

Eco-tourism has been defined by The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) as “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local people”.

The online tribe is one of the latest developments that have taken place in Vorovoro Island. This tiny, jungle-clad island, off the coast of Vanua Levu, has become the focus of an eco-tourism venture that has captured the imagination of people around the world. Through this research I intend to find out who was behind the initial plan of its development and the reasons behind it. Besides this I hope to successfully find out how the people of Vorovoro and its neighboring island benefits from the recent development. In addition I hope to find out how this venture contributes towards the economic development in Fiji. Finally I also hope to find out their future plan in developing the island.

To complete this project successfully, the following methods of research were used.

Library Research

Researches were carried out at the school library and also at the Labasa Town Council Library which is located at the Labasa Civic Center. At the school library books on the topic "Economic Development" were being researched. A list of books and magazines researched is shown in the bibliography.

Internet

Surfing into the internet was also one of the methods used which was very helpful in completing this project. The address is shown in the bibliography.

Field Research

- For field research, two sets of questionnaires were formulated and ten copies of each were being made. These copies were distributed to the staff and members of the tribe. The questionnaires were collected after two weeks and the answers were analyzed.
- With the help of interview questions that have been formulated, interviews were able to be carried out with Mr. Ben Keene, and Rt.Apenisa Bogiso.
- The island was being visited and personal observations were made.

The project would not have been a success if it was not for the help of certain people. I would like to thank them for the support, help and encouragement that they had rendered during the course of my research. They are:

- God Almighty for giving me the power, strength, wisdom and knowledge to do this project
- Mrs. Naidu- my English teacher(2007) for guiding me through this project
- My parents, Mr. & Mrs. Nasimo for their financial support.
- Mrs. Nandan, the Labasa Town Council Librarian as well as Mrs. Salesni, the school librarian, for issuing books to me.
- The founding chief, Mr. Ben Keene and Tui Mali, Rt. Apenisa Bogiso, for taking out their time to be interviewed.
- My cousin sister, Ms. Ditamoi, the staff of the online tribe for the relevant information that she had provided
- The tribe members and the employees of the tribe who gladly filled out the questionnaires

This is to declare that I, Asenaca Mae of form 701, Labasa Sagam (SKM) College have gathered information on this project through my own dedication and effort.

I solemnly and sincerely declare that this research project on the Development of Eco-Tourism in Vorovoro is an original piece of work entirely done by me.

A Mae
Asenaca Mae
Date:.....

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Economic Development is a process that transforms a stagnant society with a low average real income into one in which incomes rise more or less steadily. It encompasses a vast array of changes that affect households, workers, savings, technology and the very organization of economic activity. The economic development that has recently taken place is of an eco-tourism venture in Vorovoro Island.

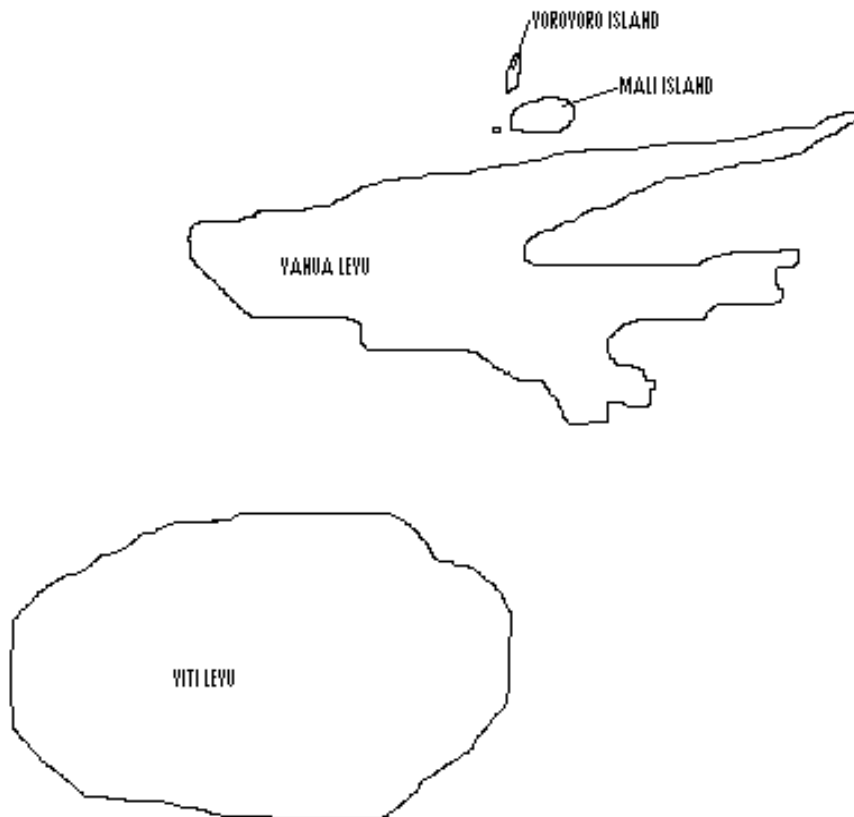
Vorovoro is a spectacular eruption of land which lies just two hours traveling time from Nadi, a short flight over the outer islands and reefs, followed by a twenty minutes drive from Labasa town to Malau and twenty five minutes boat ride. It is an over 200 acres cliff-top jungle and palm fringed paradise surges out of the crystal blue South Pacific Ocean. It is an island where the Tui Mali and his family live. (<http://www.tribewanted.com/the.island.htm>)

