

# ANNUAL REPORT 2018



**PACIFIC BLUE**  
**FOUNDATION**  
Sustaining Reef Communities





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Pacific Blue Foundation (PBF) provides 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.

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# Veitau Waqa – *the boat lives*

## A fun-filled day of traditional Fijian sailing and songs

The annual event *Veitau Waqa – the boat lives* is a traditional sailing boat race, and celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year in Suva on August 17<sup>th</sup>. The Veitau Waqa helps conserve traditional knowledge and craftsmanship of the traditional sailing canoe. Pacific Blue Foundation, as the event organizer, had worked with the Fijian Government and Corporate partners and sponsors to add more value to the event by developing more activities around the race day program.

Over 70 kids, youths and adults participated in the races, exhibiting their capabilities to a crowd of about 1,000 people. This unique Fijian cultural event has increased awareness and promoted the celebration of Fiji's traditional sailing canoes. In addition, the event provided educational opportunities for the local community: the Ministry of Agriculture displayed climate-smart farming methods and the Ministry of Fisheries highlighted the importance of protecting fishing resources.

The beautiful weather and light winds provided perfect sailing conditions.

### Drua race

This year, two Drua canoes raced against each other: the commercially owned and operated 'I Vola Siga Vou', and the 'Heart of Te Fiti', owned by Korova community and constructed with funds from Walt Disney Films Ltd.

Both boats navigated out to the reef, rounded the buoy markers, and then sprinted back to the judges. I Vola Siga Vou, captained by Setareki Ledua, arrived at the beach ahead of Heart of Te Fiti, captained by Tui Cakau.

### Three sailor race

Four competing Camakau boats benefited from steady 10-knot winds, heading downwind in close contest. The crew of three on each boat worked hard on deck to race towards the buoys, changing positions and using the changing winds on the reef to their advantage. The crowd cheered from the Korova and Veisari families as Captain Setareki Domonisere arrived at the beach in 1<sup>st</sup> Place, followed by Simone Paki in 2<sup>nd</sup>, Mosese Tamuali in 3<sup>rd</sup>, and Jiujiu Bera in 4<sup>th</sup> place.

### Bakanawa race

The event, which allows local youth to compete with model traditional boats, has grown very popular as the numbers of participants for this race increases every year. This year, 62 children raced their boats, pleasing the boat families who watch more children become interested in Fijian heritage. The children also had the opportunity to witness races and learn from the Ministries' displays.

### Two sailor race

The 10 – 15 knot winds propelled the impressive Camakau canoes, which filled the harbor skyline with their triangular sails and outright speed. Setareki Domonisere just beat Jiujiu Bera in an exciting finish, with Simone Paki in 3<sup>rd</sup>, followed by Mosese Tamuali in 4<sup>th</sup>.

## Official results of the 2018 Veitau Waqa – *the boat lives*

Place	Prizes (FJD)	Winners/Boat
<b>Drua race</b>		
1	\$1000	Setareki Ledua/I Vola Siga Vou
2	\$ 500	Tui Cakau/Heart of Te Fiti
<b>Two sailor race</b>		
1	\$600	Setareki Domonisere/Elenoa
2	\$400	Jiujiu Bera/Cumu
3	\$200	Setareki Paki/Tama ni Dauloloma
4	\$100	Mosese Tamuali/Bati ni siwa
<b>Three sailor race</b>		
1	\$800	Setareki Domonisere/Elenoa
2	\$500	Setareki Paki/Tama ni Dauloloma
3	\$300	Mosese Tamuali/Bati ni siwa
4	\$200	Jiujiu Bera/Cumu
<b>Bakanawa race</b>		
1	\$75	Jone Vaivai
2	\$50	Etonia Waqaevo
3	\$25	Ledua Talebula
4-59	\$10	Other place-getters





# Beqa Lagoon Initiative

## Project highlights

2018 was a very successful year for the growth of the Beqa Lagoon Initiative (BLI) with substantial effort invested in strategic planning, formal partnership arrangements, and developing relevant and productive collaborations which are essential to long-term success of the BLI. Specific planning and governance system consolidation outcomes include:

- A strategic plan that consolidates the framework, integration, goals, objectives and project outcomes addressing all entities with interests in the Beqa Lagoon, including communities, NGOs, government entities, traditional leadership, and commercial operations.
- The establishment of the Yaubula (natural resources) Management Support Teams (YMST) that signifies the formation of an agreed and unified socio-ecological-systems-based approach for natural resource management, encompassing many different factors relating to the coastal and marine environments and their usage.

