

Desktop Review for Votua Village, Nawaqarua Village and Natutu Village within the District of Nailaga, Ba under the GEF 5 STAR Ridge to Reef Project – 2018.



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1.0: Overview Report of Nailaga District, Ba.

The following report will provide an overview of information on the progress made since the introduction of Fiji Locally Managed Marine Areas (FLMMA) Network in 2000 in the Vanua Votua in the villages of Votua, Nawaqarua and Natutu, which are part of the district of Nailaga. The report is designed as a tool to assist in the review of the current Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMA) along with the implementation of future community based adaptive management (CBAM) programs and practices (Hugh G et al. 2008). The report provides details including the community's demographic, governance, natural resources and livelihood conditions. The information has been collected from a combination of reliable sources including the Ba Provincial Office, Non-Government Organization partners, Fiji Bureau of Statistics, past management papers and qualitative data gathered during FLMMA scoping field work. Community perspectives have been gathered through methods including key informant interviews and focus group discussions with all members of the village including women and youth. This allows a detailed and contextual overview of past and present challenges within the community. The comparisons on the conditions of the village health and environment are vital components of the review, impacting what strategies are implemented or altered for sustainable future management.

2.0: Background:

Ba is a province of Fiji, occupying the north-western sector of Viti Levu, Fiji's largest island. It is one of fourteen provinces in Fiji, and one of eight based in Viti Levu. It is Fiji's most populous province, with a population of 247,708 - more than a quarter of the nation's total - at the 2017 census. ¹covers a land area of 2,634 km, the second largest of any province. Ba Province includes the districts of Nailaga, Magodro, Nadi, Nawaka, Tavua, Vuda and Vitogo.

There is also a town by the name of Ba within Fiji, 37 kilometres from Lautoka and 62 kilometres from Nadi, inland from the coast of Viti Levu, Fiji's largest island. Covering an area of 327 square kilometres, it had a population of 14,596 at the 1996 census. The town is built on the banks of the Ba River, after which it is named. Votua Village is about 8 km from the Ba Town. There are 21 districts in Ba province and 107 villages. Ba province includes the towns of Tavua, Ba and Nadi and the city of Lautoka. The district (tikina) of Nailaga is comprised of villages. The villages include Votua, Nawaqarua, Natutu, Nailaga, Matawalu, Nasolo, and Koroqaqa. The villages are predominantly populated by the indigenous iTaukei Fijians who are either registered owners of the land or were accepted by the villagers as part of the village. Indo Fijian settlements can be found on the outskirts of these villages as well. For this GEF 5 STAR project, the targeted villages that the project will focus on is Votua Village, Nawaqarua and Natutu Village.

Votua Village consists of 890 people living in the village with 150 households. The village consists of 8 clans and 4 tribes. The village has a traditional governance structure, which is the Village Chief "*Turaga na Ratu*" and the Vanua Votua. There are only 3 tribal positions that are occupied

¹ Fiji Bureau of Statistics (5 January 2018). "2017 Population and Housing Census - Release 1". Census 2017. Retrieved 8 April 2018.

and 7 clans that are also occupied to date. The main source of income for this village is from lease money, fishing, farming and employment in the nearby towns. The village households are within the power grid electrification, thus all the houses in the village have electricity. The village has a community hall where all meetings and ceremonial activities occurs. Votua Village has the largest qoliqoli boundary which is being shared amongst those in the Ba Delta villages and nearby settlements. The village has a dispensary whereby a registered nurse manages it on a daily basis and provides needed medical care and drugs. In emergency cases, the villagers are taken to the Nailaga Hospital or the Ba Health Centre. The village has a kindergarten and a primary school. However, the only Secondary school is Xavier College.

Votua Village has one of the largest Qoliqoli areas in Fiji. Its extensive customary fishing rights area (Qoliqoli) extends from Ba Bridge in the nearby township of Ba and includes the mangrove flats located at the mouth of the Ba River to the seas of the Yasawa Islands. Permission is been given by the Paramount Chief of that particular Qoliqoli boundary and also the agreement by the Commissioner in the form of one year licenses to non-indigenous Fijians to conduct fishing activities in the area which is consistent with traditional fishing rights area that are defined and owned by Vanua or Tikina which regulate their use and exploitation.

