



FIJI-COUNTRY REPORT

*To the Regional Seminar on Community-based Coastal Resource Management
Project for Promotion of Grace of Sea in Coastal Villages- Phase 2: October 13-
16 2014, Port Vila, Vanuatu*

This country report presents a summary of coastal management initiatives currently being undertaken in Fiji, it briefly outlines some challenges faced in the effective implementation of coastal resource management measures and identifies how these challenges were overcome to ensure the continuity in the successful implementation of coastal resource management policies.

Fiji Country Report

1. Overview of Coastal Resource Management Activities In Fiji

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.

The most recent national fisheries assessment suggests that of the 410 *i qoliqolis* in Fiji, 70 have been over-exploited, 250 are being fully utilised and the remaining 90 have yet to encounter fishing pressure due to distance from markets. Fiji's inshore fishery area is mainly used by for subsistence and artisanal purposes contributing approximately \$48million and \$28million respectively according to 2003 figures. Many of Fiji's coastal communities rely almost exclusively on fishing for food and income, with about half of rural households engaging in subsistence fisheries. According to more recent estimates, Fiji has about 43,000 subsistence fishers although this is likely vastly underestimated.

Of primary importance, therefore, is the empowerment of coastal communities to manage their own resources. The Department of Fisheries is somewhat limited in their ability to take over all management responsibilities, and involving local communities gives resource owners 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 past eighteen years Fiji has been at the forefront of raising awareness about the marine environment and the establishment of marine resource management projects across the country. Most of these efforts are spearheaded by NGOs, the Institute of Applied Sciences at USP and the Department of Fisheries.

Non-governmental organisations that come under the Fiji Locally Managed Marine Area network umbrella are heavily involved in community-based marine resource management programs where they exchange ideas on the different projects they are involved with and to map out ways of empowering communities to manage their marine resources.

The Department of Fisheries under the Ministry of Fisheries and Forests has also over the years played an important role in steering coastal fisheries management in the four main geographical divisions of the Fiji Islands. The Department's role is vital in that being custodians of marine resources they are mandated to sustainably manage the nation's fisheries resources. The Department currently executes a Coastal Fisheries Development Project having six components aimed at developing the artisanal fisheries of Fiji. Sustainable management of the fisheries is executed through the Department's core functions which are

articulated in the relevant legislations that govern the Department and the resources. The Department of Fisheries responsibilities are therefore to administer and enforce the Fisheries legislations; to ensure conservation, sustainable utilization and management of fisheries resources; to approve and issue fisheries related licenses and to provide training, extension services and research.

Coastal management activities implemented under the Department of Fisheries include resource assessment surveys, stock assessments of inshore fisheries, fisheries impact assessments, the deployment of fish aggregating devices (FADs) to encourage fishing around FADs with the aim to relieving pressure of fishing off the reefs; establishment of seed stocks for overexploited fish stocks-Fiji in this case has established giant clam nurseries; the introduction of sandfish cage fattening for

A number of coastal management initiatives can be seen in Fiji. These range in project focus from marine conservation and marine resource management, community based adaptive management; assisting communities in developing localized coastal management plans; focuses on good governance, payments for ecosystem services, and learning and leadership, with the aim to improve the quality and sustainability of water resources in the region; to pilot climate change adaptation in an integrated approach to exposure sectors, and internalize climate change adaptation at rural communities; effective management of natural and coastal resources; improving livelihoods and climate proofing coastal communities and helping communities manage their mangrove and associated coastal ecosystems to build resilience to the potential consequences of climate change and variability on coastal areas.

2. Problems and Constraints of Coastal Resource Management

Coastal resource management in Fiji had in the past been constrained by a number of factors these include but are not limited to the absence of a consolidated national environment legal and administrative framework, the scarcity of human resources within the Government system to effectively execute and implement coastal resource management measures and through the lack of an integrated approach to coastal resource management.

Over the years and in light of the increasing threats to coastal areas Government has embarked on a more proactive approach to coastal resource management through strengthening its human resource capacity and capabilities. The Department of Fisheries enhances the capacity of its Fisheries Officers by despatching Extension Officer and Senior Managers to trainings and workshops related to coastal resource management, over the years fisheries have been sent on training through JICA and SPC and various other organizations.

The primary piece of legislation for coastal fisheries management is the Fisheries Act (Cap. 158). The Fisheries Act (Cap. 158) recognises customary fishing rights within the qoliqoli (customary fishing right area) for native Fijians, here native Fijians with a customary fishing right to a particular qoliqoli are referred to as resource owners. The recognition of customary fishing rights is intertwined with the establishment of a permit system, such that all non-resource owners wishing to fish for any purpose (including subsistence) require a

permit, notwithstanding a few exemptions. People wishing to fish for “trade or business” require a licence in addition to a permit.

