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## Possible Ban on Emtem and Erakor Lagoon

By Mavuku Tokona  
Oct 2, 2020



**On the heels of the story that** informed Efate of the bacteria called Enterococci which is currently present in Emtem and Erakor Lagoon, Director of the Department of Water Resources Erickson Sammy said that a ban on the lagoon is in the works.

According to the DoWR Director a meeting was held discussing a possible ban on Emtem and Erakor Lagoon, like the Fatumaru Ban, that would mean no recreational activities on the water and fines of up to VT1 million.

While nothing official has been done yet, residents along the lagoon have decided to voice their concerns and a few suggestions.

Tan Mainguy, a resident at the tail-end of Emtem lagoon for 33-years said even though there is talk about contaminated water, it hasn't seemed to have affected her so far.

“I use to swim in the water all the time, people say the water is polluted, I swim no problem. I feel bad because I have been here for 33-years in this area and there was no news, I heard about first lagoon which was polluted by the hospital but I’m not living there, when it’s summer time I swim every day and I have no problem,” she recalled.

Ms. Mainguy suggested that there might be a few homes without a proper sewage system, thus taking advantage of the free-flowing water – “Maybe people have no toilets and they go to lagoon.”

The accusation of defecating in the water may not seem as outlandish as one may believe, another lagoon side resident Sergio De Sonnevile proposed that the only cure for the lagoon is proper waste management sanitation.

“The best way to keep the water clean is to have proper septic tanks for each house, if this can be done, the lagoon can be free.”

A local woman renting in the area who wished to remain unknown remarked that she is scared of entering the water, due to the bacteria – “Before I used to swim in this place, just last year, now I’m frighten, there’s just plenty pollution.”

Hannington Nakamal owner Nadine Alatoa, which offers its guests a view over the lagoon said to keep people away from the lagoon is unfeasible, since they are dependent on its resources.

“It’s a big area for government to do its part, Erakor can do their part, I heard Erakor banned fishing which is good but I also heard that people break the rules, they fish, poverty is coming up,” she said.

Now that the lockdown has forced a substantial number of workers out of a job, Mrs. Alatoa believes that when push comes to shove, the laws by Erakor Chiefs or even the local government departments will be broken.

“People who live around the place, not in a good level of income, especially now with COVID they fish there and eat it, is it safe for eating? I don’t know. When you have a lot of people who are not making enough money, they will always break the rule, there are no enforcement officers to police it, it will require money to train them and government will have to do the same.”

She added that many residents by the lagoon are without personal vehicles, so swimming in the lagoon is the only option for them.

Attempts to get a comment from the Resorts along the lagoons have been futile.

Despite the lack in communication, the elephant in the room is more obvious than ever, with the border closure and now the tests results revealing the presence of fecal matter in the water, the enticing Resort lagoons are now faced with yet another challenge.