

Partnership between a large resort, an NGO, and the community: Cuvu Marine Protected Area, Shangri-La's Fijian Resort and Spa

Shangri-La's Fijian Resort & Spa is located on the small island of Yanuca, Cuvu, immediately off the west coast of Viti Levu, north of Sigatoka (the "Coral Coast"). It is part of a corporate chain of hotels based in Hong Kong, and one of the oldest resort properties in Fiji, first opening for business in 1967. It still has the highest guest capacity in Fiji, with 442 rooms, potentially housing over 1,400 guests.

In 2000, the resort management became concerned about the state of the marine environment surrounding the island, and in 2001 began a joint project with local NGO the Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific (FSP) and the local community of the Cuvu *tikina*, to address various environmental issues, including the formation of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). The resort provided funding to match grants secured by the FSP, the project facilitator, to conduct environmental awareness and management workshops in seven villages, and to design and implement a long-term management plan, including marine protection and watershed management, with a particular focus on women (the predominant fishers) in decision making. They commissioned a private sector consultant (Resort Support) to design and create guest environmental awareness materials and programmes, and to train resort staff in sustainable tourism practices.

In 2001, three marine and one mangrove protected areas, including the reef off-shore of the resort, were declared as traditional no-fishing *tabu* areas by the Paramount Chief of the district of Cuvu, *Na KaLevu*, Ratu Sakaisa Makutu, originally for least three years, to be renewed by future agreement (Fig. 1–2). Destructive fishing methods and disposal of rubbish into the sea was banned in the district. The Cuvu District Environment Committee was formed, consisting of representatives of villages, clans, families, the resort, FSP, and various governmental sectors. The Ministry of Fisheries provided 500 giant clams for restocking, and trained 16 local community members as Fish Wardens, empowered to oversee and enforce the no-fishing agreement.

John Rice, the general manager of the resort at the time of formation, estimated that the resort spent in excess of FJ\$150,000 (US\$70,000) in cash and in kind on activities to benefit the marine environment. The project was designated a United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) International Coral Reef Action Network "model site for coral reef conservation", the first for Melanesia.¹ Since that early start, the resort has continued to develop the resort-based project, including employment of a permanent marine biologist and a full time community environment representative in the watersports department, building and furnishing a marine centre for guest and local school education, and establishing mangrove planting around the foreshore.

The *tabu* area is recognised by traditional authority, but not by law. Initially poaching was low and the local Fish Wardens' authority was effective. However, in later years, community commitment to the project has waned, and the area fronting the resort has been opened multiple times, reducing its effectiveness. Due to the position of the *tabu*, one of the seven villages involved was much more impacted by the loss of fishing rights than the others, and currently

Minister for Tourism with the Heritage in Young Hands mangrove planting programme. © Shangri-La's Fijian Resort



1 MPA News 2002: Involvement of the Private Sector in a Community-Based MPA: Case Example from Fiji Vol. 4, No. 3

actively fish the sections less used by tourists without hindrance. The flow of benefits between providers and beneficiaries is shown in Figure 3.

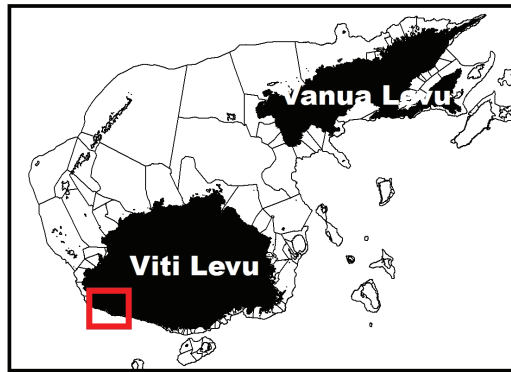


Figure 1. Map of the Cuvu MPA at the Shangri-La's Fijian Resort on the Coral Coast of Viti Levu.

