

**Key Messages:**

Preservation of functional integrity of Fiji's eco-scapes through multiple stakeholder management.

- 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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# EBM-FIJI NEWSLETTER

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## Ridge-to-reef update meeting in Suva

On Friday, 30th July, the communities from Kubulau held a meeting at Saint Agnes Parish in Samabula. The Wildlife Conservation Society-Fiji (WCS-Fiji), Coral Reef Alliance (CORAL), Partners in Community Development (PCDF) and SeaWeb were invited to update the residents of Kubulau who are living and working in Suva about Kubulau's efforts to manage their resources.

"Kubulau has rich ecosystems. Our job is to help you (the communities) understand them and how to manage them so that resource use is sustainable, but at the same time earn an income for the people without affecting the surroundings too much" said WCS-Fiji program director Dr. Stacy Jupiter.

WCS-Fiji has been conducting meetings and capacity building workshops in Kubulau and has now started to provide updates to members of Kubulau who are living in Suva. As part of this program, WCS-Fiji hosts a monthly talanoa session at its office on every last Friday of the month.

WCS-Fiji has been the lead organization in Kubulau assisting communities to implement ecosystem based management



Tui Kubulau, Ratu Aisea Vuki during the Kubulau update meeting at the Saint Agnes Parish.

(EBM) of the natural resources. The results of the work are reflected in the recently developed Kubulau EBM plan. This is Fiji's first holistic management plan that seeks to address issues from the ridge-to-reef.

This plan is soon to be reviewed with results of the reef resilience survey that was conducted earlier this year. These results will help the communities choose productive and healthy areas to add to their current network of protected areas. It is important to identify these areas and incorporate them into the existing protected areas network, as these reefs are likely to continue to support livelihoods and essential ecosystem services into the future.

## Strategy to Promote Sustainable Land Use Practices and a Healthy Qoliqoli

Mali Island in Vanua Levu is the first in Fiji to trial the community Land Care Committee Concept (LCC) concept.

The Mali LCC was initiated during a workshop facilitated by WWF under the GEF's Small Grant Program funded to restore the natural landscape on Mali Island.

The land care committee is acting as a community watchdog and providing advice to their fellow villagers on how best to address land issues, guided by advice from

the Ministry of Agriculture.

The sixteen young men and women were also trained in water management, water harvesting, water quality testing and improving water storage facilities on the island.

As a result of this project, the island will have a high percentage of native flora and will be able to improve its land quality and soil condition for long-term sustainable agriculture.

A similar committee concept will be introduced by the

Qoliqoli Committee into the villages of Sasa and Naduri.

Mali Island has four villages of the 37 villages of the Qoliqoli Cokovata and are current partners in setting up networks of protected areas in over 1, 300 km<sup>2</sup> section of the globally significant Great Sea Reef.



Land Care Committee Concept members learning the use of tripod (above), Mali communities participant of the Landcare workshop (below)

## Traditional Weaving Skills and Restored Wetlands of Macuata

In 1998 WWF South Pacific worked with the communities in Navakosobu and Korovuli villages on Vanua Levu, Fiji, at their request to restore local kuta producing ponds.

Kuta reeds are used in the traditional Fijian mat weaving, but recently the trade has been in threat of dying out due to the loss of the plant habitat. Seven years after the restoration work on this important habitat, the WWF team went back to investigate the state of the habitat.

Happily, when WWF staff re-visited the village in May, kuta weaving was thriving in the community. The pond, as confirmed by a villager, contained more kuta than it ever had before. The women of Navakosobu are now not only very proud of their reinvigorated trade but are

also contributing a considerable amount of money to the community by selling the kuta mats, which command considerably more than their pandanus counterparts. Navakosobu is one of the 37 villages of the Qoliqoli Cokovata, who are partnered with WWF in setting up and managing networks of protected area in over 1, 300 km<sup>2</sup> of the Great Sea Reef.

### The Legend of the Floating Island

There is a 'floating island' in Macuata within the village of Nubu, over an hour's bus drive from Labasa (Macuata). In Nubu village there is a small lake with a floating island about the size of a large house. It is made of thick tangled reeds such as *kuta* and



Women of Navakosobu proudly weaving kuta Mats (left) Kuta reeds growing in the wetlands of Macuata (right).

is called *Nawaqakuta* which means the kuta reed boat. The island is so-named because it moves like a boat. Legend has it that a traditional priest, a *bete*, would chant beside the lake and the island would move. Eventually it would stop and sit beside the hard land. The people don't go swimming in this lake and it is rather shallow.

