



Assessing Community Perspectives on Governance in Fiji

*RETA 6065: Assessing Community Perspectives on
Governance in the Pacific, a report for ADB*

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FSPi

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- Tavarau Indo-Fijian community
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Executive Summary

- F-1* This report is prepared in accordance with *RETA 6065: “Assessing Community Perspectives on Governance in The Pacific”* for the Asian Development Bank (ADB). In 2002, ADB agreed in principle to support the “*Voices and Choices: Gardening Good Governance and Democracy in the Pacific*”, a regional project managed by the Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific International (FSPI) covering four Pacific nations. The *Voices and Choices* project complements the ADB governance assessments in the Pacific region. The Fiji component was undertaken by Partners in Community Development Fiji (PCDF), formerly the Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific Fiji (FSP Fiji). This study focused on the two major populations, Fijian and Indo-Fijian as, well as people living in a Melanesian community, as the Melanesian population has been identified as being one of the poorest communities in the country.
- F-2* The geographical location of all case study communities for the project was on the main island of Viti Levu where 75% of the total population resides. Thus the communities identified to be involved were two Fijian communities (Nukutubu Village and Jubaniwai District), two Indo-Fijian communities (Busabusa Settlement and Tavarau Settlement) and one Melanesian community (Muanikoso Settlement). These communities were selected because of their socio-cultural, economic and ethnic diversity and willingness to participate.
- F-3* Data was gathered using various participatory learning and action (PLA) techniques, knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) surveys and through interviews with community-based stakeholders and external experts. Results of a limited literature review on the evolution of governance in Fiji were also incorporated.
- F-4* The study explored the connections between traditional and modern governance systems, with specific attention to areas of actual and potential interface. Governance processes were considered primarily from the perspective of families and communities; issues related to gender, ethnicity and migration were considered throughout.
- F-5* There were six distinct governance structures studied: the traditional and modern for each of these communities – Fijian, Indo-Fijian and Melanesian. There were two communities in each of the Fijian and Indo-Fijian studies, with just one Melanesian community in the study. The findings showed that for both Indo-Fijian and Melanesian communities the modern system had superceded the traditional system, where as the Fijian system had adapted so that the traditional system now interfaces with the modern system of governance. Both Indo-Fijian and Melanesian communities originated from people who had been completely alienated from their original culture and governance processes and the pre modern governance processes operating in Fiji was modeled on a remembered system for the Indo-Fijians and for the Melanesians, adapted from the Fijian system with the commonality of committees managing various issues, such as water, roads and conflict management.



F-6 Main findings included the following:

F-7 All of the case study communities identified similar priority governance issues.

- **Land:** Issues related to land use are a major concern for all communities (86% of land belongs to Fijian landowning units – *Mataqali*); land landownership has long been a contentious constitutional issue as Indo-Fijians and Melanesians are unable to obtain leases necessary to secure livelihood.
- **Security:** Security is related to the issue to land, especially for Indo-Fijians and Melanesians. When leases expire, families do not have alternative living arrangements resulting in homelessness, domestic and community violence and increased substance abuse.
- **Livelihood and Employment:** A growing number of people involved in the sugar industry (farmers, cane cutters, truck drivers, *sirdars* and mill workers) are losing their jobs with little alternative employment available. Flow-on impacts occur when landowners are unable to take over the cane farms, further jobs are lost and the productivity of the sugar industry is reduced.
- **Governance Processes:** People are dissatisfied with modern governance and believe traditional systems were more responsive to the needs of communities. For instance, water was provided by communal wells dug by the people whereas water supplied by the Public Works Department (PWD) is unreliable, especially in rural areas.

The Governance Structures and Systems

F-8 The national Fijian government structure appears to interface well with the traditional and modern community governance systems. The findings of this study indicate that the Fijian system can be further modified to accommodate all communities without threat to the identity of any of the component parts. A greater recognition of the Fijian structure with more empowerment at the community level would address the issue of lack of response from the modern governance system.

F-9 The traditional system for the Indo-Fijians was poorly documented though well remembered, while the Fijian traditional governance system was well documented and well understood by community participants. The Indo-Fijian community felt strongly that the modern system does not work for them whereas the traditional system did. They would not return to the traditional system in its entirety but would like the workable features included in a modern governance system.

F-10 The Fijian and Melanesian case study communities recognized that the modern system provided roads, water and other services but was slow to respond (if at all) compared to the traditional system and did not work for conflict resolution and promises to support community projects.



Understanding the Modern Governance Systems

Fijian Communities

- F-11* The traditional Fijian system was well understood; people believed it was effective in promoting development and managing conflict. Women's role was to implement decisions made by the male Council of Elders; youth learned about governance from their elders in formal and informal ways. Accountability was assured because everyone lived together; if promises were not kept people would lose face.
- F-12* Although almost all Fijian participants vote in national elections, they understand little of the modern governance system other than the name of their elected leader. People do not believe the modern system addresses community needs; government officials have left a legacy of unfulfilled promises. Women today are more involved in family and civic affairs but less engaged in family/community support activities.
- F-13* There is a clear interface between traditional and modern Fijian governance, although the application of law in criminal and civil cases is not always clear. For instance, Fijian communities found it difficult to understand and accept legal processes in the post 2000 prorogue of parliament, especially in relation to the activities of chiefs.

Indo-Fijian Communities

- F-14* Indo-Fijian communities adapted the GSS and *Panchayat* system used in India to suit the Fiji context. Participants have a clear understanding of how this system worked and believe it was more responsive to family needs, especially in times of disaster.
- F-15* The GSS system promoted and reinforced community cohesion/cooperation and provided assistance for those in need, irrespective of caste or status. Both women and men served on the *Panchayat*. The mother-in-law was dominant in the home; community governance was the man's domain.
- F-16* Indo-Fijian participants vote in high numbers in national elections but claim they do not understand how the political system operates. The Advisory Councilor (the representative for the Indo-Fijian community), appointed by the Government is not seen as effective in addressing issues at district or national level.
- F-17* Indo-Fijian communities do not believe the modern system is fair or reliable in addressing development issues or in using funds in an accountable and transparent way. Nonetheless, people feel they have no choice but to accept the current governance system as mechanisms for community input do not work. Participants have a strong desire to elect their own Advisory Councilor rather than having someone appointed by government. They would also like to see the return of the *Panchayat* and GSS system, although not in exactly the same form as existed prior to independence.

Melanesian/Fijian Communities

- F-18* The Melanesian community understood and supported their adopted governance structure adapted to the Fiji context during the pre-independence era. This system reflected the Fijian/Melanesian emphasis on extended family and community –based management. The system promoted accountability as everyone lived together and feared being ostracized by the community if obligations were not fulfilled.



F-19 Although Melanesian community members claim to understand modern governance structures—they know the name of their members of parliament and vote in national elections—they believe the system does not adequately address community concerns.

The Role of Chiefs in the Fijian Communities

F-20 Chiefs have always played an instrumental role in ensuring that communities practice good governance. However, most young people today have not been taught “the old ways” of resolving conflict and maintaining social harmony; they question the authority and relevance of the chiefly system. As a result, chiefs no longer feel empowered or equipped to deal with modern governance issues, especially with respect to young people.

F-21 Participants believe the leadership of the Great Council of Chiefs “saved” Fiji following the 1987 coups and 2000 prorogue of parliament. Had the Fijian community not been willing to listen to the Council, the country would not have normalized as quickly as it did. The Great Council of Chiefs is seen as a stable, detached institution free of the daily functions of government. Recent history has demonstrated the need to retain elements of traditional governance that reinforce security and peace. People suggested that leadership training be provided to individuals likely to become chiefs by virtue of birthright or nomination.

Shared Problems for Fijian and Indo-Fijian Communities

F-22 With regard to both development issues more broadly and to governance specifically, Fijians and Indo-Fijian communities share, despite these differences, fundamental challenges. These challenges are:

- Both Indo-Fijian and Fijian communities have little knowledge of how modern systems of governance function. The KAP surveys showed that rudimentary aspects of modern governance—personalities, institutions, functions—are poorly understood.
- Modern governance systems are seen as presenting a number of problems namely:
 - They are top-down with little or no input from communities
 - They make unilateral decisions without consultation
 - They are seen as unsympathetic to the requirements of communities
 - There was a concern expressed that modern governments are a black hole to requests made by communities. Requests are submitted without reply or in some cases acknowledgement.
 - They are viewed as a threat to traditional authority as traditional community leaders no longer have the authority to make decisions without reference to modern governance agents.

Land Issues

F-23 Land is a key issue for Fijian communities because the increasing population is putting added pressure on land used for food production. For Indo-Fijians, concerns center on expiring land leases as these tenancy arrangements have provided shelter and means of livelihood for generations. When leases expire and Indo-Fijian families are forced to vacate their homes, they face great difficulty securing alternative housing and



employment. Similarly, the Melanesian communities have no legal entitlement with respect to land tenure or use.

- F-24* The impact on land issues varies throughout the country; demands for occupancy depend on the space available for displaced families in established and new settlements. Indo-Fijian and Melanesian communities report feeling insecure and highly vulnerable to the demands of landowners. Uncertain livelihoods have resulted in increased crime and domestic violence, higher suicide rates and substance abuse, especially among young people.
- F-25* The Melanesian and Indo-Fijian communities need moral and technical support and improved negotiation/conflict management skills to improve relationships with Fijian landowners. Similarly, mechanisms need to be established to enable greater dialogue between landowner and tenant groups. Constructive dialogue on land issues needs to take place at community level. Churches and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) could play an important facilitating role in this process. The Native Land Trust Board (NLTB) needs also to play a critical role in the use of land and the relationship between landowner and tenant. It is clear from the media that the NLTB staff is not diligent in doing their work whereby a tenant had not been given his lease documents although all was in order after 20 years. The internal workings of the NLTB need investigation and sorting through if the land issues are to be properly resolved. It is clear that the principles on which NLTB was established was helpful to the nation to manage the land on behalf of the native tribes, however the refusal of the manager in 2001 to allow Fijian landowners wanting to re-lease their land to their Indo-Fijian tenants was not justice. While the new manager has not taken that stand, there is still much to be done.

The Roles of Women, Youth, and Families

- F-26* The role of women, youth and families were studied and the findings showed that their roles in community governance have broadened as community governance systems have evolved. Although women and youth still do not have an equal voice in the community decisionmaking, it is more than in the traditional system and is increasing as they take an increasing part in the economy and family income. All communities acknowledged the role of the elders and parents in educating the children to know respect and custom and train them for the future in the governing of the community.

Lessons Learned

- F-27* Lessons from this study showed that more time and additional communities need to be involved in understanding the community perspective on governance. The data collected was smaller than desired but fitted the widely accepted picture of governance in all the communities studied. More data can be collected to strengthen the material gathered in this study with the work PCDF is doing with communities throughout the nation. Questionnaires related to governance can be part of the workshops on education, health and the environment.
- F-28* This study also indicated that some of the reports on poverty, human rights and social issues need to be reconsidered on such matters as defining poverty, the rights of the individual versus the rights of the community and where justice lies with the different aspects of conflict management in the different communities.





