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Madang man wins US award

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Villager wins world award

A WANANG villager from Madang Province has won the 2009 Seacology prize for his efforts in helping conserve the forest around his province.

Filip Damen, a customary landowner and community organiser was also awarded a USD 10, 000 (K60,000) and honored at a ceremony at the Aquarium of the Bay in San Francisco, California last week.

Each year, the Seacology prize is awarded to an indigenous islander for exceptional achievement in preserving the environment and culture of any of the world's 100,000 islands.

Filip was born, raised and lives in a traditional village and he has never been overseas and until a few years ago had never ventured beyond Madang Province. All odds, he preserved his forest and led his community to develop a national and regional asset in environmental sciences.

The United State Embassy in Port Moresby advised that the award highlighted the heroic efforts by people who seldomly receive any publicity - indigenous leaders who risk their own lives and well-being to protect their island's ecosystems and culture.

The US Embassy advised that the award, allowed the landowners in his area to join an international collaboration to study the dynamics of rainforests around the globe and the rainforest's response to climate change.

The embassy said that since the inception of the prize in 1992, Seacology has given the award to 18 native islanders in recognition of their brave work. Mr Damen was awarded for leading efforts by group of 11 Wanang villages to sign a conservation deed.



LISTEN: Filip Damen