



Culture-Gender-Relocation Nexus in iTaukei Villages

*Supporting the implementation of the Standard
Operating Procedures for Planned Relocation in Fiji*

Simione Sevudredre

on behalf of Fiji Climate Change Division and
GIZ Human Mobility in the Context of Climate Change Programme

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Terminologies, Definitions & Acronyms

TERM	DEFINITION / DESCRIPTION
Bika vanua	<p>A traditional Fijian marriage arrangement which held great socio-political influence in traditional Fijian polity. A woman of high rank is married off to a different clan of equal status. This marriage brought political benefits to both clans acting as an indefinite peace broker ensuring stability and security. The forerunner of bika vanua in olden day Fiji was the state of Bau who maximised its women of rank to marry off into traditional independent states. This tradition peaked around the late 1800s. Many old traditional polities in Fiji like Cakaudrove, Lakeba, Naitasiri, Nairai, Batiki and Verata by the early 1900s had a woman of Bau married to their chiefs thus increasing Bau influence.</p>
Bete	<p>Traditional priests or spiritual leaders. These individuals played important roles in the spiritual and cultural life of the Fijian people. They were responsible for performing various religious and ceremonial duties, and they often served as intermediaries between the people and the spirits or deities in traditional Fijian religion. Bete provided spiritual guidance and advice to their communities, helping individuals navigate important life decisions and challenges.</p> <p>Bete were seen as the bridge between the living and these spiritual entities, and they communicate with them on behalf of the community. They often possessed extensive knowledge of traditional Fijian customs, myths, and oral history, which they passed down through generations. This role become redundant when Fiji adopted Christianity in 1835.</p>
Carasala	<p>Literally means “clearing the pathways” alluding to it being overgrown with grass and weeds. It is a ceremony where a group retraces its origins to its ancestral land in Fiji and involves presenting generous gifts. Carasala is an emotional reconnecting of related people or family who parted ways centuries ago and have come together finally to essentially meet and catch up. The visiting group reconnects and returns with renewed ties and bonds.</p>
Covicovi ni draudrau	<p>This is for the case of a woman from one Mataqali marrying into another Mataqali. Members of her Mataqali would donate land on her behalf in recognition of her children’s special links [vasu] to her Mataqali. The same type of alienation is known by different terms in other dialects of other provinces. In Ba province it is called “Lewe ni Kete” and in Nadroga it is called “Lewe ni Kato”.</p>
Culture	<p>The set of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviours, and artifacts that characterise a particular group or society. It encompasses the way people within a group or community think, act, and interact with each other and their environment. Culture is not limited to one aspect of life; it influences everything from language and religion to food, art, and social norms.</p>

TERM	DEFINITION / DESCRIPTION
Daunimamaroroi	Roughly translates to protector or custodian in today's modern context – a role that traditionally belonged to elderly men
Dauniveisusu	Generically means nurturer and is used synonymously with women in Fiji. It spans the continuum of nurturing ranging from family, to clan, to non-consanguineal groups like a boarding school, a home for orphans or retirees. It also refers to nurturing or caring of gardens, herbs, rivers and waterways a woman is individually or collectively responsible for.
Daunivucu	A traditional composer and choreographer of traditional performing arts or meke in the Fijian indigenous culture. This position is hereditary in some parts of Fiji. In other parts it is gifted to someone by another person through rituals. It is also common for one to become a daunivucu through vasu privileges.
GEDSI	Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion
Gonedau	These are the traditional fishermen who are part of a Fijian clan or larger confederate state. They are custodians of the sea, its reefs, shoreline and the various fishing techniques and the traditional knowledge that comes with it.
Ikanakana	Sites or places with ancestral meanings. These sites may be spiritual, natural or associated with ancestral farming sites.
Indigenous spirituality	Refers to the diverse and complex belief systems, practices, and worldviews of Indigenous peoples around the world. These spiritual traditions are deeply rooted in the cultures, histories, and environments of Indigenous communities. While there is no single, monolithic Indigenous spirituality, there are common themes and principles that are often found across various Indigenous cultures. It's important to note that Indigenous spirituality is incredibly diverse, with distinct beliefs and practices among different Indigenous groups.
iTaukei	Indigenous people of Fiji
Tatau	To seek permission and blessings to depart from a place for work, sport or travel. It can range from simple verbal expressions to elaborate ceremonial expressions. It can also mean a person's final words before dying.
Yau	The generic word meaning wealth. It can refer to tangible artifacts to intangible attributes and values
Kovukovu	Piece of land given by an iTaukei landowner or land owning group, or an institution to another for use
LGBTQI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and more. Describes a person's sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.
Loss and damage	A term used in the context of climate change and international climate negotiations, particularly within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It refers to the adverse effects of climate change that go beyond what can be mitigated or adapted to through standard measures. In other words, loss and damage represent the residual impacts of climate change that cannot be prevented or effectively addressed through mitigation or adaptation efforts.

TERM	DEFINITION / DESCRIPTION
Mana	A term that has significance in various cultures and contexts around the world. It generally refers to a concept of spiritual power, authority, or energy. In many Polynesian cultures, including Hawaiian and Maori, “mana” is a spiritual force or power that resides in people, objects, or places. It can be both positive and negative, depending on its use. For example, a person with a lot of “mana” might be seen as having influence, prestige, or spiritual power.
Mataisau	These are the traditional craftsmen in the traditional Fijian social hierarchy. It is hereditary. They are more than just carpentars for they are also stewards of trees.
Matanivanua	<p>A Fijian term that translates to “eyes of the land” or “people of the land” in English. It is a significant concept in Fijian culture and represents the indigenous Fijian people’s deep connection to their ancestral land and their role as custodians of their traditional territories.</p> <p>The term “matanivanua” reflects the idea that the land and the people are inseparable. It signifies the spiritual and cultural ties that Fijians have with their land, which is often passed down through generations. This connection is central to Fijian identity, as the land not only provides sustenance and resources but also holds cultural and historical significance.</p> <p>Fijian culture places a strong emphasis on the relationship between people and their land, and this connection is reflected in various aspects of Fijian life, including customs, rituals, and traditions. It underscores the importance of environmental stewardship and the preservation of cultural heritage in Fiji.</p>
Non-economic loss and damage	The intangible or non-monetary consequences of various events, such as natural disasters, accidents, or personal injuries. These losses are not easily quantifiable in terms of dollars and cents and often involve emotional, psychological, social, or cultural impacts.
Sau	<p>A Fijian word that means “chief” or “leader.” In Fijian society, the term “sau” is used to refer to a person who holds a position of leadership and authority within a clan, tribe, or community. The role of a sau is significant, as they are often responsible for making important decisions, resolving disputes, and representing their people in various social and cultural contexts.</p> <p>The selection of a sau typically follows traditional Fijian customs and may involve a combination of hereditary succession, consensus among clan members, and adherence to cultural protocols. Sau is a respected title, and those who hold it are expected to uphold the values and traditions of their community while providing guidance and leadership.</p>
Sautu	It means peace and prosperity at one level and implies balance or harmony at all levels of existence both in the seen and the unseen world
Sauturaga	These are the traditional kingmakers and advisors of a chief in the Fijian social structure and is hereditary. They are also custodians of traditional, norms and ethics
Sigana	Offering to the gods: Also the portion out of many offered to the gods. The sigana of food is tabu to be eaten except by the aged.

TERM	DEFINITION / DESCRIPTION
SOGIESC	“Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sex Characteristics.” It is often used in discussions related to human rights, diversity, and inclusion, particularly in the context of LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, and other identities) issues.
Totem	Symbolic objects or representations often associated with indigenous cultures, particularly those of North America and the Melanesian Islands of the Pacific. These objects hold significant cultural and spiritual meaning within these communities and play various roles in their rituals, beliefs, and traditions.
Turaga	At everyday level the word means gentleman. At ceremonial level it refers to a chief who is the traditional leader of a clan and is a hereditary role.
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
Uvi	Generic word for cultivated yam
Vanua	<p>A Fijian word that has a unique cultural and social and spiritual significance in the indigenous Fijian society. It can be somewhat challenging to provide a single, concise definition, as its meaning encompasses various aspects of Fijian culture and tradition. However, I can provide a general understanding of the term:</p> <p>Vanua refers to the land, territory, and the people who inhabit a particular geographical area or community in Fiji. It goes beyond a mere physical location and encompasses a deep connection between the land, its resources, and the indigenous Fijian people who live on it. It is a concept that embodies the spiritual, cultural, and social identity of the community.</p>
Veiciqomi	A traditional value that means mutual recognition and acceptance
Veidokai	A traditional value that means having mutual respect for one another
Veitauvutaki	<p>“Veitauvutaki” is a Fijian term that translates to “relationship” or “kinship” in English. It refers to the social and familial bonds that connect individuals and communities in Fijian society. Veitauvutaki encompasses the idea of belonging and interconnectedness among people, and it plays a significant role in Fijian culture.</p> <p>In Fijian society, veitauvutaki is central to how people relate to one another and their sense of identity within their clan or tribe. It involves not only immediate family relationships but also extends to extended family members and the wider community. These relationships are often built on reciprocity, mutual support, and a sense of shared responsibility.</p>
Veivakaturagataki	A traditional value that means esteeming one another. This value attests to how clans or tribes of olden Fiji esteemed strangers with charisma and had them installed as chiefs. The value is expressed widely in contemporary Fiji by way of treating a guest by giving the best of what one has.

TERM	DEFINITION / DESCRIPTION
Vunivalu	<p>Refers to the traditional title of the paramount chief or leader of a specific region or province within Fiji. The vunivalu holds a position of great authority and responsibility within their respective community or province, and their role is significant in Fijian society.</p> <p>The vunivalu is often regarded as the highest-ranking chief within their area of authority and is responsible for making important decisions, resolving disputes, and representing their people in various social, political, and cultural matters. The selection of a vunivalu typically follows traditional Fijian customs and may involve hereditary succession, consensus among clan leaders, and adherence to cultural protocols.</p>
Yabaki	Word meaning year in everyday Fiji conversation. At ceremonies of annual first fruits, it refers to yams that have been symbolically presented and offered.
Yavu	House mound in traditional Fijian dwellings, which are made of upraised compacted earth into a rectangular mound about three feet to ones towering over 9 feet. Houses were built on these earth mounds or foundations. Symbolically if a group has a mound in a village site, it means roots, belonging and ancestral connections to a place.

Significant persons referenced

NAME	DETAILS
Rokomoutu	Ancestral hero or founder of the ancient kingdom of Verata that spanned most of eastern Fiji from 1000AD to 1800s. Rokomoutu was the son of Lutunasobasoba the ancestral hero and voyager who arrived at Vuda. His other siblings according to Verata lore include Buisavulu, Romelasiga, Daunisau, Tuinayavu and Sagavulunavuda.
Buatavatava Naulumatua	The first-born son of Rokomoutu who was banished by Rokomoutu for a misdeed. At his banishment, he was accompanied by sympathisers and out of this banishment came many tribes and clans on Vanualevu in Fiji.
O koya na Ratu mai Verata	The traditional honorific title of Rokomoutu and by extension the paramount chief of Verata and its tributaries whose residence is in Ucunivanua village in the Tailevu province on the eastern coast of Vitilevu.

Introduction

1.1 Defining culture in the iTaukei context

There are diverse definitions of culture and their subscriptions likewise are equally diverse. The indigenous Fijian understanding of culture, as articulated in this report, is extrapolated from iTaukei culture. Culture in this sense then is known as “na itovo kei na ivakarau” which alludes to patterns of observable behaviour and expressions. Na itovo kei na ivavakarau by extension embeds the indigenous collective notion of governance, chieftaincy, its people, the seen and unseen world, the positions, spaces, places, notions of time, the spoken and the silences, the verbal and the non-verbal expressions in both the human, natural and spiritual dimensions. This working definition augments the definition in the glossary which further defines culture as



The set of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviours, and artifacts that characterise a particular group or society. It encompasses the way people within a group or community think, act, and interact with each other and their environment. Culture is not limited to one aspect of life; it influences everything from language and religion to food, art, and social norms.

1.2 Defining gender in the iTaukei context

Gender also is defined and understood in the indigenous iTaukei context which basically refers to the denotational and connotational aspects of being either a male or a female. One's status of being a male or female in the biological sense underscores this notions and social constructs, history, culture, time, place and space further define one's gender and its roles. Therefore, one's gender role evolves as one transits throughout the continuum of life. One's gender role is not an isolated mould on its own but is a cog in the greater scheme of culture and life in the indigenous iTaukei ontology and its gradual and subtle evolution in today's contemporary context in Fiji.

1.3 Defining relocation

Relocation in this report is understood from its historical context when seen in the migratory patterns and movements of people and clans in and around Fiji throughout the two millennia indigenous Fijians have existed in Fiji. In this historical sense then, relocation means movement of a person or group from one point to another due to overcrowding, insecurity and conflict and seeking better resources and access to food, water and land.

Relocation and Planned Relocation in the context of climate induced mobility is articulated in the Fiji Government's Planned Relocation Guidelines (2018) as –



Relocation is the voluntary, planned and coordinated movement of climate-displaced persons within States to suitable locations, away from risk-prone areas, where they can enjoy the full spectrum of rights including housing, land and property rights and all other livelihood and related rights. It includes displacement, evacuation (emergency relocation) and planned).

Planned relocation is understood as a solution-oriented measure, involving the State, in which a community (wholly or partially, and as distinct from an individual/ household) is physically moved to another location and resettled permanently there.

The lessons and recommendations coming out from this analysis serve to provide guidance and instructions for a culture and gender sensitive and responsive approach when implementing the Standard Operating Procedures for Planned Relocation in Fiji.

1.4 Why culture-gender relocation nexus in Fiji

The indigenous people of Fiji are part of an oceanic migratory wave whose first settlers arrived around 1500 BC. Living as farmers, foragers and fishermen, the early Fijians developed ontologies extrapolated empirically through living closely in tune with nature and the elements. Skills, values and attitudes that evolved from this early culture were transmitted through the generations with each generation adapting accordingly. Internal and external migration and relocation was very common by these early Fijian ancestors who were flexible and adaptable in the pursuit of survival.

When Fiji became a British Crown Colony in 1874, the migrations gradually declined and stopped altogether. This was particularly so when the colonial government regulated that all indigenous settlements inland and near the coast were to relocate to the nearest river or coast to facilitate easier health and administrative services by the colonial administrators.

By roughly the early 1900s Fijians living communally in clans and tribes had become 'fixed' to their new locations. This 'fixed relocation' came about through the colonial administration Native Lands Claims and Fisheries Commissions. Notable commissioners of the period include (but not limited to) Sir Basil Thompson, Sir David Wilkinson, G. V. Maxwell and Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna.

With colonialism also came formal education or schooling - its main socialising agent. The curriculum included the three 'Rs' reading, writing and arithmetic which subtly but intentionally marginalised the indigenous language. The indigenous languages and dialects of Fiji are the repository of traditional knowledge and expressions that are replete with notions and oral traditions regarding custodianship of the land and seascapes. From 1874 to the writing of this report (2023), it has taken 149 years of formal schooling to subtly marginalise the oral histories and traditions of old that had sustained and built resilience of the Fijians since their arrival in Fiji more than two thousand years ago.

In addition, formal education introduced individualism and capitalism which subtly subverted the indigenous collectivism and its economics that foregrounded kinship, mutual well-being and the values of looking out for one another and the spiritual connection to the environment. Essentially colonialism and formal education created a paradigm shift in terms of indigenous notions of culture and gender. It also silenced the oral traditions on traditional resilience and adaptation almost into extinction.

However, all is not lost as slivers of wisdom drawn from traditional knowledge remain embedded in words, practices and expressions that are a quiet reminder of how these time-honoured values and precedents still retain their universality.

Therefore, the question then on why culture-gender nexus in relocation? There are invaluable strengths and lessons to be drawn from the oral history and tradition of the indigenous Fijians. To recognise and relearn these valuable precedents requires the decolonising of the mind of both implementors of climate relocation and the indigenous iTaukei villages. This approach is not the panacea to the climate relocation conundrum, rather they can begin to provide solutions on what works better for the indigenous Fijian communities living in Fiji.

1.5 International and national policy context of culture-gender-relocation

Fiji is part of the United Nations and some of its Conventions. These international instruments embed and imply the cross-cutting aspect of culture and indigeneity. Notable ones that recognise culture, gender and its subsequent nexus to relocation include:

1.5.1 The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People

This was adopted by the Fiji Cabinet in 2023 ever since becoming independent in 1970. While the entire declaration articulates how States should incorporate the recognition and respect of indigenous people in their jurisdictions, Articles 10 and 11 speak directly to the focus of this report.

Article 10

Indigenous peoples shall not be forcibly removed from their lands or territories. No relocation shall take place without the free, prior and informed consent of the indigenous peoples concerned and after agreement on just and fair compensation and, where possible, with the option of return.

Article 11

Indigenous peoples have the right to practise and revitalise their cultural traditions and customs. This includes the right to maintain, protect and develop the past, present and future manifestations of their cultures, such as archaeological and historical sites, artefacts, designs, ceremonies, technologies and visual and performing arts and literature.

