

SHEFA TOURISM

WORKSHOPS: WASTE MANAGEMENT NGUNA & PELE



31 August - 4 September 2015



7 Workshops - 31 October to 4 September

We conducted a series of seven Waste Management Workshops in the villages that receive tourists on Nguna and Pele Islands. Initially we planned to do also do WASH workshops, but as Save the Children are still working in this area doing post cyclone recovery with contaminated water sources, the timing wasn't right. I think being able to focus our efforts on a single topic made the workshops more effective.

Mary O'Reilly (WasteWise Consulting) provided the technical expertise. My counterpart, Kathy Stephens, and I were the Shefa Tourism representatives and managed the logistics. Mary's detailed report is included in this document.

I knew it was important to work individually with each village as they all have different needs and therefore require different solutions for their waste management issues. I felt it was essential that we work with communities rather than single tourism operators because tourists are exposed to the beaches and villages, not just the bungalows where they are accommodated. The Department of Tourism has coined the phrase: "Tourism is everyone's business" and in this case, it is particularly true.

The logistics of organizing workshops in this environment are challenging. Although we had done a preliminary visit to Nguna and Pele to make arrangements, we were unsure of who would attend and what the response would be. The results were gratifying. Even in Piliura Village where there had been a death and almost the entire community was at the funeral, we were able to do one-on-one training with the Evergreen Tours representative and the bungalow operator.

The workshops were presented at a grassroots level in community meeting places with no technology beyond simple talk boards. The attendees varied between villages, from women nursing infants to Paramount Chiefs and elders, but the activities that Mary devised engaged and informed everyone. Participants contributed to discussions, raising questions and considering solutions.



Outcomes

A three-hour workshop won't change behaviours. Plenty of "awareness" about waste management, the dangers of burning plastic etc. has already been made by other organisations with little visible uptake. We asked the participants to give feedback on how they felt Shefa Tourism could assist in improving their waste management practises.

Suggestions included:

- Conducting waste management workshops in the schools in Pele and Nguna
- Support in holding village community waste management awareness events
- Weaving workshops using packaging, to create products which are popular with tourists

We are now working towards providing this assistance.

In addition to the workshops, Mary was able to give advice to each village based on their individual needs. In Taloa Village on Nguna, for example, the elders were considering dumping corrugated iron and other inorganic waste from the cyclone into the sea - something we were able to prevent.

There was a strong capacity building component to these workshops. Mary presented in English and my counterpart, Kathy, translated everything into Bislama. As a result Kathy is now able to deliver waste management workshops on her own. She's very familiar with the format and feels confident to answer the more technical questions.

(This is one of my assignment objectives.)

Every workshop we held helped to build the relationship between the Shefa Tourism Office, tourism operators and communities. They are now more likely to consult us before going ahead with tourism ventures.

The money we spent doing the workshops goes directly into communities that have had very little source of income since the cyclone. It's not a large amount of money but relatively it is significant (it could pay school fees for a couple of children in each village, for example).

Workshops, regardless of content, are often viewed by people in the community as an educational opportunity. I'm always really humbled by this aspect. In developed countries we take access to education for granted. Here, people (usually older people and women) who haven't been able to finish their schooling, come with notebooks and pencils and carefully take notes. At least one person in every workshop did this.



Recommendations

Reduce

- Use cloth napkins instead of disposable nappies, at least some of the time
- Calico eco bags instead of single-use plastic bags
- Reusable drink bottles instead of purchasing bottled water
- Local materials for furnishing and decoration of bungalows and guesthouses
- Fresh local ingredients when cooking for tourists (no tinned meat and fish or packaged goods)

Recycle

- Aluminium cans
- Tusker bottles

Re-use

- Packaging - make into purses, bags, belts etc. to sell to tourists
- Plastic bottles - use as many times as possible for water, takeaway kava, benzine
- Glass bottles - use as edging borders in gardens
- Tins - for storage

Remaining Waste - Don't mix It / Don't burn it!

- Compost organic waste
- Safe landfill / burying practises to prevent leachates
- Toxic waste such as batteries need to be put in a cemented landfill area with a cover

Responsible Tourism

Encourage tourists to take any inorganic waste that they bring to the offshore islands, such as plastic bottles and disposable nappies, back to Port Vila with them.

Provide Additional Workshops for:

- Schools on Pele and Nguna
- Other tourism operators in Shefa Province
- Area Secretaries (as requested by the coordinator of the Shefa Area Council)
- Events such as International Rural Women's Day where Shefa Tourism will have a stall

We have had preliminary discussions with NGOs about ways in which we can collaborate to achieve these recommendations. We are also investigating the possibility of producing washable cloth nappies as a micro enterprise with women in Pango Village, Port Vila.

In addition, the Vanuatu Discovery Trails project funded by MFAT is going ahead. Shefa Tourism Office will work closely with the consultant who has been contracted to work on the Efate Trails. Waste management has been identified as an area that needs to be addressed and there is budget allocated for this.