



TV UNITED NATIONS NATIONS UNIES

U.N. IN ACTION

Week of 27 October 2003

Programme No. 876

Length: 3'23"

BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

VIDEO

FARMER ARRIVES (21")

SENDING A MESSAGE (10")

ELISSON WAURA ON-CAMERA
(13")

ISLAND VIEWS (16")

AUDIO

NARRATION

Until recently, it might have taken weeks for farmer Elisson Wauru to send his brother a message. Elisson lives in Ulawa, one of the 850 islands that make up the Solomon Islands, a South Pacific nation. His brother lives in New Zealand, thousands of kilometres away.

Now, thanks to a groundbreaking project, Elisson can communicate with his brother almost instantaneously at a very small cost.

WAURU:

"Letter will take about one month before I receive it. With the email I use today – just about one minute from here to New Zealand. That is easy for me to communicate."

NARRATION

Ulawa Island is one of the nine locations throughout the Solomon Islands where the

NARRATION

People First Network, or PFNET, is available. PFNET is a network of E-mail stations located in remote islands across the country.

SCHOOL GIRLS SING/CLASS
(10")

The stations are usually hosted in provincial clinics, schools, or other accessible and secure public facilities.

SEND E-MAILS, VILLAGE
WIRE/PFNET WIRE, HONIARA
WIDE (22")

E-mail operators assist customers in sending and receiving messages at nominal cost. Each remote E-mail Station connects on schedule several times a day to the hub station in Honiara, the Solomon Islands capital city. Incoming or outgoing e-mails are transferred between remote stations, the hub in Honiara and the Internet.

INTERNET CAFÉ (17")

Since February 2001, PFNET has run a very successful internet café in Honiara. People use PFNET for contacting their friends and family, business partners and for education purposes. Now PFNET is looking to expand and grow, says Randall Biliki, PFNET's Manager.

RANDALL BILIKI ON-CAMERA
(17")

BILIKI:

"We want to strengthen the revenue side of the project so that we will be able to improve the services and expand the network that is so much depended on by rural communities, which are the main objective of our project."

NARRATION

TECHNOLOGY (38")

The rural e-mail stations use a simple, robust and

well-proven technology consisting of a short wave radio, a low-end computer and solar energy. This technology was deemed appropriate considering the scattered and remote nature of many of the islands. The system has been working very well indeed. Supported by UNDP, the UN Development Programme, PFNET has found a balance between technology and the needs of the people, says Edo Stork, an information technology Project Manager with UNDP.

STORK

EDO STORK ON-CAMERA (21")

"It was not like technological solutions imposed on people. It actually addressed the needs of people. And also people who started implementing the project in the Solomon Islands are people that do not necessarily have the technology focus, but more think of how the country can be developed and to do this in a partnership."

NARRATION

TRADITIONAL DANCE/WELCOME
(41")

The Solomon Islands have just come through a difficult period of serious ethnic unrest. PFNET is helping to bring people close to each other and it's a practical example of bridging the digital divide. The United Nations' World Summit on the Information Society, sponsored by the International Telecommunications Union, which will take place in Switzerland next December, will look into the information revolution and its impact on the international community. PFNET proves

that information technology can also benefit low-income rural populations even in some of the most remote parts of the globe.

LOGO (20")

This report was prepared by Chaim Litewski for the United Nations.