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COUNTRY GENDER ASSESSMENT

OF AGRICULTURE AND THE RURAL SECTOR IN

FIJI

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THE RURAL SECTOR IN

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Acronyms and abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ARD	agriculture and rural development
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CGA-ARS	Country Gender Assessment of Agriculture and the Rural Sector
CSO	civil society organization
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
EUS	Employment and Unemployment Survey
FAME	Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems Division, SPC
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FJD	Fijian dollar
FWF	Fiji Women's Fund
GDI	Gender Development Index
GDP	gross domestic product
GII	Gender Inequality Index
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German Corporation for International Cooperation)
HDI	Human Development Index
HIES	Household Incomes and Expenditures Survey
ILO	International Labour Organization
LRD	Land Resources Division, SPC
NFIT	National Financial Inclusion Taskforce
PLGED	Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration
PPA	Pacific Platform for Action on Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights
RWE	rural women's empowerment
SAMOA	Pathway Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SPC	Pacific Community
SV	Soqosoqo Vakamarama
TC	tropical cyclone

UN	United Nations
USD	United States dollar
USP	University of the South Pacific
WHO	World Health Organization

Executive summary

Background

Fiji is a diverse nation comprised of multiple ethnic groups, each with their own sets of cultural and social norms. The total population of the country stands at 884 887, with 50.7 percent men and 49.3 percent women. Nearly half of the total population (44 percent) resides in rural areas.

Employment opportunities are very limited in rural Fiji. About a quarter of the rural population (24.7 percent) works in agriculture, fisheries and forestry, of which there are officially nearly three times more men than women (30.6 percent compared to 11.1 percent). While agriculture (including fisheries and forestry) is the primary industry of employment for men, a large share of rural women (40.5 percent) work as own-account workers and contributing family workers on family farms. Besides agriculture, wholesale and retail trade offer employment to 13.4 percent of rural women.

Informal employment is high nationwide, with nearly half of the total population (48 percent) working in the informal economy during 2015/16. It is important to note that over two thirds of all informal workers work in rural areas (67.8 percent). The gender and generational dimensions of informality are illustrated through the fact that employment in the informal economy is higher among rural men aged 15–34 years and rural women aged 40–64 years.

On average, rural women earn a quarter less than rural men. Furthermore, there is a significant urban-rural wage gap of 44.5 percent, which may result in greater overall vulnerability of the rural population to poverty.

Gendered divisions of labour are apparent in the agricultural sector. In crop production, women tend to carry out the ongoing, time-intensive work of garden maintenance and are involved in harvesting, processing and marketing. Men tend to take on the more physically strenuous work of clearing gardens, burning, maintaining large root crops and using machines to plough, cut brush or harvest cane. A similar division of labour and roles is also reflected in fisheries, where men tend to fish from boats in deeper water, using large nets to harvest larger species, while women are more likely to harvest shellfish or invertebrates, fish with hand lines from shore or while wading. They also

undertake processing and cooking of fish for sale in small market settings. In addition to agricultural work and other productive employment, women spend large amounts of time on reproductive work, taking the bulk of responsibility for childrearing, cooking, cleaning and community work.

Land and marine tenure arrangements are complex and support continued customary ownership of 85 percent of the land base by indigenous (i-Taukei) clan groups called *mataqali*. In addition to customary ownership, other tenure arrangements include freehold leases and leases of crown land. Women are usually excluded from formal decision-making processes concerning land in the largely male-dominated *mataqali* systems. Women are allowed to inherit land and participate in most meetings, but their power and influence varies from place to place depending on factors such as 1) isolation of communities; 2) influence and 'enforcement' of social norm; and/or 3) education levels and political connections of community members.

In rural Fiji it is common for women's husbands or brothers to be the public voice for the family in community or village councils. Social norms tend to place the wellbeing of the community ahead of the rights of individuals.

Summary of findings and recommendations

Enabling environment for gender mainstreaming

Assessment of the enabling environment for gender mainstreaming was carried out primarily through discussions with the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development and National Disaster Management (Ministry of Agriculture), the Ministry of Fisheries and the Ministry of Forestry. Information on the enabling environment within the Ministry of Women, Children, and Poverty Alleviation (Ministry of Women) is based primarily on desk review and information provided by development partners. The policy environment in rural sector ministries is supportive of gender mainstreaming, with clear paths to link policy direction on gender equality to programmes. Staff interviewed were open to acquiring greater capacity on gender equality and rural women's empowerment (RWE) and integrating gender-responsive approaches into their work, but felt

that technical capacity to undertake gender analysis was lacking in their respective ministries. Additionally, there are still considerable gaps in sex-disaggregated data collection and analysis related to agriculture, fisheries and forestry. Funding has been made available to support some gender mainstreaming work in each of the above ministries; however, analytical, planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms need to be improved to better track the effectiveness of such efforts.

Gender-responsive community engagement in rural sectors

In the short term, recommendations are oriented toward community programming that is more equitable, practical and beneficial for women. Developing infrastructure to reduce women's workloads and facilitate their ability to engage in the cash economy could enhance women's economic opportunities and contribute to improved family welfare. Promoting the use of radio, texts and social media to allow women to share information on weather, prices, economic opportunities and savings and banking can empower women to make more informed decisions about their activities. Building the gender analysis capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs) working in rural sectors on climate change, disaster management and sustainable development will support the engagement of women in community-based decision making and other activities. CSOs that employ gender-responsive approaches can also act as brokers to bring women's voices to larger audiences and share lessons learned about the benefits of engaging women and men in work in the rural sectors.

The Assessment identified three main challenges to gender equality and the empowerment of women in rural Fiji:

1. The contributions of rural women to household and rural economies need to be better known and adequately reflected in policies, strategies, plans and programmes
2. Gender inequalities affect Fijian rural women's capacity to develop their potential

3. Recognition of gender inequality as an impediment to sustainable development is not systematically mainstreamed in public policies, strategies, plans and programmes.

A set of recommendations targeted to the Government of Fiji, FAO and The Pacific Community (SPC) is provided to address the above findings. Recommendations are formulated to progressively advance gender equality and support the empowerment of rural women through policy, programming and organizational strengthening. Regarding the visibility of rural women's contributions to their households and to the rural economy, suggestions include improving the collection, production and analysis of age- and sex- disaggregated data pertaining to agriculture and rural development (ARD); mandate all relevant ministries and strengthen their capacity to monitor and report on the impact of their policies, plans, programmes and services in a gender-sensitive manner; and implement a comprehensive monitoring framework on gender equality and rural women's empowerment in ARD covering key economic, social and political aspects.

To address gender inequalities in the rural sector and support the empowerment of rural women, a set of concrete recommendations is given. These range from promotion of policy research and analysis to inform policies and strategic planning on gender equality and rural women's empowerment in ARD to putting in place concrete measures for the improvement of rural women's access to services, technology, finance, markets and resources.

Actions identified as key to the systematic integration of a gender perspective in public policies, strategies, plans and programmes include: 1) the establishment of an intra-governmental coordination mechanism dedicated to the coordination of gender equality and RWE across the governmental system (central and local) and 2) setting up a structure of Gender Focal Points in all agriculture-related line ministries as well as all other relevant ministries and institutions.

1

INTRODUCTION



FAO recognizes that gender equality is both a human right and an absolute necessity for achieving the organization's mandate to eradicate hunger and poverty worldwide. In 2013, FAO published its policy on gender equality for the attainment of food security goals in agriculture and rural development.¹ In this policy document, gender mainstreaming and women-targeted actions are components of a two-pronged strategy for promoting gender equality in the agriculture and rural sectors.² The set of minimum standards for gender mainstreaming laid out in the FAO policy document includes a requirement to undertake a Country Gender Assessment. This Assessment contributes to the formulation of the Country Programme that is established between FAO and a member country government and expressed in the Country Programming Framework. The Assessment also supports gender analysis at the identification and formulation stages of technical assistance projects. FAO's (2012) Guide to the Project Cycle states that a gender analysis is essential for the preparation of a concept note for programmes and projects and it is recommended by FAO that a gender assessment be carried out prior to any project formulation.³

Gender Mainstreaming is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.

United Nations Economic and Social Council, 1997.

1.1 Background and rationale

The Republic of Fiji is a Pacific Island state made up of 322 islands and over 500 smaller islets, of which 106 are permanently inhabited. The country covers an area of 18 333 km² of land and 1 281 122 km² of exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

The total population of the country stands at 884 887 (50.7 percent males and 49.3 percent females) (Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 2018). Forty-four percent of the total population lives in rural areas (51.9 percent males and 48.1 percent females). The rural population decreased by about 5 percent over the period of 2007–2017 (Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 2018).

Agriculture remains an important pillar of the Fijian economy, accounting for 44 percent of total employment (Asian Development Bank, 2015). Thirteen percent of the population aged 15 and older is engaged in subsistence agriculture and fisheries. In rural areas, nearly one quarter of women (23 percent) are involved in subsistence employment (Asian Development Bank, 2015).

Fiji, like other Pacific Island countries, is highly affected by climate change and climate-related disasters. In recent years, numerous tropical cyclones and floods have affected rural livelihoods on multiple levels, including loss of crops and depletion of natural resources essential to sustain the rural economy. Loss and damage from the category 5 tropical cyclone (TC) Winston in 2016 are estimated at USD 1.42 billion, equivalent to 31 percent of the GDP. The agricultural sector (including livestock, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture) was among the most affected sectors, with total loss and damage amounting to USD 259.32 million (Asian Development Bank, 2016a).

A third of the population lived under the national poverty line in 2008/09. Poverty rates were disproportionately higher among the rural population, up to 43 percent, compared to 19 percent of the urban population (World Bank, 2011). The impacts of climate change, incidences of natural disasters and changes in rural economies are likely to have exacerbated the poverty rates.

¹ *FAO Policy on Gender Equality: Attaining Food Security Goals in Agriculture and Rural Development* is available at: www.fao.org/policy-support/resources/resources-details/en/c/427024.

² Both the policy document and this report use a broad definition of agriculture that comprises crop production, livestock, fisheries, aquaculture and forestry.

³ *FAO's Guide to the Project Cycle* is available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/ap105e/ap105e.pdf>.



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Non-communicable diseases are the main causes of death in Fiji. Prevalence of obesity is as high as 20 percent among men and 41 percent among women (World Health Organization, 2014) and unhealthy diets are among the main behavioural risk factors (Ministry of Health, 2014).

Gender equality and the empowerment of women have been recognized as critical to achieving sustainable development at the global, regional and national levels. This is particularly so in the context of rural development, with public services and infrastructure lacking in rural areas while the rural population, especially women and girls, is heavily affected by the adverse impacts of climate change and is more vulnerable to poverty.

Agriculture, rural development and the environment are among the priority areas of the Fiji national gender policy (Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, no date).

The overall objective of the Assessment is to analyse the agricultural and rural sectors from a gender perspective at the macro (policy), meso (institutional) and micro (community and household) levels. The Assessment further aims to a) to provide information to the Government of Fiji to inform the development and implementation of gender-responsive policies and programmes in ARD; b) inform the development of the FAO country programming process with the Government of Fiji; and c) contribute to SPC's programmes of strengthening the national enabling environment for gender mainstreaming.

The Assessment seeks to identify gender inequalities in access to critical productive resources, assets, services and opportunities. It looks at the priorities, needs and constraints of both women and men in agricultural and rural communities and the gaps that exist in responding to them. It provides background information, research findings and recommendations to promote gender sensitivity in future programmes and projects, as well as identifying possible partners for gender-related activities. The Assessment can be used as a tool to mainstream gender perspectives in future policies, projects and programmes, including delivery of services, in ways that empower rural women. The main aim is to provide information to the government of Fiji to inform gender-responsive actions so that "no one is left behind." Beyond policymakers, this Assessment is also intended to raise awareness

on gender issues among NGOs, community-based organizations and others in Fiji.

1.2 Scope and methodology

The analysis framework used in this Assessment has two components: a situational analysis and an enabling environment analysis. The situational analysis of gender issues in the rural sectors is based on desk research and supplemented by information from site visits and consultations with government ministries and CSOs. The analysis includes a qualitative examination of women's and men's access to and control of resources, including economic resources, political resources, time and knowledge. Family and community decision-making and leadership are considered components of political influence at the family and community level. This qualitative information is supported with available quantitative data.

The analysis of the enabling environment for gender mainstreaming draws from methodology developed by SPC for taking stock of government capacities for mainstreaming gender equality and RWE across policies, strategies, plans and programmes. Such methodology is consistent with FAO's approach, as stated in its Policy on Gender Equality. The factors considered in this Assessment in analysing the enabling environment for mainstreaming gender include: 1) legal and policy frameworks that uphold and promote gender equality; 2) demonstrated government commitment; 3) clear accountability mechanisms; 4) strong technical capacity; and 5) adequate resources.

The four main data collection methods used in this Assessment to inform the analysis were:

- 1) A desk review of literature was conducted to assess issues relevant to gender equality and the empowerment of rural women across sectors relevant to ARD. This includes analysis of policies, strategies, plans and programmes, as well as other information generated by the Government, FAO, other development partners and CSOs.
- 2) Focus group discussions were held with women and men of two ethnically and geographically different rural communities in the Ba Province on the island of Viti Levu. These communities were selected in consultation with the Ministry of Agriculture and had been stakeholders of previous

projects of SPC in agriculture, which facilitated interaction with respondents. The community of Navai village is i-Taukei⁴ (indigenous people) and the community of Malele is an Indo-Fijian settlement. Both are engaged in agriculture and some fishing. Focus group discussions conducted in Navai consisted of one discussion with 28 women and a separate discussion with ten men; and in Malele one discussion was held with 30 men and five women.⁵ Additional information on the two settlements is provided in Chapter 5. Information generated through the focus group discussions has been used in this report to illustrate some aspects of gender roles and gender issues in agriculture and the rural economy without generalizing the experiences of these communities to the whole of Fiji.

- 3) A stocktake of the enabling environment for gender mainstreaming was conducted with the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Fisheries and the Ministry of Women. This involved analysis of policies and strategies of the respective ministries and a series of interviews with senior governmental officials.⁶
- 4) Consultations were held with 11 representatives of 9 CSOs that work with rural women and promote sustainable resource management. A half-day workshop was held with eight participating CSOs and two separate interviews were conducted. As key development actors in the region in providing Pacific countries with technical assistance in agriculture and fisheries, partners from GIZ and from SPC's Land Resources Division (LRD) and Division of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems (FAME) were also consulted.⁷ A representative of GIZ was interviewed; a one-day workshop to present and discuss the preliminary findings was held with 16 staff members of LRD; and five staff members of FAME reviewed and contributed content to earlier drafts of this Assessment. These consultations were carried out to build knowledge and understanding of ongoing initiatives of the Fijian Government and to document good practices from the civil society groups and development partners.

1.3 FAO in Fiji

Cooperation between Fiji and FAO has been ongoing since the country joined the Organization in 1971. Over the past 48 years, FAO assistance has focused on building the evidence base and capacities for policymaking, protecting and enhancing natural resources and building resilience to natural disasters. In 2016 FAO opened a country office in Fiji to strengthen this cooperation. Fiji is also involved in FAO's new initiative on Value Chains for Food Security and Nutrition in the Pacific Islands.

1.4 Organization of the assessment

This report is divided into six chapters. Chapter 2 provides contextual information on the national social and economic situation surrounding ARD and human development, including demographic and population dynamics, health, education, employment, infrastructure, sanitation and gender equality. Information is drawn from a variety of sources, including the 2007 and 2017 Censuses of Population and Housing, the 2015/16 Fiji Employment and Unemployment Survey and the 2010/11 Household Incomes and Expenditures Survey (HIES).⁸

Chapter 3 focuses on the stocktake of the capacity of the government to mainstream gender equality and RWE in ARD and provides an analysis of the enabling environment for doing so. This is based on analysis of key policies and strategies made available during a consultative exercise involving multiple government ministries in 2015. Consultations were held with central and line ministries, including ministries of agriculture, fisheries, forestry and women.

Chapter 4 examines gender inequalities in agriculture and the rural sector through the assessment of different aspects ranging from the division of labour, land tenure, and food security and nutrition to rural finance, infrastructure and cooperatives. Information was derived from desk review, the Fiji Bureau of Statistics and interviews conducted with key informants during the preparation of this report.

⁴ I-Taukei are the Melanesian Indigenous Fijians and represent approximately 55 percent of the population.

⁵ Participation in the focus group discussions was on a voluntarily basis, hence the disparity between the participation of women and men in both communities.

⁶ One limitation of this study is that it was not possible to meet with more governmental officials when the stocktake was conducted due to their limited availability.

⁷ It is to be noted that the FAO Country Office in Fiji was not consulted during the analysis.

