



Cultural Mapping Program: Fiji's ICH Inventory-Making and the Establishment of the Traditional Knowledge & Expression of Culture (TKEC) Information System

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I. Description

The Cultural Mapping Program began in 2004 after the Fiji government decided to adopt the model legislation that specifically looks at the protection of Indigenous Knowledge and Expressions of Culture. This legislation is still in its draft form. The IFLC was then mandated to be responsible for Cultural Mapping, which involves the collection, recording and documentation of indigenous tangible and intangible cultural heritage in all the 14 provinces in Fiji. The information collected through the cultural mapping will then be protected under the legislation on the protection of Traditional Knowledge and Expressions of Culture.

The Cultural Mapping Program is a national project intended to cover the fourteen provinces in Fiji. Provinces mapped so far include Serua, Rewa, Namosi, Tailevu South, part of Tailevu North and the islands of Ovalau, Motoriki and Koro in the Lomaiviti Province. Cultural mapping will be conducted in all provinces that are yet to be mapped. Remaining provinces that are still yet to be mapped include parts of Lomaiviti, Ba, Bua, Cakaudrove, Kadavu, Lau, Lomaiviti, Macuata, Nadroga/Navosa, Naitasiri, and Ra.

II. Aim

The establishment of a National Inventory for Traditional Knowledge and Expressions of Culture and its subsequent protection was initiated with the following issues in mind:

- the preservation and safeguarding of tangible and intangible cultural heritage;
- the promotion of the value of cultural diversity;
- the respect for cultural rights;
- the promotion of tradition-based creativity and innovation as ingredients of sustainable economic development.

Basically, the project will ensure that custodians appreciate what they have and can receive financial rewards with the utilization of aspects of their traditional knowledge and expressions of culture for commercial purposes. Moreover, it could exemplify an alternative mode of employment for the local population.

1. Project rationale

The project was derived from concerns for the following issues:

- 1) Globalization, with its culture of uniformity could replace completely aspects of Fijian culture.
- 2) Rapid development in information technology could establish a new culture of modernism eradicating the traditional culture. More so, new technologies generate unprecedented ways for cultural products to be created, replicated, exchanged and used.
- 3) Challenges of multiculturalism and cultural diversity in Fiji often require a balance in cultural policies, which could severely affect the livelihood of the indigenous population.
- 4) Loss of important aspects of Fijian culture, without any chance of being revitalized, with the deaths of key custodians. The team has covered 3 provinces in 3 years and at this rate the 14 provinces may be completed in 12 years times and since only 1.5% [Bureau of Stats

2003] of the Fijian [445,907] population is 70 years and above, there is a high risk of losing the valuable information that our old people have. In addition Bureau of stats, 2003 also reveals that current death rate for male Fijians who are 70 years and above is 107.58 and the female is 94. This shows that old people who are custodians of the culture and language are dying at a faster rate.

- 5) Rise in rural-urban migration, and emigration, amongst indigenous youths contribute to a vacuum in the transmission of know-how, skills and practices of the older to the younger generation.
- 6) Rise in unemployment amongst young indigenous men and women.
- 7) Over commercialization of traditional knowledge and expressions of culture.
- 8) Less or no recognition and due acknowledgment, financial and non-financial means, of the contribution of the indigenous population to an innovation, a new creation, or to a research activity whereby the indigenous population served as the primary informant.
- 9) Efforts to include the study of Fijian culture in the education curriculum.
- 10) Efforts to implement fully and enforce proposed legislation for the safeguarding and protection of traditional knowledge and cultural expressions. It looks at communal ownership of the latter and their copyright.

For this reasons, the Cultural Mapping Program began in 2004, after the Fiji government accepted and ratified a model legislation that specifically looks at the protection of Indigenous knowledge. The program has been running for the last four and a half years and with limited resources, the team has managed to overcome obstacles and culturally mapped three provinces and is on course to complete the fourth province by May 2009. The Cultural Mapping team has also completed mapping of the four Tikina's in Ovalau. Decision to move cultural mapping exercise to Ovalau was made upon directive from Head Office to accommodate request from the Department of Culture and Heritage. This was to support their submission towards Levuka being included in UNESCO's World Heritage site list.