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Glossary

ACRONYMS

ALTAAgricultural Land Lord and Tenants Act
CCFCitizens Constitutional Forum
CDU	.....Curriculum development Unit (of the Ministry of Education)
CGS	.....Community Governance Structure
DO	.....District Officer
DPO	.....District Planning Officer
FEA	.....Fiji Electricity Authority
FLP	.....Fiji Labour Party
FSC	.....Fiji Sugar Corporation
FSP I	.....Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific International
GCC	.....Great Council of Chiefs
GSS	.....<i>Graam Sudhaar Samiti</i> Indo-Fijian Community Development Committee
KANA	.....Komiti for the Advancement of Nutrition and Agriculture
KAP	.....Knowledge Attitude and Practices survey
MAF	.....Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
MoE	.....Ministry of Education
NCW	.....National Council of Women
NGO	.....Non-government organisation
NLTA	.....Native Landlord And Tenant Acts
NLTB	.....Native Land Trust Board
PCD	.....Fiji Partners in Community Development Fiji (formerly Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific Fiji {FSP Fiji})
PWD	.....Public Works Department
PLA	.....Participatory, Learning and Action
SSVM	.....<i>Soqosoqovkamarama</i> Fijian Women's Association
SWS	.....Suva Water Supply
UNDP	.....United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	.....United Nations Children's Fund
USP	.....University of The South Pacific



IN-COUNTRY TERMS

<i>Bose Levu Vakaturaga</i>	Great Council of Chiefs
<i>Girmit ty</i>	Indo-Fijians who came to Fiji under the indentured system
<i>i tokatoka</i>	extended family group
<i>I kanakana</i>	Landowning units farming and fishing ground
<i>Mana</i>	spirit of the people, particularly chiefs.
<i>Mataqali</i>	sub-clan or land-owning unit, group of <i>I tokatoka</i>
<i>Mukhiya</i>	head of the <i>Panchayat</i>
<i>Panchayat</i>	group of five elected people in Indo-Fijian communities who deal with conflict
<i>Panch</i>	group of five elected people for the <i>Panchayat</i>
<i>Rara</i>	central area in the village
<i>Sau Turaga</i>	Chief's Ambassador
<i>Tikina</i>	Fijian for district formed by a number of villages closely related to each other. There are 187 <i>Tikina</i> in the 14 Provinces in Fiji.
<i>Turaga Ni Koro</i>	village administrator in the modern governance condition in the Fijian community who receives a modest allowance from Government via the Fijian Administration.
<i>vanua</i>	land, sea and people
<i>Vanua</i>	States – eg Vanua Burebusaga
<i>Yaqona</i>	Fijian word for <i>Kava</i> , Pacific ceremonial drink made from the root of the pepper plant, <i>Piper methysticum</i>
<i>Yavusa</i>	clan comprising several sub-clans or <i>mataqali</i>





Part 1. Introduction

1.1 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE COUNTRY

Location

- F-29 The Republic of Fiji Islands is an archipelago consisting of 332 islands—of which approximately 110 are inhabited—located in the South Pacific Ocean. The total land area is about 18,376 square kilometers. These islands, apart from a few atolls in the Lau Province are mostly mountains of volcanic origin. The climate is tropical marine; only slight seasonal temperature variation and cyclonic storms occur from November to January.
- F-30 The capital city, Suva is located on the eastern coast of the main island of Viti Levu; the international airport is in Nadi on the western coast of Viti Levu. For administrative purposes the country is divided into four divisions (Central, Eastern, Northern and Western) and 1 dependency (Rotuma). Each division is subdivided into *tikina* or districts, comprising a varying number of villages and settlements. The map in Figure 1 shows the location of the case study communities on Viti Levu.

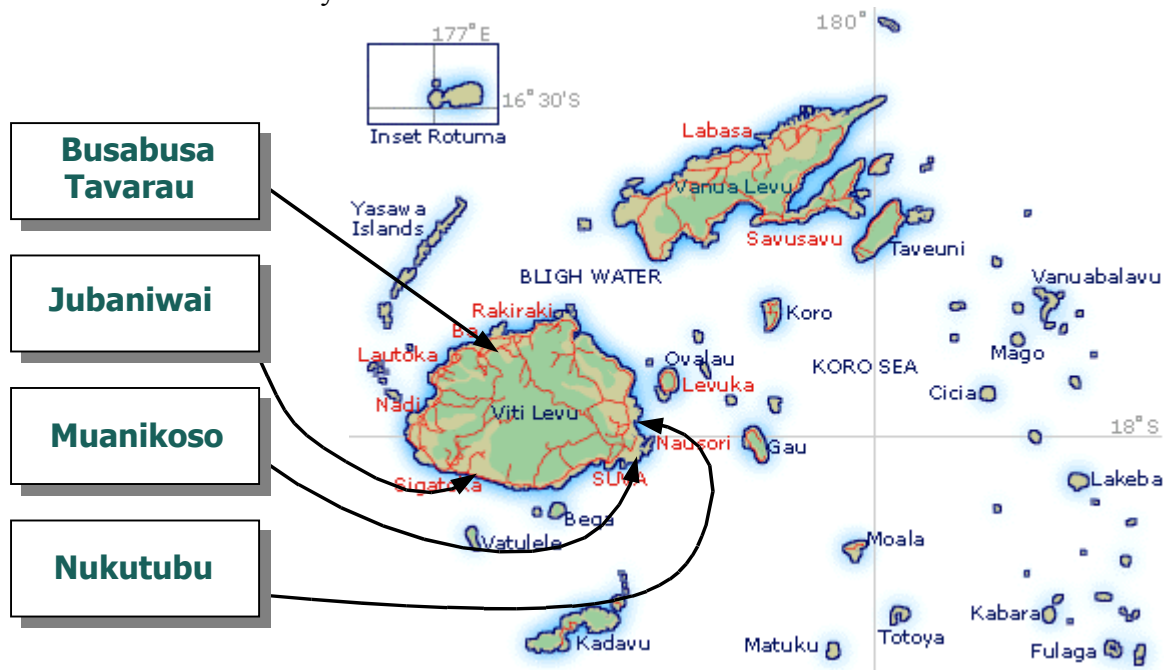


Figure 1: Map of the Fiji Islands

Population

- F-31 In 2000, the population was estimated at 810,000 (46% urban) with a growth rate of 1.1% and a density factor of 44 people per square km. At the present rate, the population is expected to double in 60 years but migration will be a significant determinant. Ethnically,



the population is 52% Fijian; 43% Indian; 2% European; 1% Rotuman; 1% other Pacific Islanders and 1% Chinese.

- F-32* With respect to religion, the population is 52% Christian, 38%, Hindu, 8% Muslim and 2% other. Fijians are mainly Christian; Indians are mostly Hindu with a Muslim minority. Life expectancy at birth is 72 years of age for males and 75 for females.

Economy

- F-33* Sugar accounts for about 40% of the country's total export earnings. While tourism has surpassed sugar in total revenue, a significant portion of profits leave the country as return on investment and payment on imported goods and materials to support the industry.
- F-34* Sugar industry production has been valued at approximately \$F230 million per annum; about 43% of the Fiji's total agriculture production. Although the contribution of sugar to national GDP has fallen slightly in recent years, sugar remains the most significant single source of primary production. The economy is also supported by the service sectors: transport and communications (12.6%), finance, insurance, real estate and business services (16.5%) and community, social and personal services (17.5%).
- F-35* Given the sugar industry's relationship to cane farm lease arrangements, employment and national income the viability of the industry has become a central governance issue. As such, the land issue continues to be the subject on ongoing political debate.

1.2 OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL GOVERNANCE

Introduction of the Modern System

- F-36* The chiefs of Fiji ceded their country to the British government under Queen Victoria in 1874 and was then ruled as a colony until Independence in 1970. The colonial administration introduced European principles of government and adopted a system of indirect rule over the Fijian people (Ravuvu, 1995). Fiji's first governor, Sir Arthur Gordon, engineered the traditional Fijian administration model and governance structure in the Deed of Cession in 1874, which became the Native Affairs Ordinance in 1876.
- F-37* Sir Arthur Gordon's mission was to maintain Fijian communal cohesion and to ensure that indigenous land, customs and traditions were protected; Ratu Sukuna reinforced and reorganized these reforms in 1944 (Nayacakalou, 1975). This model accommodated customary forms of governance and land rights and created a form of "government within a government" (Ravuvu, 1995). The setting up of the Fijian administration enabled indigenous people to participate in the governance of their own affairs (Nayacakalou, 2001).
- F-38* Under colonial rule the Fijian administration was divided into Provinces (currently 14), which contained a number of villages organized by districts or *tikina* (currently 187). A chief and Council of Elders governed the village. Representatives from these committees attended meetings at the *Tikina* Council, which sent representatives to the Provincial Council. This system was retained for the administration of the Fijian community under the modern government system.



- F-39 Beginning in 1887, the colonial government brought people from India to work in Fiji under the indentured labor system. This new Indo–Fijian community had no formal structure and was governed as extended family groups. During the colonial period, Indo-Fijians adapted the Indian *Panchayat* system for conflict management and initiated a *Graam Sudhaar Samiti* (GSS) or community development committee to address the development concerns of the people.
- F-40 The Independent government did not recognize the *Panchayat* system and consequently it weakened over time. Instead, District Advisors brought development matters to the attention of the District Office and annual District Development Council meetings. After the 1987 coups, the system was mostly discarded because the elders who formed these committees had migrated from Fiji. As a result, the Indo-Fijian community was left with only the modern governance system.
- F-41 In the early colonial period, indigenous people from Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands were also brought to Fiji as plantation workers under indentured conditions; descendants of the first Melanesian community participated in this assessment. These people adapted the Fijian administrative system of traditional governance, particularly the use of a *Turaga ni koro* as Community Administrator. This governance arrangement was later aligned with the modern system using an elected council to interface with national government machinery through district offices.

Independence

- F-42 Fiji became independent on October 10th 1970. The country adopted its own Constitution, a bicameral parliament (Lower House of elected representatives and a Senate or Upper House of nominated representatives), and an independent judiciary. This system has been retained through various Constitutional amendment processes since 1970, although numbers of seats has increased.
- F-43 Fijian leaders only reluctantly accepted independence. Overtaken numerically by the Indo-Fijians since 1945, some were concerned their privileged political status (as defined by the colonial constitution) could be whittled away in the face of Indo-Fijian demands for democracy based on common political role. They also feared violent confrontation between the races. However, the era of decolonisation (which begun in India in 1947 had spread rapidly though Asia and Africa) had already reached the Pacific. Western Samoa had gained independent in 1962, Nauru in 1968 and the powerful United Nations committee on decolonisation was urging the same status for Fiji (Routledge, 1985).
- F-44 Although it was the chiefs who ceded power to the British Government, power was given to the modern government, established by the colonial administrators, when Fiji became independent. The first Prime Minister, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, combined the position of high chief with that of elected political leader preventing any overt conflict between traditional and modern systems of government. However, when Ratu Mara lost the election in 1987 and was replaced by a Prime Minister without chiefly status, conflict erupted at all level, (Rabuka, 2000).
- F-45 The Independence Constitution was changed following the 1987 coup; the 1990 Constitution, under which the 1992 and 1994 elections were conducted, abolished cross voting (Norton, 2000). The Reeves Commission subsequently reviewed this Constitution, resulting in the 1997 Constitution, which was intended to address the human rights



concerns of Fiji citizens. For instance, spouses of both men and women who married non-citizens became eligible to claim citizenship whereas earlier Constitutions allowed this privilege only to men.

- F-46* The elections of 1987 and 1999 provoked a constitutional crisis; in both instances the House of Representatives was dominated by a political party with a majority of Indo-Fijian members. This created a climate in which opponents were able to incite the general population to protest through marches and other civic disturbance. General Sitiveni Rabuka led the army coup in 1987—the government of the day was removed, a new Constitution was developed and fresh elections were held. During the transition period, nominated individuals ran the country; a second coup was mounted later that year against the nominated government.
- F-47* The 1999 elections again produced a government with a majority of Indo-Fijians in the party dominant in the lower house; groups opposing this government prorogued parliament in 2000. An interim government was eventually appointed to govern the country until the 2001 elections.
- F-48* The 1997 Constitution contains clauses defining the formation of a multiparty cabinet; the law states that all parties elected with the required number of members must be represented in cabinet. In effect, this has meant that there is virtually no party in opposition. Citizens are concerned that the government has not fulfilled this Constitution requirement creating concerns over legitimacy; the matter is before the courts.
- F-49* In recent years there is growing awareness about the influence politicians exert over government administrative processes; the decline in the quality of political leadership; the excessive politicization of the government machinery and impropriety of the state's dealings with the private sector through tendering and concessionary loans (Prasad, 2003).

