



Locally-owned private resorts: Lawaki Beach House and Botaira Resort

Background

Both of these projects have traditional *tabus* fronting small resorts privately leased and run by members of the local resource-owning community, who returned to the area after working overseas or in mainstream tourism in another district. Although the local communities are not directly involved in decision making at the resort, they supply most of the employees, and have strong family and traditional bonds.

Traditional *tabus* have been formed after NGOs working with the local communities created awareness of the prospective benefits. However, neighbouring *tabu* areas without active resort involvement have failed due to the difficulty people find in enforcing regulations on their own community members. The *tabu* areas in front of the resorts have survived because the community sees direct benefits from their existence, and because the resort owners and staff actively police and enforce the area.

Lawaki Beach House

Lawaki Beach House is a small eco-resort on the south western coast of Beqa Island, operating since early 2003. The resort was built and is privately owned and operated by a member of the local resource-owning community, and currently employs 11 staff from the two villages of Naceva and Naiseuseu. Their stated aims are to operate with sustainability and environmentally friendly management, and have a low impact on local culture and tradition.

In 2004 the shallow fringing reef and slope in front of the resort was protected under a traditional verbal *tabu* agreement and, after a Fiji Locally-Managed Marine Area (FLMMA) network workshop in 2010, the area was extended to stretch between Lawaki Beach House and Naiseuseu Village (the Kauvala *Tabu*), agreed to by the Naceva and Naiseuseu communities (Fig. 1). The area is used for snorkelling by Lawaki house guests and day trippers. Ten community members were trained in reef monitoring, and to be snorkel guides by a local consultant (Resort Support), and a number as Fish Wardens by the Ministry of Fisheries, supported and facilitated by Beqa Adventure Divers.

Lawaki Beach House guests and day-trippers are asked to contribute FJ\$10 each to a local community fund in support of the Marine Protected Area (MPA). The maximum house guest capacity is 18, but frequent occupation levels are 2 to 6 at a time, and up to 20 day-trippers visit about 3 times per month. The roughly estimated annual income to the village from this is probably between FJ\$5,000 and FJ\$10,000 per year. The flow of benefits between providers and beneficiaries is shown in Figure 3.



Lawaki Beach House MPA Beqa Island © Helen Sykes

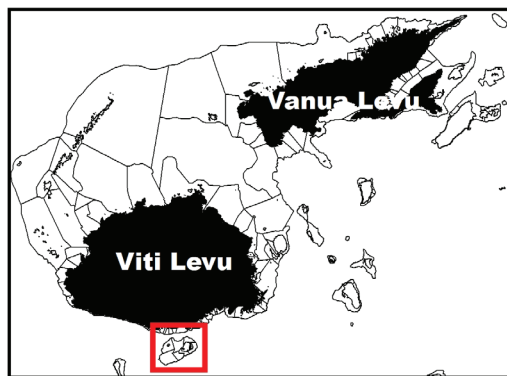
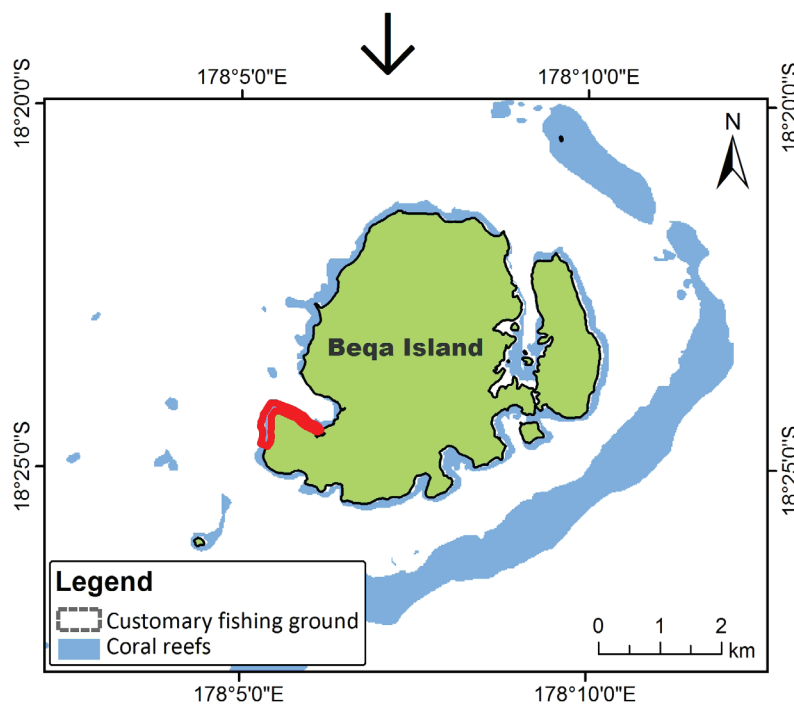


