The Vanuatu International Waters Project

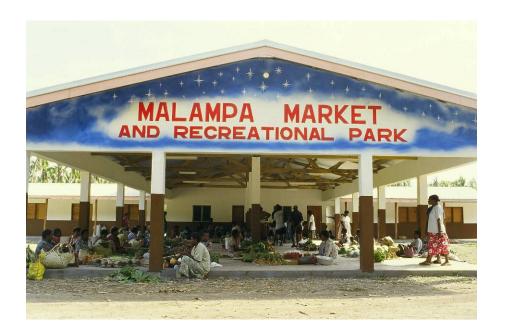
Using a social marketing approach to strengthen the community management of coastal fisheries

By Steve Menzies and Leah Nimoho



The Crab Bay Community

- Located on Malekula Island
- Consists of eleven villages with a population of over 1,000 people.
- Five different languages.
- Mangrove vegetation, reef flat and a lagoon
- Habitat for many invertebrates including Cardisoma carnifex a species of land crab.



What is the problem?

- In Vanuatu 80% of the population lives on the coast and continues to depend largely on subsistence farming and fishing
- Land crab is one of the main sources of protein and cash for local villagers.
- The land crabs are collected daily, mainly by women for family food, with any surplus being sold at the market for cash
- The growing demand for cash and the absence of harvesting controls is resulting in a rapid decline of this key resource.



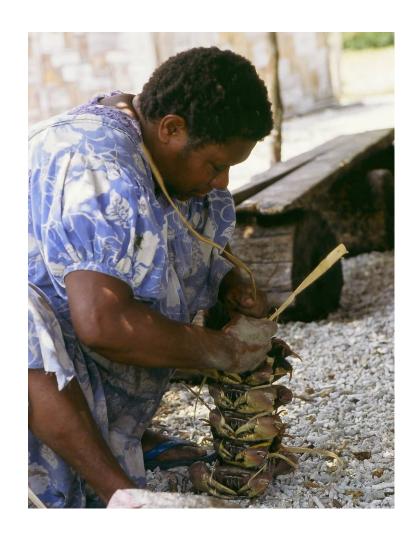
What is the problem?

- Traditional practices such as the use of "taboo" or "no-go/no take" zones are still used to manage fisheries resources.
- Community chiefs set a "no fishing and no entry" tabu zone in 2002
- The women fishers were not included in this decision-making process
- Tabu rules were not clearly explained to the rest of the community



Objectives of Vanuatu International Waters Project

- Help the community find practical, low-cost, ways to improve the management of coastal fisheries resources.
- Provide a model for other communities facing similar problems
- Inform national policy development
- Partners: Vanuatu Environment Unit, Global Environment Facility, SPREP



A Participatory Process

- 30 local community members trained in the use of participatory processes
- Also trained in the use of ecological and biological baseline and monitoring surveys.
- These community facilitators ran village meetings to create a better understanding and to motivate participation.
- Improved understanding of the coastal fisheries management problems
- Allowed the community to determine their own possible low/cost solutions
- The facilitators became "Champions" and advocates of resource management

Building Understanding

- Ecological baseline survey used GPS technology to define geographical boundaries and record over 50 different species
- Understanding when the crabs reproduce and where they release their eggs could be vital in determining harvesting rules
- The critical size of maturity of land crab was determined as 7cm and this has now enabled better decision-making at the community and national levels.
- Building greater understanding of the importance of mangroves as a habitat could also help to discourage people from cutting large areas for firewood or housing.



"Using a participatory approach has really helped us to try and develop a better understanding of the perceptions, desires, and commitment that our communities have to manage their own resources."

Russell Nari Deputy Director, Vanuatu Environment Unit

Chief Manoa was of 30 local facilitators who were trained to work together with the rest of the community to develop a better understanding of the root causes of their resource management problems.



A Social Marketing Approach

- The social marketing strategy helped focus on achievable short-term goals and build a solid platform for addressing long-term behaviour change.
- The information generated by the community participation exercises and baseline collection surveys provided a vital starting point for developing appropriate management, evaluation and communications tools.
- Social marketing focused on advocating specific behaviours and tools to promote the sustainable management the land crab resources.



A Social Marketing Approach

- The programme used tools such as the use of "Community Champions", Community Drama, brochures, signboards, radio etc.
- A 12-minute video documentary on the community pilot project was also produced and screened for the local community and broadcast on national TV.
- The facilitators worked with the Wan Smolbag theatre company to develop a community drama to promote specific actions to manage the land crab resource



What were the results?

- The community established a management plan for land crab resources with a focus on the taboo, size limits, market quotas
- People are now observing taboo rules and poaching has more or less stopped
- Studies show that land crabs are regenerating: from 100 juveniles per hectare in 2003, to 500 per hectare in 2005
- Increased demand to establish seven other `taboo' areas to reinforce sustainable land crab management
- Women are now part of the local Community Taboo Management Committee
- Project lessons are being used to improve the sustainable management of other fish resources



What were the key lessons?

- Programmes must focus on promoting clear benefits for changing damaging behaviours.
- Must create a sense of ownership and motivate ongoing participation in sustainable management activities
- It is appropriate to start small to demonstrate clear results and influence wider.
- By selecting the land crabs as a "signal" resource, the IWP has paved the way for the Vanuatu Government to address management of other target fisheries resources.
- The community should be encouraged to develop its own communications messages, tools, and "Champions".

