



Community initiative to create employment stability: Vuda and Waya Qoliqoli

The communities of Vuda and Waya are the traditional resource owners of a large section of the Mamanuca and lower Yasawa islands, north of Lautoka town, predominant tourism development areas of Fiji. In the 1990s, community leaders, working in partnership with early local tourism pioneers such as Mr Dan Costello (Beachcomber Island), decided that in order to support sustainable development and employment in the area, they would declare no-fishing areas around resorts.

Initially, in 1996, three islands were declared no-fishing areas by the traditional leader, the Tui Vuda, Ratu Sir Tavaiqia, who wrote an open letter saying "I confirm that the waters around the islands of Tai, Eluvuka and Kadavu Lailai in Nadi Bay are now either Fisheries Reserves or are to be designated Fisheries Reserves and therefore no fish, shell fish or octopus (*sasala ni waitui*) are to be taken from those waters in that area of sea being 400 m from the shoreline of those islands." These islands are now known as Beachcomber (Tai), Treasure (Eluvuka) and Bounty (Kadavu Lailai) Island Resorts.

Aerial photograph of the protected reef within the Marine Protected Area at Treasure Island Resort. © Treasure Island Resort



These first reserves were later joined by no-fishing areas fronting newer resorts at South Sea Island Resort (Vunivadra Island), Tivua Island Resort, and Vomo Island Resort. To the north, on Wayalailai and Kuata Islands, similar protected areas were formed at Wayalailai Ecohaven, Naqalia Lodge and Kuata Barefoot Island Resort (Fig. 1). Most of these reserves only cover shallow fringing reefs from beach to the deepwater drop off, but a new, larger area including an expanse of open sea and dolphin habitat was declared in February 2017. Lying between Wayalaia and Kuata Islands, it was named the "Gateway" Marine Park in recognition of the area serving as the gateway to the Yasawa Islands.

These reserves are traditionally formed no-take *tabu* areas, recognised by traditional authority, but not in law. In most areas traditional leaders, with the agreement of the resort, may allow limited fishing for specific traditional events. Enforcement and management are carried out primarily by resort employees, some of whom have formal training and are recognised as Fish Wardens by the Ministry of Fisheries. If transgressors are found to be from the local community they are reported to the village

authority, the *Turaga ni Koro* for discipline. The Vuda community resource owners formed the Vuda Resource Committee to manage environmental issues, consult with resorts, and negotiate new agreements in their area.

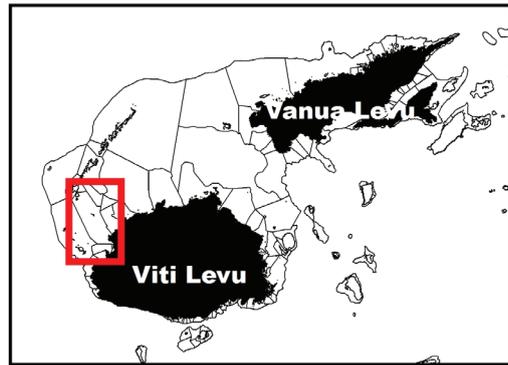
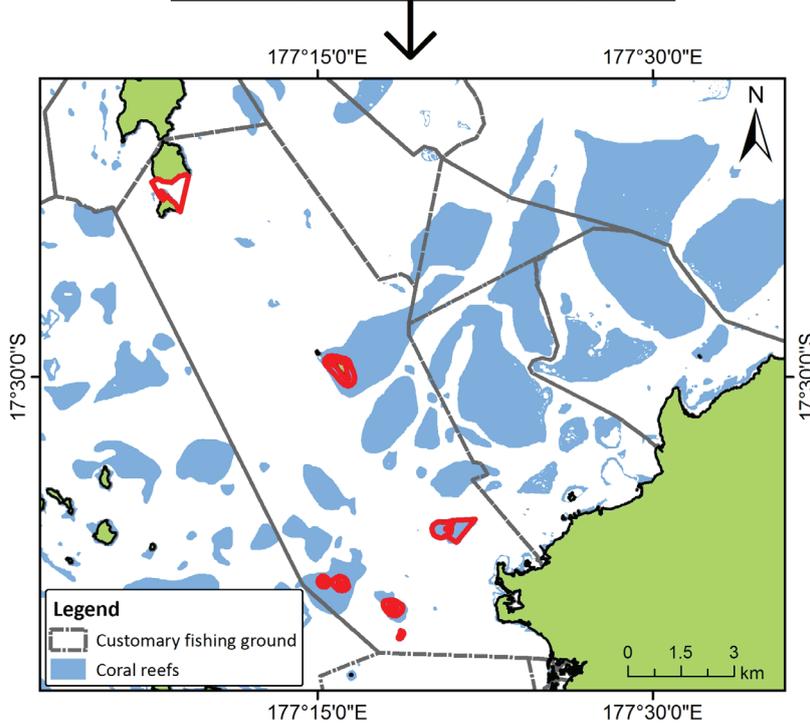


Figure 1. Map of the tourism-related MPAs within the Vuda and Waya Qoliqoli, Viti Levu.