⁸ For further information, see the Fiji Bureau of Statistics' website: <https://www.statsfiji.gov.fj>



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Information from the focus group discussions with rural women and men conducted in the Ba province is included to illustrate some of the opportunities and constraints facing rural women in Fiji.

Chapter 5 presents a case study on gendered aspects of two rural communities on the island of Viti Levu: the Malele settlement (in the Tavua District of Ba province) and the Navai village (an i-Taukei community near the centre of the island). Analysis focused on gendered roles in agricultural production, division of labour, control over and access to resources, and gendered impacts of food and nutrition security and climate change.

The final chapter, Chapter 6, summarizes findings and proposes recommendations to support gender equality and the empowerment of rural women in agriculture and the wider rural economy.

Limitations of the analysis

The collection of data for the production of the Fiji CGA was constrained by the difficulty of setting interviews with a wide range of governmental stakeholders. This also affected the capacity to access documentation on rural sector programmes and projects implemented by the government. The lack of existence or access to sex-disaggregated data and/or gender statistics was another constraint in conducting gender analysis in agriculture and the rural sector. Finally, the data collected through the field visits is not representative of all rural situations because of the diversity of Fijian rural contexts.

2

COUNTRY CONTEXT



Fiji is composed of volcanic and mountainous islands. Sixty-nine percent of the population resides on Viti Levu, the largest island covering approximately 57 percent of the land area. The climate is tropical, with very little temperature variation between seasons. Fiji has about 304 cm of rain annually, with the cyclone season usually extending from November to March. More than half of the Fijian population lives on the coasts.

Fiji is a diverse nation comprised of multiple ethnic groups, each with its own set of cultural and social norms. Land and marine tenure arrangements are complex and support customary ownership of 85 percent of the land base by indigenous (i-Taukei) clan groups called *mataqali*.⁹ In addition to customary ownership, other tenure arrangements include freehold leases and leases of crown land.

Fiji became an independent state in 1970 after a century of colonial administration under the United Kingdom and became a republic in 1997. The country has experienced political instability, with four coups between 1987 and 2006. However, the 2014 and 2018 parliamentary elections, which saw the election of eight women and ten women, respectively, to the 50-seat Parliament, brought stability and a return to democracy.

The country is divided into four administrative divisions (Central, Eastern, Northern and Western), fourteen provinces, and the self-governing island of Rotuma. Rural communities in Fiji include a variety of forms of jurisdictional development. I-Taukei villages are core areas for rural Fijians who live with their clan groups and are governed under traditional *mataqali* systems. Settlements on leased land are generally occupied by Fijians of Indian or other descent and are often linked to smallholder farming and market gardening activities. Additionally, there are a number of small towns with ethnically diverse populations governed under municipal law.

2.1 Demography and population dynamics

The 2017 Population and Housing Census recorded that the majority of the population (over 75 percent) lives in the Central and Western divisions on the island of Viti Levu (Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 2018). Forty-four percent of the population (494 252 people) lives in rural areas, of which 51.9 percent is male and 48.1 percent is female. Between 2007 and 2017, the rural population decreased by 5.3 percent while the urban population increased by 16 percent over the same period. The decrease was higher for rural males (5.6 percent) compared to rural females (4.9 percent). The decline of the rural population is explained by outmigration and the extension of urban boundaries (Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 2018).

Age also plays a role in demography by gender; the proportion of men is higher among those aged 59 and under while the proportion of women is higher among those aged 60 and above – indicating greater longevity of women. The annual rate of population growth has been decreasing for three decades – from 2 percent in 1986 down to 0.6 percent in 2017 – as a result of lower birth rates and outmigration (Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 2018).

Children and youth (persons aged 24 years and under) constitute nearly half of the total Fijian population (46 percent). In the age group of 15–19 years, a higher percentage of boys and young men live in rural areas and a higher percentage of girls and young women live in urban areas, implying earlier migration of young women from rural to urban areas compared to their rural male counterparts. The total dependency ratio (care for children and elderly) reflects this trend and is higher in rural areas (at 65.1 percent) compared to urban (at 49.5 percent) (Fiji Employment and Unemployment Survey 2015/16).

⁹ A *mataqali* is a Fijian clan. Traditional land ownership is usually set around a *mataqali*.

Table 1: Rural population by province and sex 2007 and 2017

Province	Rural				Absolute change		% change	
	2007		2017		Male	Female	Male	Female
	Male	Female	Male	Female				
Ba	57 332	53 428	42 413	39 884	-14 919	-13 544	-26.02%	-25.35%
Bua	7 098	6 486	7 710	7 131	612	645	8.62%	9.94%
Cakaudrove	22 286	20 024	20 702	18 768	-1 584	-1 256	-7.11%	-6.27%
Kadavu	5 374	4 793	5 980	4 917	606	124	11.28%	2.59%
Lau	5 763	4 920	5 173	4 429	-590	-491	-10.24%	-9.98%
Lomaiviti	6 328	5 528	5 983	5 424	-345	-104	-5.45%	-1.88%
Macuata	22 472	21 204	19 808	18 993	-2 664	-2 211	-11.85%	-10.43%
Nadroga/Navosa	25 464	23 301	25 191	23 447	-273	146	-1.07%	0.63%
Naitasiri	13 100	12 627	14 681	14 300	1 581	1 673	12.07%	13.25%
Namosi	3 557	3 341	4 063	3 808	506	467	14.23%	13.98%
Ra	12 566	11 933	12 494	11 951	-72	18	-0.57%	0.15%
Rewa	6 363	5 869	7 705	6 828	1 342	959	21.09%	16.34%
Serua	5 858	5 524	6 574	6 452	716	928	12.22%	16.80%
Tailevu	20 098	17 771	23 373	20 859	3 275	3 088	16.30%	17.38%
Rotuma	1 046	956	817	777	-229	-179	-21.89%	-18.72%
Total	214 705	197 705	202 667	187 968	-12 038	-9 737	-5.61%	-4.93%

Source: Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 2018

2.2 National social and economic situation

The national GDP was estimated at FJD 8 015 million (around USD 3 791 million) in 2016, and in the same year agriculture accounted for approximately

FJD 924 million (around USD 437 million), forestry for FJD 33 million (around USD 15 million) and fishing and aquaculture for FJD 132 million (around USD 62 million) (Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 2017).

Table 2: Gross domestic product by industry at current price FJD, millions¹⁰

	Base weight	Years						Percentage change				
		2011	2012	2013	2014 (r)	2015 (r)	2016 (p)	2012	2013	2014 (r)	2015 (r)	2016 (p)
GDP	100.0	5 738.8	6 000.0	6 429.0	7 066.1	7 609.7	8 014.9	4.6	7.1	9.9	7.7	5.3
AGRICULTURE	8.2	472.6	528.1	615.1	647.7	690.9	924.5	11.7	16.5	5.3	6.7	33.8
Subsistence	2.7	152.5	156.0	158.5	164.6	173.7	174.4	2.3	1.6	3.8	5.5	0.4
Informal	0.7	37.7	38.6	39.2	40.7	42.9	43.1	2.3	1.6	3.8	5.5	0.4
General government	0.1	8.2	8.4	9.2	11.0	11.6	10.3	2.4	9.6	19.2	5.8	-11.7
Non-general government	4.8	274.2	325.1	408.2	431.4	462.6	696.8	18.6	25.6	5.7	7.2	50.6
FORESTRY AND LOGGING	0.6	32.6	37.2	40.3	55.9	41.1	32.9	14.2	8.4	38.6	-26.5	-19.8
Informal	0.2	10.8	10.8	10.9	10.9	10.9	11.0	0.4	0.5	0.2	0.4	0.6
General government	0.0	1.3	1.5	1.3	1.9	2.2	2.5	22.1	-12.9	43.9	11.0	14.0
Non-general government	0.4	20.5	24.8	28.1	43.0	28.0	19.5	20.9	13.2	53.2	-35.0	-30.4
FISHING AND AQUACULTURE	2.1	118.7	122.6	124.9	128.8	130.2	132.1	3.3	1.9	3.3	1.1	1.4
Subsistence	0.6	37.0	38.7	41.5	45.3	39.7	39.6	4.8	7.1	9.1	-12.3	-0.2
Informal	0.1	6.3	6.7	7.1	7.8	6.8	6.8	4.8	7.1	9.1	-12.3	-0.2
General government	0.0	1.6	1.9	2.3	3.2	4.2	4.2	16.2	24.3	36.6	32.8	1.3
Non-general government	1.3	73.8	75.3	74.0	72.6	79.5	81.4	2.1	-1.8	-1.8	9.5	2.3

Source: Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 2017

The growth rate from 2011 to 2018 was four percent on average, with the exception of 2012 following TC Evan and 2016 following TC Winston (Reserve Bank of Fiji, 2018).

The services sector is the main sector contributing to Fiji's economy, at approximately 71 percent of the GDP (World Bank, 2017). Within services, tourism-related industries are the fastest expanding, attracting 750 000 tourists annually (World Bank,

2017). Tourism contributes about 38 percent of the GDP and while agriculture contributes only 11 percent. The manufacturing sector, centred on sugar, garments, food processing, beverages and wood, employed 26 000 workers in 2013 (World Bank, 2017).

The main natural resources fuelling Fiji's economy include forests, minerals and fisheries. In the last few decades, Fiji's growth has been affected by political

¹⁰ One Fijian dollar (FJD) is equivalent to 0.46 United States dollars (USD) as of September 2019.

turmoil, disasters, global oil and food price shocks, and global financial economic crisis (Asian Development Bank, 2014; World Bank, 2017).

The agricultural sector was forecasted to register a lower growth rate in 2018 because it is still recovering from TC Winston. Particularly hard hit is the sugar sector, which also suffers from a labour shortage due to aging farmers together with increasing costs of farming and depressed sugar prices.

The main products exported are sugar, fish, crude coconut oil, root crops, and horticultural crops, while the country is highly dependent on imported food. Population pressure and climate change have had adverse impacts on land, forestry and marine resources for decades (Ministry of Agriculture, 2014)

2.2.1. Poverty and social protection

In 2013, 28 percent of the population lived below the national basic needs poverty line (Asian Development Bank, 2018).¹¹ The 2008/09 HIES clearly showed a 4 percent decrease of poverty in urban areas – from 35 percent in 2002/03 to 31 percent in 2008/09. However, the HIES noted a 3 percent increase of poverty in rural areas over the same period – from 40 percent to 43 percent. The Northern division of Fiji remained the poorest, with a 45 percent poverty rate (with half of the division's rural population falling under the basic needs poverty line compared to 38 percent of its urban population). Such disparity in poverty levels along urban-rural lines will deepen and worsen if living standards, services, infrastructure and household incomes in rural areas are not improved.

There are no significant differences in poverty rates among ethnic groups. The reduction in sugar prices and expiring land leases that caused the displacement of sugarcane farmers are among the factors generating higher rates of poverty in rural areas (Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 2012).

Sex-disaggregated data on poverty in Fiji are not available. However, the Government of Fiji has indicated that there are several factors putting women at a higher risk of poverty, including labour market discrimination and non-payments of alimonies and child support by former spouses in cases of separation and divorce. The government has

also reported that a majority of beneficiaries of the Family Assistance Scheme from the Social Welfare Department are women (Secretariat of the Pacific Community, 2015). The HIES 2008/09 found out that nearly two-thirds of Fijian children (61 percent) lived below the basic needs poverty line, with rural children particularly disadvantaged.

The Government of Fiji provides financial support to families in need through programmes administered by the Ministry of Women. The annual report of the Ministry for 2016/17 provides information on different schemes. The Poverty Benefit Scheme provided assistance to 25 491 households in 2016/17 for a total of FJD 23.2 million. The monthly allowance ranges from FJD 30 to FJD 110 supplemented with a food voucher of FJD 50. The Care and Protection Allowance is provided for the care of children of single parent households in need of financial assistance. The allowance provided is in the range of FJD 25 to FJD 110 supplemented with a food voucher of FJD 50. The budget for 2016/17 was FJD 3.5 million for 3 141 cases attended to. The Food Voucher Programme for Rural Pregnant Mothers specifically targets rural women with the objectives of improving maternal health and reducing child mortality. A total of 2 165 women benefited from this support in 2016/17. The Social Pension Scheme provides a monthly allowance ranging from FJD 30 to FJD 50 to persons aged 66 years and over without sources of income or pension (number and gender breakdown of beneficiaries not provided in report). The Ministry also provided support for bus fare for 5 507 people in 2016/17, although information about the beneficiaries is not disaggregated by rural or urban areas (Fiji Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, 2018).

Customary institutions used to offer some form of social protection. However, with rapid socio-economic and environmental changes, including migration and urbanization taking place in Fiji, those systems are less effective. In 2016, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) published an assessment of social protection in the Pacific (Asian Development Bank, 2016b). Social protection expenditure was equivalent to 1.4 percent of GDP in 2012. ADB's assessment showed that, overall, the non-poor are the main beneficiaries of social protection because they are the main contributors of the social insurance

¹¹ The Fiji Bureau of Statistics defines the incidence of poverty as the percentage of the population living below the basic needs poverty line, which is "the dollar value of a basket of food and non-food expenditure items considered necessary to be out of poverty" (Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 2011).

programmes. The poor are less likely to be employed in the formal sector and to contribute to social insurance programmes. Likewise, women's participation in the labour force in the formal sector is much lower than that of men. Women therefore contribute less to and benefit less from social insurance programmes (Asian Development Bank, 2016b). Furthermore, the increasing occurrences of natural disasters such as cyclones and floods add to the multiple risks experienced by already vulnerable rural populations. For example, approximately 156 000 workers were affected by the severe TC Winston in February 2016, and an estimated 60 percent of those workers were employed in informal activities.

2.3 Agriculture and rural development

2.3.1. Agriculture

Agriculture is a significant part of the Fijian economy and involves a large percentage of the rural population whose unpaid, in-kind and subsistence economic contributions are difficult to measure. Such work contributes to poverty alleviation in a variety of ways, including through provision of economic, food and nutrition safety nets for rural families.

However, while the total value of the agriculture sector grew by 6 percent between 2011 and 2016, its contribution to GDP fell from 8.2 percent in 2011 to 7.5 percent in 2016. Until recently, sugarcane production, which employed about 3 000 people directly and sustained the livelihoods of approximately 200 000, and subsistence farming formed the backbone of the agricultural sector. Today they contribute approximately 2.2 percent of Fiji's GDP (Asian Development Bank, 2014; Ministry of Economy, 2017). Commercial agriculture has seen some growth while the value of the subsistence sector has decreased (Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 2017). Other crops and livestock production that are contributing to the GDP include traditional food crops (e.g. dalo and cassava, which are the main root crops produced in Fiji), tropical fruits, vegetables, spices, cocoa, coconut products, beef, dairy, pork, poultry and goat (Ministry of Agriculture, 2014; Ministry of Economy, 2017).

In 2017/18, most of the budget of the Ministry of Agriculture was dedicated to the production of cash crops (Ministry of Economy, 2017). While Fiji exports sugar, fish, crude coconut oil, root crops and horticulture crops, basic domestic food requirements are not met, necessitating food importation (Ministry of Agriculture, 2014).

2.3.2. Forestry

Forests cover about one million hectares of land in Fiji, which is over half of the total land area and 2.5 times the agricultural area (FAO 2017; Reserve Bank of Fiji, 2017). Fiji's forestland is comprised of approximately 92 percent naturally grown forest, while 8 percent is commercially grown, dedicated mainly to pine and mahogany plantations. Those two species are utilised in 80 percent of Fijian wood products (Ministry of Economy, 2017).

2.3.3. Fisheries

The majority of the Fijian population is heavily reliant on inshore fisheries for subsistence and local economic needs. Approximately 33 percent of all animal protein consumed in Fiji comes from fish. Subsistence and commercial fisheries contribute at least USD 44.4 million annually to Fiji's GDP. However, inshore fisheries remain grossly undervalued in national accounting and development planning. The Government of Fiji reports that a combination of increased urbanization, poor management and planning, and overexploitation have caused the near collapse of the reproductive stocks of a number of marine species and altered food web relationships, affecting ecosystem productivity and food security (United Nations, 2018).

2.4 Human development

Fiji's progress in human development has been slow, but some progress has been made in the past three decades. In 1990 the UN Human Development Index (HDI) rating for Fiji was 6.4, and by 2017 it had increased to 7.4. As of 2017, Fiji was ranked 92 out of 189 countries (United Nations Development Programme, 2018).¹²

¹⁰ The Human Development Index (HDI), published by UNDP, assesses progress in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living. The Gender Development Index (GDI) is the ratio of the HDIs calculated separately for females and males using the same methodology as in the HDI. There is no data available on the Gender Development Index (GDI) value for Fiji.