1.5.2 UNESCO 2003 Convention

A key UNESCO Convention on culture Fiji ratified in 2010 is the 2003 Convention on the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. This Convention is about safeguarding indigenous culture and knowledge systems (intangible cultural heritage) from the perspective of the communities and its practitioners. This Convention validates and supports viable cultural expressions that identify and sustain communities, hence the need for States parties to develop safeguarding plans to this end. The Convention foregrounds the community and how each defines its intangible cultural heritage, a pertinent issue given today's issues around disasters, climate change and relocation.

1.5.3 Sendai Framework

Sendai Framework focuses on the adoption of measures which address the three dimensions of disaster risk (exposure to hazards, vulnerability and capacity and hazard characteristics) in order to prevent the creation of new risk, reducing existing risks and increasing resilience.

1.5.4 Paris Agreement

The Paris Agreement is a legally binding international treaty on climate change adopted by 196 Parties at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) in Paris, France, on 12 December 2015. It entered into force on 4 November 2016.

The decision preamble acknowledges the need for Parties to respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on the rights of indigenous people. Article 5, paragraph (2) of the Agreement reaffirms the importance of incentivising, as appropriate, non-carbon benefits associated with market mechanisms. Under Article 7, paragraph 5, Parties acknowledge that adaptation action should follow a country-driven, gender responsive, participatory and fully transparent approach, taking into consideration vulnerable groups, communities and ecosystems, and ... as appropriate, traditional knowledge, knowledge of indigenous peoples and local knowledge systems, with a view to integrating adaptation into relevant socioeconomic and environmental policies and actions, where appropriate.

1.5.5 Pacific Islands Forum 2050 Strategy

The 2050 strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent thematic area on climate change disasters and strategic pathways on inclusion and equity ensures the protection and practice of the rights, cultural values and heritage and traditional knowledge of Pacific peoples in global and regional protocols for climate and disaster risk reduction, and mobility including relocation, migration and displacement

1.5.6 Fiji 2013 Constitution

Chapter 2 of the 2013 Fiji Constitution stipulates the Bill of Rights that are recognised as legal and binding on the State and its subsequent legislations.

1.5.7 Climate Change Act

Fiji's Climate Change Act of 2021 established the Fiji Government's commitment towards the governance and operationalising the government's plans and strategies. Sections 75 and 76 in particular articulates the requirements on Climate Displacement and Relocation. While the Act does not directly mention culture, it requires an approach that is human-centered, livelihoods-based, human-rights-based and pre-emptive. Furthermore, the iTaukei Affairs Act 1944 and the iTaukei Land Trust Act 1940 are prescribed laws to the Climate Change Act.

1.5.8 Fiji National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against All Women and Girls (NAP) 2023 - 2028

The 2023 – 2028 Fiji National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against All Women and Girls (NAP) is the first of two five-year plans intended to establish the foundations for the Government of Fiji's long-term commitment to prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG). Five key strategies are employed to comprehensively address violence: 1) transformative public education and social norm change; 2) strengthening of equal and respectful relationships; 3) survivor-centred services for survivors of violence; 4) coordinated legal protection for survivors of violence; and 5) fostering a gender equal society.



Women Defend the Commons network calling for gender justice. Source: Fiji Government

The NAP states that aspects of culture and religion, and their interpretations, promote gender inequality and reinforce harmful ideas and myths about women and girls and their rights. Manifestations of patriarchy as the root cause of VAWG include culture and religious traditions:

- cultural and religious traditions and their interpretations link to men's power and control over women;
- upholding traditional gender norms and learned behaviours entrench patriarchy.

Actions to address these include –

- Advancing a whole-population and whole-of government institutional culture change to generate attitudes, norms and practices that promote gender equality and the prevention of VAWG.
- Improving governance and accountability for the safe and inclusive participation and leadership of women and girls in sport, faith-based settings, workplaces, education, disciplined forces and traditional institutions and entities.

1.6 Purpose of the report

The purpose of this report is to:

1. Describe cultural norms and practices that are affected when an iTaukei village relocates;
2. Highlight how relocation affects:
 - a. Traditional knowledge
 - b. Traditional totems
 - c. Vanua attachment
 - d. Traditional structure and hierarchies including traditional roles

The overall objective of the analysis is to provide insights into lessons learnt and provide recommendations to support a culture and gender sensitive approach when implementing the Standard Operating Procedures for Planned Relocation.

The report is framed in stories and epistemology from oral history and tradition to inform ways forward today, an approach that resonates closely with Winston Churchill's quote



1.7 The indigenous iTaukei ontology¹

Churchill's quote resonates closely with the indigenous iTaukei worldview or ontology which has been distilled, created and recreated orally over centuries and have defined indigenous ways of being, doing things, creating, validating and recreating. And to begin, it is vital to understand how the indigenous iTaukei views time, not with the physical eyes but philosophically. To do this, one needs to understand two lexical terms.

The iTaukei word for 'ahead' or 'in front' is 'liu'. 'Muri' is the word meaning 'previous', 'past' or behind. However, when referring to time, the context of the words is reversed. Where "liu" in ordinary discourse means a position or place ahead, it becomes the marker for the past. Where "muri" in ordinary discourse means behind or later, "muri" or "mai muri" becomes the marker for the future. The iTaukei reference of 'muri' or 'mai muri'², if one is telling a story is accompanied by forward pointing.

Reference to the past uses the word 'i liu'³ and the pointing this time points towards ones back. The future in the indigenous iTaukei perspective is not a blasé approach but one that continually seeks to promote, invest and promote 'sautu' and to achieve this, it is the values and ethics that are the fore grounded.

'Sautu' and all encapsulated in the future will take care of itself if one esteems, recognises, respects and acknowledges the oral cultural heritage, values and established principles of doing things in the past, the past precedents. Hence, the indigenous iTaukei metaphorically progresses with his back to the future because the focus and attention is turned towards the past, particularly the values and ethics distilled over centuries to form a body of knowledge. To illustrate it graphically on an imaginary timeline continuum would be something like this:

¹ Sevudredre, S., 'Indigenous iTaukei Epistemologies and Ethics and its Place in Peace Building, the contextualization of the rights of women and children, paper presented at Pacific Peace Conference, September 2016.

² In the future/next time

³ In the past/previously

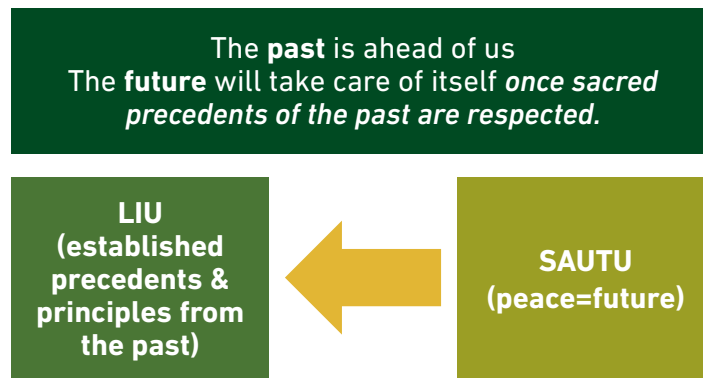


FIGURE 1: Indigenous iTaukei world view

In contrast, a simplified representation of the modern world’s progressive worldview is illustrated below:



FIGURE 2: Modern world view

The modern world view as we all know is forward looking, the past is behind us, and the future is ahead of us. Contemporary culture and its broad endeavours - education, nutrition/diet, exercise, development etc all resonate with one accord – securing one’s future. There is nothing wrong or misplaced with the modern worldview.

The indigenous iTaukei worldview, on the other hand, can add a deeper philosophical meaning of the past where values, ethics, ways of doing, and ways of being have been distilled and established as precedents for consideration and forward direction today. One does not know what the future holds, but the lessons from the past with its established values and empirical precedents transmitted orally over generations as traditional knowledge – is a vast repository which, when acknowledged, fore-grounded and respected – the future will take care of itself.

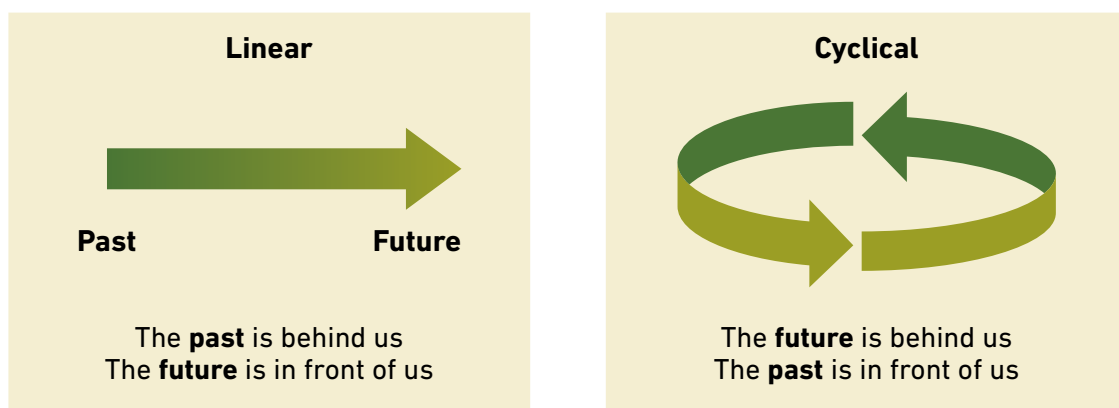


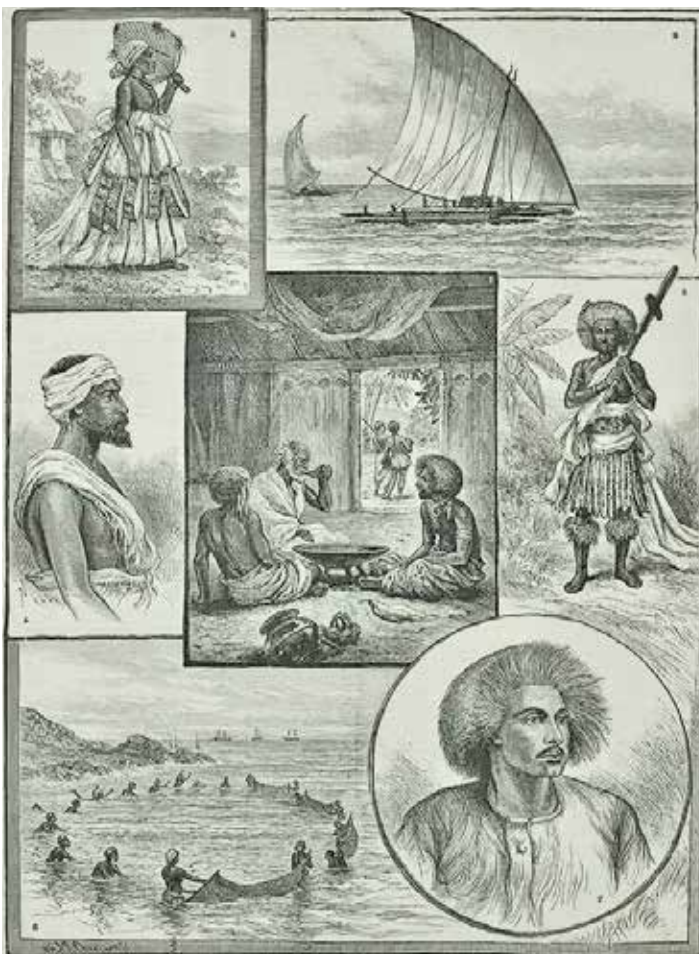
FIGURE 3: Comparing the modern and indigenous ontology on time

Understanding the notion of Vanua

2.1 Vanua in the Pacific

Vanua discourse has parallels across the Pacific, in *fa'asamoa* in Samoa, *kastom* and *wantok* in the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea and *te katei ni Kiribati* in Kiribati. Vanua is a widely used term in Fiji that has multiple meanings. It is at once a term for land and a place. It implies practices which are bound to the land and are specific to a place or region (Overton, J., Aug 1990)⁴

2.1.1 Definition of Vanua in Fiji



The word *vanua* has physical, social, cultural, and spiritual connotations. It refers to the land area which a person or a group is identified, together with its flora, fauna and other natural constituents. It also means the members of a group, the members of which relate socially and politically to one another. Culturally, the word *vanua* also embodies the values and beliefs which people living in a particular locality have in common. It includes their philosophy of living, and their beliefs about life in this world and in the supernatural world. Thus, the concept of *vanua* is an encompassing one, it is the totality of a Fijian community (Ravuvu, 1987: 14 – 15).⁵

"Sketches in the Fiji Islands" – London Illustrated News 1887

⁴ Vakavanua, vakamatanitu: discourses of development in Fiji, Asia Pacific Viewpoint, vol.40, No.2, Aug 1990 ISSN: 1360-7456, PP173 -186

⁵ The Fijian Ethos, Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1987.

2.2 Generic loss and voluntary immobility

When a community opts to not move despite increasing climatic risks to their homes and lives, it could be due to their conscious and sub conscious being having the sinking feeling that it will be losing the following:

- a. The traditional identity of the clan which is tethered to the geography and natural landscape;
- b. The values and ethics are also tied to the tangible and intangible aspects of the vanua, be it a grove of trees, a stone shrine, old habitation sites (koro makawa), old gravesites of forefathers etc.; some clans play roles as traditional elders to a senior chief, being relocated negates or diminishes the mana in their role as it is tied to the geography and natural ecosystem of the place;
- c. The beliefs and spirituality of the clan are both drawn and passed individually and collectively from the past. This would include certain supernatural abilities (e.g. walking on fire, or healing).



Old house mounds with spiritual significance. Source: Elia Nakoro

2.3 Lessons and application in today's relocation context

1. For implementers of relocation, there is a critical need to develop an acute sensitivity about the vanua and its cultural, spiritual and social dimensions.
2. Relocation is not about taking inanimate objects and placing them in a box. It is about people who have cultural, spiritual and social layers tied to them as attachments to their vanua.

Indigenous spirituality

3.1 Understanding mana and sau in the indigenous (iTaukei) context

The first monolingual Fijian dictionary defines mana as 'achieving it's intended purpose' (yaco dina na kena Inaki; Tabana ni Vosa kei na iTovo Vakaviti 2005)⁶. This sense of mana hinted at in Hazlewood's third definition from 1850 (so be it, let it be so), is regularly made clear in indigenous Fijian communities during ceremonial speeches. For example, during iseusevu (offerings of kava between guests and hosts), the speeches made by those receiving the presentation feature aspirational phrases such as 'Let fish be abundant' and 'Let chiefly authority be maintained', and those who have given the presentation often respond 'Mana' to these lines.

Sau can be defined specifically as 'chiefly power' (Erasaari 2013)⁷ or generally as 'powerful and effectively influential to cause ill or good' (Ravuvu ibid). Sau also refers to individual chiefs and the way their instructions and plans to their people must be followed or else misfortune (accidents, sickness and so forth) will afflict those who have disrespected the chief's words.

3.1.1 Sau or mana misalignment and its loss in today's relocation context

Consequently, the indigenous spirituality holds that an individual's or community's notions of success, creativity and fate is influenced by the unseen. Nothing happens as a coincidence or by mistake. There are norms, values and relational aspects that must be constantly maintained, appealed or aligned to correctly in the unseen world before its consequence manifests in the physical world. When this is maintained, the mana or sau stands (tu) tall like a communications tower emanating positivity (sau-tu).

If there is an imbalance or misalignment, negativity emanates. The negativity causes the sau to teeter lashing out negativity called sau-ti. This negativity can range from simple malaise, physical and mental conditions to environmental catastrophes like droughts, cyclones, pestilence, famine and deaths. Mana and sau are the indigenous parallels to the oriental Ying/Yang notions of duality that are held by indigenous people to impact both the seen and unseen world.

3.2 Significance and sanctity of totems

3.2.1 Totems in First Nation Culture⁸

Totem poles are monuments created by First Nations of the Pacific Northwest to represent and commemorate ancestry, histories, people, or events. Totem poles are typically created out of red cedar, a malleable wood relatively abundant in the Pacific Northwest, and would be erected to be visible within a community.

⁶ Na iVolavosa Vakaviti, Tabana ni Vosa kei na iTovo Vakaviti, Tabacakacaka iTaukei kei na iYau Vakamareqeti, 2005

⁷ Erasari, M., We are the Originals – a study of value in Fiji, Research Series in Anthropology University of Helsinki, 2013

⁸ http://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/totem_poles/#:~:text=Totem%20poles%20are%20monuments%20created,be%20visible%20within%20a%20community.

Most totem poles display beings, or crest animals, marking a family's lineage and validating the powerful rights and privileges that the family held. Totem poles would not necessarily tell a story so much as it would serve to document stories and histories familiar to community members or particular family or clan members.

A totem pole typically features symbolic and stylised human, animal, and supernatural forms.¹ Totem poles are primarily visual representations of kinship, depicting family crests and clan membership. For example, some Kwakwaka'wakw families of northern Vancouver Island belonging to the Thunderbird Clan will feature a Thunderbird crest and familial legends on their poles. Other common crests among coastal First Nations include the wolf, eagle, grizzly bear, thunderbird, killer whale, frog, raven, and salmon.

