

**GEF Small Grants Programme
GEF Core funds funded project**

Liua le vai o Sina watershed and rainforest sanctuary

Project No: WSM/SGP/OP5/Y4/CORE/LD/15/01

Grantee: Falese'ela Environment Protection Society

Location: Faleseela, Lefaga

SGP Contribution: 47,500 USD

Cash Co-Financing: 10,000 USD

In-Kind Co-Financing: 20,000 USD

Project Duration: 3 years

Number of people served: 1051 (537 M & 514 M)

Background

This area is deteriorating due to both climate change-driven (2011 drought), damage from Cyclone Evan (2012) and anthropogenic (increased land use) impacts. The watershed is home to the critically-endangered tooth-billed pigeon (Manumea), and the remaining mangroves of Lefaga Bay and its fisheries nursery depend on the flow of the river system and the closed forest canopy of watershed.

Project Objectives and Key Activities

To conserve and rehabilitate the degraded biodiversity in one of the most critical landscapes of Upolu Island through establishing a sanctuary at the Falese'ela village terrestrial ecosystems. Using of a participatory approach, project initiatives include capacity development and

awareness-raising sessions that will address the environmental and socio-economic challenges and identify opportunities to generate long term benefits for villagers and carers of the natural ecosystem. The use of the P3D modelling tool and drones to capture baseline information of the 1700 hectares of land area for rehabilitation work. The establishment of the village management plan for its terrestrial conservation efforts is complimented with the enforcement of village by laws. Knowledge sharing with other projects with similar thematic areas were also implemented to maximise the benefits of best practices replication.

Environmental Impact



One of our young conservation rangers retrieving a sound recorder from the forest. The recorders were put out by the Samoan Conservation Society assisted by staff from the Auckland Zoo and Department of Conservation NZ. PC: Faleseela community

Sustainable environmental practices have materialised through the regeneration of native plants in the protected terrestrial and watershed areas. 10,000 native tree species seedlings were planted near river banks and degraded areas identified during the construction of the P3D model, with the support of the droning technological system. A degraded area of 600 acres of the total protected area was replanted along the buffer zones of 20 meters along both sides of the riverbanks. At this stage, these native trees were planted across five (5) Zone Areas, Area 1 being closest to the coast and 5 being the untouched ridge of the protected terrestrial and watershed area. Some trees height to date are close to 5 meters and nearing maturity stage when they will be resilient and could survive without regular maintenance work. Also the reduced amount of agricultural activities such as livestock and plantation in these areas have shown less sedimentation washed down the reefs and securing high chances of native trees to survive. The ridge to reef approach was applied in the implementation of this project and the grantee also re-applied for funding to complete the reef aspect of the R2R approach through the establishment of their marine resources.



Tourists leaving Faleaseela eco-tourism business site by the river. PC: Caf  Coko

Socio-Economic Impact

At least four (4) small to medium sized eco-tourism business activities run by local village members are supported or established as one of the key results of the project. The key activities include eco-tours, water fall activities, out-rigger canoe rides, hosting groups and visitors for cultural and swimming activities, sales of traditional handicrafts by the women and watercress vegetable farming at river stream areas nearby the coast and settlements. At least 30 people mainly unemployed youth are employed by these small businesses. An average net income/profit earned by a local

business operator monthly of \$1500 WST helps to support their respective family and usually these are shared amongst the village family members. At least 80% of the village population participated in series of workshops and project activities implemented with full participation of women and youth. Sustainable livelihoods of villages' most vulnerable groups in particular the unemployed youth and stay home mothers have been empowered to either self-employ through the use of its traditional knowledge and goods or be employed by the start-up business operators.



Hon. Fiamē Naomi Mataafa, Minister of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment cutting the ribbon to launch FEPS book during World Water Day 2016 hosted by FEPS. PC: SGP Samoa

Policy Impact

Falease'ela village with the support of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE) through the Water Resource Division adopted the villages' management plan with integrated village by-laws to help protect and enforce the rehabilitation efforts of the community with its degraded rainforest and watershed systems.

The community also made very sound decisions with the invested knowledge gained from the workshops delivered through the project on the importance of conservation of its terrestrial environments. As a result, the community refused a hydro power plant proposed by the Electric Power Corporation (EPC) to be installed in their protected area.



Faleaseela Primary School and College students' visitation to the project site and planting some trees. PC: Faleaseela community

Youth Engagement and Participation

Youth engaged and shared the benefits of the project through gaining paid employment from the business operators within the village. Falease'ela village council encourages its youth members to represent their organisation at public forums on issues that are related to youth empowerment. For instance, Falease'ela village representatives attended the South South Youth exchange programmes with other youth from various Pacific island nations to discuss climate action and youth related interests. Recently in 2016, one of the Falease'ela village youth won a community champion award from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE) for being an outstanding advocate for youth and climate action issues.



Faleaseela women planting organic vegetable gardening. PC: Faleaseela community

Gender Mainstreaming

Women empowerment in the village of Falease’ela is respected by the village council. It is believed that the legend of the Goddess Sina who lived in the mountains is the guardian of the river which runs through the village of Falease’ela. Sina blessed the village of Falease’ela because of their act of kindness and love and in return she redirected her river flows to benefit the villagers. The traditional status of women in the village is sacred and respected by all, hence the support of the village council of womens’ active participation and equal shared benefits of project outcomes. Falease’ela village encourages women to conduct activities they have interest in, even

some women are seen working in a plantation which is traditionally a male task. There are no barriers for women to explore and develop their talents, hence the reasons why there are economical empowerment activities led by the women such as watercress and vegetable farming, taro plantations and other farming activities for income generation activities.



Village untitled men and youth maintenance work and conducting the removal of invasive species. PC: Faleaseela community

Replication and up scaling

Falease’ela’s project model was used to support other terrestrial community driven projects supported by SGP and other partners in Samoa. For example, the Letogo village project with the conservation of its watershed and terrestrial ecosystems. A knowledge exchange took place to share lessons learnt and best practices from the Falease’ela project site. The Ridge to Reef (R2R) approach is yet to be completed with the grantees OP6 application for the conservation of its marine resources.

The pipeline application will see Falease’ela as the final village in Lefaga Bay area to implement a properly managed marine reserve which will complete the ring of marine reserve corridors in the Lefaga/Falease’ela District and also enable the mangroves and marsh area at the entrance of the village to be rehabilitated and regenerated to increase food security and ecotourism activities.