Today a road goes to Nubu but before access was by boat and river. The local people do not go near the lake because they are a bit frightened about it. However, when the priest performs his chant a group of people can stand on the floating island.

## Development of Flood Risk Management Plan

The Nadi River basin regularly suffers from heavy flooding, the most recent being the major floods of January 2009. These floods are partially due to the poor management practices undertaken on the Nadi catchment mainly by the communities and local authorities. In 2008, the Nadi Basin Committee (NBCC), of which IUCN and SOPAC are also part, was established to provide appropriate stakeholder engagement in the development of a Flood Risk Management Plan (FRMP).

Members of the NBCC have so far been engaged in the implementation of the FRMP.

In the beginning of 2010, water-level recorders for early flood warning were installed, proper land-use practices in the upper and mid-catchment areas have been initiated and consultation with the local communities undertaken.

More recently, IUCN Oceania together with SOPAC conducted a water quality and bio-monitoring survey along the Nadi coast. A key point that has been raised from previous sub-committee meetings is the importance of GIS as a management tool in tackling the issue of flooding.



Measuring dissolved oxygen as a indicator of water quality of the Nadi basin.

## Sustainability: the Way Forward

“We must practice sustainable methods in order to protect our livelihood and our future.” These are the words of Vasia Viavia of Nukuni Village, Ono I Lau.

According to Ms Viavia, there is a lot of money to be earned back on the island but this can only be achieved through hard work, patience and good practices. “We make good money from selling *yasi* (sandalwood), *lumi* (seaweed), pigs and *magimagi* (coconut fibre).” Together with her husband, Mesui Luvu, who is the *turaga ni koro* of Nukuni village, they managed to save \$35,000 to purchase a piece of land in Koronivia, Suva where they will build a family home.

“Every time we come to Suva we have had to stay with relatives and now that we have bought a piece of land our dream of owning a home in Suva is slowly turning into a reality.

According to Ms Viavia, sandalwood brings in more revenue compared to other resources but replanting them in the hope that one day it will benefit the future generation has proven to be a lot of hard work. “When we tried to replant sandalwood after we’ve harvested them, they do not really grow well. Now we have an expert from India who is currently in Nukuni to show us a different technique.” She said the family will also be planting sandalwood in Koronivia.

She thanked organizations like WWF, The United Nations and government for helping bringing about positive change. “Ever since we implemented the Ono Development, Plan we have never looked back.”

Launched last year, the 20 year



Vasia Viavia during her visit to Suva.

Ono I Lau Development Plan is broad and covers 14 important focal areas which are intended to positively impact the lives of the people through improved living conditions, better education, food security and a God-fearing community.

According to the advisor to the Ono Development Committee, Anare Jale, global warming and increasing cost of energy will continue to be pressing issues to be given due consideration in the development of the islands in the *tikina* and to mitigate their impacts in the livelihood of the community.





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PLEASE CONTACT**

The Editor,  
Fiji EBM Partnership  
Newsletter,  
WCS-South Pacific Program,  
11 Ma'afu Street, Suva,  
Fiji Islands.  
Suva

Phone: + 679 331 5174  
Fax: + 679 331 0178  
E-mail: [infofiji@wcs.org](mailto:infofiji@wcs.org)

**[WWW.WCSFIJI.ORG](http://WWW.WCSFIJI.ORG)**

## **CONSERVING WILDLIFE AND WILD PLACES**

Science-based marine protected areas (MPAs) have been demonstrated to protect exploited marine resources, may increase coral reef ecosystem resilience, and are considered an essential tool for the long-term management and conservation of high priority seascapes around the world. Recognizing the connectivity between terrestrial and marine systems has led to a more holistic approach that also includes terrestrial processes and their potential impact on marine habitats. For example, sedimentation and nutrient enrichment have been found to be key threats to the health of nearshore marine

ecosystems. Therefore understanding the potential impacts of runoff from watersheds on the adjacent marine areas is vital.

Our research and advocacy as part of this EBM project is building an applied understanding of how terrestrial and marine systems are connected in terms of fauna and habitat quality, and what the implications are for conservation management in a tropical high island setting. The areas we are investigating include; the aquatic fauna that utilize "wet" ecosystem types during different life stages (living connections between

the land and the sea); spatial patterns of perceptions of ecosystem change and community resource use; potential influence of terrestrial nutrients and runoff on near shore environments; the effects of intensive harvesting on reef fish communities; reef community responses to management in Fiji, the connectivity of marine habitats and incorporating connectivity of marine habitats into conservation and management plans.



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