 10-year strategy to address the climate change issues faced by our islands. In February, we hosted a three-day workshop to assist in the monitoring and evaluation of targets committed to by countries under the regional climate change framework. Time was also dedicated to fostering awareness on the Asia Pacific Adaptation Network (APAN) and its role in supporting adaptation work in the Pacific. [Read more...](#)

## EDUCATION AND OUTREACH: THE NEXT GENERATION OF PACIFIC ENVIRONMENTAL GUARDIANS



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Education and outreach play a significant role in strengthening environmental literacy amongst young people in the Pacific islands region. Every year, school groups from Samoa visit the SPREP headquarters to learn from our staff about issues ranging from threatened species through to climate change. For schools that are located outside of Samoa, we offer educational and teaching resources and can provide advice on developing lesson plans on environmental themes. You can [visit our website](#) to read about a recent school visit to SPREP. To subscribe to SPREP Learning Grounds, please send a blank email message to [subscribe-spreplearning@lyris.sprep.org](mailto:subscribe-spreplearning@lyris.sprep.org)

## UNCOVERING THE MYSTERIES OF THE VAVA'U ARCHIPELAGO



© P.Anderson / SPREP

Much more will be known about the plants and animals of the Vava'u archipelago in Tonga after the most ambitious study ever undertaken in the island group. A team of experienced biologists are participating in a major expedition to conduct a rapid biodiversity and ecological assessments (BIORAP) of both land and marine sites throughout the archipelago. The expedition identify sites within the archipelago that have high conservation value and could be added to Tonga's protected area network. The survey will make a major contribution to the conservation of Tonga's ecosystems, endemic and native species, as well as land and seascapes. [Read more...](#)

For more news from SPREP please visit our website at [www.sprep.org](http://www.sprep.org)

HUMPBACK WHALES – PACIFIC VOYAGERS WITH A MESSAGE OF HOPE



© M.Donoghue / SPREP

Of all the creatures of the oceans, few can match the humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*). The Latin name means ‘Big-winged New Englander’, because of their enormous pectoral flipper and the whalers who once pursued them.

But humpbacks are also one of the most outstanding conservation success stories in the region. Poorly-managed commercial whaling in the Antarctic, Australia and New Zealand last century greatly reduced the Oceania population.

In the late 1950s/early 1960s, the Soviet Union carried out an illegal operation on their summer feeding grounds, that killed 45,000 humpbacks in just a few years. The Oceania population was reduced from around 40,000 to as few as 500 whales, spread across the entire region. Extinction was imminent.

Nowhere was this more graphic than in Tonga, where a subsistence whaling operation, taking mainly mothers and calves, was halted by Royal Decree in 1978. By then, the Tongan population had probably been reduced to around 60 whales.

However, humpbacks have bounced back – the Tongan population is now over 2,000 animals, and humpbacks are also recovering in New Caledonia, Cook Islands, the two Samoas and French Polynesia.

In Tonga, whale-watching has become big business, generating around US\$5 million in tourist revenue and a global reputation for the small island group of Vava’u.

Although no country is currently hunting humpbacks in the Southern hemisphere, there are new threats, such as climate change, marine debris and vessel collisions. Their future is in our hands.

**HUMPBACK WHALE FAST FACTS**

- Humpbacks grow up to 15 metres in length and can weigh up to 50 tonnes!
- They spend half their lives travelling between summer feeding grounds and overwintering grounds spread across a huge area between New Caledonia and French Polynesia.
- Every humpback has a uniquely patterned tail, and this can be used to estimate population abundance from photographic catalogues, slowly built up over years of research.
- A humpback with a life span of 50 years will swim the equivalent distance of the moon and back.
- Males in the breeding grounds sing the most complex songs known in the animal kingdom, and modify them every year. In Oceania, the new songs spread from west to east.



© M.Donoghue / SPREP

SPREP’s Whale and Dolphin Action Plan aims to make sure that future generations of Pacific Islanders are able to also marvel at these denizens of the deep. Read more about SPREP’s [Pacific Islands Regional Marine Species Programme \(2013-2017\)](#).

## IN FOCUS

### MEET CHRISTINA LEALA-GALE

Christina Leala- Gale, Project Manager for FINPAC, commenced work at SPREP in September last year. This year she'll be working with her team in the Pacific Meteorological Desk to support the delivery of meteorological services in 14 Pacific island countries.

FINPAC, a three-year project funded by the Government of Finland, aims to increase resilience of Pacific island communities to the effects of climate change. The Pacific island countries targeted by FINPAC include Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

Because of their unique place in the community, the important role played by women is given emphasis by the FINPAC project. As well as ensuring the voices of women are heard in the formulation of products and services for the communities of the region, the project also aims to promote meteorology as a potential career for Pacific women.

It will also establish a Pacific Women in Meteorology network of existing professionals to provide support and a platform for them to voice their needs and visibility. While the FINPAC project has identified these activities, onus is also on the National Meteorology Services to work on inspiring change in the workplace to encourage gender equity in their offices.

"I know women can do anything. We'd like to inspire change through this project to not only help Pacific women in their daily lives, but also to see more women embark on careers in the meteorological services as it's a predominantly male career. We'd like to inspire positive change and see that happening through this project!"

Keep an eye out for Christina when she visits your country as part of the FINPAC project.



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## KEY DATES

### KEY DATES FOR MARCH

- 8 March: International Women's Day
- 22 March: World Water Day
- 23 March: World Meteorological Day

### COMING UP

- 29 July – 1 August: Forum Leaders Meeting (Palau)
- 1 – 4 September: UN Conference on SIDS (Samoa)
- 29 September – 3 October: SPREP Meeting (Venue TBC)
- 6 – 14 October: CBD COP 12 (Korea)
- 1 – 12 December: UNFCCC COP 20 (Peru)

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Our vision: The Pacific Environment, sustaining our livelihoods and natural heritage in harmony with our cultures.



**SPREP**  
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Environment Programme