It is an online community with the common goal of creating and experiencing eco-community on the small Fijian island of Vorovoro Island which promotes sustainable tourism. The tribe team has leased the island for three years and tribe members are provided with a one to three weeks residence depending on their subscription. With funding through their membership they aim to build sustainable tourism facilities which will be enjoyed by Tribe members during their stay and handed over to the island owners at the end of the project.

Much of the island is undeveloped forest with a small area currently used for agriculture and providing home to two families. Unless managed effectively, the tourism activities of the Tribe and other visitors in later years could significantly impact on the natural environment of the island. The project also aims to develop in partnership with the Fijian people (Mali & Vorovoro), providing economic and educational benefits and conserving their cultural heritage.

Vorovoro is an island where the chief of Mali and his family live. It is mostly deserted volcanic uplift, fringed with coco palms, pawpaw trees and mangroves and surrounded by a sea so blue.

LOCATION OF VOROVORO: The Tribe wanted Island



On the main Fijian islands of Viti Levu and Vanua Levu, communities were modernizing rapidly, but on the outlying ones where the Yavusa lived, people practiced a subsistence lifestyle that has changed little in generations. Hints of the current era had surfaced among the tribes 400 members- a few came cell phones, some had jobs at a lumber mill on Vanua Levu- but most lived in huts with no electricity or indoor plumbing and survived by catching fish, growing cassava, and collecting rain water.

Tui Mali, seeking jobs and income for the people of Mali had decided to develop Vorovoro, the gem of his freedom which was uninhabited save for the chief and a few relatives, (Everyone else resided on Mali Island an island immediately to the east including three villages)

In February 2006, with the help of a tech-savvy nephew, Tui Mali listed Vorovoro's availability on the web and less than a month later, the chief heard from two friends in Britain's Ben Keene, 26, and Mark James. (Wild Island Adventure, 2007, pg 64)

Mr. Keene and the friend decided to create a virtual community with a bridge to reality so they launched Tribe Wanted.com which invites 5000 people to pay a sum of money to spend one to three weeks over the next 3 years on Vorovoro.

Reasons for choosing the Island

- The island was cheap and near to town
- Other island was just too expensive and others were cheap but in dangerous areas
- "Soon we discovered a south pacific island in Fiji that looks perfect" (Keene, 2007, pers.comm.)

THE TRIBE WANTED PROJECT.

The plan on Vorovoro was to create a sort of Ewok Edon: a discreet complex of traditional style huts that blended in under the palms, consumed minimum of natural resources and relied where possible, on non-polluting technologies such as solar power. Crops would be planted in small valley behind the village and protein would come largely from fresh fish caught in local waters by the Yavusa.

The project will use the principles of system engineering to analyse the environmental systems of the Vorovoro island plan to aid the long term management of the island. These include:

- Collating existing information about the natural features and environment, including the environmental impact statement and highlighting gaps in knowledge
- Define the demands on environmental systems posed by the tourism, including the number of people and the type of activities that will take place on the island
- Identify options for managing environmental impacts of water, water energy and biological diversity
- Engage with the tribe on-line community as a source of knowledge and ideas, and ensure the acceptability of the plan to Tribe members
- Write a systematic environmental management plan that can be implemented by the tribe and future managers of the island

The project uses systems thinking to conceptualize the tribe wanted project in a holistic and inter connected way. (The tribe wanted project,2007,pg 3)

SOURCE OF FUNDS

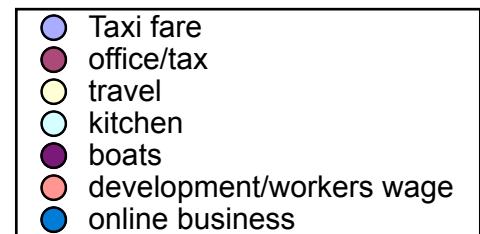
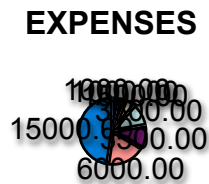
A business cannot run without the medium of exchange and wise decision making. Therefore the Tribe Wanted Island and its staff are able to run the development through members signing in the online communication.

