Global Seminar- Workshop on Indigenous women, climate change and REDD+

The Matrilineal System:
A cultural solution to Land Tenure and Security

Presenter: Ms. Donna Pearson
Objective of this presentation

- Identify mechanisms from our indigenous culture, which can be used when strategizing and planning for climate change and REDD+
- Integrate values from our culture into strategies of addressing climate change.
- Identify gaps in our culture which need strengthening in order to address climate change and other priority issues of our community.
- Identify institutions in our communities that can be created to promote, protect and further strengthen the work of environment conservation and climate change.
Autonomous Region of Bougainville
Thank you for inviting me to represent the women of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville.

It is my hope to learn more about the climate change, REDD+ and how as woman, I better address the issues of climate change in my homeland.

Acknowledgment:
Ruth Iarabe - My grandmother
Rita Mamavi Pearson - My mother
Agnes Devenis Titus – Colleague and Mentor
Marilyn Taleo Havini – Partner & Mentor
Hako Womens Collective - Partner
Bougainville Women’s Federation
Robin Wilson – Deputy Speaker (House of Representatives, Bougainville Parliament)
All my family members from NaKaripa Clan of Teop Tinputz.
Staff of Lands Division (ABG)
Andreas – Division of Primary Industries, Environment & Culture
Graeme Vatoro – Ragenbeca Media Productions
Jeffrey Noro – Pictures (power point presentation)
Peter Nerau – Pictures (power point presentation)
Mark Wolfsbauer & Bougainville Tourism – Pictures (power point presentation)
Today, as we find ourselves battling to find ways of protecting our earth and environment from destruction that mankind has brought on itself, let us take time to reflect; on our perception of the relationship we have with the land,
the forests,
the mountains and lakes
the seas
the rivers
our brothers
our sisters
And those who stand beside us in finding a solution of protecting our mother earth
Who we all depend on for our sustenance.
The Autonomous Region of Bougainville is made up of two main islands – Bougainville and Buka and 166 smaller islands, including the Atolls.
About half of the land area is mountainous/hilly with peaks rising to 1500 to 2400 meters, including several active and dormant volcanoes along with remnants of a geologically ancient plateau of uplifted oral limestone.
Vegetation is of thick mantle jungles, cold plains in the mountains, swamps, and flat grassland plains on the coastal plains.
• With the many changes taking place in the ARB, the issue of protecting the environment is paramount.

• Climate change is real, and the people of ARB are already facing the effects of this, with
  – droughts, floods, rising sea levels, sinking islands, change in production of crops, increase of pests and diseases to crops, increase in respiratory illnesses in people and the more commonly felt change in temperature and weather patterns.
Truck full of passengers crossing a flooded river in the Tinputz District
Sinking island of Carterets
With around 97% of ARB land being “Customary Land” and 3% belonging to the State, there is a great need to get the indigenous women to identify ways of better protecting their land and resources and promote activities that sustain the conservation of their environment for generations yet to come.
In order to understand how Land Tenure and Security in Bougainville promotes empowerment of indigenous women and the protection of our environment, we must first understand and acknowledge the culture that governs this society; 

The Matrilineal system.
• Bougainville is mainly a matrilineal society, except for a few areas (Buin, & Atolls) where they are patriarchal.

• This system means that a person’s lineage is traced through the maternal ancestry.

• It also means that customary land is inherited and passed on through the mother’s lineage.
The matrilineal system works on the mutual respect and appreciation of women and men as bilateral partners in decision making and development.

Women’s opinions are not disregarded or overlooked.

Women are not seen as mere objects. They are seen a valuable instrument in protecting and promoting the inclusion, welfare and interests of the family as a whole, and this includes the land that sustains them all.
Being a woman, she is concerned for the wider or extended family.

She is concerned for the continuity of the clan and family lineage.

She is also concerned for the availability of resources that can sustain the livelihood of the clan and family.

She accommodates the needs of the wider and extended family and clans and thus, contributes to decision making in regard to the mechanisms that must be promoted to maintain overall peace and for the community.
Matrilineal societies promote the security of both men and women through a system that facilitates consensus and appreciation for all members in the society. Through its structures it is a system that promotes a fair distribution of resources for the sustainable livelihood of people in its community.
There is a great concern that the matrilineal system that was the basis of governance over the last 28,000 years in Bougainville, may be lost with the intrusion of the all too assuming patriarchal systems that dominate most societies of the world. The pressures of these foreign social systems automatically exert their mechanisms on our society without considering the relevance it has to the values of the indigenous people of the land. A fine example of this was the Panguna mine.
Which resulted in the children of the land being frustrated and provoked, as for over a decade, they witnessed the destruction and mutilation of their land, the pollution of their rivers and seas, the airs, whilst all along being denied their rights to benefits of the mine and recommendations of reviewing the copper mine agreement.
oh, my Island
BOUGA
I cry for you
BOUGA
VILLE
Being protectors and defenders of the land, going to war with the Mining Company was the only option they had to make the Mining Company listen to their grievances, thus, leading to the Bougainville Crisis which lasted well over 10 years and resulted in the death of around 15000 – 20 000 lives.
Traditional Mechanisms used to identify land boundaries and custodians