3.2.2 Totems in Aboriginal Culture⁹

In Aboriginal peoples, totemism was not simply a matter of identifying with a particular animal or plant species. It was a multifaceted system of meaning and symbolism that pervaded all aspects of social life. Totemic animals and plants were believed to possess spiritual power and significance, and were regarded as sacred beings with whom humans could communicate and form relationships. These relationships were based on mutual respect and reciprocity, and were essential for maintaining social harmony and balance.

One of the key functions of totemism in Aboriginal peoples was to establish and maintain social identity and cohesion. Each clan or tribe was associated with a particular totemic animal or plant, which served as a symbolic representation of their shared identity and ancestry. The totemic system provided a framework for organising social relationships, including marriage and kinship ties, and for regulating access to resources such as land, water, and food. It also provided a means for resolving conflicts and mediating disputes between clans and individuals.

3.2.3 Totems in Fijian iTaukei Culture

Traditional iTaukei identity includes verbal, non-verbal, tangible, and intangible aspects. One of the tangible aspects is known as totems which reflects the intangible indigenous spirituality on notion of stewardship and custodianship of the environment.

Totems also are bound to a geographical site. There are three generic totems for the indigenous Fijians and each symbolises custodianship and stewardship of the totem's surrounding ecosystem. There is a sky totem, a land totem and a water totem. Sky totems include birds and insects. Land totems include trees, rocks, earth, and all land bound fauna. Water totems include fresh water and marine creature and species. Hocart (1914) mentions that totems originally emanated from the highlands on mainland Vitilevu.¹⁰

In principle, a group's totem is the vessel of a founding ancestor's spirit, depending on whether it emerged from the sky, earth or water. Hence the sacredness of a totem is rooted to the geographical space it is connected to and the form the founding ancestor incarnated into after passing away. Totems also become the benevolent guardians of the people it belongs to, entrenching the intimate connection to the vanua. Tribes on Vitilevu usually have two or three totems from all three domains (sky, earth, water).

At one stage in Fiji's not too distant past, totems were adorned as tattoos and cicatrices on Fijian maidens particularly on the cheeks, lips, arms and the thighs. This practice of tattooing maidens as a transitional protocol waned with the onset of Christianity post 1835.

⁹ <https://ulukayin.org/aboriginal-peoples-and-their-animal-totems/>

¹⁰ Hocart, A. M. "Notes on Fijian Totemism." *Anthropos*, vol. 9, no. 5/6, 1914, pp. 737–39. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40443131>.

BOX 1: Legend on how totems came about in Fiji

How a clan adopts or identifies its totem is largely unknown or forgotten. There is an old Fijian legend though that sheds light on this. The account is adapted as follows:

It is said that the old Nakauvadra site had long been empty when the Waimaro people set out to look for land of their own to settle. Along the way they reached a place called Devosara where it was said they saw a frangipani tree within the branching roots of the famous vugayali (sacred myrtle) tree. And perched on top of the frangipani tree was a handsome looking lad. They took the lad with the intent to make him their chief. He was given the name Tui Boti or Botikinabua, meaning he-who-emerged-from-the-frangipani. It was said that flying spears did not hurt him, their points only bent on him. If a club was thrown at him, it broke into pieces. If he was beaten with clubs, they did not make any wound or mark. Then came a time when Tui Boti was stricken with illness.

It reached a point where he realised, he was going to die so he gathered his people to bid farewell.

“Upon my death, you are to bury me in the river further inland.

When a call to war comes, remove my gravestones to let the river flow and offer two pigs as sacrifices.

Only after I have received the sacrifices will I then re-emerge.

When you see me re-emerge, you must dip in the water which is from me as the source.

I will take the shape of the kingfisher bird and you must bathe in the manner of the kingfisher”

The Waimaro today includes those from Sawakasa and Namalata in the Tailevu province and also the Soloiria clan in the Naitasiri province and the king fisher still remains their sky totem.

3.3 The iTatau

When a whole village relocates it needs to leave in a culturally sensitive manner with the appropriate traditional protocols observed. This protocol is usually called na itatau. This departure protocol is part of iTaukei culture and spirituality. It is observed when a visitor is about to depart a host's house or village when the purpose of the visit is over. It is also when a person is about to leave his/her home or village for an indefinite time period. It is observed when a national sports team or delegation is about to depart Fiji. It is also the final speech a dying or aging parent or grandparent gives before they breathe their last;

Implementing agencies need to recognise and be sensitive regarding departure protocols and consult with communities on their protocols.



Stamps of traditional Fijian bures. Source: Fiji Post Philately

BOX 2: The Matarawa ceremony in Ra

In the Tokaimalo district in the Ra province on Western Vitilevu is a ceremony called the Matarawa. There is a ceremony with the same name in other tribes on western Vitilevu but it refers to welcoming an individual or group who arrives at a village. The matakara-wa is an atonement ceremony presented by an individual or group arriving or departing. It is a solemn and symbolic ceremony atoning for all wrongs, misdeeds, seeking forgiveness from sins of omissions and sins of commissions. Its acceptance by the party that receives it implies assurance of a clean slate or conscience to the presenting group.

Fijian culture being reciprocal responds to departure ceremonies with the 'ibili ni mua' (pushing out the canoe prow). This ceremony is where the receiving group of the departure protocols pronounces blessings and well wishes to the living and future generations of the departing individual or group.

Linking present relocation to historical precedents

4.1 Losing ancestral land and mana



Rekitaki waqa vou - edau cavu vei dua e taleitaka ga na waqa, iyau se cava ga ena gauna se vou kina, seg ani dede sa velavela vua ka sa seg ani via kauitaka

[Rejoicing at the arrival of a new canoe – said of one whose merriment and joy is huge when a new canoe or item comes into their possession, which over time dissipates and disappears altogether]

4.1.1 The case of Vunidogoloa Village, Cakaudrove

Upon relocation in January 2014, Vunidogoloa village initially rejoiced. They had gained a new site with houses, accessibility to Savusavu and were given new livelihoods.

Children are now able to attend school daily, travelling on the local bus, rather than having to walk unaccompanied along the foreshore, negotiating a tidal river (especially dangerous in bad weather), and then boarding weekdays at the nearest school - an unimaginable ordeal for the youngest community members and anxious parents alike. Improved access to the Natewa-Bay main road also means that the sick no longer have to be carried on bamboo rafts (bilibili), and paddled down the coast to the local hospital; road vehicles now transport them swiftly to medical services, easing both transfer times and patient hardship. Life is easier. (Fiji Sun Nov. 2014)

BOX 3: Lapita relocation to Fiji from West Oceania

Relocation in Fiji dates back to almost two millennia when Fiji was first settled by Oceanic voyagers and the Lapita migration. These are places in Fiji where Lapita pottery was discovered. They are listed in estimated chronology of arrival as follows (Clark, et al,1999)

- Bourewa, Nadroga 3000 years ago
- Naitabale (sic), Moturiki 2700-3000 years ago
- Vagariki, Yadua, Bua 2600-3000 years ago
- Naigani, Verata 2750 years ago
- Sigatoka Dunes 2460 years ago
- Yalobi, Waya 2870 years ago

What was unbeknown then was in the process of gaining, Vunidogoloa had subtly lost tangible and intangible cultural heritage like:

- Their old *ikanakana* or traditional feeding grounds. At the old site, intergenerational knowledge of the environment traditional was imprinted in minds of generations. This knowledge included location of healing herbs, wild vegetables, trees, coastal fish and crustacea, the ebb and flow of the tides and coastal weather;
- Pineapples and tilapia fish were provided in 2014 as Vunidogoloa's new livelihood and with good intention. Ironically though, the identity and livelihood of the village is embedded in the village's name which means "the black mangrove" (*Avicennia germinans*). This macro identity was built up over the generations as the people lived in harmony with the mangrove ecosystem. The name Vunidogoloa further implies that its people are adept at drawing livelihood from marine fish and creatures that live in mangroves. Its people are at home or comfortable with mangrove environment. Tilapia is a fresh water introduced fish. The provision of tilapia ponds means that over time the traditional knowledge associated with living near mangroves will diminish over time and perhaps become extinct.
- At the new site, this intergenerational familiarity was wiped clean; starting all over with physical, spiritual, social, emotional and cultural re-establishing and re-familiarisation. For a career family today in an urban or metropolitan context, moving to a new home is not entirely without its anxieties and stresses. There is always the initial adjustment for the children, the pets, schools, utilities etc. In the context of Vunidogoloa, its people have moved from a place that was home not for mere years but for centuries! Moreover, the circumstances in Vunidogoloa's relocation were externally determined in which the people did not have an active choice or voice in.
- In addition to relocation, anecdotes heard from those related or connected to Vunidogoloa referred to initial loss of hereditary mana regarding healing and mending of fractured bones (a clan in Vunidogoloa is gifted with bone healing).

4.1.2 Lessons and recommendations from Vunidogoloa Village

1. Oral histories concerning clan and group relocation in the past refer to a practice known as '*butuvanua*' – literally stepping on the land – to refer to initial reconnaissance of a site before settlement. With *butuvanua*, aspects like security, water and food access etc. are scouted out before settlement occurs in phases.
2. There is no wholesale exodus except in rare circumstances like war or famine. *Butuvanua* allows gradual familiarisation and staking out of resources and re-establishing traditional practices.
3. Stakeholders need to be culturally sensitive and aligned to cultural practices and approaches that allow villagers to check a new site first and familiarise themselves with the new site.

4.2 The Vanua has eyes

Relocation is a secular State intervention or response but stakeholders need to bear in mind that indigenous communities are spiritual people. There is always an awareness and connection that is part of their existence and must be foregrounded, acknowledged and respected. Moreso because many actors and stakeholders connected with climate induced relocation in the local scene are indigenous people who need to empathise and recognise this as it is enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People which the Fiji Cabinet adopted in March 2023.

4.2.1 The case of Vunidogoloa Village

Stories from Vunidogoloa during the 2014 relocation recounted the case of the first truck to depart Vunidogoloa for the new site Kenani (from the Biblical story of new Canaan), the engine of the truck died when trying to ascend a hill. Elders said that the Vanua was not pleased because proper iTatau (departure protocols) were not observed for the Vanua. In the indigenous psyche, the Vanua has eyes, ears, soul.

4.2.2 The case of Cogea Village, Wainunu, Bua

Similarly, anecdotes from Cogea mention how their portable sawmill mysteriously refused to run when they had to mill timber for their new houses.

In the eyes of the elders, they maintained that this was due to the Vanua not being informed the traditional way. Only when their plans were articulated traditionally did their portable sawmill was up and running again.

BOX 4: Looking to the past: connection to Verata

Oral traditions hold that the people of Vunidogoloa in Cakaudrove and Cogea in Bua (and many more in Vanualevu) are descended from or associated with Buatavatava's Verata banishment and relocation. These two villages, (like many more in Fiji) have roots in Verata. The ancestors of Vunidogoloa and Cogea were resilient and asserted their identity in knowing who they were. At the time of their banishment, they became seafarers, explorers and survivors. Knowing one's cultural identity and how to apply it is a tremendous source of empowerment and resilience. When the Buatavatava relocation occurred, the members of this group moved in solidarity and it bolstered hope and strength as a group.

4.2.3 Lessons from Vunidogoloa and Cogea

1. Indigenous iTaukei are extensions of the physical land or the vanua. This perspective holds that the land is more than just the fauna and flora. It means that there is an invisible guiding force in it that influences the seen and the unseen world including the people (lewenivanua).
2. The vanua is sometimes regarded as one would do an elderly matriarch or grandparent, i.e. slow-moving, capable of empathy and anger, having both benevolent and malevolent predisposition. So in contexts like relocation where no prior consideration is given to traditional protocols and rituals, the vanua reacts just like how an elderly grandparent would if a grandchild is forcibly taken away. This is why indigenous Fijians tacitly uphold the notion that the vanua has eyes.

4.3 Kalawaci ni Vanua / tagi ni Vanua - the Vanua being dntrodden

4.3.1 The case of Tukuraki Village

With Tukuraki village, it was an extreme extent to which indigenous ways were not recognised. A week of heavy continuous rains during the ill-fated January 2012 caused a landslide which plunged through the community killing a family of four and burying more than 50 percent of the village area. The turaga-ni-koro of 2023 retold whilst still being a police officer in 2012 how they dug out the bodies of the deceased family after two days of being buried.



“Mataqali, eratou sa mate tu na wekai keitou. Ratou sa siga rua e lomaniqele. Sa dada tu na yagodratou. Ia e tukuni meratou keliraki tale mai, me caka vei iratou na post-mortem me vakatakilai na vu ni nodratou mate” (personal communication with turaganikoro 2023)

[Mataqali, our relatives were dead. They have been buried for two days. Their bodies had softened. Yet we were told to exhume them so a post mortem could be carried out to determine cause of death.]

.....



“O iratou na wekai keitou. Na cava e sega ni ciqomi kina na neimami itukutuku ni keimami wekadratou? Ratou keli mai, ratou dolavi tale, me keimami rai tu. Oti ratou usani lesu ena body bag. A sega ni keimami rawa ni tagici iratou se qarava edua na kena reguregu”.

[Those were our relatives. Why weren't our testament as living witnesses that they were dead not accepted? They were re-opened through post mortem on site with us watching. Then they were taken away in body bags. We were not allowed to observe funeral rituals or mourn them]

In spite of all that, the Tukuraki villagers were told to relocate the same day of the exhumation and post-mortem and told at 4pm to leave by 6pm. The villagers reluctantly and painfully herded everyone out of their ancestral home. There were no rites or rituals, no cultural sensitivity to them considering what they were facing.



“Mataqali, kevaka mada ga a vakaraitaki vakavanua edua na ivesu yaqona se tabua, me kerei vei keimami, ke a bau rawarawa neimami ciqoma na lewa me keimami toki.”

[If there had been at least some cultural consideration given to observance of a protocol to ask us traditionally, it would have lessened the pain in having to relocate].

.....



“Keimami se mavoa tu ga qo. Keimami se bera ni tau.”

[We are still traumatised today. We have not settled emotionally].

4.3.2 Lessons from Tukuraki

1. Traditional rituals and ceremonies have great emotional and spiritual impact when observed, giving a level of assurance to people. These are time-honoured constants that have become the bedrock of indigenous assurance and strength. To take them away or to ignore them is equated with severe disrespect as if walking on dust or mere wood.
2. When a community or village is displaced, when all are scattered, traditional structures are dismantled because people are in chaos; everyone, including leaders, are traumatised. This makes it hard to keep everyone together and social safety nets and support system are weakened.
3. The turaganikoro of Tukuraki had to procure ten whale's tooth (tabua) on different occasions in order to perform various ceremonies for their relocation. This community already had minimal resources, and were still traumatised by displacement. On top of this, was the added burden associated with undertaking mandatory traditional ceremonies that mattered significantly in the culture.

4. Five years after being forcibly displaced, the people of Tukuraki, began a slow recovery to pick up the pieces of their lives. The paper work for their new land boundary was administered by the iTaukei Lands and Fisheries Commission and construction at the new site began. Slowly the traditional structure started rebuilding as the people of Tukuraki reunited at their new village site.
5. Soon after the relocation to the new site, the local chieftain of Tukuraki, the Tui Yakete located in Nalotawa village passed away. The new Tukuraki boundary was contested from Nalotawa opening up wounds and adding more to the already existing trauma. However, Tukuraki did not speak up nor wished to counter it. Instead, they chose to remain silent, preferring instead to keep goodwill with their contesting kinsmen.



Mataqali keimami veiwekani voleka tikoga. Keimami sa sega ni via veivala. Sa balavu na neimami yavalati ka mavoa tiko mai. Keimami sa digia me keimami galu tikoga ka masumasu. (personal communication turaganikoro Tukuraki 2023)

[We are very closely related. We have no wish to fight. We have been hurt and traumatised for too long. We chose to remain quiet and pray instead].

6. The cultural norm of solesolevaki buoyed the people of Tukuraki when their new land boundary was contested. They initiated prayer vigils at the Tukuraki community hall once a week. They invoked their kinship ties that transcended church denominations for inter-denominational prayers with their fellow kin. Solesolevaki with the intention for prayer vigils carried over the years as a means for solace, strength, and reconciliation.

a. Lesson on *solesolevaki*

No man is an island - John Donne

John Donne's poem resonates with the indigenous idea inherent in solesolevaki of the connectedness of people. People are not isolated islands. We are all a part of the larger vanua, and if one person dies, everyone is affected. This resilience is built into the indigenous structure and is the bedrock of iTaukei communalism.

4.3.3 Recommendations

1. Intangible aspects in the iTaukei culture need to be recognised by stakeholders and factored into relocation plans. As such, due consideration must be given for the construction or creation of communal spaces that promote solesolevaki in its various expressions.
2. The issue of kinship or veiwekani is a strong social cohesive factor and needs to be recognised, encouraged and facilitated. Furthermore, for the ceremonial aspects of the iTaukei culture, stakeholders need to consider a separate budget for its observance particularly for the procuring of kava and whale's tooth. It must be factored in the relocation plan and not to be treated in an ad hoc manner, but in a way that recognises its place and importance in society.
3. A manual or standard operating procedures (in the iTaukei language) should be developed and specifically tailored to guide government officials and other stakeholders on the various cultural processes, ceremonies, etc. with accompanying examples of phrases or expressions of cultural diplomacy. Government officials and stakeholders may be specialists in their respective corporate and technical fields, but are not necessarily adept or confident in switching to cultural diplomacy. Being cognizant and conversant in cultural diplomacy begins to open mutual understanding particularly between a climate relocation person on the ground and a village chief and elders.