Nawaqarua and Natutu Village is located 3- 4 km from Votua Village and are part of the villages from Votua Village. There are 3 Clans Navatu, Naivitabua and Koroni in Nawaqarua and 1 clan in Natutu Village. There are 2 village headmen that are leading both these villages and has no traditional chiefs. However, the traditional leadership in this village is spearheaded by the Votua Village chief in terms of the protocol of the Vanua and “I qoliqoli’s and its user’s. The role and responsibilities of this Village is to facilitate and assist the chief from Votua village in terms of their request in terms of any traditional obligations. The total number of households stands at 59 with 260 villagers whereas in Nawaqarua and Natutu there are 54 houses and a total population of 240. The village main source of income and livelihoods is from fishing and employment.

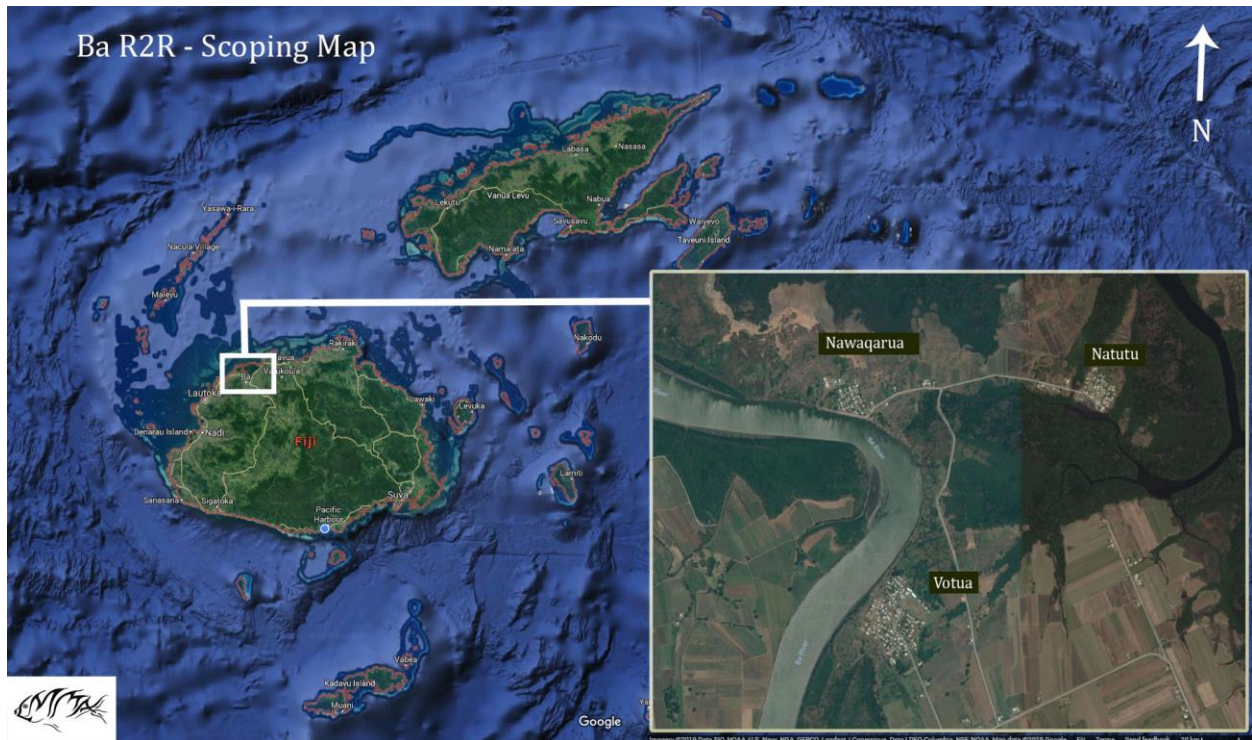


Figure 1. Map of Ba Catchment within Votua, Nawaqarua and Natutu Village.