These plans ensure that stakeholders are working towards a common vision and operating picture in order to ensure clear roles and responsibilities, transparent process, the empowerment of the local community to utilize traditional land/sea rights to manage resources and protect ecosystem services, and ensure accountability of all contributing entities for meeting their obligations under the established frameworks. Going forward into the 2019/2020 fiscal year, an emphasis will be placed on the implementation of the BLI within the auspices of the established governance structures and agreements.

## Core project development

### Historic meeting between tribal leadership of Beqa Island

Through an unprecedented event, all the Chiefs of the two districts of Beqa Island, referred to as Tikina Sawau and Tikina Raviravi, came together accompanied by the traditional leadership delegation of each tribe and agreed to work together towards long-term environmental and associated cultural protection on Beqa Island. The meeting was attended by representatives from the Rewa Provincial Council, Fiji Locally Managed Marine Area (FLMMA) Network, and Pacific Blue Foundation as voices of collaboration and advice in discussion on how to move forward with creating an island-wide Yaubula (natural resources) Management Support Team (YMST). The committee encompasses all the different entities, representing cultural, political, economic and scientific interests tasked with the creation of a Natural Resource Management Strategy for the entire lagoon, including communities, traditional leadership, government, business stakeholders, NGOs and academia. The truly historic occasion demonstrated a powerful commitment to and an understanding of the intrinsic value traditional Fijian communities still hold for the environment as well as recognition of the environment's connection to the people - termed 'Vanua'.

This milestone means there is now a framework in place for the tribes of Beqa to unite to develop and implement natural resource management plans.

## Establishing district-level Yaubula Management Support Teams

Following the narrative of the Ministry of iTaukei (indigenous) Affairs and our key project partner Fiji Locally Managed Marine Area Network (FLMMA), the Beqa Lagoon Initiative facilitates sustainable environmental management through the pillars of YMSTs at the village, district and island level. These committees encourage accountability for ensuring that the natural resources of the Beqa Lagoon from 'ridge to reef' are protected as terrestrial, coastal and marine ecosystems are highly interconnected requiring localized activities that are replicable and fall under wider management strategies. These management committees also give a channel through which any local and external entity can easily work with. They provide both the communities and the traditional leadership structures in giving scientific advice and training on conservation and management actions.

Workshops, facilitated by PBF, FLMMA and the Rewa Provincial Council, saw the two island Districts – Sawau and Raviravi – hold their first YMST meetings where the committee members were declared, and the roles and responsibilities of each member was decided upon. Furthermore, initial management plans for each district were drawn, identifying threats, their root causes, and potential solutions and implementation responsibility. This provides a broad outline from which long-term plans were enabled, and to be able to focus on village action plans will be formed. The plan highlights the need to engage all levels of Fijian community life to ensure that decisions relating to environmental management come from above, but actions and training are actively engaging the people whose everyday lives depend on it; additionally it is clear protecting traditional culture is as important as biodiversity.

This significant achievement means that the governance structures for progressing BLI are now in place and efforts can now be directed into detailed planning and on ground implementation.

## Village YMST formation and registration

A week of workshops visiting all nine villages on Beqa Island was facilitated by a delegation consisting of representatives from PBF (Sefano Katz and Roko Josefa Cinavilakeba), FLMMA, and the Rewa Provincial Council; had supported the paramount chiefs of the two tribes of Beqa and the newly elected district's YMST chairs and secretaries. The workshops had emphasized the importance of forming a strong and operational YMST, with clear, realistic and important management actions. This highly successful week of workshops really opened the door for management and conversation regarding the roles of individuals, communities, the government, resorts and PBF in preserving the natural resources of the Beqa Lagoon. It helped to formally introduce individual villages to the Beqa Lagoon Initiative and its support from key

entities, and how villages can move forward in protecting their resources through building a strong and active YMST which can channel efforts into adequate management of the natural resources and to the communities' sustainable development. The distinct roles the YMST will play had been reinstated, and the support of PBF and other outside entities had been assured through the commitment and requests from established YMSTs. This is the only way that sustainable, lasting results can occur within remote communities; by setting up these committees it allows community members to receive training and take on specific responsibilities for protecting different aspects of their coastal and marine environment into the future. This workshop will be followed with another roadshow of workshops conducted by the same delegation forming village-level 'conservation action plans' identifying key threats to their environment. Solutions will then be drawn up by communities aligning closely with the district-level management plans.

