

# Seacology Visits Bosavi

By Helen Perks

In November 2003, the Berkeley-based conservation organisation, Seacology, approved funding of three resource centers for the Kosua Orogo Resource Holders Association Inc. (KORA) in the villages of Musula, Bona and Fogumaiyu to support their work in protecting their land and determining their own path of development. With many months of planning and the hard work of the communities and carpenter-trainer Jacob Kamunai from Chuave, Simbu Province, the first resource centre for the Sulamesi Region was completed in August in Musula village. On 14<sup>th</sup> September, a group from Seacology arrived in Papua New Guinea, their first time ever in the country, to open the resource centre they had sponsored and to meet and celebrate with the people of Bosavi; to step into their world, if only briefly.

We were due to fly out to Musula on the morning of September 15<sup>th</sup>. The previous evening, the Seacology group had listened to Sam Moko from WWF-Kikori, Sabi Patil from the Environmental Law Centre and myself talk about the work out in the Bosavi area and they had been asking many questions, eager to learn as much as they could. Our main concern was the weather, usually at its rainiest at this time of the year



Seacology Executive Director- Duane Silverstein (right) and team member Dick Lemon join the celebration.

around Mt. Bosavi. I woke up early waiting for the daylight. What did the sky look like? Not so good...maybe not so bad. But how was it out in Musula? As we took off, the pilot announced that the weather out in Bosavi was "marginal...but we'll give it our best shot..." Hm. As we flew we were engulfed in solid white and my eyes were searching constantly for a break, just a tiny break, in the clouds. *Nogat*. The pilot was opening his window and looking out for a gap to descend through. We started to descend through the wall of white clouds and more white clouds and I hoped and hoped we would get through and...then....forest, cockatoos!

My heart jumped. But the cloud was hanging low and there was no sign of the village. After a few minutes we were ascending again. No luck! Everyone was waiting for us down below.

They had been preparing for weeks and they would be hearing the plane leaving again. People who had come from all over Bosavi to see the people from the US who had come all this way to visit them. My heart sank, but I just had to tell myself that there would be an option to try again and we would figure something out. It was decided that we would fly out again the next morning. One more chance! We tried to get a radio message to Musula that we would be trying again the next day. But there was no one there to hear our message.

Awake again the next morning, excited, nervous. It had rained all night. But there was clear blue sky! Yay! We took off again and there were more gaps in the clouds this time. We flew by Mt. Bosavi. How good to see the green silent beauty of this old volcano today! But the clouds became thicker and again we descended into a wall of white. And down. Oh no! And then...the trees again. Yes! And...the airstrip! Inside the plane, clapping and cheering and then we were landing and more cheering and big wide smiles.

But...no one was there at the airstrip. Quiet and empty. We climbed out and a few people slowly came running over to us. Patrick Pate, the KORA Vice-President in charge of the project to build the resource centre in Musula came over. His face smeared still with paint. His trademark wide grin in the middle of his blackened face. I was so glad to see him! The villagers had not known we would return and had been singing and dancing the whole day and night. We all walked over to the village and the resource centre. Calls were going out around the village for people to come. Women in bilas danced to welcome us. People gathered, speeches were made. We admired the resource centre. Drums sounded and then men in



Musula women singing about their forest.

bilas and a crowd behind singing and chanting marched up to the resource centre and around and around. Songs were sung, stories were told of the forest. Seacology members joined in and people laughed. We were all high on the excitement, the energy, the colours, the chants. I was caught in the moment I didn't want it to end.

But this was to be just a short trip. The clouds were closing in. The plane was waiting. And everybody waving. *Nabilo!* *Ebamo!* I wasn't ready to leave and decided I would have to come back again ... **soon!**

## Impressions of the Kikori Basin



Photos (top - bottom), S. Richards, WWF/DBadi, S. Richards, WWF/TMamu, and SRichards

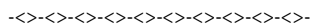


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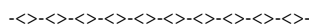
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