

Key Messages:

- Successful 'ridge-to-reef' management depends on broad stakeholder input
- Inland and coastal communities need to manage their actions and resources together
- 'Ridge-to-reef' management protects habitat for all stages of life
- The success of protected areas for conservation and livelihoods relies on combining bottom-up community engagement with top-down planning
- Public health and livelihoods depend on environmental health
- Healthy ecosystems are the best defense against climate change impacts to livelihoods

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Sustainability in periodically harvested *Tabus*

WCS is undertaking research to establish the parameters for sustainable periodic harvesting of *tabu* areas also known as Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). This will provide evidence-based guidance for communities, aiming to improve understanding and inform better management of their marine resources.

Tabu areas have been used as an environmental management tool by Melanesians for centuries. Traditionally *tabu* areas were established to ensure food security and plentiful harvests for social events as well as enable the redistribution of food as a show of wealth and status. They still play a major role as indigenous communities use this cultural practice to implement marine conservation using Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMAs) in Fiji today.



Image © WCS Fiji

Above : Periodic harvest survey team

The effectiveness of *tabu* areas as a tool for conservation can depend on how frequently and intensively they are opened for harvesting. Infrequent, controlled harvests can promote recovery of targeted fishery. The key to this is having rules in place to manage the harvests (for example specifying the length of opening and the fishing gears that can be used) - and ensuring that these are adhered to by the fishermen! Uncontrolled harvests can see marine resources removed with alarming efficiency, thus rapidly eliminating any benefits accrued from *tabu* areas in terms of fishery and other ecosystems services.

In Fiji, communities also see *tabu* areas as sources of income to cover their monetary needs (like school and church fee and provincial levies). Although they wish to conserve fish for the future, current priorities often take precedence, resulting in more intense and frequent harvests. As monetary pressures grow, there is an urgent need to evaluate how communities can best

manage the harvesting of *tabu* areas to ensure so they don't undo all the benefits and can maintain sustainable fisheries.



Image © WCS Fiji

Above: CPUE data collection during harvest in Kiobo village

The WCS team recently tested a range of survey methods for this research during a week-long harvest of the Kiobo Marine Protected Area off Kubulau in Bua Province, Vanua Levu. Working with the University of Western Australia and University of the South Pacific, diver-operated videos (DOVs) and baited remote underwater video surveys (BRUVs) were tested along with household interviews and catch-per unit effort (CPUE) surveys. The final methodology is being refined as the team prepares to undertake this research at a range of sites across Fiji in the next six months.



Left: Laitia Tamata, a Masters candidate at USP conducting household surveys during the harvest survey in Kiobo village.



Left: Jordan Goetze a PhD candidate at UWVA using diver-operated video survey (DOVs) technique on fish data collection.

Image © WCS Fiji

Bua takes a step further into sustainability

1. FLMMA network gathering in Bua

Fiji Locally Managed Marine Area Network (FLMMA) is a partnership of communities, organizations and government offices who have joined together to learn collectively and improve the success of marine conservation projects. The FLMMA vision is *Kedra Sasalu Tawa Mudu Na Noda Kawa ; Levu na Sasalu Marau o Nau* - Everlasting Fish for our future generations.



Participants analyse data

Image © WCS Fiji

Every two years, FLLMA members in the province of Bua come together to share information, plan and support each other. This event took place recently on 26-28 November in Nabouwalu village and included representatives from communities across all of Bua's 9 districts as well as the Provincial Office, the Fisheries Department, i-Taukei Affairs, WCS and the Institute of Applied Sciences at the University of the South Pacific.

As well as analyzing data and sharing stories, participants explored the growing pressures on local resources. Land is increasingly being converted for farming, landowners are tempted by lucrative logging propositions, and limited livelihoods opportunities encourage coastal communities to fish unsustainably. Major infrastructure developments are proposed including roads, ports and a new town. These will increase viability of previously untapped mineral and timber re-

sources, opening the way for more logging and mining. Participants reflected on how these pressures affect forests, rivers, and reef ecosystems, the vital connections between them and the services they provide to communities.

Participants committed to not only take these lessons back to their tikina and villages, but to help communities apply them for sustainable local management.

