



Picture extracted from the PIPA webpage (I-volutions)



Phoenix Islands Protected Area (PIPA)
World Heritage Site
MELAD
PO Box 234
Bikenibeu Tarawa
Republic of Kiribati
Phone No: 29762
www.phoenixislands.org

PIPA NEWSLETTER

PIPA In Brief Issue No. 1

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PIPA, the largest and deepest WH MPA is wholly owned by Kiribati and is a 100% closed area as of 1st January 2015

The PIPA Total Closure Watched Daily

The PIO is happy to see on daily basis the cooperation of distant water fishing nations whose vessels fish in Kiribati EEZ by observing the legal closure of the PIPA. From the PIPA snapshots that PIO received daily from the Ministry of Fisheries and the Police Maritime Unit, there is no vessel ever detected doing fishing in the PIPA EEZ since the closure on 1st of January 2015.

Though vessels aggregate on the edges of the MPA, no attempt ever seen since midnight of 31st December 2014. The only vessels seen are those that cruise up or down the PIPA zone to the Line or Gilbert waters or innocent voyages. The PIPA, rich in seamounts that provides best breeding and spawning grounds for tuna and other variety of fish species and migratory birds, used to be one of the best fishing spots but since the closure vessels have now all moved. It was also noted that there are still many vessels doing fishing on the edges of the PIPA boundary and PIO, with the help of the Police Maritime and the Ministry of Fisheries are keeping an eye on the movements of these vessels.

The main tool used in this real-time monitoring is called the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS), a satellite guided remote sensing and digital mapping technology that has abilities to track illegal fishing activity in real-time. The VMS is hosted at the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) based in the Solomon Islands and has remote connections with all countries in the Pacific.

So every day, while countries watch movements of ships in their own EEZs on their screens, the FFA also sees the same. In times the vessels show signs of illegal fishing, the data will show it as it can tell the speed of the vessel or to retrieve its past track. FFA also provides assistance to analyse ship movements in times unlawful fishing is detected. The licensed vessels are all required by law to install the VMS device and to keep it on at all times. Heavy fines are imposed to those who do not follow this procedure.

Kiribati has a long history of dealing with distant water fishing nations from the 1970s and this means that over the years Kiribati has gained wealth of information on how else to help make the surveillance more effective. At this time nearly all fishing vessels carry with them local and regional Observers, whose reports they enter every day marking the coordinates where fishing was done, the kind of fish caught, the quantity of the catch, the size of fish species caught and so forth. This Observer programme is supported by the FFA and South Pacific Secretariat and is run throughout the Pacific region in a cooperation fashion.

Fishing vessels themselves become patrol boats too so whenever they detect ships that they believe not licensed, they will help alert the authorities. This is natural because doing commercial fishing in the Kiribati EEZ is a costly business and therefore seeing other vessels doing free-riding will only prompt other vessels to report.

PIO and the government of Kiribati are happy to see the PIPA well protected but there is still a need to step up the surveillance rather than just relying on the remote sensing technology. The information shared by the PIPA Trust Executive Director, Dr. Teuea Toatu that the Ted Waitt Foundation and Oceans Five are happy to consider providing additional budget in coming years in order to increase patrol runs of the local Patrol Boat in the PIPA waters. Oceans Five Director Chuck Fox said in one of the meetings during his recent visit to Kiribati that he now sees the urgent need to have another patrol boat to be based in Kanton in the PIPA as early as next year, 2016, and he will take back this priority need for consideration. ■

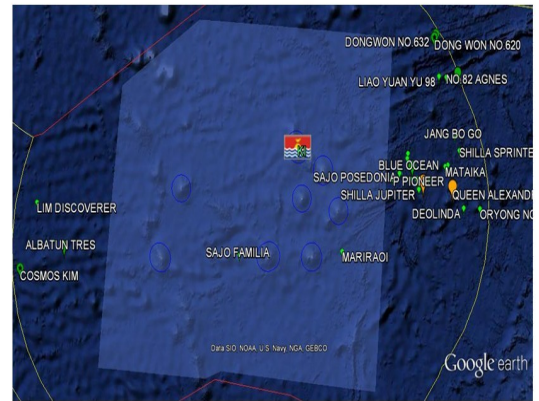
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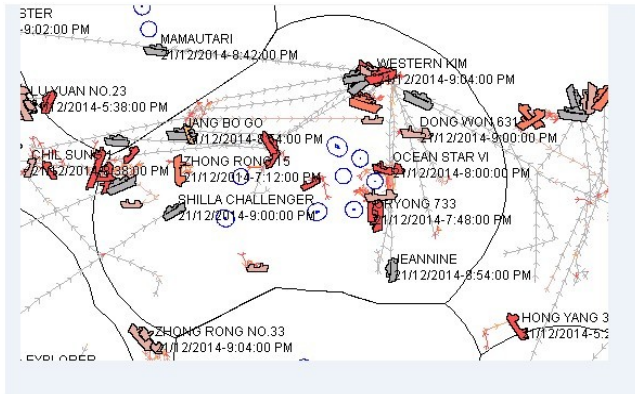
Satellite Snapshots of the PIPA: December 2014 - April 2015