The formation of the YMST is a critical piece of work in the success of the BLI. Specific management plans can now be devised and implementation can commence in 2019/2020.

## Coral reef health monitoring

One of the most important contributions PBF are making towards conserving the natural resources of Beqa Lagoon is combining scientific knowledge and research undertaken by experienced Marine Scientists with local, traditional knowledge on coral reef fisheries to develop a plan for protecting the coral reef ecosystem. In-depth annual surveys of the fishing grounds of Rukua village were started in 2017 and have been continued in 2018 with improvements and amendments to the methodologies with lessons-learned from the previous year. Abundance and size of target species of reef fish and invertebrates were measured which were combined with surveys of coral damage and substrate coverage giving an indication of the levels of fishing on the reef (both current and impacts of historic overfishing) and indications of overall reef health. The surveys further investigated the difference in these parameters between the marine protected areas (MPA) and the fished areas to look at the effectiveness of the current management strategy. Reports were produced for both the community and for our partners such as FLMMA, the Rewa Provincial Office and the Ministry of Fisheries, in order to support the decision-making with future management of these marine areas and the resources they hold.

### Key findings of coral health surveys – 2017 – 2018

Evidenced over-fishing – There is evidence of overfishing, or ineffective management of the *tabu* (traditionally instated no take zone). There was no significant difference between the overall number of fish in *tabu* vs non-*tabu* sites, and in all areas the vast majority of fish were smaller than 15cm, even when the small species such as Butterflyfish are removed from the sample.

Fish that are favored to catch for food and income security such as Groupers, Snappers and Sweetlips were either absent or in very low numbers and were all extremely small, with the majority also being less than 15cm, which would indicate all sexually immature individuals. Another indicator of overfishing is the abundance of Urchins (Echinoidea) which was extremely high across all sites in comparison to other areas of in-shore reef in Fiji. Large fish such as Napoleon Wrasse and Triggerfish eat urchins; when these fish are absent urchins become abundant, and this relationship has been used as an indicator of fishing pressure in reef systems worldwide.

The outcome of this work led by PBF is a clear indication that there is a need for a plan of management for Beqa Lagoon, formal recognition of a marine protected area and a community agreed monitoring and compliance program. With this evidence to support the case, PBF will develop the collaboration with the Ministry of Fisheries, the YMSTs, community leaders and FLMMAs to progress the establishment of the Beqa Lagoon LMMA that is supported by a plan of management and a licensing system. Community members have emphasized the need for fisheries association approach that establishes local fishing rights, excludes poaches and ensures the long term sustainability of the fish resource.

2017–2018 monitoring year has confirmed that CoTS problem is getting worse. Outside the MPAs, the numbers of CoTS and the numbers of feeding scars, which are used as evidence of the damage CoTS are causing to the reef, had increased from 2017 to 2018. Encouragingly in the MPAs the number of both CoTS individuals and feeding scars had decreased, following the removal activities that had been targeted in these areas. These results demonstrate the urgent need for a comprehensive CoTS monitoring and threat mitigation project across the whole Beqa Lagoon and shows that simple community-centric approaches such as manual removals do work in decreasing CoTS damage in localized areas. PBF now has the evidence needed to explain the importance of CoTS control and get the community on board to implement the CoTS control program.

Giant Clams (*Tridacna spp.*) are considered a delicacy and key protein source for villages in Fiji and are opportunistically harvested whenever they are sighted. This has led to massive overfishing and localized extinctions across the country. Encouragingly there were a few Giant Clams sighted in the MPAs, which have been closed to fishing for 5 years, yet they were all below reproductive size. This demonstrates the need to close MPAs to fishing for longer than the usual 5 years to allow some of these slower-growing invertebrate species a chance to repopulate.

## Mangrove restoration

Fiji has some of the most extensive and biodiverse mangrove habitats in the South Pacific, and yet across the country many of them have been removed for coastal development, boat access and fire wood. Mangroves are incredibly important as they act as nursery grounds for many large reef fish such as Bull Sharks, an iconic species for Beqa, and the complex root systems help to trap sediment and slow down coastal erosion, which has been identified as a key threat facing low-lying remote communities. PBF has been working with local community partners to survey areas of coastline where mangroves have been lost and need replacing and identify key places where mangroves are needed to stabilize the coastline.