Parliamentary and Electoral Systems

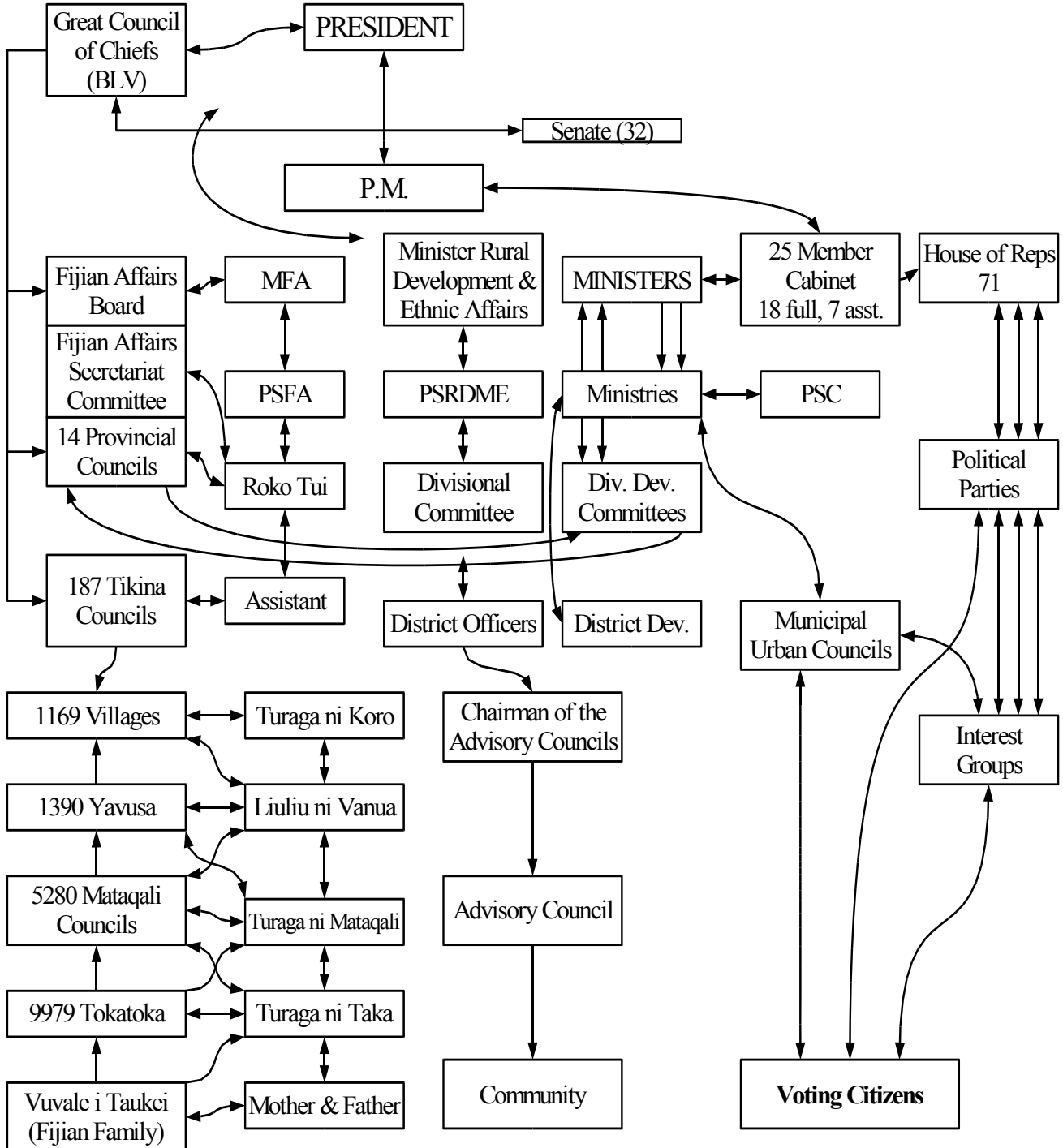
- F-50* The executive authority of the nation is vested in the President who is the Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the military; the President symbolizes unity of the State. The *Bose Levu Vakaturaga* (Great Council of Chiefs) appoints the President after consultation with the Prime Minister. The term of office is five years; a President is only eligible for reappointment for one further five-year term.
- F-51* The leader of the political party or coalition that has the majority seats in the House of Representatives becomes the Prime Minister. The Fiji Constitution (1997) states that the President appoints the Prime Minister to serve as Head of Government—the Fijian member of the House of Representatives who the President judges best able to command majority support in the House. Other government Ministers are appointed by the President from Members of Parliament (MP) in accordance with the Prime Minister's advice.
- F-52* The House of Representatives consists of 71 members; each member represents a constituency. Constituency boundaries are adjusted from time to time to ensure numerical equality. Members are elected through a system of preferential voting in which voters rank candidates in order of their preference. Membership in the House of Representatives changes with each general election. Elections are held every five years.



- F-53* The primary function of the House of Representatives is the consideration and passing of new laws and amendments to existing legislation. While any member can introduce a proposed law, the government introduces most bills. A bill must be passed by both the House of Representatives and by the Senate to become law. While bills may originate in either House, most are introduced in the House of Representatives. In the 1997 Constitution (Amendment) Act, all bills originate in the House of Representatives.
- F-54* The Senate has 32 members appointed by the President; 14 nominated by the Great Council of Chiefs, 9 chosen by the Prime Minister, 8 by the Leader of the Opposition and 1 by the Council of Rotuma. While the Chiefs are more strongly represented than they were under the pre-coup Constitution, they are still well below their strength under the 1997 Constitution (Norton, 2000).
- F-55* The Judiciary is independent of the legislative and executive branches of government. Judicial power of the State is vested in the High Court, the Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court. The final appellate court of the State is the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court is made up of the Chief Justice, to be the President of the Supreme Court; such other judges as are appointed as judges of the Supreme Court; and the Justices of Appeal. The Court has exclusive jurisdiction, to hear and determine appeals from all final judgments of the Court of Appeal.
- F-56* There were three significant changes to the electoral system in the 1997 Constitution: voting became compulsory for citizens over 21 years of age; 25 open electorates were superimposed on 45 communal electorates and the preferential voting system (the “Alternative Vote”) replaced the “first past the post” system. Although voting was compulsory, only 91% of people voted in the 1999 election.



Figure 2: The Modern governance structure



Basis: Deed of Cession 1874; Native Affairs Ordinance 1876; Re-Organisation 1944 (Rt JVL Sukuna) 1967 Re-organisation; 1983 Cole reorganization, 1998 Constitution



Churches and Governance

- F-57* Fiji is a multi-religious society reflecting the multi-ethnic composition of the community. Indo-Fijians are predominantly Hindus but there is also a visible Muslim community comprising about 10% of the population. Fijians are primarily Christian, with a predominantly Methodist community (1996 census). Although Catholics make up the bulk of the non-Methodist Fijian community, new Pentecostal denominations represent a growing number of Christians.
- F-58* Prior to the involvement of NGOs in community work in the 1970s, development was the domain of religious organizations. Churches built and serviced schools and hospitals (Ba Methodist Hospital and Ra Catholic Maternity Hospital), and supported rural development activities. The impact of churches on governance is clearly seen in Fijian communities, which has a structural relationship with the church hierarchy. There is a parallel infrastructure with the church (*Lotu*) and its priests as with the laity and the chiefs. The impact on governance is that community decision making is strongly influenced by the religious authorities to the point that the Methodist church in particular has been accused of being political and interfering with Government. These issues are commonly aired in the press around the time of the Methodist Conferences in August.

Civil Society

- F-59* Civil Society organizations—referred to as NGOs in Fiji—play an important and growing role in governance in the country. Following the coup, the Citizens Constitution Forum (CCF) was deregistered for having contravened the conditions of registration as a charitable trust because of its advocacy work on governance issues. CCF has continued to operate through registration as a not-for-profit company.
- F-60* Other NGOs working on governance issues include Partners in Community Development Fiji (PCDF), formerly the Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific Fiji. PCDF works with communities to enhance local management and planning skills. The Fiji Council of Social Services (FCOSS) is also engaged in conducting management training and other capacity building initiatives for community-based members. Other organizations including the Fiji Women’s Rights Movement (FWRM), the Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT), the Ecumenical Center for Research and Education and Advocacy (ECREA), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Virtues Project Fiji (VPF) are also working to enhance people’s understanding of good governance concepts, especially the need for transparency and accountability.
- F-61* For many years, the work of PCDF/FSP has focused on community governance by addressing health, nutrition, education and environmental concerns. The organization strives to achieve its mission statement (“To empower the people to make informed decisions about their own development”) by providing training in decision-making on issues of local concern. For instance, under the Kadavu Rural Health Project (1994-1996) communities established health committees which dealt with village health issues. These committees were responsible to the *Tikina* (District) Health Committee, which was in turn responsible to the Provincial Health Committee for overseeing health issues in the province of Kadavu.



F-62 This approach was later adapted for a community-based project on marine management piloted in the Cuvu *Tikina*. During this project the *Tikina* Committee reported directly to the *Tikina* Council rather than creating another high level committee. This model has proven effective in bolstering community support for education and sustainable environmental management; success is attributed to (a) putting decision-making in the hands of the people, (b) ensuring activities are in line with government policies, and (c) establishing communication systems that facilitate direct interaction between communities and district/provincial councils.

Women and Governance

F-63 Fiji custom provides for women to be chiefs, the most notable being Ro Lady Lala Mara, wife of the former President and paramount chief of the Rewa Province and Burebasaga Confederacy (Rewa, Kadavu, Ba, Nadroga, Namosi and Serua provinces). Adi Losalini Dovi, the first Fijian women representative to parliament and Irene Jai Narayan the first Indo-Fijian woman representative were both elected in the first independent parliament in Fiji. Following the passing of her husband, Dr Bavadra who led the deposed 1987 Government, Adi Kuini Speed took over the leadership of the Labour party.

F-64 Despite the prominence of these women leaders, prior to independence most women had low status in society due to male dominance in the community and the culturally subservient roles of females (Reddy, 2000; Ravuvu, 1983). After independence discriminatory laws against women began to change but this was a slow process since women did not begin advocating for their own rights until the 1980s.

F-65 Some writers believe that the international decade for women played a catalytic role in promoting gender equality in the Pacific (Drage, 1994; Reddy, 2000). The opening of the Fiji Women's Crisis Center in 1984 brought women's issues in Fiji to the forefront; in 1986 the Fiji Women's Rights Movement was established. In 1995 and 1996 women participated in the constitutional review process. However, despite these gains women still suffer disadvantage in both their public and private lives.

F-66 Literature on governance in Fiji identifies a lack of participation of women at both national and community level. The Human Development Report (UNDP, 2002) states that only 20.7% of ministerial positions are held by women. Similarly, women often do not participate in high-level decision-making concerning land and village issues; their influence is generally limited to the home (Lal, 2000; Bolabola, 1986).

F-67 Political leadership and decision-making are still considered the prerogative of males, with respect and influence increasing with age. As such, the younger generation is also restricted in their ability to influence policies regarding their own well being.

F-68 Despite these socio-cultural constraints, women are moving into influential posts in the civil service, including Permanent Secretary positions. The current deputy Prime Minister, the Minister for Education is a woman, as was her predecessor. Women are assuming leadership positions in national and regional NGOs.

F-69 At community level, women have their own clubs and groups, including the *Soqosoqo Vaka Marama* and various religious organizations. A national coordinating body was formed in 1926 for Fijian women, the *Soqosoqovakamarama (SSVM)* to provide training and support development of women in rural communities. The Young Women's Christian



Association (YWCA) was established in 1962 to address the training needs of young women.

- F-70 In 1968, the National Council of Women (NCW) was formed with members of all women's groups except the *SSVM*. At that time, women viewed these two national groups as quite distinct, with the NCW representing women who were "modern" in their outlook and governance of their activities. These women were often employed outside the home and took part in demonstrations and appeals to Government for change. On the other hand, most of the members of the *SSVM* saw women in traditional roles of "supporting their husbands and staying home with the children".

Civic Education

- F-71 The greatest concentration of civic education topics appears in the Class 8 and Form 3 social science curriculum (Flier, 2003). While some governance related content is covered in history (Forms 5-7), history is not a required subject. The Ministry of Education has developed a non-compulsory draft curriculum for citizenship education at all levels. The Virtues Project curriculum was recently introduced and is showing positive results however, it is non-examinable so receives less teacher attention (Flier, 2003).
- F-72 The fact that there is no required civic education content after Form 4 is an issue that needs to be addressed. There is also concern that students who do not study history in Forms 5-7 have little understanding of the governance systems or issues. Without an understanding of how governance has evolved in Fiji, students will find it difficult to participate in informed debate on political issues.

Government Performance

- F-73 The colonial government left Fiji with an excellent structure for the delivery of health and agriculture services, including a high ratio of education, health personnel and agriculture officers in remote areas. Since Independence this situation has badly deteriorated, exacerbated by the impact of successive coups.
- F-74 For instance, the political crisis in 2000 had a severe effect on the education system and created a greater number of economically disadvantaged schools and students. A Save the Children Report titled *Impacts of the Crisis on Children and Families* points out that many more families are now unable to meet school related expenses such as fees, textbooks, uniforms, bus fares and school lunches. Increasingly, children are dropping out of school to help with income generation or to care for younger siblings (SCF, 2001).
- F-75 Before the coup, Fiji's peace and beauty enhanced its desirability as a tourist destination. While this image was tarnished by political crises, Fiji has recovered well and tourist numbers have now reached record heights. While the loss of investor confidence following the 2000 coup resulted in a period of economic backsliding, this situation has abated and the economy is growing once again. However, it is still too soon to measure the long-term impact of new government policies to generate economic growth.
- F-76 At community level, case study participants believe the government is performing very poorly and is not addressing their needs adequately. The civic unrest experienced in 2000 is indicative of the population's overall dissatisfaction with government performance.