There are three levels of tribal membership:

- Nomad (7 nights stay + 1 year tribal membership)
- Hunter (14 nights stay + 2 years membership)
- Warrior (21 nights stay + membership until the end of the project in September 2009) (<http://www.tribewanted.com/about.html>)

For nomads one has to pay \$540 including all meals for the 7 nights and transport from airport whereas for hunter’s tribal membership one has to pay twice the amount of the nomads and warrior thrice. Apart from the money paid by the members the management has its own fund.

MONTHLY EXPENSES (ESTIMATION)



TOTAL EXPENSES IN A MONTH = \$31500

EMPLOYEES

Permanent Workers

Recently, there are 7 permanent workers

No. of employees	Type of work	Male/female	Local/overseas
2	Boat captain	Male	Local
2	Kitchen manager	Female	Local
1	Garden boy	Male	Local
1	cleaner	Male	Local
1		male	Local

Temporary Workers

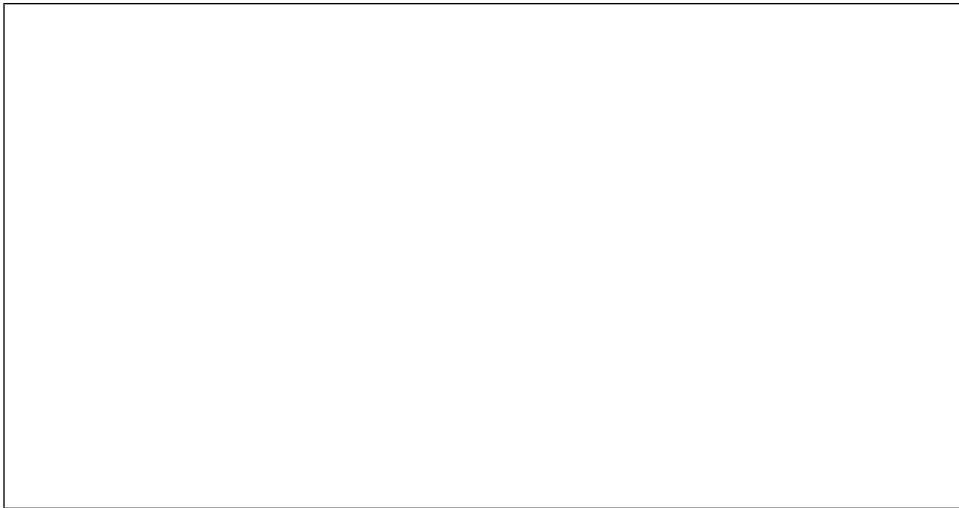
Each week, the community leader has to appoint a woman to work in Vorovoro as a cook.

Other workers come in groups or villagers for a contract.

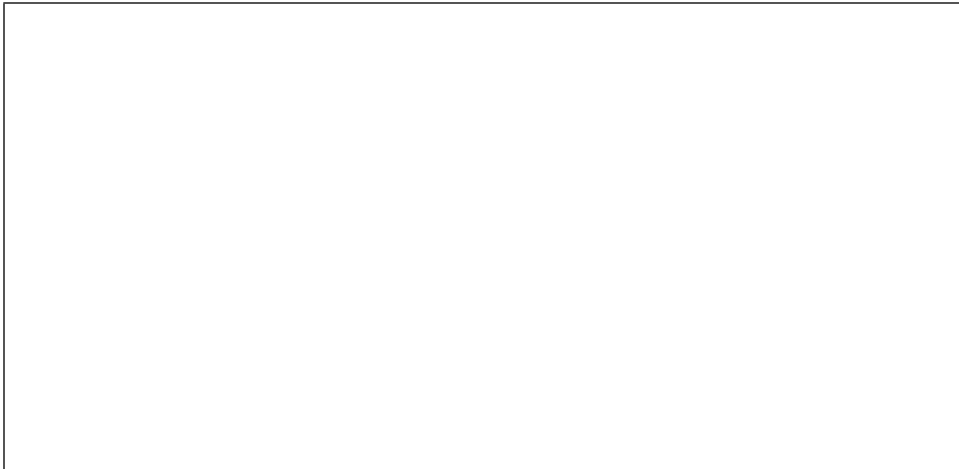
DEVELOPMENT DONE

Since the first footers came to the island on September 2006, there were some developments that have been done. They are as follows:

