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## Financing Spotlight: Funding Fijian MPAs through Resource "Adoption" Programs

In March, a new Web-based tool to raise funds for Fijian MPAs was launched, enabling people to pay online to "adopt" corals, reefs, and mangroves in the Pacific island nation. The NGO behind it - Sustainable Fijian Reef Resources, or *Sasalu Tawamudu* in the Fijian language - was founded by faculty members of the University of the South Pacific in Fiji and the Georgia Institute of Technology in the U.S. The organization's goal is to help conserve Fiji's reefs and forests while promoting sustainable development in local Fijian communities.

The three resource-adoption programs - Adopt-a-Coral, Adopt-a-Reef, and Adopt-a-Mangrove - are available on the *Sasalu Tawamudu* website at <http://sasalutawamudu.org>.

The bulk of funds raised via each program is transferred directly to the Fiji Locally-Managed Marine Area Network (FLMMA). This is a Fijian network of traditional leaders, conservation staff, and others working on community-based marine conservation projects. The FLMMA Network won the UNDP Equator Prize in 2002 for its work to reduce poverty through the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and is a national initiative within the Indo-Pacific regional Locally-Managed Marine Area Network. It has worked with communities to develop management plans and monitoring results in more than half of the fishing areas of Fiji.

The FLMMA Network uses the funds from each of the three adoption programs for different purposes, says Kirk Bowman of *Sasalu Tawamudu*. The Adopt-a-Coral program, for example, plants several species of coral nubbins on racks, and when the nubbins have grown, they are transplanted to a reef in the village of Votua, on the Coral Coast of Fiji.

"The community has an MPA and is developing a snorkeling trail within it," says Bowman. "The Adopt-a-Coral program provides the money to add both diversity of coral and a greater quantity of coral to the snorkeling trail, and provides education to the local community about corals and the reef." *Sasalu Tawamudu* staff also provide scientific expertise to Votua on a range of issues, including which seaweed species are most damaging to the corals, and how local fishers can aid coral health by not harvesting certain fish species that consume those seaweeds.

In return for a US \$30 donation to the Adopt-a-Coral program, donors are allowed to name their coral fragment. They also receive an electronic certificate with GPS coordinates of the planting location.

Funds generated by the Adopt-a-Reef program go toward work by the FLMMA Network to increase the number of MPAs in Fiji and to enhance and assess the country's existing MPAs. Adopt-a-Mangrove funds are used to plant red mangrove trees, including employing village youth to prepare the young mangrove propagules.

Bowman says the main challenge for the adoption programs so far has been reaching their target audiences - mainly tourists. "We recently had a gala event in Fiji with the U.S. Ambassador and local dignitaries to launch the programs," he says. "We are using this as a springboard to distribute materials to tourists who visit Fiji. We are also developing stories for in-flight magazines." Hotel workers in areas participating in the program also give out postcards describing the project to tourists.

### For more information:

**Kirk Bowman**, Sam Nunn School of International Affairs, Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, Georgia, U.S. E-mail: [kirk.bowman@inta.gatech.edu](mailto:kirk.bowman@inta.gatech.edu)

**Bill Aalbersberg**, Institute of Applied Sciences, University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji. E-mail: [aalbersberg@usp.ac.fj](mailto:aalbersberg@usp.ac.fj)

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