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Table 3: Fiji Human Development Index (HDI) trends, 1990–2017

	Life expectancy at birth	Expected years of schooling	Mean years of schooling	GNI per capita (2011 PPP\$)	HDI value
1990	65.5	12.1	8.4	5 928	0.643
1995	66.6	12.8	9.8	6 168	0.672
2000	67.6	13.2	9.6	6 715	0.683
2005	68.4	14.1	9.2	7 279	0.695
2010	69.3	15.0	9.6	7 128	0.711
2015	70.1	15.3	10.8	8 145	0.738
2016	70.3	15.3	10.8	8 080	0.738
2017	70.4	15.3	10.8	8 324	0.741

Source: United Nations Development Programme, 2018

Gender Inequality Index

In 2017, Fiji ranked 79 out of 160 countries on the Gender Inequality Index (GII).¹³ In terms of regional averages, Fiji ranked better than average for East Asia and the Pacific region in its maternal mortality ratio¹⁴ (30 deaths per 100 000 live births compared to the regional average of 62 deaths per 100 00 live births) and the share of women with at least some secondary education (77.3 percent compared to the regional average of 67.8 percent). The latter is also higher than the share of men with at least some secondary education in Fiji, which, at 68.3 percent, is below the regional average of 75.5 percent. However, the adolescent birth rate of 43.9 per 1 000 women aged 15–19 in Fiji is nearly double the regional average.¹⁵ Likewise, the labour force participation rate of Fijian women (40.8 percent) is about one third lower than the regional average, and it is nearly half the labour force participation rate of Fijian men (75.4 percent) (UNDP, 2018).

2.4.1 Health

Non-communicable diseases account for approximately 82 percent of all deaths in Fiji. Fijian women are three times more at risk to contract a form of cancer than men (11 percent versus 3 percent). The Fijian population is also exposed to the risk of communicable diseases such as dengue fever, diarrhoeal illnesses, typhoid fever and leptospirosis (World Health Organization, 2013).

There is also a close link between non-communicable diseases, gender and nutrition. The 2004 National Nutritional Survey (NNS) identified a gradual increase of anaemia prevalence especially high among women of Indian descent (51 percent), pregnant women (44 percent), non-pregnant women (41 percent), and children aged 5 years or below (50 percent), which represents a severe public health concern. There has also been a steady increase in obesity, with one-third of the total adult population

¹³ The Gender Inequality Index (GII), published by UNDP, reflects gender-based inequalities in three dimensions – reproductive health, empowerment and economic activity.

¹⁴ The maternal mortality ratio is expressed in number of deaths per 100 000 live births.

¹⁵ The adolescent birth rate is expressed in number of births per 1 000 women aged 15–19 years.

Table 4: Fiji's Gender Inequality Index (GII) for 2017 relative to selected countries and groups

Country/region		Fiji	East Asia and the Pacific
GII value		0.352	0.312
GII rank		79	–
Maternal mortality ratio		30	62
Adolescent birth rate		43.9	22.4
Female seats in parliament (%)		16.0	19.8
Population with at least some secondary education (%)	Female	77.3	67.8
	Male	68.3	75.5
Labour force participation rate (%)	Female	40.8	60.1
	Male	75.4	77.3

Source: UNDP, 2018

being classed obese in 1993 and over half of the population (56 percent) in 2004. In general, Indian women of reproductive age, young women aged 20–24 years, underweight women and urban women were found to be at greater risk of micronutrient deficiencies (National Food and Nutrition Centre, 2007).

Weaknesses in health systems have a larger impact on women than men, and in Fiji this is especially true for rural women, who have limited access to health care facilities. Division of labour, traditional gendered caregiving roles and the nature of reproduction mean that women need to seek health care for themselves and their children more frequently than men. A 2012 study by the Government of Fiji and the World Health Organization highlighted that only 40 percent of the population has access to quality health services with trained staff, equipment and medications available. This is despite the fact that the same report stated 70 to 80 percent of the population has access to a primary health care facility. Lack of medicines and qualified staff is more prevalent in rural areas. This indicates that rural people are more likely to wait longer to seek medical care since they must find money to travel long distances to provincial or national facilities (Fiji Ministry of Health and World Health Organization, 2012).

Fertility rates in Fiji have declined over time from 3.3 in 1995 to 2.5 in 2016 (World Bank, 2018). There are, however, distinct differences in fertility rates among ethnic groups. For instance, the i-Taukei have considerably higher fertility rates than Fijians of Indian descent (Asian Development Bank, 2015). Overall prevalence of contraception use was 49 percent in 2016, up from 40 percent in 2013 (data disaggregated by urban or rural area are not available) (Ministry of Health and Medical Services, 2016). In 2013, 90 percent of births were attended by skilled personnel (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2016). Rural women with high fertility will have higher reproductive workloads and a higher need for sexual and reproductive health care. Both factors detract from their ability to exercise their own potential and engage in economic activities and community decision-making. This may in turn result in increased reliance on purchased, easy-to-prepare foods that undermine nutritional balance and increase the risk of diabetes.

Violence against women also poses a significant and disproportionate health risk to rural women. Rates of violence and sexual abuse against women and children are high in Fiji and highest among i-Taukei communities. Rural women in remote areas have very limited access to health and counselling

services and may be subject to considerable community stigma if they seek to report violence. A comprehensive study on prevalence of violence against women in Fiji conducted in 2013 noted that prevalence of violence is “considerably higher in rural areas, including control over women’s mobility,” and that “lifetime prevalence of intimate partner violence in the Eastern Division of Fiji is one of the very highest recorded to date in the world” (Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre, 2013: 5).

2.4.2 Education and literacy

Universal access to primary, secondary and tertiary education is guaranteed in Fiji. The country has achieved its education goals in terms of enrolment and gender parity in education. National enrolment rates are close to 100 percent in primary school and approximately 80 percent at the secondary level. There are no significant gender differences at the primary level. However, the HDI 2017 reports that even though the mean years of schooling are nearly equal for girls and boys (10.9 and 10.7 years, respectively), there are more women aged 25 or above that have some secondary education compared to their male counterparts of the same age, namely 77.3 percent compared to 68.3 percent. This is particularly evident in rural areas, where 6 percent of rural women attained a secondary education compared to 3.9 percent of rural men. In 2015/16, educational attainment at the secondary level of education or above in urban areas was significantly higher than that in rural areas, at 3.6 percent and 16.1 percent, respectively (Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 2018).

In Fiji there are no fees for school attendance at the primary and secondary levels. However, children are often expected to wear uniforms and provide their own supplies, which can place a financial burden on rural families who have primarily subsistence lifestyles.

Additional obstacles exist for rural children in accessing quality education services. Rural schools in remote locations have difficulty attracting and retaining teachers and are often constrained by limited access to educational materials, poor infrastructure and limited telecommunications.

Where students have to travel long distances to secondary school, girls can be disadvantaged; their families may restrict them from traveling alone or using boarding facilities (Asian Development Bank, 2015). Students in remote areas perform below the level of those in urban centres (Government of Australia., 2014).

Sexual and reproductive health education is limited in Fiji, particularly in rural areas where young people have limited access to health services and contraception. Adolescent pregnancy has a heavier impact on girls than boys, with much more social stigma and judgement directed at girls who get pregnant than at the boys who impregnate them. There are no education policies requiring pregnant girls to withdraw from school; however, girls frequently stop their education and do not return to school once they have a child.

2.4.3 Labour force participation and employment

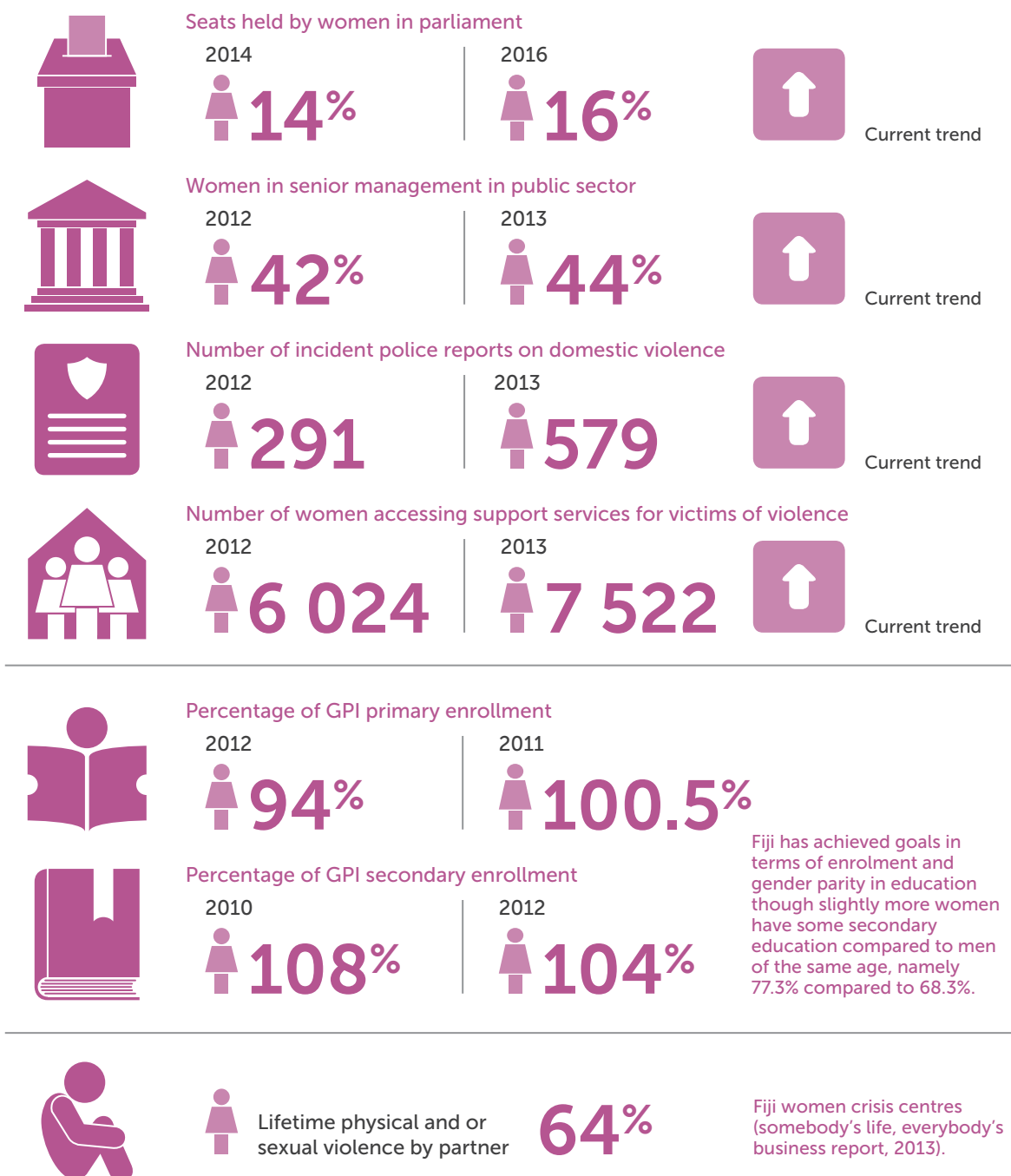
In 2016, the working age population comprised 593 620 people, which is about two-thirds of the total Fijian population, with a nearly equal male-female ratio at the national level and in rural areas.¹⁶ In the same year, the total labour force in Fiji was recorded at 58.3 percent of the population, or 346 250 people.¹⁷ Rural areas had a slightly higher labour force participation rate than urban areas, at 60.6 percent and 56.3 percent, respectively. The labour force participation rate of adults (aged 25+) was one-third greater than the labour force participation rate of youth (aged 15-24). Gendered differences in labour force participation were more pronounced in rural areas for both adults and youth (Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 2018). For rural women, the primary reason for being outside of the labour force was household work (76.1 percent, compared to only 5.2 percent for men), whereas rural men indicated full-time study as the primary reason (41.6 percent, compared to 14.6 percent for women) (Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 2018).

In 2015/16, a total of 327 065 people were employed. Nationwide, men comprised about two-thirds of the total labour force, which rose to 70 percent in rural areas. This gendered pattern was even more pronounced among rural youth, with 16 718

¹⁶ The working-age population is defined as all persons aged 15 and older who are either reporting to be employed or unemployed during the reference period.

¹⁷ The labour force is a sum of the total employed and the total unemployed people recorded during a given reference period (Fiji Employment and Unemployment Survey 2015–2016).

Figure 1: Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration trend assessment for Fiji



Source: Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2016

employed rural men aged 15–24 and 5 215 employed rural women in the same age group (Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 2018). A thorough gender assessment of employment in agriculture and the rural sector is provided in Chapter 4.

2.4.4 Basic infrastructure and sanitation

The 2007 Census for Fiji found that 88.9 percent of households had a supply of electricity and 89.7 percent had access to a safe supply of water from either metred, communal or roof-tank sources.



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Additionally, 73 percent of households were reported to have modern toilet facilities and 70 percent had a flush toilet for the exclusive use of the household (Statistics, 2008). The estimate for 2015 was 96 percent of households with access to safe drinking water and 91 percent with access to sanitation (UNICEF, 2015).

The gendered division of labour in households in Fiji establishes that women manage water, sanitation and energy consumption related to cooking, caregiving, cleaning and other household tasks. Services in these sectors vary depending on the remoteness of communities, and while services may be counted (e.g. in census data), failure of supply is common in both urban and rural areas. Where services are poor or intermittent, the workload of rural women increases.

2.4.5 Gender equality and women's empowerment

Fiji is a diverse country with many social, ethnic, linguistic, geographic and economic differences among its inhabitants. This makes it difficult to generalize about gender equality and the status of women relative to men. While existing national data from the 2008/09 HIES and the 2017 Census provide do highlight some differences in men and women's economic participation in paid work, subsistence production and household labour, this provides an incomplete picture at best of the status of gender equality in Fiji. An additional barrier to understanding gender relations is the limited availability of sex-disaggregated data on the status of men and women

at the household and community levels. The lack of sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics constrains understanding of power dynamics at the household level, although data on violence against women indicate high levels of gender inequality within households (Centre, Fiji Women's Crisis, 2013). Figure 2 shows progress towards implementing the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality declaration in Fiji in the areas of decision-making and elimination of violence against women.

The prevalence of violence against women and attitudes regarding legislation to criminalize such violence are key indicators of gender inequality (UN Women, 2018a). Sixty-four percent of Fijian women between the ages of 18 and 65 have experienced physical or sexual violence during their lifetimes. Rural women (69 percent) are more likely than urban (58 percent) women to experience violence during their lifetime (Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, 2013). Such high prevalence of violence against women undermines social cohesion and capacity in communities and families; it inhibits and slows the achievement of development objectives, negatively impacts children and reduces economic and social capital. Rural women also have very limited access to protection and support services due to the remoteness of their dwellings. Difficulty in accessing the formal justice system compels many women to seek support from traditional justice systems, which are more focused on reconciliation than protection (World Bank, 2017).

3

POLICY, LEGISLATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT



3.1 Commitments to Gender Equality

The Government of FIJI has committed to advancing gender equality through endorsement of a variety of international and regional conventions and

agreements, complemented by a series of national commitments, which are highlighted in the following sections.

3.1.1 International commitments

Table 5: United Nations conventions ratified by Fiji explicitly supporting gender equality

Convention	Relevance to gender equality
Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) Ratified 1995	The articles of CEDAW address gender equality and non-discrimination in areas such as education, employment, marriage, health, finances and decision making. CEDAW establishes internationally endorsed norms and standards for women's human rights. The Ministry of Women is responsible for the implementation of CEDAW and for reporting on progress of implementation. The National Gender Policy is the key mechanism of the Government of Fiji to guide the implementation of CEDAW. Civil society has been active in providing shadow reports to accompany official government reporting. The most recent report was submitted in June 2016.
Convention on the Rights of the Child Ratified 1993	The Convention addresses gender equality directly by recognizing that girls are often discriminated against compared to boys. It sets norms and standards against harmful practices such as denial of girls' rights to education, early marriage, and female genital mutilation. The Ministry of Women is responsible for implementing the Convention and reporting on progress. The most recent report was submitted in August 2011.
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Ratified 2017	The Convention recognizes that women and girls are subject to multiple forms of discrimination, including in health, education, access to services and mobility. The preamble and seven articles specify attention to non-discrimination for women and girls. An inter-ministry council is responsible for implementing the Convention and reporting on progress. Implementation is supported through the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2018). No reports have been submitted to date.
ILO Equal Remuneration Convention (No.100) Ratified 2002	The Convention promotes equal remuneration to male and female workers for work of equal value. It provides definitions and explanations on what constitutes equal work and gender discrimination. Monitoring and implementation of the convention is the responsibility of the Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations.
ILO Discrimination in Employment and Occupation Convention (No. 111) Ratified 2002	The Convention prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex, including discrimination based on maternity and family responsibilities. The Convention also prohibits sexual harassment in the workplace. Monitoring and implementation of the Convention is the responsibility of the Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations.