1. Boundaries – rocks, trees, rivers, creeks, reefs, water pools etc
2. Feasting ceremonies - “koma koma”, deaths and marriage ceremonies, etc
3. Initiations – chief baby’s first touch of land, 1st visit to the gardens, UPE, etc
4. Names
5. Burial sites
6. Traditional Agreements (MOUs); alliances with other clans as guardians of land.
7. Authority of Chief in the village.
8. Legends and Clan totems
Reasons for utilizing these mechanisms

1. Identify boundaries of clan land
2. Communicate the clan history and land boundaries with other communities.
3. Protect land from invaders/enemies.
4. Promote the authority of the clan
5. Maintain or way of recording clan history.
Results of traditional mechanisms

• 1. Less land disputes - clan history and land details was public knowledge through social activities that were carried out. Thus other chiefs and other clans knew and respected the history and land boundaries of other clans.
• 2. Land was protected from enemies/invaders.
• 3. Environment was protected.
• 4. Surplus food and resources.
• 5. Community was organized and supported each other.
Effects of not utilizing the traditional mechanisms.

1. Clan members do not know their own land boundaries.
2. Different clans do not know the borders of the other clan lands.
4. Land and resources are left vulnerable.
5. Damage to environment.
7. Communities having a poor standard of living.
Reasons for the loss of cultural knowledge and values.

• 1. Influence of outsiders
  – First European contact - 1767
  – Colonial influence – 1886
  – Mission – 1900

• 2. Mining (BCL) - 1972
  – Culture shock as people had to quickly experience a new way of life which was totally different to theirs. The values that came along with the mining operations had an effect on the people.

• 3. Brain drain
  – Education and work outside of Bougainville has led to Bougainvilleans loosing some of their local history.

• 4. Irrelevant education
  – Chiefs have not been given appropriate education to tackle the sudden changes occurring in their communities. Thus they are now not effective in their communities.

• 5. Crisis
  – Lead to deterioration of certain values as new values evolved from the war. “War Lord attitude”, Greed, Need for Security, etc.
Currently the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) & Autonomous Bougainville Administration (ABA) is working towards developing a Land Policy, which is aimed at integrating traditional mechanisms from this society.

The process has just started with consultations with communities within ARB. This will lead to a land summit and other series of workshops before a Land policy can be drafted.
1. Use of Names in the Matrilineal System

The use of names is a very important mechanism for land tenure in the matrilineal system in Bougainville.

Names are given with intentions of securing certain clan relationships and protecting land tenure.

In the matrilineal system in Bougainville there is no surnames.

Names are given based on the relationship that child has with a clan and the land. A name is used as a mechanism to identity/or mark a piece of land or a user right to that land.
Women in traditional times did not use the husband’s name because they are not married into his family or clan (i.e. they do not settle on his land or use the resources on his clans land).

It does not make sense for her to use his name which belongs to another clan. Her relationship with the man is the “marriage”. He is the father of “her children”. But he maintains his lineage with his mother’s clan. A father is therefore referred to as the father of the first born child (name). E.g.: Father of Rita or Father of John.

The children belong to the mother’s lineage, and thus the use of a father’s name as a surname would be implying that they belong to the father’s lineage or clan. The use of a father’s name used as a surname to his children would confuse land tenure and cause more disputes in the future.
Traditional names are properties of clans. When given, they identify a person's right to assets of that clan.
All first born children of a family must be given a name from their mother's clan. Their history and lineage must be seen through their names.

Eg: **My grandmother’s children**
Grandmother’s name: Ruth Iarabe
Grandfathers name: Simon Kaevoroho
Clan: Naukaripa
Clan: NauMutana

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1(^{st})</td>
<td>Rita Mamavi</td>
<td>NauKaripa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2(^{nd})</td>
<td>Eddie Vateop</td>
<td>NauMutana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3(^{rd})</td>
<td>Esther Vunari</td>
<td>NauKaripa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4(^{th})</td>
<td>Sake Joel</td>
<td>NauMutana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5(^{th})</td>
<td>Stanley Vitaono</td>
<td>NauKaripa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6(^{th})</td>
<td>Malcom Gaga</td>
<td>NauMutana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7(^{th})</td>
<td>Barbara Aheavina</td>
<td>NauKaripa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My grandmother refers to her husband as the “Father of Rita Mamavi” (my mother, who is the first born child).
The current use of surnames in Bougainville is an introduced patriarchal mechanism.

This mechanism started being used in the 19th century when missionaries and colonial officers began having contact and started working with Bougainvilleans.

It has the possibility of weakening the security of customary land for women in Bougainville.
2. Clan’s user rights to land: A means of security for land and resources

Each clan is made up of a group of family lineages (bloodline). In Bougainville these are referred to as “baskets” which depict the basket that was used to keep the families shell money.

A “basket” is made up of a family lineage i.e. the mothers family line refer to the traditional groupings where resources were invested or incorporated together for the communal use of paying for bride price, gift exchanges, compensations, reconciliations, trade and other cultural activities.

Clans of a certain area can adopt other family lineages of the same clan into the area by giving them user rights to their land.
“Baskets” of clans own portions of land area alongside other clans.

