



## **The Socio-Cultural Environmental and Economic Impact Study of Tourism Development in the Yasawa Group of Islands**

Tourism has grown so rapidly and has become an increasingly important economic sector in Fiji bringing in foreign exchange earnings, employment and regional development. It has also contributed to the improvement in community's welfare and the improvement in the standard of living. The Ministry of Tourism in its ongoing mid-term review of the tourism development master plan from 2003-2005, had funded a socio-cultural, environmental and economic study of the impact of tourism on the Yasawa Group of Islands. The study was due to the fact that Yasawa is one of the fastest growing tourist destinations in Fiji with potentially significant impacts on its natural and social environment.

The main objective of the study were to inform the mid-term review of the TDP in 2003-2005 by assessing the socio-cultural, economic and environmental impacts of tourism development in the Yasawas as well as to allow the Ministry and its partners to make future plans as sustainable as possible. The assessment was carried out over a period of twelve (12) weeks from October to December 2005. In contrast to the economic boom that tourism brings to the region, the study reconfirmed and supported the recommendations from the SEA highlighting the urgency for Fiji to move away form economic activities associated with enclave tourism that maximize short term gains contributing to the emergence environmental, social, cultural and economic disadvantages rather encourage the formulation of appropriate sustainable tourism activities that are sensitive to the carrying capacity of the natural resources, resorts and the people.

### **Major Findings from the Report stated that:**

- Despite its location to most of the major tourism development, only a small percentage of the populations are engaged directly to the tourism industry
- Increase interactions with outsiders and tourist sites have played a major role in the daily lives of people i.e. quality time for communal work is greatly affected
- Direct impact of untreated sewerage drained into the sea from village pit and flush toilets is further compounded by large sewerage being drained out by large tour boat vessels that daily frequented the area
- The environment of Nacula encompassing of both the terrestrial and marine is stressed due to direct and indirect human activities

- Rapid in the consumption of processed food has increased the use of non-biodegradable products and solid waste such as plastic bags, bottles, tins and glasses that littered the village outskirts
- The increasing consumption of alcohol, smoking of cigarettes and kava has led to an increase in socio-cultural problems such as increase in teenage pregnancy as well as increase in extra marital affairs and broken families
- Establishment of resort developments without proper stakeholder consultation has caused social and cultural tension first amongst the locals themselves and later on between the locals and the foreign investors.
- A positive impact that was evident particularly in the village of Namara was where villagers have become respectful of the efforts that were carried out by village elders in the initial phase of development
- Enhancement/enrichness of cultural practices
- Traditional protocols are well observed and strictly adhered to and tourism in a way has directly and indirectly strengthened the communal bond
- Even the impact of tourism in the region is yet to spread to Natawa, existing human activities has exerted a lot of pressure on the terrestrial and marine ecosystem

### **Hotel Ownership and Management in the Yasawas**

- i. Joint Partnership between a local family and a foreign investor as in the case of Oarsman Bar Resort
- ii. Joint partnership between a community and a foreign investor, this include Twin Bay Resort
- iii. Full ownership by a foreign investor by a foreign investor such as Turtle Island
- iv. Full Ownership by an individual local investor and
- v. Full ownership by a clan or tribe

### **Action Plan Derived from the group discussion**

#### ***- Economic Impacts***

<b>Key Issues</b>	<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
1. Financial / Economic interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Indirect source of income such as:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• supplying of food, fruits, fish and vegetables</li> <li>• water transport (taxis)</li> <li>• selling of artifacts / shells etc</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Initial financial contribution</li> </ul>	❖ Villagers/ Locals

2. Proportion of staff working from the villages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop skills through training</li> <li>- Improve salary and wages</li> <li>- Ensure that all community participate through the rotation of hotel workers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Hotel owners and managers</li> <li>❖ Chiefs and village elders</li> </ul>
3. Contribution of mataqali lease payments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Other benefits tied with lease arrangements</li> <li>- Compliance with lease conditions (outsiders)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ NLTB and resort owners</li> </ul>
4. Financial / Economic activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Suppliers to hotels (food / shells)</li> <li>- Dive / Trackers</li> <li>- Cultural shows</li> <li>- Entertainment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Villagers and Managers</li> </ul>
5. Non - cash (in-kind) contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Housing schemes</li> <li>- Education sponsorships</li> <li>- Complimentary tickets e.g. Awesome Adventures</li> <li>- Free evacuation of sick people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Hotel managers and owners</li> <li>❖ Awesome Adventures (shipping operators)</li> </ul>
6. Total salary contribution to villagers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Free meals for workers</li> <li>- Free accommodation</li> <li>- Improve skills and productivities</li> <li>- Promote mataqali / clan operated hotels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Hotel operators</li> <li>❖ Villagers, provincial offices and Government</li> </ul>

