

Saturday February 11th 2012

We left Funafuti 3 weeks ago on the planned day. Lucky... given Air Pacific chaotic schedule all along our stay... and after. Often postponed.. sometimes more surprisingly... advanced... as you have all learned to live with.

Landed home after 2 short stops in Suva and Los Angeles. In Paris, the gloomy skies that looked like there would not be any more sun ever, gave way to more lively clouds with glimpses of sun. Right now the sky is in fire although temperature is hitting 10 below zero. The greyness delayed the transition from one world to the other. Putting my environment back into order took a few days. Only after did I wander



outside to climb on the roof terrace. The panorama is unfailingly grandiose: Paris will always be Paris. But, unlike the old man from Nuitao who kept repeating “not blasé”, the only word he knew in French, the view left me dull. A microscopic red tomatoe brightened the sad grey winter garden. I progressively got back into Parisian life with the urge to float in warm water in my too big bathtub hit. In term of water preservation this tub was one of the AAA stupidities I did when renovating the flat years ago. I use it only when the need to be warm is too great. This time it helped me snap off the lingering time and reflexes gaps: I was ready to brave the streets.

The Bohemian who begs in front of our neighbourhood “supermarket” since 10 years is sitting there. We exchanged “Bonne annee” wishes. At the bank, usually empty, a simple deposit took ½ hour... Direction one of the 3 veggie stores around. I challenged making a call to put back my phone in service and hung up after half hour wait... Meanwhile I had put parsley, chicory, tangerines, artichokes in my basket... A little further I could not resist the red and green roses, a reminder of our wonderful friend and webmaster who slipped away 3 weeks ago after a long sickness. Also got branches of sweet smelling mimosa. And up the hill I was with Catherine, the founder of our residents association. With her broken wrist she was slowly climbing the 87 steps. Perfect pace for me !

Weather broadcasts announce an even colder week ahead with snow on Paris. Not the greatest time to be replacing our office windows and roof with a better isolated veranda. Although we are accustomed to 12° inside the office, keeping a minimum warmth is now a challenge.... Noone could guess it would be freezing in February when works were planned. Climate is really changing.

While in Tuvalu, our blog was regularly fed... in French. At the airport, Saufatu asked when we’d do the next newsletter. In Fiji, Anare wanted to know “when will the blog be in English...”. This motivated us to do sooner than later...

On November 25th, Fanny and I left with some apprehension, after 18 months absence, and the need to gauge everyone's motivation, including ours. I also needed to get clearer ideas to go further on the next film.

On the way, in L.A., Chris made himself available as always and trained me on the camera he purchased after the old one was washed off by a wave. In Fiji, we met the French Embassy team, shared some friendly moments with Leonie and Anare and prepared with Sikeli his upcoming biogas mission. We finally landed in Tuvalu on December 5th.

Most of the apprehensions immediately vanished: The welcoming was warmer than we could have dreamt and each day brought its share of friendship and warmth. Impossible in a summary to mention everything.

The house without Elega who passed away, in October 2010, felt very friendly with her wonderful vibes left behind. She was scared of rats, as we are too and we saw no rats for weeks. One found its way late in the stay... small like a mouse.

No problem with the food either: a good selection of veggies and fruits -even tomatoes- provided our palagi body the vitamins we usually lack..

Most importantly, the 2nd day, I was fortunate to be given the opportunity to raise an issue that participated in the depression felt the last 2 years: the political feud in between people who, for most of them, are my friends. The invitation by 4 of them to the Nanumea women fundraising was a favourable time to express how torn I felt. Everyone was sensitive and helped me live better with the political quarrels. Of course realizing that it is much worst in all other countries helped too ☺.

What was achieved went beyond our expectations and would not have happened without the curiosity, motivation and friendship expressed. Thanks very much to all !

