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## **Fiji's Bua Province Plans to Stop Overfishing and Logging**

**Ecosystem-based management plans formed to address effects of overfishing and logging on fragile island and sea ecosystems**

**Communities takes the lead in showing the benefits of working together to manage their natural resources**



**NEW YORK (September 12, 2016)**--Communities in Fiji's Bua Province are taking action to address the effects of overfishing and other unsustainable practices in the biodiverse but fragile land and marine ecosystems of Vanua Levu, according to the Fiji Program of the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS).

The communities of five districts in Bua Province will launch natural resource management plans—the culmination of three years of planning ---as the province takes the lead in demonstrating how villages can work together to deliver more benefits for their communities.

Each district will implement its ecosystem based management (EBM) plans that will help communities address threats such as overfishing, poaching of *tabu* areas (seasonal fishing closures), unsustainable logging, and poor farming practices. The plans also entail the application of practical, local solutions on land and sea to ensure that every village is able to manage its resources sustainably to better meet its food and income needs.

“This is a milestone for the people in these districts as now they can now strike that critical balance between conservation, sustainable use, and development to ensure their needs are met without sacrificing the ability of the next

generation to do the same,” said Dr. Sangeeta Mangubhai, Program Director of WCS - Fiji, which facilitated the district management planning.

In addition, community members worked at the district level to overcome many challenges that extend beyond local borders. For example, drinking water depends on an intact upland forest, and healthy fisheries often need multiple communities to buy into management rules.

A total of 9 districts in Bua—including Vuya, Nadi, Solevu, Lekutu, Navakasiga—now have district level EBM plans. The management plans will be implemented by Resource Management Committees (RMC) in each district, supported by the Bua Provincial Office and WCS-Fiji.

Dr. Mangubhai said the district plans will also provide a common voice for communities to inform policy makers and government ministries of assistance priorities for the most pressing community needs. The next steps include incorporating all the district plans into a provincial level EBM plan.

Early assessments of the value of similar plans have been positive. Ilaisa Naleba, a District Representative from Nadi, said since his district adopted its EBM plan in 2014, villagers have noticed an increase in fish catch and prawns.

“We’re so thankful to the chiefs for having the vision for a sustainable food system that will also benefit our children and for the support of WCS to turn that vision into an effective management plan,” Naleba said.

“Making the commitment to take on the EBM plan wasn’t easy and the hard work put in by people to make this plan work is worth celebrating,” he said.

Some of the species that are found within community fishing grounds that are critical for people’s food security include iconic coral reef sharks and sea turtles, as well as reef fish and invertebrates (e.g. sea cucumbers, lobsters, mud crabs).

The Wildlife Conservation Society Fiji Program works with local communities and the Fiji Government to protect biodiversity and natural resources through sound management practices.

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