

Itu'muta rano focus group consultation session: Thursday - 20th June, 2013  
Reflective journal by Rupeti Vafo'ou.

Perfect afternoon as I sat with a group of *rano* owners within the district of Itu'muta my home village to share with them about the *rano* project by LājeRotuma and plans to restore and protect *rano* swamplands around Rotuma. With the knowledge that the *rano* areas are owned by the District and or *kainaga* (clan), the focus group consultation was with the *rano* clan members. The first part of the session involved a mapping exercise where group present were asked to draw boundaries of their clan claim for ownership of the *rano* areas within Itumuta district. This mapping tool proved useful for this generated discussion amongst the focus group and where corrections were made on exact boundaries of the *rano* area into segments of ownership. The final map was agreed on with the clan members present and the next step would be to start on the actual replanting or rehabilitation of these *rano* areas, most of which have been neglected until presently. The results of this focus group discussion and plan of action will be taken up in the next district meeting. I believe that in my participation in this consultation phase, I became aware of these little known *rano* areas in the backyard of Itumuta where I was brought up. I can imagine the responses from the youth in my district with the wider district consultation and actual rehabilitation of these *rano* areas plus understanding the ownership of these important wetland areas, now to avoid conflict in future.

Plan of action: On Tuesday, 25<sup>th</sup> of June, the district will help out the *rano* owners to replant the *papai* plant at Munivai, Robin and Foraetes *rano* areas with the help from Agriculture extension officers stationed at Ahau government station. Second day, the district group will conduct replanting of *papai* plants at *Gagaj* Tiu, Litisie and Kijianas *rano* areas. The Rotuma Women Association will join us at Itumuta on the third day to finish off on the rehabilitation work with the biggest *rano* area known as Manua that is owned by almost all of Itumuta. During the consultation it was identified that there were 16 *rano* spots within the district boundary of Itumuta, however, 7 *rano* areas were prioritized due to its urgent need of restoration before it disappears completely. More new learning experiences for everyone involved especially me!



Women clan reps drawing their *rano* boundaries during focus group consultation.