



**INTERNATIONAL SAVANNA FIRE MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE  
INDIGENOUS FORUM  
SWISS BELIN HOTEL, KUPANG, INDONESIA  
18 MAY 2015  
DRAFT FORUM REPORT**

**A. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS**

1. The forum was chaired by Ms Sarah Hobgen of Charles Darwin University and Ms Catherine Monagle of the United Nations University.
2. Ms Hobgen welcomed participants and expressed her hope that the diversity of participants would contribute to the understanding of indigenous perspectives on within the forthcoming Asia workshop. She reiterated that all participants in the forum were welcome to stay on to participate in the workshop. She noted that the forum would be informal, and aim to give participants an opportunity to share their knowledge and experience with each other, and in later days to feed that back to the Asia workshop.
3. A representative from the United Nations Department of Safety and Security provided participants with a briefing on the local security situation with advice on how to keep safe during their stay in Nusa Tenggara Timor.
4. Apologies were extended from delegates from Flores who had been unable to make the workshop at the last minute due to flight issues.
5. All participants introduced themselves. The list of participants is attached as Appendix A. The Agenda is attached as Appendix B.

**C. BACKGROUND ON THE ROLE OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE IN THE INTERNATIONAL SAVANNA FIRE MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE**



**Australian Government**



6. Ms Catherine Monagle opened the forum by outlining how the workshop came to be and provided background on the role of Indigenous peoples expertise and traditional knowledge of fire management in informing the International Savanna Fire Management Initiative. She noted that the Initiative is exploring how sustainable livelihoods can be reinforced through integrated fire management that draws from traditional fire management fire and the application of emissions abatement burning methodologies, leading to emissions reductions, biodiversity protection and sustainable livelihoods opportunities.
7. Ms Monagle presented a documentary clip produced by UNU about indigenous led fire management in the north of Australia that had been produced by the UNU. The narrator of the clip, Mr Dean Yibarbuk, an indigenous fire ecologist from West Arnhem Land was a participant at the forum and would be available to further share his peoples' experience. The documentary is available via the website: <http://ourworld.unu.edu/en/fighting-carbon-with-fire>.

## **F. FORUM EXCHANGE**

8. Mr Nikodemus Tanuha and Mr Marthin Sose of Nusa Tenggara Timor described the fire histories and traditional knowledge in and around the Bipolo Forest in West Timor. They noted that in 1955 Bipolo's forest area was about 20.000 km<sup>2</sup> from Timau Mountain to the coastal area, Teluk Kupang. In 1965 private timber companies got permission to take timber and the forest is now much reduced. In Timor there is tradition that people cultivated each year, burning small areas for that.. With reduced community control after this the burns were less controlled and sometimes fire spread out widely. Nowadays, forest burns because people outside of Bipolo villages set the fire for hunting, or make a fire when camping, or they throw their cigarette in the grass. This causes degradation area of Bipolo's forest. Overall savanna fire status in West Timor was under monitoring of community village.
9. Mr Umbu Djawa and Mr Umbu Palanggarimu of Sumba described fire trends and traditional knowledge in Sumba. Before 1980 there was cultural regulation about when the community could start to burn savanna/forest, with cultural penalties for them who broke the rules. From 1990 to the present there has been an increase in number of burning savanna each year. Nowadays, the timing of the burning is quite different from that that took place in the past. People set fire in savanna for reasons such as hunting, as a statement in horizontal conflict in society, and for preparing farm field. East Sumba is divided into two type of land arranged according to cultural regulation, that that can be used for agriculture, and that cannot but can be otherwise accessed for human uses. Most of East Sumba vegetation type is savanna. The East Sumba representatives hoped that through this workshop there could be further engagement will between government sand NGOs to

solve savanna fire problem in Sumba. A community formed group society to control fire especially in demonstration plot area.

10. Mr Miller Kawanamo described traditional knowledge systems associated with fire and yams in Papua New Guinea. In Papua New Guinea there are 800 tribes and about 7million people, 85% of those in in rural areas depending on forest for their living through gardening, subsistence agriculture. In his region, PNG's people used to make a shifting field, burning as they went, with elders advising on gardening location, The first few seasons in a new plot would be to grow yams, being important not only for food but as traditional money for securing money, so people wanted the biggest, and highest number of good quality yams. The effect of that practice, forest area in PNG decrease and replaced by grassland. Each year people make more than 1 new garden because they have not only planted yams but also other plants such as cassavas. When the community made a new garden they used to burn grasses, sometimes the flames not only burnt the gardening area but spread out to another clan area, potentially causing conflict. If it happens the elders and chief of clans will try to solve that problem by discussion together. In Mr Kawanamas region there is now no policy about fire, with people freely setting fire for garden and hunting purpose, with most fires made to open new garden areas and for hunting purposes. However, each of the tribes has different policy about fire. Like in the north of Australia, if for hunting the people burn the grasses to force the animals out through smoke. To stop the fire so it would not burn out too large an area, the community used to cut trees or branches to make a fire break before they started burning the hunting area.
11. Participants noted that PNG has very similar tradition as West Papua in Indonesia due to agriculture, however the soil in PNG is richer than in West Papua so they only need a fallow period of 2-3 years to enrich the soil after clearing the land and opening a new garden.
12. Mr. Dean Yibarbuk, Arnhem Land Traditional Owner and an indigenous fire ecologist presented his experiences from implementing an integrated early burning fire management programme in the Warddeken Indigenous Protected Area within West Arnhem Land known as the WALFA project. Mr Yibarbuk explained how, in the past the indigenous communities living in the area managed fire for numerous reasons, as well as the factors that had contributed to the more recent wildfire regime, namely traditional peoples leaving their lands, and the negative impacts this had had. Mr Yibarbuk noted how how effective the early burning fire management programme has been in their project area, not only in

