



# VATU-I-RA COMMUNITY BULLETIN



Ni sa bula vinaka! Welcome to the sixteenth edition of the VATU-I-RA COMMUNITY BULLETIN. The bulletin brings together news and results from ongoing activities by the Wildlife Conservation Society within the Vatu-i-Ra Seascape.

VOL. 16. MAR 2011

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC SURVEYS IN WAINUNU AND WAILEVU

The next phase of WCS work has begun with the expansion of the management planning districts in Bua and Cakadrove provinces. In November 2010, WCS conducted Introductory Workshops to begin the process of what will be a multi-year project in Wainunu and Wailevu districts which are adjacent to Kubulau where WCS began working in 2005. Requests were also made from the nearby districts of Nadi and Solevu to be involved in these workshops at their own costs to continue their management planning education.

Socio-economic surveys were conducted in February 2011. These consisted of two parts; first household surveys and secondly focus groups workshops.

Household surveys were conducted in 27 villages in Wainunu and Wailevu districts. The main objective for conducting these surveys was to understand the local demographics, objectives for resource management and current capacity to implement management. Answers varied a lot especially in terms of livelihoods, resource use pattern, and relative understanding of ecosystem values and services.

The focus groups were held in the evenings and included information gathering of traditional ecological knowledge and local resource use. The sessions helped gather information from the communities on how well they understood their resources and given current global climate change, what needs to be done to reduce the risk or what

strategies communities have already implemented.

The request for setting up Resource Management plans including marine Tabu areas in these two districts was an initiative from the respective chiefs (Tui Wailevu and Tui Wainunu). Many community members are happy with this direction as they have already seen or heard the benefits that Kubulau is reaping from the Tabu areas and how it has helped their communities.



Top—Focus group session in Vunidamoli  
Bottom - Una Mara and Margaret Fox surveying community members

### KEY EBM MESSAGES:

*Preservation of functional integrity of Fiji's ecosystems through community based 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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## DISCOVERING NEW REEFS IN BUA AND CAKAUDROVE

Between March 12 and April 14, the WCS Marine Team conducted biological surveys of the coral reef habitats of Solevu, Nadi and Wainunu district qoliqoli in Bua Province and Wailevu district in Cakaudrove Province. Joining the WCS staff were Paul Veileqe and Una Mara of Navatu Village in Kubulau, as well as former WCS staffer Alex Patrick, who returned from the Philippines for this expedition.

The purpose of the surveys is to collect information on reef condition and resource availability in order to more effectively assist the communities to design networks of marine protected areas that complement the existing network in Kubulau qoliqoli. Our trained specialists were particularly paying attention to the amount of food fish on the reef, as well as whether the reefs themselves are likely to withstand future climate disturbance, such as storms, floods and excessive heat.

Our preliminary observations indicate that the coral reefs themselves are in good condition. We additionally observed many charismatic species, such as manta rays, dolphin, turtles and sharks, that might drive dive tourism to the areas. However, there are some indications that certain areas are being heavily fished. Indeed, we encountered spearfishermen and beche-de-mer collectors from other districts during our surveys.

The WCS Team would like to extend our heartfelt appreciation to the communities of Nasavu (Nadi), Daria (Wainunu) and Natuvu (Wailevu), who hosted us during the month. We were also fortunate to meet many other people from adjacent villages and districts. We look forward to continue to develop relationships with the communities and help them better manage their natural resources.



Top —WCS team member surveying the reef

Middle—Spear-fisherman at Vuya

Bottom—Heading to dive sites



## A STEP TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING DISEASE TRANSMISSION BETWEEN PEOPLE AND THEIR ENVIRONMENTS

