

South Pacific Regional Environment Programme

INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

SOUTH PACIFIC

BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION PROGRAMME



**VOLUME FOUR—KEEPING TRACK OF CHANGES IN
UAFATO CONSERVATION AREA**

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Indicators of Success for the South Pacific Biodiversity Conservation Programme



Volume 4 – Keeping Track of Changes in Uafato Conservation Area

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Cover

top panel, left to right

Cliffs and secondary forest in Koroyanitu National Heritage Park

Preparing local foods in Vatthe Conservation Area

Seafoods captured in Vaoto Bay, Uafato Conservation Area

bottom panel

Kava drying in Uafato Village

THE UAFATO REPORT

“KEEPING TRACK OF CHANGES IN UAFATO”

PREFACE

This report is designed for translation into local language for the people of Uafato. The translation into local language and distribution is critical to ensure that the people of Uafato are fully aware of the importance of, and understand the basis for, the use of indicators to keep track of the important issues in their Conservation Area.

INTRODUCTION

This is one of two reports on the Uafato Conservation Area (CA) project in Samoa, based on a study carried out between 12 and 22 October 1998. This report is for the people of Uafato, as well as others in Samoa who may be interested to read, learn and share information about conservation of Uafato's biodiversity. There are aspects of this report that will apply equally to the biodiversity of other parts of the Pacific, as well as to related issues of concern to all.

SPREP (the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme) has established seventeen CAs in the Pacific, and three of these were visited during the work we describe in this report. In addition to Uafato Conservation Area we also visited the CAs in Vathe, Vanuatu, and Koroyanitu, Fiji. The purpose of these visits was to find out how, when and what the people did who lived in those three CAs, and to establish what aspects of the CAs they valued the most, to ensure the successful conservation of the biodiversity of their area.

A technical report on Uafato has been produced for the South Pacific Biodiversity Conservation Programme (SPBCP) of the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and other relevant donor agencies. That report contains the technical details and information that will be needed by SPREP. As the Pacific's lead agency helping countries protect their environment, SPREP is required to report to donor countries and donor agencies about its work programmes. It must clearly report what the organisation has done, and also account for the wise and proper use of the financial resources given to SPREP by those donor countries and agencies. Such a technical report is important for SPREP to provide to the donors, and at the same time, it is also important to report to the community of people who live within the area of the conservation project.

This second report therefore is for the community of Uafato and reports on our work on indicators for the Uafato CA. This report has information on the resources found within the Uafato CA, on people's thoughts for tomorrow, and on uses of the resources gathered from a variety of sources. One of the main sources of information of course has been the men and women of Uafato themselves. Others who wish to learn and/or share information about work and changes going on in any of the seventeen Conservation Areas (CAs) of the SPBCP work programme are also welcomed to read this report. With the help of the people from Uafato we hope that we have been able to correctly reflect changes and important issues in the Uafato CA.

BRIEF BACKGROUND

Seventeen Conservation Areas (CAs) have so far been established around the Pacific, funded by the South Pacific Biodiversity Conservation Programme (SPBCP). The SPBCP is but one of the work programmes of the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). The Uafato CA project was approved for funding in 1994 with "O Le Siosiomaga" (OLSSM), the national environment NGO organisation of Samoa, being given responsibility for the Uafato Conservation Area work programme. Project work is organised and carried out by the Conservation Area Support Officer (CASO) who is an "O Le Siosiomaga" worker but whose salary is paid by the SPBCP funding. At the same time however, the CASO does other work as required by that national NGO.

Our project was to consult with the people of Uafato and use their knowledge and information, together with our own observations, to identify a set of indicators that could be used by SPREP, OLSSM and the people of Uafato to track any important (or potentially important) issues and aspects of their CA.

INFORMATION GATHERING

Information on the present state of the Uafato Conservation Area was gathered from the people of Uafato, Government officials and agencies in Apia. Work done and reported upon by others were also used. Resources found in the CA were shown on a village map drawn by the Chiefs and women's groups. These included everything needed by the village to earn money from, such as the ifilele trees and pandanus plants, as well as important food gardens and fishing places.

The information also included such things as materials used for building homes, the state of the village, the source and extent of the water supply, use of electricity, and transportation for the village especially to and from Apia.

