

Feasibility study on capacity building in underwater cultural heritage in the Pacific

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Abstract

The first UNESCO regional workshop on Pacific underwater cultural heritage (UCH) took place in December 2009 in Honiara, Solomon Islands. As possible steps towards building capacity for managing UCH, participants at the workshop identified the following needs: systematic recording and maintenance of a database of submerged and underwater sites; exploring licensing activities directed at underwater sites; and developing a training and education programme for managers. Based on the recommendations made at the Honiara workshop, a Feasibility Study on a Pacific Underwater Cultural Heritage Capacity Building Program was prepared by Flinders University with UNESCO support. The study recommends a possible capacity building programme to be hosted by the University of the South Pacific (USP) in Fiji.

Key Words: UNESCO, Capacity, Underwater Cultural Heritage, Training, Pacific

Introduction

Experts from Pacific Island nations and underwater cultural heritage (UCH) practitioners identified the need for UCH capacity building during the December 2009 workshop “Towards the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage in the Pacific” held in Honiara, Solomon Islands and sponsored by the UNESCO, Apia. During this meeting it was identified that, although there are limited resources available, most Pacific nations recognize the need to develop a program of UCH management and have staff trained in recording, managing and protecting this heritage. As possible steps towards building capacity for managing UCH, participants at the meeting specifically identified the following needs: systematic recording and maintenance of a database of submerged and underwater sites; exploring licensing activities directed at underwater sites; strengthening assessment and mitigation techniques for negative impacts to underwater sites; and developing a training and education program for managers. These views were expressed in light of increasing threats posed by lack of legislation, tourism, development, natural disasters and climate change.

The UNESCO Apia Office contracted Flinders University’s Program in Maritime Archaeology to conduct and write a feasibility study for developing capacity in UCH management in the Pacific (McKinnon and Kimura 2011). The Program has a history of participation in UNESCO sponsored programs and an ongoing research agenda on UCH within the Pacific region and was suited to conduct such a project.

Selected Existing and Planned Capacity: Programs, Projects and Activities

The development of a capacity building program rests on knowledge of what capacity already exists and any future planned capacity. Thus a review of existing programs, projects and activities including UNESCO Pacific member, associate member and non-member nations located in the Pacific was conducted. This included the following nations: Australia, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (non-member), Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Guam (non-member), Hawaii, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau (Associate member), Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

A review of the existing programs included thorough Internet searches, library searches and targeted emails to relevant practitioners to identify activities related to UCH. Each program, project and activity was then reviewed and information was collected to assess their capacity. Data collated included: institution name, geographic area, previous and current research/work/projects related to UCH, available facilities, contact information, associated websites and publications/texts/references. This information was compiled into a database and each nation was assessed for their potential to contribute to or host a capacity building program.

For the purposes of identifying capacity building potential, the definition of “capacity” in the feasibility study involved two key criteria: framework and sustainability. In order for a project, program or activity to be viable and capable of supporting long-term capacity it should provide a general framework that may include, but not be limited to expertise, administration and funding. As well, that project, program or activity must be sustainable over time, that is, not a one-off effort. Thus the existing and planned capacity projects, programs and activities outlined in the feasibility study fulfilled both these criteria. The following nations were outlined for their potential to contribute capacity building programs for UCH in the Pacific: Australia, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Guam, Hawaii, New Zealand and Palau. The programs, projects and activities of these nations were investigated further and subdivided into the following categories: government organisations, university programs, non-government (NGOs) and not-for-profit (NFPs) organisations, museums and private organisations and businesses. The best location for hosting a UCH capacity building program was identified as Fiji, discussed further below.

A New Pacific Underwater Cultural Heritage Capacity Building Program

During the December 2009 workshop in Honiara, participants discussed the possibilities for building capacity in the Pacific region and decided that it was too early to attempt establishing a Regional Centre of Excellence Field Training Facility as had been done in the Asia region at Chanthaburi, Thailand. Thus, the capacity building program in the Pacific would need to take an approach *suited to the Pacific*. As a result, the capacity building program focused less on the need for certification in SCUBA and diver training and more on knowledge building and knowledge transfer.

Most practitioners and agencies would agree that knowledge is at the core of sustainable capacity development. By increasing knowledge, the capacity building program would develop a framework for training future practitioners to have actual UCH working capacity.

The UNESCO Apia Office outlined the following requirements for a capacity building program (UNESCO 2010a):

- combine classroom/online lectures with field training for diving at UCH sites, including those in Pacific island countries
- use ICT as a tool for knowledge sharing and networking
- be based on public-private partnership, involving tourism diving industry, in order to ensure sustainable funding

These three requirements were incorporated into the design of a program that met the needs identified by Pacific nations during the workshop (UNESCO 2010b) including:

- systematic recording and maintenance of a database of submerged and underwater sites
- exploring licensing activities directed at underwater sites
- strengthening assessment and mitigation techniques for negative impacts to underwater sites
- developing a training and education program for managers as possible steps towards building a capacity for managing UCH