In 2017–2018 the Rukua task force was trained in mangrove ecology and the system of building a nursery, identifying viable propagules, and out-planting juvenile mangroves onto the coastline in desired quantities and spacing. The Rukua nursery is successfully up and running and a community-lead mangrove planting activity is starting to happen weekly.

This work had highlighted the importance of mangroves, and had encouraged the other communities of Beqa to follow suit. Through an acquired grant, this program will expand and cover several other communities in Beqa Lagoon to establish a mangrove restoration program.

## Ecotourism

The extensive natural wonders and cultural heritage of the Beqa Lagoon is a massive draw for thousands of tourists who come to dive with sharks, marvel at the glittering reefs and enjoy unique traditions such as Firewalking. This means that the four resorts located within the Beqa Lagoon have a key interest and say in the development of a conservation strategy, and can be a highly useful platform to increase awareness on local conservation issues and harbor support for the Beqa Lagoon Initiative (BLI). The relationship between PBF and the Beqa Lagoon Resort strengthened in 2018, with weekly presentations on coral reef ecology and the BLI; and the signing of an MOU outlining the continued and increasing collaboration between the two entities into the future including the creation of a programme of ecological activities for resort guests to create a donation stream supporting the project.

The annual tour organized by America's oldest marine conservation NGO, the Oceanic Society, was a huge success. Members were guided on snorkels throughout the lagoon by PBF marine scientists with accompanying presentations on different aspects of local marine ecology, and then they took part of ecological activities directly supporting the BLI. This collaboration had further supported the BLI and allowed for many more people to become more aware of the project, creating many more stewards to spread the message worldwide.





## Pilot projects in Rukua village. Developing best-practice methodologies for ecological activities.

### Village task force set-up

At the community level BLI has been focusing on implementing sustainable, effective nature-based solutions that help communities to implement adaptive management strategies of their communities and the surrounding environments and the natural resources within. Each succinct project within the BLI has specific activities identified to be carried out in the village, surrounding the coastal and marine environments. The village YMST created a 'task force' which received training in these activities by the PBF's Sefano Katz (the BLI project manager and an experienced marine ecologist), which will carry them on into the future. It was important to ensure different demographic groups within the village are represented, with women and youth identified as having certain skillsets which are unique and extremely useful.

### Crown-of-Thorns Starfish control

Crown-of-Thorns Starfish (CoTS) are a large predatory species which feed on live coral, and are native to the Indo-Pacific. Human-induced outbreaks - where naturally low populations quickly increase to unsustainable levels - can cause severe damage to coral reefs and subsequent loss of biodiversity and reef resources. The Beqa Lagoon has been experiencing a relatively low-level CoTS outbreak for several years which has been reported through incidental sightings by fishermen, dive guides and PBF staff, and backed-up by our annual coral reef monitoring data. The task force from Rukua village received workshops in understanding CoTS biology and ecology, the reasons for outbreaks including overfishing of their natural predators, and safe techniques

in CoTS detection and removal. During the four-month implementation of removals, the task force was able to remove over 800 CoTS from the fringing reefs nearby their village. This effort is just the start of what will be a project combining research, training, education and conservation activities that will involve villages, resorts and academic institutions in Fiji and internationally, to combat this increasing threat.

A grant has been acquired which will enable training community monitoring and priority CoTS control areas to be identified and managed in 2019/2020.

### Organic composting

Almost all Fijian families have a farm or plot of land where they produce vegetables and kava for both local consumption and sale. The government has been subsidizing the use of synthetic in-organic commercial fertilizers (NPK) for many years to help communities remain self-sustainable. However, this has led to rampant overuse, particularly with the increasing monetary value of kava. Islands like Beqa are formed from volcanic activity and are characteristically very steep and rocky, rising sharply from sea level. The combined factors of farms being on steep hillsides and heavy annual rainfall means huge amounts of topsoil and fertilisers get washed into waterways and out into coastal environments. This is a source of organic pollution, which is a real problem for in-shore coral reefs and can lead to a shift from a coral dominated reef to an algae dominated reef, with subsequent loss of biodiversity and monetary value from fisheries and tourism.



To address this problem, PBF facilitated a workshop for the YMST to foster an understanding of the benefits of organic fertilizers over synthetic commercial options. The workshop focused on how to create rich, sustainable compost using food scraps, fruit and vegetable peelings and garden waste and the subsequent environmental and health benefits of this approach. A Community Taskforce was then established with the assistance of PBF, by the community leaders of promoting the uptake of organic fertilizers over synthetic options. In the last year the Taskforce in conjunction with PBF has constructed five public composters in the village which are utilized by local households.