F-77 The political crisis of May 2000 precipitated greater unemployment and political instability and enhanced the pace of economic and social change. Contention about land-use issues, the increased mobility and break-ups of families, the growing number of people who are depressed and/or suicidal, escalating domestic violence and uncertainty about the future continue to profoundly affect grassroots families. The relations between ethnic groups have become more strained and the social fabric has been damaged (SCF, 2001). Much has been written on the growing levels of poverty in Fiji, attributed in large part to “bad governance” (i.e., corruption, poor quality leadership, lack of transparency), and periods of social and political volatility.

1.3 OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE

F-78 Traditional leadership in the "*vanua*" (states), "*yavusa*" (tribes/clan), "*mataqali*" (sub-clan) and "*tokatoka*" (extended family unit) is hereditary and remains an extremely powerful force in Fijian communities and in the wider political life of the country.

F-79 The village is the primary focal unit of local organization. All villagers have defined modes of structure, with designated roles and responsibilities that provide a sense of unity and communal ownership. Villages are divided into one or two primary divisions made up of sub-clans and extended family units.

F-80 Traditional governance provides unity through the inter-connectedness of sub-groups and reinforcement of mutual bonds. In this way, “the chief and the people are indivisible. Neither can exist independently of the other” (Bole, 1992). The system delegates duties to various family units for the well being of the clan and existence of the state. Each member knows exactly what his/her role and responsibilities are.

F-81 The chief is the leader of the social unit and the symbol of communal identification; his role is to lead and govern the people under his/her jurisdiction. The chief is placed in this position to serve as their representative from a lineage of hereditary leaders. His word is the word of the people and in him the *yavusa*, *vanua* bestows authority to lead, guide, govern and protect them. The chief is taboo (sacred) and is regarded as the representatives of the people, their ancestral god, "*kalou vu*".

F-82 The Great Council of Chiefs, also known as the *Bose Levu Vakaturaga* (BLV) is an influential umbrella organization of traditional Fijian leaders. It is an un-elected body with an exclusively indigenous Fijian membership drawn from provinces and clans. It is the highest institution in the indigenous Fijian hierarchy.

F-83 Today, the BLV consists of 49 traditional chiefs, members of parliament and those nominated by Provincial Councils. The Council has the right to appoint the President of Fiji. It draws its power from the Deed of Cession signed in 1874 with the British Government under which Fiji became a British colony. It was the Council who appointed Ratu Josefa Iloilo as interim president in July 2000 shortly after the hostages were released. The GCC also appoints 14 out of the 32 members to the Senate.

F-84 In addition to the chief, the "*Turaga ni koro*" (Village Headman or administrative agent) also plays an important leadership role in modern Fijian communities. Communities appoint the village headman, who is responsible to the chief and to the Fijian Administration. These two leaders, representing the traditional and modern governance



system, must cooperate for the welfare and unity of the community. Conflicts arise at all levels when there are differences of opinion between these leaders.

F-85 During the research process, study participants had difficulty defining the word “governance” in the modern context. This terminology is very new in Fiji even though traditional governance concepts and terms are well understood at the grassroots level. The notion of good governance is generally seen as referring to processes of decision-making in which a wide cross section of people and institutions in society participate. Participants also associate governance with the provision of services and people collaborating to meet their basic needs.

Case study communities identified the following priority governance issues:

- F-86* **Land:** Issues related to land use are a major concern for all communities (86% of land belongs to Fijian landowning units – *Mataqali*); land landownership has long been a contentious constitutional issue as Indo-Fijians and Melanesians are unable to obtain leases necessary to secure livelihood.
- F-87* **Security:** Security is related to the issue to land, especially for Indo-Fijians and Melanesians. When leases expire, families do not have alternative living arrangements resulting in homelessness, domestic and community violence and increased substance abuse.
- F-88* **Livelihood and Employment:** A growing number of people involved in the sugar industry (farmers, cane cutters, truck drivers, *sirdars* and mill workers) are losing their jobs with little alternative employment available. Flow-on impacts occur when landowners are unable to take over the cane farms, further jobs are lost and the productivity of the sugar industry is reduced.
- F-89* **Governance Processes:** People are dissatisfied with modern governance and believe traditional systems were more responsive to the needs of communities. For instance, water was provided by communal wells dug by the people whereas water supplied by the Public Works Department (PWD) is unreliable, especially in rural areas.



Part 2. Review of Literature

- F-90* This section provides a brief overview of the literature available on past and contemporary governance issues in Fiji. Despite the fact that the majority of Fiji's multi-ethnic population lives in grassroots communities, relatively little has been documented on community governance. A great deal more is written on national governance and Fijian administration than on systems used by Indo-Fijian and other ethnic communities.
- F-91* Traditional Fijian governance is based on a hierarchical model, with the chief at the head of the tribe and of various village and district councils. The concept of a "government within a government" arose due to conflicts during the pre-cession period (Ravuvu, 1992). The land and people were classified in accord with political, social/traditional alliances enabling the formation of *yasana* (provinces)—a group of *vanua*, socially and politically related, were grouped together to form one province. The *tikina* (district) is comprised of a number of villages or *koro* (Nayacakalou, 2001).
- F-92* To maintain and preserve Fijian traditions and customs, the colonial administration legislated a number of ordinances; the Native Regulation Board later known as the Fijian Affairs Board was authorized to enact policies to govern the Fijian people. The Native Land Trust Board (NLTB) was given the power to determine boundaries and rightful owners and to administer the land.
- F-93* While the Great Council of Chiefs (GCC) was not given legislative power in the modern system, it remained a strong and respected advisory council as was evident in the 1987 coups and 2000 prorogue of parliament. It was the GCC that pulled Fiji through these crises and allowed the nation to recover (Lal, 2000).
- F-94* Indo-Fijians were brought to Fiji as indentured laborers; the Colonial government is said to have deliberately destroyed any social structure known to these people in India (Sanadhya, 2003; Sharma, 1987). In this way the caste system and other social separations were removed through the mixing of Hindu, Muslim, Madrasi and upper and lower casts in housing and other social arrangements (Sanadhya, 2003). Following the period of indenture, Indo-Fijian families settled onto land and farmed sugar cane. As these families grew and other families began to settle close by, the male dominated extended family gained prominence. During this time, the *Panchayat* and GSS systems adapted from Indian models came into existence and functioned until Independence. Indo-Fijian communities began calling for "one-man, one-vote" as early as 1920 to redress the shocking social conditions of the *girmitya* (Sharma, 1987).
- F-95* The post-independent government did not recognize GSS or *Panchayat*; instead a District Advisor, responsible to the District Officer, represented Indo-Fijian communities. A government ministry was assigned responsibility for representing the overall interests of the Indo-Fijian community in parliament (currently the Ministry for Multi Ethnic Affairs). Any remnants of *Panchayat* or GSS disappeared after 1987 as Indian elders migrated out of Fiji.
- F-96* In recent years, governance has become part of the popular discourse. Common topics of discussion within families, communities and workplaces include land, leadership, racial tension, corruption, poverty, service delivery and lack of civic participation in decision-making. These issues are also widely discussed in academic and public literature.



- F-97* Land has always been a sensitive issue in Fiji, but sensitivities have intensified since the 1987 military coups and even further when agricultural leases on Native Land, issued under the 1976 Agricultural and Landlord Tenants Act (ALTA) began to expire. Lease expiry under ALTA tenancies continued to dominate the national and political arena throughout 2001. Native owners wanted their land returned to meet the needs of an increasing population. Sitting tenants were forced to move elsewhere or be satisfied with substantially reduced residential leases. The displaced tenants, most of whom are not compensated or resettled by government, face significant difficulty meeting their daily needs.
- F-98* The ALTA issue has become so highly politicized that some national leaders and organizations blame the rapid deterioration and possible collapse of the sugar industry on this (NLTB, 2001). A critical governance challenge facing Fiji is negotiation of an appropriate system of land tenure; currently two distinctly different institutional arrangements are proposed by ALTA and NLTA (Lal, 2001).
- F-99* Indo-Fijian communities still acknowledge their traditional governance system despite the fact that all post independence governments failed to recognize this arrangement (Chand, 2003; Chandra, 2003). A survey conducted by the Fiji Council of Social Services revealed that grassroots Indo-Fijian communities still want to practice the *Graam Sadhaar Samiti* and *Panchayat* system (FCOSS, 1999).



Part 3: Purpose and Methodology

3.1 PURPOSE

- F-100* 1. To describe the community governance mapping process
- F-101* 2. To assess traditional forms of governance and their place in current governance structures and everyday practice of grassroots communities; to outline units of relationship, including families and links with wider society; to identify the impact of these relationships and hierarchy within the community in terms of power, authority and beneficiary and, to describe major similarities and differences across sample communities within Solomon Islands
- F-102* 3. To identify areas of complementarity and potential conflict between the two governance models in conceptual and pragmatic terms and describe conflict management mechanisms in both systems; and
- F-103* 4. To analyse tools and mechanisms, from the village perspective, that may be useful in reconciling/managing the differences and reinforcing the positive elements of both models in order to enhance relevance of national and traditional governance institutions and processes at grassroots communities.

3.2 METHODOLOGY

- F-104* Participatory methodologies underpinned the community governance mapping and survey process. Methods used to conduct this research included a range of participatory community engagement strategies aimed at enabling people to assess local governance issues for themselves. Researchers made use of Participatory Learning Action (PLA) tools, and Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) surveys. The approach ensured that a wide range of individuals in each case study community had the opportunity to express their views, irrespective of a person's status in society. The project has also created opportunities for communities to participate in, and learn from the research process.
- F-105* The KAP survey assessed people's knowledge, attitudes and practices with respect to governance issues such as custom, leadership, roles and responsibilities and decision-making. Questions were asked in three categories: (a) family governance (b) community governance and (c) national governance. Space was also provided for respondents to talk about the impact of the 1987 coups and the May 2000 prorogue of parliament.
- F-106* The survey also included general social information such as land use/access, household conditions, services and facilities. In designing the survey, consideration was given to language, style and approach most conducive to information gathering. The purpose of the KAP survey was to give direction to subsequent PLA work and to monitor the impact of activities on community interaction and dynamics.
- F-107* PLA techniques were structured to suit the local situation so were somewhat different in each case study community. During PLA workshops, participants were given time to complete small group exercises and to discuss their views with the larger group. The workshop made use of techniques like physical mapping, social mapping, historical



profiling, time-lines, activity profiles, seasonal calendars, resource analysis and ranking and traditional system analysis. Venn diagrams were used to show what the traditional and modern system looked like and how they interact with each other.

F-108 In addition to workshops and KAP surveys, interviews were conducted with different sectors of the population. This included sub-groups within the Indo-Fijian community and those who are unable to read or write. Further, researchers conducted interviews with people outside the case study communities with expertise in Fiji governance. Input from these interviews is incorporated in the literature review.

F-109 Use of PLA tools enabled field workers to collect specific information on the following topics:

- Description of traditional and community governance, past and present
- Current community governance adaptations and changes that have occurred
- Differences between traditional and modern governance systems
- Effectiveness of current or modern governance system and how well it addresses community problems
- Identification of indicators to assess the effectiveness of community governance (i.e., availability of food, shelter, services and security)
- Attitudes about the role of women and youth in governance
- Government performance and the influence of previous political disturbances
- Principles and values inherent in community governance systems
- Commonalities and differences between traditional and modern governance systems, and
- Identification of choices and directions open to communities

Limitations

F-110 The Indo-Fijian community was scattered, with individual houses located a considerable distance from each other. Visiting each household to collect the data was time consuming and did not facilitate group synergy. In the Fijian and Melanesian communities, people live in a defined area and can easily come together at a central location to discuss issues.

F-111 Another challenge involved the collection of data from elder Indo-Fijian women as they were unable to read, write or complete documents on their own. Hence, the women worked collectively to discuss and answer the survey questions. Some community visits coincided with cane harvesting so Indo-Fijian communities had limited time and not everyone was able to participate. Nonetheless, responses to the KAP surveys confirmed the information gathered in PLA workshops when attendance was higher. Time and funding constraints also limited the sample size and dispersion.



