Namosi Eco Retreat

Namosi Eco Retreat is an *iTaukei* owned and operated “unplugged” retreat in the interior of Viti Levu, approximately 2 hours drive from Suva in a four-wheel drive vehicle. provides guests with an authentic Fijian experience, combining culture and adventure with an agritourism experience.

# Agritourism proposition

The retreat already provides an agritourism experience to guests who can visit and help out on their farm, as well as enjoy farm-to-table meals. They see value in developing an organics component to their farm experience, including developing trial plots, and adding an aligned educational component. Underpinning this and their current farm experience they recognise a need to increasingly formalise, and enhance their marketing to improve their visibility and reach.

# Impact of Covid-19 pandemic

Namosi Eco Retreat was mothballed for extended periods during Covid-19 lockdowns, and suffered cyclone damage that could not be repaired due to a combination of a loss of income and difficulty accessing the area due to restrictions on movement. A roofing solution was urgently needed to prevent the resort becoming unrepairable and permanently closing.

# Agritourism Support Programme

## Support requested

The retreat requested essential support to enable them to reopen, and specifically assistance to provide a roofing solution. Ordinarily their roofing uses sustainably harvested *soga*, which provides additional income to the nearby community, and the retreat needed time to ensure they were sourcing this properly. They also requested support to extend their insurance, update and maintain their website, conduct business planning with the iTaukei Land Trust Board, and introductory training to start an organic plot on their farm.

## Successes

* Roofs at the retreat were repaired without causing unsustainable *soga* harvesting.
* The retreat was able to reopen to domestic visitors and then to international visitors as soon as borders opened to tourists in December 2021.
* Support for their website has enabled them to improve their marketing and convey their agritourism product.
* The retreat owner was able to engage with tourism officers within the iTaukei Land Trust Board - a key relationship relating to the retreat’s land lease.
* Bookings have been received from school groups seeking outdoor and agritourism activities.

## Lessons learned

Namosi’s wet environment presents significant challenges to the ability to maintain buildings and the support allowed for experimentation and the identification of a long-term solution. This involved adopting a hybrid approach using corrugated roofing iron with *soga* trimmings, reducing the frequency and extent of harvesting while maintaining traditional skills and payments to local communities.

Having marketing funds to capitalise on Amazon’s World’s Toughest Race: Eco-Challenge Fiji production, and attract the domestic market while borders were closed was a critical part of the retreat’s survival. The longer term benefits visibility and reputational benefits from working with events, and being able to leverage off them was noted for the future.

## Community impacts

### Economic impacts

People from nearby villages were paid to assist with the construction of temporary and the new permanent roofs. The support enabled the retreat to reopen. As the sole employer in the area, they were able to rehire their core team (five part-time female staff) and ad hoc employment for others, for example, for maintenance and traditional performances.

### Social impacts

Local women from the Navukabi village were re-employed and there is a renewed sense of community, with local villages seeing the benefits the retreat brings after the period of closure. By reopening, the retreat can continue to promote indigenous culture.

### Environmental impacts

The sustainable harvesting of soga for roofing was ensured, with full oversight and measuring of soga. However, two harvests per year was too much in terms of impact and cost, and the new roofing solution will reduce this to one more limited harvest, enhancing sustainability.

# Future steps

The retreat is relieved to be able to reopen and rehire its team. The trend since reopening has been positive with relatively strong bookings and this looks set to continue. The prime focus is on consolidating and continuing to offer incredible experiences to domestic and international visitors.

| Namosi Eco Retreat was supported through the PARDI2 Fiji Agritourism Support Programme. The programme provided existing agritourism experience operators and agribusinesses with technical support and mentoring to be market ready for the domestic market initially, as COVID restrictions ease, and for the international market eventually. Five enterprises were selected by an expert panel. Each enterprise received a small grant to further support market readiness. |
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