***- Socio Cultural Impacts***

<b>Key Issues</b>	<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
1. Cultural Interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Information Guidelines for village visit and vice versa</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Resort</li> <li>❖ Tour Guide</li> <li>❖ Turaga ni Koro</li> <li>❖ FAB</li> </ul>

2. Increasing of consumption of alcohol, non communicable disease, diabetes etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Awareness programme</li> <li>- Resort- compliance to license regulations (Private Liquor License)</li> <li>- Resort rules and regulations particularly on staff – guest relationship</li> <li>- Village schedule to be given to resorts so they can fit in their programme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ FAB</li> <li>❖ Health</li> <li>❖ Tourism Police</li> <li>❖ Turaga ni Koro</li> <li>❖ Resort owner</li> </ul>
3. Complexity of Ownership of resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Awareness</li> <li>- Workshops</li> <li>- Seek advice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Ministry of Tourism</li> <li>❖ NLTB</li> <li>❖ Native Land Commission</li> <li>❖ FAB</li> <li>❖ Tourist Police</li> <li>❖ Me</li> </ul>
4. Conserving Cultural Values (Dances, Qaraqaravi ni Yaqona, Building of bures, Planting of local plants, Handicraft) Lunar knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Awareness</li> <li>- Training</li> <li>- Cultural competition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Department of Culture</li> <li>❖ Village elders</li> <li>❖ FAB</li> <li>❖ Agriculture</li> </ul>

***- Environmental Impacts***

<b>Key Issues</b>	<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
1. Water supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Water tank</li> <li style="padding-left: 20px;">- Underground</li> <li style="padding-left: 20px;">- Plastic</li> <li style="padding-left: 20px;">- Bore hole</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Resort Owner</li> <li>❖ Eco-tourism</li> <li>❖ Mineral resources</li> </ul>
2. Sewerage Treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Submission to solid waste management co. and govern</li> <li>- Other eco-friendly private facility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Waste Care</li> <li>❖ Ministry of Environment</li> <li>❖ Ministry of Health</li> <li>❖ Owner</li> <li>❖ FSM and USP</li> </ul>

3. Soil Contamination	- Natural barrier - Retaining wall - Sea wall	❖ Local knowledge ❖ Ministry of Health ❖ PWD ❖ 1/3; 2/3 contribution
4. Hydrological Regime	- Use of eco-friendly solutions - Sedimentary ponds - Sand pits - Drain to vegetable gardens - Dynamite use policy	❖ Fisheries ❖ Police ❖ Ministry of Environment ❖ Turaga ni Koro
5. Flora and Fauna	- No cutting of trees - Introduction of trees - Penalty for Burners - Expert to assist in tree introduction	❖ Land use ❖ Police ❖ Agriculture and Forestry ❖ Turaga ni Koro
6. Effect of Endanger	- No fishing - Taboo policy	❖ Turaga ni Koro ❖ Fisheries ❖ Ministry of Environment
7. Use of Local Resource	- Planting and use of local vegetables - Use of local fruits and vegetables menu	❖ Resort ❖ Village

### Recommendations

- i. Prepaid overseas vouchers associated with packaged tours should be discouraged and instead in-country purchase of these vouchers should be encouraged as this would increase the retention of tourist dollars
- ii. Increase capacity of existing small resorts to cater for more tourists at an allowable carrying capacity so as to ensure the sustainable use of the natural resources such as water and food as well as ensuring the maintenance of quality service and the management of clients
- iii. Minimize the number of high turnovers in a short span of time for packaged tours as this would also minimize the usage of energy to cater for laundry and the maintenance of food and accommodation
- iv. Encourage bure type resort developments that sell exclusivity and quality

- v. Encourage greater participation of resource owners through economic incentives by related government institutions as this would allow greater stewardship roles of the locals that have more spiritual and cultural bond to the land and sea
- vi. Resorts to be encouraged to engage in sustainable green standard practices that would minimize the increase in the usage of non-biodegradable substances and products that leads to water contamination
- vii. Introduction of educational programs by tertiary institutions that provide appropriate educational programmes in the area of catering, hotel management, accommodation and food & beverage service to the locals for capacity building. This is vital to cater for the high number of unskilled locals now working at low salary bracket in most of these resorts

Lastly but most importantly, social and cultural change due to increase tourism interaction is a complex issue hence, should be solved by the locals themselves. In addition, studies to look at the root cause analysis of these problems is imperative to gauge the real scenario of host and visitor relationship in the Yasawas.

### **Conclusion**

- I. Fiji must develop tourism within its environmental carrying capacity
- II. Fiji needs to develop tourism at a pace and scale that equates more with the resources it possesses and the constraints and risks that exist
- III. Fiji needs to spread the socio-economic benefits of tourism and reduce leakage
- IV. There needs to be an improved, bottom-up process for processing tourism development on native lands
- V. There is a lack of user fees to pay for sustainable tourism