3.3 OVERVIEW OF CASE STUDY COMMUNITIES

In Fiji there are three basic community structures: cities/towns, villages and settlements. Size is the major difference between a city and town; both have commercial centres with the population living in structured suburbs around that centre.

Villages are clearly defined areas for domicile populations, usually laid out around a central clear grass space (*rara*) used for outdoor activities. Houses, kitchen buildings and toilets are laid out in concentric circles, in that order, from the *rara*. The Chief's house is located in a prominent position at one end of the village and the Church is at the other end. Village boundaries are clearly visible from the lay out of the buildings.

F-112 Settlements are geographical areas where people have built houses. Settlements range from a few houses occupied by people from nearby villages or a scattering of farm properties with families living on the properties comprising the community, to a large cluster of homes built on land available for such purpose. Settlement boundaries are defined by commonly understood boundaries—roads, rivers or neighboring communities.

F-113 For the purpose of this study only villages and settlements were considered as they operate under their own governance systems. In selecting communities, it was important that this study reflect the socio-cultural and economic diversity of the nation. Further, the choice of communities was restricted to the main island of Viti Levu to reduce costs and facilitate involvement of Suva-based researchers.

F-114 Case study communities were selected based on their willingness to participate and their diversity in governance arrangements and socio-cultural circumstances. Most communities had a previous relationship with PCDF so trust was already established.

✦ Nukutubu Village ✦

F-115 The Fijian Nukutubu Village is situated on the Rewa Delta some 30 km from Suva, accessible by road to the Rewa delta and river punt to the village. This community is working closely with PCDF on education and good governance issues. While Nukutubu is relatively close to Suva and significantly influenced by urban conditions, it continues to use the traditional Fijian governance system. Community research revealed that the people of Nukutubu Village originated from Ra Province and have traditional ties to many other communities in Fiji. While the structure of this village is typical of most rural Fijian communities, it is unique in that people commute to Suva for employment.

✦ Jubaniwai District ✦

F-116 The Jubaniwai District consists of seven villages located on the mouth of the Sigatoka River. This cluster of communities was selected because of the area's long association with PCDF through various projects. This district has great potential for economic development and is actively engaged in the sugar industry. Jubaniwai supplies a steady source of vegetables to urban centers and is surrounded by cane farming Indo-Fijian communities. It is also close to the prime tourist destinations clustered along the western coastal area. Representatives from all villages in the Jubaniwai District participated in this research initiative.



☒ Muanikoso Settlement ☒

- F-117* This community is located close to the capital city; the population is descendant of Solomon Islands migrants brought to Fiji to work on the plantations in the early 20th century. This community was selected because it had been identified as one of the poorest, marginalized and most voiceless populations in the country (Halapua 2001) Staff from PCDF attended the 2002 National Melanesian Association AGM to seek permission from leaders—using a formal *yaqona* presentation—to work with the community.
- F-118* The Committee recommended that Muanikoso be involved with the project because this community had adopted components of Fijian traditional governance; the community also housed a unique mix of part-Europeans and Indo-Fijians. Houses are built on Fijian owned land without secure legal lease arrangements with landowners. The Melanesian Committee is responsible for governance; the key person in the community is the *turaga ni koro*, and the advisory councilor who interacts on behalf of the community with the District Office and the Ministry of Multi Ethnic Affairs on issues of concern to the people.

☒ Busabusa Settlement ☒

- F-119* Historically, community development agencies have found it difficult to engage Indo-Fijian communities in research or to mobilize their participation in wider community activities. The selection of the Busabusa Settlement arose through connections with PCDF staff previously known and trusted by the community. This relationship provided the project with entry into the community and enabled members to participate in research activities.
- F-120* Busabusa is located 20 km from Ba town in a rural cane farming area. The settlement originated when one Indo-Fijian family settled there in the 1920s and grew as descendents and relations of this family relocated to the area. The community is now shrinking as cane leases expire and the families are forced to migrate in search of employment.

☒ Tavarau Settlement ☒

- F-121* Tavarau is located 20 km from Ba town. The Tavarau population is related to the people of Busabusa; the settlement originated when three families moved into that area after the indentured period had been served and the families committed themselves to remain in Fiji to farm. Since the expiry of cane leases, this community has grown because land has been made available to displaced farming families to settle and start a new life. However, the land available to the new settlers is for residence only, so that other means of livelihood other than cane farming has to be sought.



Table 1: Number and location of participants

Case Study Community	Situation/ Location	Population	Livelihood Sources	Participants	Gender Desegregation	
					M	F
Nukutubu	Village/ Rewa/periurban	210	Subsistence Professional	70	Y 9 A 11 E 15	2 21 12
Jubaniwai*	District/ Sigatoka/rural	2149	Subsistence Tourism industry Cane farming	58	Y 3 A 16 E 27	2 7 3
Muanikoso	Settlement/ Suva	903	Professional Casual employment	65	Y 3 A 29 E 9	3 13 8
Busabusa	Settlement/ Ba/rural	200	Cane farming	56	Y 6 A 7 E 8	18 9 8
Tavarau	Settlement/ Ba /rural	500	Cane farming, fishing, casual employment	69	Y 20 A 7 E 9	9 11 13
<i>Of the surveyed population 56.3% was male and 43.7% were female.</i>				318 total		

Y = Youth; people less than 21 years of age

A = Adult; people between 21 and 45 years of age

E = elders, people over 45 years of age.

* Jubaniwai District comprises 7 Villages with population dispersed as follows: Nayawa 349; Laselase 378; Yavulo 258; Nasigatoka 362; Nasama 262; Vunavutu 291; and Volivoli 249.



Part 4. Findings

F-122

This section overviews the research findings and describes traditional and modern governance systems in Fijian, Melanesian and Indo-Fijian case study communities. It outlines stakeholder roles and responsibilities; the values and principles inherent in each system; levels of civic participation (including the involvement of women and youth); conflict management methods; and the relative advantages/disadvantages for individuals and communities of different governance models.

Table 2: Summary of research findings

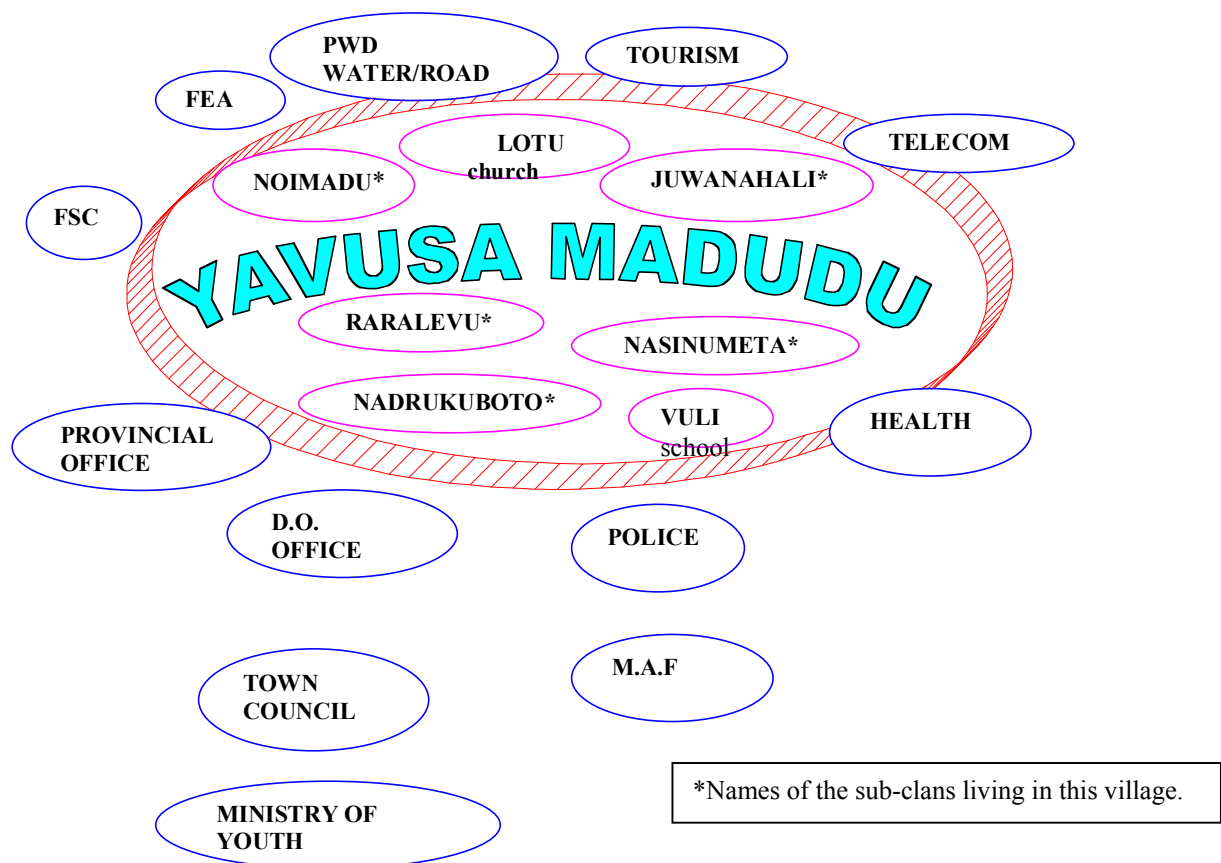
<i>Governance Issue</i>	Traditional	Modern
Description of community governance structure	Fijian Lines of responsibility – Paramount chief of Province Chiefs of <i>Vanua</i> , clans and village. Within the village: Chief, council of elders, headman (carries out decisions of elders and chief)	Fijian: The same as the traditional system. Additional – the headman of the village (<i>turaga ni koro</i>) is also responsible to the modern governance system (and is paid by the government)
	Melanesian: The family unit, then the extended family modeled on the Fijian traditional system. Managed by committees and a head man.	Melanesian: Management by committees, and a <i>turaga ni koro</i> who interacts with the modern governance structure.
	Indo-Fijian: Family units, then extended families. Community governance modified to a system that had applied in India – GSS or committees and <i>Panchayat</i> for conflict management.	Indo-Fijian: Management by committees and connected to the modern system by representatives nominated by government.
Understanding the structure	Fijian: The traditional governance system was well understood by the community at large.	Fijian: The interface is well understood. The process outside the community is understood but not effective.
	Melanesian: The adaptation to the Fijian governance system was well understood.	Melanesian: This is well understood
	Indo-Fijian: The traditional structure was well understood and remembered although it is no longer in existence.	Indo-Fijian: This was not understood
Perceived Relevance	Fijian: Understood that it adapts well to the changes and can continue to evolve.	Fijian: The modern system is able to adapt to the traditional system.
	Melanesian: not relevant	Melanesian: was able to meet the needs of the people with limitations (eg has not solved the land issue).
	Indo-Fijian: seen to be more relevant than the modern system and more able to meet their needs.	Indo-Fijian: does not meet the needs of the people and is not understood.



Differences	Fijian: Subsistence system with strong requirement for defense. Did not permit women and youth voices to be heard in the council.	Fijian: Women employed contribute to family income. Women and youth slowly being heard at the councils.
	Melanesian: Very weak governance – minority community without status in the community	Melanesian: Cash oriented lives, leaving little time for community affairs and governance issues.
	Indo-Fijian: Not recognized during independence negotiations, weakened after independence and disappeared after 1987 coups.	Indo-Fijian: Moving away from farming (cane) to employment. Youth have little time for community and governance issues. Adults less time for community service.

4.1 COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

Figure 3: Diagram of Nayawa community network structure (Extract from PLA report on Jubaniwai Settlement)



F-123 The diagram above shows the traditional governance process as it works in the community inside the oval with the *Yavusa Madudu* being the overarching structure and the clans living in the community under that administration. Outside the circle are the activities that are under the jurisdiction of the modern governance process, such as the police, the District office and Ministries that interact with the community. A number of



functions such as health are in the domain of both traditional and modern governance and have been shown as cutting into both sections on the diagram. They do not seem to be consistent and this may be a result of lack of clarity at the workshop where the diagram was produced.

