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February 2016

COASTAL RESOURCES & EPI VCAP SITE

Results & Recommendations from Vulnerability Assessments & Community Engagement

Recommendations re Coastal Resources: Epi VCAP Site

- Creation of community based integrated coastal resource management plans that coordinate with upland management practices
- Ensure inclusion of all community sub-groups (particularly those communities with current land disputes such as Burumba and Ruwo) in all planning processes involving the creation of Marine Protected Areas or strengthening of traditional conservation areas
- Technical advice from Fisheries about the location of protected coastal resource areas for communities
- Installation of Fish Aggregating Devices (F.A.D.'s) for communities in Epi VCAP Site to alleviate pressures on inshore fisheries
- Lead removal program of Crown of Thorns starfish from protected areas.
- Utilize existing Vanua Tai Resource Monitors in Ponkovio, Mabfilau, Ruwo and Yopuna villages to engage communities in awareness activities regarding protected coastal species and inshore fisheries trainings
- DARD and Forestry to advise regarding possible interventions to curb coastal erosion in Burumba and protect community infrastructure.
- PWD to advise regarding strengthening of sea wall protecting road near Malvasi

(Fishermen in Mabfilau Village displaying their catch)

Coastal Sedimentation & Integrated Management Plans

Common agricultural practices such as slash and burn farming combined with livestock grazing on slopes produces high amounts of upland erosion and sedimentation of coastal waters throughout the Epi VCAP site. Many locals believe this sedimentation may correlate with an **observed decline in coastal resources** such as inshore fisheries stocks. Sedimentation, related to agricultural and livestock activities, is believed by locals to be causing much damage to coastal resources & coral reef eco-systems.

Creation of community based **integrated coastal resource management plans** that **coordinate with upland resource management practices**, by using a "ridge to reef" approach, is a vital activity that VCAP can support.

Coastal Environment

A number of customary marine managed areas along the coast of the Epi VCAP site are reportedly **not effective in conserving marine resources**. Often in communities where there are land disputes, traditional conservation areas are not respected by some villagers and resources continue to be depleted from these sites. Sometimes community members reportedly argue over who has the authority to conserve resources in a coastal area, as there has not been a thorough community-wide consultation process with all the necessary stakeholders.

A main focus of VCAP should be **strengthening coastal management areas**, whether through supporting the creation of **Marine Protected Areas (MPA's)** or by supporting **customary management areas** already established. Ensuring inclusivity of all parties and community sub-groups in the planning process is necessary in order to create a functional coastal conservation area. There are currently no MPA's located within the Epi VCAP site and local communities request the technical expertise from Fisheries Department when selecting the location of protected areas.

(Fresh catch from Epi VCAP site)

Inshore Fisheries

In addition to the support of MPA's, conservation areas and the creation of integrated coastal resource management plans, communities requested the following assistance relating to inshore fisheries:

Installation of **Fish Aggregating Devices (F.A.D.'s)** for communities in the Epi VCAP site to alleviate pressures on inshore fisheries by providing alternative source for local fishermen to improve their food security and create sustainable income generation through local sale of fish.

Removal of **Crown of Thorns Starfish (COTS)** from coral ecosystems as led by Fisheries, especially for protected areas.

Community members request the provision of **training, awareness activities** relating to sustainable inshore fisheries practices.

Coastal Erosion

The collapsed bridge near Yervali school is causing significant coastal erosion. The collapsed building materials are obstructing the natural flow of the river and during storm surge events, when coastal waters flood over the collapsed bridge, this obstruction blocks the passage of the tide. This has resulted in a large hole being dug by around this obstacle by occasional storm surge events and flash flooding of the river. Community members and provincial authorities report a desire to have the collapsed bridge removed or cleared enough to allow for the natural drainage of the river at the coastline.

(Collapsed bridge near Yervali School)

Coastal erosion threatens the community hall in Burumba, along with some school buildings (specifically pre-school and teacher's housing only). Numerous large trees have fallen over due to this severe coastal erosion in Burumba.

(Visible coastal erosion in Burumba near school building)

In Malvasi, a small section of **sea wall**, reinforced by natural boulders on the coastline, was built decades ago and maintains the integrity of a small but vital section of road threatened by coastal erosion. However, this small portion of sea appears to be deteriorating. Local communities request assistance from PWD in strengthening this small part of vital coastal infrastructure in order to maintain accessibility of the primary road.

Protected Species

Communities within the Epi VCAP site estimated that around 88 sea turtles are harvested for consumption each year. In Ponkovio, the community estimated that annually they consume over 60+ turtles, which in comparison to other villages seems like an unusually large quantity. Burumba, Malvasi, Mabfilau and Ruwo / Yopuna each estimated that their community members consumed 10 or less turtles each year.

