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## Countering Fish Stock Depletion through Traditional Knowledge, Tenure, and Use of Marine Resources in Papua New Guinea

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Fish stocks around Lihir Island in PNG are threatened by over-harvesting, as determined by research conducted by Australia's Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization. There is a real need to understand current and projected use of near-shore fishery resources in the context of rapid social and economic changes driven by a large mining operation that commenced in the area in 1997. The project "**Traditional Ecological Knowledge Relating to Marine Environment and Fishing on Lihir**" is a collaboration among communities on Lihir, the University of Melbourne, and the Resource Management in Asia-Pacific Program at The Australian National University. The project focuses on how the people of Lihir understand local marine resources, marine tenure systems, and methods of use, both in the past and at present. The study examines traditional fishing techniques, ideas of ownership and management of resources and restrictions on marine exploitation associated with the local belief system. The effects of more intensive fishing, which occurs because of introduced technologies and increase in population, are communicated to the people on Lihir. Low-impact exploitation strategies are encouraged in the attempt to influence local-level policy to reduce over-exploitation of fish stocks.

Those involved in the project consider it to be a resounding success. The project was carried out with proper consultation at all levels, and interviews were conducted with requisite cultural sensitivity. The main challenge is, however, that most people aspire to a better life, materially, than they have at present, and are shifting from a subsistence economy based on fishing and growing yams to a cash-based market economy. At the same time, they are worried about and dismayed by the many negative social impacts that have accompanied mining and a greater engagement with the global economy.

December 22nd, 2009 | Category: [All Projects](#), [Pacific](#)

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