Clans share boundaries next to each other.

The natural environment is used as boundaries for land.

Thus, the protection of the environment is important in maintaining land boundaries.

These boundary indicators are:
trees
rivers,
Streams
Reefs
rocks
Diagram showing types of land boundaries

- NaTahi: rocks - mark of legend
- Nakaripa: rocks - mark of clan
- Nabuen: forest - ritual sites for clan
- Rivers: boundaries of cland land
- Forest: ritual sites for clan
- Reefs: burial site for clan
The land rights in Bougainville include:

- Rights to say how the land will be used and who by
- Rights to gain land from the death of a former owner
- Rights to a resting place for the dead
Rights to plant gardens, build houses
Rights to walk across the land, or use it for cultural purposes
Rights to lend, sell, give away or bequeath in a will
Mechanisms were in place to protect land tenure and these involved the assistance, participation and support in all activities of the clan’s activities.
3. Consultations with women and Decision Making

- All consultations and queries must be done with presence of the women.
- Brothers, uncles all sit with the Chief Lady and discuss land issues
- The men are not allowed to make decisions as an individual or a private stakeholder.
- The man is a spokesperson for the clan; representing the decision the decision of the clan.
Supporting the livelihood of women and children

- She can decide what she wants to do on her land.
- She can decide who lives on her land.
- She can identify certain activities that need to be changed in order to protect her environment.
- The development and benefits on her land are rightfully hers and her children.
- Children born out of wedlock have a place & land from their mothers.
**Process of Making a Decision**

- Inform her brothers/uncles/sons of the problem.
- She would then get their feedback on how to deal with the issue at hand.
- She and the immediate lineage or those supporting her cause, would then send a messenger/mediator to convey the information to the violator(s).
- Mediation takes place between parties, meetings, and consultations are carried out until a solution is found; either a law is passed, or penalty paid (compensation).
- When a clan or group of clan members decide to go to war with another clan, the woman is also consulted for her opinion.
4. Women being Planners and Orchestrators of family & Clan activities

- Women in the matrilineal system in Bougainville lead the planning, organizing and implementation of most celebrations, feasts, rituals and other activities of the clan.
- Women inform her brothers and sons of the tasks they must administer out to the rest of the family.
- All initiations
- Traditional Engagements of sons or daughters
- Traditional Weddings of sons or daughters
- Brideprice and Dowry exchange of sons or daughters
- Mourning ceremonies/feasts
- Reconciliations and compensations
Roles and Responsibilities of Women and Men in a Matrilineal Society
The roles and responsibilities of women in the matrilineal society in Bougainville include:
1. Bearer of children for the clan
2. Mother to her children and all her family lineage
3. Custodian of clan Land
4. Decision maker in all clan matters
5. Teacher of cultural practices, rituals, techniques, legends and clan history to children
6. Keeper and Treasurer of clans wealth (basket of shell money)
7. Planner and orchestrator of clan ceremonies, feasts and rituals
8. Helper for her in-laws and their clan activities
The roles and responsibilities of men in the matrilineal society in Bougainville include:

1. Father children for his wife’s clan
2. Provide for and care for his children and that of his sisters
3. Develop land for his wife and that of his sisters
4. Decision maker and spokesperson on clan matters
5. Protector of clan land and resources
6. Teacher of cultural practices, rituals, techniques, legends and clan history to children
7. Implementer of decisions agreed upon by the clan
8. Warrior for clan
9. Helper for his in-laws and their clan activities
Conclusion

• Women in the matrilineal society
  – have the power to make decisions regarding the activities of her land.
  – are lacking adequate information and education on the current global and regional issues affecting their societies.
  – unwittingly submitting to norms and practices of a destructive nature.
  – are not able to make informed decisions to protect their system of governance which promotes and protects their land and environment.

• Once they lose their traditional form of governance, their ability to speak out and confidently make decisions about their land, they lose their land, they lose their sense of security, and cannot protect the land, and they cannot protect themselves and their children.
Recommendation

- ABC and ABA need to establish an institution that promotes and is concerned about the conservation of the environment and the indigenous way of life in Bougainville.

- Review of Civil Registry in Bougainville to develop forms and certificates that are sensitive to the Matrilineal and Patriarchal societies (very important in the registration of customary land).

- Lands Division to be sensitive to both the matrilineal and patriarchal systems in ARB when collecting data and developing the ARB Land Policy.
Recommendation cont...

- Review the current approach of consultations taken at all levels of ABG to ensure that ALL women leaders and their clans are consulted and are kept informed on issues regarding their land.

- Education and awareness for both women and men on the environmental pressures on the land, and effective strategies of environmental conservation so they can make informed decisions about their land and environment.

- Strengthening of the Matrilineal System by creating an institution specifically for promoting and protecting the heritage all people of Bougainville.

- Inclusion of indigenous studies in the education curriculum of ARB so that children grow up appreciating and better utilizing certain mechanisms from their culture in the future.

- Creation for a special training institution for young women as future mothers, leaders and custodians of land, to become ambassadors of environment & conservation and climate change in ARB.
THE END