A grant was acquired to expand this program to the rest of Beqa Island and establish organic composters in all nine villages during 2019/2020. In proceeding years focus of the BLI will aim to achieve the communities goal of a 100% organic island, not only increasing the health of the people but also adding value to exported crops.

## Solid waste management

A huge problem worldwide, particularly in developing countries like Fiji where there is very little municipal waste management systems. In outer islands like Beqa, communities are left to independently manage their own waste in isolation with limited awareness and education about the environmental impacts of plastic and other sources of pollution. Current practices include burning, burying or disposing of waste in rivers, streams and the marine environment. Rubbish is visible throughout the reef system, and has been seen caught around coral and washing up on the island's intrinsic beaches. Uncontrolled solid waste is not only an environmental health issue but also a human health problem with biologically hazardous waste such as used diapers and sanitary products being irresponsibly dumped which are then picked up by dogs and pigs and spread around the villages, increasing the chances of communicable diseases.

In the past year, PBF has been facilitating information sessions and planning days with the YMST to build awareness and understanding of the environmental and health hazards associated with inappropriate waste disposal. As a result of these workshops and raising awareness, the YMST agreed to the construction of a solid waste recycling centre in Rukua village. This centre has been successful in collecting and storage of aluminum cans, plastic bottles and other forms of PET plastics. Subsequent to this achievement, PBF has been working with the Women's Committee in the village to build their capacity and training in waste management which has led to the establishment of a Beqa Waste Management Program. This Program is led by local women who are responsible for sorting waste for recycling and organizing the transportation of waste sacks to the mainland collection. In addition, two disposal units were erected in the village to encourage people to stop littering and dispose of waste properly, particularly children. The bins included signs for recyclables and non-recyclables and have so far been a huge hit.

# BLI expands

## The project has a boat

2018 saw the highly anticipated and much needed arrival of the Kasaga, a 7 meter fiberglass boat with a central console and 75hp outboard engine that is instrumental in facilitating many project activities. The output and efficiency of the project has increased exponentially since the arrival of the boat at Beqa and we are incredibly grateful to captain Robert Edgar and Blue Whale Adventures in overseeing the fitting of the boat.

## BLI support staff

As the project expands there has been a need to increase the capacity of the BLI staff. Pablo Trujillo, a fisheries biologist from Canada, spent time helping to map out the Beqa coastline, identifying key areas of mangrove deforestation and ideal locations for restoration and was working on developing alternative income initiatives through aquaculture of seaweed. Eleanor Brighton, a coral reef ecologist with experience in similar community-level conservation initiatives elsewhere in Fiji joined on a short contract as a Project Officer, and supported many areas of the project development outlined above. Raquel Carter joined the organization remotely as the project development and communications advisor. Her experience in strategic management, marine sciences, conservation output, media and proposal writing, has been prized for increasing the strategic development and public awareness of the project and increasing support through many different channels.





# Lau Seascape Initiative

## Project highlights

### Open standards and drafting the Lau Seascape Strategy

Lau Seascape Strategy workshop between the Lau Seascape Partners was set to collectively engage organizational partners in Lau for the development of the Lau Seascape strategy using open standards and an appreciation of the process, and to compile a Lau Seascape Initiative management plan for the next 10 years

The primary outcomes were: 1) The partnership gained understanding of the current situation in the Lau seascape in regards of natural resources, human well-being, and conservation, which allowed LSI partners to design an effective program for long term sustainability;

2) confirmation of the geographic scope of the seascape, creating a draft vision for the site, identify conservation and human well-being targets, set goals for these targets, identify key threats to the targets and their drivers, and;

3) identified and prioritized strategies that the program will implement to mitigate threats and reach conservation goals, develop result chains for key strategies, build a monitoring component that includes threat reduction and process objectives as well as indicators.

This created the first draft of the founding document to chart the Lau Seascape Initiative direction forward.

### Lau Seascape Strategy refinement and endorsement

The week-long workshop which was facilitated by the CI-Fiji and Raja Ampat teams, PBF's Roko Josefa Cinavilakeba, and FLMMMA, gathered all chiefs, community leaders and YMST committees of each island in Lau to refine and endorse the way to incorporate conservation

and sustainable development through the Lau Seascape Multi-use management spatial zonation plan.

