

Nanumea & Nanumaga visit 24<sup>th</sup> 30<sup>th</sup> July 2020

## 1. Introduction

A letter from Nanumea Falekaupule and Kaupule to the Prime Minister was received by TCAP & UNDP on 10 July 2020. The letter requested the Prime Minister to terminate TCAP's activities on Nanumea and divert TCAP funds to their "Protect Nanumea" project. The letter was forwarded to TCAP by the Board Chair, Hon Seve Paeniu who requested a response from UNDP. UNDP Resident Representative Levan Bouadze responded to Hon Paeniu and TCAP Tuvalu PMU staff was requested to go to Nanumea and have a *sautalaga* with the community regarding UNDP's response. This report is a supplement to the BTOR for the Nanumea *Sautalaga* mission. It outlines the activities carried out during the visits to Nanumea (25 July – 27 July) and Nanumaga (28 July – 29 July 2020).

## 2. Nanumea visit

The team departed Funafuti on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> for Nanumea and arrived Nanumea on Saturday mid-morning 25<sup>th</sup> July 2020. There were two main reasons for visiting Nanumea: (i) to consult with the community on their request to the Prime Minister, and (ii) to take pictures of the areas where sand will be extracted from, and where the CBs will be constructed.

The team settled into their accommodation and the Project Manager made way to have an informal discussion with the *Pule kaupule*. He extended an invitation to the TCAP team to join them at the Nameana Falekaupule for devotion and dinner and then followed by the *Sautalaga*.

The afternoon was spent with one elder (Mr Laina Teuea) having informal talks about his views on how to protect Nanumea. He feels that the *Kaitaumalele* (Nanumeans living abroad) are having a great influence on the people of Nanumea. The sad thing is that the *Kautaumalele* are sitting at the comfort of their luxury western homes, while the people of Nanumea on Nanumea are suffering from their poor decisions. He showed me what TC Tino did to his home and neighbouring buildings and his immediate adaptation response to stop waves from pouring sand into his house (see Figure 1 below). He planted germinating nuts in a row at the edge of the high-water mark.





Figure 1: Immediate adaptation measures (top) and fallen trees (bottom), Nanumea 25 July 2020.

### 2.1 Sautalaga 25 July 2020

The *Sautalaga* commenced immediately after dinner. A total of 49 community members attended the *sautalaga*, 25 males and 24 females. There was only one issue discussed, and that is the community's request to cancel TCAP's protection activities and to funds allocated for Nanumea to its *Protect Nanumea* project. The *sautalaga* went on for over two hours and at the end of the *sautalaga*, the community agreed on three main issues:

- (i) There was a consensus that the community would like to continue with TCAP while government and the *kaitaumalele* (Nanumeans diaspora) look for funding for their land reclamation project. Meanwhile, the head chief will call the Falekaupule Assembly to discuss the community's decision on whether to continue with TCAP or not.
- (ii) Should the Nanumea community decide to continue with TCAP, sand will be provided free of charge; and would like the project to continue with the CBs up to the Preschool (see map below).
- (iii) TCAP, UNDP should sign an agreement with the government and community to ensure that sure the CB or BTB fail within a certain period of time, the contractor would return to fix it. Beyond that period, the government and kaupule will be responsible for fixing it.

### 2.2 Intervention site 27 July 2020

Sunday was Mother's Day, so the team spent the day resting. On Monday morning, the team went to take pictures in front of the pastor's house and at the sand spit at *Hahake*, the southern end of the island. There were clear evidences of accelerated coastal erosion with fallen coconut trees and concrete water tanks along that area (marked in purple on the map below), which were damaged by TC Tino. Some of the buildings including the Pastor's house and the Preschool building are very close to the high-water mark.



Figure 2: Fallen & broken concrete water tanks, Nanumea, 27 July 2020

It was obvious from the team’s observations that the area in front of the pastor’s house all the way to the Preschool needs (Fig 3) immediate attention as this area is heavily eroded and trees are seen lying on the beach. The house next to the pastor’s house is at the verge of collapsing. The preschool is so close to the beach that it will block the geobags and this is the place that the community leaders requested to be protected with CBs.



Figure 3: Heavily eroded area, Nanumea 27 July 2020

### 2.3 Sand Spit at Hahake

The team then proceeded to the southern end of the island, where the project will extract sand from the sand spit deposited by TC Pam. On the way to the sand spit, the team noticed serious coastal erosion towards the southern end of the island. Erosion is encroaching right up to the road at some places. A tombstone was seen toppled midway above the toe of beach. At Hahake, the sand has moved rigorously since our 2019 September visit. The team took photos along the way and at the sand spit before returning to the main village settlement.