Fiji has also ratified two United Nations environmental conventions that are relevant to rural women – the Convention on Biodiversity and the Framework Convention on Climate Change. Fiji's reporting on these two conventions makes only minimal reference to gender. However, the conventions themselves – especially in combination with the Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs) – can provide rationales and guidance for increased investments in gender analysis and gender-responsive programme planning and design.

Fiji has also endorsed major international development agreements including the SIDS Accelerated Modalities

of Action (SAMOA) Pathway (2014), the SDGs (2015) and the agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women.

The SAMOA Pathway promotes gender equality, women's empowerment and the full realization of human rights of women and girls. It makes recommendations to states for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls, the strengthening of women's economic empowerment, the ending of all forms of violence against women, the ensuring of women's full, equal and effective participation at all levels of decision making, and the promotion and protection of the human rights of women, including reproductive rights (United National General Assembly, 2014).

The Sustainable Development Goals are significant for rural women in Fiji because the targets respond to different facets of their lives, such as discriminatory norms surrounding domestic roles and responsibilities that prevent women from participating in the economy and in decision-making. SDG Five – *achieve gender equality and empower all girls and women* – provides high-level guidance to the Government in addressing issues that are critical for rural women in Fiji who have limited access to health services and information on their rights to live lives free from violence. The SDGs provide a framework for policy development and indicators for monitoring progress and function as an advocacy tools for development agencies and civil society groups.

The Government of Fiji regularly attends the annual sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). The negotiated agreed conclusions provide recommendations to support progress in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the SDGs and overall human rights of women and girls. The priority theme of the 62nd session of the CSW held in 2018 was on the empowerment of rural women and girls. The agreed conclusions include recommendations that are relevant to improving the lives of Fijian women and girls living in rural areas, including supporting their roles in agriculture and fisheries (UN Women, 2018b).

3.1.2 Regional gender equality agreements

Fiji has also endorsed key regional agreements on gender equality, including the Pacific Platform for Action (1994, 2004, 2017) and the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED) (2012). These

regional agreements identify priorities for the region and provide guidance to countries in developing their own national gender policies.

The Pacific Platform for Action for the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality, (PPA) endorsed by 22 Pacific Island countries and territories in 1994, was the first regional charter on gender equality. It included 13 critical areas mirroring the critical areas of the Beijing Platform for Action. It was revised in 2004 and the priority areas were clustered into the four strategic themes of 1) mechanisms to promote the advancement of women; 2) women's legal and human rights; 3) women's access to services; and 4) economic empowerment of women. The PPA was once more reviewed in 2015 and reformulated around strategic outcomes for accelerating progress towards gender equality as committed by the Pacific governments through the PLGED and the SDGs. The name of the PPA was also changed slightly to better reflect the importance of promoting human rights; it is now the Pacific Platform for Action on Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights 2018–2030. Implementation of the PPA is focused around knowledge generation and information, gender mainstreaming, partnerships, investments and accountability.

The triennial Conference of Pacific Women and Meeting of Ministers for Women are regional conferences convened by SPC. Senior officials of Pacific Island governments responsible for women's affairs, representatives of NGOs, development partners, researchers and academics meet to review progress, discuss challenges and make recommendations to further advance gender equality across the region. Through the triennial outcomes document, the countries involved identify priorities for advancing gender equality.

The Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration was endorsed by leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum in 2012. It renewed their countries' commitments to gender equality while identifying the priorities of 1) gender-responsive policies and programmes; 2) leadership and decision making; 3) women's economic empowerment; 4) ending violence against women; and 5) health and education.

3.1.3 National commitments

Fiji's work to implement the above commitments happens through the strategic vision document entitled *5-Year and 20-Year National Development*

Plan: Transforming Fiji, which explicitly recognizes women's rights to participate in all levels of decision making and the economy, and to live free from violence (Government of Fiji, 2017). The Plan sets the direction for the integration of gender into sector-level strategic planning through the five indicators of 1) percent of women in parliament; 2) percent of women on the boards of state-owned enterprises; 3) percent of women in government employment; 4) percent of women in paid employment generally; and 5) the number of women who have developed certified 'Fiji Made' products and are participating in the annual Women's Expos sponsored by the Ministry of Women (Government of Fiji, 2017). These five performance indicators, however, do not adequately allow for reporting on SDGs. With the exception of the last indicator, which relates to a rurally-oriented project of the Department of Women, measuring the impact of the National Development Plan on rural women will be difficult.

The National Gender Policy, managed by the Ministry of Women, aims to a) promote gender-sensitive policies, plans and strategies; b) facilitate the acquisition of data on the role women play in agriculture and the rural sector; c) conduct gender impact assessments on the use of natural resources; and d) promote gender equity in the division of labour and the empowerment of women in the agricultural sector. The Policy also provides additional guidance and identifies priorities to ensure support to rural women in all aspects of life (Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, 2014). The Department of Women is mandated with capacity development to facilitate the implementation of the National Gender Policy across ministries, although the Department is highly constrained by its limited staff capacity and budget. The Policy includes recommendations to:

- Promote gender-responsive strategies in ministries responsible for rural development, agriculture and management of i-Taukei land;
- Increase women's participation in decision making on land issues and ensure fair distribution of rental and lease monies under the Land Use Decree of 2010;

- Ensure that women are included in decision making and implementation of all programmes linked to environmental management, climate change and disaster recovery;
- Increase the collection of data on women's roles in the rural and agricultural sectors;
- Use gender-responsive budgeting to support programmes to increase rural women's participation in development; and
- Use gender-responsive assessments, analysis and approaches to clarify how women and men can be more equal partners in management, use and preservation of natural resources in Fiji.

These recommendations require collaboration across the whole of the government. They also require that interventions happen in a coordinated way through multiple entry points – in different ministries and in cooperation with civil society and development partners. A stocktake¹⁸ of the enabling environment for gender mainstreaming in Fiji conducted by SPC in collaboration with the Ministry of Women in 2014 showed that, while there was stated commitment to gender equality in key strategic planning documents, there were weaknesses in technical capacity to do gender analysis. Revisions of national strategic planning documents have changed the focus and responsibility for gender integration from central planning to individual ministries. While this is positive in some ways, there continues to be inadequate gender analysis and gender planning capacity to effectively mainstream gender into sector priorities. Additionally, budget allocations for gender mainstreaming are inadequate to effect meaningful change or support staff capacity development. The stocktake further highlighted that the Department of Women, the main government agency responsible for gender equality, was underfunded and had limited human resource capacity to be effective.¹⁹

The elimination of violence against women is one of the main areas of the Government where inter-ministry technical cooperation on gender issues is beginning to be seen. This has been facilitated by donors and NGOs partnering with the Government to develop integrated

¹⁸ Secretariat of the Pacific Community (2014, unpublished) *Stocktake of Gender Mainstreaming Capacity of the Pacific Island Governments: Fiji*.

¹⁹ The 2014 stocktake was conducted with a senior government official of the Fiji Government. Note that while the Stocktake on Gender Mainstreaming for Fiji was completed, it was not approved for publication by the Government.

protocols for referral and treatment of women and children who are survivors of domestic violence. Implementation of these protocols has started but is constrained by capacity gaps and funding shortfalls.

3.2 Main agriculture and rural development-related governmental institutions

There are multiple governmental institutions operating in and supporting rural development in Fiji, across social, economic and environmental realms. In the inception meeting for this study, the following agencies were identified as key to promoting and supporting gender equality in management and use of natural resources for improved and sustainable development:²⁰

- Ministry of Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development and National Disaster Management
- Ministry of Fisheries
- Ministry of Forestry
- Ministry of iTaukei Affairs
- Ministry of Local Government, Housing and Environment
- Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport
- Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation
- Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources
- Ministry of Economy (which is managing Fiji's climate change portfolio)

The ministries of agriculture, fisheries, forestry and women have been the main focus of this stocktake of governmental institutions as part of this current Assessment. The ministries of fisheries and agriculture participated in a meeting at the start of the Assessment, and additional meetings were held with each of the three ministries to collect further information. Each ministry responded to a similar set of questions on its current efforts and abilities to provide an enabling environment for gender mainstreaming. Information on the national government and other ministries is from desk research. These findings supplement the above-mentioned 2014 stocktake of gender mainstreaming in Fiji, as well as showing progress made since. It should be noted, however,

that specificity of information on programmes and resource allocations has been constrained by the limited availability of current planning documents. Additionally, this Assessment was unable to encompass ministries working in health and education, even though it is recognized that they have mandates that overlap in a number of ways with natural resource management and gender-responsive sustainable rural development. Further research is needed to explore the constraints and opportunities that exist to more fully support rural sectors through all relevant ministries. Furthermore, it is critical that such research be well-coordinated across the multiple ministries responsible for agriculture, including the ministries of sugar, fisheries and forestry, among others.

Policy frameworks

Of the above-listed ministries, only the Ministry of Women had a specific gender policy. Other ministries have draft policies (for example, the National Sub Policy on Women in Agriculture of the Ministry of Agriculture) or are in the process of incorporating gender into their planning commitments.

3.2.3 Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation

The Department of Women within the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation provides services to rural women through village or community women's groups and by working with rural sector ministries. The Department's focus is on social wellbeing, which is fostered through group management of initiatives with shared benefits. The Ministry provides training for women's groups to form and operate as formalized groups and promotes a 'village collective' approach to group governance. It then assists these groups to access grants and technical support. Financial support is indirect; the Ministry pays vendors to provide goods such as equipment, seeds and building material to women's groups. This model allows women's groups to start small projects such as those based on poultry, piggeries and cottage gardens. Support has also been provided for women's groups to start honey production projects, grow flowers and open canteens to sell cooked food. The Ministry does not, however, provide this type of support to individuals.

In consultations, the Department of Women identified a number of barriers to women's engagement in the

²⁰ The Ministry of Sugar was not among the agencies identified by meeting participants, however, given that many Indo-Fijian communities still earn livelihoods from the sugar industry, engagement with the Ministry of Sugar should be considered.

group projects they foster. A primary challenge is a lack of technical knowledge about how to manage and maintain small livestock projects and beehives despite being provided with some initial training. The Department cited lack of communication and coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture as a barrier to the success and sustainability of women's projects. The lack of coordination was partially attributed to extension officers having full workloads that did not specifically include assisting women's organizations. Other key barriers cited were linked to the gendered division of labour. It was noted that women have heavy workloads working in family subsistence and care-giving activities as well as meeting expectations for community and church contributions. This results in a lack of time for additional projects. Furthermore, stigma and controlling behaviour from male partners and community leaders have been identified as additional factors inhibiting women from participating in or fulfilling commitments to group projects.

The Department of Women acts as a catalyst for the implementation of the National Gender Policy. The Policy has specific priorities that support and direct government programmes for rural women. These policy priorities are linked to the work of rural development ministries, including those responsible for agriculture, fisheries, land management, climate change and infrastructure.

Policy implications of the National Gender Policy

The National Gender Policy identifies action areas for the advancement of gender equality and participation of rural women in development processes. However, it also assumes that each ministry will take responsibility for gender analysis, needs assessment, developing staff capacities, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. The Department of Women is mandated to support other ministries through coordination with 1) gender focal points in sector ministries and 2) networks of rural women's organizations. These networks include, for example, Soqosoqo Vakamarama (the largest women's civil society organization in Fiji) and the Fiji Muslim Women's League. The FemLINKpacific network also works with the Department for Women to support dissemination of information to and among rural women. By utilizing these networks and working with gender focal points in other ministries, the Department of Women is partially able to overcome financial and human resource constraints.

Resource constraints do, however, limit the Department's ability to fully meet the expectations of other ministries. There is no government-wide chain of accountability for the gender equality objectives of the National Development Plan. Consultations with governmental stakeholders highlighted a lack of clarity about which agency has the ultimate responsibility for undertaking institutional strengthening and capacity building across the government to enable effective gender mainstreaming. This lack of clarity was also identified in the 2014 stocktake of the government's capacity in mainstreaming gender across policies and programmes. This reflects a gap in high-level coordination and financing for gender equality as well as a need for some coordinated monitoring of progress across ministries.

As a result of these gaps, provision of services to rural women can be intermittent. Adequate services provision does not only depend on the direction from the Department of Women being communicated to rural women's officers. It also depends on coordination between the Department and other Suva-based ministry headquarters – i.e. requesting them to communicate with their divisional staff about the need to coordinate with Department of Women's divisional officers. In many cases, these rurally-based officers do not have transportation budgets or vehicles/boats. They need to seek assistance from their counterparts in other rural sector ministries for transport to and from communities. This means that in instances where the Department of Women has provided grants to rural women to start small livestock or other agriculture projects, and these projects then need extension support from Ministry of Agriculture, there may be communication or administrative breakdowns preventing delivery of necessary services and undermining the success of women's groups' initiatives.

To date, some communication and coordination channels have been established between the Department of Women and the Ministry of Agriculture. There is less evidence of this, however, between the Department and the Ministry of Fisheries. In consultations, the Department of Women noted that they rely on the Women in Fisheries Network, a civil society organization, to take the lead in working with the Ministry of Fisheries on gender-responsive fisheries and aquaculture development. While it is positive that such a network exists and has established formal ties with the Ministry of Fisheries, there is nevertheless a gap within the government system. The Ministry of

Table 6: Summary of assessment of the enabling environment for rural women’s empowerment and gender equality within the Ministry of Women²¹

Indicative findings		
Enabling environment criteria	Enabling factors	Constraints
Commitment at leadership level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The existence of the National Gender Policy and the Department of Women demonstrates the Government’s commitment to gender equality. The stated strategic planning expectation that gender equality should be incorporated into corporate plans of all ministries and linked to the National Gender Policy indicates specific commitment to gender mainstreaming. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Ministry would have a greater impact and authority to mainstream gender equality and RWE government-wide if it were more closely linked to a central agency like the Prime Minister’s Office or the Ministry of Finance.
Organizational culture and internal willingness to address gender issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Women staff members have specific roles linked to implementation of the National Gender Policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low staff numbers, staff turnover, limited budget and competing priorities create challenges for effectively carrying out the Department of Women’s mandate.
Accountability mechanisms and systems to enforce commitments to gender mainstreaming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Women staff members have specific responsibilities for implementing the National Gender Policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department of Women’s accountability mechanisms do not extend to authority over the gender mainstreaming work of other ministries. Consequently, the Department’s ability to catalyse change is limited.
Technical capacity to identify and address gender issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Women staff members have the capacity to address immediate responsibilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff lacks skills for gender analysis of issues across sectors and lacks the experience required to influence transformational change and facilitate ‘whole of government’ mainstreaming.
Adequate financial and human resources to implement gender mainstreaming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A budget exists for some of the work required to implement the National Gender Policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The operational budget of the Department of Women is low and restricts implementation of cross-sector activities. Budgets for staffing are also low, leaving the Department understaffed and limited in its ability to achieve the stated goals of the National Gender Policy.

²¹ Note that the information in Table 6 is indicative only – it is based on an interview with the Directors of Research and Extension of the Ministry of Agriculture and review of the 2018 – 2022 Strategic Development Plan.

Fisheries noted that, although collaboration with the Women in Fisheries Network has been agreed upon and documented, work had not yet begun.

Addressing these constraints to the implementation of the National Gender Policy in order to strengthen rural women's effective participation in agriculture and fisheries will require intervention from the Ministry of Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics. This is currently the only ministry with the authority to direct the required level of coordination and influence provision of adequate financing to advance gender mainstreaming.

Table 6 below provides a summary of issues related to the strengths and gaps in the enabling environment for gender mainstreaming within the Ministry of Women.

3.2.2 Ministry of Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development and National Disaster Management

The Ministry of Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development and National Disaster Management (Ministry of Agriculture) has had a draft National Sub Policy on Women in Agriculture since 2015. This is currently under revision and will be finalized as a stand-alone gender policy applicable to all areas of the Ministry's business. The Ministry's *Strategic Development Plan 2018–2022* will guide that policy. The Plan's vision is holistic, addressing the broad spectrum of issues that can affect agricultural success and impact rural women and men.

"Women play an important role in agriculture. There is a need to empower women, providing them access to land, fertilizer, education and financial services to open economic opportunities that allow women to build assets, increase incomes and improve family welfare. Similarly, promoting gender equality in agricultural institutions is crucial for agricultural development and food security."

