Sciences in the plural: The UNESCO Environmental Encyclopedia of *Marovo* Lagoon, Solomon Islands

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**ABSTRACT**

On the basis of 25 years’ research in Marovo Lagoon, Western Solomon Islands, this paper discusses interactions between local development aspirations and introduced agendas of biodiversity management, and argues for increased dialogue between local and global ways of knowing and classifying biodiversity. Transnational companies have exploited the reefs and rainforests of Marovo Lagoon since the 1980s, while the area has attained international renown as a biodiversity hotspot. Through customary law, the Marovo tribal groups still own the lagoon and the land whose resources are targets of such conflicting projects as logging and biodiversity conservation. Chiefs and leaders in Marovo have also initiated and supported academic research documenting resource use, management institutions and environmental knowledge. This encounter between local and non-local knowledge opens the possibility of making meaningful connections between (1) Western science, (2) agendas of environmental sustainability and (3) knowledge and aspirations of local people. To illustrate how such connections can be mediated by long-term anthropological field research, the paper reports a UNESCO initiative based on an Environmental Encyclopedia in the Marovo language that also contains English translations and scientific identifications. A new approach to environmental education in Marovo schools now uses this book, aiming to prepare youth for sustainable rural lifestyles, while also fulfilling national policy to promote locally and globally relevant vernacular education. In 2010 an online version of the book was launched as an OER (Open Educational Resource) contributing to a pioneering effort underway in Marovo Lagoon to use rural internet-based education involving the OLPC (One Laptop per Child) project and VSAT broadband to remote locations.