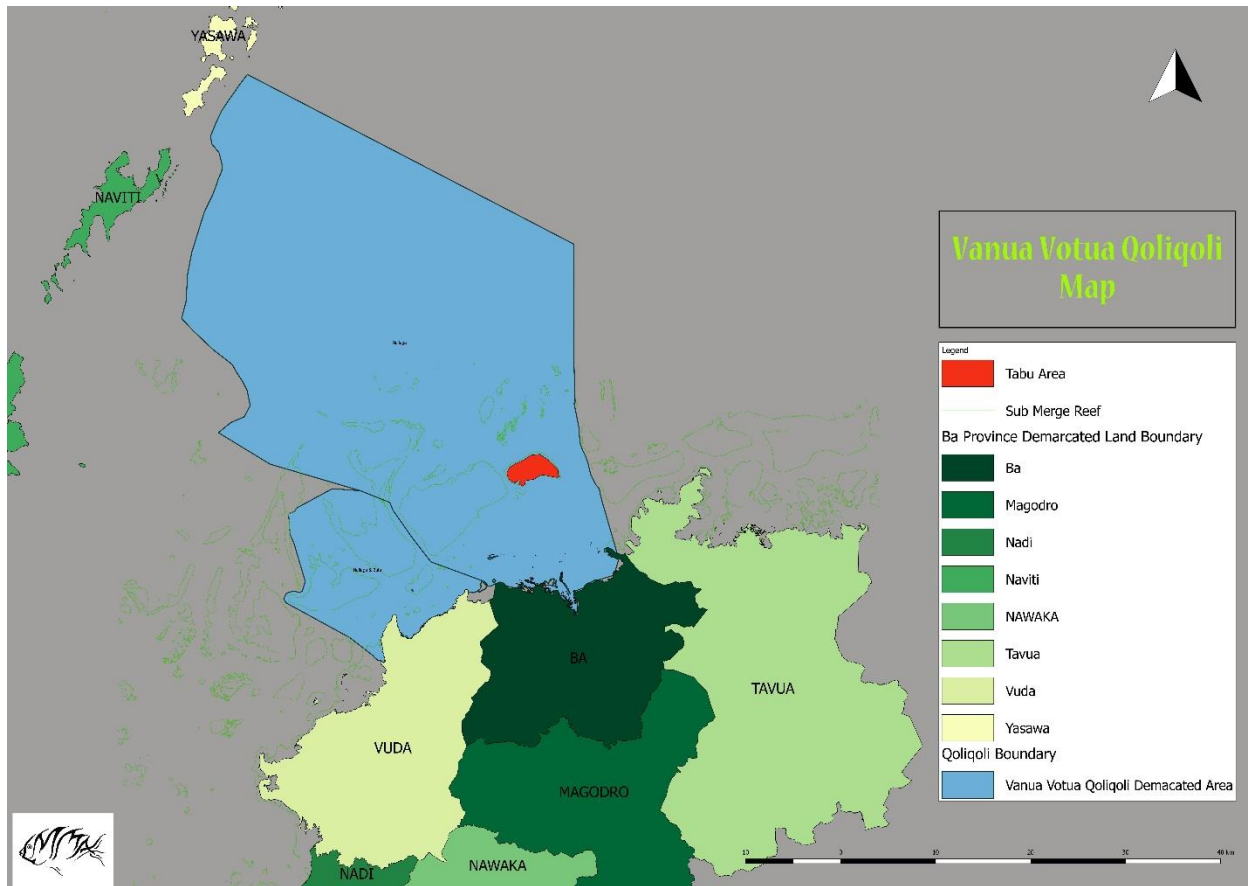


Figure 2. Map of the Vanua Votua Qoliqoli

Created by Etika. S (FLMMA)

3.0: GOVERNANCE:

(i) VANUA

In Fiji, local government arrangements consist of a mixture of customary governance and western type of institution. This comprises of 2 intersecting administrative bodies which govern i-taukei Fijian affairs. All nucleated traditional I taukei villages are governed by the provincial council administered under the Fijian Affairs Act (Nand J. S, 2015).