Strategic Development Plan 2018–2022 of the Ministry of Agriculture

To strengthen the growth of the agricultural sector, the 5-year plan identifies specific actions, including the enhancement of the role of women in agriculture. The Ministry plans to invest FJD 900 000 over five years to achieve the four gender-related objectives of 1) increasing the number of women in technical roles in agriculture; 2) publicizing the roles and contributions of women in agriculture; 3) establishing and supporting a Women Farmers Association in the Fiji Crops and Livestock Council; and 4) designing and implement targeted training programmes for women agricultural producers.

Policy implications for agriculture

During consultations for this Assessment, the Ministry of Agriculture noted that the implementation of programmes in the four activity areas identified in the strategic plan will address some of the outstanding constraints to gender-responsive agricultural development. Other constraints, however, will require refined data collection and enumeration of farmers. For example, currently the Ministry's list of farmers shows that women represent just under 4 percent of farmers (Ministry of Agriculture, 2018).²² However, many agricultural ventures, including subsistence farming, are family operated and managed. While the man of the household may be the registered farmer, work is shared among him, his wife and other family members. Since rural women's contributions are less visible, there has been less effort to identify and analyse women agricultural producers' roles, knowledge, contributions and needs.

The Ministry also indicated that while close to 50 percent of extension staff are women, the Ministry does not operate any programmes specifically targeted to women agricultural producers, nor have extension officers received any training on gender analysis of agricultural issues, needs and services. To effectively deliver on the commitment to implement targeted training programmes for women agricultural producers, Ministry staff identified the need for additional training in gender analysis, gender-responsive policy and programme development/delivery.

In 2002, a gender audit of the Fiji Ministry of Agriculture was done by ADB with support of the Ministry of Women (Government of Fiji and Asian Development Bank, 2003). It stressed the need for

²² The data source for this figure is the 2009 Agricultural Census Report.

gender-responsive planning to be done based on consultations with women and men who are actively working in different aspects of agricultural production. Additionally, a 2013 study on different sectors of the Fijian economy identified that provision of technology, training and subsidies for agriculture are primarily targeted to male-controlled cash crop production (Government of Australia, 2013). These observations point to the need for training for senior decision-makers in rural sector ministries as well as capacity building for rural extension officers to increase gender sensitivity and awareness.

The jurisdiction for food security, nutrition and health is currently divided among multiple ministries. The complexities of cross-sector collaboration constrain provision of consistent, quality services to 1) communities and 2) women who are likely to be the household members most closely involved in daily food provision and nutrition. Currently, the Ministries of Agriculture and Fisheries have food security mandates, the Ministry of Economy holds the mandate for climate change, the Ministry of Health and Medical Services addresses nutrition and dietary health, the Ministry of Education integrates agriculture and food security into school curricula and the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation addresses poverty and hardship related to food security and income. There is a need for a multisectoral approach for the advancement of women agricultural producers in general, and gendered aspects of food security and nutrition in particular.

The Ministry of Agriculture's *Strategic Development Plan 2018–2022* includes objectives for a collaborative, cross-sector approach to managing and programming for food security. This has the potential to facilitate social analysis of food production issues and support enhanced and more holistic gender analysis and programming. However, an inter-ministry coordination mechanism on the promotion of gender equality in agriculture and rural women's empowerment still needs to be agreed upon. Furthermore, consultations with the both the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Fisheries highlighted that staff do not yet have the knowledge or skills to undertake social or gender analysis. ADB's 2015 *Fiji Country Gender Assessment* highlights that other ministries, including the Ministry of Health and Medical Services and the Ministry of Education, also lack the skills needed to

integrate gender issues across their mandates (Asian Development Bank, 2015). Developing appropriate modalities for both capacity building on gender and cross-sector coordination are areas where further work is needed.

The Ministry of Agriculture's current strategic policy direction on gender focuses on the inclusion of women agricultural producers in all areas where the Ministry works, with targeted technical assistance to accelerate women's uptake of agricultural activities. Policy direction also includes supporting women to be more involved in decision-making through establishment of a women's association within the Fiji Crops and Livestock Council. Implementation of these priorities will support mainstreaming if capacity for gender analysis and gender-responsive planning can be built within the Ministry and applied in field settings.

Table 7 below provides indicative findings on different aspects of the enabling environment in the Ministry of Agriculture. The table is based on interviews with selected Ministry staff identified by the Permanent Secretary.

3.2.4 Ministry of Fisheries

Fisheries and aquaculture represent a minor and shrinking share of Fiji's national economy, yet they remain of high importance in terms of nutrition, culture and heritage. In 2016, the sector's share of GDP was 1.8 percent, down from 2.1 percent in 2011.²³ As with agriculture, many Fijians rely on fisheries for subsistence and informal income generation. There is a need for a clearer understanding of the contribution of these difficult-to-measure aspects of the economy to poverty alleviation and wellbeing of the rural population, particularly rural women dependent on fishing. There is also a recognized need for the Ministry of Fisheries to support women, men, families and communities to use fisheries as a source of livelihoods and nutrition.

The National Development Plan states that a new national fisheries policy will be finalised in 2018/19. While the Plan does not provide any specific guidance on the integration of gender into fisheries issues, it does direct the Ministry to identify gender issues and make them a part of core business. There is therefore considerable scope for the Ministry of Fisheries to 1) test its current approaches to supporting gender

²³ Government of Fiji. 2017. Fiji Bureau of Statistics, Gross Domestic Product by Industry at Constant Basic Price. <http://www.statsfiji.gov.fj/statistics/economic-statistics/national-accounts-gdp>

Table 7: Summary of assessment of the enabling environment for rural women's empowerment and gender equality within the Ministry of Agriculture²⁴

Indicative findings		
Enabling environment criteria	Enabling factors	Constraints
Commitment at leadership level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong statements of commitment to gender equality from the ministerial and executive levels. • Management is committed to the implementation of a new strategic direction on gender. • The <i>Strategic Development Plan 2018–2022</i> establishes quotas for women in specific roles and levels, with wording that indicates potential for affirmative action. • <i>Strategic Development Plan 2018–2022</i> partially addresses gender issues in agriculture. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Sub Policy on Women in Agriculture is still in development. • The Ministry does not operate any programmes specifically targeted at women agricultural producers.
Organizational culture and internal willingness to address gender issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guided by strategic plan priorities, senior staff will support gender mainstreaming in selected action areas (at a minimum). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many staff members lack gender awareness and gender analysis skills and hesitate to embrace gender mainstreaming approaches. • Some staff members might have a preference to maintain the status quo approach in working with communities and farmers; they may share traditional values about gender roles in decision making. • Some staff members might not want to cause discomfort in communities by promoting change in ways of working with men and women.
Accountability mechanisms and systems to enforce commitments to gender mainstreaming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 2 of the Strategic Development Plan 2018–2022 stipulates increased mainstreaming of gender equality in the Ministry's work in order to foster inclusion of women in agriculture. Milestones, quotas and targets are identified. • The Ministry collects sex-disaggregated data on men and women attending trainings, with the target of 40 percent women participants. • Most Ministry data are sex-disaggregated but not analysed in relation to men's and women's needs or how they benefit from programmes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other sections of the strategic plan (e.g. food security, land use, finance, markets) omit reference to gender issues, and no specific milestones or targets for women's engagement are identified. • Currently there are limited systems to enable and ensure that staff members implement commitments to gender. This includes lack of training on gender and limited reporting requirements. • There is no monitoring of quality of participation and no follow-up on women participants in trainings provided to rural communities.

²⁴ Note that the information in Table 10 is indicative only – it is based on an interview with the Director of Research and Extension of the Ministry of Agriculture and review of the Ministry's *Strategic Development Plan 2018–2022*.

Table 7: Summary of assessment of the enabling environment for rural women's empowerment and gender equality within the Ministry of Agriculture (continued)

Indicative findings		
Enabling environment criteria	Enabling factors	Constraints
Technical capacity to identify and address gender issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Ministry has a policy adviser focused on gender mainstreaming. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Previously there was a gender focal point in the Ministry, but, at the time of this study, no one was serving in that role. There is a lack of technical capacity to undertake gender-responsive analysis, planning, and implementation of agriculture programmes. There is a need for staff training on gender mainstreaming
Adequate financial and human resources to implement gender mainstreaming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commitment in the strategic plan to establish Ministry quotas for women in technical positions (25 percent) and promotion into leadership and technical positions (35 percent) will support gender mainstreaming, if training is also budgeted for. The strategic plan identifies a budget of approximately FJD 100 000 per year for implementation of three areas of inclusion of women. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The budget might not be adequate to make a significant impact at the national level. Investment will be needed to share findings and lessons learned from initial gender-focused programmes.

equality; 2) identify key issues and related financial implications; and 3) integrate gender issues into the forthcoming national policy based on initial lessons learned.

The Ministry of Fisheries included gender as a component of its 2017/18 Annual Corporate Plan, in line with national directives. The annual plan specifies two specific gender-related performance indicators, each of which has specific targets (Fiji Ministry of Fisheries, 2017). The first indicator is related to revival of the 'Women and Fisheries' programme. The Government will collaborate with and fund the civil society organization Women in Fisheries Network to 1) undertake inventories in each fisheries division to assess women's participation in offshore fisheries, inshore fisheries, aquaculture, fisheries research and administration; 2) support women as owners and/or operators of small- and medium-size fisheries enterprises; and 3) develop a centralized database on women engaged in all aspects of fisheries.

The second indicator in the annual plan aims to increase the number of women on boards and companies of fisheries enterprises. It sets targets for ten women to be members of these boards and for those members to be engaged in at least 30 percent of strategic decisions.

Policy Implications for Fisheries

Achievement of the Ministry of Fisheries' current operational planning objectives for gender will contribute significantly to knowledge on the level of women's involvement in different aspects of fisheries. Collection of sex-disaggregated data on women's economic participation in fisheries is incomplete, and understanding the extent of women's engagement in fisheries businesses will be useful. However, because the majority of women are engaged in the informal sector, additional surveys will be required to show how women integrate fisheries-related work into their economic and subsistence roles. Analysis of such survey data could provide information on women's

multiple and overlapping roles, the scope of their productive employment and the contributions of such to their livelihoods, and women's and men's relative access to and control over resources. This type of analysis could be then used to inform policy, budgeting and programming.

Despite the work of members of the Women in Fisheries Network and academic researchers in the region, knowledge gaps still exist surrounding women's roles in subsistence and commercial fisheries and in fisheries management. Gender analysis and data collection on 1) decision-making around use rights for communal coastal fishing grounds (*i-qoliqoli*); 2) policy frameworks and government systems that have successfully increased women's access to and participation in fisheries; 3) economic support programmes for fishermen and fisherwomen; 4) access to both formal and informal markets; and 5)

financial services to support enhancement of the fisheries-based economy are all areas where increased knowledge can inform more equitable approaches to fisheries management, sustainable livelihoods and community wellbeing. Implementation of the Ministry's annual plan priorities for gender, including collaboration with the Women in Fisheries Network, can advance this work and further strengthen existing commitments to gender mainstreaming within the Ministry. Furthermore, active collaboration and information sharing with the Department of Women can increase the number of policy implementation entry points for empowerment and engagement of rural women in fisheries.

Table 8 provides indicative findings on different aspects of the enabling environment within the Ministry of Fisheries, based on interviews with selected Ministry staff identified by the Permanent Secretary.

Table 8: Summary of assessment of the enabling environment for rural women's empowerment and gender equality within the Ministry of Fisheries²⁵

Indicative findings		
Enabling environment criteria	Enabling factors	Constraints
Commitment at leadership level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High levels of commitment are reflected in the 2017–2018 Annual Corporate Plan, in the Ministry objectives and in the interest of some staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender issues outside planning objectives are not identified/prioritized because they are not seen as part of the Ministry's core business.
Organizational culture and internal willingness to address gender issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is gender balance both in the heads of divisions at the Ministry headquarters and in the field divisional offices, half of which are led by women. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most management and staff interpret gender issues as outside their core functions and do not see their relevance to programme effectiveness. The perception that the Department of Women should support linkages with women's organizations constrains independent action. Lack of opportunities for collaboration undermines a multiple entry point approach. Executive positions are held by men. Women staff perceive a glass ceiling.

²⁵ Note that the information in Table 11 is indicative only. It is based on an interview with the Principal Inshore Fisheries, Research and Planning Officers at the Ministry of Fisheries and review of the 2017–2018 Annual Corporate Plan.

Table 8: Summary of assessment of the enabling environment for rural women’s empowerment and gender equality within the Ministry of Fisheries (continued)

Indicative findings		
Enabling environment criteria	Enabling factors	Constraints
Accountability mechanisms and systems to enforce commitments to gender mainstreaming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 2017–2018 Annual Corporate Plan objectives to inventory women’s involvement in fisheries will provide information to inform programming and create a baseline for monitoring and evaluation purposes. • It is perceived that systems are improving to increase accountability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While the Ministry collects sex-disaggregated data, it does not consolidate or analyse it.
Technical capacity to identify and address gender issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ministry has a gender focal point, but their role is not widely known. • The Department of Women has conducted awareness training on the National Gender Policy with some ministry staff. • Planned work with the Women in Fisheries Network will bring technical capacity into some research and programming areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is unclear if any Ministry staff members have undergone gender training. • Staff are good at core business but are not comfortable doing qualitative assessments on the social aspects of technical issues. • Lack of gender training for staff inhibits work in field divisions, as male staff do not feel comfortable taking on gender issues.
Adequate financial and human resources to implement gender mainstreaming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on the budget allocated to the achievement of gender objectives in the Annual Corporate Plan is not available. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No resources are allocated to gender mainstreaming as a general area of work. • Staff training on gender is not available through internal channels.

3.3 Key civil society organizations

Civil society, together with development partners and donors, supports the Government to advance gender equality and promote rural women’s empowerment. Civil society organizations play an important role in filling gaps in governmental services to rural women through both coordinated and ad hoc initiatives.

In addition to the strengths they bring to the table, CSOs face certain limitations in supporting Fijian rural women. Many of the CSOs working on sustainable natural resource management, for instance, have highlighted that while they have a strong interest in promoting gender equality, they have not developed the knowledge or technical capacity to do this in a strategic way. Organizations working

directly with women on health and economic empowerment do not necessarily coordinate or collaborate with organizations working on coastal resource management, climate change adaptation or conservation. CSOs with expertise in both gender and natural resource management are currently most active in urban areas, where they work on advocacy and awareness raising.

The Women in Fisheries Network is a Fijian CSO that brings together women who have both scientific and technical fisheries knowledge and an interest in the advancement of women in fisheries. The Network started working with the Ministry of Fisheries in 2017 to support the data collection and gender mainstreaming process. There is no parallel network for women in agriculture, although knowledge on gender

relations in the agricultural sector and on economic empowerment is generated through donor-funded programmes and CSOs focused on private sector development and/or community livelihoods.

FemLINKpacific is a CSO that uses a community media model and works with rural women to produce media content and broadcasts on a range of issues, including agriculture, fisheries, livelihoods and disaster risk management. The organization's Women's Weather Watch programme supports rural women to monitor weather trends and develop early warning systems for destructive weather events. FemLINKpacific is currently working with networks of rural women to develop two radio series. The first will take a 'Day in the Life' approach to document women's experiences through 36 episodes. The second will use similar methods with a different thrust, under the series title 'Look at my Abilities.' Both series will provide information and insights into women's roles, knowledge, skill sets and experiences in relation to their lives in rural Fiji.²⁶

The Fiji Women's Fund (FWF) 2017–2022 is a programme funded by Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Government of Australia (DFAT) that supports rural and urban women's groups and CSOs to develop and run projects in Fiji in four thematic areas, including economic empowerment.²⁷ It started operations in 2017 and is supporting women's groups to build their capacities and learn new skills, develop women-led governance models and increase their role in decision making. Initiatives supported by the FWF include dairy farming and sustainable natural resource management. The Fund provides advice to women's groups to facilitate linkages with the government and other development partners for technical assistance and training.

There are some good examples of collaborations among development partners and CSOs to support rural women in cottage industries. The Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprises and Development (FRIEND) is one such example of a home-grown community initiative, which was borne out of frustration over the extent of poverty in rural communities in Fiji. Today, FRIEND employs over 60 staff members. In addition to the sale of a range

of FRIEND Fiji Style products, FRIEND also implements health, community governance and scholarship programmes for rural women and children.²⁸

3.4 Summary of enabling environment findings

Staff consulted at the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Fisheries indicated that there is willingness within the agencies to integrate gender as a consideration in ministry business. Discussions also reflected awareness of the multiple ways that increased attention to gender could benefit communities, the private sector and the national economy, including through better management of natural resources, better targeting of extension services, increased economic gain for families and more informed decision making.

