



TULELE PEISA INC

**Submission to The
Executive Committee of the Warsaw Mechanism for Loss & Damage
Information on Internal Displacement & Relocation owing to factors
relating to Climate Change Impacts**

Actual (not potential) Challenges

10 May 2016

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Carterets Islands are a small group of islands comprising a remote atoll located 86 kilometres to the northeast of Bougainville Island, which itself forms the eastern most province of Papua New Guinea (PNG) in the Pacific. See the map in Annexure A. With regard to the impacts of climate change with particular reference to loss and damage, Tulele Peisa Inc. and the Carterets Islands community have identified the issues described in this submission as very pressing and detrimental to their well-being and everyday sustainable livelihood.

The Carteret Islands have a population of approximately 2,700. Since 2006, many of the people have had to face the reality of forced relocation from their islands to the mainland of Bougainville due to the impacts of climate change. Families have begun to move, following a carefully planned out process initiated by the elders and chiefs of the islands. To date, approximately 150+ people (15 families) have been successfully relocated.

The relocation has been supported by a locally-based non-government organisation, Tulele Peisa, created specifically for this purpose. With ten (10) years of work behind it, Tulele Peisa has faced significant challenges and now has developed valuable experience to share, and a substantive program that has the potential for replication in other parts of PNG and elsewhere. In 2015, Tulele Peisa received a UN Equator Initiative Prize in recognition of its work.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Papua New Guinea is located in the South Pacific, directly to the north of Australia. Bougainville Island forms PNG's eastern most province. The Carteret Islands (also known as the Tulun atoll) are a series of seven islands dotted around a large central lagoon. The islands are extremely remote, located 86 kilometres northeast of the mainland of Bougainville. On a good day, it takes 3-4 hours to travel by boat between the Carterets and the mainland of Bougainville. In poor weather, the trip can take 7-8 hours in a boat in the open sea.

Approximately 2,700 people live on the Carterets. The Islanders have inhabited the Carterets since time immemorial. They have a subsistence economy, surviving primarily on fishing and gardening.

THE REALITIES OF LOSS & DAMAGE

1. Impacts of sea level rise on Carterets Islands

- 1.1 *Loss of land and coastline and one island is cut in half – Huene atoll –* due to sea level rise. The seven inhabited islands that make up the Carterets have lost so much of their coastlines that you can still see the coconut trunks where food gardens were once standing. A testimony of this can be seen in the case of Huene Island which was cut in half by continuous shoreline erosion making the Carterets a total of seven (7) tiny islands.

In December 2008, a king tide swept over Yesila Island, demolishing three family homes and leaving these families homeless for many months.

- 1.2 *Damage to food crops and water supply – risk to food and water security*, due to sea water inundation and salination of well water. In the same period, Iangain, Yesila, Yolasa, Han and Piul atolls were severely affected due to fruit trees, palm trees and nut trees being killed from the roots and withering away. As soon as the sun began to heat up the island and as the sea water started to dry up, the food crops also turned yellowish and started to die away.

Lots of the basic local food crops, such as swamp taro and breadfruit, lost their roots, killing any available taro, Singapore (Fijian taro) and most of the breadfruit trees. This meant that a lot of the native breadfruit trees were lost, severely undermining our food security.

- 1.3 *Non communicable diseases and malnutrition*. Women in their mid-50's and early 60's are dying prematurely due to very poor diets and food intake. Malaria and other vector-borne diseases are on the increase and have become very resistant to medical treatment. Between the years 2001-2013, mosquitoes on the island were so numerous that islanders had to take their dinners inside mosquito nets. Islanders went to their gardens with smoking fires inside broken pots, kettles and aluminium buckets to chase mosquitoes away.

Children of the islands are growing big bellies and/or getting very skinny, their ribs showing to the extent that one can count their ribs. Each year since 1996, the two Primary Schools and three Elementary Schools in the Carterets have to close down for certain periods due to very poor or nil intake of food by children in the mornings before they go to school. Carterets school age children hardly make it to Grades 9 or 10 as their academic performance is very poor, in large part due to lack of nutrition and inadequate healthy food.