III. Background

The National Inventory project facilitates the identification of existing elements of traditional knowledge and expressions of culture and their customary owners within the 14 provinces of Fiji. The continuity of Fijian cultural identity and its practices had rested mostly on oral transmission and informal learning by custodians. Much had been lost because there had never been an extensive survey done before to document all that comprise Fijian language and culture. Indigenous youths are being caught within the forces of the rural-urban migration trend. There are fewer avenues for the elderly and traditional educators/practioners to pass on their knowledge and skills, hence when they pass away, the ability (talent) and know-how is buried with them.

In 2003, the Ministry of Fijian Affairs was tasked by cabinet to adapt the 'Model law on Traditional Knowledge and Cultural Expression', work towards its passing in parliament and most importantly its implementation. Thus, evolved the idea of setting up a national inventory on traditional knowledge and cultural expressions.

In 2004, the Ministry had undertaken a pilot study to test the viability of the project in 2 villages and 1 district in Fiji. The following variables amongst others were tested:

- Probable duration for undertaking research in a village or district;
- Human resources to facilitate a fully-fledge process of inventory making;
- Funds consumed or should be allocated towards the proposed visit to a village;
- Duration it takes to complete all processes of inventorying, include editing, vetting and the return of reports from informants;
- Awareness raising mechanisms – elements needed to effectively promulgate the idea of inventory making;¹
- Gauge questions asked, and the response and/or informant's understanding of the questions;
- Identify additional questions and aspects of Traditional knowledge and expressions of culture (ICH) yet to be identified [Proposed review of initial questionnaire and questions outlined].

1_ Use of the media, printing of posters, printing of brochures, development of audio & audio visual materials.

In May 2005, 6 qualified researchers with varying experiences in fieldwork were recruited to initiate the task of collecting data this year. An intensive recruitment process was undertaken culminating in the above staffing. An intensive one-week workshop/training, funded by UNESCO cultural mapping funds, was held, familiarizing the 6 researchers on Fiji's national inventory making initiative and the cultural mapping procedures. A simple, yet not so academic/professional, manual was developed and prepared, with the assistance of two international anthropologists who at an opportune time, were in Fiji for different reasons altogether. By December 2005, the six have completed the province of Namosi and Serua. Due to the enormity of elements researched, and the lack of a proper editor, transcribing and collating of information is still ongoing. Those that have been completely documented and edited are stored in a database and a copy given to custodians of the information for final perusal before it is finally recognized as correct information of relevant places and sites.

Prior to the data collection, an awareness raising campaign, (although begun at a small scale), was undertaken in the proposed sites for piloting. Provincial councils responsible for the cultural locales piloted were briefed accordingly of the purpose/objectives of the visits; and their assistance were also rendered in the promulgation of the entire process to grassroots living in villages. Since then, the theme of awareness raising is used to formally spread the 'good news' of a visit and to seek villagers consent for research to be undertaken in their respective localities. Besides the prior visitation, other mediums with which information on the cultural mapping project is publicized include:

- A weekly program (every Tuesday) on Radio Fiji One;
- Publication of brochures and posters for dissemination to schools, villages and provincial councils;
- At the request of Provincial Office administrators, presentations are being made to village headman who frequent provincial offices;
- Presentations by the researchers at Tikina (District) Councils during their scheduled meetings which varies in date and duration;
- Request by groups/individuals/NGOs for presentation on the initiative;
- Participation in workshops/panel discussions and debates organized by local indigenous groups/NGOs/Government Departments.