The rapid assessments of the three ministries' enabling environments for gender mainstreaming found some progress since the 2014 stocktake conducted by SPC. Such progress includes:

- i. Clearly stated commitments to national objectives for gender mainstreaming in key documents in all ministries;
- ii. Measurable indicators linked to the achievement of some gender mainstreaming outcomes;
- iii. A number of staff in each ministry who could articulate how these commitments would support improved achievement of strategic outcomes in core business areas (demonstrating that, while gender concerns may not be fully integrated institutionally, some change is happening at the individual level);
- iv. Awareness of the importance of increased budget allocations for integrating gender into the ministries' business.

The enabling environment assessments also identified a number of gaps. These include:

- i. Non-existent gender policies, strategies and plans within the agriculture line ministries, notably so the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Fisheries;

²⁶ Information provided by email from femLINKpacific on 6 February 2018. For more information, see the femLINKpacific website at <http://www.femlinkpacific.org.fj/index.php/en>

²⁷ Other focus areas of the Fiji Women's Fund are eliminating violence against women, women in leadership and decision-making, and strengthening women's coalitions for change.

²⁸ For more information on FRIEND, see <http://friendfiji.com>

- ii. Limited or non-existent gender analysis, data and implementation of gender commitments in some areas of each ministry's work;
- iii. Lack of clarity related to inter-ministry responsibility for social and gender analysis at national, district and community levels and gaps in coordination with the Ministry of Women;
- iv. Limited collection and analysis of data by the government on women's and men's roles in agriculture, their access to and control over resources, and access to services;
- v. Limited technical understanding and capacity to do gender analysis, design interventions to promote gender equality and deliver gender responsive programmes;
- vi. Lack of explicit data to inform budgeting for development of gender-related capacity within the ministries of agriculture and fisheries.

Gender analysis of strategic issues in agriculture has been carried out in a limited way by Ministry of Agriculture staff and is partially incorporated into the Ministry's current strategic plan. However, while gender issues are integrated in relation to the four key action areas on inclusion of women, little if any analysis of gender roles in food security, climate change and disaster resilience has been incorporated into current plans. Additionally, budget allocations for mainstreaming gender are limited. The development of a stand-alone gender policy in the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Fisheries, along with an implementation strategy for efficient gender mainstreaming into sectoral plans and programmes, would improve coordination, planning and budgeting and clarify how gaps could be strategically addressed.

The Ministry of Fisheries current annual corporate plan also highlights actions that will enhance mainstreaming by increasing data on women's roles and increasing women's participation in decision-making boards and committees. However, integration of gender across other areas, including within the Ministry's own approach to the promotion of women, remains problematic. Budget information for gender mainstreaming in the Ministry of Fisheries was not made available, so it is not possible to assess how investment compares to stated plans, or to understand if there are budgets in other areas that could be used to advance gender equality. Budget analysis of how gender is, and could be, integrated into the Ministry's

outcome areas to accelerate achievement of positive results is an area for further work.

In consultations with both ministries, staff highlighted that traditional norms surrounding gender roles, and attitudes about women and men's places in society, are strong at the rural level. These norms constrain implementation of gender-responsive programming. If decision-makers at all levels (from ministry management and senior staff to extension officers, household heads and community leaders) do not understand the rationale of increasing women's involvement and empowerment, and do not value women's contributions, then interventions will not benefit rural women. Interventions that promote gender equality and rural women's empowerment need to be carefully planned and mindful of prevailing norms and attitudes to avoid creating risk and/or backlash against women.

From a strategic policy standpoint, there appears to be a lack of clarity about which ministries should take responsibility for raising community awareness about the benefits of mainstreaming gender. Technical ministries do not feel they have the mandate to do this and the Ministry for Women has neither the staff nor financial resources to deliver this service on the required scale. This was also highlighted during the 2014 stocktake and continues to be a barrier to gender mainstreaming efforts. There do not appear to be any central government accountability mechanisms to facilitate this level of coordination or internal service provision.

Collection, analysis and use of sex-disaggregated data is partially done in both the Ministry of Fisheries and Ministry of Agriculture. The development of inventories and a database on women in fisheries will increase informed decision making and could be replicated in agriculture through improvements to the upcoming 2019 agricultural census questionnaire. It is very positive that there is recognition of the need to respond to currently available data on gender inequalities and to set quantitative targets for women's involvement in decision-making on agricultural and fisheries issues. Both ministries demonstrate good practice in tracking participation of women in their extension programmes. There is scope to expand this through qualitative assessment of how active women are in training programmes, and how they use the knowledge they have gained.



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Allocation of financial resources for gender mainstreaming remains limited in the fisheries and agriculture ministries. Those consulted identified that while gender has been recognized as an issue, it is still not considered to be core business and is therefore not a priority for many staff. This creates a risk that expenditures to support gender responsiveness of

programmes may be diverted if unanticipated costs arise in other aspects of programme implementation. To support better budgeting and use of resources, staff need considerable training, coaching and mentoring to ensure current and planned interventions are implemented effectively.

4

ASSESSMENT OF GENDER INEQUALITIES IN AGRICULTURE AND THE RURAL SECTOR



There are limited sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics related to the rural sector. Most available information is derived from qualitative studies and clearly illustrates that men dominate traditional decision-making processes in rural areas.²⁹

Different communities are associated with different settlement types and economic development patterns, and different levels of government services. The locations where rural women and men live, through a combination of cultural factors and degree of remoteness, can foster or limit social, agricultural and economic opportunities. For example, in Malele settlement, where the population is Indo-Fijian, the economy has historically been centred on sugarcane production, which remains ongoing. However, market demand and prices for cane have fallen in Fiji. As a consequence, male agricultural producers are diversifying into production of root crops, other vegetables and livestock to generate income. All land in the settlement is leased from the national government on 99-year agreements.

The main community structures in rural areas are i-Taukei villages, settlements on leased land, small towns where limited retail goods and services are available, and tourism developments that often have some commercial association with traditional landowners in their vicinity and which offer employment to residents of landowner communities and/or nearby settlements.

The rural economy encompasses subsistence and commercial activities and is resource-reliant. In rural areas, most village-run commercial activities are at the micro to small level and linked to the use and sale of natural resources such as fish and forest products, production of cash crops, or retailing of food and household supplies such as kerosene, paper products and buckets.

4.1 Land tenure systems

Rural land is governed through a complex system of traditional decision-making and formalized law and policy. Land management is guided by different pieces of legislation, including the Land Transfer Act, the Property Law Act, and the Crown Lands Act. Land is managed through three systems depending on its classification – 1) i-Taukei land; 2) freehold land; or

3) crown land. i-Taukei land comprises 85 percent of land in Fiji. Land management bodies are the *mataqali* or clans, which can be grouped under a larger *yavusa* (tribe) category. Within the *mataqali* are multiple *tokatoka* (family groups). All i-Taukei land belongs to *mataqalis*. Typically a portion is set aside for the village itself and the rest forms the *mataqali's* i-Taukei reserve that is divided into parcels of varied size and quality for the use of *mataqali* members and their family groups (Asian Development Bank, 2015).

Women who want to use i-Taukei land to undertake agricultural or inland fishery farming rely on their *mataqali* to enable them to access and use land. In some cases, the size of their *mataqali* works in their favour. However, as research reveals, land tenure systems around i-Taukei land are often a barrier for women who want to use land for economic purposes.

Inheritance patterns for land rights vary from area to area, and while women can legally inherit land, their brothers or husbands often dominate decision making on land use. In addition to this pattern at the family level, traditional structures and social norms have been observed to constrain the participation of women in community and *mataqali* meetings where larger land-use issues are discussed. Adding complexity to these dynamics, traditional i-Taukei decision making is oriented toward serving the needs of communal groups over individuals. This can negatively influence receptivity to issues on individual rights, including women's rights to participate as equals in decision-making forums (Jalal, 1998). In rural settings, women and men still maintain quite strict gender roles and divisions of labour.

4.2 Food and nutrition security

Regional priorities include safe and healthy food production, resilient agriculture, fisheries and forestry production systems, and efficient gender-responsive agricultural value chains. The Government of Fiji is working with FAO to ensure a sustainable increase in production, trade and marketing of domestic agriculture products.

In Fiji, the gendered division of labour in rural areas casts women in the role of primary family caregivers for children, the elderly and the disabled. Food security responsibilities are shared between men and

²⁹ SPC (forthcoming) *Gender Analysis of the Aquaculture Sector: Fiji*.

women, although women – being the ones who prepare food – have more responsibilities for nutrition and health. Depending on their level of awareness about nutrition and their horticultural knowledge, women’s management of kitchen and subsistence food gardens can contribute to family wellbeing in significant ways. These include fostering healthy eating habits in children and reducing prevalence of non-communicable diseases.

There is no formal food security and nutrition data available for the villages under discussion, although empirical findings on food and nutrition security generated from the community focus group discussions are presented in Chapter 5.

4.3 Crop production and post-harvest

As noted in Section 2, agriculture comprises approximately 11 percent of Fiji’s economy, the fourth largest sector after services, hotels and restaurants, and manufacturing. Fiji’s main crops supporting nutrition, import substitution and commercial opportunities are 1) market garden crops (e.g. leafy greens, beans, tomatoes); 2) root crops such as taro, kumala, and cassava; 3) tree fruits 4) spice crops, including ginger and turmeric; and 5) coconuts (Ministry of Agriculture, 2015). The government extension services are tailored to support farmers growing these crops. Additionally, yaqona, or kava, is a highly favoured high-value crop that produces faster yields on newly cleared forest land. However, consultations with Ministry of Agriculture and CSOs highlighted that the increasing price of yaqona is currently driving damaging rates of deforestation. Deforestation undermines Fiji’s climate change mitigation efforts, reduces availability of non-timber forest products such as medicinal plants and increases risks of flooding during increasingly common extreme weather events.

The Ministry of Agriculture runs a cottage industries programme that is available only to women or women’s groups wishing to initiate small market gardens, poultry projects or other agricultural activities. A number of CSOs are also working with rural communities in Fiji to develop a selection of niche crops for women producers. These crops include spices, honey and flowers. Additionally, development partners and CSOs are involving women in expanded

value chains for produce and handicrafts with the aim of selling attractively packaged and certified brands to the tourism industry. End products include honey, pickles, jam and *masi* (paper made from tree bark) that can be used as packaging, wrapping paper or art.

4.4 Fisheries and aquaculture

There has been more in-depth research on rural women’s engagement in fisheries in Fiji than on women’s roles in agriculture. As a result, there is a fairly substantial information base on the work women do in harvesting, processing and using fish and marine products for both subsistence and commercial purposes. The focus on women in fisheries in Fiji is partially due to regional programming by SPC on women’s roles in coastal fishing and partially due to gender-specific academic research on fisheries through University of the South Pacific’s Marine Studies programme.³⁰

Fisheries in Fiji encompass marine, coastal and river habitats. As with agriculture, there are clear gender roles in fisheries activities. While fishing outside of reefs tends to be a domain of men, women and men both fish in coastal areas and rivers. However, men and women often fish or glean for different species and with different equipment. For example, women generally fish with hand lines and collect shellfish, octopus and freshwater mussels by hand using simple tools. Common fishing methods of men in coastal areas include fishing from bridges or promontories with hand lines, working from small boats using nets or lines, or wading with nets.

In 2009, women engaged in artisanal fisheries were surveyed by SPC to clarify the scope and profitability of their commercial activities. The survey found great variation in the way women work, how much they work, what they fish for and how much they earn. Women worked on a continuum from full-time, to seasonal, to casual bases. Those working full-time were involved in some combination of fishing, marketing and reselling the catch of others and operated out of the large market centres of Lautoka, Nausori and Suva. Women working seasonally tended to be focused on specific species that were more abundant – or legally harvestable – at a specific time of year. These species included land crabs, octopus

³⁰ Since the 1990s, SPC and the University of the South Pacific (USP) have also invested in research and provision of technical support to women in coastal management and in commercially viable small-scale fisheries and aquaculture.

and seaweed. Casual fisherwomen were generally engaged in reef gleaning or fishing intermittently to meet specific needs for cash such as school expenses, funerals and community or family events (Verebalavu, 2009).

With the extension support of the Ministry of Fisheries, women are now also beginning to participate as lead actors in raising pearl spats, farming pearls, farming tilapia and milkfish, and managing and harvesting mud crabs. They are also engaged in family and/or community programmes to grow giant clams, farm prawns and maintain marine reserves.

FAO reported in 2017 that aquaculture investment has been ongoing and growing for a number of years in Fiji (FAO, 2017). The FAO research notes data limitations in tracking actual production but reports that the sector is still only a minor component of overall fisheries production.

Consultations with the Ministry of Fisheries indicated increasing support for the farming of pearls, prawns and tilapia in Fiji, with much of the support targeted to family economic empowerment and food security. SPC has been working with donors and the Government to facilitate research on women's roles in inland tilapia farming (Pacific Community, Women in Fisheries Network and Fiji Ministry of Fisheries, 2018). This research has included close examination of gender roles on a small sample of twelve farms around the country. The findings fill gaps in information and knowledge about gender roles in a growing industry, as there are an estimated 500 tilapia farms of various sizes currently operating in Fiji (Pacific Community, Women in Fisheries Network and Fiji Ministry of Fisheries, 2018). Women are also active in collection and post-harvest processing of species for export, primarily *bêche-de-mer* (processed sea cucumber), *trochus* (a form of sea snail) and ornamentals for the aquarium trade (Vunisea, 2014).

4.5 Employment and gendered division of labour in agriculture

Employment opportunities are very limited in rural areas, especially in remote areas. About a quarter of the rural population (24.7 percent) works in agriculture, fisheries and forestry, and out of these, there are nearly three times more men than women. While agriculture is the primary industry of employment for men, a large share of rural women (40.5 percent) work as own-account workers and as contributing family workers on family farms (compared to 27.8 percent of rural men and 13.8 of urban women). Additionally, 13.4 percent of rural women are engaged in the wholesale and retail trade (compared to 8.8 percent of rural men and 19.9 percent of urban women (Fiji Employment and Unemployment Survey 2015/16).³¹

UN Women estimates that between 75 to 90 percent of all market vendors in the Pacific are women. In most cases, market vendors work in difficult environments with poor and unsafe infrastructure such as water and sanitation. The Market for Change project implemented in Fiji, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands is an interesting initiative to support women's economic empowerment through a combination of measures, including improving safety, supporting women's leadership, improving governance, and strengthening disaster preparedness. It also supports financial literacy of market vendors and improves their access to financial services, as well as supporting the enhancement of agricultural skills.

UN Women, no date

Over a third of rural female workers (35.3 percent) and over a half of rural male workers (50.2 percent) work as skilled workers in agriculture, forestry and fisheries (Fiji Employment and Unemployment Survey 2015/16).

The 2009 Agricultural Census showed that only 3.4 percent of farmers registered with the Ministry of Agriculture were women, and of those, the majority (66 percent) were over 40 years of age.³² However,

³¹ Cultural industries are another area in which rural Fijian women are involved, especially in handcraft production. Pottery, tapa, mats, jewels, baskets, hats and handbags are produced using different natural products such as mulberry tree bark, pandanus leaves, coconut palm and seashells.

³² Registered farmers are known by Ministry of Agriculture extension workers and are notified about services and trainings and automatically eligible for inclusion in service delivery.

Table 9: Average household work by age and sex (hours per week)

Age group	Female	Male	Grand total	(F–M)
6–13	5	4	4	1.0
14–18	13	8	10	5.0
19–21	24	9	16	15.0
22–29	37	11	24	26.0
30–34	39	14	26	25.0
>34	32	12	22	20.0
Grand total	26	10	18	16.0

Source: Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 2017

it is important to highlight that the questionnaire was only administered to household heads, who are generally men; such a methodology does not properly account for gender-based differences.³³ Therefore, it is not actually known how many women agricultural producers there are in Fiji. The 3.4 percent figure reflects the share of female-headed farming households. 26.5 percent of rural women working on farms as casual labour receive payment in cash, in-kind or both, compared to 38.3 percent of rural men. Only 6 percent of rural women receive cash-only payment, compared to 15 percent of rural men (Fiji Department of Agriculture, 2009).

In terms of employment status, there are major differences between rural and urban areas. While in both areas most people are employed as wage and salaried employees, employment status was substantially higher for those employed in urban areas (82.3 percent) compared to those employed in rural areas (45.0 percent). Rural men are more likely than rural women to be own-account workers (34.2 percent and 27.5 percent, respectively) and rural women are more likely than rural men to be contributing family workers (27.9 percent and 19.4 percent, respectively) (Fiji Employment and Unemployment Survey 2015/16).

