

# Workshop on shell-craft making and marketing

**JICA HAS INTRODUCED PHASE II** of the project for Promotion of Grace of the Sea in Coastal Villages in Vanuatu in 2012 and is working alongside Vanuatu Fisheries Department to verify the effective approaches of Community-Based Coastal Resource Management (CBCRM) at each project site that is in Efate (Mangaliliu & Sunae), Aneityum (Mystery Island) and Malekula (Amal Crab Bay).

The project introduces shell polishing souvenir for tourist as an alternative income generating activity in the hope that this would contribute to reducing fishing pressure for shell in the reef. The 3-day workshop was facilitated by Mr. Graham Nomoho, Manager of the Fisheries Development Division and the JICA Project team led by Dr. Akiya Seko. Workshop participant mostly involves women from Aneityum, Malekula, Lelepa, mangaliliu and Sunae. The Department of Environment and Tourism, VANGO and few other private shell-craft business owners also support the workshop by providing solutions on some of the issues faced by the local women involved in shell-polishing.

Phase II of the project includes pilot projects which were designed to validate the actual methods for CBCRM at each project site. Included in this pilot projects is the shell craft making and marketing. Individual women from these project sites were encouraged to make shell crafts and in some communities, machines were provided by JICA to start them off. Unfortunately most of the women from Aneityum and Malekula admitted during the workshop that shell craft making is very new to them and they have very limited knowledge in utilizing the machines used in cutting, grinding and drilling the shells. At the presentation session from the participating communities, the women from Aneityum expressed difficulty pricing the products, and also how to market them. The activity attracted men and women, and now how to meet the expectation with minimum tools becomes their concern. On the other hand, the women at Mangaliliu village have recently formed an association to make shell products after being taught by Christine Delaney from the New Zealand Aid Project administered by the Vanuatu Cultural Center few years ago; however they too face some challenges mostly in marketing their locally made artifacts. At first, their market was the Pandanus shop but some of their previous products were not sold out therefore giving rise to a new problem which needs new designs and bet-

ter quality.

To respond to these issues, the participants made tour to Port Vila shops to observe what kind of local products were showcased, and where participants could find necessary materials and tools. The owner of shop Pandanus Vanuatu, Nicola Barnes encourages the women to aim for quality and always try different designs as tourists are always captured by new products. Anne Smith who was also present at the workshop inspires the women on a new design she got from the internet which is fast selling at Pandanus shop at the moment and she also encourages the women to write small stories and attach it along with their products as tourists love this. She works with her Ni-Vanuatu friend Nerry from Tanoliu village who makes unique bracelets made out from cut magazines and jewelries from polished coconut shells. Similarly, Jennifer West who sells her products at Goodies before motivated the women through her products which she cuts out from wood, broken coca-cola bottles, satellite disc and other types of shells. She encourages the women to be inspired by nature and to revive carving of traditional pieces from wood as there is a market for revival work and also not to forget that weaving is also a vital source of income. Brenda Andre, Cruise Tourism Officer from the Department of Tourism also promotes locally made Vanuatu product and explains that the Department is trying to eradicate imported products by encouraging women to use local coastal resources as tourist are more interested in indigenous products.

The National Coordinator of VANGO, Leah Nimoho encourages the women to form small associations and apply for small grants provided by VANGO to pay for machines and also training on the best way to use this equipment. Brenda also presents other ways of marketing their products such as the tents at the main wharf with a monthly rent of around VT15000 which 3 to 4 women can share and divide the rent among them.

All women participants were glad to have joined the workshop as they learned many new things such as first-hand experience on the proper use of the machines at Sunai, Mosso and were able to find solutions to their difficulties. In addition, the JICA project team hopes that this pilot project of shell craft making and marketing be known to all the islands of Vanuatu in the near future so the project for Coastal Resource Management can become effective in all the coastal communities in Vanuatu.



Nicky Barnes, owner of Pandanus shop and her products displayed on the table while Dr. Seko looks on



Workshop participants at Sunai, receive training on how to use shell-polishing machines.



Mrs. Trudy Kalotiti giving training on the careful use of the drill for the smaller and fragile shells.