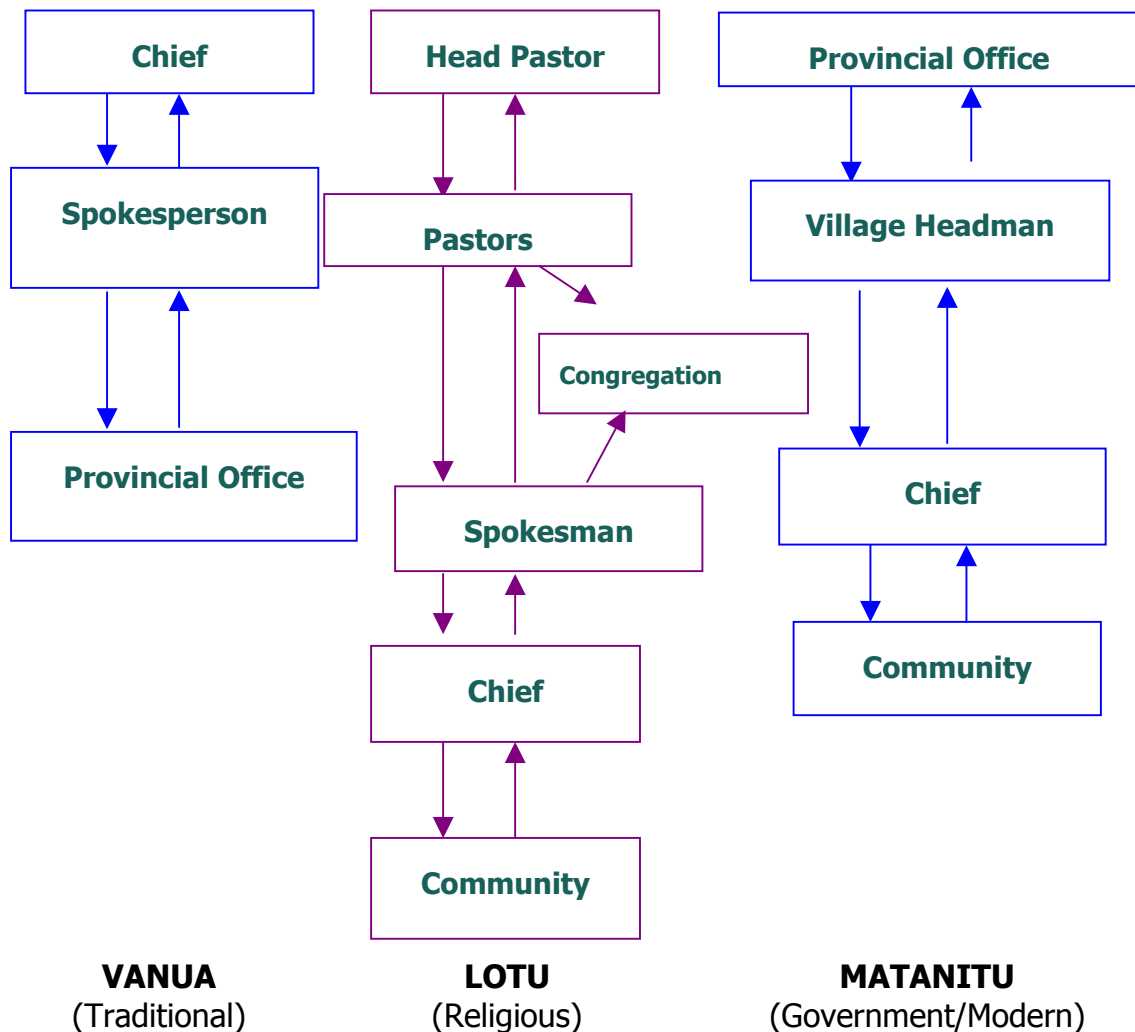


Figure 4: Traditional, Religious, and modern Fijian governance structure within the village

(Figure sourced from Jubaniwai PLA Report)

F-124

The network structure above was drawn by the representatives of the Nayawa Village in Nasigatoka District. This structure clearly defines religious, traditional, and modern government structures followed by the community. This is the model of governance structures used by Fijian communities. Although the structure does not depict relationships among the people, participants emphasized their closeness and dependence on one other, especially in conducting traditional and religious activities. In order of importance in the decision making process, the priests take precedence over the chiefs and all this takes precedence over the modern governance process. It is noted that the chief is common to all lines of decision making and acts to maintain balance and fairness in the activities undertaken though the decisions made within the different governing structures. An example of the impact of this relationship is the oft-heard complaint that



the women spend so much time on church related activities that they neglect their families and children.

F-125 Ratuva (2003) confirms this point in his research:

"Church affairs, after economic activity, provide another major setting in which the people of the village come close together and share the same tasks ... Many Fijians see the *Kalou* (Christian God) in very much the same way as their *Kalou Vu* (ancestral Gods)."

F-126 Ratuva also points out "the supernatural characteristics associated with the notion of *vanua* have been reinforced by Christian mythology about the divine rights of the *vanua* and by extension, chiefs". In this way, religious and traditional activities are equally important aspects of the people's spiritual and social development.

4.2 TRADITIONAL AND MODERN FIJIAN GOVERNANCE

F-127 The role of the Fijian governance system is to maintain order, promote peacefulness and enable individuals to contribute to maintenance of the social fabric. Traditionally, people are born into the roles that they to support the system (i.e., a person is born as a chief, warrior, gardener, spokesperson and so on).

F-128 Respect is considered a fundamental value in the traditional system. The Fijians spoke of honoring customs, such as presentation of *yaqona* as a principle method of showing respect. All participants stated that their elders taught respect; this was done at religious events and community gatherings primarily through participation and observation. Respect for community leaders/groups is an essential underpinning of the traditional system. Fijians of all age groups could identify the leaders, chiefs, headman, priests and heads of the *vanua* and their tribes.

F-129 In all communities the responsibility of the leader is to make decisions for the headman, to ensure decisions are carried out and that religious leaders look after the spiritual life of the community. All respondents believe this is being done well. In Nukutubu, the roles of people in the system are clearly defined.

F-130 In the *vanua*, there are usually seven roles that tribes or *yavusa* are born into and are responsible for. This includes

1. **Chief (*Turaga*)** The Chief comes from a chiefly sub-clan; this family is required to perform the leadership role in governance of the clan. Progression to the chiefly position follows the male line, in descending order of age
2. **Chief's Ambassador (*Sauturaga*)** The role and function of the Ambassador is to see that the chief's decisions are properly carried out by those responsible. Members of this sub-clan consult with the chiefly family in deciding who should be installed as Chief.
3. **Spokesman for the Chief (*Matanivanua*)** The spokesman functions as a go-between for the Chief and the people. Members of this sub-clan are recognized for their communication abilities and outgoing nature. Sometimes they present and accept gifts on behalf of the Chief and the people



4. **Traditional Priest (*Bete*)** The role of the traditional priest is to provide spiritual leadership and guidance for the Chief and people; the Priest communicates with the gods on behalf of the community. While this tradition is no longer practiced, people still recognize and identify with the role and power of traditional priests.
5. **Warriors (*Bati*)** Warriors are responsible for protecting the Chief and clan from enemies. While this role changed under the modern law and order system, Bati are still responsible for maintaining order at community level
6. **Chief's Carpenter (*Mataisau*)** Traditional carpenters and craftsmen were responsible for building canoes, houses and boats for use by the Chief; they also ensured preservation of local knowledge and skills
7. **Fishermen (*Gonedau/Kai Wai*)** Fishers and seafarers were members of a sub-clan with considerable wisdom and skill in marine matters.

F-131 Each of these sub-clans played a unique and critical role in support of the chiefly family. People did not receive economic compensation for their efforts; they believed that through the act of service (*mana*), blessings (*sau*) from the chief would be bestowed upon them.

F-132 According to Ratuva (2002), the *vanua* has the *mana* to punish wrong doers (such as those questioning the authority of the chiefs and Elders) and reward honest, hard-working and loyal individuals/groups. In turn, the chief was required to acknowledge and respect the people and the roles they performed and share his/her wealth, at times giving land for family food gardens.

F-133 All participants stated the father, or sometimes the parents, makes decisions for the family. The role of the father is to provide for the family and to teach the children respect and financial management skills. The role of women is to look after the family and husband, teach the children and support community activities. Traditionally, women contributed in their own domain and did not involve themselves in community councils. Their concentrated on raising the children, preparing meals and medicine, making mats and *tapa* and preparing for traditional functions such as weddings and funerals.

F-134 Traditionally, youth did not participate in community decision-making; their role was to learn the functions of the clan into which they were born. All case study participants saw the role of youth as supporting community work.

In the traditional system, it was the chief's role to deal with conflict in the community. Punishment was given by birch beatings, and in extreme cases, eviction from the community. Communities view the benefits of the traditional governance system as stability and responsiveness to the immediate needs of the people (i.e., allocating land for food gardens to families as needed). Although the chief received food and gifts, these were shared back with the community. Individuals felt secure—they knew their place and the roles they were expected to perform—life was orderly. Even today, when someone comes to a village, they know which house to stay at as this is determined by their relationship to the occupant.

F-135 The role of the modern system is to maintain the peace and permit individuals to contribute to the social order. While individuals are still born into a family whose role is defined by the traditional system, this is for ceremonial purposes only. Education has enabled people to work in areas their forefathers could not have. For instance, a person trained as a doctor of medicine now usurps the role of the traditional healer.

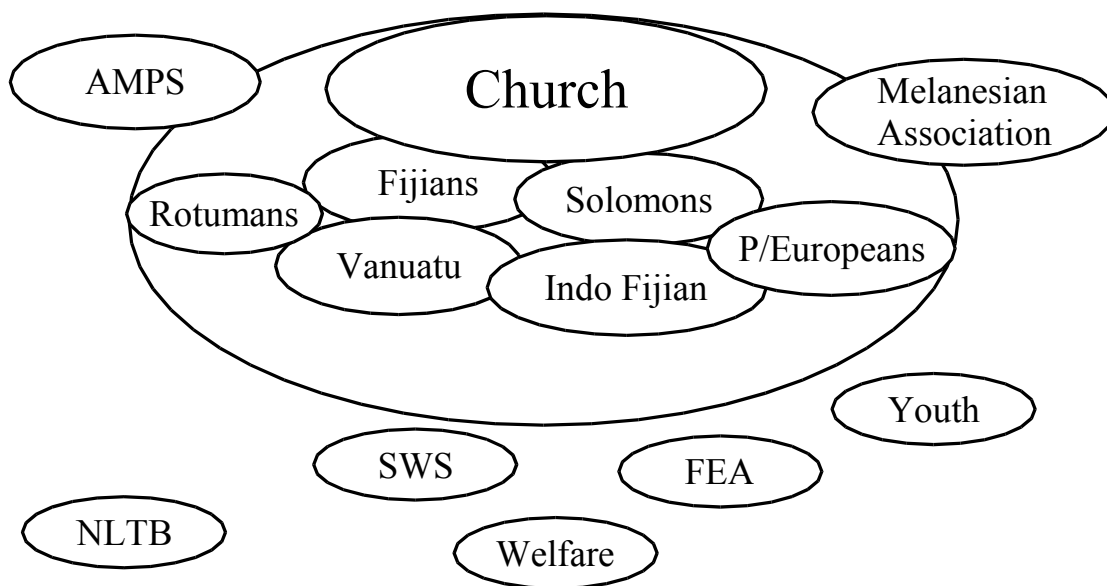


- F-136 Notions about respect have changed dramatically; youth today are more influenced by television and western values than they are by their elders and traditional teachings. Most respondents do not believe youth should have a voice in community decision-making. Fijian participants did not see any change in the traditional role of youth.
- F-137 While the rules governing the modern system are similar to the traditional system, the position of *turaga ni koro* is paid a small stipend by the Government to enable that person to attend meetings and other required functions. This person represents the community in modern governance; they present development issues and concerns to the District and Provincial Councils and to Government Ministers where necessary.
- F-138 Although participants recognize that women’s role is changing (including greater involvement in decision-making about family and community affairs), all respondents believe the role of women is to look after their family and husband, to teach the children and to support community activities. While many participants saw women’s contribution to family income as a positive thing, there is concern that employment will have a negative impact on community activities.
- F-139 Minor conflict is dealt with in the traditional manner—gifts to the aggrieved parties and requests for forgiveness. Major conflicts such as land disputes are dealt with through the modern court system.

4.3 MELANESIAN FIJIAN GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

F-140 The Melanesian case study community comprised descendents of people who were uprooted from their homeland and traditional governance system. In Fiji, they chose a modified version of the Fijian governance structure including use of a *turaga ni koro* to administer family and community affairs. It was an ad hoc structure, characterized by tenuous relationships with landowners and uncertainty about the future.