Informal employment

During 2015/16, informal employment was high nationwide, with nearly half of the total population (48 percent) working in the informal economy. Nearly two thirds of all informal workers work in rural areas (67.8 percent, compared to 28.9 percent working in urban areas). Subsistence farming and fishing are the most common subsectors of informal employment for rural women and men. Across different age groups, discrepancies in employment informality by gender are notable. Rural men aged 15–34 years are more likely to work in the informal economy than rural women in the same age group. This difference is particularly pronounced in the age group of 15–19 years, with 81.9 percent of rural males and 37.9 percent of rural females working informally. However, the trend is different for those aged between 40 and 64 years, as rural women in this age group are more likely to work informally than rural men.³⁴ By the age of 65 years and above, the majority of both rural men and rural women are employed in the informal economy (95 percent and 95.5 percent, respectively) (Fiji Employment and Unemployment Survey 2015/16).

³³ The agricultural census questionnaire was not available for detailed review. The 2017 National Population and Housing Census had a module on agriculture, but it did not include any sex-disaggregated questions.

³⁴ Informal working arrangements may support women in combining their multiple roles in the household, on the farm and in the community.

Table 10: Gender division of labour in agriculture (crop and livestock production)

Activity	Mainly men's role	Mainly women's role	Both men and women
Clearing land	•		
Ploughing	•		
Construction of sheds, pens or other infrastructure for livestock	•		
Cash crop planning and harvesting (taro, cassava, yamqona, coffee, cocoa, tree fruits, coconuts)	•		
Weeding and maintenance of market and subsistence gardens and cash crop plantations (taro, cassava)		•	
Cash crop and market garden post-harvest processing			•
Processing of subsistence crops, coconut oil, honey		•	
Market sales			•
Interaction with business intermediaries purchasing cash crops	•		
Raising poultry and small livestock (pigs and sheep)		•	
Raising large livestock (cows, horses, goats)	•		
Niche agricultural ventures in floriculture, vanilla, bees		•	
Handicrafts (mats, baskets, sewing, niche products such as masi)		•	

Source: This table has been adapted from the ADB 2015 Fiji Country Gender Assessment (Asian Development Bank, 2015) and informed by consultations with the SPC Land and Resources Division.

Note: These delineations are generalised for all of Fiji and there may be some variations by province and/or district

Wage gap

The gross weekly income in urban areas is nearly double that in rural areas (USD 296 and USD 164, respectively). This 44.5 percent rural-urban wage gap results in greater vulnerability of rural populations to poverty. On average, rural women earn a quarter less than rural men (USD 133 compared to USD 178, respectively), while the gendered wage gap is smaller in urban areas, at about 14 percent (Fiji Employment and Unemployment Survey 2015/16).

Time use in paid and unpaid household work

Rural women work the lowest amount of time per week in paid work on average (28.3 hours), compared

to rural men (35 hours) and urban women (38.6 hours). Time-related underemployment and unemployment rates are higher among rural women compared to their male counterparts (5.3 percent and 5.6 percent compared to 3.9 percent and 2.8 percent, respectively). Youth unemployment is higher among rural women aged 15–24 years (27.1 percent) compared to their male counterparts (8.8 percent) (Fiji Employment and Unemployment Survey 2015/16).

In addition to their paid work, rural women also spend much more time than men on unpaid work in the household. Table 9 shows that household members spend an average of 18 hours a week on household

Table 11: Gendered division of labour in fisheries

Activity	Mainly men's role	Mainly women's role	Both men and women
Fishing from vessels outside the reef	•		
Fishing from canoes with lines or nets	•		
Fishing from bridges and promontories with lines			•
Wading with nets	•		
Wading with handlines		•	
Reef gleaning for octopus and shellfish		•	
Diving in rivers for freshwater mussels (kai)		•	
Collecting crabs		•	
Farming tilapia or milkfish – digging ponds, piping water, heavy maintenance		•	
Farming tilapia or milkfish – pond cleaning and maintenance	•		
Prawn farming			•
Collection of speciality products such as bêche-de-mer and trochus			•
Raising pearl spats and pearl farm maintenance		•	
Post-harvest processing of fisheries products			•

Source: Vunisea (2014); Verebalavu (2009); Pacific Community, Women in Fisheries Network and Fiji Ministry of Fisheries, 2018

work, approximately 26 hours a week for female household members compared to approximately 10 hours a week for male members (Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 2018).

Child labour

In 2010, ILO conducted a survey on child labour in Fiji that included interviews with 343 working children, of which the majority (70 percent) were aged between 5 and 14 years. Nearly two-thirds of them (61 percent) were working in hazardous conditions in agriculture and the rural economy. The survey also found that more boys were engaged in child labour than girls (56 percent and 44 percent, respectively). While

there is no available data on child sex exploitation in rural Fiji, rural children are often sent to cities to attend high school, which may increase their risk of sexual exploitation for commercial purposes (e.g. being coerced into sexual exploitation to pay for their schooling) (ILO, 2010).

Gendered division of labour in agriculture

In addition to food production for the household, women commonly undertake small-scale marketing of excess produce and handicrafts such as mats and baskets to generate income for household and personal needs. They may raise small animals such as poultry, pigs and sometimes sheep that are raised

for meat. They may also be involved in other paid and/or unpaid work. This can include a) maintenance of cash crops through weeding and cleaning plantations during growing periods; b) planting, maintenance and harvesting in market gardens run by their families or others; and/or c) washing, sorting and/or packing products in post-harvest processing centres.

Men's roles in agriculture tend to be oriented around strenuous work such as clearing and ploughing land and planting root crops for both subsistence and cash cropping. Men also manage larger livestock such as goats, cattle and horses. Table 10 summarizes gender roles in agriculture. It should be noted that these are generalized roles and that variations can be found based on a range of influencing factors, including age, geography, culture, ethnicity and whether one is residing in one's original village or in the village of one's spouse. The 2015 ADB Country Gender Assessment notes that women in the Lau group and other outer islands are less likely to be involved in agriculture and horticulture than those in Naitasiri, Namosi, Ba and interior rural locations (Asian Development Bank, 2015). Anecdotal information highlights that women who are married into the villages where they live and work are less bound by social stigma and traditional gender roles.³⁵ They may therefore be more engaged in non-traditional forms of work.

Similar patterns of gendered division of labour were also identified in the villages of Melele and Navai during the fieldwork for this Assessment, as presented in Chapter 5.

As with agriculture, gender-related specializations in fisheries lead to women and men developing different knowledge and skill sets. Given their different experiences in the coastal and river environments, women and men tend to notice different indicators of stress or change in the environment and to have different ideas about using fisheries products. This means, in turn, that women and men can be distinctly valuable and complementary resource-persons in management of coastal and marine resources, climate change adaptation, disaster risk management, and sustainable economic development (Swedish International Development Agency, 2016). Table 11 provides information on gender roles in fisheries-related activities.

Higher education and employment in agriculture, forestry and fisheries

In 2014, 53 percent of students enrolled in agriculture, forestry and fisheries studies at the Fiji National University were female, while at the University of the South Pacific (USP) women made up 45 percent of students in the agriculture and land management programmes. Women students were the majority (65 percent) of marine science students at USP (Asian Development Bank, 2015). However, data from Ministry of Agriculture indicate that few of these graduates become registered farmers. This may be due to cultural perceptions of lead actors on family farms and how ownership and roles in agriculture are reported. Consultation with government staff indicates that there are increasing numbers of women technicians working across all sectors, although extension work is still male-dominated. Tracking how women graduates apply their knowledge of agriculture, fisheries and forestry will support increased understanding of how to foster transformational change for both gender equality and sustainability in the rural sector.

4.6 Access to and control over resources

Accessing (or making use of) and controlling (or making decisions over) productive resources are critical issues to address in order to promote equitable benefits of rural development outcomes. Stressing again the diversity of contexts within the Fijian population, overall, women have less access to key productive resources such as transport, technology, extension services, markets, etc. Because men are considered to be the heads of households and the primary decision makers, women have even less control over critical resources. A 2017 study noted that this is partially due to male-dominated decision-making in village governance, which is exacerbated by the degree of isolation of the village, limited presence of governmental or development organizations, and a self-identified lack of community solidarity (Duaibe, 2017).

During the community consultations in Melele and Navai, it was noted that in general women have less access to political and economic resources than men do. Discussions highlighted that men have greater access to machinery, vehicles and farm equipment, as well as control over most financial assets, including

³⁵ The eco-tourism operation is managed by an external company, which pays a percentage of the tourists' fees to the village.

family savings and land leases. Further details and examples are provided in Chapter 5.

The Ministry of Agriculture is currently developing a gender policy to support women's engagement in agriculture, animal husbandry and small business development. The evidence-based policy will facilitate increased engagement of women in decision making and management of agricultural resources to ensure policies and budgets address their multiple economic, social, caregiving and reproductive roles.

4.7 Rural finance

The Government of Fiji has put measures in place to support financial inclusion across the country. A 2015 'demand side' survey commissioned by the Reserve Bank of Fiji, the Pacific Financial Inclusion Programme and the National Financial Inclusion Taskforce (NFIT) showed that 68 percent of men have bank accounts compared to 57 percent of women (Reserve Bank of Fiji, 2015). The NFIT is led by the Reserve Bank and is coalition of partners including civil society financial and business services groups, women's organizations, the private sector, donors and the government. The Taskforce provides a range of services, including financial literacy development for women and men. It also has a financial literacy strategy that includes redressing the lack of gender parity in access to financial services.

The primary goal of the Taskforce has been to provide access to affordable financial services and financial education to Fiji's unbanked population. The purpose is to increase knowledge about money, saving, use of credit and use of banks. The Taskforce is also working through the Ministry of Education to incorporate financial education into school curricula.

Savings and loans clubs exist in a number of rural areas. Documenting the work of these groups with women – including the education they offer, interest and repayment rates and perceived benefits – is an area for further research (Asian Development Bank, 2015).

The Government of Fiji also invests in financial literacy, including by integrating financial education in school curriculum, through radio programmes, and programmes targeting rural populations (World Bank, 2017).

4.8 Agricultural cooperatives

Agricultural cooperatives are not a common model in the Pacific, and there are only few examples in Fiji of successful cooperatives that have operated over an extended period. There is a related lack of information about rural women's engagement in cooperatives. Women working in groups tend to do so through models facilitated by NGOs that support some combination of small business capacity development, quality control and branding.

4.9 Rural infrastructure

As noted above, weak health infrastructure creates specific barriers for rural women who are responsible for caregiving and ensuring child health. Transportation infrastructure is limited; this not only constrains rural women from accessing health services, but also makes it more difficult for them to market surplus goods from their agricultural activities. Sanitation infrastructure is basic in some areas of Fiji, and current data is not available on numbers of homes with different types of water supply and toilets. In schools and markets, the lack of private and safe sanitation facilities prevents girls and women from fully exercising their rights to education and economic participation, particularly when they are menstruating. Most villages in Fiji have some supply of electricity, but data is not readily available on the number of homes that rely on generator power, grid electricity or solar energy. Lack of access to electricity increases women's burden of work and can cause health problems linked to inhalation of smoke or kerosene fumes.

4.10 Climate change and disaster risk management

In 2014, Fiji was identified as one of the 15 countries in the world most exposed to risk of natural disaster. Disaster risk reduction is critical to maintaining agricultural, food and nutrition security. Fiji works with a number of development partners to ensure regional and national resilience to climate change and disasters. Increasingly, climate and weather events impact availability, reliability and quality of services and women's access to them. Where women are not involved in decision making about disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, there can



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be negative impacts. Community consultations following Tropical Cyclone Winston in 2016 highlighted that prior to the cyclone, there were challenges in conveying accurate information about the level of intensity of forecasted weather events to women. They were therefore less prepared than they could have been and did not have the opportunity to contribute to disaster management planning or to make optimal preparations for themselves and their families. This represents a lost opportunity, and it resulted in serious negative impacts to health and property. The women consulted felt they would have had different, and perhaps better, strategies on how to manage water supplies, food and shelter if they had been more fully informed and more involved in planning.

The above example clarifies that women's knowledge is an underused asset in rural communities and that existing gender roles and power relations linked to decision making can constrain positive development and cause harm to individuals and communities. Further perspectives on climate change and gender based on the fieldwork conducted for this Assessment are provided in the following chapter.

Overall, although life in rural areas presents a number of challenges for all rural inhabitants, especially with the intensification of climate change and related disasters, in Fiji, as in the rest of the world, as noted by FAO, "rural women fare worse than rural men and urban women" (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2016: 49).

5

CASE STUDY:
RURAL WOMEN AND
MEN IN MALELE AND NAVAI



Two communities on the island of Viti Levu were visited to inform this study. One of the communities is the Malele settlement in the Tavua District of Ba province. The settlement consists of an estimated 264 households, the majority of which are Indo-Fijian families. The settlement is a 30-minute drive from Tavua town and has relatively easy road access to the larger towns of Ba and Rakiraki.

The second community, Navai, is an i-Taukei village toward the interior of Viti Levu with an estimated 72 households and a population of 232 (131 males and 101 females). The village is located in relatively mountainous, forested terrain and is more isolated than Malele. There is road access to the village and travel time to Tavua town can vary from one to two hours, depending on weather, road conditions and vehicle type.

The purpose of community visits was to substantiate general findings from the literature and to highlight some examples of gender-related variations in different rural communities. Geography, ethnicity, religion, governance models and the degree of isolation from larger centres contribute to context-specific variations in men's and women's roles and their life experiences and expectations. These site visits included the use of specific rapid appraisal tools designed to a) assess women's and men's knowledge and roles in relation to environmental decision-making; b) clarify women's and men's activities and responsibilities in agriculture, fisheries, forestry and climate change adaptation; and c) gain some understanding the various factors supporting and hindering gender equality.

A primary information collection method used in both communities was focus group discussion. All members of the communities were invited to the focus group discussions, and the ones available attended the meetings. Men and women into different groups and participatory techniques were employed to facilitate discussion. Their respective reflections were then shared with the whole group.

In Navai, small group discussions and participatory exercises were conducted on time use, land use decision making, changes in food consumption patterns and climatic changes. More women (28) than men (10) participated in the Navai village consultations. This is likely linked to the fact that support was provided by the village branch of the national women's organization Soqosoqo Vakamarama. It could be that

fewer men than women attended because men felt the involvement of the women's group implied discussion of 'women's issues' not relevant to them.

In the Melele community, focus group discussions was conducted to explore similar issues. Thirty men participated in one large group and five women participated in a smaller group discussion and in one-to-one discussions.

While the fieldwork cannot provide generalizable information about a country as diverse as Fiji, the information collected is intended to provide a snapshot of such diversity.

5.1 Malele settlement

The economy of Malele has historically been centred on sugarcane production, which is still an ongoing activity. However, since market demand and prices for cane have fallen in Fiji, male agricultural producers are diversifying into production of root crops, other vegetables and livestock to generate income. All land in the settlement is leased on 99-year agreements from the national government.

Gendered roles in agricultural production

Women's engagement in agriculture includes producing vegetables, cultivating fruit trees and raising chickens and ducks in backyard gardens both for household consumption and sale. Vegetables grown include multiple types of leafy vegetables, beans, okra, eggplant, squashes, spices and herbs. Some rain-fed rice, maize and pulses are also grown. Fruit production includes citrus, mangoes, papaya and other tree fruits. Surplus produce is primarily sold in the local Tavua market to supplement incomes. Both men and women are engaged in selling in markets, but men control transportation resources, so women's access to markets is limited.

Men manage sugarcane crops and all the financial dealings associated with sugarcane production and sale. They also manage large livestock such as cows, horses, goats, sheep and pigs, and sell live animals as a source of income.

The community does not engage in fishing activities to any significant degree. Fish is generally purchased from local markets or elsewhere.

Food and nutrition security

During consultations, women in the community expressed differing views as to whether food production has increased or decreased over the past decade. Women noted that marketing of produce is more prevalent, while food consumption patterns reflect lower household use of crops grown in family gardens. Women estimated that ten years ago close to 100 percent of food consumption needs were met by home-based production whereas now that number has dropped to about 10–20 percent. It is not clear if this is linked to higher household incomes, greater availability of groceries or a combination of both.

Preferences are for foods that are more convenient to prepare, including canned and frozen food, bread and sweets. Some women report growing less food due to increased reliance on purchased products, while others have increased both production and marketing to generate more agricultural-based income.

Control over and access to resources

The community consultations in Malele did not yield a full picture of women's access to agricultural resources in the settlement, which may have resulted from men dominating the discussions. The community governance system of Malele is a local advisory council comprised of ten members, only one of whom is a woman. This constrains women in having their voices heard in decision-making about community assets that are, in theory, accessible to everyone.

Women noted during consultations that they would like more support to enhance their livelihoods and quality of life. However, lack of agency and voice inhibits them from participating in community development. Constrained by social and gender norms that limit their engagement, women have limited capacity to influence and advocate for government or civil society interventions to address their needs.

