

**Project location:**

Peava Village, Gatokae Island, Marovo,
Western Province, Solomon Islands

Project start date:

1 October 2009

Funding source:

AusAID 47%, The Wilderness Lodge 53%

Total grant funds approved:

A\$110,000

Updated December 2012

The Wilderness Lodge – Remote Tourism In Solomon Islands

ABOUT WILDERNESS LODGE

The Wilderness Lodge sits on a coral lagoon at the south-eastern tip of Western Province, Solomon Islands, next to some of the world's richest and most intact coral reefs and tropical rainforest habitats. The 100% locally owned eco-lodge business has been operating since 2002 but did not have the resources to cater for the strong demand from eco-tourists.

THE PROJECT AND HOW IT WORKED

Wilderness Lodge sought an ECF grant to double the capacity of the eco-lodge and to invest in tourism training for communities. This would bring about -

- Improved and diversified livelihood opportunities for local communities in four villages where government services and other livelihood opportunities are minimal – in the form of wages, contracts, tour fees, sales of food and vegetable products, carvings and craft and income from sea based activities
- An almost doubling in value by 2012 of island access fees paid directly to communities
- Hospitality and nature guide training of staff and communities in partnership with other eco-resorts and non-government organisations
- Improved access to telecommunications and transport services as the business expands

THE RESULTS

The project's close links with communities, training of local people to undertake key roles in the business and comprehensive environment protection strategy, represent a model that can be replicated in other Solomon Islands locations and elsewhere.

- Construction and lodge refurbishment at Wilderness Lodge is complete and accommodation facilities have increased from 8 to 16 beds. The team is seeing increased visits from tourists and is making an increased profit.
- These profits are invested into improving the facility further and developing a supply chain of tourism goods and services from the local communities.
- Hospitality training of staff, in partnership with Uepi Island Resort, Tetepare Eco Lodge and Biche and Zaira Villages, has already benefited eight female staff.
- Training for local construction workers in use of power tools and equipment reduced construction costs.
- Installation of VSAT internet station to enable effective communications with booking office.
- Doubling of employment from 2010 to 2013, 65% of whom are women.
- Establishment of scuba diving facilities and training of indigenous Dive Instructor and Divemasters.

The success of this project will help boost the tourism industry in a region previously impacted by social unrest.

HOW ECF FUNDS WERE USED

- ECF funding support is focused on the construction costs, the solar panels and foreshore consolidation works. It has enabled a doubling of guest accommodation and site infrastructure improvements.
- Wilderness Lodge is funding equipment, training of local staff and associated market development.