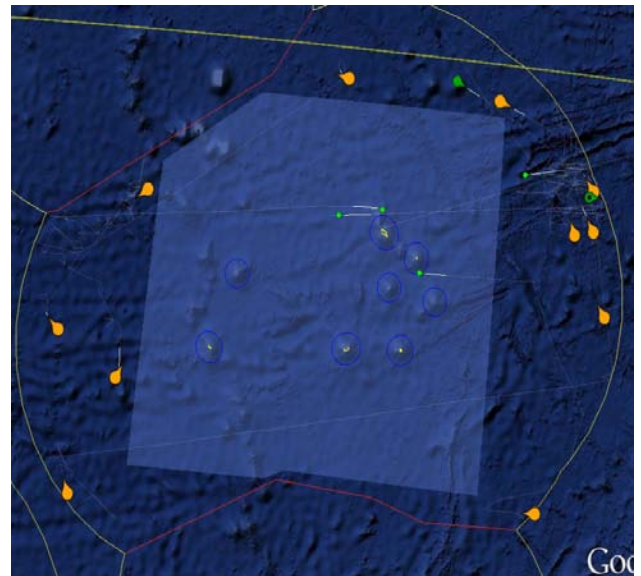
Above: PIPA (in grey box) on 29th of December 2014 before the closure



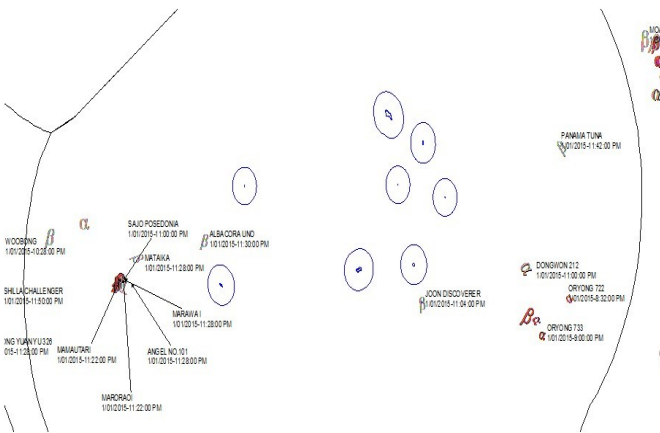
Above: Snapshot of 26 February 2015 showing innocent voyages of fishing vessels. The VMS shows real-time movements of vessels.



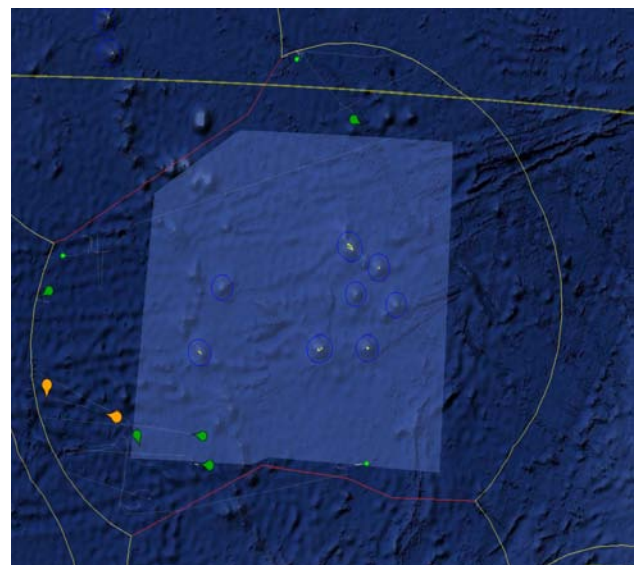
Above: PIPA snapshot of 31st December 2014 showing vessels moving out of the PIPA.



Above: PIPA snapshot for 26 March. Three fishing vessels passed through the PIPA (in green) while most are fishing (orange button) outside the PIPA.



Above: Smart-track of the PIPA on 1st January 2015. PIPA is at centre with eight islands. Vessels appearing on west and east of PIPA were cruising while some were fishing outside the PIPA..



Above: PIPA snapshot for 21 April 2015. The vessels (green buttons) seen at bottom of the PIPA are just cruising.

Millennium Island in the Line Islands Invaded

The PIPA Surveillance Advisory Subcommittee expressed its grave concern on the recent illegal poaching of one yachtsman who in early October last year, 2014, was found virtually owning Millennium island.

According to the local boarding party that accompanied the permitted National Geographic Orion vessel that took tourists to Millennium island in November 2014, they saw this illegal yachtsman as relaxed and ignorantly introduced himself as lover of the island.