Discussions and consultations held with different groups of people and individuals included the following:

- the Council of Chiefs. This group included the Chairman and members of the Uafato Conservation Area Coordinating Committee (CACC). Although the Chairman was not a chief of the village, his high standing as the village Pastor made him be appointed the CACC Chairman and to be the one responsible for making sure the CA work programme is carried out well.
- One-to-one interviews with one of the Chiefs, with the Pastor, the school teachers and the traditional medicine-makers were held. Other interviews had people come together for group discussions such as the women's group, family groups and carvers' group, other social groups, or, as individuals. The interviews took place during the two days spent in the village.
- Interviews were held with community groups such as the women's group, heads of households, people with special skills such as traditional medicine-makers and school teachers.
- the Director and staff of "O Le Siosiomaga".
- senior government officials of Departments and Divisions which had been working closely with the Uafato community since the Conservation Area programme was set up in 1994.
- Heads of Divisions, staff and the Management team of SPREP.

A large amount of information was also gathered from past and recent progress reports relating to the Uafato CA and from the written work of others.

OBJECTIVES OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

Village level

The main goal of the SPBCP project is to help community people learn to live and use their natural environment carefully and properly and to have pride in what nature has surrounded them with. With such thinking, the bounties of nature might be better used and looked after, so each succeeding generation for years to come can enjoy these as well.

National level

The purpose of the CAs is therefore to help communities find the best ways of managing the use of their resources while at the same time, keeping track of changes taking place. They must be able to follow and understand changes that happen with the sources (or place) that provide for their daily lives. Food gardens, money-making activities, supplies of medicinal plants, sources and types of building materials, fishing grounds and stock, rivers and the supply of good drinking water, modern technology, and so on and so forth, must all be watched carefully. Help from those outside the CA can be important to the community too. Sometimes, outsiders who have no personal or emotional connection to the area have a better chance of being objective, and are better able to see and help community people learn other ways of keeping track of changes. If villagers are to make sure they do not end up using

everything in their area, sometimes lessons can be learnt from others who are doing similar things. Government departments and other agencies can help too.

Communities themselves however are responsible for keeping an eye on their resources, and making sure they do not disappear altogether at some stage in the future. It is therefore important that customary ownership of land and sea resources and being good users of these resources is well understood by everyone not only in the village, but also around the whole country.

INDICATORS

What are they?

Indicators are like signposts. Some signposts will tell you where to go and where not to go, or, how much further you have yet to go. At other times, a signpost will tell you what to do and what not to do, e.g., "Please do not litter". A signpost will sometimes tell you the name of the area, the tree, shrub, or whatever is of importance to be found in the area. Sometimes a signpost will even tell you what used to be there before, e.g. "Original site of mangrove".

Indicators for the CAs are signposts that tell the people the good things as well as the bad things that have taken place in their environment over a period of time.

Moving gradually further out to sea and catching fewer varieties and less fish is an obvious indicator that something is happening to the fishing grounds where people have fished for many generations, and to the stock and types of fish they used to catch.

The falling number of pigeons or flying foxes found near or around a village is an indicator that either too many birds or their eggs/young are being eaten or destroyed.

Green moss-like weeds growing along the watermark lines of the beach and in lagoons is an indicator that the lagoon is becoming polluted.

A village with healthy children and babies is an indicator that the mothers of the village are practicing good habits of eating a balanced diet of local foods. High blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, heart problems, etc., are indicators of poor dietary habits with high consumption of imported or processed foods by the village people.

These are but a few examples of what indicators are.

Why are indicators important?

Indicators are important signposts to help communities keep track of changes taking place in their community and environment over a long period of time. Without indicators, a community could be led to believe that what they have today is what

their ancestors had yesterday. They could also be led to believe that the way they use their land and marine resources have always been, and will continue to be the best ways for themselves and their children's children.

While it is true that many Pacific communities have traditional methods of conserving and preserving natural resources, it would be wrong to presume that these are the only ways. In today's world, other ideas and systems have been introduced which have helped change attitudes about many things in communal living for instance. The shift in life-style from living off the land and sea, to buying canned, bottled and packaged food has meant the need to have money to be able to buy. This in turn has meant a change in the diet of community people from eating mainly local food to now eating processed or manufactured foodstuff as well. And this in turn has affected the health of the community because of the arrival of non-communicable diseases such as high blood pressure, diabetes and obesity.

THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY IN THE CA CONCEPT

The role of the community in the conservation of the biodiversity of their environment is very important. Children, young people as well as parents and grandparents all have a part to play to make sure everyone preaches and practices the same message of conservation through careful and proper use of resources, known today as the sustainable use of environmental resources.