The workshop focused on 1) preparedness of community leadership toward sustainable development practices and conservation activities in Lau; 2) coordinated interventions of conservation and sustainable development of resources in each island from ridge to reef to ocean with partners in Lau; 3) formulation of information constructs to the build-up of island based spatial zonation plan and respective management, and; 4) enable negotiation at high level intervention for enabling policies to support Lau Seascape recommendations and strategies for national user payment system.

The main outputs of this workshop were: 1) finalized Lau Seascape Strategy and officially launch it amongst the Lau Seascape Initiative partners, and; 2) Finalized governance and structure of the Lau Seascape Initiative.

### Setting Yaubula Management Support Teams and plans in Yasayasa-Moala

Scoping activities by a team comprised of PBF (Roko Sau), CI and FLMMMA, were held in every village on Moala Island of the current status of management plans on the island villages. Through this two-week engaging trip, each of the 10 villages on Moala Island had set up their YMST committee which endorsed it with a village-based management plan. Following the great enthusiasm of the communities and the leaders, an island-based YMST committee was set up to oversee the work conducted in each village.

At the end of the workshops a native tree restoration was initiated with sandalwood trees planted.



## Traditional ceremony for the Navatu Atoll protected area

A group of anthropologists and artists with the TBA21 group were led by PBF's Roko Josefa Cinavilakeba, went to explore the art crafts and the natural wonders of the Yasasa–Moala group, and to strengthen the links between the people, the arts and the environment.

Following a research trip in 2017, wherein the Navatu atoll was recognized as a special and unique reef system due to the high biodiversity, abundance of big fish and endangered species, such as giant clams and turtles; a traditional ceremony was performed to instate the Navatu atoll to be an MPA through traditional protocols.

## Aerial assessment survey of cetaceans in the Lau seascape region

The survey was carried a collaboration undertaking with the Ministry of Fisheries Research Division, Pacific Blue Foundation, the Lau Provincial Office, the Seafly flight carrier and crew and Conservation International. On the field surveys, the process was facilitated by the services of the local cetacean experts Saras Singh and Aporosa Nalasi, Roko Josefa Cinavilakeba, Kalesi Nadalo, Susana Waqainabete, and Semisi Meo.

The survey established a baseline map of whales across the Lau Seascape region, spotting a total of 13 Humpback whales. This work helped in the methodology design to collect data by the Ministry of Fisheries and the University of the South Pacific on cetaceans and other marine creatures, such as seabirds, sea turtle and large elasmobranchs (sharks and rays).

## Northern Lau islands turtle survey

In December a team comprised from PBF (Roko Josefa Cinavilakeba), Conservation International (Semisi Meo), and the University of the South Pacific (Malakai Tuiono), assisted by SeaFly Inc. (Ted Neil and Billy Peake), headed out to the northern Lau Islands to investigate both nesting and foraging green and hawksbill turtles, and to provide a baseline dataset of the sea turtle populations in Fiji.

The trip helped in establishing a baseline status of marine turtles and unique coastal fauna across the North Lau Seascape region and had identified over 60 turtle nesting sites for Hawksbill and Green turtles. The human activities and other anthropogenic factors impacting these sites were assessed, finding that many of these are still under threat from coastal development, habitat destruction, poaching and coastal erosion. Additionally, sea–grass meadows, turtle foraging grounds, were mapped, and opportunistic genetic sample were taken from turtles towards a population genetics study on turtles.

This information has aided in decision making of locating significant location for turtles which will be targeted as protected areas.

# Sireli Kago Education Fund

The Sireli Kago Education Fund (SKEF) honors the dedication and hard work of the late Sireli Kago. Pacific Blue Foundation supports the people of Yanuca and Totoya Islands improve technical skills and build capacity with higher education. Improving education within the individual, family unit or group business not only increases family income, but also encourages spending on improved home facilities, business expansion, and community commitments. The SKEF pays for 50% of all registration and tuition fees for secondary, tertiary and other trade–skills students or workers. Village Councils have pledged to pay 25%, and students and families pay the remaining 25%.

In 2018, the following individuals received the SKEF:

Lanieta Kuruybaki Naimiri from Yanuca Island received support to pursue her Diploma in Agriculture for the Fiji National University. We applaud and congratulate Lanieta for successfully graduating!