Figure 4: Hahake sand spit (left). Eroded road & fallen tombstone (right), Nanumea 27 July 2020

### 2.4 Socio-economic data

Prior to departing Nanumea, the SPC ESIA social expert requested the Project Manager to get some information for her. Some of the information needed included the population size, number of people returning to Nanumea due to Covid-19, and traditional way of life, such as traditional fishing practices, which included canoe building. Nanumea is renowned for its canoe making craftsmanship. So, I went to look at one of the canoe builder’s place whether he has a canoe in his shed. And lucky enough, there was a canoe still in the making (Figure 5 below).

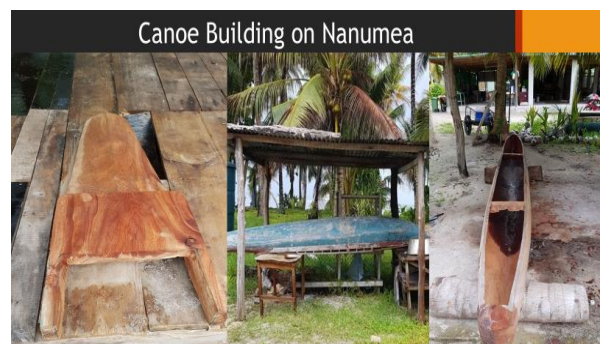


Figure 5: Nanumea canoe, Nanumea 27 July 2020

Prior to the outbreak of the Covid-19, the population on Nanumea was 475 including the elderly and children. During the State of Emergency, the only operational vessel made two trips to Nanumea to repatriate Nanumeans back to their home island. A total of 255 Nanumeans returned to Nanumea, and the population increased to 730 as of 27 July 2020. Men usually go out fishing, while women do other chores such as handicrafts – mats, fans, dancing skirts, and coconut oil. The information was shared with the SPC ESIA consultant.

### 3. Nanumaga

The Nivaga 2 departed Nanumea for Nanumaga around midnight 27<sup>th</sup> July and arrived early Tuesday morning. The team went ashore and settled in at the Kaupule guesthouse. While the ESIA report consultation was already done, the team needed to get the letter of confirmation from the *Hui Tupu* confirming the cost of sand per cubic metre for the geobags. The team also needed to take some pictures at the TC Pam sand spits for the CTA and coastal engineer.

The team met with the *Pule Kaupule* and the Kaupule Planner at the Kaupule office later that afternoon and the Project Manager explained to the *Pule Kaupule* what has transpired since the July 9-10<sup>th</sup> visit. He explained that their request to have a concrete wall in front of the church and TCS store/warehouse and to change the sand geobags to concrete wall was conveyed to the CTA and Coastal Engineer. Their responses are:

- They will consider putting sheet piling at the church area; and the community should know that the church will be there only until the next cyclone hits the island;
- Concrete walls along the berm will require another ESIA and is more expensive and ugly.

He understands and stated that the *Hui Tupu* wants the geobags instead of the concrete wall, so they are now going with the geobags. He also confirmed that they have agreed on the cost for sand, which is \$10/cubic metre. The team obtained the letter from the *Hui Tupu* and continued to take pictures at the sand spit (Figure 6 below). The team returned to Funafuti on 29 July 2020.



Figure 6: TC Pam sand deposit, Nanumaga 28 July 2020

### 4 Way Forward

This trip to Nanumea is one of the most challenging trips, as it involved lengthy negotiations with the island leaders during the *sautalaga*. There were tension amongst leaders and at times, voices were raised. At the end of the *sautalaga* there was a general consensus amongst leaders

to cancel their request to the Prime Minister and continue with the TCAP coastal intervention on their island.

As for Nanumaga, the island leaders have also agreed to charge \$10/cubic metre of sand instead of \$75/m<sup>3</sup>. The leaders have also agreed to remain with the sand geobags instead of the concrete wall they requested during the ESIA report consultation.

In order to keep the communities' interest with the project intact, continuous visits and consultations with both communities is an essential ingredient in order to get the 'buy-in' from both communities and maintain support to the project. Going out to the community and updating them on the progress of the project puts confidence in the community that we care about their safety and we want to ensure that their decision to go with the TCAP coastal protection measures will protect their community from the impacts of cyclone wave overtopping.

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