

This case study is one of several produced by the **CLARA** network to coincide with the publication of the IPCC Special Report on Land. We're showcasing **CLARA** member climate solutions which demonstrate the **rights-based, low-emission development pathways** needed for reducing emissions while **promoting livelihoods** and **ecosystem integrity**.

This case study is based on one of over 60 participatory assessments carried out with communities in 22 countries through the Community Conservation Resilience Initiative (CCRI).

Mangrove conservation partnerships strengthen climate resilience in Samoa

Political will, corporate accountability and support for community initiatives are required to turn the tide against the decimation of mangrove forests

Organisations and individuals involved

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Location

Villages of Toamua, Saina and Vaiusu in Samoa.



OLSSI FOR GFC/CCRI

COASTAL VILLAGES IN Samoa depend on mangrove forests and the ecosystem services they provide, like fisheries, for food security and income. They are also home to indigenous bird species and other biodiversity. However, huge areas of mangroves have been destroyed due to urbanisation, industrial activities, population expansion, climate change and overharvesting.

The conservation and rehabilitation of mangroves is vital for a resilient ecosystem. It leads to the replenishment of fisheries and secures a safe haven for threatened wildlife. Mangroves also improve the health, productivity and resilience of the intricate network of interconnected ecosystems in the adjacent lagoons, mudflats, seagrass beds and coral reefs. They reduce salinity intrusion into lowland areas, improving the resilience and productivity of inland ecosystems and agriculture.

The communities recognise the need to reverse the conditions causing mangroves to decline. Consequently, the Vaiusu women's committee has developed a two-acre mangrove plantation as part of its rehabilitation plan. The communities have also already developed village bylaws focused on protecting

the habitat's integrity, such as a ban on cutting mangroves, unsustainable fishing practices and dumping rubbish, and have compiled 15 mangrove biodiversity audits to capture the existing wealth of resources in these ecosystems.

Samoa villages have sovereign governance directed by cultural protocols, with the land and sea controlled by the customary tenure system. However, a government law that considers all land under the high water mark as government land has created a problem for community mangrove management. Despite this, the government and communities have in the past joined forces to strengthen mangrove conservation and committed to stronger community participation in the decision-making process.

Since the CCRI took place, the Samoan government has confirmed plans to build an international shipping terminal in Vaiusu Bay, and the affected communities have not been consulted. This poses a serious and imminent threat to the communities and mangrove ecosystems nearby due to the ecological and social impacts that the project will have if it proceeds.

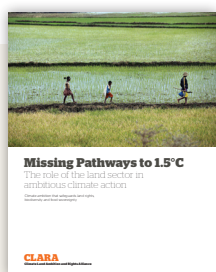
Testimony

Leaoniu Patolo of Toamua Village

“Our once rich mangrove resources supported community livelihoods for generations. Legends claim that the mangroves and abundance of fish and edible marine life were part of an award for bravery granted by Tui Manu’a to Malalatea, a renowned warrior from Toamua village. This environment, however, has deteriorated dramatically because we failed to uphold sustainable fish harvesting practices and cut mangroves for firewood. Urbanisation has also contributed significantly to the decline. Our goal now is to restore our mangroves, which will enhance ecosystem resilience and simultaneously strengthen protection from extreme tidal activities.”

‘Missing Pathways’ to climate action

Last year, CLARA published the report ‘Missing Pathways’, identifying areas of global mitigation ambition rooted in land rights, restoration, agroecology, and food system change.



The climate actions that are needed to support the efforts of this community are...

for communities to be given adequate support for their efforts to stop the decimation of their mangrove forests and the social crisis that results, given the imminent challenges they face. Political will from the national government is needed to combat the problem, as well as corporate accountability to prevent and reverse the damage done by large development projects, especially where there is no prior community consultation. Communities need support to revive traditional knowledge and practices related to mangrove management, and initiatives like the women’s conservation project in Vaisu should be replicated. These actions are reflected in the Missing Pathways report.

Transformational change in land management starts with respecting rights.



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