In my interview with Mr. Tekaa Mikaere, the local agent that catered for the licensed entry of the tour expedition of the National Geographic team on the vessel National Geographic Orion, he said that the situation was full of frustrations. On the morning of Thursday, 30th of October 2014, the Orion vessel landed at Millennium island while taking the National Geographic team to a number of islands in the Line Group, the eastern most group of islands of the republic of Kiribati.

Millennium Island, as explained on the Wikipedia Encyclopedia, is home to one of the world's largest populations of the coconut crab and is an important breeding site for seabirds most notably the sooty tern. The atoll after the 1995 realignment of the International Date Line became one of the first points of land on Earth to reach January 1 in 2000 on the calendar.



Above: Mr. Lyderic Morlier photo in front of his Millennium Island, October 2014.

they sighted the yacht on the beach of the island and asked the captain if they could go ashore to inspect it. The captain, a Frenchman, first refused but after some insistence from the agent and from the police who is also on the expedition, they were given only 10 minutes to do that. The local party comprised of the police, immigration, customs and quarantine officers and a captain went ashore.

At a site they met this yachtsman, also a Frenchman with a name Lyderic Morlier, as shown on his passport which he presented to the party. He claimed he visited the island five days ago and the purpose of his visit is to enjoy the pristine state of the atoll and that he would return home in Tahiti after 19 days. The government officials on this trip quickly made plans to arrest this yachtsman based on facts that his entry into the island has not been cleared by local authorities. The idea was abruptly turned down by the captain who said his vessel is not a patrol boat. The agent and police insisted but the captain just refused. The local party instead was given few more minutes by the captain before they leave the island. So they did a quick search. They found that this yachtsman has been on the island for some time. He owns a small hut with rainwater catchment, some fishing buoys, and more disturbingly a farm of marijuana.

The team decided to take pictures of everything and some marijuana as exhibits to local authorities in Tarawa but the captain again intervened and said he will never take these items aboard his vessel. Being overpowered by the French captain, who is the boss of the vessel, the local party only managed to get the pictures. The agent scolded the captain and said he will report his uncooperative behaviours to his company. Also he said this would be the last time he would deal with Orion to enter the republic. The National Geographic team on the vessel shared the sentiments of the local party.

The captain who showed no signs of mercy, while on the island did a casual conversation with Mr. Morlier in French and he even took back to the ship his mobile phone to fix and charge its battery. After giving this assistance the Orion left the island.

The most disappointing thing reported by the government officials was that the captain did not agree to cooperate at all. He also did not want take back some marijuana and fishing gear as requested for exhibits. Apparently, the captain played the role of an accomplice or probably he tried to avoid being involved in the processes of arrest and prosecution. Anyway, it is a pity that the captain had missed the noblest duty of helping the weak and the small. He missed the golden opportunity of doing a small favour so large to a small country!



Above: Morlier holding his passport in Millennium, Oct., 2015.

harmful to the island as he just enjoys it.

Local authorities only managed to get a few photos of this 58 year old yachtsman and photo of his passport which shows no clearance from his last port or clearance for his entry into the republic of Kiribati and photos of his marijuana farm, yacht and fishing buoys. The officials could not further their survey on the island to check the scale of the marijuana farming or to see if Morlier has other friends and other activities on the island. They could not check his own yacht too to see if he has arms or other partners.



Above: Morlier's marijuana plants.

For security reasons the local officials could not impose more but to painfully swallow the fact they have to leave this man in peace on the island. The captain vessel operator mentioned to the Kiribati officials that this man is not doing anything

Millennium Island in the Line Islands Invaded....continued...

Upon receiving this report, the Kiribati Police tried to make contact with neighbouring countries to assist in the arrest and also quickly resorted to other countries that have surveillance agreements with Kiribati. We learned later that the Kiribati Police Maritime Unit arranged a special mission to visit Millennium island in early March 2015. The long delay was caused mainly by the lack of funds to timely send the one and only patrol boat. Also this mission was coincided with the budgeted mission scheduled in March to patrol the 3 EEZs of Kiribati namely the Line Seas - where Millennium island is, the Phoenix seas - where the PIPA is and the Gilbert seas - where Tarawa is located.



Millennium in red circle. (Taken from Wikipedia).

The PIPA Implementation Office (PIO) while not affected by this poaching, as it happened in the Line Islands, gathered this report with grave concern as they believe this kind of unlawful entries can happen in the PIPA anytime. In the November 2014 meeting of the PIPA Surveillance Advisory Subcommittee, Captain John Mote, police in charge of the Kiribati Maritime Patrol Unit expressed his worry that this Millennium case can repeat itself in any of the PIPA islands and because we do not have the needed funds to effectively patrol our vast EEZ, this is much expected. He added to underscore the importance of cooperation with the US on the Ship-Riders Agreement, and the cooperation with the governments of Australia that now provides much of the funding to the one patrol boat that serves the 1.3million sq.km EEZ, the frequent surveillance flights of the coasts guards from the US, Australia and New Zealand.