- 1.4 *Loss of trees for food and building materials* e.g. coconuts, palm trees and hardwood, for school buildings, houses and canoes. The only trees that have grown on the islands are being washed away. Sago palms used for building materials are also being killed by the sea inundation or being cut down for food intake. Coconut trees along the shorelines are falling into the ocean as there is nothing that can continue to hold their roots. There are less materials available for building houses. This is an added difficulty for the islanders as issues double or triple.

The Carterets people's right to continue to live on their islands is undermined by a range of issues related to sea level rise.

2. Ocean warming and acidification

Bleaching of inshore reefs, depletion of coral fish and other marine resources. The bleaching of inshore reefs is another major concern for the islanders. Islanders find fishing near the island increasingly

difficult due to deterioration of the coral reefs and depletion of fish, shellfish and other marine resources near the island.

3. Irregular weather patterns, increases in storm surges and natural disasters

Increases in storm surges and king tides are now regular. The weather is increasingly unpredictable. Building sea walls to protect the shorelines by the islanders has not made any differences as the sea continues to wash over them and erode the shorelines. When there are storm surges, waves wash over homes and destroy the small family food gardens on the island, resulting in many households going without food for months on end.

4. Forced relocation

The relocation of the Carterets Islanders to Tinputz on the mainland of Bougainville has been an extremely emotional issue as most islanders were totally against the move. The people are not being relocated because they wish to move: they are being made to move due to all of the impacts described above. frequent storm surges, destruction of their homes and increasing threats to food security.

TULELE PEISA: GENERATING HOME-GROWN SOLUTIONS

1. Planned relocation

However, in 2005, the elders and chiefs of the Carterets atoll initiated a planned, voluntary relocation program. It recognised the importance of raising awareness about climate change and its impacts on the lives of the islanders, and highlighted the idea of “relocating with dignity”, including equipping relocated families with new skills in gardening and cash crop agriculture.

A non-government organisation to support this initiative was registered under the Investment Promotion Authority of Papua New Guinea as Tulele Peisa Incorporated which in our local language means “sailing the waves on our own”.

2. Maintaining our unique cultural heritage and language

If our people remain in the Carterets, we are faced with the risk of drowning. Therefore, many people are choosing to relocate to safe and secure locations where we can grow our food and cash crops to sustain our own livelihood. We are documenting our cultural knowledge, traditional beliefs and ceremonies, and the relationships of these to the Carterets biodiversity, so that we can keep reminding our children and continuing to make them associate themselves with these in the future.

3. Financial resources

With very limited financial support from the Finland Embassy in Canberra, The Christensen Fund, Caritas Australia and New Zealand, the Lutheran Church and the Pentecostal Churches in Germany and other Catholic Agencies in the US and Australia, Tulele Peisa has confidently progressed this program from 2006-2016 onward.

4. Achievements

Tulele Peisa's relocation program is the only home-grown relocation program operating successfully in PNG. It has the potential to be replicated in other coastal and atoll groups in PNG. It offers a local solution to relocation as it has been carefully thought out by the Carterets Islanders' elders, and the staff and Board of Tulele Peisa. The following sub-programs have been implemented by the organisation:

- Relocation of 10 Carteret families to the first site on the mainland (Tinputz), with housing and assured food security.
- Planting of a mini food forest, currently holding 34,000 different trees ranging from hardwood and softwood to nut trees, fruit trees and palm trees, providing both a source of climate change mitigation and resource resilience for the future of the families.
- Rehabilitation of cocoa and coconut trees for cash cropping. This has been done on 14 hectares of the relocation site, with a total of 8,950 cocoa trees and 200 clone trees which will be shared between local community partners of Tulele Peisa and Caritas Australia. A "Cocoa Mama" initiative is being co-ordinated to enhance women's and young people's participation in the cocoa industry.
- Inter-food crop gardening provides a major part of the relocated families means of sustaining their own livelihood through the yields of kumara, taro, Fiji taro, bananas, yams and a variety of leafy green vegetables.
- Through the mini forest crop research project, a variety of food crops are grown and distributed to the relocated families as well as to host community members interested in pursuing food security initiatives.
- Surplus food crops are also transported to families still living on the islands, and a program of raised-bed vegetable gardening has been initiated to improve their food security.

RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGES OF LOSS & DAMAGE

1. *The challenge of losing a homeland and finding a new place to move to, and how we got the land.* In 2006, the challenge of acquiring land from Bougainvillean landholders was very difficult and time-consuming as the majority of land in Bougainville is under customary ownership. After the civil unrest in the 1990's in Bougainville due to environmental damage caused by Rio Tinto Zinc (RTZ)'s copper mine, customary owners became, and still are, very suspicious when land is discussed outside of their knowledge. We approached five landholder groups on the North East Coast of Bougainville and in each of the meetings no positive outcome was reached, although the islander chiefs and elders with the leadership of Tulele Peisa were encouraged to keep going back to them.

Tired of this practice but with a big issue of islanders severely affected at that time, Tulele Peisa approached the Catholic Diocese in Bougainville through one of the local priests to ask about the possibility of non-utilised Catholic plantation land. In February 2007, the Auxiliary Bishop, Bernard Unabali and Bishop Henk Kronenberg gifted, on humanitarian and spiritual grounds, four (4) Catholic owned

plantations to the Carterets Islanders under the management of Tulele Peisa. Three plantations are situated on the north east of Bougainville at Tinputz, Tearouki and Mabiri while Tsimba is situated on the North West coast.

2. *The challenge of culture clash.* One way of responding to this was to emphasise existing connections to communities in the Tinputz area. Our stories from the elders tell us of how Carterets Islanders who were left from a fight with the Polynesians of Tau'u (the Mortlock Islands) decided to flee the Carterets (Tulun/Kilinailau) in three monas (dugout canoes) of the enemies to what are now called Deos, Namkerio and Kovanis villages in Tinputz on the north east coast of Bougainville.

As a result some clan connections still exist between clan groups on Carterets and clans in Tinputz, making it possible to re-establish and maintain family relationships. The cultures in Tinputz and the Carterets are not so dissimilar, and there are linguistic connections as well.

3. *The challenge of preparing people to move.* From 2006 to 2009, the initial preparation and planning for some of the islanders to move to Tinputz was a huge and difficult task, at times very frustrating. Awareness raising amongst the islanders themselves was difficult. In addition, Tulele Peisa met a lot of opposition from the elites and working class of the Carterets residing in Buka (the capital of Bougainville) and from certain islander individuals who were motivated by self-interest and not very interested in helping others to develop longterm self-sustaining livelihoods.

One strategy of Tulele Peisa to overcome resistance was to organise Young Peoples Environmental Speaking Tours around Bougainville from 2008 to 2010. These engaged young people from the Carterets and young people from Tinputz. The environmental tours aimed to empower communities and to impart skills to communicate about climate change and its impacts on the islands. They sought to provide very clear information as to why the islanders had to move away from the atolls. One of the significant concerns that the tours highlighted was the extent of shoreline erosion and the very scarce arable land that remained for food crops, creating health issues and affecting the right of the islanders to proper adequate nutrition.

An exchange programme between chiefs and elders was another activity which underlined the impacts of climate change on the Carterets but also focused on the "caring and sharing" attitude of Bougainvilleans towards one another. Another exchange program involved relocated men who travelled to Central Bougainville to an area which was prepared by the Bougainville Government for the Islanders but was abandoned due to the civil unrest which rocked Bougainville for more than 15 years during the 1980s and 1990s.

4. *Avoiding conflict with the host community at the location site.* A huge community building effort with the local host community was required

at the relocation site. Some of the integration activities and assimilation with the host community was arranging for members of the relocated community to be integrated into the political structure of the host community. Arrangements were made so that the relocated community members could cast their votes with the host community and this has been happening since 2009. Coupled with this, the relocated community in Tinputz belong to the Iris Village Assembly and now have an elder from the community who is a representative in the Village Assembly.

As part of feeling comfortable with and owning the relocation program the host community have formed small carpentry and joinery groups to build family houses for the relocated families. The ten family houses on the first relocation site were all built by young carpenters from the host community, including the office facility and main operational centre of Tulele Peisa.