2. Bua Yaubula Management Support Team

A major outcome from the Bua FLMMA workshop was the formation of Bua Yaubula Management Support Team (BYMST).



Bua Yaubula Management Support Team

Image © WCS Fiji

Based on principles of collaboration and a 'Ridge to Reef' management approach, BYMST aims to help raise awareness, build capacity and coordinate sustainable resource management across the province of Bua.

BYMST has been endorsed by the Provincial Council and its remit and membership will be further developed in the coming months through a range of training and planning activities. Along with the Ministry of i-Taukei Affairs and Bua Provincial Office, WCS and other partners will support and work closely with BYMST to address the challenges and opportunities ahead

Merger gives charge to local NGO in Fiji

BirdLife (BL) Pacific has official transferred its Fiji program to Nature-Fiji-MareqetiViti (NFMV).



Left : Local staff from BirdLife and Nature Fiji-MareqetiViti smiling with the two organizational head after the merger

Image © BirdLife

NFMV - Fiji's leading local conservation organization has taken responsibilities for projects and staff previously managed by BL Fiji country program.

At the event marking this occasion, was the Minister for Local Government, Urban Development, Housing and Environment, Colonel Samuela Saumata, saying, "This is a wonderful achievement which

both organizations have been working towards for the past two and a half years".

Don Stewart, Birdlife International Director has overseen BirdLife's Pacific operations and its Fiji Country Program since 2004, while Dr Dick Watling has led NatureFiji-MareqetiViti since its inception in 2007.

Speaking at the event, Mr Stewart shared his dream saying, "One of our ambitions, when we set up an office in Fiji was to help establish a national NGO, so I am delighted that this has been achieved and in such a short space of time". He also added, "Transferring the work program to NatureFiji-MareqetiViti is good for the organisation, good for the country and good for the environment."

Therefore, BirdLife International Pacific Partnership will now focus on developing and expanding its regional program, which tackles issues such as invasive species, deforestation, species extinctions and climate change. NFMV concentrates on local development and programs. Together they will "deliver benefits to the Pacific's environment and its people"

Natural Resource Management Strategy in Macuata

Momentum is building in Macuata, in northern Vanua Levu as they establish their Provincial a Natural Resource Management (NRM) Strategy.



Image © WWF South Pacific

Above: Farmer solely depends on ancestral land for food security and source of income

With support from World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) South Pacific, Macuata Provincial Office and partners have gone through a process of research and planning, culminating in a Provincial Workshop in Labasa to outline the shape and content of the strategy.

Based on principles of Ecosystem Based Management (EBM) for sustainable resource use, the NRM Strategy aims to safeguard the natural resources that communities rely on through targeted and coordinated actions.

The action plan will incorporate input from a wide range of stakeholders under the following thematic areas:

- Biodiversity;
- Capacity Building;
- Sustainable financing;
- Governance;
- Policy and Advocacy; and
- Sustainable Economic Development

Partners are planning for an official launch later this year after a final round of consultation and action planning. Macuata NRM Strategy will focus on advocacy to assist communities with adequate knowledge and understanding in order to identify and address key challenges while maintaining the ecosystems services that they rely on for their health and livelihoods.

Macuata Yaubula Committee will take the lead in the implementation and enforcement processes. "A Successful Natural Resource Management Strategy is a step closer to reaching conservation targets,"

stated Roko Tui Macuata Sitiveni Lalibuli "while also supporting development of livelihoods"



Image © WWF South Pacific

Left: Partners and communities get together to discuss NRMS during a workshop

Strategy success calls for replication

The iTaukei Affairs Board hopes that a successful Natural Resource Management (NRM) Strategy in Macuata will encourage other provinces to follow their lead.

The Macuata NRM Strategy reinforces the value of sustainable management. It guides resource owners to make informed decisions, avoiding the pitfalls that can come with poorly planned development and be detrimental to their long-term interests.



Image © WWF South Pacific

Left :Discussion held on components of NRMS with partner organizations and stakeholders, during



Image © WWF South Pacific

Left : Colonel Apakuki Kurusiga, iTaukei Affairs Board CEO talks during the planning workshop held in Labasa.

be based on consultation with resource owners, relevant government stakeholders and non-government organizations, with the Provincial Offices playing a key role to ensure communities are fully engaged in planning and implementation.