Figure 5: Melanesian community structure in Fiji



F-141 The role of this modified governance system is to maintain order and enable individuals and families to contribute in a systematic manner. The Melanesians spoke about the



importance of customs, especially the demonstration of respect. While elders have played a significant role in preserving indigenous and adopted traditions, their influence is diminished through rapid westernization.

F-142 The traditional Melanesian approach never really existed in Fiji as systems were modified from the outset to accommodate local circumstances. The influence of Fijian landowner rights and intermarriage with local people has had a significant impact on governance arrangements. Communities were primarily governed by the extended family, with the father responsible for all major decisions. The woman's role was to look after her family and husband, to teach the children and support community activities. Youth supported the family and community through agriculture and subsistence activity.

F-143 The principal person in the community is the *turaga ni koro* (Headman) who managed the daily affairs of the people and ensured decisions were carried out. Conflicts were managed by families and appointed committees, with the *turaga ni koro* assisting where needed. Conflict arises when landowners demand money and materials from the community through people try to comply in order to maintain the peace.

F-144 The Fiji Melanesian Association plays a central governance role and is guided by a legally binding Constitution. While the constitution was not available for this study, it was explained that the Melanesian Association has an annual general meeting for which all community members can attend. Office bearers are elected to carry out the tasks of the Association for which Government provides an annual grant of \$100,000.00. The work of the Association was highlighted for the *Voices and Choices* project when it was necessary to consult with the Association that provided the recommendation and approval to work with Muanikoso Community.

4.4 INDO-FIJIAN GOVERNANCE

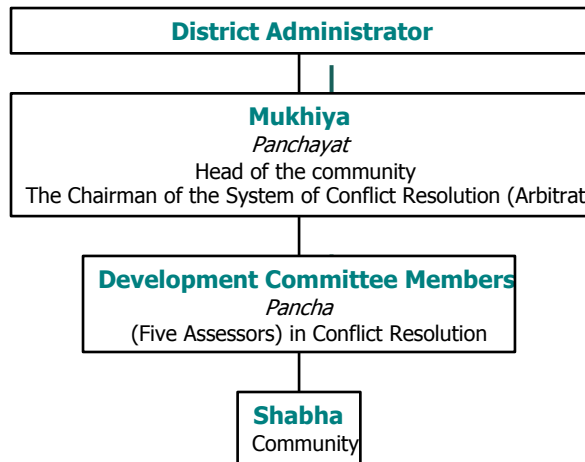
F-145 Although unrecognized by the government of the day, the Indo-Fijian community made use of the *Graam Sudhaar Samiti* (GSS) or community development committee system until Independence. The GSS included the *Panchayat*, an elected council of five members of the community who were responsible for dealing with conflict and justice issues. The *Panchayat* was considered a court in itself.

F-146 The GSS also facilitated communication within the community and with members of the public. The committee liaised with the District Officer (colonial administration representative) and disseminated government information to the community. In addition, the GSS provided security and safety and enabled the community to have a voice in development decisions. The GSS no longer functions except in remote rural areas. Its motto was "Be prepared".



Figure 6: Traditional Indo-Fijian community structure

Graam Sudhaar Samiti (GSS) (Community Development Committee)



F-147 The PLA process revealed that the GSS:

- Provided an easy and effective form of community governance in both Indo-Fijian case study communities
- Incorporated values, principles and religion in community governance
- Involved all members of the community; everyone knew their responsibilities and how the system worked
- Ensured expedient action when individual and community concerns were raised
- Facilitated the smooth flow on information and dialogue between the community and the GSS

F-148 GSS board members were elected from within the community, which ensured a high degree of transparency and accountability. Any member of the community could be part of the GSS irrespective of ethnicity, cast, culture or gender. GSS board members (Arbitrator and Assessors) were required to be mature, educated, retired, knowledgeable and exemplary leaders. Board members had to be fair in their judgement; during conflict resolution situations the assessors could not favour the accused or take sides.

F-149 Members of the community elected the GSS board in a meeting arena called the “Graam”. The Arbitrator (*Mukhyia*) was required to have permanent residency in the community he/she represented. *The Mukhiya* was a highly respected member of the community; he acted as an arbitrator or public procurator on behalf of the people. His primary function was to ensure that fairness prevailed.

F-150 The *Mukhiya* was also an investigator. In conflict situations, he/she would conduct a complete inquiry before judgement was laid down. He acted as a consultant on behalf of the community when liaising with the colonial administration and reported back to the *Panch* (Assessors). He was also the manger of all community development activities and was the “front man” for organising religious and cultural events.



- F-151* The Assessors were responsible for studying all dispute cases in detail before rendering judgement. They were required to take an oath and to work on behalf of the community irrespective of culture, religion and/or personal difference. The Assessors were the volontaire members of the GSS and in the court of conflict resolution (the *Panchayat* system). They were required to be responsive and to make personal sacrifices for the welfare of the community. When visiting dignitaries or outside development agencies visited, the *Panch* undertook liaison and report writing functions on behalf of the *Mukhiya*.
- F-152* Community members played a central role in the GSS governance model. It was their responsibility to ensure the system operated effectively and in a transparent and participatory way. They had the power to elect and to remove board members of the *Panchayat*. Parents and elders were responsible for educating their children about the GSS system from an early age. When children reach the age of thirteen years, they underwent a series of briefing session about GSS and how the system operates.
- F-153* The role of the District Officer was to liaise with the heads of the *Mukhiya*, pass information to the Chairman of the GSS and take community grievances to higher administrative levels as required.
- F-154* The following table illustrates how the elders of Busabusa and Tavarau assess levels of participation in the *Panchayat* System.

Table 3: Levels of participation in the *Panchayat*

Overall level of participation	Participation on <i>Panchayat</i> Board	Voting	Participation in community development work	Participation in decision making processes
All Male elders	90%	100%	88%	100%
All female elders	10%	100%	52%	70%
All Male youths	0%	100%	100%	70%
All Female youths	0%	85%	90%	65%

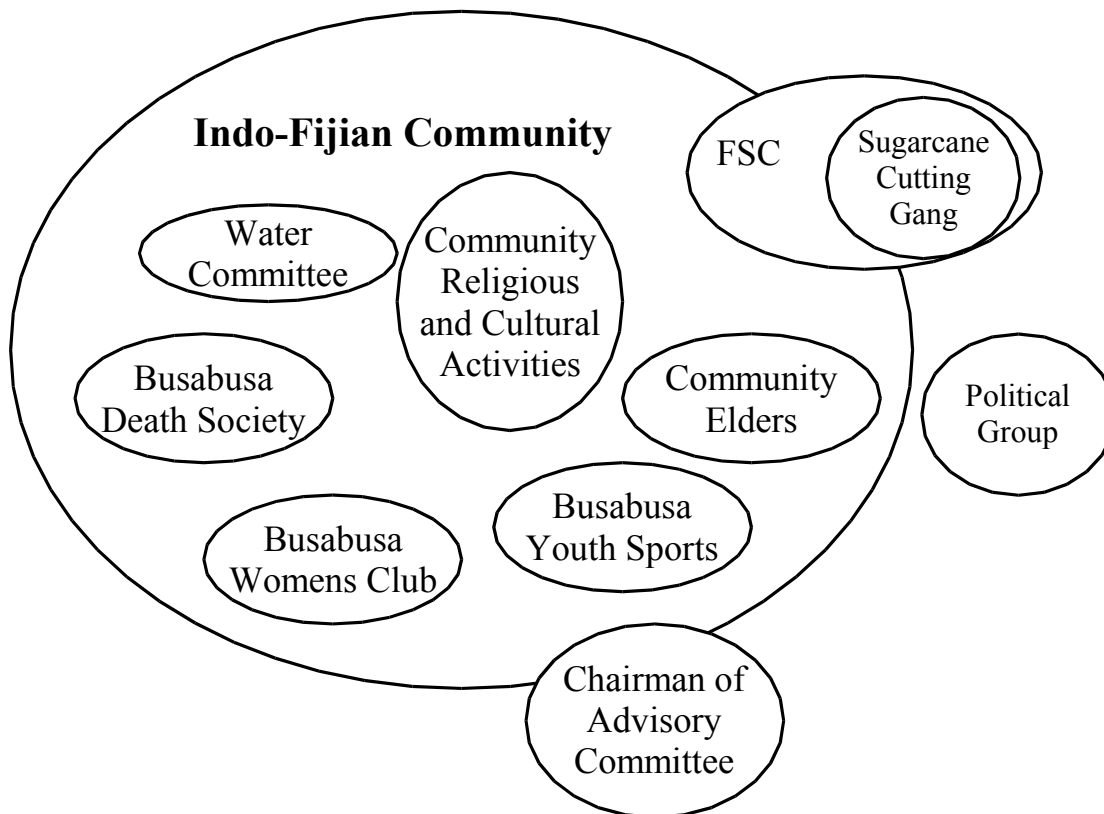


Figure 7: Modern Indo-Fijian community structure

- F-155* In modern Indo-Fijian communities, governance matters are dealt with at the family level first; Advisory Councilors address community issues. However, participants reported that government appoints Advisory Councilors with little or no community consultation. Councilors do not visit the community and members live too far away to visit his/her office. People feel the modern system does not work.
- F-156* Advisory Councilors are supposed to consult with the people and take their concerns to the District Officer for consideration. Participants believe elected representatives should be more sensitive to community issues and ensure that people's voices are heard in government. However, parliamentarians rarely, if ever, visit the community and are not aware of people's views. Hence, communities feel they are unable to influence decision-making on major issues (i.e., land leases) even though their welfare is dependant on choices made in parliament.
- F-157* Community members recognize the changing role of women in context with modern economics and governance. While some believe women's contribution to family income and the wider society is positive, many are concerned about negative impacts on family and community life. Personal and family issues are discussed at weddings and funerals, the primary meeting ground for communal sharing among women.
- F-158* All participants believe the role of youth is to support community work. Primary concerns about young people today include unemployment, migration to cities/towns and alcohol/drug use. Most participants do not see youth having a voice in community affairs other than through involvement in school activities and sports clubs.



- F-159* Modern Indo-Fijian communities resolve conflict through the court system, to which every small issue is referred. This is an unsatisfactory alternative to the *Panchayat* system, because it is costly and those who do not have the finances cannot access the courts. In addition to cost the *Panchayat* system included the community and the court system is detached and not necessarily just, depending on the cleverness of the lawyers.
- F-160* Many respondents in Indo-Fijian case study communities are so dissatisfied with the modern system that they want to migrate. This is born out by the large number of Indo-Fijians who have already migrated, particularly those with management and professional qualifications. Most Indo-Fijians now have relatives overseas, many of whom can sponsor their close relatives to newly adopted countries. The impact on governance was that those with experience and ability have migrated away, leaving a leaderless community with no purpose and increasing stress with implications for health and decision making capacity. It also impacts on the national economy in a negative situation where people can no longer be productive (cane farming associated work disappearing) and in a positive way with increasing remittances coming from relations overseas to support their families in Fiji.

4.5 COMMUNITY UNDERSTANDING AND PREFERENCES

- F-161* 100% of participants from all communities knew the name of their member of parliament.
- F-162* 100% of participants from all communities believe the role of the MP is to visit communities, to represent people's views in parliament and provide funds for development.
- F-163* 100% of Indo-Fijian and Melanesian participants indicated they did not have a good understanding of the provincial governance system; 100% of the Fijian community believe their knowledge of provincial governance is adequate.
- F-164* Fijians and Melanesians feel they can approach their local government for assistance via the headman or village administration; Indo-Fijians believe they cannot access their Representative as s/he is located too far away.
- F-165* Fijians and Melanesians stated their provincial representative comes to the community to collect head taxes; Indo-Fijian communities report that District Councilors do not visit them; 100% of all participants believe representatives should visit communities more often and be more familiar with local issues.
- F-166* The majority of participants from Fijian and Melanesian communities could cite examples of positive government intervention (i.e., water, electricity and community development projects); 100% of all Indo-Fijian participants believe the government has done nothing to help their community.
- F-167* 100% of participants from all communities were not happy about cost of living increases (including VAT) and rising unemployment rates.



Key Findings

Fijian Communities

- F-168 • The traditional Fijian system was well understood; people believed it was effective in promoting development and managing conflict. Women's role was to implement decisions made by the male Council of Elders; youth learned about governance from their elders in formal and informal ways. Accountability was assured because everyone lived together; if promises were not kept people would lose face.
- F-169 • Although almost all Fijian participants vote in national elections, they understand little of the modern governance system other than the name of their elected leader. People do not believe the modern system addresses community needs; government officials have left a legacy of unfulfilled promises. Women today are more involved in family and civic affairs but less engaged in family/community support activities.
- F-170 • There is a clear interface between traditional and modern Fijian governance, although the application of law in criminal and civil cases is not always clear. For instance, Fijian communities found it difficult to understand and accept legal processes in the post 2000 prorogue of parliament, especially in relation to the activities of chiefs.