No one can tell a village community what it should and what it should not do in conserving its biodiversity, or what will or will not work for them. The leaders and elders, both men and women, are the best people to know what will work and what will not work in their community. When it comes to persuading the community to come together and work on important issues such as looking after their natural resources, only they themselves know what will and what will not move them to action.

The same goes for Uafato.

The Chiefs of the village, who form the village Conservation Area Coordinating Committee (CACC), with the Pastor, who has great influence in the community, discuss and make decisions for the people of Uafato. This is not only to do with conservation but with life in general in Uafato.

The CACC meets every month to discuss a number of issues, and some of these have included:

- the village's handicraft products for both men and women and their supply of raw materials;
- the ifilele tree and alternative species for carving;
- suggestions for replanting scheme to make sure there is always a supply of trees for future carvers;

- women's woven products and their supply of pandanus;
- the state of the marine resources and fishing grounds;
- food gardens and wandering pigs;
- other potential income-generating activities for the village to consider;

THE ROLE OF NATIONAL BODIES

O Le Siosiomaga is the official channel of communication between the village, the Government departments and divisions which help the Uafato project and the SPBCP Programme Manager and staff. Based with OLSSM, the CASO facilitates work programmes at village level to further improve and increase the level of awareness of the community about conserving the varieties and abundance of the resources they have today for tomorrow's families.

As the lead national NGO given the responsibility for an important development work programme, O Le Siosiomaga will need the assistance of its membership, and that of others, in the replication of the principle of conservation. The organisation has responsibility also to ensure that the objectives, principles and practices of conservation are known, understood and taken up by other national NGOs and the country as a whole - not just the people and community of Uafato.

THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL BODIES

The SPBCP and other agencies including UN and regional organisations all have a part to play to assist bring about greater awareness and therefore commitment to the principle of biodiversity conservation. This is very urgent in the Pacific where quick changes are taking place. Even in the very remote areas of some of our Pacific Island countries, many changes for the worse have taken place already. The cutting down of trees for instance has disturbed the natural life cycles and habits of forest creatures and plants. Already large areas of forests have disappeared forever because of heavy logging by foreign timber companies. The removal of these trees however can only happen if the national Government and land-owners agree for trees to be cut down for timber. Heavy logging is still going on today in some of our countries.

MANAGEMENT OF A CONSERVATION AREA

The daily and regular management of any Conservation Area (CA) is the main responsibility of the Conservation Area Coordinating Committee (CACC). The CACC usually has members who are highly respected and regarded by the community. People listen to the views and thoughts of CACC members and in turn, are expected to lead well and be knowledgeable about issues of concern to the whole community.

Over-all official supervision of the management of the CAs in all seventeen countries is the responsibility of the Programme Manager of the SPBCP. While the Uafato project is located in the host country of the SPBCP Project, the Programme Manager with his staff at least have a very good opportunity to set up very close working relationships not only with the CACC members and their work, or the CASO and his/her work, but also with key Government departments and divisions such as the Environment Unit.

The CACC

The Conservation Area Coordinating Committee (CACC) is the most important group of people in the project. They are “appointed by the village” to make plans, consult the community when they have to and make decisions on behalf of their people. The Pastor of the Samoan Congregational Church is the Chairman of the Committee and is an important person in helping the community decide what it will or will not do. Other members of the CACC are men matais.

The role of the CASO

The Conservation Area Support Officer (CASO) is the key person of the CA project. He (or she) helps the community plan programmes for all kinds of activities in trying to conserve the biodiversity of their area. The role of the CASO is to help find ways and means for the community to know as much about the biodiversity of their environment and the importance using that environment in such a way that it does not become destroyed or lost.

The Uafato CASO (Dion) is a very highly regarded and hard working person who has earned the respect of the people of Uafato. He has helped the community through some difficult times and has been instrumental in some of the community training programmes in awareness raising being held in Uafato.

The role of the community

The community on the other hand has a responsibility to learn as well as teach, where and when and as much as it can about conservation; why it is important to be involved in every stage of careful and proper use of the biodiversity of the immediate surrounds; strategies to employ to ensure the sustainable use of the biodiversity of the area; and so on and so forth.

The seventeen CAs around the region which are currently operating with the help of the SPBCP all require equipment to help store information during the life of the project can be done, but for some, it is not yet possible.

