

Local innovation benefits women *nama* harvesters

MEDIA RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Yasawa Islands, Fiji

Twenty harvesting floats have been gifted by Essence of Fiji (EOF) to the women of Somosomo village, on Naviti Island in the Yasawa group, to help make the collection of *nama* easier and more environmentally friendly.

Nama is the main source of income for the village and the new inflatable floats will enable the women to sustainably harvest *nama*, as previous practice involved collecting and storing it in sacks that were tied to their waist, and when full would drag and damage the reef.

The harvesting floats have been provided by the EOF Group with support from Australia's Market Development Facility (MDF).

"I would like to acknowledge all the hard work and hours you spend in the ocean harvesting the *nama* by hand. These new floats are designed to support your work as well as protect the environment that you work in so it continues to thrive," EOF Managing Director, Ms Debra Sadranu said during the handover at Somosomo village.

Australian Counsellor for Development Cooperation, Joanna Houghton, said the event was well-timed given the challenges following COVID-19.

"It's inspiring to see businesses like EOF working closer with *nama* farming communities to empower women harvesters to build on existing livelihoods and find new, improved ways to harvest their precious resource," Ms Houghton said during the handover ceremony.

Her sentiments were echoed by women harvesters in Somosomo Village.

"When harvesting, sacks become very heavy which hurts our backs sometimes, but now we can just store the collected *nama* in these floats which really eases our burden," said Virisiveni Koro, one of the women harvesters from Somosomo village.

"It is also much better for our reef because we no longer have to drag the heavy sacks which would get stuck and sometimes break the coral," she added.

The floats, made from recycled rubber tyres, mesh sacks, and fitted with cable ties, are designed to provide a low maintenance, cost-effective and practical solution for *nama* harvesting.

They are manufactured by The Fusion Hub, a local upcycling and recycling business based in Lautoka.

"The harvesting float is a fairly simple innovation using recycled products but the benefit it brings to women's workload and the environment is huge, so we were delighted to work with EOF and MDF on this project to support the women of Somosomo village," said Fusion Hub Founder, Sagufta Janif.

The Essence of Fiji Group has sourced *nama* from Somosomo village for its company's renowned *Nama of Fiji* skincare range since 2018.

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