Climate change

Consultations in Malele settlement noted that changes attributed to climate change are affecting community members' livelihoods and the sustainability of the community. These include more extreme weather events such as cyclones and other major storms as well as droughts. Secondary impacts include flooding, landslides and damages to infrastructure – all of which challenge planning and production. The community also noted increases in river sedimentation, higher temperatures in the hot season and poor pasture production and lower livestock yields due to droughts

and floods. Due to the male-dominated nature of the consultations, the gender dimensions of such changes were difficult to assess.

5.2 Navai village

Navai village has a land tenure system that is different from the mataqali land management arrangements common in i-Taukei villages. Land is managed through a 'native grant' system under the Native Land Trust Act, with villagers leasing 500 acres of land from the Government for agricultural purposes. Lease terms are usually 99 years. However, due to the steep slopes of up to 30 degrees, not all the land is considered arable because of high risk of erosion if agriculture is attempted in steep areas. It is estimated that only 50 acres of truly arable land are available to the 72 households in the village.

Agricultural in Navai land is allocated to family groups and is transferrable through inheritance following *mataqali* traditions. Family groups may comprise single or multiple households. Men and women manage their family land in line with accepted divisions of labour. Additionally, two acres of land in the village is leased to the women's organization Soqosoqo Vakamarama. The village women share this plot and use it to grow vegetables. Some of the resulting produce is sold and some is divided among the participating women for home consumption and to share with elders in the community. Decisions on how to use income from sales are made in monthly meetings. Women may also grow vegetables and fruits on the property immediately surrounding family houses and collect edible and medicinal plants from the forest.

Soqosoqo Vakamarama (SV) is the largest women's civil society organization in Fiji. It is a stand-alone entity headed by the wife of the President of Fiji, assisted by the wife of the Vice President. This women's CSO works in the country's 14 provinces on village, district and provincial matters, in accordance with the protocols of relevant government ministries. Its work coverage includes national development policies, programming, laws, regulations and services. Each i-Taukei village has an SV representative. The SV represents i-Taukei women's voice on all development issues, and specifically gender issues, in all sectors of development. SV is involved in traditional governance systems and can influence decisions.



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Agricultural practice is typically a form of shifting cultivation. Farmers move to new land after two to three cropping sequences, for example, a vegetable crop followed by a root crop followed by a fallow period.

Water resources include the Navai and Drodromai rivers, which are source of freshwater fish and prawns. The village has at least one fishpond and is walking distance from the reservoir of the Monasavu hydroelectric dam.

The village is surrounded by four forest reserves, one of which, Mount Tomaniivi, is used for eco-tourism trekking, which provides income to the village.³⁶ Agricultural cultivation and logging activities are prohibited in these areas. The size of the village landholdings, the steep mountain terrain and the forest reserve restrictions limit food production and have led to increased reliance on purchased food.

Gendered roles in agricultural production

A variety of crops is grown in Navai, following a gendered division of labour and responsibilities similar to patterns found in other i-Taukei communities.

Men are primarily responsible for the heavy work of preparing the ground, preparing new areas for crop rotation, managing slash and burn activities, growing higher-value root vegetables and yaqona, harvesting pandanus leaves used by women for weaving and managing larger livestock such as cattle, goats and pigs. Men also manage the village fishpond. Men's labour in the village is informal or self-employed, with the aim of selling crops to intermediate buyers or in public markets.

Women manage kitchen gardens, gather medicinal plants from forest areas, and do weaving with pandanus leaves. They also engage in fishing for subsistence purposes, including gathering prawns and eels from rivers and creeks, as well as fishing in the large reservoir of the Monasavu dam in order to sell fish in the Tavua market. There is no specific formal employment for women in agriculture in the village.

Food and nutrition security

Villagers consulted for this report perceive that reliance on subsistence food sources has decreased in the

past 10 years. People consume more purchased food, including rice, frozen and canned food, sweets, butter and salt. The change is associated with a number of factors, including 1) increased transportation options to Tavua town and beyond to access products; 2) more people opening small stores in the village; and 3) ease of preparation of purchased food. Additionally, limited arable land makes it difficult to produce food for an increased population and the available income of most households makes purchased food a viable option.

Access to and control over resources

Women in Navai, as with other i-Taukei communities, have access to agricultural resources on family property but they lack decision-making power regarding household finances. While further research is needed on gender differences in access to and control over resources in Navai village, it was noted that men largely control the decision-making bodies that govern the village and clans, resulting in women having less control over community land use, management of natural resources, and engagement with government and civil society resource people. It was also noted that resource management decisions, particularly those related to how much logging to allow and what to do about resulting deforestation, have led to forest degradation, decreased quality of water resources and reduced availability of medicinal plants.

Some households in the village are engaged in eco-tourism or small businesses. Men are more active in this work and control the resulting income. Men also have sole control of large machinery and vehicles. In terms of other physical assets, both men and women generally own and control the tools and assets that are associated with their agricultural, fisheries and handicraft activities.

Women are the primary producers of handicrafts and weaving, but their control over the income generated from these activities is not clear. Both men and women reported having bank accounts, but more research is needed to understand how assets are managed and controlled within households.

Time is an important resource. Consultations in Navai showed that women have considerably less leisure time and spend more hours working than men. While women and men both spend several hours a day

³⁶ The eco-tourism operation is managed by an external company, which pays a percentage of the tourists' fees to the village.



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in productive activities —for both subsistence and income generation—women spend considerably more time than men on household tasks such as cooking, cleaning and caregiving. For example, women may be engaged in unpaid household tasks for seven to eight hours per day, compared to men’s average engagement of two to three hours.

In terms of potential to generate income, men and women in the community both indicated that men are at a greater advantage because of the higher value of the root crops they control combined with their ownership of or access to transportation resources. Women can sell the vegetables they produce and/or fish they catch. However, family food security requirements, combined with their limited access to transportation and time to make regular trips to the town market in Tavua, hinder their capacity to earn much income from produce and fish.

Climate change

Climate change is perceived by the villagers of Navai as having both positive and negative impacts. Warmer temperatures have resulted in improved yields of taro, cassava, breadfruit, citrus and other tree fruits. Farming of yaqona is now also possible with more regular warm temperatures. These changes are viewed favourably as they result in greater food security and potential income opportunities.

Negative impacts include more extreme weather events such as flooding, as well as reduced soil fertility, pest outbreaks that damage crops and lower yields of some traditional varieties of root crops, reduced populations of endemic plant and animal species, and reduced water levels. Changes in river sedimentation that damage fish habitat are believed to be a result of poor management of forest resources combined with flooding caused by climate change.

6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS



The Government of Fiji has committed to gender equality and the empowerment of women through a variety of national, regional and international instruments. Overall progress has been made in the areas of education, healthcare, basic infrastructure and, to some extent, employment and participation of women in decision-making. However, remoteness and insularity, economic factors and, above all, social norms continue to serve as barriers to women in accessing development resources, information, public services, technical support and justice.

This Country Gender Assessment of ARD in Fiji has identified gaps between women and men in access to information, quality of livelihoods and opportunities to benefit from development outcomes. These issues are interconnected, necessitating a strategic approach with a combination of actions to support the empowerment of rural women.

6.1 Major findings

1) The contributions of rural women to household and rural economies need to be better recognized and adequately reflected in policies, strategies, plans and programmes

Women's roles in agriculture and other rural development sectors remain largely invisible and unaccounted for in most surveys. There is a scarcity of sex-disaggregated data (combined with a scarcity of data disaggregated by rural/urban location) and gender analysis across the development sectors. This makes it difficult not only to assess the value of rural women's contributions to ARD, but also to identify appropriate solutions to support rural development overall.

2) Gender inequalities affect rural women's capacity to develop their potential

In the rural sectors in Fiji, particularly in agriculture and fisheries, women have less control of economic resources and less decision-making power than do men. Women's effective participation in decision-making on natural resource management is constrained by traditional social norms and rules of community governance. Most women concurrently participate in both the subsistence and cash economies while bearing a heavier burden of responsibility for day-to-day household work and caregiving. Overall, women spend more hours per week than men on paid and unpaid work. Consultations for this report indicated that government

ministries and CSOs working on agriculture, fisheries and sustainable rural development are often uncomfortable discussing gender equality issues that contradict established gender power relations.

Women and men are both involved in agriculture and fisheries, but with clear gendered divisions of labour. Women and men fulfil different roles in agriculture and fisheries, use different types of equipment and often have different sets of knowledge and experience. These factors have policy and programming implications since women and men have different skills related to managing environmental resources that can be combined for effective adaptation and response to climate change and related disasters. For instance, based on their different roles and types of knowledge, women and men might recognize different indicators of environmental stress that, together, could contribute to effective management approaches. From a policy perspective, it is important that such diversity in knowledge, behaviour and roles be integrated into data collection mechanisms and programme approaches. It is also important to ensure programmes accommodate the constraints on women's time due to caregiving and household responsibilities. This requires strengthening the enabling environment for gender mainstreaming in government agencies as well as strengthening evidence collection and analysis.

3) The integration of gender inequality as an impediment to sustainable development is not systematically mainstreamed in public policies, strategies, plans and programmes

Integration of gender into current strategic planning at the national and sectoral levels is happening to a certain degree, but there is a need for more quality assurance in terms of the holistic application of gender analysis across all ministry mandates and the design of monitoring and evaluation of what works to incrementally foster increased gender equality. For example, the gender indicators in the *5-Year and 20-Year National Development Plan: Transforming Fiji* will not effectively measure any cumulative progress on gender mainstreaming and gender equality by ministries working in the rural sectors. Additionally, the absence of coordination mechanisms to share and mainstream information among line ministries constrains synergistic programming and monitoring of higher-level efforts.

The combination of desk review, site visits and consultations conducted to inform this study points

to relative progress on mainstreaming gender in the agriculture, fisheries and rural sectors in Fiji. There is demonstrated political will at the policy level, both nationally and in line ministries, and senior staff consulted for this report readily spoke about how gender mainstreaming will support achievement of government mandates for development in rural areas. Additionally, the agriculture and fisheries ministries have budgets allocated for gender mainstreaming and have specific targets for engaging women in their respective sectors. Both ministries are also working to build their base of sex-disaggregated data to inform decision making.

Progress in other areas is slower. There is an acknowledgement that awareness about gender analysis and gender mainstreaming is low among staff working at the field level to implement extension programmes. Ministry plans do not include capacity development for staff in these areas, and there is a lack of clarity about accountability for inter-ministry coordination and outreach to build gender analysis capacity. Consultations with both CSOs and government agencies stressed that, in order to avoid backlash against women, capacity building for progressing gender equality should be done in the context of programme implementation. This will support government and CSO staff to use their existing technical and sector-specific knowledge to adapt their approaches in ways that communities are comfortable with. Collaboration among government extension workers and CSOs working in the same communities will mutually reinforce approaches and create multiple entry points for change. It is important that findings at the micro level inform policy and strategic planning at the macro level. Such a bottom-up flow of information could be facilitated through efficient inter-governmental coordination mechanisms, although these have yet to be established.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this Assessment, the following recommendations are targeted to the Government of Fiji, FAO and SPC to align their respective commitments to address gender inequality issues and work towards empowering women in agriculture and the rural economy. These recommendations also reflect commitments made by the Government of Fiji at the international, regional and national levels, with the aim of supporting the implementation of

such commitments. Recommendations are provided for supporting the empowerment of rural women, improving policies and strengthening the capacity of institutions to deliver gender-responsive programmes and services.

To make rural women's contribution to households and rural economies visible and gender equality adequately reflected in policies, strategies, plans and programmes:

- Improve the production and analysis of sex-, age- and rural/urban- disaggregated data relevant for gender equality and rural women's empowerment in ARD policies, strategies, plans and programmes;
- Mandate all ministries to monitor and report on the impacts of their policies, plans, programmes and services for rural populations with age- and sex-disaggregated data and indicators, and strengthen their capacity to do so;
- Implement a comprehensive monitoring framework on gender equality and rural women's empowerment in agriculture that will cover all key economic, social and political aspects;
- Strengthen monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation, including through regular tracking and auditing of expenses on gender-responsive budgeting in order to understand changes in women's status. Periodically review the processes, criteria and weightage of indicators for gender-responsive budgets to make them more effective and relevant from gender, social and geographical perspectives;
- Improve statistical surveys to adequately measure the complexity of rural women's contributions to the rural and national economies, including the informal economy. In parallel, conduct age- and sex-disaggregated time-use surveys in rural areas to assess women's and men's amount of time dedicated to productive and reproductive work (including unpaid household work and care, community-related activities, subsistence activities, incomes-generating activities, etc.)
- Conduct studies to identify economic opportunities for women in the context of the green economy, including through value-chain development of agricultural and fisheries' products, to support ecological resilience and contribute to sustainable development.

To address gender inequalities in the rural sector and support the empowerment of rural women:

- Promote policy research and analysis on gender equality and rural women's empowerment in the agricultural sector to inform policies and strategic planning, and conduct systematic gender analyses on legislation and policies, including macroeconomic policies, structural reforms and aid and trade agreements;
- Put in place concrete measures for the improvement of rural women's access to technical support, extension services, technologies, and transport as well as to productive resources and financial services, including credit, loans, and saving schemes to support the financial inclusion of rural women;
- Build rural women's resilience to climate change impacts in order to sustain their livelihoods in agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture by supporting sustainable traditional knowledge and practices;
- Encourage governmental institutions and rural finance institutions such as micro-finance and development banks to offer special promotional packages that include group collateral, business literacy, insurance schemes with low premiums and assurance of markets for agricultural products to strengthen women's engagement in agriculture and in the rural non-farm economy (including in cultural industries) and to stimulate their access to markets and market infrastructure;
- Promote accessible communications systems and use of radio, texts and other media as a way for rural women producers and sellers to access 1) agricultural extension, rural advisory services and weather information; 2) information on opportunities to apply for grants and in-kind services and support; and 3) support and information from other women growers (e.g. on how produce products more effectively, use financial services, develop opportunities, etc.);
- Prioritize the needs of rural women in relation to their livelihood activities in disaster recovery programmes and empower them as key actors in food and nutrition security and as conservators of local ecological knowledge and practices;
- Increase rural women's access programmes and services that support survivors of domestic violence and their access to justice;

- Improve the delivery of quality rural services adapted to women's needs, including accessible child care, elderly care, mental health care and disability care, to alleviate the burden of rural women's unpaid care work.
- Improve rural infrastructure, including infrastructure for transportation, water and sanitation and sustainable energy, with specific measures to promote accessibility to women;
- Stimulate participation of rural women in decision making through dialogue and collaboration with customary institutions, including review of gender-biased norms and practices, adoption of measures to support women's representation in local and national institutions and in natural resource governance mechanisms (land, water, and forest, marine), and support for rural women's groups to increase their bargaining power to access financial resources, technology, markets and land;
- Develop partnerships with civil society organizations and governmental mechanisms to transform gendered stereotypes and other adverse gender norms.

To support the systematic integration of a gender perspective in public policies, strategies, plans and programmes:

- Finalize or commence the preparation of stand-alone gender policies by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Fisheries;
- Based on evidence, recognize the scope of rural women's involvement in farming, forestry and fishing activities as agricultural producers in their own right so that ARD policies, strategies, plans and programmes are designed and implemented in a gender-responsive manner to effectively contribute to the sustainable empowerment of rural women.
- Establish an intragovernmental coordination mechanism on gender equality and RWE mandated to fully take charge over the coordination of gender equality and RWE efforts across the governmental system (central and local); such a mechanism would involve the establishment of Gender Focal Points in all agriculture line ministries and all other relevant ministries and institutions;
- Assess impacts of legislation and policies, including macroeconomic policies, structural reforms and aid and trade agreements, on women's productive assets and economic empowerment;

- Design gender-responsive policies and strategies for climate change adaptation and disaster risk management that support rural women's activities in small-scale agriculture, fisheries, aquaculture and cultural industries;
- Adopt and implement gender mainstreaming strategies and plans in key ministries that provide rural services (including ministries responsible for agriculture, fisheries, infrastructure, women, justice, climate change and disaster risk management);
- Strengthen the capacity of ministries involved in ARD to mainstream gender equality and RWE across their policies, programmes, budgets and services, including extension services.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1: List of institutions consulted

Government

Ministry of Agriculture

- Director of Extension Services
- Director of Research
- Policy Adviser

Ministry of Fisheries

- Principal Fisheries Officer (inshore)
- Principal Research Officer
- Principal Planning Officer

Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation

- Women's Affairs Officer
- Senior Women's Officer

Development partners and civil society organizations consulted

GIZ/REDD+

Wildlife Conservation Society

Women in Fisheries

FemLINKpacific

Rise Beyond the Reef

World Wildlife Fund (WWF)

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON)

Conservation International

Live and learn



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**Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Representation in Fiji**

FAO Subregional Office for the Pacific Islands (FAO SAP)
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