



Women in fisheries profiles

Tracey Boslogo

By Tracey Boslogo¹ and Teri Tuxson²

Born and raised in Lovongai in New Ireland Province, Tracey Boslogo spent a lot of time at her parents' island home where, as a child, she loved fishing and collecting shells in the mangroves with cousins. The sea is an integral part of life, and fishing, gleaning and paddling were daily ocean activities.

Tracey Boslogo is a Marine Conservation Officer with the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) in New Ireland Province, Papua New Guinea (PNG). She has been with WCS for eight years. In addition to coordinating WCS's scientific research, she is also responsible for communicating science to the local communities WCS works with to help them relate science to their traditional ecological knowledge. Her role is to ensure local communities understand the science and biological processes that are involved in the development of marine organisms and ecosystems, and how this benefits them (the people) and their families.

Tracey has been happily married for six years and has two young children. She grew up in Noipuas, a logging site in West Lovongai, where she attended elementary school. In Grade 5, the family moved to Kavieng Town, and she attended Carteret Primary School. For secondary school, she first attended Tokarara High School in Port Moresby, and then after Year 10, she attended Port Moresby National High School. She completed her tertiary education at the University of PNG Moresby Campus pursuing Environmental Science, Chemistry and Geography.

What encouraged you to pursue a career in Environmental and Marine Science?

Growing up, I witnessed firsthand the impacts of logging, damage to the natural environment, and the unfulfilled promises made to so many local communities. Initially, this inspired me to become an advocate against logging, which eventually led to other marine science work, but this all stemmed from wanting to help our communities here at home in Papua New Guinea. Education also helped to influence my mindset.

What are your main projects with WCS?

Our main project is the establishment of the marine protected area (MPA) in Lovongai and Murat. The MPA is nearly 17,000 km², and was a massive effort that took over seven years of engaging with local communities, as well as national and provincial stakeholders. Nearly 80 communities in Lovongai and 26 communities in Murat all work together to identify problems, and even more importantly, identify community-led solutions.

How did you achieve this huge undertaking?

It was essential to carry out a consultative and transparent engagement with communities through the “free prior and informed consent” process, whereby communities consent on what should be included in the management plan for the MPA in both Murat and Lovongai local level governments (LLGs). A technical working group was formed to provide advice on the MPA from the initial stage through to the endorsement of LLG laws. A legal consultant was engaged to support the process for enacting laws in addition to the MPA management plan. In 2023, the two LLGs enacted this for recognition under the national government. But there is still much work to be done. In the future, we are partnering with all stakeholders on the ground (in New Ireland Province) again to roll out the implementation plans for both MPAs.

Your work also entails more than the MPA implementation project. Can you share with us a bit more about your other work?

We have quite a few projects on the go, so we are always busy. At the provincial level in New Ireland Province, we are working on scaling up community-based fisheries

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management. This is the fourth year we have hosted the Annual Locally Managed Marine Area Learning Network meeting with LLG fisheries officers and community champions coming together to share lessons learned over the year in how to support more communities in managing their resources. We have also worked with the Provincial Fisheries Office providing mentorship in aligning their workplans with the New Ireland Province Coastal Fisheries Roadmap, and developing databases for the Fisheries Division to support their work in tracking communities and activities. We also have a shark and ray project, developing awareness materials for communities, as well as instituting protection laws for them within MPA boundaries. In Tigak and Lovongai, we are conducting key informant surveys for socioeconomic data collection and catch per unit effort (CPUE) work; this is to understand fisheries health and socioeconomic benefits from marine resources. CPUE data collection is ongoing (every two years) as it helps to inform community-based fisheries management in these communities (Tigak and Lovongai). Finally, together with West New Britain and Manus, we are working on food security and nutrition through the development of traditional diet cookbooks for local women.

What do you like most about working at WCS?

The teamwork and dynamics within our office and among the staff really create an environment conducive to success.

What is your most memorable achievement in working with coastal communities?

My most memorable achievement is the success of the MPA. There are challenges ahead but if we continue to build relationships with our partners, we can ensure continuity and success.

What is a story from your childhood that you would like to share with readers from which you find inspiration?

When I was 10 years old, I caught a very large skipjack tuna, and my parents told me, *“If you share your catch, the next time you go out fishing, you will always catch more.”*

What advice would you give to women involved in fishing or fisheries management?

If this is your dream, you must go for it and pursue it. There is a great need for women in the fisheries space. Women are naturally gifted with managerial and mentorship skills. It is very important to network and broaden your circle, so you learn from other people’s experiences. You would be surprised when you start networking and sharing information with others, they are learning from you too.

Thank you, Tracey, for your time and for sharing your experience. It is truly inspiring for us all!