During February and March, WCS-Fiji along with Ilana Brito, a researcher from Columbia University, launched a biological study to take a step towards better understanding how diseases spread amongst people and between people and their environments. The ongoing epidemic of typhoid occurring in February and March in the Northern Division highlighted the need for more knowledge in this area. The ultimate goal of this project is to determine how changes in land use, from natural land cover to agricultural or mining-modified areas, impacts diseases. Typhoid and other bacterial disease outbreaks, including shigellosis and leptospirosis, may arise after heavy rains and flooding because infective bacteria can be transported in water. Of particular concern is the role of waterways and floods in carrying bacteria downstream and how land use decisions alter drainage patterns and the use of rivers for different practices. This research is based upon the belief that community-based decision-making to through land and water-use changes can be successful at providing access to clean and preserved water sources. A team of five people surveyed approximately 300 people from four different villages in Wainunu and Macuata and collected biological samples from these individuals, the soil, water and livestock to gain a fuller picture of the main routes by which bacteria is transferred. One of the outcomes of this study will be to identify prevention mechanisms, in addition to vaccination and hygiene practices, that involve informed land use decisions. This research was supported by the Fiji Ministry of Health, Columbia University and the Wildlife Conservation Society. The results of this study will come out later this year.



Above—Waisea Naisilisili from WCS taking soil samples.



Right—Participants from the Leadership and Management workshop in Kubulau.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT WORKSHOPS

A joint initiative between the I-Taukei Affairs Board and the Institute of Applied Science at University of the South Pacific developed the concept of 'Leadership and Management' workshops. The target of these workshops was Village Chiefs, Turaga ni Koro, Turaga ni Yavusa, and leaders of various groups in the village. Sirilo Duluniqio participated on behalf of WCS in the Bua Provincial level meeting and Nasavu (Nadi district) and Akanisi Caginitoba assisted the workshops in Kubulau and Wainunu. Attendance for the workshops was very good. Participants were split into groups where they brainstormed on what good judgement is, how modern changes have influenced us and how they have adapted to the changes.

Ratu Semi Ramatai the Roko Veivuke for the two districts, informed the participants of the importance of various meetings (Bose Vanua and Bose Vakakoro) in the village and the tasks that should be carried out by each individual, together with their roles and responsibilities.

The Bose Vanua is a meeting that everyone respects. This is when the chief informs the community of his decision. But the Bose Vakakoro is when everyone attending can voice in their opinions and decisions will be made appropriately.

This Leadership and Management workshop is currently being workshopped around Fiji by the two stakeholders and other partners to outline the roles and responsibilities to make better leaders for tomorrow.

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## ONGOING AND UPCOMING EVENTS

- March–April 2011– Baseline marine biological surveys in Wainunu, Wailevu, Nadi and Solevu.
- July 2011—Workshop with KRMC and chiefs to discuss options for adapting MPA network and EBM plan.
- July 2011—CENT workshop with CORAL.
- July—November 2011— Construction of options for Solevu-Nadi-Wainunu and Wailevu MPA network designs, consultation workshops with communities leading to MPA design and management plan recommendations.

## COMMUNITY EDUCATORS NETWORK TRAINING—MODULE 3

As part of WCS Fiji's core objective in protecting iconic species, maintaining habitat connectivity and preserving livelihoods by integrating community based management with science based solutions, participants of this workshop from the villages of Kubulau were trained to carry out awareness programmes to their respective communities. Issues presented included; the importance of mangroves and their functions, the need to understand and respect spawning aggregations of aquatic species, the importance of understanding and following environmental management regulations and understanding climate change and its impacts.

WCS teamed up with various stakeholders from Coral Reef Alliance, SEAWEB, Conservation International, Environmental

Law Association and the Kubulau Resource Management Committee to provide participants in this workshop with educational resources to continue the awareness work they had carried out from the two previous CENT Modules. This addresses our vision in communicating the value of EBM in Fiji on the slogan of: "Healthy people, processes and systems".

Additionally this workshop empowers the members of the Kubulau district to educate their fellow kinsman, families, peers and friends in understanding the role of having a healthy ecosystem and preserving it, which in turn will protect their livelihoods and health during this onset of rapid developments and unpredictable climate disturbances.



Please send your questions and letters to the Vatu-i-Ra Community Bulletin Editorial Team, using the contact details above.

*TAQOMAKI NI NODA VEIKABULA*



The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) is a U.S. based international NGO, with conservation programs all around the world, including Fiji. Over the past century, the WCS has worked to establish more than 130 parks and protected areas on land and at sea as well as working on threatened species. WCS works to save wildlife and wild places by understanding and resolving the critical problems that threaten key species and large, wild ecosystems around the world.