The committee expressed their great relief with the Ted Waitt Foundation and Oceans 5 funding which now allows significant scaling up of patrolling of the PIPA seas. This funding will be optimally used to this very activity and while the purpose of this funding is targeted towards protecting the PIPA waters, it will be optimally used to patrol intrusion to the eight islands of the PIPA.

In the latest report received today, after almost six months, the Kiribati Maritime managed to reach Millennium Island in the mission that started last month. Captain John Mote emailed from stating that they have finally reached Millennium Island. "We have now left the Millennium Island with the French man removed and arrested to Kiritimati Island.

The Frenchman will be trialed in Tarawa so he will be on board Teanoai for most of the time. We may keep him in custody at Xmas and take him back onboard again to Teanoai prior going back to Tarawa."

Mote's report is a great relief. Mr. Morlier seemed prepared for the arrest as his yacht broke down and the Police party that raided the island on the 19th of April 2015 saw no signs of marijuana farming or illegal fishing. As he must have cleared them on this South Island.

RKS Teanoai successfully arrived at the Millennium Island on Sunday 19 April 2015 at about 0600 hours LT (Tarawa time).

RKS Teanoai drifted at the West where the boat passage is located and made their first approach. The weather was moderate and the entry into the passage was successful without any problem.

As the advance party arrived inside the lagoon, they saw the yacht beached and moored on the other island next to the main island (South Is). They proceeded to the island and met up with this Frenchman.

The Commanding Officer mentioned that the French man age about 60 years old was friendly and was very much cooperate in everything. He welcomed the crew as like as he was the owner of the island. He mentioned that he was on the island for about five to six years. And this is contrary to earlier reports from the Orion, which was translated by the Captain.

RKS Teanoai work boat went back to the ship and transport the support party to ashore to assist in the search. About eleven Officers conducted a thorough search on two islands. The Commanding Officer later confirmed that nothing was found on the island such as dried sea cucumbers, dry shark fins, marijuana and other illegal activities that was earlier reported Obviously he has removed all this as the October 2014 photographs said the opposite.

The only thing that the crew found was tomato plants which he brought from Tahiti to grow as his food supply whilst on the island. He was also growing pawpaw. The Frenchman's yacht was also inspected and it was confirmed as well that there was no fire arms or drugs found on his yacht.

It was intended for RKS Teanoai to tow the yacht back to Kiritimati Island (as evidence) but due to the poor condition of the boat, it was not sea worthy and safe to tow it or it will break apart during the towing operation. The yacht was left behind.

The crew searched the island for about 8 hours but nothing as earlier reported found. Morlier was arrested without any resistance and was taken on board the patrol boat to Kiritimati Island.

RKS Teanoai departed the Millennium Island on Sunday 19 April 2015 at 1700 hours LT for Christmas Island. She is expected to reach Kiritimati on Friday 24th April 2015.

The saga which began with disappointment and frustrations now ends in a successful arrest of the illegal immigrant. There is great humanity in our system blended with the culture of hospitality so for sure this man will be well looked after while in custody but the due prosecution is a must so such an act of violating sovereignty is corrected and news of which will deter other potential invaders.

Once regular patrol runs in the PIPA are visible to the world in the coming years, the poachers will be deterred and will keep out from the area. The PIPA Surveillance Advisory Subcommittee will propose imposing huge fines in cases as this. Mr. Tukabu Teroroko, the Director of the PIO said that the committee needs to impose unprecedented high fines so potential poachers can understand how serious is Kiribati in dealing with these unlawful activities. ■

Visit of PIPA Friends in March 2015

Dr. Greg Stone, the leading architect of the PIPA, who now serves as Chairman of the PIPA Conservation Trust Fund and Vice President of the conservation international, accompanied Mr. Chuck Fox, the Director of the Oceans Five which together with Ted Waitt Foundation fund activities implemented by the PIPA Implementation Office, and Ms Christine Greene, a Kiribati national and US-based entrepreneur who has provided many supports to the PIPA and being awarded a title of PIPA Ambassador.

The party arrived on 16th of March 2014 to check on the progress of the PIPA initiative which as of 1st January 2015 has received a funding of US\$1million - aimed mainly towards strengthening the protection of the PIPA which closed off all forms of commercial fishing since 1st of January 2015.

While on the island they held meetings with the Executive Director of the PIPA Trust Fund, Dr. Teuea Toatu, who manages this \$1million funding, the Director of the PIPA Implementation Office, Mr. Tukabu Teroroko, who will deliver budgeted activities and the Minister for Environment, Mr. Tiarite George Kwong. The party also had time to meet with the President Anote Tong and other reps of key ministries like the Kiribati Police Maritime Unit and the Tourism Office.

