

**GEF Small Grants Programme
GEF Core funds&NZ Aid Pacific Environment funded project**

Savaia Marine Conservation Project

Project No: WSM/OP3/01/05/35 (15,364 USD)
WSM/NZD/OP4/Yr-3/07/71 (19,730 USD)

Grantee: Alii ma Faipule Savaia Lefaga

Location: Savaia Lefaga

SGP Contribution: 35,094 USD

Cash Co-Financing: 3,831 USD

In-Kind Co-Financing: 40,000 USD

Project Duration: 2005-2008 (Core) & 2008-2012 (PEF). A total of 7 years

Number of people served: 332 (179 M & 153 M)

Focal area: Biodiversity

Background

Savaia marine resources were threatened by over-fishing and the harvesting practices (coral crushing and dynamiting) used in the past years. The coastal community was also very prone to high surges and king tides which threatened their coastal beach with sand erosion. Other stressor such as sand extraction and sedimentation from land affected the conservation of the village marine life.

Project Objectives and Key Activities

To improve the coastal and marine environment of the Savaia village from the effects of cyclones, destructive harvesting, over-fishing and land use activities. Using a participatory approach, workshops were held to raise the awareness of the communities as well as develop their capacities in sustainable coastal zone and marine management.

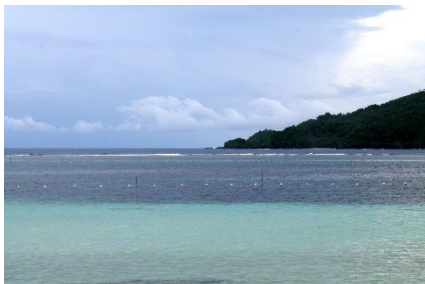


Figure 1: Savaia Marine protected area demarcated

Environmental Impact

Sustainable practices have helped reverse the negative trends and resulted in the recovery of corals and reefs to almost 100% of the village lagoon area of approximately 2 acres of marine reserve; different marine species have come back and fish catches from the fringes of the reserve indicate that the reserve is playing a useful role as refuge and spawning ground for certain species. This project has received Samoa’s “Best Marine Protected Area Award” and “Best Giant Clam Award” on several occasions.



Figure 2: Giant Clams thriving in the marine protected area site

Socio-Economic Impact

Savaia village generated income through the limited sales of giant clams which amounts to 500 WST per giant clam (faisua) to neighbouring tourism businesses such as hotels etc. Also the village charged a fee for visitors/tourists who visit the marine reserve area. An average of 500 WST is earned a week from fees collected by the women’s committee and is used by the project committee for village development activities.

At least 2 youth members of the village have gained employment through conducting eco-tours for tourists who visit the site. Women are also able to sell their traditional handicrafts to visitors. Whole of village (332) were trained on the importance of conserving their marine resources and on ways to minimise stressors impacting the growth of corals for fish and other marine species spawning and stocking. Village is able to use their funds saved from eco-tourism to beautify their villages' coastal landscapes through planting of coastal plants to protect against soil and sand erosion. Savaia village is known in Samoa as one of the most greenery and beautiful village. It has also won national community beautification awards from the Government of Samoa.

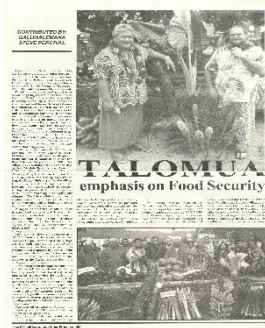


Figure 3 : Local newspaper article on the launch of village products. HE Prime Minister and SGP NSC members attending. (Samoa Observer, 2007)

Policy Impact

Savaia village with the support of the Fisheries Division adopted a management plan for the marine reserve. It comprised of village by-laws to promote the conservation of its marine resources. These by-laws were officially endorsed by the village council and was published nationally to raise the awareness of neighbouring communities that Savaia village forbids anyone from its protected marine area. The village governance is stable and transparent in managing its affairs. To date, its by-laws continue to be respected and observed by all. For this reason, neighbouring villages were inspired with the success of Savaia's marine protected area. It is a demonstration site for all the newly established marine reserves in Samoa. At least 5 new marine protected areas projects funded by SGP were encouraged to visit the village for knowledge sharing, and all of which were successful visits with new MPAs adopting Savaia's experience in managing village marine reserves. Savaia community by laws for its marine reserves have been influential due to the fact that it has been used as a baseline of village by laws in other villages in Samoa with marine protected areas site. The Government of Samoa through the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) have utilised the project experience of Savaia village marine reserve as a model for the development of management plans for other marine reserves in Samoa.



Figure 4 : Village youth and children attending workshop on marine conservation

Youth Engagement and Participation

Youth participation in the design and implementation of the project was acknowledged and taken on board by the village council. As an outcome, youths were empowered to lead eco-tourism activities. The village council approved at least 10 youth leaders to participate and attend diving and swimming classes. Youth gained new skills through training conducted by the Fisheries Division of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) on how to spawn giant clams, monitor the growth of corals and giant clams and other specialised marine fields they were invited to attend. Village also hosted many school visits to learn about marine biology and conservation.



Figure 5 : Proud village women showcasing their finest mats

Gender Mainstreaming

The project highlighted the development of village women. Savaia village council encourages women leadership through empowering them to strengthen their skills in traditional weaving and crafting and other skills they wish to develop. An outcome of improved livelihood through the sales of their traditional handicrafts to visitors which contributes to the development of their self esteem in their respective families. Traditional Samoan families usually rely on men to earn money whereas in this project, women who are housewives were able to contribute to earning and contribution to family income. Women were also able to have equal authority as men on how funds should be utilised.

Replication and up scaling

Savaia marine reserve served in many ways as a model community marine reserve driven project with best practises that are replicated and up scaled throughout Samoa and the Pacific region. It is also a project site that is now officially added to Samoa's travel maps for tourist as an eco-tourism site approved by the Government of Samoa. The project has won numerous awards over the years.