Six monthly project progress report to the

AAGE V. JENSEN CHARITY FOUNDATION

REPORT PERIOD

1ST JANUARY– 30TH JUNE 2010

FORESTS OF FIJI
CREATING PERMANENT FOREST ESTATES FOR THE BENEFIT OF FIJI’S
PEOPLE AND BIODIVERSITY

BIRDLife INTERNATIONAL AND
NATUREFIJI-MAREQETIVITI

Together for birds and people
Project Background

The tropical forests of the Fiji Islands contain some of the richest natural communities of all the oceanic islands of the Pacific and these forests are critical for the conservation of Fiji’s endemic biodiversity. Fiji’s forests also contribute substantially to the quality of life of the rural people, providing timber and non-timber products, and environmental services such as soil conservation, water catchment, and carbon sinks. They are also very important for their deeply rooted traditional social and cultural values. Over 80% of Fiji’s land and forests are owned by ‘family clans’ called mataqali, for whom these forests are their main source of livelihood. About half of Fiji’s forests have already been lost through clearance for agriculture, unsustainable logging, and fires, and as a result, many of Fiji’s endemic species are threatened. The long-term impact of this project is the survival of large tracts of forests in Fiji, which are sustainably managed and will provide a long-term income base to the Fijian people as well as permanent habitats for Fiji’s endemic biodiversity. This project is implemented jointly between the BirdLife International Pacific Partnership Secretariat and NatureFiji-MareqetiViti (NFMV), the proposed BirdLife Affiliate in Fiji, and also serves to develop NFMV’s institutional capacity.

The involvement of Aage V Jensen Charity Foundation to date

The Aage V. Jensen Charity Foundation has previously (June 2008 – October 2009) funded NFMV’s Tomaniivi project through a BirdLife International small grant. This project supported the development of a Site Support Group (SSG) for one of Fiji’s Important Bird Areas. The Tomaniivi project developed a model for the establishment of Nature Clubs in Fiji.

The Forests of Fiji project (Creating Permanent Forest Estates for the Benefit of Fiji’s People and Biodiversity) is building on concepts and lessons learnt from the Tomaniivi project, and works together with the regulatory authority network in Fiji. Important among these are the Fiji Department of Forestry, the Department of the Environment, the Provincial Authorities and the Native Land Trust Board. The capacity development activities are implemented in close collaboration between NFMV and BirdLife International.

Project progress during the reporting period from 1st January to 30 June 2010.

**Output 1: All forest-owning mataqalis will be aware of their rights and opportunities under the new Forest Policy and associated legislation. Activities include:**

- Identify all forest-owning mataqalis and carry out an information needs assessment among them

  The final list of target forest-owning mataqali was compiled by the Fiji Department of Forests, analysed by NFMV, and then approved by the Department of Forests, Provincial administrators and the Native Lands Commission (Appendix 1).

  Project officers are currently visiting the villages within which these mataqali reside to make appointments for the awareness raising to be undertaken in August 2010 (Appendix 2).

- Based on this, develop targeted materials in English and Fijian about the new Forest Policy and the concept of Permanent Forest Estates, and about what this could mean to them and their livelihoods (move from short-term resource exploitation to long-term forest management)

  The bulk of the activities in the first half 2010 has been on the compilation of communication materials, the translation of the communication materials into Fijian and awaiting the reviewers’ comments on the translated documents (Appendix 3, pages 15 – 18). The review
of the translated Fiji Forest Policy Statement Summary (2007) required the involvement of Fijian language speakers within the Department of Forests. After a considerable review by relevant authorities a camera-ready copy has been presented to the major stakeholders, including the Institute of iTaukei Language and Culture within the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs. The Institute of iTaukei Language and Culture is currently reviewing the drafted materials. The review and editing process has taken longer than anticipated but is now almost complete. These were discussed in the project stakeholders meeting on the 08th of June 2010 (Appendix 3).

Streamline Creative, a graphics company which has produced many of Fiji’s books on wildlife was contracted to design the layout of the communication materials.

A local graphics artist – Naibuka Qarau (CatalogFiji) produced NFMV’s organisation pamphlet. Naibuka Qarau will be supervising the printing of the communication materials once they are ready for print in mid July 2010.

- disseminate these materials across the country: broadcast information and messages through national TV and local radio stations; set up a free ‘Information Line’ for mataqalis to call (most villages have a communal landline); and give presentations at Provincial Council meetings, through which information and materials will be spread to District and Village levels

Awareness raising within the Department of Forestry began in October 2009. Since then NFMV has given a presentation to the key body responsible for the administration in Fiji’s rural areas and indigenous people: the Fijian Affairs Board within the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs (March 2010). The presentation received an overwhelming positive response from the Provincial Administrators of Fiji’s 14 provinces (see http://www.naturefiji.org/newsstory.php?id=91).