Significant hindsight – relocations of the past

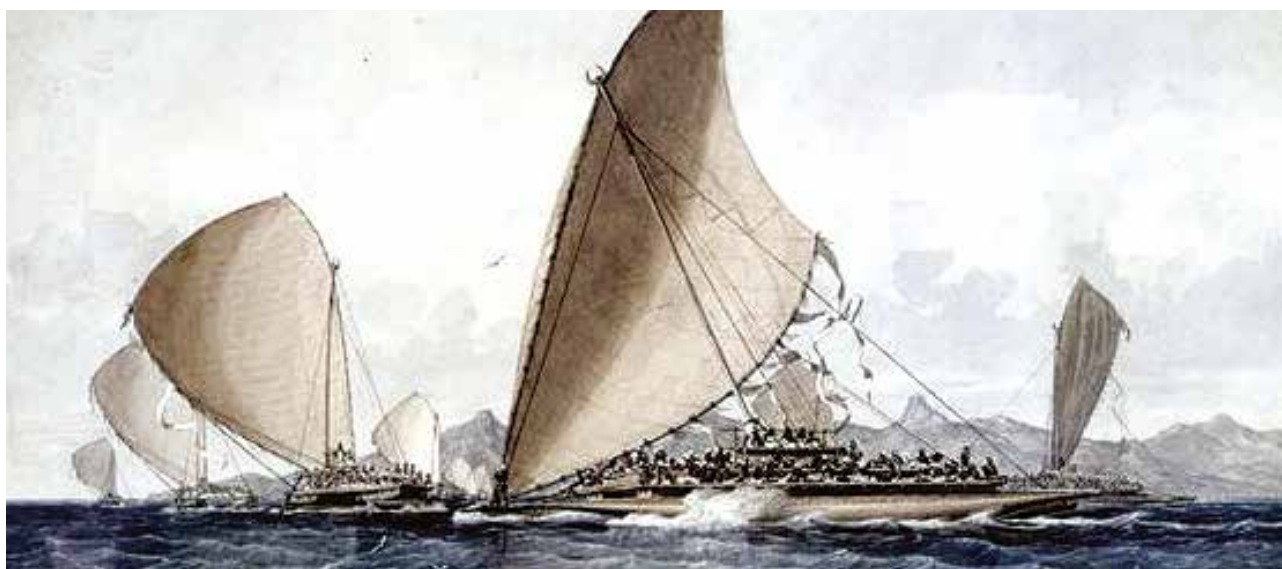


5.1 Outward migration from Verata due to banishment and the vetauvutaki

Oral traditions also speak of relocation in the context of the vetauvutaki¹¹ relationship between clans separated geographically in Fiji but sharing the same origins. A well-known vetauvutaki and relocation story in Fiji is the Verata legend from the old Verata kingdom that once spanned eastern Fiji from as early as 1200AD until the early 1800s.

The tradition records the migration to Vanualevu of people from Verata. Buatavatava Naulumatua, the eldest son of Rokomoutu (and the ancestral founder of Verata), was sent away from Verata by his father. Buatavatava and his supporters reached the south coast of Vanualevu, along with his followers as the expedition sailed westwards to Bua, where he himself settled at least temporarily at Seatura. The name Savusavu (Nasavusavu as is articulated by its locals) has local and Veratan traditions maintain got its name from Buatavatava's canoe being driven (savu) towards the large bay. The canoe had the leading three of the eight subordinate peoples were founded by a turaga (chief) who arrived in Vanualevu with Buatavatava.

One of the groups are in Wailevu whose origins are known amongst their elders. The resulting two groups, including the Navesi of which the Tui Wailevu is head, came eastwards from Bua. As did others, it may be presumed that they sailed eastwards after the Veratan colonisers had reached Bua (Sayes, S. A, 1982)¹²



Fijian Drua canoes. Watercolour by James Glen Wilson, 1856

¹¹ Hazelwood Fijian-English Dictionary: Tauvu, and Veitauvu, n. lit. to have the same root, or sprung from the same source: used of people who worship the same god: they are allowed to swear at and take each other's property.

¹² Cakaudrove, Ideology and Reality in a Fijian Confederation, Phd, 1982, ANU

5.1.1 Loss in today's relocation context

The primary loss for Buatavatava and his entourage was land, their ancestral home and all the familiarity that came with living close to the land and its proximity to the large Veratan family. They lost the land with which came the knowledge of feeding, foraging, water sources, fruits and plants.

Buatavatava also lost connection with his aging parents, his younger siblings and the clan he was raised in. Being first born he was the direct heir to the sacred elder title of "*O koya na Ratu mai Verata*". Tradition required Buatavatava to be reared apart from his siblings with his elders at today's Namara district in Tailevu. No more would he receive the affection and supportive rearing tailored specifically for his later role of taking up the helm on the death of his father Rokomoutu. These special grooming privileges were accorded to Buatavatava so he in turn would mentor his siblings and the greater Verata kingdom that later spanned from eastern mainland Vitilevu, central, northern to the south Fiji and the Lau group, even later into the ancient Tui Tonga at Velata fort in Ha' (Marais, A., 1995).¹³

Lastly, was Buatavatava's growing understanding that with his banishment, he lost the privilege to be buried in the *sautabu* (sacred burial site) reserved for all the *Ratu mai Verata* chiefs. Sailing outwards and onwards, *Buatavatava* had the growing realisation and uncertainty that he was now a stranger all on his own and had to start afresh literally.

The comforting factor for him was the solidarity in his retinue and entourage who willingly travelled with him in empathy and sympathy, travelling and tackling the unknown together.¹⁴

5.2 Disappearance of Vuniivilevu Island and dispersal of its people

Nunn¹⁵ et al (2005) mentions about the dispersal of people from Vuniivilevu, (an island off Moturiki Island in today's Lomaiviti Group) that may have disappeared as a result of a collapse of part of the east Vitilevu insular shelf between AD 1200 and 1600.

People in many parts of Fiji said to be descended from those who fled Vuniivilevu include Nasauvuki, Uluibau and other villages on Moturiki, parts of Koro Island including Tuatua where the Tui Koro now resides; the chiefs of Vuna on Taveuni Island, the Burei clan of Nawaikama village, Gau and the Navure clan of Sawaieke village in Gau, some of the villagers of Vadravadra on Gau Island; Naimalavau in the Rewa Delta on Vitilevu; and the people of Namara on Kadavu Island who claim to have originated either from Verata or Namara Tailevu, and whose chief is called Tui Leleuvia.

5.2.1 Loss in today's relocation context

The Vuniivilevu loss is more or less the same as with Buatavatava's except with a few salient differences

- With Buatavatava he at least had a chance to visit his ancestral home. His descendants would still have an ancestral home to revisit or return to if they wished. With Vuniivilevu, its survivors and later generations could never ever connect or set foot on their island home.

¹³ Kolo Velata: An Analysis of West Polynesian Fortifications, MA, Simon Frazer University.

¹⁴ Buatavatava later made a return visit to Verata when he heard that the great Rokomoutu was weak and fragile. Even though years had passed since his banishment, upon arriving at Verata, he berthed his canoe in the deep for eight nights uttering the chiefly salutation (*tama*) from the sea each day, for he was still unsure whether his father's wrath had subsided.

¹⁵ Vuniivilevu and Burotu, the geography, ethnography and hazard implications of vanished islands in Fiji, People and Culture in Oceania, 2005.

- With Buatavatava, no one died during the relocation. With Vuniivilevu, there is little doubt that the survivors are the ones who made it out in the nick of time. The land and all those who did not make it out drowned during the cataclysmic event.
- With Buatavatava, he had sympathisers who travelled with him. It was not so with the Vuniivilevu survivors. Each survivor had to cling to the waves and literally swim to survive. There were no provisions to sustain like in Buatavatava's case. Each one had to start afresh as a refugee somewhere and if lucky, was able to form a group of like survivors to start all over again emotionally, culturally, spiritually and socially.



Hypothetical position of Vuniivilevu. Source: Institute of Language and Culture, Ministry of iTaukei Affairs

Figure 4 above attempts to demonstrate the position of Vuniivilevu island (in the foreground) before it sunk. In the middle is Moturiki and back is Ovalau island.

5.2.2 Lessons and application in today's relocation context

- With Vuniivilevu there was a total and complete loss of land. Its survivors scattered throughout Vitilevu and the smaller islands in today's maritime zone. Yet the people were still resilient and adapted completely.
- There were those who were once fisherfolk like the kai Burei in Nawaikama village but they eventually became chiefs (Matanavure chief in Nawaikama) due to their positive impact on their new community. Traditional roles are not written in stone.
- The adaptability in the survivors of the Vuniivilevu cataclysm enabled them to survive in the new environment amongst new people. No one today has knowledge on how the survivors were received by the hosts on the various locations they were adopted in.

- One can have an idea of what could have transpired by understanding the iTaukei value of 'veidokai' (mutual respect for one another), 'veivakaturagataki' (esteeming one another) and 'veiciqomi' (mutual recognition). These are timeless values and have more or less been articulated from the viewpoint of hosts clans regarding arrival of strangers who were then made chiefs.
- For present day iTaukei communities though, it is worth noting that traditional roles can change upon relocation. What it morphs into depends on dynamics and agreement between visitors and host, which essentially is a renewing and asserting of the visitors' worth and purpose.

5.3 Correlation today on relationship between Tukuraki and host

In the case of Tukuraki, despite their displacement, trauma and relocation, it required tremendous will power from them not to rock the proverbial boat during the 5 years they had relocated to the new site.

In a parallel to the survivors of the Vuniivilevu cataclysm, Tukuraki villagers found initial solace from their kinsfolk nearby through the value of veiciqomi. Despite the surmounting tension that later ensued regarding their new land boundary, they invoked the veidokai value by not retaliating or crying foul. They saw the good side of *veiwekani* or kinship and hoped it would come through.

BOX 5: The power of solesolevaki

During lunch at the first consultation workshop of Wednesday August 16th, 2023 in which the draft report was presented, the turaganikoro of Tukuraki shared that their contesting kin had indicated their willingness to reconcile with them. This news was received joyously. Furthermore, it was believed to be the outcome of their constant inter-denominational prayer vigils that had been on-going over time – a form of *solesolevaki*.

Impacts of relocation/mobility on traditional structures



6.1 Traditional governance structure

Ravuvu (ibid) argues that the early Fijians lived as a family unit or as dependents of a larger one which later became a more powerful social unit. Over time, small family groups extended and a number of separate, unrelated and cognate families came under a single leader. However, they tended to work with their own groups but paid homage and remained loyal to the bigger group. This bigger group became known as the yavusa. The yavusa is the largest patrilineal kin grouping in Fijian society. Roth (1953)¹⁶ states that a yavusa is a collection of unrelated and cognate families joined together for the primary purpose of defence.

The official structure therefore can be summarised as follows: one main vanua may consist of a number of yavusa (tribes), one yavusa may consist of a number of mataqali (clans), one mataqali may consist of a number of itokatoka (households). All yavusa, mataqali and itokatoka have a close relationship with their vanua. This is the parallel to what is known today in the corporate world as channels of communication. This is the relationship and relational aspect of indigenous hierarchy which assured that the right message is received the right way by the right person it was designated for and reaches the right destination the right way.

Consultation and participation are built into the Fijian social structure. The entire structure of information and opinions travelling back and forth. It runs on the value of “veirogorogoci” (listening to each other) and veidokai (mutual respect). In this structure, a message or information is dispatched from the macro level to the micro or vice versa.

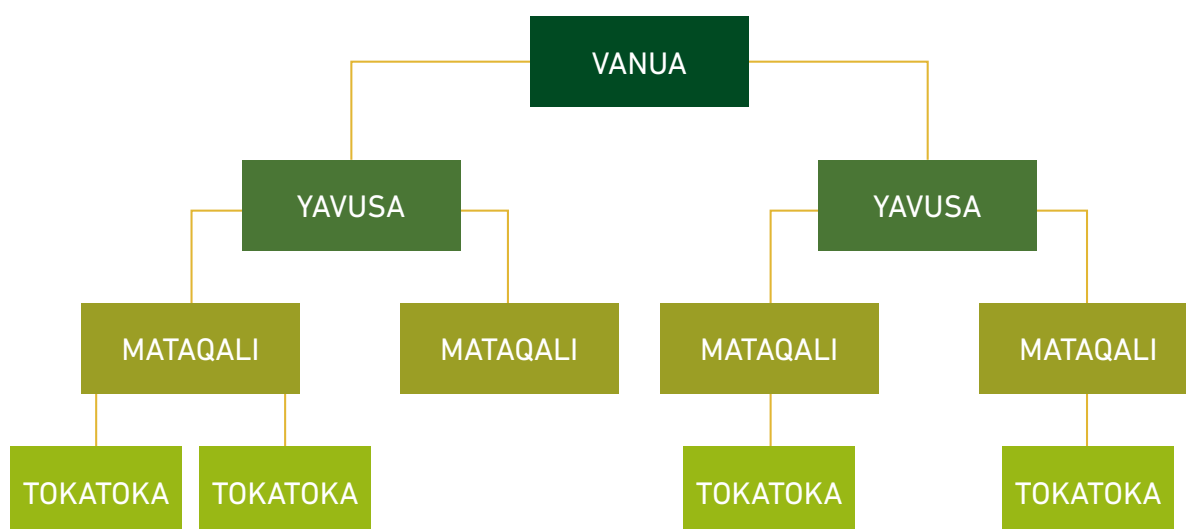


FIGURE 4: Generic socio-cultural structure of a Fijian community.

¹⁶ Roth, G. K., Fijian Way of Life, Melbourne/London/Wellington: Oxford University Press, 1953

At each level, the message, tone and vocabulary are tailored according to the respective rank and position of the giver and the recipient of the message. Implementors of relocation must be sensitive to this structure and tailor information on relocation etc to suit each respective level. There is no one message for all from a top-down level. Messages are relayed and contextualised to suit each level. This structure can be seen as the indigenous version of the notion of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) by way of filtering or customising messages and information.

6.1.1 The case of Tukuraki Village

Consideration and sensitivity of traditional socio-cultural structure and its nuances were not considered in the slightest way when the decision was made for Tukuraki villagers to relocate. Had this structure and its inbuilt channels were recognised, it could have lessened the impact of the resulting trauma that ensued.

6.1.2 The case of Vunidogoloa Village

Varying reports also were gleaned from McMichael's and Powell's case study research.¹⁷ In one instance, some community members explained that while village leaders made the decision to relocate, community members were consulted and 'contributed with ideas during the village meetings after they made the decision'. However, some residents pointed out those who are not from the main clan were not involved in village talanoa and decision making.

Another woman—who married a resident of Vunidogoloa but comes from a different village and clan—explained:



We were not consulted. Only the clan was involved in the decision-making. We just went along with the decisions made by the others. Our contribution was not included, like the other clan members, when we were relocating from the old site.

6.2 Recommendations

1. Implementers of planned relocation need to assist and facilitate a village emergency response team that activates itself and channels State directives via its own community/village channels. This channel can be regularly monitored both at village and provincial level, maximising the availability of communication technology and how best to integrate it at community level.
2. A guide or SOP on a culture centred and sensitive approach for planned relocation should be developed for implementers. This should be developed first in the iTaukei language, in order to accurately capture all sensitiveness, ethics, protocols on the correct way to speak and to address different groups - using the right tone, words, etc. This can then be translated to English for broader understanding but it should be applied in the iTaukei language. This will guide officers on integrating a culture-sensitive approach in all planned relocation processes, including participatory community consultations and decision-making, field assessments, conflict resolution, training, and other capacity building initiatives, like on livelihoods.

¹⁷ McMichael, C., & Powell, T., Planned relocation and health: a case study from Fiji, International Journal of Environmental Research and Health, 2021.

Impacts of relocation on traditional roles

7.1 Traditional social structure in an iTaukei Village

There are generically seven traditional roles according to Seru (1983)¹⁸ and each is allotted a custodian role that makes up the indigenous governance of a Fijian village.

The same channels of communication and social hierarchy also orders the various traditional roles and responsibilities that govern the vanua. This social structure is how iTaukei Fijians conceptualise their world. It is the theory by which order is understood at structural level.

This hierarchical concept is expressed in different ways in contemporary Fiji but it nonetheless demonstrates how 'wired' the people are to structure and groupings. While this is the theory or concept, villages today may have all seven or just one unit in the village. This is because the hierarchy is from the old tribal sites.