In this visit, the Kiribati side took the opportunity to thank the Ted Waitt Foundation and the Oceans Five for this year's funding support which is now allowing the implementation of the 2015-2020 PIPA Implementation Plan but mainly activities such as surveillance, outreach, series of capacity building programmes that will take place this year, supporting the operations of the PIPA Trust and PIPA Implementation offices and so forth. Minister Kwong assured Fox that this funding will be optimally used to the very purpose it is intended for. "With this funding, the PIPA initiative is now attaining another milestone achievement in terms of its stepped up protection especially when the funding comes at the very right time - when the PIPA is wholly closed to all forms of commercial activities and when surveillance becomes a paramount duty."

Mr. Fox made a remarkable comment in the reception held at Parliament Premises on the eve of Monday, 16th of March; "The world is now watching you and will try to follow you." This really encourages the local players in the PIPA initiative.

Fox returned on the 19th of March while Stone and Greene left Kiribati on the 26th of March 2015. ■

PIO is ready for 2015

The PIO has faced unforeseen problems in late 2014 when in October 2014 the PIPA-Kanton Coordinator, Mr. Iannang Teairo resigned from duty due to illness. The PIO, assisted by the mother Ministry of Environment, Lands and Agricultural Development, in response to the situation and decided to pick on the then PIPA-Kanton Assistant, Ms. Rakentai Kabotoa, to replace Mr. Teaioro.

The decision was based on the fact that Ms. Kabotoa has all the required qualifications. Also Kabotoa did apply for this Coordinator post in the first place and came second. She has also completed all tests (written and oral) in the recruitment process. So Rakentai Kabotoa is now the new Coordinator.

As Kabotoa moved up, the Assistant Coordinator post she filled was then left vacant. The PIO with the ministry again decided to recruit Mr. Tiare Etei. The selection of Mr. Etei, who was the Agricultural Officer based on the outer island, was based on his results from the first recruitment to this Assistant Coordinator post in 2014 when he came second. Mr. Etei is a biosecurity officer by training and more than once has accompanied rat eradication programmes in the PIPA in the past.

So the PIO team is now complete and they are much attuned to their work. The two staff to be based on Kanton, Kabotoa and Etei are now waiting for the completion of their houses and office and then they will go to Kanton. This is sometimes in May. At this time, they are helping in the daily running of the PIPA office. ■

PIPA Premises nearing completion on Kanton

The Antaai Construction won the bid and was given the work of building the PIPA Office, the two homes for PIPA staff, the septic and rainwater tanks and construction of groundwater wells. On the 5th of February 2015, the contract between the builder the PIO was signed.

The office and homes are prefab houses so the contract is now putting together these houses. The report received this week stated that the workers are now on the last house.

The PIO in efforts to quicken works on Kanton faced many constraints.*continued next page*

PIPA Premises nearing completion on Kanton...continued...

The main problem it baffles with is distance and remoteness and this is further compounded by the rare means to get things to Kanton.



Prefab house materials loaded onto ship

In the first shipment, the ship could not bring the whole 40-foot container so the prefab materials had to be loaded by hand onto the ship. In addition, the ship's load is limited and could not carry more so other materials for the septic and rainwater tanks

could not be loaded.

Another challenge is the lack of land transport on Kanton. As the workers reached the island, there was no transport to move the materials to the building sites three kilometers away. So in the end, the whole of Kanton community (25 people) have to walk on foot to hand-carry these materials - bags of cements, bricks, cement mixer, fuel drums, and other food items. The Kanton community offered their few motorbikes and bicycles but the rest was hand carried.

As for now, PIO is waiting for the next available vessel going through Kanton so it can take the rest of materials. Also at this time, based on what is available, works on Kanton only focus on the houses. PIO has agreed



Groundbreaking ceremony on Kanton

with the contractors to wait for the rest of the materials hoped to be sent soon on the next available ship.

The whole PIPA premises is planned to complete in May 2014 rather than April as initially planned. The work could have been quicker and more efficient if PIO was in a position to charter a bigger vessel in the first place. Now PIO patiently awaits any ship going to Kanton.



2nd PIPA House erected on Kanton.

PIO expressed deep gratitude to the community of Kanton for giving the most needed help in moving the materials to the site and in facilitating the work of the builders. ■

Preparations for the PIPA Conservation Trust Board Meeting are Underway

Dr. Teuea Toatu, the Executive Director for the PIPA Conservation Trust announced that the 9th PIPA Trust Board meeting is being scheduled to take place in Kiritimati Island from 17th to 19th of June 2015.

The Board meeting, which meets two times annually with venues oscillated between the US and Kiribati, is governing the operations of the PIPA Conservation Trust. This year's meeting will focus on ways forward to enhancing strategies for ensuring effective surveillance and monitoring of PIPA, the development of opportunities for PIPA especially for Kanton, and the Board will have time too to discuss the fundraising programme for 2015.