Naomi Gavidí from Totoya Island received support to pursue a Foundation in Arts Science from the University of the South Pacific. She is currently in her second year of studies.

# Publications and media

## **Interview on the TV show Tali Magimagi, December 2018**

Featured on Mai TV, the show hosted Roko Josefa Cinavilakeba, PBF's government and community relations director, and Alifereti Tawake, Fiji Locally Managed Marine Area Network chair, who discussed ongoing conservation work in Fiji.

They pointed to the inspiration gained by and given to our partner communities, strengthening the commitment that they gave and the trust the partners have built in the last decade, as well as the way forward in the conservation and natural resource management fields.

## **Paradise Threatened: Fiji's War Against Climate Change - New York Times, November 2018**

Journalists Ken Belson and Asanka Ratnayake came to Beqa on two separate occasions to meet with the BLI team and the village of Rukua as part of their article documenting the connection between the people of Fiji and their environment and how they perceive climate change in affecting their daily lives. It was a very well written article, featuring the BLI project manager - Sefano Katz - on the front page of the travel section of this globally acclaimed newspaper. The article highlighted the plight of local communities in the South Pacific who will be the hardest to be hit, but also brought attention to the positive attitudes these communities have in the face of a changing world and what people are doing to mitigate the impact of climate change in Fiji. The article covered the knowledge and perception of community elders

who talked about changing weather patterns and severe coastal erosion that has occurred in the past 50 years, took part in mangrove restoration activities, an example of local communities fighting back, and snorkeled on the pristine reefs of Beqa to truly appreciate what is at stake.

[> Link to the publication](#)

## **Managing Island Resources - Fiji Times, September 2018**

The article, which featured Sefano Katz (BLI project manager), highlighted the strength, unity and integrity of the Vanua as the main building-block for successful community based management of natural resources.

The article followed a workshop held in the chiefly village of Dakuibeqa, on Beqa Island, as part of the BLI, in collaboration with Fiji Locally Managed Marine Area (FLMMA) and the Rewa Provincial Office. This initiative was highlighted as the first of its kind in Fiji's Central Division to target island-wide YMST (Yaubula Management Support Team) committees, focusing on creating the structure for community-based management.

[> Link to the publication](#)

## **Leader with a vision - Fiji Times, August 2018**

As a traditional Fijian leader, Roko Josefa Cinavilakeba (Roko Sau) knows his role comes with a lot of responsibilities. As part of a workshop organized by Pacific Blue Foundation and FLMMA (Fiji Locally Managed Marine Protected Area network) in conjunction with the Rewa Provincial office; the article on the Fiji Times had covered Roko Sau's views and vision of the idea behind the BLI - to make Fijian communities enlightened on the importance of their natural resources, and how the decisions they make can affect their people.

[> Link to the publication](#)

## **Biophysically Special, Unique Marine Areas of Fiji**

Sykes H, Le Grand J, Davey K, Kirmani SN, Mangubhai S, Yakub N, Wendt H, Gauna M, Fernandes L (2018).

*MACBIO (GIZ, IUCN, SPREP), Wildlife Conservation Society and Fiji's Protected Area Committee (PAC); Suva.*

The government of Fiji has committed to placing 30% of the country's seascape as designated Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), this report was written to give areas of Fiji a ranking based on ecosystem services provided and unique features to certain locations such as sea mounts and high biodiversity areas. This allows decision makers to make more informed decisions about which areas to protect and which areas require more research or restoration. We are delighted that the Beqa Lagoon was awarded the highest ranking possible. The incredible diversity of coastal and marine habitats combined with unique spatial features, such as a migration route for Humpback Whales and nursery and aggregation sites for large Elasmobranchs (e.g., Tiger Sharks and Bull Sharks), highlight the Beqa Lagoon as highly special and in need of further protection.

[> Link to the publication](#)



# Partners and collaborators

- Communities of Beqa and Yanuca Islands
- Fiji Locally Managed Marine Area (FLMMA)
- Rewa Provincial Council
- Serua Provincial Council
- Fiji Environmental Law Association
- Ministry of iTaukei Affairs
- Ministry of Environment
- Ministry of Fisheries
- Ministry of Health
- Maritime Safety Authority of Fiji
- University of the South Pacific
- Scripps Institute of Oceanography
- Beqa Lagoon Resort
- Lawaki Beachhouse
- Blue Whale Adventures



## Sponsors

- UNDP/GEF through the Small Grants Programme (SPG)
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