Generic Traditional Social Structure
(Seru, E., iTovo Vakavanua Vakaviti)

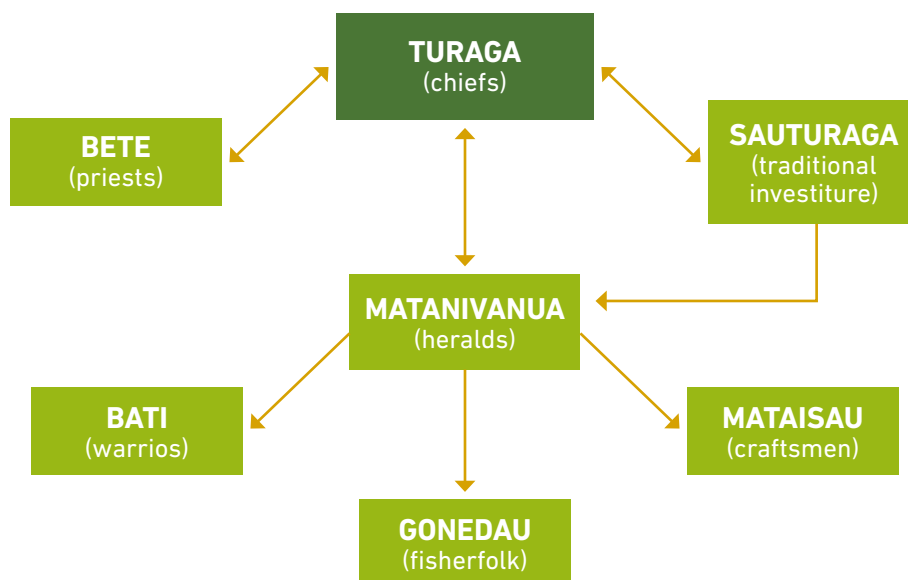


FIGURE 5: Traditional social structure in an iTaukei Village

¹⁸ Seru, E., (MBE), A iTovo Vakavanua Vakaviti, Fijian Dictionary Project, 1983.

During colonialism, a directive was sent throughout Fiji for tribes in hillforts and in ring ditch fortifications to relocate to the nearest river or coast to enable better access to colonial administration and health services (personal communication, Josefa Toganivalu, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, iTaukei Affairs Board, 2023). Therefore, it is not unusual to find one clan or vanua spread out in more than one village today. The significance of these traditional roles come to the fore when observing traditional events like marriage, installation or death of a chief.

A person is born into his/her traditional role and inherits its set of responsibilities that are carried out in the name of the collective mataqali as part of the whole governance machinery. The inheritance of one's traditional role operates primarily through patrilineal lines with the matrilineal role operating either secondarily in the background or entirely dormant. The socio-cultural context largely determines whether one's paternal or maternally inherited role is expressed.

It is not unusual to find cases of matrilineally inherited roles and abilities from a generation or two back operating in an individual. This is seen in the ability to heal burns by children or adults from other provinces who may have a maternal grandparent or great grandparent from the firewalking tribe of Sawau in Beqa.¹⁹ (personal communication with firewalking high priest in Dakuibeqa village, Beqa, 2018).

The general responsibilities of each of the generic roles are summarised below:

TABLE 1: Summary of responsibilities of traditional roles

ROLE	DESCRIPTION
Turaga	Leads the yavusa; custodian on the welfare of the clan both the visible and invisible world;
Sauturaga	Chief's advisor on traditional matters; installs a chief; custodian on issues pertaining to norms and traditions;
Bete	Chief's advisor on spiritual matters; custodian on spiritual matters
Matanivanua	Herald and diplomat who speaks to the chief for the people and vice versa; custodian of traditional oratory;
Bati	Warriors tasked with protecting the clan frontier, the chief and the status quo; custodian of the natural ecosystem;
Gonedau	Fishermen; custodian of the marine or fresh water and its creatures;
Mataisau	Craftsmen; custodian on the chief's artistic expression via works of art hewn from wood;

Source: Sevudredre, S., Tabana ni Vosa & iTovo Vakaviti, 2019

¹⁹ For more on Beqa firewalking, refer to Pigliasco's "The Custodians of the Gift: Intangible Cultural Property and Commodification of the Fijian Firewalking Ceremony", University of Hawaii at Manoa, 2007

7.2 Fluidity in taking on new “traditional” roles

BOX 6: Flexibility in traditional roles - Lovoni

In 2012 the author of this report was attending the preparatory ceremonies for the traditional installation of the Rokotui Vuma, a chieftain from the village of Vuma on Ovalau Island. At one particular moment, the Vunivalu of Lovoni arrived to make his traditional contribution at the home of Delai, the sauturaga or traditional king maker. The Vunivalu had a huge bundle of kava roots with him which he tossed to a man from Vuma village who was present. The latter without hesitation caught the bundle and presented it on the Vunivalu's behalf. When it was over, the author quietly asked the Vunivalu of Lovoni (to whom he was related) as to what exactly had happened.

The Vunivalu of Lovoni quietly replied

“That man (referring to the one who presented the kava protocol) and his forefathers were oracle priests when they lived prior at Lovoni. They were sent down to Vuma village to act as warriors for the young Rokotui Vuma chieftain. I tossed the kava roots to him following my old line with him to which he reverted to without a blink”.

This anecdote reflects the flexibility of traditional roles when one relocates and also how an oracle priest can temporarily act as mediator in every day affairs as well.

There are oral traditions that illustrate flexibility and fluidity in pre-Christian Fiji when an individual or a group leave their home environment for another depending on the push-pull factors.

The case about the kai Levuka mentioned above attests to their initial traditional fisherman role. Upon banishment they were adopted by the Tui Nayau chief of Lakeba in today's Lau province and assumed the role of warriors to the same chief. Yet whenever the warlord of Bau and the Kubuna confederacy is installed, they have traditional responsibilities in conferring the title of their former Bau home to the Bau warlord's principal wife as Radi Levuka (Queen of Levuka).

BOX 7: Origins of the wood craftsmen of Kabara, Lau

War broke out between Degei the supreme god and the two princes, Cirinakaumoli and Cirinakausabaria. Legend tells of how the princes asked Rokola, the chief canoe wright, to fashion an arrow to kill Degei's famous pigeon. Rokola's arrow brought down Degei's pigeon and in doing so sealed the fate of his people. Such was Degei's fury that all who were not on his side, including Rokola and his people, were banished from Nakauvadra. Their escape was aided by the chief canoe wright, Rokola, who provided an escape canoe.

Rokola and his people, whose land on Nakauvadra was called Narauyaba, settled at today's Nukutubu village in the Rewa Delta and another party settled as far as Kabara Island in today's Lau group. The Kabara group maintained their trade in wood craftsmanship and merged their skills with the arrival of canoe wrights from Manono in Samoa, Lemaki and Lesa. Though the Kabara people retained their craftsmanship for the ancient Tui Lau of Kabara, they have assumed the role of club bearers for the Tui Nayau in Lakeba. Their Narauyaba ancestral land, long vacant since the ancient war, is today gradually being resettled by Rokola's descendants.

(personal communication Peni Baledrokadroka Moceiwasa Lala, Aug, 2023)

7.3 Present day context: impacts of relocation on traditional roles

Changing geographical locations may affect traditional roles for relocating villages. Traditional roles were solidified in the 1900s when sworn statements were collected in the 1900s by the then Native Affairs (now iTaukei Lands Fisheries Commission). These sworn statements are narratives of how a village came to be and the various land-owning units and their roles. If, for example, a coastal village whose role is that of fisherfolk relocates, the change from their role will not be felt immediately. Over time the changes will manifest as they adjust in the new location.

BOX 8: Case study on *veisa* - food reciprocity

Qoma, Tailevu has very little land available for planting but food from the sea is abundant. They have a traditional relationship with Driti Village, Dawasamu, to exchange seafood with root crops – a standing arrangement from way back to present day. The arrangement is built on trust where there is already an understanding on fair exchange.

Lessons:

1. Loss of access to traditional food in a new site can be gained through traditional food reciprocity engagement. Traditional structures will need to be strengthened or re-established.
2. Traditional roles and obligations (e.g fisherfolk expected to provide seafood harvest for ceremonies/gatherings) can be fulfilled through *veisa*. For instance - a coastal community relocated inland can barter with their fisherfolk counterpart at the coast for seafood/ fish in exchange with meat from wild boar or livestock.

7.4 Application for today's relocated villages

For present day iTaukei communities, it is worth noting that traditional skills can change upon relocation. What it morphs into depends on dynamics and agreement between visitors and host, which essentially is a renewing and asserting of the visitors' worth and purpose.

Time will tell whether relocated villages can adapt or not for the dynamics of the past and the present are vastly different. Where the fluidity in the past was unhampered and flexible, today's context has to reckon with the contemporary Fijian administration and the sworn statements of every clan recorded in the Tukutuku Raraba ni Yavusa (TRY) that was extrapolated during the Native Lands Commission in the early 1900s.

In addition, the contemporary iTaukei mind today has been influenced and socialised by Christianity and colonialism. The ideologies of the past and the present has had its effect. Case in point is the issue today of non-communicable diseases like diabetes, stroke, heart attack, etc. and how it was non-existent in the early days of migration and relocation. Suffice to say, there will be impacts, but it will reveal itself in time.

7.4.1 The case of Tukuraki Village – adapting skills to new environment

In the case of Tukuraki, traditional skills like weaving mats changed because of relocation. This is because the old site had pandanus plants but not the new site, where there was no land given for planting. As a result, the women of Tukuraki changed from their weaving skills to making soft toys under the Rise Beyond the Reef initiative. A change in location results in a shift in knowledge because traditional skills are anchored to the natural landscape of a village.



Women of Tukuraki making stuffed toys for Rise Beyond the Reef. Source: Gabriel Mara

7.5 Recommendations on traditional roles and planned relocation

1. Implementing and supporting agencies must be in constant consultation before and after relocation with a community and its local chieftain so the adjustments to traditional role are mitigated by the community. Agencies, particularly the relevant sections in the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs & Culture need to facilitate the discussions on changes to a village's traditional impacts of relocation on traditional skills and knowledge
2. Relocation impacts can vary with relocated communities so each community should be approached according to their current situation. The legend about Rokola and the Nakauvadra war reveals that hardly much had changed after Rokola's relocation to Kabara Island in Lau. Yet, on the other hand, there is the case of the kai Burei in Nawaikama village in Gau. They were once fisherfolk at their old site but they eventually became chiefs (Matanavure chief in Nawaikama) due to their positive impact in their new community.
3. Traditional roles are not written in stone. The adaptability in the survivors of the Vuniivilevu cataclysm enabled them to survive in the new environment amongst new people. No one today has knowledge on how the survivors were received by the hosts on the various locations they were adopted in. However, one can have an idea of what could have transpired by understanding the iTaukei value of 'veidokai' (mutual respect for one another), 'veivakaturagataki' (esteeming one another) and 'veiciqomi' (mutual recognition). These are timeless values and have more or less been articulated from the viewpoint of hosts clans regarding arrival of strangers who were then made chiefs.

8 Impacts of relocation on traditional totems

8.1 Tukuraki totem – a beacon of hope

Tukuraki has a land and a sky totem. No water totem was mentioned. This could be attributed to either a loss of the memory, or simply non-existent due to their being hinterland people. It is interesting though that they stated the household lizard (*moko*) as a totem. The sky totem is the kula bird (red collared lory) and their land totem is the ylang ylang tree (*mokosoi*).

The current relocated site is noted for the aggressive invasive African tulip trees, taking over the landscape. The old site which they vacated is a day's walk away. Questions raised about their land totem in the midst of the masses of African tulip trees revealed that saplings of their totem tree appeared mysteriously at the new location. This information was uttered with a sense of joy, in their discovering that their totem has followed them to the new site.

8.1.1 Lessons from Tukuraki

1. As the people of Tukuraki gradually came to terms with their relocation and kept their silence in observance of the values of *veiciqomi* and *veidokai*, their totem tree became an assurance and comfort to them that all was going to be well.
2. Given the trauma and anxiety brought about by the landslide disaster, being displaced, and relocated, it can be an insurmountable challenge for supporting agencies to reassure relocated people. It is important to recognise and understand indigenous cultural heritage like totems that speak and assure people in ways no one can. Implementers of planned relocation should be sensitive to these attachments that can provide healing and incorporate this in their approach when dealing with affected communities.

8.2 The case of the people of Burei and the resurgence of their ancient totem

The "kai Burei", or people of Burei, living in Nawaikama Village, Gau, are descendants of the displaced people of Vuniivilevu (of the sunken island). In 2018 a *cara salalevu* was undertaken to Uluibau Village, Moturiki, where they have the same Vuniivilevu ancestry.

A day before the arrival of the kai Burei, two giant manta rays emerged, within sighting of Uluibau village. This was a very rare sighting. The manta ray is the totem of the ancient Vuniilevu clan. The people of Burei had lost touch with their totem when they were displaced to Gau from Vuniivilevu in 1200AD. In 2018, more than 800 years later, their totem resurfaced to acknowledge them. Most of the Burei people had lost touch with their totem after several centuries of being displaced from their ancestral land.

8.2.1 Lessons from the kai Burei cara sala experience

1. The land still has eyes and can remember. Your totem – spirituality and mana is still alive despite loss and abandonment of land. The Vanua / totem recognised the Burei people's respect and their efforts to reconnect to their traditional homeland after more than 800 years. Their totem welcomed them back to their ancestral and showed their approval and pleasure.
2. For displaced and relocated communities, they may temporarily forget these connections to totems. If they retrace their path back to their roots, their roots reveal themselves. What is forgotten will reveal itself.
3. In the context of today's relocation, even though communities have physically moved away from their ancestral land, there are still avenues for keeping in touch with ancestral Vanua – no matter how far or for how long. Staying connected to one's ancestral land keeps alive indigenous spirituality which in turn provides people with inner-strength and resilience. Re-establishing traditional ties with old units is also a way of bolstering resilience.

8.3 Recommendations regarding totems

1. The respect and significance of totems bring comfort and can serve as an anchor in times of anxiety; a beacon of hope prior to any outward assistance arriving.
2. It would be worth the while for relocation implementers and stakeholders to research cultural heritage like totems of a relocated community. Replanting of tree totems can be planted close to the relocated site. This of course needs to be consulted sensitively with the community concerned.
3. Elders and institutions need to recognise and revitalise understanding and meaning of totems amongst younger generation, government officers and village development implementers.
4. Utilisation of information gathered from cultural mapping where recognition and significance on one's ancestral land is to be highlighted. Officers engaged with communities in planned relocation are to be educated on these cultural aspects and sensitiveness.

Gender considerations in the context of culture and relocation

9.1 Roles and customs regarding iTaukei women – pre-colonial

9.1.1 Namena, Tailevu

The late academic and high-born chief from the Tui Nawainovo clan in Namena village Tailevu, Alumita Durutalo, in an unpublished paper mentions that, just like indigenous Fijian men, indigenous Fijian women, figure prominently in the long-term survival of indigenous Fijian society. Women's roles in society are just as important as men's roles. Women's roles, like those of men, connect and reinforce the values of life in the three indigenous Fijian worlds/realms: Vuravura (earth – space of the living), Lagi (Heaven – space of the Gods) and Bulu (underworld – space of the ancestors).²⁰ A balance of life in these three cosmoses connects both the physical and the spiritual. This ensures bula sautu (quality of life) and bula galala (freedom). Even though they are not physically present, indigenous Fijians believe that the occupants of the other two cosmos, lagi and bulu, are just as engaged and watchful on the activities of the living.

According to custom, life on earth has to be lived correctly, bulataki vakadodonu²¹, to avoid being reprimanded by the Gods and ancestors in the spiritual realm. Overall, role learning, acquisition and practice are crucial to balancing life in the three cosmoses. Anthropologist, Howard, explains: the concept of holism, in which human existence is viewed as a multifaceted whole, also recognises the biological as well as the cultural aspects of human existence.²²

Traditional Fijian history relate stories about women in different capacities as: goddesses; chiefs; warriors; givers and nurturers of life; healers and as tillers of land.

The history of the vanua of Namena, also relates the participation of women as warriors in a battle in the mid-1800s.²³

²⁰ See also Nabobo -Baba, U. 2008.

²¹ To live life in the "straight way" or correct way.

²² Howard, M. C. 1997. *Contemporary Cultural Anthropology* (fifth edition). Pearson: p. 4.

²³ See also Derrick, R. A. 1946 (Vol. 1). *A History of Fiji*. Suva, Colony of Fiji. Government Printing Press: pp. 110 – 111.

9.1.2 Matrilineal vanua

In pre-colonial Fiji, indigenous women's leadership abilities gave rise to matrilineal vanua, where women were recognised and installed as chiefs and leaders. Matrilineal vanua were found on Fiji's second largest island, Vanualevu. A notable example of this was how the ancient Tui Macuata chiefs on Macuataiwai ascribed to this title via matrilineal lines. The successors of the old Tui Macuata title were not from the patrilineal but from those whose mother was a senior ranking Tui Macuata princess.

9.1.3 A woman's traditional role on marrying within or without

In the indigenous iTaukei context, one's traditional role is determined by patrilineal descent or matrilineal in certain parts of Fiji. So regardless of one's biological status as a man or woman, if one is born a chief, it is this that generally determines one's identity and role regardless of one's biological status as a male or female. Or if a woman born into a warrior role marries a man who belongs to say, the role of the diplomats or heralds (matanivanua), the woman is expected to complement her husband's role in collaboration with other women who have also married into the same mataqali of the matanivanua. She does not entirely discard her own traditional role, rather it goes dormant as she assumes her new role that her marriage has afforded her. Should the woman return to her home, usually if she is widowed, she resumes her own role. It is usual for such women to return less as practitioners of their role and more as a senior member of the village in an advisory role/mentoring role.