Votua is the second listed village as part of the Tikina of Nailaga. Votua, Nawaqarua and Natutu Villages falls under the leadership of the chiefly village of Nailaga. Nailaga district is headed by the Tui Ba who reside in Nailaga Village. She is addressed as *“Nawaiviture na Marama na Tui Ba”*. However, the 3 villages are being governed by the *“Turaga na Ratu”*. According to James S & Kevin N, (2015), the village, district and provincial council at the local level and the Council of Chiefs at the national level were established by the British as a system of direct rule. The itaukei Villages are administered by the Provincial Councils through the Village Act. These are part of the administrative structure of the i-taukei Affairs. Village councils are found at the bottom of the formal administrative structure. Village matters and concerns are discussed at this level. The

Turaga ni Koro or village headman usually channels matters through the district to the provincial council (James S & Kevin N, (2015)).

Lastly, leadership training has been done for this district on the general awareness on the roles and responsibilities of leaders from all the villages within this district.

(ii) Lotu:

Catholic and Methodist are the two main denominations in Votua Village. Both denominations have their church and their appointed Ministers situated in the village. The 2 villages (Nawaqarua and Natutu) have 2 denominations as well, whereby Nawaqarua has no church but is part of the Votua congregations in the 2 denominations. In Natutu village, the majority belong to the Methodist denomination.

(iii) NGO Partners:

In Votua, Nawaqarua and Natutu Village, the partners that are implementing and assisting these villages are Institute of Applied Science (IAS), Fiji Locally Managed Marine Area Network (FLMMA) and World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF). For all these Partners, the main workshop which were done by the Institute of Applied Science in the year of 2000 “*Summary Report of the Votua Village (Ba), Community Marine Resource Management and Monitoring*” was about conservation and implementing projects to upgrade the villager’s livelihood and for future generations. Some examples of some of the developments done by these partners are:

1. WWF: Assisted in planting mangrove in the 3 Villages (Votua Village, Nawaqarua Village and Natutu Village)
2. IAS/FLMMA: Carried out a workshop in the year 2000 on general awareness about conservation of our natural resources and setting up Natural Resources Management Plan for the District.
3. JICA: Around last decade, JICA assisted in Aquaculture for Natutu Village and also Mangrove rehabilitation.
4. 1999 – IAS awareness workshop funded by UNDP
5. 2000 – Management planning workshop
6. 2001 – Baseline monitoring and Community Monitoring Training workshop
7. 2002-2004 – LMMA Learning Framework data collection.
8. 2005 – Votua Video Shooting

4.0: CBAM: (Community based adaptive management FLMMMA approach).

The FLMMMA Network has been working with coastal indigenous communities since the early 1990s in addressing threats faced by the communities with regards to their natural resource management e.g: fishing, agriculture that supports the core food security and livelihoods of these communities. The support the Network has provided over 466 communities is through the implementation of the CBAM Approach with the end goal of a Management plan designed by the community and most importantly they have ownership of their respective management plans.

FLMMMA's basic implementation process is as follow:



Community-Based Adaptive Management (CBAM)