Tulele Peisa has conducted and facilitated a series of community development training programs for women, youth and church fellowships on leadership and management, agricultural and cocoa management, and some skills training on food security and climate change. Members of the host community are also involved and included when Tulele Peisa undertakes its three yearly evaluation and strategic planning workshops

5. *Providing opportunities for income generation.* Climate and soil conditions on Bougainville make it ideal for cocoa production as a significant income-generating activity. Mobilising cocoa farmers from the relocated families, host community and some other Bougainville farmers has been a major interest of Tulele Peisa. The main challenge is improving cocoa fermentries to harness quality and taste of cocoa mainly for export. The other bigger challenge is making sure downstream processing is being supported and there's political will to enhance value adding to the product to stimulate and benefit the farmers and cocoa industry at large.
6. *Integration of relocated families into their new physical social and cultural environment.* From 2009 onwards relocated families have been fully participating in cultural ceremonies of the host community, especially the women. This is beginning to illustrate a positive attitude on the part of the relocated families towards the host community. "The Carterets community continue to show leadership amongst us, as they have some common understanding of a set of guidelines that provides guidance and leadership, when issues of concern affects their community", commented Antonia Mareas of Siptawan village.

Relocated families are being taught skills in gardening as cash cropping as these families have been up lifted from being fisher folks. A local expert on food security and land use management has been involved since 2009 with the relocation program and has been tasked to provide "on the field" skills training for the relocated families, especially in the area of rotational cropping, unknown to them on their home islands.

Work on school activities happens every second Monday of each month and the relocated families have been allocated a spot in the school where they perform their chores. Tulele Peisa is also represented on the school board as chair. As part of their contribution to the host community, Tulele Peisa and community will present a four-in-one classroom to the host community financially supported by the Catholic Diocese of Sydney.

On every first Monday of each month in Tinputz the relocated community take part in cleaning part of the Parish allocated to them as every other community of Tinputz. Also the relocated community do their share of contributing to fundraising activities in Tinputz to build a new and bigger church in Tinputz.

7. *Particular challenges for the Nukumanu, Nuguria and Tau'u Islanders and their cultures.* The Nukunamu or Tasman Islanders are a Polynesian people who inhabit an atoll located more than 300 kilometres off mainland Bougainville, a three day journey in an open banana boat. Nukumanu Islanders have relatives in the Ontong Java atoll across the border in Solomon Islands. Two other Polynesian groups inhabit other outer atolls of Bougainville, Nuguria (Fead) which is more than 200 kilometres and Tau'u (Mortlock Islands) also 200 kilometres away, two days' journey by an open boat. All these atoll peoples are extremely isolated and receive little by way of government services.

The particular challenges for the Nukumanu, Nuguria and Tau'u islanders are: 1) the same issues of loss and damage as those faced by the Carteret Islanders; 2) acquisition of land for relocation, including mobilisation and raising awareness for the islanders and the people of Bougainville who own land; and 3) sourcing financial support to establish the office of Atolls Tema'rae in Buka to develop a comprehensive work plan for the atolls.

8. *Difficulty of accessing funding from the Government for a community based program that is actually working.* Tulele Peisa was established in 2006 in order to respond to the urgent needs of the Carterets Islanders to adapt to climate change and to begin the relocation process – a need which was not being addressed by either the PNG National Government or the Bougainville Government.

Tulele Peisa has faced very serious difficulties in accessing funds from either of these government sources since its inception in 2006, despite many funding applications. In September 2007, the PNG National Government allocated 2 million Kina in its revised budget for the Carterets Relocation Program. This was given to the Bougainville Administration.

To date, Tulele Peisa has had no success in accessing any of this funding, on the grounds that it is an NGO and a "private" entity, in spite of its proven record of a successful relocation program. In the meantime, no resettlement of any of the islanders from the four atoll

groups within Bougainville's political boundary has been accomplished by the Administration.

Tulele Peisa therefore faces the prospect of blocked access to any of the financial support that might in theory become available for its work through funds established under the UNFCCC. There is an urgent need for the Loss & Damage Committee to address this issue.



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