- Three compost toilets with coconut swinging doors
- A kitchen with stone oven and recycling units
- The 'Great Bure' (Big Fijian style house) and a mini bure
- Two sky-view bucket showers in the woods
- A bunk house
- An outdoor dining room a wood store
- A floating pontoon and jetty on the south side of the island
- A farm where fruit , vegetables and chickens are thriving
- Renovated one of the family house and added recycling units to the village
- Two more family bure
- A chief's bure
- A tree house
- Expansion of the kitchen



The 'great bure' for the tribe members
Source: Photo taken by Asenaca

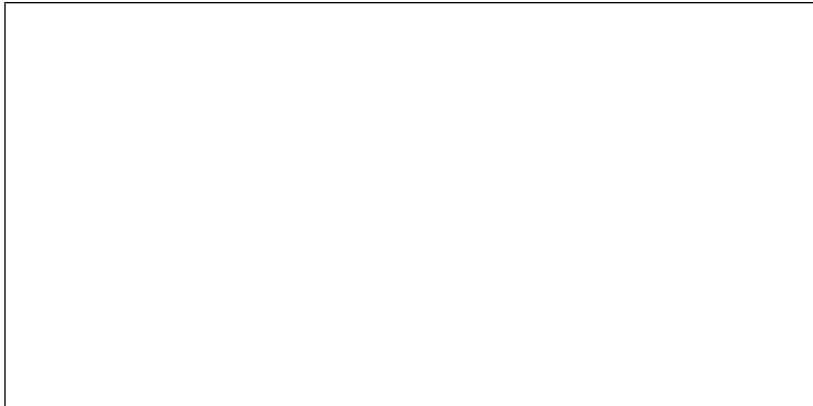


The chief's Bure
Source: Photo taken by Asenaca

BENEFITS TO:

1. THE PEOPLE OF MALI

Most of the people in Mali Island are uneducated and unemployed. However, they are so richly blessed by the recent development that has taken place in Vorovoro Island. Most of the young people who are without jobs have been employed and are earning income to support them. Therefore they are able to buy whatever they want without asking assistance from their parents. Parents are also able to pay their children school fees and other family needs by working in the tribe wanted island. According to Mr. Apenisa an old cannot still go fishing because of the weakness and eye sight problem, therefore this venture has created an employment opportunity to the old and the young. School leavers have been also employed. According to Mr. Apenisa, some school leavers have been using their talents in the islands such as gardening, carpentry work and many more outdoor activities." I'm so delightful and surprising to see that the young people are showing their creativity."(Bogiso, 2007, pers.comm.)



2. THE SCHOOL

The school Mali District School is one of the many schools in Fiji which faced financial problem. However the recent eco-tourism development have helped in some way or the other the school standards. According to Mr. Keene every tribe members visiting the island has to visit the school and donate something to the school.

Since the starting of the tribe wanted project in September,2006 library books in the school library have been piling up. Some of the tribe members gave a minimum of two-three books but some gives in sets. The tribe members took a visit twice a month mostly on Fridays when the school is having their sports day. The members enjoyed their time in playing with the Fijian students and this is one way where the children's ability to speak in English are build up. Further more members have also taught students how to speak French which is offered free by the French members who visited the school.

3. COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE

The recent developments have also helped and donate more to the community as whole. In any kind of fundraising held by the community or in a particular village, the tribe members and its chief are always invited to the occasion. The tribe members would get together contributes and donates to the Turaga ni Yavusa.

