

Happy New Year!

As OceansWatch looks forward to building on our existing work in 2016, we would like to wish everyone a Happy New Year! In this newsletter we wish to give further insight into a selection of the projects carried out in Buma, a small village located in the Temotu Province of the Solomon Islands. In 2014 we delivered a climate change program in the village so in 2015 we were interested to evaluate the progress made.

*Buma village with newly planted mangroves as protection against the effects of climate change*



The Solomon Islands are internationally considered a conservation priority due to high levels of biodiversity and the presence of many endemic species. However, the villagers of Buma have noticed a decline in the abundance and diversity of marine species. Furthermore, Crown of Thorns starfish outbreaks have been reported in Vanuatu, and there are concerns outbreaks are moving north towards the Solomon Islands. The Crown of Thorns starfish is a predator of coral polyps and outbreaks pose a significant threat to live coral reefs.

In response, the 2014 OceansWatch team instigated its Marine Monitoring (Reef Guardian) program. Ten local individuals were trained in Marine Ecology theory and practical survey techniques, such as catch per unit effort and the use of transects, in order to collect data on the state of the reefs. Returning in 2015 the OceansWatch team ran refresher courses and a Crown of Thorns starfish education and removal session. A number of spikes were left in the village, to be used to remove the Crown of Thorns starfish if an outbreak did occur. Using GPS the team also produced a fine scale map of the important habitats and protected (Tabu) area around the village. In the future these maps will provide an important tool to monitor habitat changes. Finally the team implemented a marine education program at the local school. 36 pupils, aged between 6 and 15 years old, attended workshops on the marine environment, our positioning within the food web and reliance on natural resources.

*Buma's Men's Climate change Adaptation Plan*



*Erosion in Buma*



In rural areas of the Solomon Islands unemployment is 95% among men and 98.5% among women, and the Temotu Province has the lowest per-capita income of any province. In Buma only the schoolteacher has a paid job. Unemployed people survive by subsistence farming and fishing, which leaves no income for basic financial needs and sending the kids to high school.

*Sophie Bone and Buma women making coconut oil*



Virgin Coconut Oil has a strong market in developed countries as a cooking oil and a constituent of skincare products. Virgin Coconut Oil is currently made in Buma, and there are more than 3000 coconut trees owned by the residents. OceansWatch has facilitated the development of a co-operative and provided the equipment to produce the oil. We paid for them above the going price for the quality oil they produced and this is now available for purchase in New Zealand by contacting [operations@oceanswatch.org](mailto:operations@oceanswatch.org). It costs around \$5000 to equip and train a village to be able to produce virgin coconut oil and provide a small income for these isolated island villagers. If you would like to sponsor a village we will be able to give you details of the names of the women involved and provide a photobook acknowledgement for your gift. for more details contact [chris@oceanswatch.org](mailto:chris@oceanswatch.org)

*The Buma women's coconut oil co-operative*



We are now recruiting for the 2016 season so if you feel you have skills you can bring to OceansWatch projects and would like get involved follow the guidelines at [www.oceanswatch.org](http://www.oceanswatch.org)