IV. Assumptions / pre-conditions

Educational institutions such as the Fiji Institute of Technology and the Fijian Teachers Association have proceeded in undertaking a project of similar nature but for very different reasons. Fiji Television Limited has also embarked on commercialization of what the project is trying to protect in its Noda Gauna Program. The University of Fiji has recently showed interest in researching, documenting and using the information in its curriculum. Whilst the Ministry of Fijian Affairs is concerned at the rate of informant loss, the documentation and safeguarding of information for future generation, the educational institutions is solely looking at commercializing information collected from field. Despite, this it should be recognized that Fijian Affairs, as a government agency is at the helm of all matters pertaining to the governing of the Fijian people. Thus, all projects by the private sector regarding the use of local village settings and its inhabitants should have the Ministry of Fijian Affairs consulted initially prior to it being implemented.

Likewise components of Fijian cultural heritage and intellectual property has been commercialized and abused at an alarming rate. There is no legal mechanism in place that will safeguard or ensure protection of such knowledge or guarantee any return or compensation for owners of traditional knowledge and expression of culture.

V. Co-ordination

1. Ministerial/ National Level

When the notion of a National Inventory for Fiji first surfaced, rigorous consultations between the Fijian Affairs Board and the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs was undertaken and still continues for the successful implementation of the project. The Fijian Affairs Board was instrumental in the formulation of a questionnaire specifically designed for the project, hence, the inclusion of a representative from the Fijian Affairs Board (FAB) in the Internal Subcommittee responsible for the national inventory project. Furthermore, with activities encompassed in the inventory project, representatives of the provincial councils have and will be consulted for their much-needed input

and notified duly of the progress of the project.

Further, the Fijian Affairs board has been active in supporting teams in the awareness campaigns and in billeting researchers in respective villages. Besides, the Ministry of Fijian Affairs is working closely with the state law office in the drafting and subsequent passing of the *Model Law on Traditional Knowledge and Expressions of Culture*.

2. Regional efforts and collaboration

The Model law for Traditional Knowledge and Expressions of Culture, which necessitates the inauguration of a National Inventory to fulfill its implementation, was a regional effort initiated as a 'Legal Protection Project' in 1999 by the Cultural Affairs Programme of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC). The project was initially launched through a 'Symposium on the Protection of Traditional Knowledge and Expressions of Culture', jointly organized with UNESCO, from the 15-19 February, 1999. A regional workshop for regional experts on TK & EC in February 2001, organized by SPC, Forum Secretariat and UNESCO then followed. Subsequently, a regional legal framework was developed and presented to the Forum Economic Ministers Meeting in Port Villa from 3-4 July 2002, and later at an SPC/UNESCO/Forum Secretariat coordinated meeting of regional Cultural Ministers in Noumea from the 16-18 September 2002. The Cultural Ministers meeting activated Fiji's adoption of the Model Law and its implementation action plan.

In February 2004 and later December 2004, the officer responsible for the project within the Ministry went on back-to-back seminars on inventorying making in Osaka and Tokyo Japan promulgating the level of works Fiji has undertaken. Participants and WIPO and UNESCO representatives are at awe with the progress of the project and have used the Ministry's procedures as guidelines for other countries within the Asia Pacific region to follow.

In November 2005, the same officer was invited to attend a meeting at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris on the same subject – inventory making. A workshop similar in nature was held in Thailand in December the same year where the said officer was invited as a resource person. This shows the growing interest in the region on Fiji's model for inventory making.

VI. Policy Context

1. Relationship to sectoral policies

The inventory project serves to implement policies and strategies outlined in 12.10 of the 20 Year Development Plan (2001-2020) for the enhancement of participation of indigenous Fijians and Rotumans in the Socio-Economic Development of Fiji. This includes the identification, research and establishment of a database for indigenous cultures and heritage treasures. Besides, the project will assist in the empowerment of the new legislation for collective /community ownership rights in connection with indigenous knowledge. The aforementioned policies are ranked as top priority for the cultural sector since they serve two important objectives: [i] the protection and preservation of indigenous Fijian culture and heritage; and [ii] assurance of fair trade and practices, and the protection of intellectual property rights regarding the tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Specific mention for the review of current Intellectual Property Rights Act to embrace the Model Law for TK & EC is made in 6.5: Cultural and Heritage as a key performance indicator for Policy Objective of ‘protecting, preserving and managing Fiji’s cultural heritage’.