The Deputy Chief Executive Officer for iTaukei Affairs Board, Colonel Apakuki Kurusiga sees NRMS as a hope for ensuring sustainability in resources management leading to socioeconomic development in future. He stated that he is proud of Macuata province for such a wise move, which shows they are taking the lead in light of increasing development under the government's Look North policy.

Colonel Kurusiga encouraged other Provincial Councils to develop similar strategies to assist with provincial development efforts.

With the support of WWF, efforts to replicate the process are now underway in the provinces of Lomaiviti and Ba. Strategies will again



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Adding Protected Areas to existing Network

The District of Sawaieke is located on the West side of Gau islands with a population of 1800. It is also the chiefly home to the current paramount chief of Gau and consists of 7 villages (Somosomo, Sawaieke, Nawaikama, Levuka-i-Gau, Nukuloa, Vadravadra and Yadua).

The people of Sawaieke recently expanded their network of Protected Areas (PAs), reflecting their growing commitment to an ecosystem-based management approach.

Strengthening and expansion of a PAs network was made possible after a 2 day workshop (24th -26th September) facilitated by WWF South Pacific in Vadravadra village. Participants from the 7 villages including men, women and youth representatives joined with Government and non-government representatives to discuss and determine new marine areas for protection up-scaling from what was established in 2005.



Left: Facilitators conducting a MPA network re-configuration exercise with community reps in Gau

Image © WWF South Pacific

The process of reconfiguring PA boundaries was based on traditional knowledge of priority areas and information gathered from baseline surveys on key habitats that include mangroves, sea grass, beach profile, freshwater and land use capability. These surveys were conducted by WWF South Pacific, Department of Landuse and Planning and Frontier International in 2011.

The inclusion of Forest and Freshwater Streams for protection to Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) within the proposed network exemplifies the principles of Ecosystems Based Management (EBM). EBM has been very successful in Qoliqoli Cokovata, Macuata District, Vanua Levu and Sawaieke project is a strand of it. The purpose is to enforce the importance of an approach towards conservation that links land and sea.

The work in Gau Islands is funded by WWF Austria through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Sawaieke Yaubula Management Committee and WWF South Pacific. The aim is to safeguard the District's natural resources, enhancing rural development, ensuring food and water security and building resilience to climate change through an effective link of protected areas.

Network of PAs is likely to manage resources better through protection and restoration of three ecosystems but there is urgency for socio-economic consideration due to the communities' dependence on of natural resources.

Furthermore, to get the communities working together, proposed areas will be mapped out and presented back to the 7 villages within Sawaieke District to get confirmation in-order to adopt these areas for protection.

According to the Mata-ni-Tikina, Kalivati Sotia, islanders have witnessed degradation of the natural environment without proper management before WWF get involved. There has been exploitation in the past but human dependence on natural resources is clear now.

This is a renewed hope to see the district unite in decision making that affects the future of Gau for the generations to come.

Ocean Issues to be tackled by new graduates

Nine journalists, journalism students and church youth workers who had gone through the Sea Series fellowship are now ready to cover ocean issues after their recent graduation. The fellowship introduces journalists to marine life and the living environment. It features local experts, community leaders and government officials who discuss critical issues in Managing Fiji's marine resources.



Image © Seaweb

Above: Sea Series fellowship program graduates

The fellowship runs from March to September including two fieldtrips and lectures are held fortnightly. Lecture topics include community-based management of marine resources, climate change adaptation, ecosystem-based management, cultural roles in conservation, sustainable tourism, destructive fishing practices and the national plan, mangrove ecosystem and others.

Many of those who have gone through the series are now being given the task of covering such stories thus an increase in its coverage. Graduate Fiji Times reporter Tevita Vuibau said when he first joined he was in doubt about the fellowship but this changed as he sat through the lectures and went on a field-trip.

"This belief is that while the issues of climate change, coastal erosion and depleting fish stocks are taught in classrooms and discussed by governments in conferences around the world,- the real action must take place at grassroots level. This is an issue that has been greatly impressed on me by the Sea-Web Sea Series lectures and one which I intend to further explore during my tenure as a journalist."