

## Kiribati benefits from maritime boundaries project

Written by Administrator

Tuesday, 24 August 2010 18:14 - Last Updated Friday, 27 August 2010 13:40

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Staff of the **Oceans and Islands Programme** of SOPAC, the Pacific Islands Applied Geoscience Commission, is engaged in working with technical personnel from the Government of Kiribati in order to update the Kiribati maritime boundaries database. This work is part of the SOPAC **Maritime Boundaries Project**, and follows similar survey work in Fiji and Papua New Guinea in 2009.

Mr Andrick Lal, SOPAC Senior Project Surveyor, has just returned, having spent two weeks on the atolls of the North Gilbert Group, Butaritari and Little Makin, where he has provided training to develop expertise in the use of the latest technology in Global Positioning Systems (GPS) in order to establish baseline data essential for computing Kiribati's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

"With Kiribati, Phoenix and the Line groups of islands making up Kiribati and spread across near to 4,000 kilometres of the Pacific Ocean, the island state has the largest EEZ in the Pacific," explained Mr Lal.

"During our stay on Butaritari and Little Makin, my colleague Ms Emily Artack, SOPAC Project Officer, Maritime Boundaries Project, and I worked with the Kiribati Lands and Survey Staff in conducting high-level GPS surveys. To carry out this work, we gathered as much information as possible. We used maps that already exist, satellite images, and field surveys. We also worked with the local communities, explaining our work, and gaining permission to be on their land."

Mr Lal explained that field surveys were part of the capacity building for the Kiribati staff, and involved demonstrations on how to relocate existing control points, or establishing new ones, where necessary. These control points, which are on land, are the starting point or the reference line, and maritime limits are computed from this baseline data.

"Surveying equipment would be set up at the control point on land for up to six days, while teams worked to take readings based on this reference point, from positions held for four to six hours. All the data is fed into the International mapping system, so there is a link between this and any local systems that might be in use. We aim for being within one centimetre accuracy,

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which in most cases is achievable. Ms Artack is currently continuing the survey work on Christmas Island, Kiribati,” said Mr Lal.

“This work is multi-purpose, as not only is it essential for establishing 12- nautical mile territorial limits, 24 nautical mile maritime (sea) zones and 200 nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zones, it also has implications for a country’s fishing, agriculture or deep-sea mining ventures,” concluded Mr Lal.

Photo captions:



1) Children are interested to see the GPS systems being used by SOPAC's Ms. Emily Artack



2) To get the job done, we go where we have to...SOPAC’s Andrick Lal (centre), with residents of Little Makin.



3) SOPAC uses the latest GPS equipment to survey Kiribati’s maritime boundaries.