

SHEFA TOURISM

WORKSHOP: DECORATING WITH LOCAL MATERIALS



28 August 2015 - Taloa Village, Nguna Island



WORKSHOP - Decorating with local materials

One Day Workshop - using local materials for decoration and furnishings

The purpose of the workshop was to encourage the use of local materials to decorate bungalows and restaurants. There are good reasons for this:

- We know tourists to the outer islands prefer a local feel - they have all the cement and plastic they need at home.
- Using local materials is much more cost effective than buying ready-made from stores in Port Vila.
- From a waste management perspective we try to encourage as little plastic as possible. Furniture and decorations made from local materials biodegrade really easily.

Workshop Facilitator: Odile Guiomar

Odile was part of team that did the VSA-funded needs assessment after Cyclone Pam on Nguna and Pele. She did presentations during the assessment about using local materials for building and decoration, which meant that more than half of the workshops participants already knew her. She has a good reputation and owns a bungalow herself that she has decorated with local materials. This gives her credibility when she tells tourism operators what overseas visitors want from outer island accommodation.

Attended by:

Pango Village	x 2	(M1, F1)
Emua Village	x 3	(F3)
Emau Island	x 5	(M3, F2)
Nguna Island	x10	(M3, F7)
Pele Island	x 6	(M2, F4)

This was a workshop for owners of tourism businesses - primarily bungalow and guesthouse owners.

There was no entry fee but we asked that each participant bring bamboo of varying lengths and widths, as well as a bush knife.

We paid the transport costs for all participants, provided lunch and refreshments, and bought mirrors and rope for the practical exercises during the workshop.



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Workshop Content

The workshop was opened by the Chairman of the Nguna, Pele, Emau Tourism Association, who was present throughout the day.

The first part of the workshop consisted of a PowerPoint presentation on how to use local materials in furnishings and decoration. This was extremely visual and Odile is a fluent Bislama speaker, so participants were very engaged. The PowerPoint is available for all participants in digital format and / or as print-outs.

The next part of the workshop involved taking a wheelbarrow down to the beach and filling it with objects gathered from the beach - corals, shells, interesting pieces of driftwood, coconut husks, pebbles etc.

After this the practical side of the workshop began. Participants made bamboo vases, a bamboo seat to hang from a tree and a bamboo towel rail. They also decorated mirrors using the materials they had collected from the beach.

Not all of the tourism owners we invited to the workshop came, but we felt that the optimum number of people attended. If there had been too many more it would have become difficult to control and to give people individual attention.

Feedback from the participants at the end of the day was that this had been the best workshop they had attended and the only criticism was that it should have been longer - two, preferably three days.



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Outcomes

We went back to Nguna and Pele the following week to do a series of Waste Management workshops. All the bungalows proudly demonstrated the skills they had learned at the “Local Materials” workshop. Bamboo vases of flowers adorned the rooms, bamboo towel rails were on display in showers and they all had mirrors, imaginatively decorated using materials found on the beach. Other evidence of the influence of the workshop could be seen with clam shells replacing plastic bowls as water and soap holders, and in the presentation of our meals. Locally woven baskets were being used instead of plastic dustbins.

Apart from the content of the workshop, there were other positive outcomes:

- It helped to strengthen the Nguna, Pele, Emau Tourism Association which has only recently been reinstated, and was perceived as giving added value and support to the members.
- It also helped to build a relationship between tourism operators and the Shefa Tourism Office. Kathy (the Shefa Tourism Product Development Officer) says that this is the first time she has seen participants from so many different areas in the province gathered together at a single event.
- Kathy participated in the workshop and is now able to pass on these skills.

We had planned to video the practical demonstrations, but unfortunately these didn't translate well and would have required too much editing to work as intended. We realised that to do this we really need to set up the demonstrations as a scripted video shoot.