Cultural Mapping is one of the key priorities of the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs, aimed at achieving the deliverables assigned by the Interim Government, as stipulated in the corporate plan 2008 of the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs.

2. Relationship to national policies

The work of cultural mapping has been further enhanced by cabinet decision in March 2006 at Lomanikoro, Rewa. In addition it is also a priority area in the interim government. Section 12.10 of the 20-Year Development Plan corresponds with 6.5 of the *2003-2005 Government Strategic Development Plan* (rolled over for the period 2005-2007) which highlights that integral to Fiji’s development is the conservation, development and promotion of the indigenous identity. Mirrored in this dimension is the national goal that aims at protecting and managing culture and heritage for current and future generations. On the outset, the national inventory project objective is streamlined to correlate with the national goal regarding culture and heritage

in Fiji, through the creation of employment opportunities for locals.

The vision of the Indigenous Affairs looks at *Enlightenment of the Indigenous People's* which is clearly outlined in the ministry's Corporate Plan for 2009. The core function of the Institute of Fijian Language and Culture is the protection and the promotion of natural and cultural heritage of the iTaukei. In addition the Fijian Affairs Act. is mandated to encourage good governance for the well being of the iTaukei and this is one of the core roles of the Fijian Affairs.

The Peoples Charter for Change, Peace & Progress document that set the platform for rebuilding a better Fiji is guided by seven key principles one of which is 'mainstreaming of the indigenous Fijian in a modern, progressive Fiji.' In addition, Pillar Seven of the Peoples Charter looks at establishing an integrated development structure at the provincial level. In its draft submission, the charter has identified that the Fijian Administration as a system of governance for indigenous Fijians, despite some successes such as in the promotion of culture and heritage, has failed in the areas of economic and social development. Therefore, the charter promotes indigenous Fijian interests to be mainstreamed into national developmental plans and programme with line ministries and other implementing agencies responsible for implementation. As such the need to document tangible and intangible aspect of indigenous Fijians needs to be urgently addressed.

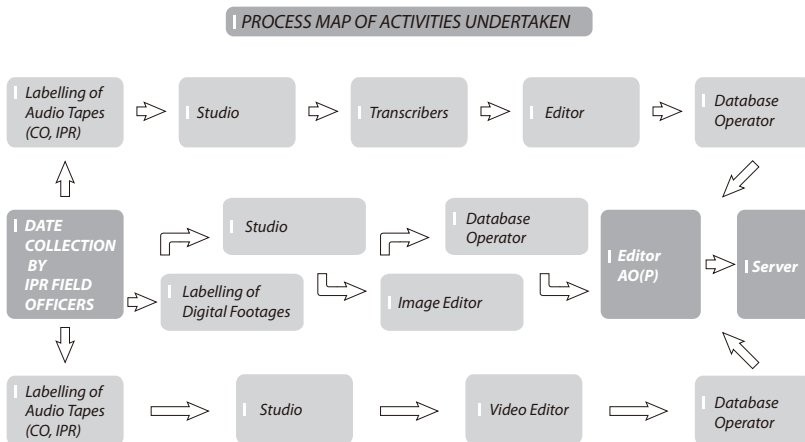
In the reform process it is important to note that threats related to diminishing senior indigenous population is accounted for. Moreover, reliance of indigenous identity, anthropology, history and intellectual property issues on oral sources need to be eliminated through documentation as it has been a major cause for divisions and instability within indigenous community. This has also led to abuse by business entities and individuals. Documentation and storage of anthropological and historical data will contribute to an enlightened and a knowledgeable indigenous society. This will contribute positively towards stability which can be transformed to economic prosperity.

Equally important, the need to address biological diversity and intellectual property issues that is related to increasing globalization requires timely mapping and identification of intellectual property owners. For the same reason, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and United Nations through UN Declaration of Indigenous Rights have adopted policies that will ensure protection and promotion of indigenous issues. The institute is also working closely with the Asia Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU) in the protection of tangible and intangible cultural aspect of

indigenous societies in the Asia Pacific region. Two officers from the institute also attended training courses in Tokyo and Osaka in Japan to look at ways in which Japanese aspect of tangible and intangible cultural heritage is documented, protected and promoted.