Training

Based on the above needs identified by Pacific nations, a capacity building program would include an intensive, regional training in one of the Pacific nations involving relevant representatives from each nations' management authorities and experts in the field of UCH and heritage management. The training would focus on basic knowledge and capacity building. It could be offered during one long training session (i.e. three-four weeks) or divided into two, three, or four sessions over an extended period. The following was a proposed outline for the training separated into sessions, modules and subject matter:

Session 1: Underwater Cultural Heritage: Identification, Recording and Database Management

Module 1: Defining UCH using a Pacific approach: Introduction to UNESCO and ICOMOS; What is intangible and tangible heritage?; Regional priorities in Pacific UCH management

Module 2: Requirements for systematic recording of UCH: site identification, recording and delimitation: What types of sites are UCH?; Cultural maritime landscape and seascape approaches; Recording techniques for UCH; Defining site boundaries

Module 3: Understanding site significance: The Burra Charter process; What is significance?; Writing a significance statement; Thematic frameworks and approaches

Module 4: Building and maintaining a database of UCH: What is a heritage database?; What is included in a database?; What software to use?; Maintenance of databases; Successful uses of databases

Module 5: Practice in recording sites: Conduct an actual archaeological survey of a UCH site

Session 2: Underwater Cultural Heritage: Management

Module 1: Identifying risks to intangible and tangible heritage: What are the risks to Pacific UCH?; Preventative approaches; Case studies

Module 2: *In situ* conservation and preservation: What is *in situ* conservation and preservation?; Developing and conducting conservation surveys; Developing a conservation management plan

Module 3: Disaster risk management and developing a plan: What are natural disasters?; Vulnerability of various types of UCH; Planning for disasters; Writing a disaster risk management plan

Module 4: Assessment and mitigation of impacts to UCH: Damage assessment investigation and surveys; Violation investigations; Damage assessment report preparation; Case studies

Module 5: Developing a network of support: local and regional capacity: Strengthening inter- and intra-island communication and collaboration; Identifying regulatory agencies for partnerships; Trainings for law enforcement

on UCH protection; Public outreach programs; Developing local heritage interest groups

Session 3: Underwater Cultural Heritage: Interpretation and Heritage Tourism

Module 1: Methods in public interpretation: *in situ* and museum approaches:

What is public interpretation and what forms does it take?; *In situ*

interpretation and museums; Traditional approaches to museum interpretation

Module 2: Respecting Indigenous UCH places and values: What is an

Indigenous heritage place?; Identifying traditional owners' rights and interests;

Consulting with traditional owners; Dealing with disputes

Module 3: Restricting access to UCH by the public: licensing, permitting and

regulation: Legal implications of restricting access; Licensing and permitting

schemes using case studies; Regulation of access restriction; Dealing with

breaches of access restriction

Module 4: Heritage tourism strategies: What is heritage tourism?; Regional

issues and how can it be sustainable; Working with and training local tour

companies and dive shops; Developing a plan for monitoring heavily visited

sites; Developing site stewards programs; Heritage Awareness Diving

Seminar Trainings

Module 5: Successful heritage tourism approaches: UCH parks, trails and

preserves; Case studies

Location

The preferred location chosen was Fiji. Fiji is an accessible island nation and is serviced by three international airlines including Air New Zealand (Star Alliance member), Air Pacific (Fiji's national airline) and Pacific Blue (Virgin) as well as several smaller regional airlines. This makes getting to and from Fiji easy for both Pacific nation representatives and experts. Fiji was chosen as the location because the government and the Fiji Museum have previous experience with hosting UNESCO capacity building training programs (Smith and O'Keefe, 2004). The previous capacity building training was run with the permission and support of the Ministry of Fijian Affairs; the Department of Culture and Heritage; the Fiji National Commission for UNESCO; and the National Trust for Fiji.

Fiji also was chosen due to the location of the University of South Pacific and the possibility of a partnership between the University's School of Marine Sciences (SMS) and the Fiji Museum. This would increase capacity for the use of infrastructure such as classrooms, wet and dry labs, boats and ICT tools. According to USP, "SMS is situated in a modern, state-of-the-art facility on the shore of Laucala Bay in Suva, not far from the main Laucala Campus. Its buildings were purpose-built through a grant from Japan, and include offices, science and computer laboratories, lecture theatres, aquaria, a comprehensive library (PIMRIS), a modern fish processing laboratory, collection, SCUBA and boat service facilities." SMS has a fully equipped and self-contained dive shop with lockers, showers and change-rooms and equipment hire is available. Additionally, there is continual availability of small and medium boats with capacities of 6-20 persons. All are equipped with navigational and safety equipment and operated by trained personnel.

Once the training is completed there exists the opportunity to continue taking advantage of USP resources through their online ICT services. USP has campuses located in Suva, Labasa and Lautoka, Fiji; Apia, Samoa; Port Vila, Vanuatu; Rarotonga, Cook Islands; Tarawa, Kiribati; Majuro, Marshall Islands; Nauru; Alofi, Niue; Honiara, Solomon Islands; Tokelau; Nuku'alofa, Tonga; and Funafuti, Tuvalu.

