As 2016 draws to a close its natural to reflect on the year’s activity. One major event that comes to mind is Tropical Cyclone Winston and its impact on the country and people of Fiji. In this edition, we look at fishing communities in Fiji still rebuilding boats damaged by Winston. In other news, we farewell a long serving officer who is moving to Papua New Guinea and we highlight a team of Fijian professionals who travelled to Australia to learn about biodiversity conservation.

We hope that this newsletter will keep you informed of the work we do in partnership with others in the region.

Eriko Hibi
FAO Subregional Coordinator for the Pacific Islands

FAO help fisherman repair boats damaged by Cyclone Winston

The impact on the fishing sector of Tropical Cyclone Winston which struck Fiji in February 2016 is still evident today.

It’s been reported in the town of Levuka on the island of Ovalau of damaged infrastructure, destroyed fishing boats and a decrease in the size and quality of fish catches after the typhoon.

FAO working in co-operation with the Fisheries Department in Fiji have conducted workshops to repair previously damaged fishing boats to replace ones that were damaged, lost or destroyed by TC Winston. Damage to fibreglass boats was caused by vessels being moored to long, general wear and tear and previously incorrect repairs. These boats were identified for the restoration project which was implemented over a three week period in four villages on Ovalau.
International consultant and fibreglass expert from Australia, Raymond Tate conducted training in fibreglass repair. “The objective was to build the capacity of locals to perform correct repairs and to pass the relevant skill and knowledge to others”. Tate explained. “Participants in the project would learn overall understanding of fibreglass principles and procedures of working with fibreglass and techniques such as resin, sanding and finishing”.

Fisheries Officer, Sairusi Senilawalawa found the training informative and helpful for fisherman seeking to restore their damaged boats. “Thanks to FAO for bringing an expert on fibreglass boats to the people of Levuka and Moturiki to work on their damaged boats”.

FAO Fiji Fisheries Coordinator, Apisai Sesewa said. “Boat owners as well as the Fisheries Technical staff participated in the workshop have increased their know-how on fibreglass works – they will be going out to sea on safer boats”.

FAO also conducted training on repairing outboard engines for boats. Sesewa explained. “Regarding Engine Repair, family of boat owners are now at ease knowing that their loved ones are at sea with well examined motors”.

Long serving officer moves on

Forest Resource Management Officer, Mr Aru Mathias is leaving Samoa after serving nearly two decades for FAO. Mr Mathias, a national of Vanuatu, arrived in Samoa in March 1999. “I arrived in Samoa on three year contract as Forest Resource Management Officer and stayed 17 years”.

During his time here Mr Mathias has noticed significant change in Samoa and in the region as a whole. “We have grown over the years from a small office specialising in traditional FAO technical areas to supporting much larger forestry programmes which include climate change and resilience components. These programmes will take a lot of energy and resources to manage and to make sure they have lasting impact”. Said Mr Mathias.

“For me, how forestry is viewed has shifted over at least the last 15 years”. Mathias explained. “We took care not to chop forests down but to look at sustainably managing yields the forests”. He continued. “This work is still very important but now forests are seen as playing a vital role in mitigating Climate Change. Forests help absorb and store global carbon emissions into their biomass and soils.”

FAO Sub-Regional Coordinator, Ms. Eriko Hibi said the organisation is very fortunate to have long serving staff. “Staff committed to the organisation genuinely bring what they believe is best for FAO."

Mr Mathias will move to the FAO country office in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea in his existing capacity as Forest Resource Management Officer. “I will be concentrating more the larger island countries in Melanesia but will still support work in other countries in the Pacific region. It will be sad to leave Samoa but I look forward to a new life and new challenges in PNG.”
FAO Forestry

FAO Forestry programme provides advice on forest policy formulation, reviews and coordinates implementation of forest policy at the regional level, and exchanges information on suitable practices and solutions for technical problems. Promotes improved forest management through national codes of practice for forest harvesting, reduced impact logging practices and assisted natural regeneration techniques. Established the Asia-Pacific Forest Policy Think Tank to analyse critical forestry issues and guide policy makers. Raises awareness of the costs and dangers posed by invasive species through creation of the Asia-Pacific Forest Invasive Species Network. Supports REDD+ and climate change adaptation.

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**Fijian forestry professionals learn about Australia biodiversity conservation**

Staff from the Fiji Forestry Training Centre (FTC) travelled to Queensland, Australia to participate in a technical study tour of Australia’s approach to sustainable management of natural resources, biodiversity conservation and protected areas.

Knowledge gained through first-hand insights into sustainable Biodiversity Conservation and Protected Areas Management (BCPAM) will contribute to the Centre’s training curriculum as well as the development of its new training course to increase local capacity in BCPAM in Fiji.

Meetings with key headquarters and field staff of the Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Services as well as dialogue with traditional land owners and staff of an aboriginal corporation provided new knowledge and depth of understanding of technical information, while visits to various national parks and world heritage sites such as the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area and the Great Barrier Reef National Parks demonstrated tangible results of the Queensland authorities’ success in BCPAM.

Participants visited various government institutions, NGOs and private sector offices. Encounters with members of academia meant that they received a full overview of BCPAM at the landscape level.

In particular, the management of the Wet Tropics of Queensland and the Barrier Reef World Heritage areas with their various forms of governance, conservation issues, eco-tourism ventures, law enforcement, and aspects of indigenous peoples rights, were the source of relevant information that could be applied to FTC training programmes and the new modules under development.

The tour was designed and coordinated by Dr Lea Scherl, international consultant, who is also assisting with the development of a new curriculum and course programme in Biodiversity Conservation and Protected Areas Management within the Forest Training Center in Fiji, with the support of Mr David Cassells, Adjunct Associate Professor, James Cook University, Queensland, Australia.

Built around a key component of the FAO-Global Environment Facility-funded project “Forest and Protected Area Management” 2, to review the FTC curriculum, the study tour centred on visits to the...
Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Services.

Projects have been implemented to conserve biodiversity in Fiji, Samoa, Vanuatu and Niue by expanding and consolidating their networks of protected areas, building capacity for conservation management and sustainable use of biodiversity and reducing forest and land degradation.

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New Publication: Food Matters

Policy measures for strengthening food and nutrition security in the Pacific Island Countries

In recent decades the nations of the Pacific Island Countries have gone through a nutrition transition associated with the increased availability of cheap, energy dense foodstuffs; migration to urban centres; and diversification of income generation away from primary sector activities.

The aim of the Toolkit is to showcase examples of good policies for promoting healthy eating, and agriculture sector development, in the Pacific. It provides suggested methodologies, key principles, frameworks for implementation and case study examples of the policy tools designed to achieve improved domestic market opportunities, and better health and nutrition outcomes. The target audience for this toolkit is policy-makers, researchers and development partners with an interest in the agriculture, health, finance, education, trade and tourism sectors of the Pacific Island Countries.

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New Publication: Contract Farming for improved access to market and resources

Guiding principles, case studies and recommendations for the implementation of responsible Contract Farming operations in the Pacific Islands Countries (PIC).

This brief provides technical information re Contract Farming operations and specific cases of Contract Farming from the (PIC). Benefits and potential pitfalls of Contract Farming for both farmers and agribusiness firms are listed in this brief. A win-win Contract Farming agreements play significant role in “access to market” and in some cases, “access to input resources”, therefore guiding principles for responsible Contracts Farming operations development are precisely mentioned in this brief. Furthermore, this brief provides recommendations for the implementation of responsible Contract Farming operations in the PICs.

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