Toatu added that His Excellency Anote Tong has indicated his interest to attend, and so have the Australian and New Zealand High Commissioners. The Trust will soon send Invitations to Ministers and Secretaries of key stakeholder ministries, and to same invitation to interested members of the private sector. There will also be representatives from private foundations in the US including, but not limited to, Google, Monaco Foundation, DiCaprio Foundation, and others. So it looks like this June meeting will be one of the most exciting board meetings ever had.

Kiritimati island, the second most populous island in the republic of Kiribati and known as the largest atoll island in the world has hosted this same meeting in the year 2013. This time, those who are new to Kiritimati will have chance to witness the unique beauty of the atoll with its island cuisine and warm and charming people. Kiritimati is also one of the popular gamefishing destinations and is receiving handful of tourists on weekly flights. Kiritimati, 750 km away from Kanton is resembling the PIPA islands in many ways - its unspoilt condition (in places outside settlements and the multitude of migratory birds that breed on Cook Islet - 20 minute boat-ride away west of Ronton, the capital of Kiritimati and the relative small population compared to a large land mass. Kiritimati land area of 388 square kilometers comprises over 70% of the total land area of Kiribati, a country encompassing 33 Pacific atolls and islands. ■

Night of the Turtle Hits the Roads in Tarawa...help Deter Poaching in the PIPA



Opening slide literally means; "This year's outreach will be guided under the name Night of the Turtle, the turtle which is really our own identity."

The PIPA Outreach to communities and schools started in 2013 on the radio and in the form of National Quiz aired on the one radio station that connects all the remote islands of Kiribati scattered astride the vast 3.5 million sq km EEZ. The content of the outreach in that year was compacted with information on the PIPA initiative, how it started and what were the actions to be undertaken to make the initiative work and self finance itself.

Then in 2014, the outreach launched the Night of the Shark to communities and Shark Roadshow to all schools in Tarawa. The programme included updates on the initiatives and formed a kind of breach between what was done in the PIPA Implementation Office and the general public. The idea, as framed in the messages was to gain public support and with special focus to cultivate and nurture a conservation mindset. The appreciation of sharks and what the PIPA is doing as Noah's Ark to the sharks and rest of marine species plus the birth of the new vocabulary, pipa, which means beautiful or to protect or be reasonable are the consummation of 2014 shark outreach programme.

This year, under the new banner of Night of the Turtle or Turtle Roadshow to schools, the aim is to continue to nurture the conservation mindset and to expand it to focus more on role of the public to help in the protection of the PIPA - the initiative that they should be proud of.

The main targeted groups remain the general public but with special focus on the politicians, church leaders, women and youth groups and the business sector. In 2014, the PIPA Implementation Office (PIO) received a call from someone who did not want to identify herself and shared the information that one local business already traveling to Kanton to do shark-finning and to harvest sea cucumber. The PIO was thankful to the caller and immediately took a necessary step to inform the police on Kanton who subsequently protected this illegal activity from going ahead.

Besides, the PIPA has in mind the turtle which IUCN reported as an animal that is now under great threat and the outreach wants to have this woven into the PIPA message, just like what was done to the shark.

During the long Easter break, the PIPA Outreach visited two large gatherings of main church groups, the Kiribati Uniting Church which gathered in Bairiki village and the St. John Parish of the Roman Catholic which gathered in Bikenibeu village. As in the usual fashion of PowerPoint presentation punctuated with locally composed songs with themes underscoring the messages, the crowd seemed to appreciate the message and expressed their pride in the initiative. They also agreed to cooperate with us to help protect the PIPA and to put into practice the conservation message.

This month, the House of parliament is scheduled to start on 13th of April through to 24th of April and the Education National 4-day Summit starting on 24th this month would



PIPA Outreach to KUC Leaders during Easter.

prompt PIPA to expand its outreach to include MPs and participants of the summit. It may be recalled this PIPA Initiative is the only initiative that has obtained the historic support of all political parties, as evidenced in the August 2014 parliament session when the Opposition lodged a query to Government as to why they were slow to make a financial contribution to the PIPA Conservation Trust.

So while everyone is fond of the PIPA, it is always encouraging to move further in the outreach to cement this national support. At this time, the PIO is also working with the Curriculum in putting together the PIPA materials for learning in higher secondary forms, as already PIPA was highlighted in the Primary level under the subject of Community and Culture.



Young PIPA Serenaders nailing home the message

Also, churches are the closest to the people in terms of their daily engagements and activities' churches just have powerful influence on people.

During the Easter outreach the church leaders said that they will help preach conservation to their people. The Kiribati Uniting Church Moderator at end of the Bairiki outreach said in his own words; "the PIPA message is already biblical and reminds us of our role by the Creator as custodians of the planet. We will include this PIPA message in our sermons." ■

The Messages of Sharks and Turtles

The PIPA in its outreach has this approach of using the two most threatened marine animals to stimulate the I-Kiribati understanding on the roles of these animals in the culture. This in turn is expected to heighten deeper commitment to respect and support the PIPA being the keeper of these culturally symbolic animals.