The town of Levuka on the island of Ovalau, Fiji, was chosen as the dive training site because Levuka offers a diverse array of prehistoric, colonial and post-colonial heritage in the form of built and archaeological heritage and more specifically shipwrecks. Three historic shipwrecks in Levuka Harbour have already been archaeologically surveyed (Hosty and Hundley, 1998). These sites are easily accessible and lie in 5m, 12m and 20m of water. Shallow sites such as these with good visibility are excellent sites to use for training purposes. Alternatively, for those participants with no SCUBA qualification, there are inter-tidal and terrestrial "maritime-related" sites that could be chosen for the practical component.

Delivery

The delivery mode of the training modules was designed to be face-to-face and involves experts in the field of UCH and heritage management in the Pacific delivering module lectures, practical and discussions. This approach was preferred due to the difficulty of content and the need to demonstrate during practical sessions and discussions. It is understood that for this capacity building exercise to be

sustainable and to build a stronger network of practitioners who interact on a regular basis, several follow-up developments should be put in place. The first development would be the production of a CD for distribution to participants that includes all of the readings, training modules, PowerPoint slideshows, lectures and other materials developed for the program. This CD could be used by participants to review materials and develop programs based on some of the examples and case studies presented.

Another development would be two Webinars whereby the participants and experts participate in an online web-based seminar to discuss any issues that developed out of the program, relate any advances made in the recording and management of UCH sites, and ask questions of the experts about specific queries or directions for future work. The Webinars could be conducted through an online program such as GoToMeeting™ (<http://www.gotomeeting.com.au/fec/>).

Another development would be the creation of a listserv for practicing professionals and experts in the field of UCH in the Pacific. Such a listserv would provide a useful communication vector for discussing ideas, issues and developments in UCH in the Pacific.

Finally, another option would be the creation of a blog through WordPress.org on the topic of UCH in the Pacific. A blog would facilitate discussion and interaction in a slightly more creative and interactive way. The blog could be a place to post photographs, stories, developments, questions, etc. The development of the blog could begin with a short training session during the program so that all participants are able to utilise the software. Access could be restricted to only those who participated in the program. Restricting access would allow potentially sensitive information from being distributed widely.

Steering Committee

The steering committee was designed to include a range of practicing professionals and experts in the field of UCH and cultural heritage management. It would consist of individuals from a variety of institutions and countries with a focus in research and management within the Pacific region.

Timeframe

The development of such a capacity building program would take 9-12 months of planning so that the maximum amount of participation can be achieved. Below was an estimated timeframe:

Table 1. Timeframe for developing a capacity building program

Planning (9-12 months)
Develop steering committee Send out invitations to training Develop curriculum Organise logistics such as airfare, lodging, transportation, boats, diving needs, training classrooms, site survey areas, etc.
Training (1 month)
Run training over one month period or split into two or three sessions of a week or two each
Follow up Developments (6 months)
Organise and run Webinar at 3 months and 6 months after training Organise and run Listserv Organise and run blog Create CD of course materials
Total timeframe (16-19 months)

Budget

An estimated budget for the costs of running a capacity building program was created. It included costs related to travel, accommodation and equipment for up to 25 participants. The 25 participants would include between three to five trainers and the remainder would be trainees.

The budget did not include the costs of organising the training or curriculum development, nor did it include the follow-up organisation of Webinars, a list serve or blog. It is expected that some of the training content and curriculum development might exist in some capacity within organisations identified in the list of capacity building programs reviewed in the study. For example, Flinders University offers courses and curriculum in the subject of maritime archaeology and has run similar trainings in the past (i.e. ALA Fellowships). If partnerships or arrangements were made with such organisations, these training components and curriculum could be made accessible.

However, it was recommended that a specific curriculum that is catered to the Pacific region that deals with Pacific issues be developed for this program. This would require financial support that could be negotiated through a one-off contract with an organisation already equipped with the capacity to develop such a program (i.e.

existing framework, specialists, administration support, etc.). This program curriculum could then be used in the future in other locations or successive years.

An estimated budget for the development of the curriculum and the delivery of curriculum (for one person/organisation) was provided separate from the main budget for operating the program. The budget assumed the trainers would participate as volunteers and present content relevant to their own experiences/projects/programs and did not include preparation time or salaries.

Conclusion

In concluding it is pertinent to re-state that the Pacific region has its own unique set of challenges and issues that are quite different to adjacent regions. Thus it is important when designing a UCH capacity building program that other “models” for capacity building, training, and management are not applied wholesale to this region. A careful approach that considers the challenges and difficulties the Pacific is facing should be taken, and a program that is suited to deal with these challenges and resolve them into the future should be outlined for a successful program of capacity building. As Anita Smith has stated in *Contested Heritages in the Pacific*, “Communities and governments in the region are keen to engage with international conservation programs not only because they are interested in protecting their heritage and resources but also as they provide a source of income, training and avenue for communication with the global community. The challenge is for processes of heritage protection and national legislation to govern and enforce this protection to be based in and evolve from traditional systems of governance and cultural practices rather than imposed from the outside.”

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Biography

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