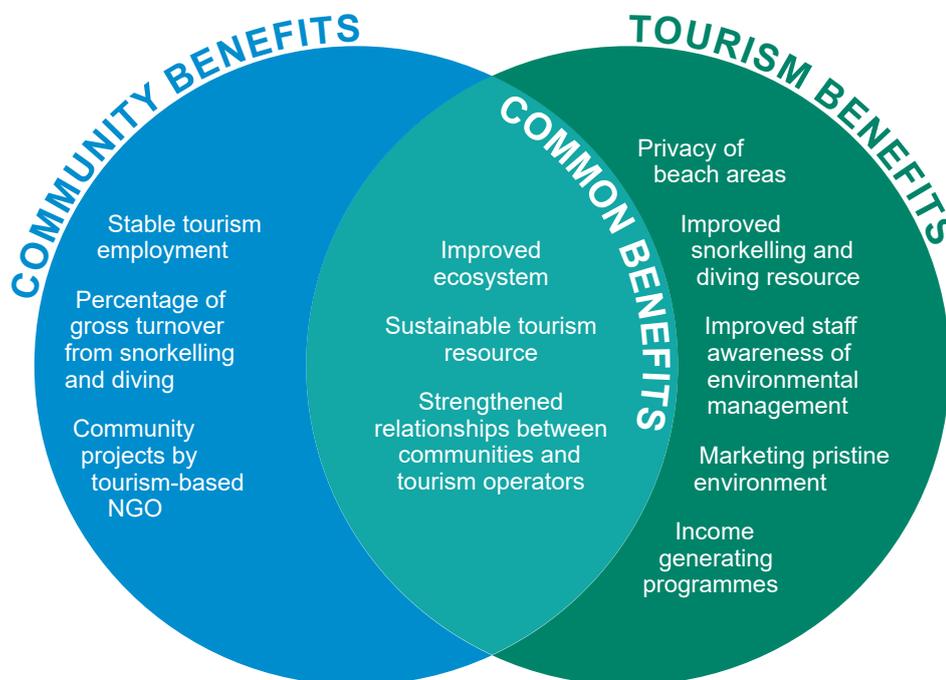


Poaching in the areas is generally low, but varies from resort to resort, depending largely on the strength of their relationships with the local communities. Where the closest villages are on the mainland, with employment opportunities and a reduced need to fish on the small patch reefs, and where there has been a long-standing agreement between resort owners and the community, a simple word to the traditional authorities has been enough to discourage fishing.

On outer islands, where communities are more dependent on fishing for subsistence and agreements may have been made more recently, enforcement has been more complex, particularly for properties managed by community members who find it difficult to refuse fishing requests from their own community. In general, enforcement by outside management has been taken more seriously. In the islands closest to Lautoka town, there is a continuing problem with poaching by small-scale commercial fishers, who may not recognise traditional authority, and there is a desire for increased legal recognition to assist in preventing this.

Most (but not all) of the resorts carry out some form of reef rehabilitation and protection programmes, usually for guest attraction and involvement. The most common are removal of crown-of-thorns starfish, restocking giant clams and coral transplanting. Others carry out specific wildlife interaction activities including fish feeding (shark feeding as an income-generating attraction in one area), and turtle protection programmes. The flow of benefits between providers and beneficiaries is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Benefits to providers (community) and beneficiaries (tourism operators) for the properties in Vuda and Waya customary fishing grounds.





Vomo Island fringing reef. © Vomo Island Fiji



For more information on Marine Conservation Agreements

Sykes H, Mangubhai S, Manley M (2018) Contribution of Marine Conservation Agreements to Biodiversity Protection, Fisheries Management and Sustainable Financing in Fiji. Report No. 02/18. Wildlife Conservation Society, Suva, Fiji. 98 pp.
<https://fiji.wcs.org/Resources/Reports.aspx>

Contacts

Wildlife Conservation Society, Fiji Country Program
11 Ma'afu Street, Suva, Fiji.
Email: infofiji@wcs.org, Tel: 331 5174
Marine Ecology Consulting
Email: Helen@marineecologyfiji.com