In the traditional Kiribati maneaba, a big meeting house with no walls which always stands high at the centre of villages, there is a special arrangement in allocating sitting places to families or clans in the village. No one can just sit anywhere in the maneaba. Each clan has its own sitting place. This sitting place is called a *boti* (pronounced almost like 'pause'). The name of this *boti* is very important as it points to the clan's dwelling place in the village and also indicates the lands the clan owns. So whenever you enter the maneaba, you can tell instantly the identities of people by where they sit. You can know too their *kainga* or dwelling places in the village and the lands they own. Also the sitting places indicate the different functions and roles of families in the maneaba and in the villages in any of the social affairs regulated by the *maneaba*, which also functions like a parliament and court.

It is most amazing that the shark or *bakoa* and the turtle or *tabwakea* are the main and oldest sitting positions in the maneaba. There had been evolution of the *boti* over generations and the *bakoa* and *tabwakea* *boti* were in fact right from the start of the maneaba tradition. The locations of these two sitting positions are also interesting as *bakoa* is on the seaside (west side of the maneaba) while *tabwakea* is on the landside (or east of the maneaba). Note that the maneaba is always built on the west side of the islands adjacent to the sea. The turtle *boti* is occupied by certain clans as well as the shark *boti*. These clans have special functions in the maneaba and in the entire village. As years go by, the population increase forced to the *boti* to break up into new *boti* in order to accommodate more people. The original *boti* of the shark and turtle however do remain and still recognised today as prototype *boti*.

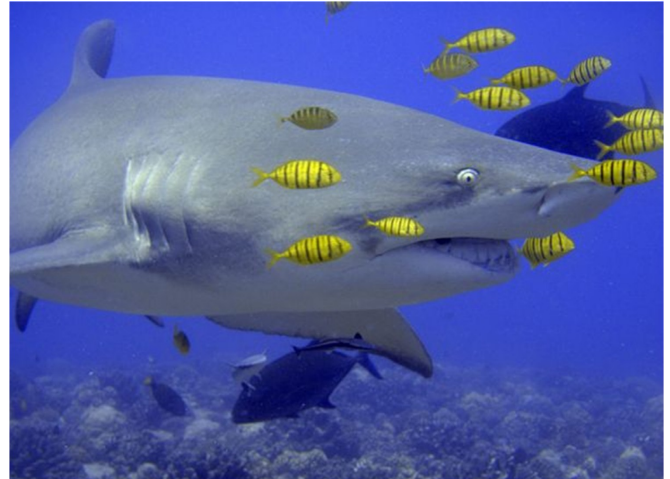
Why did our ancestors call these *boti* as turtle and shark is a question that has roots in myths. The turtle's carapace was seen by some local informants (from the island of Banaba) as a body of the *bo-ma-te-makii* (the Darkness of the Embrace) or simply the void universe which was broken open by the *Nareau* (creator god represented by the spider) in the Kiribati Creation Narrative. As the carapace opened it formed the heavens (*karawa*) and the earth (*aonnaba* or *tarawa*) and the oceans (*marawa*). In addition, the turtle embodies the picture of the true I-Kiribati. It symbolises the I-Kiribati person who virtually lives in the sea all his life. In real life the I-Kiribati people spent most of their time fishing for their daily food and most of their activities are centered around the sea. The turtle in short stands for the I-Kiribati person.

The shark on the other hand as a *boti* means a location in the maneaba where visitors to island can see. Though visitors sit in this *boti*, the equation remains unchanged - these visitors will have dwelling places in the village and will also have lands on the island. The *bakoa* which comes from the sea also has a dwelling place and land on the island. This only underscores the I-Kiribati's closeness and connectivity to the sea. As in the case of the turtle that has home and land both on land and in the sea and so is the shark.

The shark goes beyond just the sitting position. It also refers to the cultural role of protecting and managing well the sea resources mainly the fish.

In times of seasonal harvest, the catch is taken to the maneaba for equitable distribution amongst all *boti* and clans sitting in the shark *boti* are those who will lead works in distributing to the village the shares from the fish harvested.

The shark also becomes a key image used in dances and in magical chants with a purposes of bringing peace in times of disorder in the village or whenever there are disputes between families. This is why many people in Kiribati carry names as *Tabwakea* (turtle) or *Bakoa* (shark). There are still people who do not eat sharks or turtles because these animals are family totems.



Pictures speak thousand words. This picture sheds light on the protective role of the shark as it guards the small fish from big ones

The myths surrounding the shark and turtle when demythologized will only show how the I-Kiribati people value their existence - their atoll world surrounded by vast oceans and which over time defined their identity and shaped their way of life and world view.

So while these animals are used in the PIPA outreach, they mean a lot to the people of Kiribati. Protecting the turtles or the sharks is really protecting the I-Kiribati identity and heritage and the PIPA is doing just that. It is not about teaching culture and tradition but using such to amplify the PIPA message.