VII. Structure of the Project

The diagram is a detailed illustration of program organizational structure:



1. Personnel and Logistics

The program at this time is operating with fifteen project officers. There are six project research officers (2 EOs and 4 COs) classified under the Indigenous Intellectual Property Rights project (IIPR) and supervised by an Administration Officer (Project). In addition the Institute has recently recruited an additional eight project officers whose salary are being sourced from the Fijian Trust Fund. The eight officers consist of four transcribers, two editors and two database operators.

2. Project Research Officers

Responsible for the collection and recording of data; interviewing and consulting respective leaders of a 'mataqali'; compile fieldwork reports; submit Individual Work Plan and monthly work plans; report directly to AO/P. The six project officers are grouped in two's (male and female) and make up a team. There are three project teams and a team is assigned to one village per week. Hence, three villages can be covered in one week. Project officers spend a week in the office after two to three weeks in the field. This serves to allow project officers to compile all data, recuperate and prepare for the following weeks of fieldwork.

3. Transcribers

The four will be responsible for transcription of recorded audio materials. In addition they will also be responsible for typing transcribed version of audio recordings before they are passed on to editors for editing.

4. Editors

Editors are responsible for:

- Editing of transcribed information according to database setting and format;
- Editing of audio recordings according to specified audio formats for database [corresponds with audio log sheets] & creation of back-up copies;
- Editing of digital image description entered into computer;
- Editing of video footages according to database format;
- Editing and cross-checking of entered information into database (evaluation);
- Editing and cross-checking of entered information into database.

5. Data Base Operators

The two database operators are responsible for:

- Digitizing of audio recordings and creation of back-up copies of materials digitized;
- Entering of description of digital images [ensure that it is aligned to forms used and description] & creation of back-ups;
- Entering of information into database [audio/video/digital images and transcribed information].

6. Administrative Officer (Project)

Responsible for coordinating and implementing the project; consult with cultural authorities and stakeholders; prepare and design awareness programs, assessment and monitoring procedures; provide policy advice and analysis, submit reports, financial forecasts, work programs and budget estimation; reports directly to Director of IFLC.

In the restructure submission that is inclusive of costing prepared for this paper, an additional seven field officers and a Senior Research Officer will be recruited to be part of the new makeup. In addition, all field officers positions will be upgraded to Executive Officer level to accommodate nature of work and specific skills and qualification needed for research duties.

VIII. The Traditional Knowledge & Expression of Culture (TKEC) Database.

In 2005, a database system was developed for the project to facilitate the input of final edited data collected from respective villages and provinces. Local and overseas consultants were utilized to carry out necessary IT and language configuration to suit need for data storage. It was the first ever software created to receive commands in the indigenous iTaukei language, which put to good use linguistic and interpretive professionals in the institute. This is in anticipation of those who will later access data stored.

The system has enhanced the proper storage of information accumulated from the field and ensured that each cultural expression is filed appropriately. In this way, the data is retrieved easily and efficiently if it needs to be accessed by custodians and individuals/parties with the traditional bearer's consent. Records entered into the database are based on the domains outlined earlier in the following format: text, images (digitalized photos), audio recordings and accompanying film footages. Hence, each Fijian village will have entries of aspects of ICH in our database.

IX. Conclusion

The Cultural Mapping program since its inception has managed to carry out scope of work required as mandated by the Great Council of Chiefs with governmental support. It has had its fair share of challenges in regards to staffing, funding and logistical issues. The Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage was not ratified by the Fiji until August this year. However, activities recommended for implementation in the Convention and the Expert Meeting on Inventorying of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Paris from 17th to 18th March 2005 is already being undertaken by the Fiji Government since 2004. In addition it has been participating in conferences and seminars that look at the importance of ICH protection and revitalization. With government support and identification for need of protective measure by custodians, project is positively gaining momentum in regards to documentation, storage and related revitalization activities.