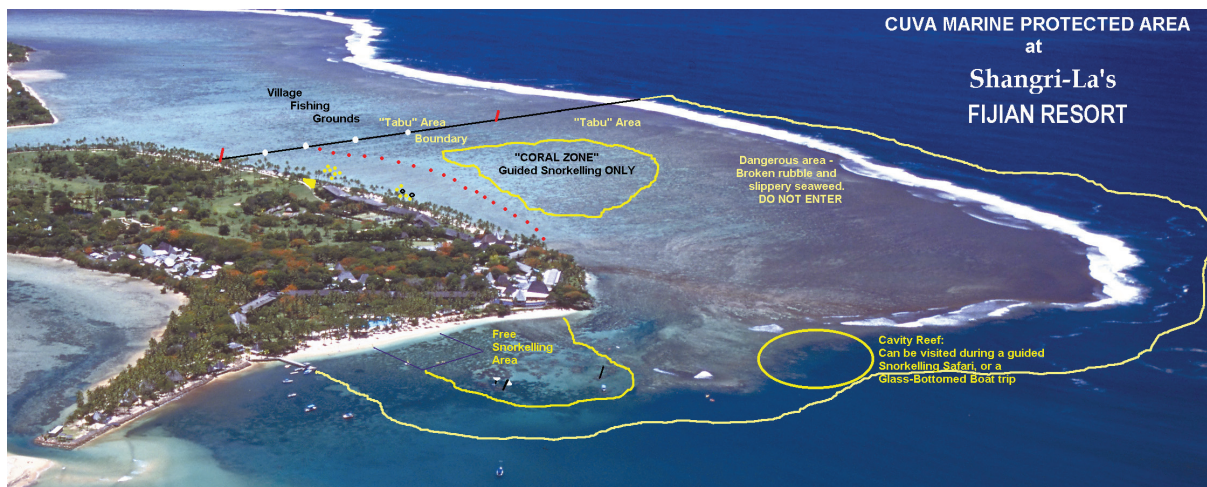
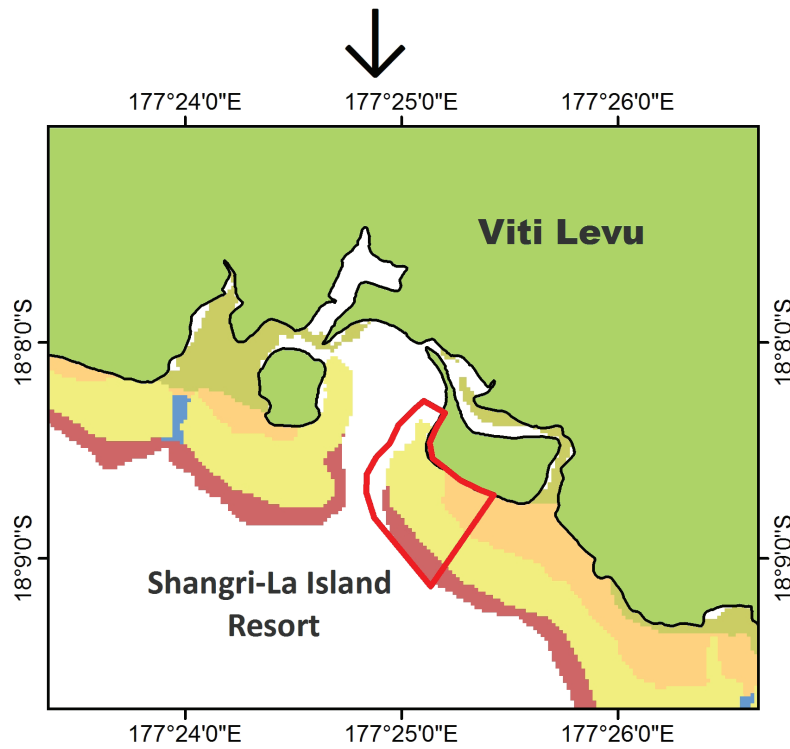
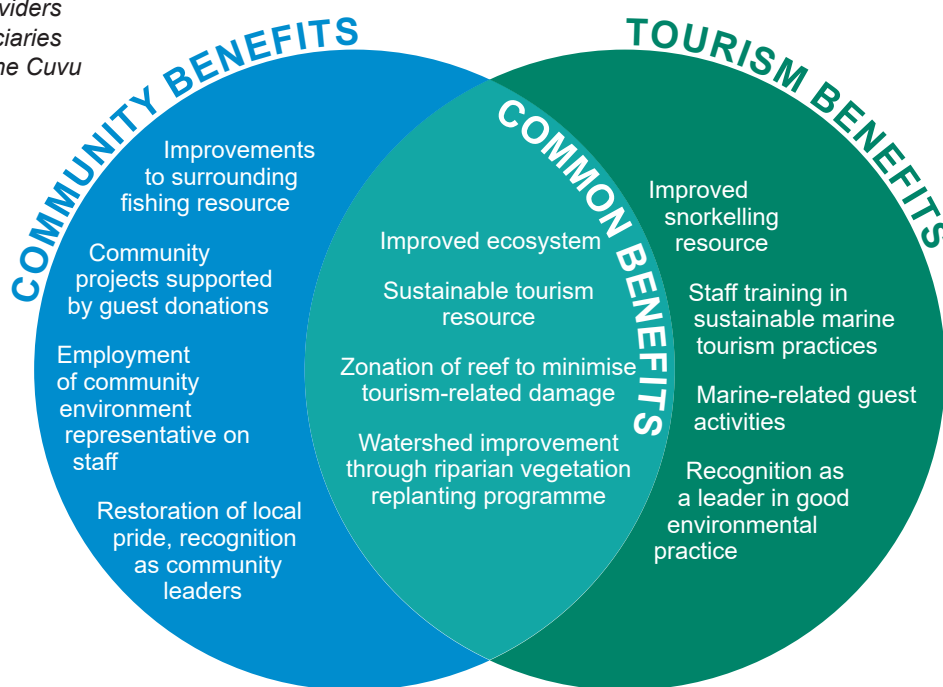


