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## **A sustainable financing model for a marine protected area network in Fiji**

**Key words:** Marine Protected Area, user fees, Fiji

### **Abstract:**

Marine Protected Areas (MPA) are continuously studied and assessed however, little attention is directed to financing of MPA networks. At the Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) Conference in 2014, Fiji reaffirmed its commitment to make 30% of its inshore and offshore marine area MPAs by 2020. This study aims to explore benefits derived from selected community-based MPAs and recipient local stakeholders, to better understand and identify sustainable financing mechanisms to maintain an MPA network in Fiji. Using research methods of Willingness to Pay and Willingness to Contribute Time to manage an MPA, topdown and bottom-up approaches to MPAs are combined in a common framework to elucidate possible financing mechanisms. This approach endorses both customary management, and more contemporary science-based styles of MPA design and implementation. Proximity to a fishing market or lack thereof, dependence on marine resources, food security, income and international commitments were found to be significant variables influencing stakeholder's Willingness to Pay and Willingness to Contribute Time to finance and manage an MPA. Tourists WTP was also an important factor in financing 'hotspot' MPAs for Fiji. However, offshore MPA findings expose significant gaps existing between concept and practice of creating practical sustainable financing mechanisms. These findings aim to be used as recommendation for the Government of Fiji to consider innovative and long-term sustainable financing mechanisms for an MPA network with goals of biodiversity conservation and sustainable resource management.