reducing emissions, but in reducing the frequency of wildfires and in increasing the productivity and biodiversity of the savanna, on which community depend. In addition, the emissions abatement contract, which has been set up with Conoco Philips currently supports five indigenous ranger groups (who manage an area of 2.5 million ha) and employs 240 local people. These activities have supported livelihoods and conservation, and encouraged young people about traditional respect of the landscape. They have further enabled WALFA to initiate other programs for people such as cultural activities, bring children to the landscape and tell stories about land management that ancestors did so it will raise their responsibility to their land when they grow up.

13. Participants directed questions to Mr Yibarbuk and engaged in discussions on the topics presented. Questions included discussion of whether there had been conflict with clans and how to manage if a fire crossed clan boundaries, as well as the use of fire-breaks to prevent that. Mr Yibarbuk also further outlined the traditional knowledge of ecological signs in West Arnhem Land which signified to elders when was a good time to burn. Ms Sarah Hobgen explained further the similarities between landscapes in north Australia with those in Indonesia.

#### **L. CLOSING**

14. Ms Catherine Monagle thanked all the delegates for attending the forum and participating so actively and sharing of so much expertise and information. She extended special thanks to Mr Dean Yibarbuk and the indigenous delegates from Indonesia and Papua New Guinea who had generously shared their expertise in traditional fire management. The discussion of the forum would be reported back to the broader workshop of the coming days, with several forum participants staying on to also attend the workshop.
15. The meeting closed at 5pm on the 18<sup>th</sup> May 2015 followed by a group dinner.

**APPENDIX A**  
**PARTICIPANT CONTACT DETAILS**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>TITLE</b>	<b>ORGANISATION</b>
<b>AUSTRALIA</b>		
Simon Pollock	Mr	Australian Department of the Environment
Rohan Fisher	Mr	Charles Darwin University
Jeremy Russell-Smith	Prof	Charles Darwin University
Dean Yibarbuk	Mr	Warddeken Land Management Ltd
<b>INDONESIA</b>		
Umbu Palanggarimu	Mr	KOPPESDA
Sarah Hobgen	Ms	Charles Darwin University
Umbu Djawa	Mr	Indigenous representative - Sumba
Marthen Sose	Mr	Indigenous representative - Timor
Nikodemus Tanuha	Mr	Indigenous representative - Timor
<b>PAPUA NEW GUINEA</b>		
Miller Kawanamo	Mr	Papua New Guinea Forest Research Institute/Papua New Guinea Forest Authority
<b>UNU</b>		
Catherine Monagle	Ms	United Nations University
<b>CIS TIMOR</b>		
Sischa R.L. Solokana	Ms	Note Taker, CIS Timor
Roby Lay	Mr	CIS Timor
Dismas Fernando Banu	Mr	Transport, Logistics, Restaurants, CIS Timor
Gloria Pricillia Rondo	Ms	Translator, CIS Timor

## APPENDIX B

### International Savanna Fire Management Initiative Indigenous Perspectives on SFIM Kupang, Indonesia

18<sup>th</sup> May 2015

#### AGENDA

- 9.00 Welcome and Opening Remarks (CDU/UNU/CIS)
- 9.20 Participant Introductions
- 9.40 Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous Fire Management and Governance around the world, and the International Savanna Fire Management Initiative (UNU)
- Presentation  
Questions & Discussion
- 10.20 Indigenous Fire Management and Governance in Australia - Mr Dean Yibarbuk  
Wardekken Land Management
- Presentation  
Questions & Discussion
- 11.00 COFFEE BREAK
- 11.20 Indigenous Fire Management and Governance in the Arafura Region – Informal Sharing of Experiences
- Presentations  
Questions & Discussion
- 12.30 Indigenous Peoples & Fire Management – Facilitated Discussion to Inform Regional Assessments and Recommendations to Initiative
- Discussion
- 13.00 LUNCH
- 14.00 Indigenous Peoples & Fire Management – Facilitated Discussion to Inform Regional Assessments and Recommendations to Initiative (Cont.)
- Discussion
- 15.45 COFFEE BREAK
- 16.00 Summary of Recommendations to Initiative (UNU)
- 17.00 Close
- 19.30 Group Dinner (Arrangements to Be Advised)