



Training participants conducting a 'stroll through' assessment in the Marshall Islands

Fisheries training workshop in Fiji Islands: The I Qoliqoli Management Project

By Aliti Vunisea, SPC Community Fisheries Officer

A training workshop on community-based marine resource management for fisheries extension officers in Fiji Islands was conducted by SPC's Community Fisheries Adviser and Community Fisheries Officer 29 July to 9 August. The workshop, which was held at USP's Institute of Pacific Studies, involved 28 extension officers from throughout Fiji. The workshop was held in response to a request from Fiji's Fisheries Division for advice on setting up a model for marine resource management for the country. Training of trainers was a first step in the initiation of the I Qoliqoli Management Project for Fiji.

At the end of the workshop, a sample management plan for the I Qoliqoli Management Project was drafted. Participants were expected to be equipped with the skills to conduct or facilitate community-based workshops and learning. They were also expected to have acquired enough skills and knowledge to identify community needs and assist communities in the drafting of marine resource management plans, and the establishment of a community management committee. In addition to this, trainers were expected to be able to hold their own training workshops for their officers. The sample management plan to be used by the Fisheries Division, is a plan for Marau village.

The schedule of activities for the first six-months of the project are:

- The implementation of an ongoing marine awareness programme to promote both the importance of sustainable marine resource use and the need for management to local communities and the public in general.
- The provision of in-house training for fisheries officers in the four main divisions in Fiji: Central, Northern, Eastern and Western.
- The drafting of management plans for 12 different villages or communities in Fiji. The sites

and locations of these will be determined by requests and interests from coastal communities.

- The submission of funding proposals to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for possible SPREP funding.
- The securing of facilities and equipment such as vehicles, computers, and equipment for field exercise.
- The monitoring of progress on the project, which will also determine any follow-up work to be undertaken by SPC.

Project contact persons from the Fiji Fisheries Division are Sunia Waqainabete and Vasiti Vuiyasawa.

To implement the tasks outlined in the work plan, Fiji Locally Managed Marine Areas (FLMMA), ministries and NGOs will work closely with the Fisheries Division.

FLMMA is an association of practitioners working with community-based marine resource management in Fiji, including NGOs, institutions, ministries of government, and interested individuals.

Background to the project

Fiji Islanders, like other Pacific Islanders, depend heavily on coastal resources. With an ever-increasing population, commercialisation of previously subsistence food sources, increasing urbanisation, improved fishing methods and gear, and other internal and external factors affecting the availability of resources, there is an obvious need for management. Most Pacific Island peoples still live a subsistence lifestyle, and the long-term sustainability of their coastal resources is crucial for the survival not only of the current population but also of future generations. Marine resource management is, therefore, essential for long-term food security and social livelihoods.

Of primary importance, therefore, is the empowerment of coastal communities to manage their own resources. Most fisheries departments are ill equipped to take over all management responsibilities, and involving local communities gives citizens the opportunity to be responsible for their own resources and the future of their peoples' livelihood. Furthermore, in most Pacific Island countries, local people have jurisdiction or ownership rights over their resources, so their involvement is crucial.

For the last six years in Fiji there have been ongoing attempts at raising awareness about the marine environment, and attempts to establish marine resource management projects. Most of these efforts were spearheaded by NGOs and the Institute of Applied Sciences at USP.

Organisations involved in community-based marine resource management recently formed an association where they could exchange ideas on the different projects they were involved with so that similar community-based work project standards could be established.

Community-based projects in Fiji are underway with the following institutions and organisations:

- Foundation for Peoples of the South Pacific (FSP) — Cuvu District, Nadroga.
- World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF-Fiji) — Ono District in Kadavu and Wai in Nadroga
- Institute of Pacific Studies — Verata District in Tailevu, Votua in Ba, Marine Affairs Programme, USP, Vanuaso in Gau, and other areas
- International Marinelife Alliance (IMA) — Nakasaleka District in Kadavu
- Women in Fisheries Network (WIFN) — Namena District in Tailevu.

Note that district means several villages under the same administrative authority. Interest in community-based management is evident in the number of requests to FLMMA from interested communities. The association has requests from 13 communities for the establishment of community-based marine resource management projects.

Tools used by FLMMA and other NGOs in Fiji

FLMMA and other NGOs have adopted a participatory approach with participatory learning activities (PLA) forming most of the awareness work. Visits and initial awareness work usually takes a

year to two year and requires a process where communities can accept their responsibility before management initiatives are in place. In areas where management has been in place for more than a year, monitoring skills and processes become part of the PLA tools taught. Some of the stated cases are success stories, for example Verata in Tailevu and Waisomo in Kadavu. In these cases the organisations have pulled out from the projects and only pay visits when required. The communities have taken over the management and monitoring work, and in both cases, both men and women are involved in all activities. This is a clear indication of the potential for success of community-based management initiatives if implemented on a wider scale.

This I Qoliqoli Management Project is an attempt to get the Fisheries Division to implement resource management initiatives on a broader scale. At the same time, the department can put existing facilities and funding towards other projects. The I Qoliqoli management project was initiated in September 2002, and will be reviewed in early 2003.

Recommendations

- Establish a vigorous media campaign to promote the I Qoliqoli management project.
- Raise community awareness about the need for long-term sustainability of marine resources.
- Take an integrated approach to the marine awareness and community-based marine resource management project.
- Work with FLMMA and other ministries, NGOs and institutions already working in marine resource management in Fiji, to ensure that local situations, traditions and needs are taken into account.
- Involve all stakeholders at all levels of the project.
- Implement the project as requested from the communities.
- Involve SPC's Community Fisheries Adviser at the initial community workshop in Fiji, and at FLMMA-organised workshops so that tools and procedures already used in Fiji can be observed.
- Follow up on possible SPREP funding for the project.

