

# Emau launches ten-year conservation management plan

By Jane Joshua

**"WITH THIS PIG KILLING** ceremony I declare these tabu areas on land and sea as prohibited areas and anyone who goes against these words will be penalised accordingly" says – Chief Noupat George.

Chief Noupat George of Marou village was addressed addressing over two hundred Marou people and guests at the official launching of the Emau Community Management Plan (ECMP) last Friday.

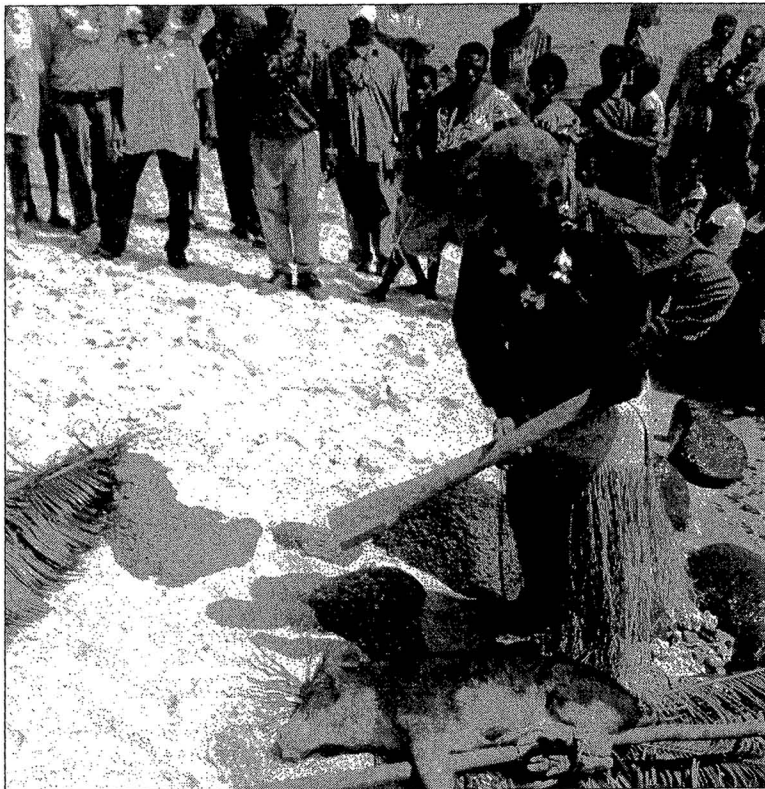
The Marou community initiative to protect, preserve and use their resources in a sustainable manner is now effective for the next ten years.

The special event was sealed by a pig killing ceremony attended by a number of distinguished NGOs including Pedro George from Wan Smol Bag Theatre, Field Officer from Seacology, Kevin Tari, the Foundation of the South Pacific (FSP) and the Fisheries Department.

Marou village is one of the last of the six villages on Emau that has one of the biggest and spectacular lagoons on Efate offshore Islands. The lagoon is around 3 kilometres long, fringed with mangroves and 2 kilometres wide.

Chief Noupat George said that the continuous increase in population at the village is one of the main factors that is accelerating overfishing and overharvesting.

He explained the Emau Community Management Plan is part of a series of developments that began in



The act of Pig killing, Chief Noupat symbolising that the interior and outer Lagoon will be used for bathing only and fishing applies to the area outside the boundary

2002 also included training in monitoring the marine life. The ECMP also involves the community in participating in baseline surveys. Seacology also assisted the Emau community in building a kindergarten classroom as appreciation for their commitment in realising their management plan.

The Emau Community Management Plan places restrictions that apply to

marine and land resources from coconut crabs to birds as well as village resources like sand and coral.

Locals and tourists are warned that anyone caught breaching these restrictions can be faced with paying a customary fine of a pig, a root of Kava and twenty mats.

Acting Secretary General for SHEFA Provincial Council, Ernest Kaloris welcomed the initiative by the Emau Com-

munity.

"This compliments the Shefa REDI initiative in preserving the marine life in SHEFA," says Mr Kaloris.

A Biologist at the Fisheries Department, Sompert Rena said: "The preservation of the site is only the beginning, the success of the management plan now depends on the commitment of the locals."

The tabu on these areas will be lifted in 2016.