



Left: Students of Beqa-Yanuca Primary School have joined the 'Silence of the Sharks' online campaign.
Picture: SUPPLIED



Students listen attentively to presentations about the importance of protecting shark species. Picture: SUPPLIED

SHARK campaign



Students of Beqa-Yanuca Primary School during presentations on tropical marine ecosystems.
Picture: SUPPLIED

TROPICAL marine ecosystems are under pressure from rapidly changing environmental conditions.

Some of these global pressures include warming seawater, ocean acidification and more intense floods, droughts and cyclones while local and regional pressures include commercial and recreational fishing, and degraded water quality caused by sediment, nutrient and pesticide run-off from agriculture and coastal development.

Although global pressures are difficult to manage locally, there is hope that the resilience of local marine ecosystems can be enhanced by reducing local pressures.

According to Pacific Blue Foundation (PBF) project manager Sefano Katz, healthy shark populations may aid the recovery of coral reefs whose futures are threatened throughout the globe.

"Sharks have existed on this planet for over 450 million years. They both pre-date and have outlived the dinosaurs. As a species, they have survived five major extinction events that have wiped almost all life off the earth," he said.

"Yet in the past 100 years their global populations have shrunk to a point where their very survival is tenuous and extinction is a strong possibility.

"A 2013 study published in the journal *Marine Policy* looked at reported catch numbers of sharks and concluded that there are between 63 and 273 million animals caught annually. The majority of these are caught either in order to harvest their fins, or as bycatch in other fishing operations."

He said a children's competition by the "Silence of the Sharks" campaign (www.silenceoftheshark.org) was held online, inviting children in all countries up to the age of 14 to create their own protest banner and to share it on a dedicated



By GERALDINE PANAPASA
gpanapasa@fijitimes.com.fj

platform established on the Silence of the Sharks website.

The winning banners will be printed on waterproof ads and will be carried underwater by protesting divers.

The best drawing of them all will be awarding its young creator and a parents with an invitation (flights and accommodation) to participate in the event held in Eilat, Israel during October 19-23, sponsored by the organisers.

Thus Mr Katz and Ziggy Livnat, an award-winning filmmaker and founder of For The Sea Productions, began the outreach program on July 4 at Beqa-Yanuca Primary School with about 150 children.

He said posters from about 40 children were handed to the PBF personnel and were submitted online.

"These are the only representative posters from the South-Pacific region. Public votes through the website are between July 25

and August 10. A live announcement of the winner will be given on September 10," Mr Katz said.

"In addition, the activity was extended to the Beqa-Yanuca Secondary School, with a similar activity, to about 100 students, though were not part of the silence of the sharks 'children's competition', due to age restrictions of the competition.

"A similar activity was also extended to Rukua Village on Beqa Island, to about 60 community members."

Pacific Blue Foundation aims to raise awareness about the biodiversity and the threats to coral reef ecosystems and is dedicated to providing basic research, education, encouragement and dissemination of sustainable practices in coastal regions with the ultimate goal of preserving and promoting the biological and cultural diversity of the region.

Challenge yourself!!

ARE you a student, youth or a fan of *Kaila*?

Do you have stories to share with young readers, other students, your peers, family or friends?

Send us a photo of your family, friends or colleagues, besties

or selfie celebrating special occasions explaining what the occasion is, location and a caption.

You may send us poems, drawings, jokes, lessons in life, letters, recipes and school functions.

Contact us

Editor: Sailosi Batiratu
Email: sbatiratu@fijitimes.com.fj
kaila@fijitimes.com.fj
Phone: 3304111 ext. 659

Deputy editor: Geraldine Panapasa
Email: gpanapasa@fijitimes.com.fj

Graphics: Senimili Bradburgh
Email: sbradburgh@fijitimes.com.fj
Phone: 3304111 ext 624