Figure 1. Map of the Kauvala tabu area at Lawaki Beach House on Beqa Island



Botaira Resort

Botaira Resort is on the west coast of Naviti Island in the Yasawa chain of islands north of Nadi, operating since 2008. The resort was built by members of the local resource owning community, and is privately owned and operated by a member of that community. It preferentially employs directly from the local village, but also takes staff from neighbouring island villages as needed.

As part of "Year of the Coral Reef" Initiatives in 2008, and supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), WWF and Global Environment Facility (GEF) small grants fund, members of the communities of Naviti Island formed the *Tikina* Naviti Conservation Initiative (TNCI), with the aim of creating MPAs around resorts and villages in their *tikina*, with the twin objectives of attracting tourism and also providing breeding grounds for marine life. In 2012, the Ministry of Fisheries mapped the areas and provided Fish Warden training to 26 community members from seven villages.

One of these *tabu* areas was Botaira Bay, stretching from both points of the bay to cover the shallow fringing reef and the deeper open water of the bay (Fig. 2). The area is used for snorkelling by Botaria house guests and day trippers. Staff were trained in reef monitoring, and to be snorkel guides by a local consultant (Resort Support), and occasional reef monitoring is carried out by visiting students from the University of Georgia in the USA. Botaira does not make any direct payment to the community for the marine protection, and does not charge guests for snorkelling.



Student carrying out reef surveys, and reef path to protected corals at low tide in Botaira MPA. © Helen Sykes

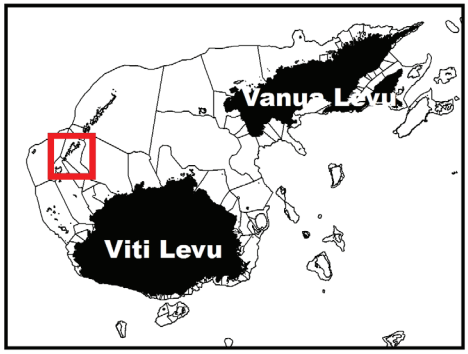
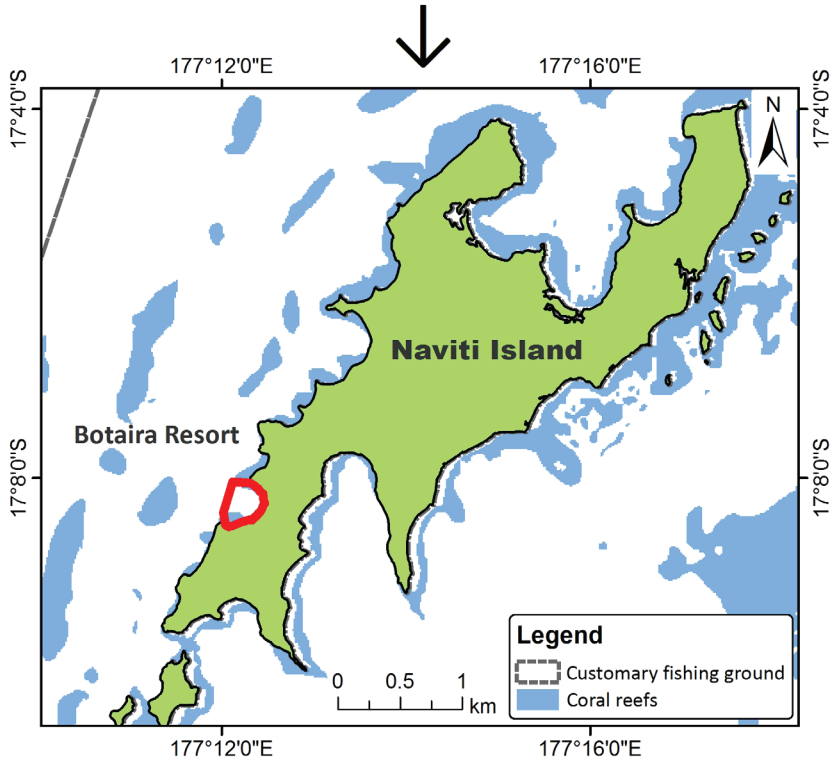


