

**Kuta Workshops**  
Kaloa, Namalata and Valeni  
19-24<sup>th</sup> November 2012



## INTRODUCTION

The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) supports the conservation of Fiji's unique biodiversity and culture and the livelihoods of communities. WCS sees the development of environmentally-friendly economic activities as a means of empowering local communities, diversifying their sources of income and reducing pressures to harvest and sell natural resources in an unsustainable manner.

Workshops (see agenda at Appendix 1) involved women from the districts of Lekutu, Nadi, Solevu, Wainunu and Kubulau (all in Bua Province) and Wailevu (in Cakaudrove), with the following aims:

- to enhance kuta-weaving skills amongst local women
- to encourage women to pass on their kuta weaving skills within communities
- to explore opportunities for a co-operative to generate and manage income
- to raise awareness about good practice in managing kuta plantations

This report reflects what was covered at the workshops. ***It will be sent to the Provincial Office and also to participants so they can explain what happened to the rest of their village/tikina.***

## FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS

Roughly 30 % of the ladies felt they knew how to weave round kuta mats and what 40% had no experience

Roughly 15% had sold kuta mats before, with most of the others having given them as gifts

All participants felt that their skills had been enhanced by the training

Of those who were selling other products, most were other mats and handicrafts

## ORGANIZATION

Women have decided that they will be divided into teams to work on their products. Initially the teams will be:

### Lekutu team

Team Leader:

### Nadi and Solevu team

Team Leader:

### Wainunu and Kubulau team

Team Leader: Edith Whippy

### Wailevu team

Team Leader:

Teams should look to 'grow' over time – taking in new ladies from these areas or from other areas. Teams should be proactive in this by recruiting and training more ladies. The more ladies who are weaving, the greater the chance of success! Profits will be shared within these teams also.

## QUALITY CONTROL

The price of each mat will be determined by the size (diameter) and how finely decorated the mat is. The Team Leader will be responsible for quality control. She will inspect all completed mats before they go out to the market to ensure it is worth the price they will put on it and the customer will be satisfied also.

## SALE AND LOGISTICS

Once products are completed and quality checked, the Team Leader contact WCS (331 5174) and make arrangements to take them to the market or buyer.

WCS will support this process at the start, with a view to teams handling everything themselves in time.

Following a basic market analysis, the following pricing structure is proposed

	<b>small</b> 70-80(cm)	<b>medium</b> 80-140	<b>large</b> 140-200	<b>XL</b> 200-300	<b>XXL</b> 300+
<b>basic</b>					
<b>decorative</b>					
<b>extra special</b>					

Potential buyers have been identified as:

- Visitors to the village (especially Greenforce volunteers in Namalata)
- Cousteau resort
- Other hotels in Savusavu
- Soqosoqo vakamarama
- Bua Provincial Office
- Suva Flea Market
- Suva Handicraft Centre
- Resorts outside of Vanua Levu
- Internationally: to Tonga or to Islanders living overseas (via the internet) at some point

Costs associated with posting or transporting mats will need to be incorporated into the actual price that the customer pays. Other products such as straight kuta mats, pandanas mats and other handicrafts may be included in the future.

To ensure good management of money, each team should have a Treasurer, who will keep record of finances. WCS will provide a template for the teams to record the numbers and types of mats they produce and the money they make from sales.

## **PROFIT SHARING**

This project aims to create sustainable businesses that involve and benefit whole communities. To enable this, we suggest that any profits are shared along the following lines:

- 60% to the individual ladies who made each mat
- 20% to a separate fund for management of kuta and to invest in the kuta weaving business
- 20% to a separate fund for local social or environmental projects

This will need to be confirmed by each team, but we recommend they each use the same system.

## **MANAGEMENT OF KUTA**

Places where kuta is known to grow: Votua, Naruwai, Nawailevu, Nakawakawa, Kaciwaqa Estate (Nakabuta, Wainunu), Nakorovou & Namalata (mataqali owned), Nasasaivua, Nabalebale, Dreketi, Valeni

## **THREATS:**

- There is no properly planned management of kuta plantations
- The ladies using kuta are usually from different mataqali to the owners of the land where it grows
- The hot and dry season can dry up the kuta ponds
- Invasive/weed species can take over kuta ponds
- Ladies need to be well organized and work together to help manage the kuta plantation, harvest it and bring it for weaving

Potential activities for 2013 include undertaking a survey of kuta sites and developing guidelines for managing the sites to ensure they continue to produce kuta.

WCS will seek to integrate this within the Ecosystem-Based Management Plans for each district.

## **NEXT STEPS**

- Provincial Office and participants to ensure feedback on this project to Bose Vanua, Bose va Koro and Soqosoqo vakamarama in relevant tikina (through Provincial Office, Mata ni Tikina, Turaga ni Koro and other routes).
- Participants share their knowledge and pass on their skills to other women in their village and even to other villages.
- Ladies get weaving and keep weaving! Notify Team Leaders and/or WCS when you have finished mats you want to sell.
- WCS will provide a template for the teams to record the numbers and types of mats they produce and the money they make from sales.
- WCS will keep in touch with Team Leaders in Jan-Feb 2013 to offer support.

**Appendix 1**  
**Kuta Workshop Agenda**

Kaloa, Namalata and Valeni, 18-24 November 2012

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Facilitator</b>
5.00pm	Arrival of participants	
6.00pm	Dinner	
7.30pm – 8.30pm	Workshop overview Discussion on the workshop programme Discussion with women on skills sharing & kuta management	Edith & Cagi
<b>Day 1</b>		
7.00am	Breakfast	
8.00am	Registration & Devotion	
8.15am	Introduction: overview & objective of the training	Cagi
8.45am	Grouping into a) new learners; and b) refresher ones	Edith & Cagi
8.50am – 9.00am	Edith to facilitate this session – butcher paper work	Edith
9.00am – 10.00am	Begin weaving with instruction	Edith
10.00am – 10.15am	MORNING TEA	
10.15am – 12.30pm	Weaving/Training on Kuta	Edith
12.30– 1.30pm	LUNCH	
1.30pm– 2.30pm	Discuss management on Kuta plantation (growing, harvesting, storing) Facilitated by Womens group	Elenoa, Matila, Radini
2.30 – 3.30pm	Weaving/Training on Kuta	Edith
3.30pm – 3.45pm	BREAK	
3.45 – 4.45pm	Weaving/Training on Kuta	Edith
5.00pm	Reflection and Finish	
<b>Day 2</b>		
7.00am – 8.00am	breakfast	
8.00am – 8.15am	Registration & devotion	
8.15am – 8.30am	Brief recap of yesterday	Cagi & Edith
8.30am - 9.00am -	identifying key challenges and opportunities	Cagi
9.00am – 10.00	Weaving & training	Edith
10.00am – 10.15am	MORNING TEA	
10.15am – 10.45am	Identify preferred option for cooperative structure	Cagi with Ladies
10.45am – 12.30pm	Weaving/Training	Edith
12.30pm – 1.30pm	LUNCH	
1.30pm – 2.30pm	Build understanding about markets & supply chains	Cagi & ladies
2.30pm – 3.30pm	establish working groups and plan next steps (with SMART targets)	Cagi
3.30pm – 3.45pm	Afternoon Tea	
3.45pm – 4.30pm	Rounding training with evaluating participants' knowledge on Kuta weaving. Where to from here and how?	Cagi & Edith