Figure 2. Map of tourism use zonation within the Cuvu MPA. ©Helen Sykes

The resort is engaged in several environmental rehabilitation and enhancement projects, including:

- Removal of crown-of-thorns starfish;
- Restocking giant clams, *Tectus* or *Trochus niloticus* trochus shell, *Lambis lambis* spider conch (*Yaga*);
- Coral transplanting onto constructed “fish houses” to enhance fish habitat;
- Tree planting in villages to absorb polluted groundwater leaking onto reefs;
- Upgrading of the resort’s sewage treatment plant, and installation of a pioneering artificial wetlands tertiary treatment facility to reduce nutrients entering the sea from treated wastewater; and
- Replanting *Rhizophora* spp. (*tiri*) coastal mangrove trees.

Figure 3. Benefits to providers (community) and beneficiaries (tourism operators) for the Cuvu Marine Protected Area



Further details of benefits

Tourism activities related to project:

- Redesign of “Little Chiefs” kids’ club programme to relate activities to environmental and cultural themes;
- Fish identification materials at watersports centre and on glass bottom boats to replace fish feeding;
- Donation-based “Fish House” building and mangrove planting programmes for guests; and
- The Shangri-La’s Marine Education Centre and staff, established in 2009 to provide educational and awareness raising activities for guests, and community groups, and to provide assistance and expertise to other resorts in the area.

Community benefits related to project:

- School "Heritage in Young Hands" programme, where primary school students from 5 primary schools learn ecosystem stewardship and leadership. Carried out in partnership with the National Trust for Fiji Islands Sigatoka Sand Dunes National Park.
- Guest income generating programmes and donations fund community projects selected by resort, including school projects and the Naeledamu women's centre.
- Recognition as leaders in environmental management: chiefs from two nearby districts with resorts requested assistance from the FSP for marine restoration projects and resort partnerships.

Yanuca Island from the water. © Shangri-La Fijian Resort



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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