



KIBCA

**Kolombangara Island
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MEDIA RELEASE

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KIBCA Proud to Celebrate Kolombangara

KIBCA is proud to be dedicating the Kolombangara Island conservation area and its new name at a Festival on 13-17 June. KIBCA says there is no evidence to support claims about a plan to rename parts of Kolombangara or that there has been a lack of consultation.

“Kolombangara Island people will be gathering at Ringgi in June for a big celebration of their culture and the island’s natural environment”, said Mr Ferguson Vaghi, KIBCA Coordinator. “The highlight will be a ceremony on Wed 15 June to officially dedicate the conservation area covering the forests above 400m altitude and the name for this area.”

“This area is the largest conservation area in the Solomon Islands, so we are definitely proud.”

“There will also be a 3-day soccer and netball competition, a singing contest and school speech and drawing contests. A field trip to the Kolombangara Crater is also being offered. All events at the Festival are free.”

“Despite some wild suggestions, there is no plan by anyone on Kolombangara to change names of any existing features or Indigenous names or to change their ownership. Places like Rano, Veve, Kongu Rano and even the name Kolombangara is safe”, assured Mr Vaghi.

“The KIBCA naming competition is selecting a name for the conservation management area. It is an area that is without a name and that is why we are asking people to help us find one. The idea to name it was raised by KIBCA– not by government, donors or NGOs.”

“KIBCA has set up a two-day process involving two committees to ensure that a name is found that is compatible with Kolombangara’s culture and it’s in the Nduke language. The decision will be made by people who respect the culture and the traditions of the Indigenous Kolombangaran people.”

“I challenge anybody to find a better way for Kolombangarans to find a name for our conservation area”, stated Mr Vaghi.

“This competition has been both popular and successful. We have already received over 100 entries (closing Fri 3 Jun). People from around the island have told me it is making our people talk about our culture, our language and what is the best name. Kolombangara people have never had a chance like this to talk about our culture.”

“The prizes, generously donated by Soltai and bemobile, have added to the interest in the competition.”

“The dedication ceremony is not a new idea that was arrived out without consultation. Every project must have a start and a finish. The launching program was first planned by KIBCA when

KIBCA formed in 2008, but only now have we raised the funds to hold the ceremony. It celebrates the actions of landholder representatives when they signed a conservation agreement in 2008 and 2009.”

“The area above 400m has a unique position in the culture of the Kolombangaran people. Very lately we find out it has high biodiversity. Protecting this area is not a new idea. It had been in our history for many generations,” said Mr Vaghi.

“KIBCA recognizes the conservation area has many values in it – culture, high biodiversity value and it houses all of our rivers which are important for our daily life. It has a very unique mountain formation that is not only beautiful and attractive to tourists, but has been revered by all past generations of Kolombangara people.”

“There is a time for consultation and there is a time for celebration. We have waited for three years for our celebration and now it is time to celebrate. We can demonstrate that we consult and that we can deliver for our communities, our children and for our country.”

“You can be assured there will be more consultation with landholders, the SIG and the provincial government about the next steps in our conservation program, including if the area should be listed under the Protected Areas Act. The launching will be the start of this consultation.”

“We really hope the Prime Minister can come to celebrate with KIBCA and the people of Kolombangara. We have made the largest conservation area in Solomon Islands and it is contributing to the SIG environment program. It is appropriate that the Prime Minister attends the program because Kolombangara has made a big contribution to the economy of Solomon Islands. We would like the PM to visit a grassroots initiative and to visit KFPL which supports the conservation area.”

“No PM has ever visited Kolombangara Island.”

“We respect the ordination of our chiefs, but Kolombangara has no tribal chiefs left. Are we going to wait for the ordination of the five main tribal chiefs to bring about changes that are needed to protect the rights of Indigenous people, or should we let our land be destroyed? Getting agreement on who shall be the new chiefs may take years, or may never occur.”

“While we are waiting, why don’t we put our heads together and work out ways to protect our island and our heritage.”

Mr Vaghi said, “There are people that can only see their own feet. Then there are people who can see beyond the skies. KIBCA is guided by the dreams of far-sighted people.”

“I invite anyone who shares a love of Kolombangara to come and join our celebration of our island and the work of KIBCA.”

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