In the past, marriage was arranged where a woman was married horizontally into a role close to hers. These were for perceived advantages to strengthen an aspect between the two different clans who both stood to gain mutually from it. Such political or relational marriages with mutual benefits were referred to as "bika vanua" (lending weight to the vanua) or "bika yavu" (lending weight to a mound). The woman being married was seen as a much-needed presence to essentially reinforce, bridge or elevate the lineage that she married into. The genealogy of notable house of chiefs in Fiji's three confederacies attest to this for it helped strengthened one's claim to power and prestige. Moreover, with shared relationships from such marriages, trade and security were more or less guaranteed in the olden days. By tradition, one never waged war against a party one was related to.

A woman's wedding ceremonies, when observed via the continuum of traditional cultural expression followed by consecration in the Church elevates her status and voice because she has been 'bought legally' in the traditional sense. This principle is euphemistically referred in different ways around Fiji²⁴. In principle then, she has all the speaking rights to the clan she has married into. There is tension in this area because Christian interpretations plus colonial influences have communicated otherwise.

9.1.4 Covicovi ni draudrau/ketekete ni qele (taking leaf land/basket of earth)

The customary practice called lewe ni ketekete²⁵ or "icovicovi ni draudrau"²⁶, refers to land that was gifted to indigenous women at the time of marriage for their use. This custom was practiced in parts of pre-colonial Fiji, especially on the main island of Vitilevu, in certain vanua like in Durutalo's vanua of Namena. The practice gave these women land to plant and gather food for their sustenance. It was a recognition of the land rights accorded to indigenous Fijian women.

²⁴ Itakitaki ni wai (water fetcher), vakabuta rourou (cooker of rourou, a boiled vegetable), sema dra ni kawa (kinship connector)

²⁵ Lewe ni ketekete in the context it is used in this paper, refers to food content of a basket.

²⁶ Icovicovi ni draudrau refers to a place where one plucks leafy vegetables.

BOX 9: Covicovi ni lou – land gifting to women

Article printed in the Fiji Times 30 September 2020

A group of landowners appeared before the Civil High Court in Suva yesterday seeking, among other things, a declaration that no traditional land belonging to the province of Rewa could be located within the province of Naitasiri.

The matter, involving plaintiffs Kinisena Salamailagi, turaga ni yavusa of the yavusa Matanikorovatu of Kalabu Village, Naitasiri Paula Nawiriwiri and defendants, the iTaukei Lands and Fisheries Commission, iTaukei Land Trust Board and turaga ni mataqali Nakausoqo, yavusa Naqavoka, Rewa, Kini Raqoli, was called before judge Justice Brito-Mutunayagam.

Representing the plaintiffs, Law Solutions informed the court that all parties had been served with affidavits in the matter. The plaintiffs also wanted an inquiry into the traditional ownership of a parcel of land called Naulu, which sits in the Naitasiri Province boundary.

They are also seeking an order restraining the iTaukei Land Trust Board from leasing or dealing with the land until a decision was made and all lease monies paid to Kini Raqoli ceased until the ownership issue was resolved.

Mr Nawiriwiri stated in his affidavit the traditional boundary of the land known as Kalabu stretched from Koronivia up to the Bailey bridge river on Jerusalem Rd in Nabua, up along the Tamavua River along Cunningham Rd and ending with the boundary of Colo-i-Suva.

The affidavit stated land-gifting to women of high birth was practised by the vanua of Kalabu since the late 1800s and was traditionally referred to as covicovi ni lou.

It further stated that the covicovi ni lou was recorded by the iTaukei Lands and Fisheries Commission as reserved land and was reserved for the usage of the woman and her descendants only.

The affidavit stated the land remained registered to the yavusa that had gifted the land to the woman in the first place and the clan members from that yavusa had no right of usage or claims over these types of land.

His affidavit also claimed that the covicovi ni lou had a life span of one century and continued usage was at the discretion of the reigning turaga ni yavusa.

The plaintiffs claimed the land called Naulu belonged to the yavusa Matanikorovatu of Kalabu, Naitaisiri.

According to Mr Nawiriwiri's affidavit, this land had been gifted to Lavenia Kaloubula, a high-born woman or the princess of the Mataqali Makoi, yavusa Matanikorovatu as her covicovi ni lou at the time of her marriage to Mitieli Waqavou of the Mataqali Nakausoqo, yavusa Navokai of Rewa.

The defendants sought 14 days to file an affidavit response in the matter.

9.1.5 The Vasu – underscoring the value of women

A further insight into the recognition and respect given to indigenous Fijian women, is through the vasu system, where women's children, usually the eldest children, are accorded certain rights to their mother's brothers' properties. There are three types of vasu: the *vasu-itaukei*²⁷, the *vasu levu*²⁸ and the *vasu*²⁹. The authority of the vasu usually depends on the social status of the mother in her vanua. For example, vasu itaukei is referred to "a vasu whose mother is a lady of the land in which he is born". A vasu levu is also a son or daughter of a woman of rank who has the privilege to claim from her mother's brother. The vasu system on the whole recognises the rights of indigenous Fijian women.

BOX 10: Invoking the privilege of "vasu" – the Lovoni case

Long, long, ago in the Lovoni tribe on Ovalau island, the chiefly title belonged to the elder tribe who lived in Nasaumatua. The meaning of their title underscored their seniority (matua) and original power (na sau) as a consequent and blessing of being the elders. On the day of the installation of the successor to be chief of Nasaumatua, two women who belonged to the junior Lovoni clan approached the installation. The women were vasu to Nasaumatua. At the given moment when the installation cup of honour was about to be offered to the selected successor, the women clapped with cupped hands before the successor did so. This meant that the cup bearer had to turn away from the initial person the installation was meant for. It was instead given to the women who had invoked their vasu privilege and taken the chiefly title.

Ever since then leadership in Lovoni has been vested with the women's clan and descendants in Lovoni village. Nasaumatua on the other hand has taken upon themselves to be elders of the Lovoni chief in terms of being food handlers. This is so as to protect their 'sau' that is upon the Lovoni clan chief. This tradition exists even until today.

9.2 Colonial influence on women's roles

Matrilineal communities in Fiji declined with colonisation in the attempt to unify social systems. According to France, the British colonial government's Native Land Commission (NLC) altered the matrilineal system by establishing a uniform Fijian land tenure system through the patrilineal lineage, beginning in the early 1880s.

France stated: *There was a tendency for the records to be tailored to fit a uniform pattern.*

British colonisation and the desire to simplify and unify the land tenure system, socially engineered indigenous Fijian socio-political units like the traditional matrilineal and patrilineal systems. This was done to suit a uniform pattern for colonial administrative convenience. In the long term, the marginalisation of the matrilineal system had a direct impact on the traditional role of indigenous women as leaders in indigenous Fijian society.

²⁷ Children of a lady of noble birth married in her own vanua.

²⁸ Children of women of noble birth.,

²⁹ Children of any woman in general not of high birth.

BOX 11: Colonial influence on matrilineal lineage - the Tui Macuata title

The ancient Tui Macuata of old once lived on Macuataiwai Island. Ascension to the Tui Macuata title was matrilineal. The higher ranking a contender's mother's role was, particularly of the chiefly household, the more likely he got the status. This tradition changed to patrilineal shortly before Fiji's cession to Great Britain. This change from matrilineal to patrilineal was without doubt immersed in intrigue and subterfuge. The change was later mainstreamed through the colonial lands and fisheries claims commission.

The seat of the Tui Macuata today is Naduri village. The matrilineal line of ascension still exists and is called the House of Nawaivuvu. The patrilineal line is called the House of Vuya. The kingmakers try to have each house to ascend to the Tui Macuata title whenever possible in trying to honour traditions.

(Source: History of Macuata: from a manuscript found in the Catholic mission, Nabala, Macuata / edited by Francoise Gardere and David Routledge)

9.3 Na Dauniveisusu – the nurturers

Culturally, women are referred to as dauniveisusu – nurturers. This role goes beyond that of just being a mother to children in the western context. It also extends to women being at the forefront of providing. This role is not confined to a woman in her own nuclear family. Rather it encompasses the generic role of women in rearing children, rearing the village, rearing relatives, orphans, elderly and incapacitated members of the community. It extends to cultivating vegetables (like rourou, egg plants, bele) for the family consumption and knowing where the ota or wild ferns are and the different seasons of fruits and vegetables. It also extends to coastal marine creatures and fish that are quickly accessible for a meal. It means that this knowledge sustains the family, the clan and the village and the surpluses can be sold at the market. The income earned from it would feed again into the daunivesusu role.



Making clay pots the traditional way in Nakoro Village, Navosa. Source: GIZ

In addition to the *dauniveisusu* or nurturer role, women also are the creators and protectors of a clan's indigenous artistic expression. This is in the creation of *iyau* or cultural artefacts that dignify a traditional ceremonial exchange. These *iyau* or artefacts provide high esteem for any cultural ceremony of birth, transition, wedding and funeral. The *iyau* are expressed via iconic woven mats, clay pots, scented oil, baskets and *tapa*. No traditional ceremonial exchange is complete or esteemed if traditional *iyau* are missing.

9.3.1 Tukuraki case - a matriarch's premonition

Litiana Tige or Tai Liti is in her 60s and is from Tukuraki village. She retells how she had premonitions that fateful January (2012) that something horrible was going to happen.



Au sa lomaleqataka tiko na uca sa tau tiko ena veisiga. Au sa raica na vanua e muria na wai mai na delana nira sa lau tā tu na paini. Sa drodrova na wai na vanua a cavuraki kina na paini. Au sa sega ni toka dei ni dua na ka ena rawa ni yaco. Au kaya vei ira ena koro mera qaqarauni tiko.

[I was so worried seeing the continuous rainfall. I saw the way rain was flowing from the hills where the pine trees had been felled. Water was gushing out of the empty holes where the pine trees once were. I was ill at ease that something terrible was about to happen. I told the village to be alert and watchful].

Because indigenous women in the villages remain largely at home while the men travel to work elsewhere, the women develop intimate mental maps of their locality as a result of their '*dauniveisusu*' role.

In the case of Tai Liti she belonged to Tukuraki and lived there for most of her married life. She began raising the alarm bells but to no avail. In the old days, a woman's concern and worry was never taken lightly. If she was an outsider who married in, the stakes in her being in the village are culturally high because it involved large ceremonies and rituals that accompany a marriage.

The role of the woman is further accentuated if she is a matriarch because she holds a very significant position in the kinship system. In this case for Litiana, she was 'tai Liti' an affectionate address that underscores rank and respect.

9.4 Tagane/Turaga – the traditional role of men



Ni vuvu mai na uluniwai, ena vuvu sobu mai

[When the headwaters are murky, it will flow downriver]

The Fijian idiomatic expression is a statement on leadership at all levels in traditional society. If the leadership lacks clarity or assertion, this will be felt at all levels of society.

Issues relating to gender and women, particularly the overburdening of women in relocation villages implicates the leadership role of the men.

In the traditional dichotomy of gender, a man is referred to either as 'tagane' which denotes being male, or 'turaga' meaning an adult male. As such a man is expected to be "liga qāqā" or "liga kaukau" (literally translated to "strong hand"). This reference to having a strong hand connotes notions of strength in terms of defending and protecting. In pre-Christian days it meant being war ready against encroaching enemies. 'Tagane' also connotes being strong in being an able provider. In the pre-Christian days of polygamy, a man was expected provide for his many wives. Whichever traditional role a man belonged to, he was tacitly expected to protect and provide in both times of war and times of prosperity.

9.4.1 Being a tagane and leadership implication

The notions of 'tagane' and 'liga kaukaua' of old have not evolved much from the old days and the principles still remain but expressed somewhat differently today. At many levels, a man has to protect and provide for his own. It also means looking out for his female siblings and relatives. It encompasses notions of personal leadership and decision making, upholding the norms and traditions from personal to clan level. Not all men ascend to traditional and contemporary roles of leadership, but the expectation to protect and provide for his own lot implies a leadership responsibility.

It is when this responsibility is "murky" will its consequences ripple and flow downriver. "Murky" headwaters carry associations of those at the apex (usually chiefs who are men) wanting and lax in their expected leadership role. Leadership at the apex of a clan is the benchmark against which all men in the clan are measured against. This is because of the relative and relational aspects built into a clan's leader or chief. A chief's status and strength reflect the status and strength of the men at various levels under his leadership. Therefore, when a man at individual and micro level deviates from the gender norm expected of him, it creates unpleasant ripple effects that implicate the loss of the "liga qāqā" and "tagane" responsibility. The absence or decline in being a "liga qāqā" and a "tagane" affects all levels of society from the micro to macro in the vanua.

9.4.2 Vunidogoloa case – from extended to nuclear family structure

Early reports following the establishment of individual family homes at the new site reveal a subtle socio-cultural shift in behaviour. At the old site, houses were inhabited by traditional extended family members. The kinship within included in-laws, aunts, uncles, siblings, etc and these kinship in themselves play a crucial role in monitoring proper behaviour and decorum in the house. For example, if a married man and his wife live with the wife's parents, the man keeps his behaviour in check because of kinship taboos between him and his in-laws. Likewise, for a married woman who lives with her husband's parents and relatives. The woman is reassured of her safety and security because of this.

At the new site, the new units were designed for nuclear families – husband, wife and children. With the kinship and cultural checks and balance safeguards gone, a husband's behaviour subtly shifts from quiet compliance to domineering, assertion and even violence.

9.4.3 Lessons from Vunidogoloa

1. In the traditional iTaukei structure, men are by deference upholders of the leadership and its embedded roles. Living communally though having its economics has cultural and kinship safeguards inbuilt in it. When these elders from the kinship position are gone or is absent or lax for some reason, it creates unwanted consequences particularly for the women. This imbalance ties in with the notion of mana, sau and alignment mentioned earlier on.
2. Violence in the family and towards women that emanate from such an imbalance can be addressed at a few levels. An immediate level is at kinship level. Siblings or cross cousins by definition of their kinship role have speaking rights to speak out to another. There is another level of uncles or fathers also taking up the mantle of their kinship role to speak and address anomalies and violence in the home and community.
3. There are also provisions in the iTaukei structure regarding the village meeting or 'bose vakoro'. This is the forum where everyone, young, old, male and female voice concerns and issues and the onus is on the turaganikoro and the traditional elders in the community to advocate and take action for that is the meaning of the role and position. The village meeting forum can only go so far in terms of reminding and advocacy. Implementation of decisions particularly regarding to how a village addresses the issue of domestic violence against women carries more weight if the traditional elders and leaders make a stand on it.

This statement implies two key issues before such decisions are made:

- i. The traditional elders or leaders must live in the village for decisions cannot be fully implemented if one lives in the urban
- ii. The traditional leaders need to know their traditional roles and its jurisprudence in the contemporary village context

If either of these are missing, it is a traditional governance misalignment that has far reaching repercussions on social cohesion, social submission, resilience and overall socio-cultural health of a village.

4. The meeting for traditional elders or leaders is known as the Bose Vanua or Vono. It is strictly a meeting of the traditional stakeholders or representatives of the key traditional leaders in a village. The efficiency of the Bose Vanua depends on the two key issues mentioned above. Failing that, the inherent responsibilities of respective traditional roles will be lethargic which negatively affects the socio-cultural well-being of a village. Furthermore, traditional members of this forum are always those born into the various leadership roles. Given the prominence of education and income, it is not unusual for a village to preface these on non-traditional leaders by co-opting them into the forum. When this happens, it indicates the disconnect with traditional heritage and knowledge as a result of modernisation. There is also the notion the notion of “lotu kei na vanua”, a Fijian phrase that translates to “Religion and the land” in English. In the context of Fiji, it represents the significant role that religion and land ownership play in Fijian society and culture.

9.5 The influence of “lotu” on culture

Fiji is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country, with Christianity being the dominant religion. The phrase “lotu” (religion) emphasises the importance of religion in the lives of many Fijians. Various Christian denominations, including Methodism, Catholicism, and Anglicanism, have a strong presence in Fiji. Religion is not just a spiritual aspect but often a central part of the Fijian way of life, influencing cultural practices, rituals, and social norms.

The “vanua” is of immense significance in Fiji. In many traditional Fijian societies, land is not merely a commodity; it is part of their identity and heritage. The concept of “vanua” includes land ownership, ancestral connections, and the responsibility to care for the land. Land disputes and issues related to land ownership have been central to Fijian politics and social dynamics. “Lotu kei na vanua” underscores the intertwining of these two critical aspects of Fijian life and culture. It acknowledges that religion and the relationship to the land are interconnected and central to the Fijian way of life, shaping not only spiritual beliefs but also social, cultural, and political aspects of the society.

“Lotu kei na vanua” can also negatively impact traditional roles and responsibilities particularly certain Christian denominations bent on demonising traditional culture or the ‘vanua’. This is aggravated if a village subscribes or patronises such denominations. Because of the high and sacred esteem people place on men of the cloth, it has led to the notion of infallibility of pastors or reverends who are taken to be the actual voice of God in the village. The result is a general apathy or even total desertion of cultural values and attitudes which have been labelled as “vakavuravura” (worldly or sinful) or “vakatevoro” (demonic).

Such hard lined Christian denominations subvert knowledge, values and attitudes that have been empirically captured from generations of living closely with the natural environment, and instead alienate and segregate its members culturally. As a result, cultural protocols and ceremonies are not recognised nor respected.