Much of our time was dedicated to our ongoing projects:

Nanumea Biogas: After having sorted out the mess with Undp/GEF we got in November 2011 the installment planned for May 2010 ! Alleluiah. We were fortunate enough to be able to advance the costs and allow Sikeli to purchase in Fiji 4 water tanks, stoves & fittings. Surfing with the changing boat schedules and thanks to the support of many people in GoT, the equipment got loaded onto the Nivaga, along with the gasifier we left in Suva. Nivaga arrived in Funafuti Xmas week. Finding our shipment took many trips to the warf and got everyone (marine, customs, agents, Kaio and Puatei, the new Kaupule planner) supportively involved. Sikeli and Kaio departure to Nanumea worked out very well: Sikeli's plane landed the said day



and the Manu Folau was conveniently delayed till the day after allowing Sikeli and Kaio to leave a week earlier than planned. The objectives of their 5 weeks trip : to implement the water tanks purchased, to make sure the 4 biogas units installed in 2010 are working sustainably, to do more training and awareness.

2 days after they set foot on Nanumea Kaio wrote : *“good news is that 2 digestors are producing gas.... go Nanumea go... be the first island in Tuvalu to use Bio-Gas...”*. Sikeli goes on: *“Now 3 of 4 watertanks are producing gas, they even had breakfast with the gas and the boys sat up an awareness workshop with 80+ attendees”*. That made our day. Since then, the team run a 2nd workshop with 100+ attendees, the water tanks and 3 pigpens are being installed or built.

See: <http://www.alofatuvalu.tv/blog>

Biofuels at TMTI After the 2010 soft mutiny that impacted my motivation, peace is back. We were delighted to hear Iefata, the new captain and our longtime friend Leota, chief engineer, express their will to go further with the biomass operations.



TMTI trainees took delivery of the gasifier from the Nivaga, long before we found our equipment for Nanumea ☺. A few days later, during a friendly dinner organized by Iefata, we handed out to Leota the spare parts brought from France for the biodiesel unit. Amongst themes of discussion and satisfaction:

- Both believe it is not only possible but a plus for the school to include into the curriculum the biomass energies that were demonstrated at TMTI.
- To optimize the biogas, the piggery will be hosting the school’s own pigs including some of the trainees who’ll operate the system; Sikeli will make the trip to assist as soon as TMTI is ready.
- On the biodiesel & gasification field : Leota and his team will put the units back together with the new spare parts.

Hopefully, this will allow Nielu from the Energy Department, to achieve his project of demonstrating and training on biodiesel in the outer islands, with the assistance of the TMTI officers who were trained in 2008 and 2009. These activities are in phase with the Minister of Energy’s aim to have at least 3 islands become oil independent with a combination of alternative energies and in line with the objective of a 100% renewable Tuvalu by 2020.

Electric scooters: The idea pitched at our 2009 General meeting is slowly making its way. In 2010, John made an attempt to push further. This year, the motivation was revived by Anare’s interest for IUCN energy efficiency projects. The concept was discussed with as many people as possible from GoT to small businesses... Everyone seems very keen. We did not manage to discuss with Mafalu, IUCN local representative, but will follow up by email.

Biodiversity The last draft of the Marine Life synthesis report was handed out to concerned people from the Funafuti & Nanumea kaupules and Fisheries who were actually not overseas. We hope to get their comments soon ☺

Yearly activities

Distribution & screenings More than ever, after such long time, our luggage were full of things to hand out. Including a 100L barrel: a new gasifier for TMTI (see below). We usually start with giving the **press cards** to the members of the Francophone press club created in 2004. Then, mostly at random, according to our daily trips, we distribute **past activities Dvd's**, such as:

- the 20mn baby clinic construction video finally given to the Fagogo Malipolipo after 2 years ! It was nice to be able to watch it with the group.
- a Dutch TV report about Tuvaluan soccer was handed out to Paulson. We had put in contact a Dutch trainer and the Tuvalu Soccer association and were pleased to see the project actually materialized..
- A 15mn video, made by the Danish journalists who staid at the Alofa House, was given to Ampelamo, who has been picking up scraps for years, alone, with his bike and trolley, and Apisai (PDL). Hopefully this will help Ampelamo a bit. We want to stay confident that he will get support from the new EU fund. The waste situation has not improved and is still a thwart for tourism.

