

# *LäjeRotuma Initiative*

From Alfred Ralifo (21 May 2010)

I am here in Boston transiting through the US to Uruguay for the Fourth Assembly of the GEF (Global Environment Facility) which will be held from the 24th of May to the 28th, at the convention center of the Conrad Resort and Casino, Punta del Este, Uruguay. The Assembly, held once every four years, is a strategic opportunity for the GEF stakeholders to meet, take stock and collectively strengthen strategies and actions for protecting the global environment and achieving sustainable development. The Assembly will combine plenary meetings and high-level panels, exhibits, side events and GEF project site visits. LajeRotuma Initiative was chosen out of thousands of Civil Society Organization applications world-wide to be part of this assembly. This is a milestone and a great achievement for LajeRotuma Initiative to be recognized by an international organization. Funding for our attendance is provided by GEF with the World Bank.

This is the International Year of Biodiversity and LäjeRotuma is strengthening its partnerships with a diverse network of island stakeholder groups in the target villages, Council of Rotuma, government departments-water supply, education, environment and related NGOs as well as extending its learning to the trans-national community in the fields of climate change adaptation, biodiversity conservation and sustainable development. LäjeRotuma Initiative was substantially supported by GEF SGP Fiji in terms of funding, administration and technical assistance, therefore, the opportunity to attend the GEF Assembly will be a chance to learn and experiences acquired, enables the LRI core member/ representative to think globally! This is an information technology world and yet, much of the information that is valuable to managers and for us community (grass root), is in forms that are difficult to access or readily interpret, especially in developing island states. Informed decision making relies on an awareness of what information is available, timely access to the information and a capacity to make best use of it, to understand the impacts of decisions on others. Good access to information helps to ensure people and organizations are informed and able to influence decisions in which we are interested in.

Our presence in this conference will enable us, a small indigenous group in the middle of the vast Pacific Ocean to share our experiences with others about how we as a small community have been trying to empower our own communities to live sustainably and be resilient against the effects of climate change and at the same time conserve our culture and unique island biodiversity. The GEF Assembly will also provide us with an opportunity to voice our concerns regarding the effects of climate change in the international arena, share our culture and learn about the diversity of cultures that will be on display during the conference. At the same time we hope to learn from other participants and delegates about their own stories as well as make new partnerships and friends.

I left Fiji May 20th and arrived here in Boston on the 21st. I will be flying down to Uruguay tomorrow and will be joined by Katarina 'Atalifo of SGP-GEF Fiji Office in Punta del Este. We will be showcasing LajeRotuma's activities in the past eight years and strengthen ties with other like-minded organizations around the world.