9.6 Changing roles today

9.6.1 The case of Tai Liti of Tukuraki Village – Daunimamaroroi

Today's modern context has added a woman's dauniveisusu role. It has evolved into a role of a daunimamaroroi which roughly translates to protector or custodian in today's modern context – a role that traditionally belonged to elderly men.

Where the traditional daunivesusu context initially confined women to the village, the subsistent gardens and the rivers or reefs, today's demands and challenges of living have enabled women to be protectors and custodians.

Tai Liti from Tukuraki was a simple villager tending to her vegetable gardens and selling the surplus in the market at Ba town. After relocation to Tukuraki, Tai Liti took on an entrepreneurial role with Rise Beyond the Reef NGO as part of protecting herself and the Tukuraki community from experiences that could further destabilise. Through entrepreneurship she linked women in her Nalotawa district in Ba into the Rise Beyond the Reef entrepreneurial business planning and execution. This was through the making of stuffed toys ensuring compliance to accepted standards of quality, marketing and delivery.

Tai Liti's custodian role is tied to her facilitation and advocacy of Tukuraki's regular inter-denominational prayer sessions. The psychosocial trauma of Tukuraki's relocation propelled Tai Liti to take custody of Tukuraki's mental, emotional and spiritual safety.

9.6.2 Experiences from Nabavatu and Cogea

The women of Nabavatu village are forced to take on the role normally carried out by their males. The women carry out the marketing of cash crops that are usually done by men and are the main food providers. Men are rendered semi-comatose, largely due to being overwhelmed with the difficulty of getting to their plantations and for some, being still traumatised by their makeshift living conditions for more almost 3 years. The women however, have taken up the responsibilities of their men in order to put food on the table and provide for their children's needs.

Likewise, with Cogea village where women have to act as comforters to elderly and children even though they themselves are traumatised – overburdening their role as dauniveisusu during time of trauma. This extra burden has seen them take over roles normally fulfilled by men i.e. providing for the family and harvesting crops and produce to sell at the market. This imbalance in gender roles comes about when men fail to assert or are neglecting their roles as leaders and providers in the community.

9.7 Women and livelihoods

9.7.1 The case of Vunidogoloa

According to a journal in 'The Conversation' (April 30, 2019), Vunidogoloa was provided solar power, rainwater tanks, and household facilities that were not available in the original villages. Vunidogoloa also received pineapple plants, cattle, and fish ponds, which have helped reestablish their livelihoods.

But it's not all good news. While new housing was built for the community, they were built to a poor standard, with leaking through the doors and walls, especially in periods of high rainfall. Fiji is located in the tropics, so these infrastructure problems are likely to get worse. And moving the Vunidogoloa villagers away from the ocean were acutely felt by women who missed fishing in the sea, catching and cooking fresh fish for the family, and the social act of fishing together as group.

BOX 12: Reflections from Vunidogoloa after relocating away from coastal village

- *'I'd rather stay near the sea. To feed the children and all the family. Go swimming there. We went a lot, with the net. Four or five times a week. We had access to fish, shellfish'. (Woman, 2020)*
- *'Down there we can go out to the sea to go and fish. Here when there is nothing to cook then its nothing. Not like down there. You just cook the cassava while its cooking, you can go to the sea and go fish. You got something to eat'. (Woman, 2019)*
- *'We lost our rights to our natural resources, especially our qoliqoli. When we moved up here anyone can just come and use our fishing grounds, poachers, and there's no control. When we were down there, we had control of how our resources are used. And also, the chopping of the trees and the mangroves. So, we can't safely keep our natural resources'. (Man, 2020)*

Source: Teresia Powell, 2023

9.7.2 The case of Tukuraki – mat weaving

No kanakana and gardening land was provided at the Tukuraki relocated site when they first moved. This prevented women from planting pandanus so women rarely wove mats after relocating. This meant them not having a source of income from their mats and a decline in utilising their mat weaving skills. This also forced them to purchase or barter in order to obtain pandanus mats for traditional functions.

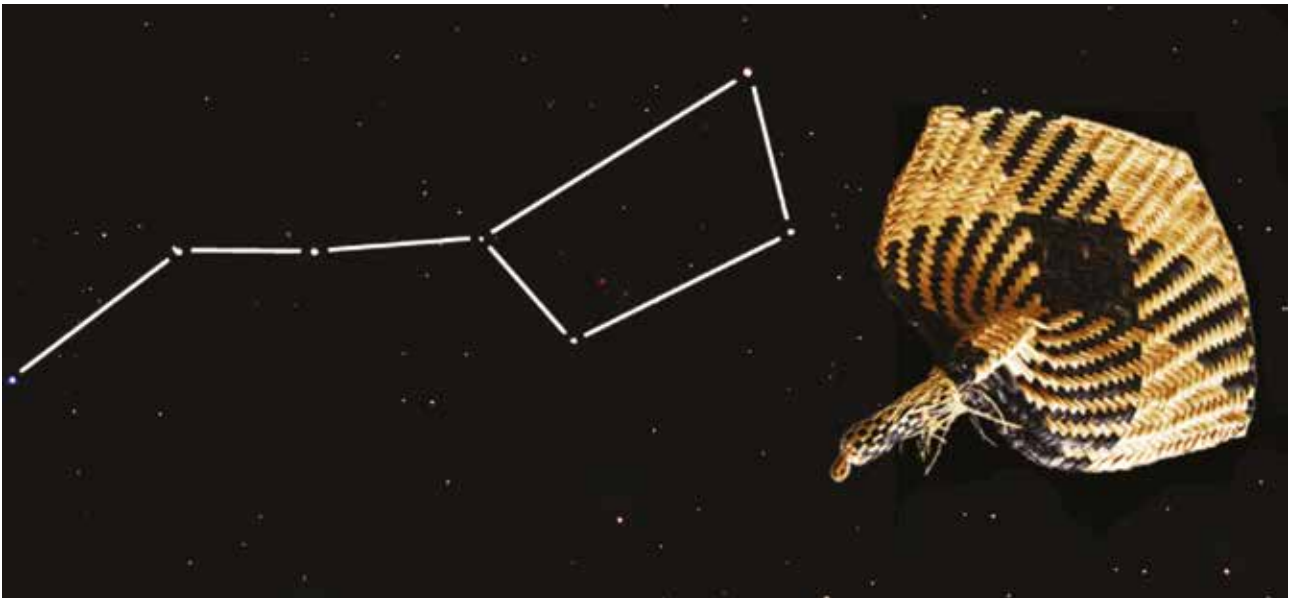
The lack of sufficient land for planting has significant impacts, especially for women.

9.7.3 The sale of the sacred iribuli fans of Daku village

The village of Daku in the southern Tailevu province are renown for the distinctive fan known as iribuli, woven from young coconut fronds. Oral history tells of how a dispute led to their departure in the late 1700s from their kai-Dakunivale dwellings in Lovoni, to seek refuge in Daku village on Moturiki Island. But food and water were scarce on Daku Moturiki. Through their traditional channels, the Daku Moturiki chiefs sought the assistance of the Bau chiefs. Radomodomo Matenakutu Naulivou, Bau warlord of the 1800s adopted them and temporarily gave them refugee status on Bau island before providing them with a permanent site, where their present village of Daku sits. Daku village maintains its ancestral link with Lovoni by retaining the name of the ancestral clan-name - Nasaumatua, Lovoni in Ovalau.

To honour and reciprocate Radomodomo's generosity, the ancestors of the Daku villagers in Tailevu pledged their eternal fealty to the Bau warlords and bound their future generations to it.

As an expression of gratitude, the distinctive iribuli fan was created at the new site. The iribuli fan is named after the Big Dipper group of stars – known as iribuli in the local language. The weaving of the iribuli is a sacred art that is exclusively contained within Daku village. Women who marry into the village and clan pick up the sacred knowledge upon settling in the village. On the other hand, when women from Daku marry outside the clan or village, this knowledge is lost when they leave the village to settle elsewhere.



The iribuli fan, named after the big dipper

In the early 1980s, during a visit to Daku village, the then Vunivalu of Bau, Ratu Sir George Kadavulevu Cakobau, came across villagers cutting mangroves to sell as firewood. Firewood and resources from mangroves were their main source of income to meet basic family needs, like food and education. The iribuli was considered as a sacred gift to the Vunivalu of Bau and therefore, ownership belonged to the Vunivalu and could not be sold.

In recognising the hardships faced by the people of Daku, the late Vunivalu gave his blessing for the Daku people to sell his fans for their livelihood. With this endorsement, women started marketing their fans and it was easier for them to meet their obligations. Villagers feed their family and educate their children through the sale of the fans. Today, a woman from Daku can earn between F\$100 to F\$200 in a week from the sale of her iribuli fans. This depends on the orders of the fan and prices depend on the design and size of the fans.

9.7.4 Lessons & recommendations on livelihood

1. Relocation must be done in a manner that accounts for the rebuilding of local livelihoods, with sustainable adaptation solutions that centres culture and the inputs of the women as *dauniveisusu*.
2. Good and sympathetic leadership is important for addressing the needs of the people. Leaders/chiefs of relocated communities have the *mana/sau* to make such decisions.
3. Modern living, driven by a cash economy, places new demands on some traditional practices – like taboos on commodities that cannot be commercialised. This can be opened up through appropriate protocols and approvals. Women can especially benefit from this given their traditional knowledge of arts and sourcing wild food.

9.8 Recommendations relating to gender and culture

1. There needs to be concerted efforts first by the iTaukei in the communities and villages to revisit and reappraise men's roles and responsibilities as far as the traditional customs and ceremonies are concerned because they mirror the untainted roles of men. Christianity and colonialism lens must not be brought to the fore when men's traditional roles are appraised. Rather, they can add value to it where required.
2. Being a male and a traditional leader implies empathy, consultation, inclusion and participation of all those who come under the leadership. Notions of the right time, place and space to speak and be heard must be created. Likewise, the recognition of cultural values like 'vakarorogo' and 'veirogorogoci (listening and listening to each other).
3. An Integrated Village Development Plan (IVDP) is a comprehensive and multi-faceted strategy aimed at fostering sustainable development in a rural village or community. These plans are typically created and implemented by governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), or local community groups to address various aspects of village life, including social, economic, environmental, and infrastructure development. Women in villages are in a strong position to manage and benefit from an IVDP bringing the flexibility and adaptability of their roles to it.
4. Revisiting the sacredness and position of women is recommended via traditions and customs that embed this. It is enshrined, for example, in the custom of 'vasu', which refers to one's maternal kin and side and is steeped in sacred protocols and norms. Colonialism and to an extent, certain brands of Christianity have diminished the cultural significance of women. Reorienting the mind needs to happen in society, by men and women in the villages using culture and as far as culture is concerned needs to be carried out. UNESCO's 2003 Convention on the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage was ratified by Fiji in 2010 and it binds states parties to recognise these aspects of culture known as intangible cultural heritage (ICH).
5. Decolonisation of the mind – a process in which an individual or society work to free their thoughts, perspectives, and worldviews from the influence and dominance of colonial ideologies. It involves recognising and challenging the mental and cultural legacies of colonisation and striving for a greater sense of self-determination and cultural authenticity. There are different aspects on the decolonisation of the kind but in the case of culture-gender and relocation, reclaiming indigenous knowledge is crucial to decolonisation of the mind. The involves rediscovering and valuing indigenous knowledge systems, languages and cultural practices that may have been marginalised or suppressed during colonial rule. The decolonising of the mind is not just about rejecting colonial ideologies but also about creating a more inclusive and equitable society where diverse cultural ways of thinking are valued and respected. It is a complex and ongoing process that can take place on both individual and societal levels. Decolonisation empowers individuals and communities to assert their own identities and worldviews independently of colonial influences.
6. In consequence to (5) above, it goes without saying that the recommended SOP in cultural sensitiveness needs to be decolonised to guide implementors on planned relocation.

7. Further to the decolonisation of thinking and perceptions, other suggested interventions and strategies could consider:
 - a. Training of stakeholders on traditions about women and empowerment.
 - b. Re-thinking, re-appreciating and re-claiming tradition.
 - c. Examining the structural and systemic problems regarding gender responsive actions.
 - d. Promoting theologies that treat contemporary issues that are both embracing and pastoral.
 - e. Facilitating open dialogue or talanoa symposiums on culture, gender relating to climate relocation
8. The Church is also a community stakeholder and needs to be part of the relocation consultation particularly as a valuable ally in terms of Biblical perspectives on the value and sacredness of women in the family and community. This consultation must be planned and discussed prior with the Church before it is included.
9. Government agencies for education, women and culture are at the forefront of cultural facilitation. As such there needs to be improved and continuous sensitisation on decolonised notions of gender and culture in their strategies and interventions. It pro-actively bolsters approaches that mentor their respective segmented audiences as part of the relocation process (pre-, during-, post- relocation).
10. Stakeholders and institutions connected to climate change and relocation must decolonise also in this respect and re-learn the traditions about women, and their sacredness in society and its various cultural expressions. These expressions of culture have been mapped out under the Cultural Mapping Program (CMP) undertaken by the Ministry iTaukei Affairs & Culture aligned to UNESCO's 2003 Convention.
11. Cabinet adopted the UNDRIP which further enshrines the revisiting and reappraising of indigenous values and ethics which paves the way for Government, stakeholders, civil and non-government organisations to begin incorporating these as far as climate change relocation goes.



Preparing pandanus leaves for weaving mats in Nakoro Village, Navosa. Source: GIZ

BOX 13: Lesson on decolonising the mind

In recent years contestations around European colonial heritage and legacies have been voiced around calls “to decolonise” institutions, public spaces, curricula and forms of knowledge (Casper, A., 2018). To decolonise has different meanings, but the underlying assumption is that the effects of colonialism on the cultures of the colonised have been profound, negative and enduring. Decolonisation, therefore, is not merely (or indeed primarily) an event that took place when and where formal colonial rule came to an end, but rather a process of challenging the cultural and epistemic legacies of colonialism in broader fields of history, aesthetics and culture.

The recognition for decolonisation is implied to the State and its parties (including institutions, NGOs and CSOs) through the 2003 UNESCO Convention and its consequent International Decade of Indigenous Languages.

Source: Andersen, Casper (2018), ‘Decolonizing the Mind’ [online] ECHOES: European Colonial Heritage Modalities in Entangled Cities. Available at: <http://keywordsechoes.com/>

9.9 SOGIESC, culture, and relocation

9.9.1 Defining SOGIESC in the local context

SOGIESC is acronym for sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics. People with diverse SOGIESC is an umbrella term for all people whose sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions and/or sex characteristics place them outside culturally mainstream categories.

In Fiji SOGIESC is administered by the Rainbow Pride Foundation, a not-for-profit organisation that advocates for the human rights of LGBTQIA persons so that they are respected and are able to live with dignity, free from discrimination, persecution, and violence; and where their human rights are upheld. Its mandate includes promoting LGBTQI Rights and Equality, Social Justice and Health & Well-Being. It empowers and encourages LGBT individuals in Fiji to participate fully in democratic decision-making in their household, communities and national processes.

9.9.1.1 The LGBTQI or SOGIESC – a perspective through language

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis states that people experience the world based on the structure of their language, and that linguistic category shapes and limits cognitive processes. It proposes that differences in language affect thought, perception, and behaviour, so speakers of different languages think and act differently.

For example, different words mean various things in other languages. Not every word in all languages has an exact one-to-one translation in a foreign language. Because of these small but crucial differences, using the wrong word within a particular language can have significant consequences.

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is sometimes called “linguistic relativity” or the “principle of linguistic relativity.” So, while they have slightly different names, they refer to the same basic proposal about the relationship between language and thought.

In the Fijian language, there is an umbrella word that refers to SOGIESC, particularly to homosexuals. The word is “vakasālewalewa” (one having both sexual organs of a male and a female; an effeminate, looking, thinking or acting like a female). This word is commonly used in a derogatory context. Homosexuality and its diverse nuances in the English language is devoid in the linguistic reality of the Fijian language, except for “vakasalewalewa” which is an entry in the Fijian monolingual dictionary. Other socio-linguistic colloquial expressions include (but not limited to) “viavia yalewa” (acting like a girl), “damele” (queer soft), and “tārua”. For lesbians the socio-linguistic reality (or the lack of it) applies too. Colloquial words referring to lesbianism include “wadua” and “panikeke” (pancake).

Given the absence of this concept in the social reality of the Fijian language, the entire spectrum of SOGIESC is basically an invisible or parallel sub-world. On top of it all, the SOGIESC community does not recognise nor subscribe to mainstream gender roles and responsibilities. And it is this invisibility that perpetuates further vulnerability and marginalisation.

9.9.2 Disaster situations and impact on LGBTQI persons

While disasters affect everyone, its impact is particularly significant on those most vulnerable, marginalised and discriminated against in society. Some of the specific vulnerabilities include religious groups asserting disasters as divine retribution for “sinners” and their supporters, claiming disasters as acts of God against sexual “transgression”. This stigmatises and incites violence against LGBT and exposes them to harassment.