A radio awareness campaign has begun through the Fijian Affairs Board’s popular Sunday morning program. The first session of the radio prompted Fiji’s national television channel to interview NFMV conservation coordinator, Nunia Thomas, for a news item.

Village level awareness campaigns are currently being organised to begin in August 2010 (Appendix 4). Provincial offices of the target villages have provided their support through facilitating the project team’s correspondence and meetings with the village headmen.

- make use of other networks (government and non-government) to disseminate materials and monitor to ensure that all mataqalis receive and understand the information provided

2011 is the International Year of Forests. The Fiji Department of Forests has proposed that this project prepare the villagers in the awareness leading up to the celebration of the International Year of Forests. The Fiji Department of Forests has committed their personnel towards this project.

In April 2010, the Department of Forests sought NFMV’s assistance in the launch of Fiji’s ‘Plant a million trees campaign’. NFMV took advantage of this opportunity to create awareness about the project as it became one of the lead awareness raising organisations in public speaking, displays and radio talk-back shows in relation to the ‘Plant a million trees campaign’.

After the project team’s presentation in March 2010, the Fijian Affairs Board has pledged their support for the project and has offered to serve as a dissemination point for the communication materials produced out of this project. The Fijian Affairs Board has also offered to allow the NFMV project team to use their radio station for the awareness campaign.

4. 3. 2013
Nunia Thomas and Mark O’Brien
NFMV were invited to man a booth at the Fiji National Agricultural Show. NFMV used this opportunity to present some of the communication materials that have been developed for the project. NFMV also gathered information on the level of interest and knowledge displayed by the visitors to the booth regarding Fiji’s biodiversity. Schoolchildren were fascinated by the pictures of Fiji’s wildlife – and asked a lot of questions.

The Fiji Ministry of Health, in learning about NFMV, has sought collaboration. This will be further explored in the next 6 months.

NFMV and BirdLife International continue to be represented in several established networks in Fiji’s conservation sector:

1. National Protected Areas Committee (NFMV, BirdLife International)
2. GEF-PAS facilitated by the Department of Environment (NFMV)
3. Forest Council (BirdLife International)
4. Forest Stewardship Council (NFMV)
5. Protected Areas Committee (NFMV, BirdLife International)
6. Ramsar Secretariat and CEPA NGO focal point (NFMV)
7. CITES – Fiji Islands Management Authority Council (NFMV)
8. Ramsar Steering Committee and Ramsar Site Project Management Team (NFMV)
9. National Environment Week Campaign Committee (NFMV);
10. National World Wetlands Day Campaign Committee (NFMV)
11. Plant a million trees campaign (NFMV)

- support other related activities leveraged through this project (with additional fundraising).

RAMSAR site community awareness: The managers of Fiji’s only Ramsar site have sought NFMV’s assistance in conducting an awareness campaign with the landowners of the current Ramsar site – Upper Navua Conservation Area (UNCA) - on the negative impacts of the current illegal logging occurring within the site. The landowners of the UNCA have been identified as a target group by the Fiji Department of Forests for the Permanent Forest Estates project. This aspect of the conservation awareness campaign is a good case-study for the

4. 3. 2013
Nunia Thomas and Mark O’Brien
Permanent Forest Estates concept within the Fiji Forest Policy (2007). The lessons learnt from NFMV’s involvement with the UNCA conservation awareness is being documented.

**Output 2: Children in the rural forest areas of Fiji will have enhanced respect and recognition of the various values of their forests.**

Activities include:

- **use the needs assessment in Output 1 to collect information about environmental awareness among the target groups (the forest-owning mataqalis, and especially their children)**
- **produce awareness materials about the forests’ roles and values - as a source of livelihood; as a home to Fiji’s endemic plants and animal and in terms of climate change and water catchment.**
- **use the information dissemination campaign in Output 1 to spread these materials, including ‘guidance’ materials for the teachers, especially through schools and churches.**

The project has contracted Tamara Osborne-Naikatini (July 2010 – December 2010) to produce communication materials for Fiji’s children (See Appendix 5):

1. A 45 page booklet on Fiji’s terrestrial biodiversity and the value of forests.
2. 50 articles highlighting Fiji’s terrestrial biodiversity.
3. Publish the 50 articles in the leading newspaper agencies in Fiji.