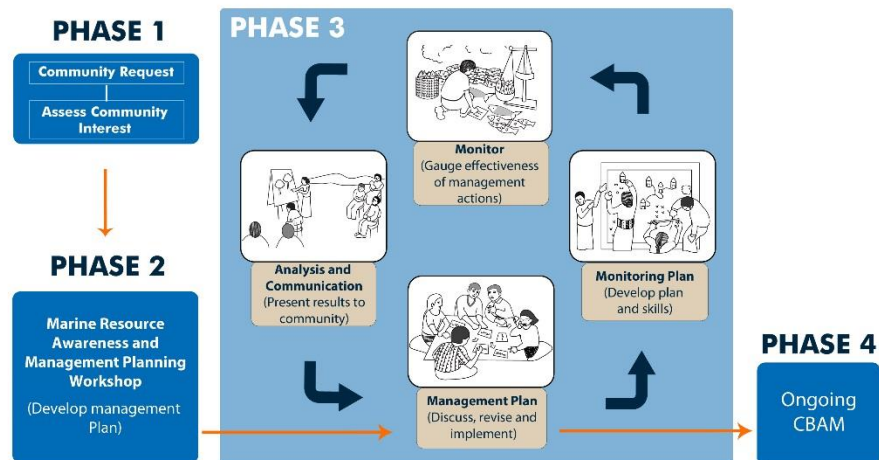


Figure 3. The Community Based Adaptive Management (CBAM) illustrations or diagram.

The basic process of this approach can be summarized as making a plan, implementing a plan, check how it is going, revise the plan if necessary and carry on” according to LMMA, 2004.

In this GEF 5 STAR R2R Project, to preserve Terrestrial and Marine biodiversity, Qoliqoli Votua as part of the Ba Catchment been selected as a priority catchment that encompasses a diverse and geographical environment and scales, intensities of land use, degradation and challenges.

Prior to this project, Votua Village had already undergone a workshop in the year 2000 about the general protection and wise use of their Natural resources through the community based adaptive management (CBAM) approach. This approach encourages communities to play a major lead role towards the protection and management of their natural resources. Various activities were done to gather information about the current status of the village and its development over the years like

resource mapping, group discussion on status and changes over 10 to 15 years. From these exercises, comparisons were discussed among the villagers to identify arising issues that have impacted the village and changes that have been adopted and created better development and major setback to the village and its natural resources. Moreover, integrating concepts and theories learned during the workshop makes the villagers more capable of not only identifying and highlighting issues but also become aware of the guidelines or steps of how to resolve these issues. The outcome of these workshops is a developed and agreed Natural Resource Management Plan by the village for securing better livelihood and improvement in food security of current and future generations.

The Vanua o Votua underwent another review of their Management Plan in 2010, which was facilitated by the Institute of Applied Sciences (IAS) and according to (Ratuniata & Bogiva, 2010), the Votua village leadership & Qoliqoli Management Plan Workshop review saw that most of the issues that were highlighted by previous studies had already been taken care of while new ones also arose. Issues such as deforestation, lack of equipments like phones, engines & boats, over speeding of boats near shorelines, dredging and climate change were some of the new issues that were highlighted during the review workshop.

(Ratuniata, 2010) shared that through discussions in their group work during the Review Workshop, issues such as lack of cooperation by the villagers, soil erosion, lack of spiritual upbringing, burning of Fish wardens boat, as well as the need to increase the Votua village boundary were highlighted as some of the current issues that the villagers are trying their best to resolve amongst themselves. This is important since each issue encountered can have some effect on the whole conservation and management plans of the Village. According to (Mills et al, 2018) “every action in a conservation plan has a different level of effect and consequently contributes differently to conservation”.

Furthermore, in regards to their customary fishing grounds, the villagers still implemented traditional no-take or taboo areas, however, the recent implementation of Black Sand Mining Project at the Ba River delta meant that the Votua Qoliqoli is now more threatened than before. Even though the project benefited some of the people in terms of providing employment opportunities, villagers of Votua still claimed that they have been left in the dark. According to (Devi, 2018), she stated that even though the mining company was granted a license to extract black sand after an Environment Impact Assessment was conducted in 2012, some villagers of Votua, Ba claimed that they have been left in the dark since they were kept out of the loop during the discussions and decision making of the black sand extraction at the Ba River delta.