Moreover, disaster response agencies enact heteronormative assumptions in policies and processes which marginalise LGBT people from aid as described below:

- In government and organisational policies, “family” often means an opposite-sex couple with children, while emergency relief practices deploy binary (male-female) concepts of gender. Emergency shelters, for example, are problematic for LGBTQI people, especially same-sex couples, “effeminate” males, trans individuals, and other gender minorities.
- In some instances, sexual and gender minorities have been denied access to emergency shelters and aid (food, finance) as they could not be accommodated in relief policies that framed evacuees as “nuclear families” or as “male” and “female” individuals.
- Same-sex couples fear going to evacuation sites due to anticipated gossip, discrimination, animosity of family situation, abuse, so they prefer staying in their damaged homes or seek shelter at other LGBT peoples or LGBT ally home. The concerns and needs of LGBT people in natural disasters are largely absent from government emergency management, and NGO policies and processes and from the mainstream media.

9.9.3 Recommendations to existing National Legislation/Policy

The SOGIESC 2023 policy brief³⁰ compiles and analyses national legislation and policies on climate change that directly and/or indirectly considers the concerns and welfare ((or lack thereof) of diverse SOGIESC individuals in various themes as given below:

THEME 1: Diversity and Inclusion

1. There is insufficient disaggregation within existing data used to inform policies of the distinct realities of different population groups, and this needs to be improved. There is no focus on people with diverse SOGIESC in DRR-CCA policies and laws, and where mentioned is often incomplete. LTBTQI+ organisations and allies should assist policymakers in ensuring that specific experiences are not rendered invisible and thus lead to inadequate policy and programming responses.
2. There needs to be a national framework developed that can facilitate the training of DRR-CCA service workers or community personnel to ensure a more humanitarian aid response with sensitivities to the SOGIESC individuals' own experiences and preferences.
3. Support ongoing and promote new academic research to include SOGIESC groups in mainstream climate change and disaster scholarship.

Theme 2: Decision-making

1. There is a need to engage with – and to co-create and co-produce with people of diverse SOGIESC when designing and implementing programs. This applies across humanitarian, development and community services, health, education, and other vital sectors. The aim must be to ensure that programs and services are appropriate for different population groups and are sensitive to context and tailored to their specific needs.
2. The Fijian Government should strongly consider a decentralised CCA and DRR planning and actions to strengthen the capacities of local governments and response organisations and ensure that risk assessments and DRR plans routinely, specifically and substantively address the rights, concerns and strengths of SOGIESC people.
3. Develop organisational and staff capacity to address people's rights, concerns, and strengths with diverse SOGIESC in DRR, including CCA programs, by supporting programs that reduce stigma, discrimination, violence, and exclusion against people with diverse SOGIESC within communities, both in everyday life and during disasters.
4. Ensure effective representation of SOGIESC groups in discussion-making spaces on CCA/DRR. Invest in their capacity also to contribute substantively in free spaces.
5. The lack of appropriate data on SOGIESC needs and concerns around disasters is a primary barrier to more inclusive disaster emergency responses by Government bodies.
6. Gendered and intersectional analyses in emergency management policies and practice are needed as a first step to addressing the immense harms that may result from neglect or exclusion. Such gendered analyses should be applied to emergency sector organisations as well as to the disaster-affected communities that benefit from their service.

³⁰ SOGIESC inclusion in climate change – a policy brief on gaps in inclusion of Fijians of diverse SOGIESC in climate change laws and policies in Fiji

7. Data is needed on gender-based violence to allow comparison pre-and post-disaster across Fiji.
8. Encourage local governments and relevant departments, including key stakeholder response organisations to support and build on existing strengths, capacities and actions to plan effective and inclusive CCA-DDR policies and strategies.
9. Ensure that risk assessments and CCA-DDR plans routinely, specifically and substantively address the rights, concerns and strengths of SOGIESC people.
10. Government to develop National SOGIESC policy to guide All ministries involved in CCA-DDR on how to be more SOGIESC transformative.

Loss and Damage as a result of climate induced relocation

10



When a tradition gathers enough strength to go on for centuries, you don't just turn it off in one day.

Chinua Achebe

Cultural loss and damage are embedded in the vanua and its physical, spiritual, social aspects. In addition to the generic loss stated above, there are different nuances and dimensions to it. Traditional society and identity are tethered and intricately tied to the geography and natural landscape within a vanua. Here are distinctions of cultural loss and damage as a result of climate induced relocation.

10.1 Physical loss

Physical loss refers to loss of land and sites. Climate change and environmental impacts, such as deforestation, loss of biodiversity, and the destruction of natural habitats, can affect indigenous and local communities' traditional practices and spiritual beliefs that are closely tied to the environment.

The loss of traditional plants, fishing grounds, hunting and gathering grounds (wild foods) are tied to traditional knowledge and rituals (that need these natural resources – e.g. skirts for fire walking made from specific fibre of plant). It means loss of burial grounds and the history embedded in old burial grounds. Though a community is re-housed at a new location and with seemingly improved wooden or concrete structures or houses, there is still a loss in terms of skills associated with traditional house building and identity.

House mounds or *yavu* are the indigenous equivalent of sculptured monuments of the ancient cultures like Egypt, Greece, Rome or India to cite few instances. A house mound aligns to cultural notions of one's place and position, oral history and social hierarchy. These mounds were created via social ceremonies and protocols which is why there is indefinite value in them.

Climate change impacts and consequential relocation leaves behind all these indigenous monuments of oral history that have existed for decades and centuries in clans and villages. Initial reactions to relocation may be favourable from a relocated community's viewpoint, but the impacts of this loss begin to show up gradually intergenerationally. By extension, burial grounds in communities also pass as monuments. Like urban areas where there is a common cemetery for everyone, villages also have common cemeteries but there is a separate one for elder chiefs. These gravesites are called 'sau tabu' – sacred burial sites.



Graves being destroyed by coastal erosion in Lau. Source: Elia Nakoro

Village cemeteries have protocols and ceremonies also in their preparations. When a person dies in the village, there are different people designated traditionally as grave diggers, food handlers, vigil observers etc. The saying it takes a village to raise a child also applies to when one dies. Climate change impacts literally washes all these away. Relocation pushes these away.

Heritage destruction involves the physical destruction or damage to cultural heritage sites, monuments, artifacts, and historical buildings. These cultural heritage sites are increasingly threatened by the intensifying impacts of climate change, especially extreme weather events. The loss of these physical manifestations of culture can be irreparable.

10.1.1 Addressing physical losses

Physical loss of land and sites can begin to be addressed via photographs and mapping of sites. 3D models of the site can also be created virtually or using other materials so as to keep a tangible and visual memory of the site. Processes about village burial site preparations and its protocols can be documented in audio/video and photos including the village's iconic weaving, culinary, pottery etc housed in a common house at the relocated site for access and posterity. IT technology, GPS mapping, websites, etc can also be used to map out graves and their socio-cultural significance.

Indigenous trees and plants at the old site need to be given consideration too when a village is relocated. These plants and trees take time to grow and mature, and consideration needs to be held with the Ministry of Forests and Ministry of Agriculture to ascertain soil types and ecological conditions from old site to determine the suitability of introducing these culturally significant plants at the new site.



Cultural mapping by the Fiji Museum in Navosa, Source: GIZ

10.2 Spiritual loss

Spiritual loss refers to loss of intangible aspects of culture. All knowledge and intangible expressions of culture are believed to emanate from the spiritual world and ancestors, and is also considered as traditional knowledge.

Traditional knowledge refers to the knowledge, practices, skills, and wisdom that are developed and passed down through generations within a particular culture or community. This knowledge often encompasses a wide range of subjects, including agriculture, medicine, ecology, spirituality, storytelling, and more. It is typically transmitted orally or through practical demonstration rather than through written texts.

Language extinction - the loss of languages is a major aspect of cultural loss and damage. When a language becomes extinct, it often means the loss of unique worldviews, knowledge systems, and cultural practices associated with that language. Displacement, scattering of people in different parts of the country, urbanisation, modern technology like social media, and higher education can contribute to the decline of the spoken indigenous dialect and/or language, especially among the younger generation.

As traditional cultures come into contact with modernity and its comforts and technologies, traditional knowledge systems can erode. Such traditional knowledge include - agriculture and fishing practices; medicine, midwifery, and healing; reading weather patterns and the land (animal, plant and water behaviour); construction; navigation; food security in times of scarcity; ecological sustainability; and more. The presence of traditional knowledge reflects the spiritual connectivity between the people and their vanua. This loss of knowledge can have detrimental effects on communities' abilities to adapt to changing environments.

For Fiji, traditional knowledge is understood at State level according to the UNESCO 2003 Convention which Fiji ratified in 2010 (and administered by the Ministry iTaukei Affairs and Culture) which articulates traditional knowledge as intangible cultural heritage of culture. The Convention states that there are five general domains of culture –

1. Oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage;
2. Performing arts;
3. Social practices, rituals and festive events;
4. Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; and
5. Traditional craftsmanship.

Governing these five domains are benevolent spirits or muses who gifted the knowledge to the people. This is why knowledge in the indigenous sense is not objective but subjective because they all have a spiritual source. Few examples on this include:

- a. Vatulele Island –is renowned for their tapa making and whenever an honoured guest visits the island, beautifully decorated tapa in various sizes are presented traditionally as gifts. Once these tapa gifts are traditionally acknowledged by the guest, it can never be given back or reclaimed by the hosts. However, in this case, just before the guest collects the traditionally presented tapa, a woman from among the hosts grabs the top most tapa and runs off with it to the village. The local chiefs do not react but condone it saying that the act is to ensure the spirit of tapa making remains in Vatulele, only the tangible expression (i.e. the tapa) is gifted, not the muse or spirit from whom the knowledge emanates.
- b. Beqa Island firewalkers– the gift or power over heat is not confined to members of the Sawau tribe in Beqa. This gift was given to Tui Naivilaqata, a prince of olden days in Beqa as a gesture of goodwill by Tui Namoliwai, a mythical gnome who lived in a pool. Tui Namoliwai pledged to Tui Naivilaqata that he and his generations would walk over fire and have power over heat³¹. This is why when non-Sawau tribe Fijians are part of a firewalking display, the Sawau elders recognise that the gift has passed from one of their women who had married and had children outside the tribe. This is the implication of the first promise made to Tui Namoliwai that “he and his generations to come” – not the male generations but all his generations.
- c. Vunidogoloa village was one of the first villages to be relocated in Fiji. There is a sub-clan in Vunidogoloa who possess the gift of healing and mending broken bones. It is an inherited gift. When Vunidogoloa relocated without fully completing the traditional protocols and ceremonies for departure, there was temporary loss of this gift for weeks.
- d. Korovā settlement Suva – nestled in Suva, is an urban settlement for those who came from Moce Island in the Lau province in the late 1990s. One of the members who came was a man who was ‘vasu’ to the Jafau canoewrights in Naividamu village on Vulaga Island. Through this particular vasu connection emerged the canoe construction skill. Most notable in Korovā’s canoe construction was the making of the camakau that was featured in Disney’s Moana. In addition, the community is making wooden crafts for income.

Certain traditional performing arts come replete with spirituality like the Maravulevu meke that is traditionally synonymous with the Nakelo district in the Tailevu province. Memory and recollection of the meke’s lyrics and choreography connect with its chanters and performers shortly after observation of a few traditional protocols. When the closing protocols are observed at the conclusion, the memory is ‘gone’ once more, waiting in its world for another occasion to surface. On the flip side, memory of traditional dances and other traditional expressions for that matter can be withheld.

³¹ Click on this link to watch a presentation on the story: <https://artsandculture.google.com/story/na-vila-sacred-power-over-heat-and-fire-ichcap/PQWR96K7HiUCLQ?hl=en>

The processes and the outcomes of learning a traditional performance or any other traditional art form can have therapeutic value for loss and trauma. It also strengthens identity, boosts esteem, bolsters social cohesion, nurtures discipline and patience.

An example of spiritual loss is the annual festival of first fruits that was traditionally held in February. This festival has its origins in tribal reconciliation through the harvesting of yams intentionally planted and set apart for this very purpose. Young males harvested their yams and reconciled with their older siblings for all their omissions and commissions during the year. This process began a month or two prior and snowballed from the micro to the macro until the entire clan right up to the chief had reconciled. The yams, locally known as “uvi”, were gathered and a token was presented to the traditional priest as an offering (sigana) marking the clan’s unity. When the offering was placed in its rightful place, its name changes from offering (sigana) to “yabaki” meaning ‘year’. Hence the new year and it’s abundance was guaranteed as a result of clan-wide reconciliation and unity.

When a village is relocated and there are no considerations for soil and space suited for yam cultivation, this can lead to the loss of this traditional practice, which in turn can have implications on community unity and goodwill, if there is no substitute for the tribal reconciliation tradition.

10.2.1 Addressing spiritual losses

Spiritual loss can never be fully addressed but can begin to be captured via cultural mapping aligned to the five domains of culture in the UNESCO 2003 Convention. This mapping requires the community to be at the forefront of the mapping – defining and articulating it, giving their free prior informed consent - grounded and informed in indigenous ways. The capturing of the spirituality can be captured via video and audio data.

In terms of language/dialect loss in the context of relocation, strategies should be in place to ensure that the indigenous dialects and/or language are kept alive or revitalised amidst the drive for better access to education, communication technologies, and modern services. Mapping and documentation of language and dialect should be part of the cultural mapping. Social and communal gatherings are to encourage the usage of local language and dialects, especially amongst younger generations.

New relocated sites should include a space that allow for traditional events and gatherings to continue and to consider traditional practices, including planting of traditionally significant crops and plants that are spiritually connected to the resilience of a community.

10.3 Social loss

Kinship and relationship are the hallmark of indigenous iTaukei people. Villages are nexus of kinship and relationship, everyone and everything are related to one another. These relationship dynamics are intergenerational, gathering strength over time. With relocation, connection to the social world that ordered the kinship and relationship can be negatively affected.

It is affirmed when a community participates in social events of the church or the chiefs, the links are continually strengthened. It is a safety psychosocial net particularly when a community is traditional and lives in extended family units. Relocation that does not consider these communal relationships, weakens and diminishes this. The notion by John Donne ‘No man is an island’ is subverted and snowballs into negativity in relocated people and their environment over time.

10.3.1 Addressing social losses

Social losses can begin to be addressed by consulting and engaging with a relocated community BEFORE they are relocated. The community must be at the centre of relocation plans. Agencies must ensure that the social aspects of the community (community hall, worship centres, etc.) must be factored and if possible, replicated at a relocated site. It may not be a total replication but if worked sensitively in tandem with a relocated community, they can be mentored to lead in how their social relocation can best be addressed.

10.4 Economic loss

Economic loss refers to financial setback or a decrease in economic well-being experienced by an individual, business or society as a whole due to various factors. For a relocated community, it means the source for a subsistence living, the loss of resources that enabled heritage arts like fans, mats, tapa, oil, baskets, to name just a few. Relocating to an inland environment for a community that derives its living from the sea is also an economic loss – both at subsistence and cash livelihood. It can mean loss of skills, attitudes and values that formed the basis of economic livelihood - attributes that took multiple generations to build up and transmit.

10.4.1 Addressing Economic Loss

Stakeholders can begin to address economic loss by dovetailing livelihoods that are closely related to traditional skills and knowledge. A coastal village whose livelihood has been derived from the sea, upon relocation their livelihood must be still connected to the sea. If the relocated site is further inland, there can be provisions of new community transport to easily access the coast and the sea to continue this livelihood. This is where the notion of village cooperatives can be adopted and valued added to enable and sustain the livelihood. Introducing a new livelihood altogether is not sustainable because it is not the people's DNA.

Carefully replicating or re-adopting an old livelihood at a relocated site can be done and must be done with the people at the centre, having agency over their welfare for they know best what is good for them.



House foundations after flooding at Vuniniudrovu Village. Source: UNITAR

10.5 Recommendations regarding cultural loss and damage in the context of relocation

1. Climate change impacts are resulting in the devastating loss and damage of tangible and intangible cultural assets of our indigenous communities in Fiji and across the Pacific. Communities are forced to move and, in the process, leave behind or lose pieces of their cultural identity. It is imperative that countries take swift and urgent action to curb greenhouse gas emissions and to halt global temperature increase to within 1.5°C.
2. The voice of our indigenous communities needs to be amplified at the world stage, sharing their stories of cultural loss and damage and its impacts. Understanding and sensitiveness on the profound implications of cultural loss and damage is crucial and appropriate responsive actions are needed for the survival of a community's cultural identity and for their resilience in the midst of this climate crisis.
3. Targeted climate financing to address tangible and intangible cultural losses and damages needs to be increased. Funding for climate-induced planned relocation initiatives and projects should always factor in cultural loss and damage components.
4. Efforts to address cultural loss and damage include cultural preservation initiatives, legal protections for indigenous and minority cultures, language revitalisation programs, and raising awareness about the importance of cultural diversity. International organisations, such as UNESCO, play a role in promoting and protecting cultural heritage and diversity worldwide. Recognising the value of cultural diversity and respecting the rights and autonomy of indigenous and local communities are essential steps in mitigating cultural loss and damage.
5. While the Ministry iTaukei Affairs and Culture has a national inventory of culture being finalised as per the UNESCO 2003 Convention, the same Convention encourages and assists communities to create their own inventories at village or community level. Because the State has ratified this Convention, it obligates the State and all parties to support this.



Schools for Climate Action event in Suva, 2019. Source: GIZ

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