The Act also imposes restrictions on size limits, species and methods of fishing, as well as creating a power to designate “restricted areas” where fishing is heavily restricted, (with the exception of certain fishing methods). The Act creates the role of “fish warden” which is filled by trained community members to undertake monitoring, surveillance and inspection to determine compliance with the Fisheries Act (Cap. 158). The offences under the Act are relatively comprehensive in their coverage of fisheries crime however, the maximum penalties are inadequate.

In addressing the importance of an integrated approach to coastal resource management the consolidated *Integrated Coastal Management Framework* was drawn up in 2011. This framework begets the coastal management plan (to be called the *National ICM Plan*) by delineating the plan’s scope and structure. The framework is produced by the Fiji Department of Environment to review current coastal conditions in the context of tourism development, coral reef degradation, siltation and erosion, harvesting of marine resources, waste management, coastal reclamation and construction and natural disasters among others as well as assess the current legal and institutional governing framework so as to recommend proposals for action and policy towards sustainable coastal resource management for Fiji. In line with this the 2005 Environment Management Act (EMA) stipulates the development of a coastal management plan under Section 3(8).

Fiji over the years has also strengthened work and efforts in collaboration with its partner non-governmental organizations in addressing coastal resource management, of particular significance is the work of the Fiji Locally Managed Marine Area Network (FLMMA). The network has been pivotal in coastal fisheries management in Fiji. FLMMA has expanded rapidly throughout Fiji, aiding communities in the implementation of management tools utilised within the qoliqoli (customary fishing grounds). Most notable is a growth in the use of tabus, traditional no-fishing zones. Community-imposed tabu areas are not explicitly recognised in the legal framework for coastal fisheries management. This is an area needing improvement for Fiji, as the process of legalizing these protected or tabu areas through the gazetting process needs reviewing.

Through strengthening human resource capacities and capabilities, addressing coastal resource management issues through relevant effective legislations and frameworks and through strengthening the partnership work between Government and NGOs Fiji has been able to improve in their efforts to effective coastal resource management and continues to look forward in addressing pressing issues in coastal resource management in the future.

3. Existing Projects / Programs for Coastal Resource Management

Fiji has in actual fact been successful in its continuous journey to implement effective coastal resource management initiatives. Over the years the Department has been actively involved in several initiatives that address coastal resource management in collaboration with partner NGOs.

The development of the aquaculture sector has allowed the Department to create alternative livelihood options for coastal communities and at the same time relieve pressure from fishing off the reefs; the successes of traditional fisheries management practices which in Fiji is referred to as tabu (taboo) areas has become an important tool in coastal resource management; native customary rights to fish in qoliqoli areas for non-commercial purposes are protected. All non-resource owners are required to obtain a permit before fishing in qoliqoli areas, whereas resource owners are free to fish for subsistence without government approval. In addition, before permits are awarded, the resource owners must be consulted.; the Department also works closely with customary fishing rights resource owners through its Marine Resource Inventory project whereby stock assessments of qoliqoli's are done to ascertain stock status and problems faced by coastal communities in managing their resources and addressing these through the established of management plans tailor made to manage the problems faced by coastal communities.

Coastal management has been proposed as a crucial part of Fiji's environment policy and management capability since 1992. Among the early examples of an integrated approach to addressing the problems of overuse of coastal resources can be found in Watling's 1985 Mangrove Management Plan for Fiji. Coastal management as a term and a necessity was featured in the 1992 Environment, Fiji: The National State of the Environment Report by Watling *et.al*. Since its publication Fijian and regional environmental policy analysts and advocates have devoted a decade of hard work in order to identify issues, suggest policies and recommend implementation options for environmental management and biodiversity conservation of which coastal management is included.

Recent legislation and studies reinforce these early conclusions. Fiji as a signatory to the international Convention on Biological Diversity has committed itself to an integrated approach to coastal management. The need for integrated coastal management has been realised through the formulation of the 2011 Integrated Coastal Management Framework. The National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan one of the first policy statements prepared focuses on conserving the genetic, species and ecosystem diversity of the country. The guiding principles and many of the measures required to put the policy in place encompass site-based integrated coastal resources management.

The Climate Change Vulnerability and Adaptation Assessment also recommends a number of coastal management measures to enable Fiji to successfully address the wide ranging impacts foreseen in the climate change scenarios. These include carefully considering a range of coastal protection options, including discouraging development in high risk areas.

Attachment



Figure 1 FLMMA Adaptive Management Cycle

Poster depicts the Adaptive Management Cycle as used by the Fiji Locally Managed Marine Area Network (FLMMA) including assessment, awareness raising, issue identification, action planning, implementation and monitoring and analysing and communicating results.



Figure 2 Kubulau Traditional Fishermen



Figure 3 Turtle Moratorium Poster in the Fijian Vernacular



**Figure 4 Participants at a workshop
devise management rules**



**Figure 5 Diving during Marine Resource
Inventory Survey**



Figure 6 Gillnet Surveys



Figure 7 Survey Activities