Inside modern maneaba of Bikenibeu West Primary School. School kids also enjoyed the shark song.

The outreach while propagating the PIPA as physical area protecting the rich seamounts where all forms of marine life can safely breed and multiply is also reviving the cultural values attached to the I-Kiribati identity. PIPA as Noah's Ark and as a National *Okai* (traditional store house) makes the initiative very close to the hearts of the people of Kiribati. ■

Cultural Significance of the PIPA

The PIPA initiative is best understood by locals when explained in terms of the 'okai' or the traditional household storehouse.

In the past, the I-Kiribati people in their dwellings used to have a special room in their local huts that is treated as an *okai* or storehouse. In this room, the family keeps all surplus of the seasons harvest of pandanus fruit sun-dried paste (*tuae*), surplus of processed *babai* (root of taro crop), surplus coconuts, surplus of fish in sun-dried and processed forms, plus family wealth of varieties of new mats, family tools, unused fishing gear of all types, and other family treasures.

The PIPA, as propagated to the public and student is acting really as a national *okai* where Kiribati is keeping all kinds of marine and terrestrial species for the one purpose of giving them chance to rest and multiply. The expected outcome is again very clear when viewed from the way the I-Kiribati view their own family *okai*. In bad times when storms or droughts prolonged, the families will open their *okai* and cautiously take their daily rations. When the bad time is over, the doors of the *okai* quickly closed. So PIPA is understood as a storehouse that will help strengthen food security in Kiribati not by way of re-entering it in the future but by allowing to grow and overflow with its supplies.

The outreach went on to say that the benefits of the PIPA will go beyond the borders of Kiribati and will help strengthen food security in the region and beyond. This piece of message only adds value to the PIPA as it is much applauded by the local populace. The tradition of sharing is now being put into practice as the benefits will spill over our borders. This is the element that will always make the I-Kiribati feel good and humbled. This practice of sharing is also central in the Christian teaching and being a Christian nation, the now much quoted phrase; "PIPA is Kiribati's gift to humanity" remains much adored.

One respondent in one of the outreach sessions said; "it is always good that one day you can share with someone what is in your *okai*!" And by this he referred to the PIPA Initiative.

In addition to the *Okai*, the PIPA lessons are also wrapped in meaningful images of the shark and turtle, as already explained. So while the lesson is geared towards propagating the PIPA as a closed area banned from all forms of commercial fishing, it, at the same time, springs out lessons of conservation and appreciation of nature and reviving our roles as *bakoas* and *tabwakeas* that should continue, as always be in the past, in order to make this national *okai*— the PIPA work and Kiribati sustainably grow.

Tabwakea of the Land and Bakoa of the Ocean

Kiribati you are the real Tabwakea of the land

You are the real Bakoa of the ocean

You in your totality agreed in unity with nature

To share your toddy syrup in times of peace

And tears and sweat of your *okai* in times of storms

You make life complete and flourish

You protect it by being in it from the beginning of time

I will eternally respect you Bakoa and Tabwakea

Because you will always be there till end of time.

By B. Rimon

General Updates

- (1) The TIGHAR has applied for permit to conduct expedition on Nikumaroro in July this year. The PIPA Management Committee has approved the permit. TIGHAR is expected to meet all permit requirements inclusive of sharing a final report at completion of their mission.
- (2) There is one interest to conduct gamefishing in Kanton. The PIPA Management Committee was first reluctant to permit the application since Kanton is in the PIPA, which is the World Heritage Site, but later considered the interest being very small in scale and is a catch-and-release leisure operation and works are now underway to determine the right requirements inclusive of the local observers and right level of fee to be applied.
- (3) Another proponent eyed investment in luxury camping on Kanton late this year. The concept of the proposal was perceived appropriate and highly approvable. The PIPA Management Committee will await further details on the scope and scale. At the same time, the Committee sees the urgency in completing the Kanton Resource Use Sustainable Plan, which should be ready to help guide ascertaining proposals of this nature.
- (4) Silversea Cruiselineer with about 80 passengers will visit the PIPA and some other islands in the Gilbert group in November 2015. The proposal has been reviewed by the PIPA Tourism Advisory Sub-committee and approved by the PIPA Management Committee in its meeting last month. The commercial cruise visit will be the first since the closure of the PIPA. As early measures, in the absence of Kanton Resource Use Plan, the cruise will again abide by the rules of the PIPA Permit, as stipulated in the PIPA Regulations (Amendment) 2014. The requirements will serve to protect the PIPA from any possible harm and observers will ensure this.
- (5) PIPA Management Plan 2015-2020 was completed in December 2014. The plan will guide all works this year through to end of 2020 surrounding protecting the PIPA covering surveillance, pest control, education and outreach, capacity building, tourism development, Climate Change, Kanton Resource Use Sustainable Plan, and rest of other activities that will strengthen the resilience of the PIPA.