Despite the great number of issues that are being faced by the villagers of Votua, the traditional management practice also benefited the people. (Ratuniata & Bogiva, 2010) stressed that some of the benefits included ensuring a healthy river system, supporting livelihoods, source of income as well as providing a solution to water pollution. Apart from these benefits, the practice ensured that the Vanua Votua customary fishing grounds are conserved and managed. The review by (Ratuniata & Bogiva, 2010) also highlighted the plans that the Votua villagers were having in terms of restoring and rehabilitating forests, mangrove protection, sustainable land use practices, having an integrated development plan as well as riparian restoration in adjoining upstream watersheds.

Other studies have also identified some of the root causes of the issues faced by the Votua villagers. In this report, (Ratuniata & Bogiva, 2010) it has stated that some of the root causes of these issues is mainly due to the lack of awareness, however, for issues of poaching and overfishing, negligence was the root cause. For instance, fish wardens boats were burned in order for people to fish in the taboo or no-take areas. People had to make awful decisions in order to obtain money as they mostly relied on the sea as a source of their livelihoods. Tawake (2004) in his report stated that institutionally, lack of communication between stakeholders and lack of proper monitoring and evaluation as some of the main causes of the issues faced by the Votua villagers. He also states that due to financial issues like high tariff rates and low sugar costs, this has made the villagers to focus more on fishing as a source of income. Socio-economically, lack of sound inclusiveness in pre and post implementation monitoring, lack of income generating activities and lack of pre & post implementation plans are also causes of some of the issues that the Votua villagers are facing.

5.0: Key Issues/Threats: (presence or absence)

Some major threats identified within the Vanua Votua are as follows:

1. Deforestation,
2. Lack of equipment like phones, engines & boats,
3. Over speeding of boats near shorelines,
4. Dredging
5. Black sand mining project
6. Lack of awareness and educational workshops
7. Poaching and overfishing.
8. Negligence of Village by laws
9. Lack of communication between stakeholders
10. Lack of proper monitoring and evaluation.
11. Lack of financial capacity.
12. Lack of sound inclusiveness in pre and post implementation monitoring
13. Lack of income generating activities and lack of pre& post implementation plans.

6.0: Considerations for Review of Yaubula Management Plans.

The Fiji GEF 5 STAR R2R project's objective is to preserve biodiversity, ecosystem services, sequester carbon, improve climate resilience and sustain livelihoods through a ridge-to-reef management of priority water catchments in the Ba River within Fiji.

Fiji's largest customary fishing boundary is owned by Vanua Votua. There have been numerous studies, research and workshops done in the Vanua Votua having to identify some benefits as well as issues arising from traditional management approaches and practices. Issues such as sand mining projects, poaching, overfishing, flooding and deforestation, communication breakdown within traditional chiefs and its decision making about its natural resources. In 2000, IAS/FLMMA

carried out a workshop which identified some of these issues and as a result , a Natural Resources Management Plan was put together which also identified and highlighted relevant action and monitoring plan to improve livelihood with the villages within the Vanua Votua. Prior to these, relevant government ministries assisted in building a seawall for Nawaqarua Village and NGOs assisted in Mangrove rehabilitation activities with assistance to the disadvantaged with hygiene supplementary.

However, issues that are still in progress are sand mining, poaching, communication breakdown within leaders and the villagers. From these pending matters, more information needs to be gathered and relevant training and general awareness needs to be done to demonstrate sustainable approaches and provide better economic understanding of the links between salt and freshwater ecosystems.

7.0: WAY FORWARD.

The way forward for these issues is to gather more information from the villagers about its traditional governing structure and existence, roles and responsibility of various key stakeholders within the village setting and its committee, assess the general knowledge of the villagers in understanding the natural resources and its connectivity and mainly identify the current situations of the villages to date. FLMMA under the GEF 5 STAR Project will be carrying out a Scoping Exercise Activity after this review to gather the required information to set a programme for a participatory general awareness Workshop on Ridge to Reef to which FLMMA with Solution Providers will review the Management Plan for the Vanua of Votua.

8.0: CONCLUSION:

To conclude, this review has gathered some basic information on the general background, socioeconomic and livelihood developments projects, key issues, threats and challenges for the Vanua Votua.

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