Uafato has a brand new Information Centre at the far end of the village. Until the Centre is adequately equipped to store information, and to accommodate training and

other programmes, all Uafato information relating to the CA will continue to be stored at the OLSSMG Head Office in Apia.

This will in a sense continue to have the village depend on the CASO, O Le Siosiomaga and Government Departments to be kept informed about changes or events taking place which will affect them directly.

The community at this stage in the life of the project is beginning to move towards becoming self-sufficient and self-reliant of the funding agency. A true sense of ownership and total responsibility for the continued success of the project is beginning to glimmer. Part of this could be due to the increasing economic capacity and capability and therefore stability of the community.

The people of Uafato are keenly aware of the importance of the wealth of their land and marine resources. They know of the consequences of abuse and/or misuse as demonstrated by the disappearance of the highly prized ifilele wood from the rest of the Fagaloa Bay area due to ignorance and misuse.

THREATS TO THE BIODIVERSITY OF UAFATO

The following sections discuss some of the changes which have taken place, and other changes which could take place if certain pressures which threaten the biodiversity of the area, are not controlled and monitored. The changes, which were identified by the people of Uafato as well as by others who have been involved in the life of the community, can be monitored and controlled.

Issues of concern are:

Land

- The disappearance of a vast area of ifilele forest from the CA. Most of Fagaloa Bay used to have ifilele growing from one end of the bay to the other. Today only the Uafato area has ifilele trees growing in reasonable number. This has been due to over-harvesting of the tree for carving and other purposes, for land clearing for gardens, and cyclones and the invasion of weeds.
- The decline of some of the forest resources such as flying foxes and pigeons due to over-harvesting and damage caused by cyclones;
- Soil erosion becoming more and more evident as more land is cleared for gardening and agricultural purposes for subsistence and commercial use;
- Damage of food gardens and pandanus plants, etc. by wandering pigs which forage heavily wherever their wanderings take them. Pigs roam the village and forests at will with homes being fenced in instead, to keep the animals from causing damage close to home.
- Increased demand for good quality water as shown by the number of households with running taps located close to the home.

Marine

- Decreased catch of fish due to over-fishing, and the possibility of pollution of the river and lagoon waters from agricultural activities and wastes that empty into the river and finally into the lagoon. Fishermen find they have to go further out into deeper waters, or further from the village, to get a decent catch.
- Degradation of the lagoon, coral life and reef because of possible polluted water draining from land.

CONCLUSIONS

The concept and principles of conservation are critical to the survival of the Uafato people and their CA. This is also true not just in Uafato, but around the country. Uafato is but one small slice of the biodiversity of Samoa's wealth, but here the people of Uafato have an opportunity to be able to keep track of the important changes that might affect their lives and the biodiversity of the CA. When they recognise that unwelcome changes are occurring, they can be able to respond to those changes and adapt their own activities to be more consistent with the conservation of the biodiversity upon which they depend for their livelihood.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Indicators to Track Important Aspects of Uafato Conservation Area

- B1. Area of forest ecosystem types
- B2. Extent of weed invasion into forest
- B3. Bird populations and species composition
- B7. Fish populations
- B10. Distribution of seagrass beds near the village
- B13. Number of pour-flush and septic tank toilets
- B18. Development and implementation of a participatory and effective plan of management for natural resources
- R2. Number of carvers resident in village
- R3. Number of ifilele trees cut in DBH classes, and source ridge of each harvested tree
- R4. Number of each tree species cut in DBH classes, and source ridge of harvested trees (by species)
- R7. Cash Crop Index
- R8. Subsistence Crop Index
- R13. Area of land used for agriculture, including fallow land
- R14. Subsistence Wild-Harvest Food Index for each species used
- R17. Catch of fish and shellfish by species, and their location of capture
- R24. Development and implementation of an effective plan of management for tourism
- H1. Children's growth statistics
- H4. Population size and structure
- H10. Participation rate in the activities of all groups for village development

H12. Number of village cooperatives (or similar business structures) established, operating and with audited accounts
H13. Number of people trained for business and resource management posts
H15. Type of house construction and number of electrical appliances
H19. Stability in the market and pricing for ifilele handicrafts, kava, and pandanus handicrafts
H22. Proportion of population with traditional tattoos
H25. Number of villagers with traditional skills in fine mats, tapa making, weaving, canoe building, sinnett making, fale-style construction, traditional healing knowledge and practices, or tattooing.