These documents will be ready at the end of 2010; and will be launched in 2011 in celebration of the International Year of Forests and the closing of the Department of Forest’s ‘Plant a million trees campaign’ (See Appendix 6).

**Output 3: A strong, self-sustaining NGO will be able to continue to promote (forest) habitat conservation and environmental education in Fiji**

Activities include:

- **establish a project team with staff from BirdLife International (from the Regional Secretariat based in Fiji) and NatureFiji-MareqetiViti, to jointly implement this project**

Much of the project’s first six months had concentrated on the establishment of the NatureFiji-MareqetiViti office, and the project team. The project team currently includes:

1. Dr. Dick Watling (Project Supervisor)
2. Nunia Thomas (Project Manager)
3. Reena Fiu (Accounts/Office Administration)
4. Kolinio Moce (Landowner Liaison – Project Officer)
5. Don Stewart (BirdLife International – Project Supervisor)
6. Mark O’Brien (BirdLife International – Technical Advisor)
7. Miliana Ravuso (BirdLife International – Project Officer)

In the past 6 months (January 2010 – June 2010), the project has identified an awareness team. This includes a retired Department of Forests officer: Mr. Pauliasi Sorovi (former Divisional Officer for the Northern Region in Fiji); and members of NFMV’s Tomanivivi Nature Club who have shown potential for public speaking in villages (see [http://www.naturefiji.org/newsstory.php?id=92](http://www.naturefiji.org/newsstory.php?id=92)):

1. Meli Naiqama (Nadala Village)
2. Litia Taubere (Nadala Village)

4. 3. 2013
Nunia Thomas and Mark O’Brien
3. Sunia Kalidredre (Nadala Village)
4. Leone Senileba (Nasoqo Village)
5. Meli Lote (Nasoqo Village)
6. Venina Naivala (Nasoqo Village, recent graduate in Bachelor Degree of Arts: Geography and Psychology).

See Appendix 7 for the list of project stakeholders.

- pass on project management skills ‘on the job’ and provide additional training where necessary (including in finances, fundraising, rural development, communications)

NFMV was invited to the Department of Forests’ workshop on ‘Financing Sustainable Forest Management in Fiji’. Fiji has been selected as a case study on forest financing in Small Island Developing States. The workshop was attended by financial institutions within the Fiji government and the Forestry sector. The workshop provided the project manager, Nunia Thomas, with an opportunity to learn more about the processes of financing conservation and forest issues within the Fiji government (other than the norm of international funding agencies).

The project manager participated in the annual retreat of the BirdLife International – Pacific Partnership and Fiji programme in June 2010.

Nunia Thomas was the lead spokesperson in the national launch of the International Year of Biodiversity in May 2010; and NFMV selected to present a talk on Fiji’s terrestrial biodiversity during the launch.

Are there any potential changes required to the project design?

1. The village level awareness campaign has been deferred from the first 6 months of 2010 to the second half of the year. This has no impact on the current project design. In fact, this has worked in our favour as the relevant provincial offices have asked if they could accompany the team in the awareness campaigns.

2. The translation of the documents into Fijian, while being strongly recommended, has revealed the complications of having a standard Fijian document. Fiji has more than 14 dialects, all of which are still used within Fiji’s rural areas. As a result, the current formal Fijian language may not necessarily be the best language to use in the translation of the Forest Policy. After much consultations with the relevant authorities, the Fiji Department of Forests has recommended that NFMV publish the current translated version of the Fiji Forest Policy Statement Summary (2007) as version 1, and to use the planned awareness campaigns to get feedback from landowners on their views of the language used and the content of the policy. This will not greatly impact the project at this stage, but it does mean that the Department of Forests will have several versions of the policy in the Fijian language. The final Fijian, and more widely accepted version of the Fiji Forest Policy (2007), will most likely be produced at the end of the project.

3. The project is over budget on information dissemination and equipment, but nothing has been spent on baseline studies. Therefore we request that we can transfer funds between these budget lines to make them more representative. Baseline studies was ‘cheaper’ because information was collected by other means. So, transfer of funds from that to info dissemination would make sense.
Extra capital items in the budget resulted from a couple of trial runs doing workshops in villages. We had originally thought we could use local facilities – but rapidly found that the time required to get the generator working, get sufficient lighting set up and the size of audience meant that we felt we had to get our own generator, our own lighting and our own sound system. We are planning to do workshops in approximately 70 villages over the next six months – so reducing the amount of hassle per presentation was a high priority.

Do you foresee any major changes being required to ensure that the positive impact of this project is sustained once this project ends?
No.