Mixed feelings with the IRWM Children Quizz 90mn video. We fear it will just be sent for the funder's file when we would have loved a screening for the children.... and a little consideration for our benevolent work... Small frustration too with the 60 mn video 2010 garden competition on which I slaved ☺ nights to be able to hand it out to Ivy before leaving. I was stunned to hear that she suddenly left for 2 years, a week before us. Tataua, Red Cross, was ready to try to organize a screening for the gardeners, after our departure but I lost my motivation and left the video unfinished. Maybe next year.



On December 18 & 19, the 2 public screenings of the 2010 King Tides Festival gathered around 100 people each night. Free copies were handed to some concerned people and masters and blank dvd's were given to Red Cross for them to sell copies.

Delivering the **Sony semi professional camera** fixed in Los Angeles to the Social Office along with blank tapes brought many laughs: I mingled Lanieta's face with Tananoia and... Aseta who was astound when we came to give her the camera. ☺

As always too we distributed **organic seeds** to Funafuti and outer islands gardeners. Some were handed out to Nanumea by Sikeli and Kaio. This is always a pleasure to see the results. Most surprising is Pati's basil. Planted a few years ago, it developed into a 1m bush on which we help ourselves regularly.

As you all have seen and as always **every activity was documented.**

- We filmed most events we were invited to such as the Celebration in honor of Isaia Taeia, who passed away last July while overseas ; Fagogo Malipolipo Xmas visits to the jail and the hospital and the group's Xmas party for a video in length. TMTI passing out; There was also, as mentioned earlier, the Nanumea Women Meeting and Tinapolo's funerals. We will try to edit this for next trip.

- Alofa Tuvalu's daily projects follow ups were also documented as well as our daily interaction with the children with whom we will set the Alofa Tuvalu "junior club" thought of a few years ago by Susie and Lasela

- As always too, we cant help it, we kept discussing biomass activities and every other aspect of environment and... life

Other activities this year included: - Thanks to the PM and the Foreign Affairs Minister (and Ministry), the investigation about the issue raised by the French Embassy of letters of credentials not having been returned was an easy cross off. The letters had been sent months ago and were forwarded again.

- By 31/12 we had to finalize a couple of reports: for the French Embassy, to close the "legal junior expert" file and for the Total Foundation, we sent a draft synthesis report of our Marine Life survey.

- On January 5th, although the schools were still closed, the donation to Nauti & SDA Primary schools on behalf of Hunamar, a French NGO that worked with 2 elementary schools from the South of France, was another picture opportunity.



The last week

we concentrated on the yearly picture exhibition. Supported this time by the French Embassy, with the assistance of Kaio and half a dozen kids from the "Alofa Tuvalu junior club", thousands of pictures got stuck to the Vaiaku Lagi Hotel wall. After a week, everyone came by to pick their picture off the wall... Our way to give back pictures we take.



We were also pleased to find the time before leaving to do a few interviews such as Tafue's feelings after Durban matching ours: Waste of time, money, GH Gas...

2 days before leaving, and 3 years after cabinet decision, we were able to do a photo souvenir with Apisai, Minister of Foreign Affairs and environment, with the nomination letter as "Ambassador for the Environment". I don't care about a title but when things finally happen always brings satisfaction ☺



Amongst my regrets for this too short trip :

- Not to have more time to spend with my friends and not to have found the time for a bingo with the media girls lead by Diana.
- Not to have fixed one omission (amongst my many mistakes the last 10 years). Over the years, we did training and communication about energies and other environmental themes. But, although this is my specialty and despite the fact that Small is Beautiful is based on disseminating information for reproduction, we yet have to tackle the theme of communication in more depth.. This time, it seemed a too wide project for too short a stay.

The previous years, 6 months proved too long for my mental and physical states but 7 weeks is much too short. This time the 10 below temperatures exaggerates the "We miss you Tuvalu" feeling ☺ ? But having to reorganize our space, reviewing and looking at some of the video recorded this year, also brings much



nostalgia. Staying tuned on projects with local counterparts keeps our minds there. What we miss the most are our foliki friends who were so much part of our daily life. Strange not to hear them anymore !!

Here in Paris, it is difficult to realize that we wont see Farrah anymore. This is dedicated to her who generously gave her time to Alofa... Tuvalu... and you.

www.alofatuvalu.tv