Community members report that there are regular sightings of dugongs that inhabit coastal waters within the Epi VCAP site. There were reports of sighting up to three dugongs swimming in coastal water recently. The dugongs are not threatened by the local population.

There are “resource monitors”, recognized by the Fisheries Department as having the authority to enforce fishing regulations and standards, located in Ponkovio, Mabfilau, Ruwo and Yopuna. These “resource monitors” have received training in marine resource management from Fisheries Department and an NGO called Wan Smol Bag.

VCAP may be able to support further awareness activities regarding the **conservation of protected species** such as **sea turtles** in partnership Wan Smol Bag and by utilizing the Vanuau Tai Resource Monitors present in the Epi VCAP site is recommended.

Mangrove Ecosystems

There no reported mangrove ecosystems along the coast of the Epi VCAP site.

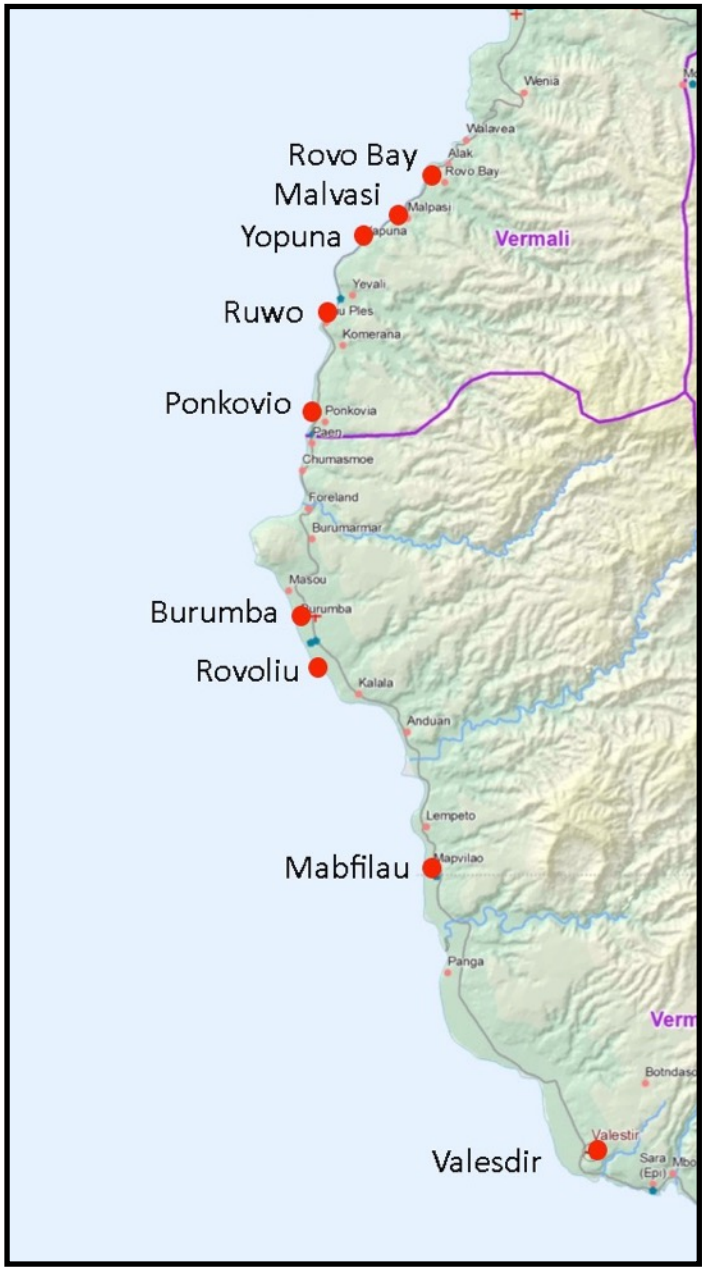
Site Coordinator & Area Secretaries

There is a field based coordinator, Basil Mael, from Masou (close to Burumba Village) helping to facilitate VCAP activities with local communities as part of the five year CCA project. Although the Site Coordinator lives in Masou, a part of the Vermaul AC, he is responsible for coordinating with communities throughout the entire VCAP site from Rovo Bay to Mabfilau, including those target communities found in Vermali AC.

The VCAP site on Epi contains communities from two different Area Councils (Vermaul & Vermali) with two responsible Provincial Area Secretaries (AS) for this area. The AS for Vermaul AC from Mabfilau is Gideon Yonah has several years of working experience in this position. The AS for Vermali AC is Graham Api lives on Lamen Island and was just recently hired in September of 2015 and has no prior working experience. Both Area Secretaries have been a part of the CCA planning process for VCAP and are available to support implementation.

Data for Upland Resources

Refer to the Vulnerability Assessment Report for Epi VCAP site from February 2016 to review data relating to upland resources.



(Communities in Epi VCAP site)