Recently (June) the people of Mali are preparing for the Methodist conference that will be held in Macuata in August. The Turaga ni Yavusa and the founding chief Mr. Keene have sorted out on how to bit this up. Therefore the men of Mali will work in Vorovoro to build another two bure for the visitors or tourist. However their wages will not be received but given directly to the Turaga ni Yavusa.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE ECONOMY

Economic benefits of tribe wanted projects

The economic benefits of having this tribe wanted project are immense

- Because of employment creation, people's income have increased hence leading to an increase in economic activity and decrease the case of poverty
- An increase in income leads to an increase in consumption of goods and services thus creating more business for the entrepreneurs in Labasa
- This development has also proven to be a key factor in the improvement in the lives of the local people by improving the standard of living

PROBLEMS FACED BY EMPLOYEES

- Less wages i.e. not enough weekly income to satisfy the family needs
- Conflict arise between employees
- Communication problem i.e. difficulties in speaking English
- Lack of space in the kitchen
- Late wage payment

PROBLEM FACED BY EMPLOYERS

- Less funds from the tribe members
- Employees arrived late to the work place
- Pollution effect
- Political instability
- Adverse weather conditions

RESPONSE FROM INTERVIEWEES

- The Tui Mali has never regretted having the groups over on the island saying villages have benefited in many ways
- “One of the important areas this group has helped us in is the employment sector where at least 100 villagers have been employed as builders, cleaners and in other jobs which cropped up.”(Bogiso, 2007, pers.com.)
- The group had helped students by donating library books to the school and teaching students how to speak foreign languages.
- The tribe members always asked the Tui Mali and the villages if they need financial help.
- Relationship between the locals and the tourist are very close
- The tribe chief wanted the people of Mali to benefit so they organize many activities for them to work on; in return the workers are paid.

FUTURE PLAN

THE SCHOOL

Tribe members have found that the school is in need of electric wiring to lighten up the whole school community which includes:

- The classroom
- Hostel
- Teachers quarters
- Rest rooms

The school managers have managed to run the school and at the same time maintain an average level of competency and efficiency without the use of electricity in the past. But recently, the school have been blessed with a generator that will provide electricity which is needed to power the computers and electrical appliances

REASONS FOR WIRING OF BUILDINGS

- “We will be able to bring electricity from the generator to all the buildings in the school compound to brighten it up” (Keene, 2007, pers.comm.)
- The students (boarders) will be properly supervised with their studies and high preparing for external exams, i.e. FILNA and FEYE.

FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

Thus year (2007) the tribe will be tackling longer term water supply, further accommodations, as well as improving some of the current infrastructure. The tribe is also keen to get more involved in supporting local community projects on Mali Island.

After doing this project, it can be concluded that if employment are not provided there would be increase in poverty and there would be low standard of living. Therefore, the people of this island are so blessed and are able to support the family. Also there is increase in economic growth, since the educational facilities are improved. In addition the people of Mali are able to earn income even though they are uneducated and unskilled. Even though the island was cheap it improved the economic activity. Furthermore, villagers are not going to search for jobs since it is on their island.

GLOSSARY

<u>Tui Mali</u>	chief of Mali
<u>Yavusa</u>	clan/village
Turaga ni Yavusa	village chief
Gem	thing highly valued for a special quality

LABASA SANGAM (SKM) COLLEGE
FSFE RESEARCH PROJECT-2007
QUESTIONNAIRE 1

THEME: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
TOPIC: DEVELOPMENT OF ECO-TOURISM IN VOROVORO

NOTE:

NAME: _____
AGE: _____
SEX: _____
RACE: _____

1) How do you come about the development that is taking place?

2) Do you face any problem so far?

Yes

No

If yes, state at least five.

3) Are you satisfied with what has done on the island?

Yes

4) What are your aims in signing up the tribal membership?

5) Have you achieved some of your aim?

6) Are you able to communicate properly with the workers or the local people?

Yes

No

7) Do you wish to give further information about the development?

LABASA SANGAM (SKM) COLLEGE
FSFE RESEARCH PROJECT-2007
QUESTIONNAIRE 2

THEME: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN FIJI

TOPIC: DEVELOPMENT OF ECO-TOURISM IN FIJI

NOTE:

1) What are your opinions in the recent development?

2) ~~Are you satisfied with your wage? Either yes or no. If no why?~~

3) State some of the problems that you have faced?

4) Were you employed before?

5) Why did you choose to work here rather than go fishing?

6) Have learn anything from the tourist?

7) Do you wish to give further information?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

TO THE FOUNDING CHIEF

- 1) What made choose this island?
- 2) Who brought the idea of tribewanted.com
- 3) When did the development start?
- 4) What are the places to get the funds from?
- 5) How are the workers paid?(weekly/monthly)
- 6) List some of the people that you have helped?
- 7) What are some of the expenses incurred?

TO THE TUI MALI

- 1) How did you communicate with the founding chief in the first place?

- 2) Are you satisfied with what you have seen?
- 3) Is your people benefit from this development?
- 4) From the money you get from earning what do you do with it?
- 5) Do you wish to give further information that will help in completing this project successfully?