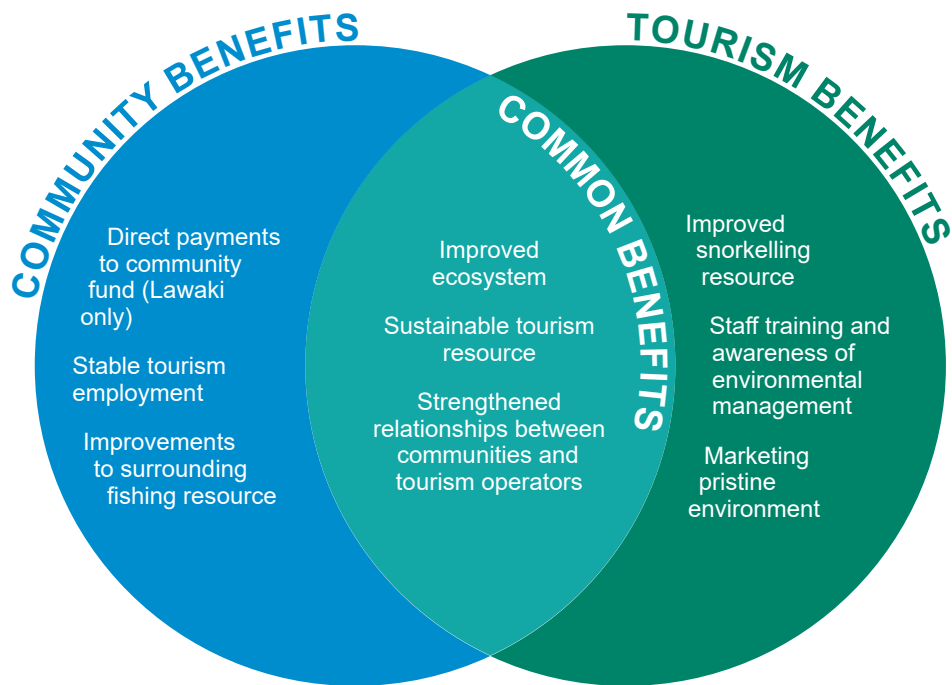
Figure 2. Map of the Botaira MPA on Naviti Island in the Yasawa group





Poaching on both islands was low at the start of the *tabu* period, but has increased since, primarily in the form of night spear fishing, probably from the local community, but also possibly from outside small scale commercial fishers. Both areas rely on the resorts to monitor and enforce the protected areas, which means that enforcement is more effective immediately in front of the resort, less so in more distant sections. Fishers are asked to leave, and may be reported to the traditional community leaders. Both projects have small areas of reef rehabilitation and protection projects, namely removal of COTS, restocking of giant clams and *Charonia tritonis* Triton’s trumpet snail “Davui” (Botaria only), and small areas of coral transplanting. The flow of benefits between providers and beneficiaries is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Benefits to providers (community) and beneficiaries (tourism operators) for the properties at Lawaki Beach House and Botaira Beach Resort.



Marine life in Botaira MPA. © Helen Sykes

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>

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