Indo-Fijian Communities

- F-171 • Indo-Fijian communities adapted the GSS and *Panchayat* system used in India to suit the Fiji context. Participants have a clear understanding of how this system worked and believe it was more responsive to family needs, especially in times of disaster.
- F-172 • The GSS system promoted and reinforced community cohesion/cooperation and provided assistance for those in need, irrespective of caste or status. Both women and men served on the *Panchayat*. The mother-in-law was dominant in the home; community governance was the man's domain.
- F-173 • Indo-Fijian participants vote in high numbers in national elections but claim they do not understand how the political system operates. The Advisory Councilor (the representative for the Indo-Fijian community), appointed by the Government is not seen as effective in addressing issues at district or national level.
- F-174 • Indo-Fijian communities are greatly concerned over expiring land leases and lack of provision for displaced families. Water supply issues are also not being addressed. People are concerned about the impact of women entering the workplace "to keep their family going" and youth moving away from the community in search of employment.
- F-175 • Indo-Fijian communities do not believe the modern system is fair or reliable in addressing development issues or in using funds in an accountable and transparent way. Nonetheless, people feel they have no choice but to accept the current governance system as mechanisms for community input do not work. Participants have a strong desire to elect their own District Councilor rather than having someone appointed by government. They would also like to see the return of the *Panchayat* and GSS system, although not in exactly the same form as existed prior to independence.



Melanesian/Fijian Communities

- F-176* • The Melanesian community understood and supported their adopted governance structure adapted to the Fiji context during the pre-independence era. This system reflected the Fijian/Melanesian emphasis on extended family and community – based management. The system promoted accountability as everyone lived together and feared being ostracized by the community if obligations were not fulfilled.
- F-177* • Although Melanesian community members claim to understand modern governance structures—they know the name of their members of parliament and vote in national elections—they believe the system does not adequately address community concerns.
- F-178* • Government is accessed through the District Office and the Melanesian Association; the *turaga ni koro* manages village affairs.
- F-179* • Many women and youth are employed outside the home to provide/supplement family income; their voices are heard in decision-making process through focused clubs/committees.



4.6 DIFFERENCES, RELEVANCY, AND SELECTION OF GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS

Key Findings

Fijian Communities

- F-180*

 - Fijian community participants believe the traditional system has adapted well to change and is evolving in response to people’s circumstances and expectations. The merging of traditional and modern governance can be seen by the take over of the *turaga ni koro* from the *sauturaga*, although for traditional activities the *sauturaga* still takes precedence. As such, the *turaga ni koro* plays the key role in the new structure; government provides a small allowance to cover costs associated with this work.
- F-181*

 - The traditional Fijian system encompassed matriarchal and patriarchal dominance. It was the men’s role to defend the community and the women’s responsibility to look after the home and children. Men dominated public decision-making processes in traditional governance; the modern system affords greater opportunities for women to be heard and influential. Youth are active in various community, school and church-based groups; their concerns are represented on *Tikina* Councils.
- F-182*

 - Traditional and modern Fijian governance systems lack accord in the area of conflict resolution; the traditional system promotes restorative justice while the modern system uses the retributive justice approach. Traditional resolution measures have been unable to address modern conflicts associated with urbanization and land leases. Chiefs and other leaders do not know how to curb destructive behavior and restore order in their communities. There is currently a political debate about whether to permit aspects of traditional governance to legally operate in communities (i.e., determining punishment through traditional means rather than through court action). This discussion precipitates debate on the advantages/disadvantages of maintaining two sets of laws—one for the village and one for the rest of the country.

Melanesian/Fijian Communities

- F-183*

 - Because the Melanesian community in Fiji had no real traditional system of its own, members more easily adapted to post-independence governance arrangements. Women report they are now more involved in modern decision-making and governance process.
- F-184*

 - The Melanesian case study community is considered to be one of the poorest in Fiji; respondents believe they have been continually overlooked and neglected by government. They do not have a representative to voice their concerns in government, as in the case for Indo-Fijian communities. These people just try to cope with the system by paying landowners what ever they demand in exchange for shelter and means of livelihood.



Indo-Fijian Communities

- F-185* • In traditional Indo-Fijian culture, both men and women played a role in governance. In rural communities today, women's influence is confined to the home and they have very limited opportunity to participate in the public domain.
- F-186* • The traditional system no longer functions within Indo-Fijian communities; the modern system is not considered effective. People are dissatisfied with government's response to the land crisis that the increasing number of displaced Indo-Fijian families. There is a profound sense of hopelessness and helplessness evident in these communities; many people long to leave Fiji.
- F-187* • The Indo-Fijian case study community would like to assume a more proactive role in modern governance, particularly in relation to selection of their representative and presentation of concerns at district level. There is discussion and debate in Indo-Fijian communities about the value of restoring a modified *Panchayat* system.

4.7 ENHANCING EFFECTIVENESS OF GRASSROOTS GOVERNANCE

Participatory Approaches

- F-188* Some NGOs, including PCDF, are working with communities to address governance and development concerns related to health, education and environmental issues. Effort is focused on establishing mechanisms that draw on the positive elements of the traditional system and on facilitating linkages with modern processes. It is essential that these mechanisms be formulated at community level using a range of PLA techniques in order to create ownership through full engagement of internal and external stakeholders (i.e., district administration and government ministry staff) in the change process.
- F-189* Participatory learning and action tools enable communities to suggest changes in intra and intra-governmental relations, policies, procedures and guidelines. As the work progresses and communities develop a clear understanding of their needs and expectations, village committees are appointed to improve representation with district administrators and government authorities.

Expansion of Tikina concepts

- F-190* In August 2003, the High Chief of Macuata Province in northern division (the Tui Dreketi) announced that all people living in this area were "one people" under his leadership. Until then, the concept of the *tikina* (or district) has been used in the narrow sense pertaining to Fijian villages in a given area. If this concept were expanded to cover all communities in geographical catchments, representative of these communities could be present at *tikina* council meetings and represented on provincial councils. In this way, politically sensitive issues could be resolved through broad-based discussion close to home.



All villages in the Tikina Nasigatoka (also known as Jubaniwai) have their own rules and laws. These rules, which all community members know and respect, serve to uphold the social order. Jubaniwai also has village police to help chiefs and elders maintain peace and stability. Anyone who breaks the rules knows the consequences. In most cases this includes a "beating or belting" in front of the people. Community members accept and respect this way of promoting unity and peace in the village.

This situation impacts on human rights issues. This community has set clear boundaries and the consequences of breaking those boundaries. This puts the rights of the community above the rights of the individual, which is necessary if society is to function in peace and harmony. It is clearly necessary to define rules for people who drive vehicles on the roads, or there would be chaos. The rules actually make it possible for people to have the freedom they need to function. While these Fijian communities have chosen to use physical punishment and humiliation as a means of maintaining order, further education and training may give them other alternatives for the consequences of breaking the boundaries set by the community for living in a peaceful manner.

Affirmation of Values

Throughout the research process, all communities emphasized the importance of respect, for both leaders and traditional practices, and the central role customary values play in promoting good governance. Globalization has brought many outside influences to Fiji, which serves to reinforce western values like wealth accumulation and individualism. In this way, communalism—the basis of traditional governance, is undervalued. People are especially concerned that youth do not recognize the role that respect plays in maintaining cohesion at family, community and national level. All communities want peace, however this will come only when people relearn respect for their own and other people's cultures.

The Role of Chiefs

- F-191* Chiefs have always played an instrumental role in ensuring that communities practice good governance. However, most young people today have not been taught "the old ways" of resolving conflict and maintaining social harmony; they question the authority and relevance of the chiefly system. As a result, chiefs no longer feel empowered or equipped to deal with modern governance issues, especially with respect to young people.
- F-192* Participants believe the leadership of the Great Council of Chiefs "saved" Fiji following the 1987 coups and 2000 prorogue of parliament. Had the Fijian community not been willing to listen to the Council, the country would not have normalized as quickly as it did. The Great Council of Chiefs is seen as a stable, detached institution free of the daily functions of government. Recent history has demonstrated the need to retain elements of traditional governance that reinforce security and peace. People suggested that leadership training be provided to individuals likely to become chiefs by virtue of birthright or nomination.



The Role of Education

F-193 Within case study communities, there was a pronounced variation in education levels. Elder Indo-Fijian women were mostly educated informally; some had primary schooling. Elders in all other communities had at least primary education. Within the adult population, men had attained higher levels of education than women—most had secondary schooling, few had attended tertiary education. In contrast, most Fijian elders completed primary school and most adults had reached secondary level, although none had attended tertiary level classes. The research clearly points to the need for civic education to be included at both primary and secondary level to enhance young people’s understanding of governance processes and encourage learning from past experiences. Similarly, NGOs have an important role to play in providing opportunities for adult learning on democratic governance.

The Role of Churches

F-194 The study revealed that Christian churches play a powerful role in influencing local and national politics. In Fijian communities, the church is an inherent part of the governance structure. The religious leaders in Fiji can still influence the decisions made by the communities with respect for the priest putting them higher than the chief. Conflict between different religious groups and denominations can occur and disrupt the community with chiefs and elders not uncommonly expelling people and families who have identified with a new group that does not permit them from being involved in the community activities (as was the case with the “Every Home” movement during the 1980s and 90s). Leaders in the Methodist church have been accused of being involved in politics and disruption of the church.



Part 5. Discussion Paper

Family and Tribal Linkages in Indigenous and Indo-Fijian Communities

- F-195* The work that *Voices and Choices* has done with indigenous Fijian and Indo-Fijian communities in Fiji suggests that there are different core (and general) concerns faced by each group. The Fijian communities in the study are concerned with the impacts of changes to traditional governance brought about by modernity (including modern forms of governance). These concerns include the erosion of traditional authority, reduction in respect, out-migration, increased rates of crime and growth in substance abuse.
- F-196* By contrast Indo-Fijian communities are primary governance concern revolve around the loss of their security. This insecurity includes economic insecurity (high levels of unemployment and concerns for future income sources/opportunities), personal insecurity (there is a feeling of vulnerability to criminal actions) political insecurity and security of tenure (the land issues remains unresolved).

Similarities Between Fijian and Indo-Fijian Kinship Systems

- F-197* These underlying differences in Fijian and Indo-Fijian systems hide a number of important similarities. These include the extended family links remain strong within both systems in the rural areas. These extended families form the backbone of economic, social, cultural and political life in these communities. The extended family links not just the members of a given community, but incorporates the entire country. Fijians can find a family connection no matter where they come from and where they currently reside, when they meet another Fijian. While members of the Indo-Fijian community are not so intimately connected, they do have family members in widely separated areas of the country.
- F-198* In addition tradition and religion (though differing between Fijian (Christian) and Indo-Fijian (Hindu by and large) are regarded as the glue that binds both Fijian and Indo-Fijian families and tribal networks together. Also in both systems family and tribal networks perform important avenues for access by communities into modern systems of governance.

Differences Between Fijian and Indo-Fijian Kinship/Tribal Systems

- F-199* Fijian communities have a more formal structure empowered by legislation wherein villages are linked through Provincial Councils to central Government. Structures do exist in rural areas for Indo-Fijian communities (and other races) to gain access to central government through a system of Rural Advisory Councilors. These positions are voluntary and Advisory Councilors look after a number of distant communities.
- F-200* The Fijian system that links traditional and modern forms of governance is communal based. The Indo-Fijian system relies on individuals approaching Councilors through their own initiative.



In the absence of formal working structures that Indo-Fijians can gain access to local or central forms of government, trade unions (e.g. sugar unions) and political parties play an important governance role- a government within a government. Communities in fact see these agencies as being more responsive to their needs than formal government structures. These agencies would need to be included if attempts were being made not only to improve governance, but also to alleviate poverty.

Shared Problems for Both Fijian and Indo-Fijian Communities

F-201

With regard to both development issues more broadly and to governance specifically, Fijians and Indo-Fijian communities share, despite these differences, fundamental challenges. These challenges are:

- Both Indo-Fijian and Fijian communities have little knowledge of how modern systems of governance function...even the basics. The KAP surveys showed that rudimentary aspects of modern governance-personalities, institutions, functions-are poorly understood.
- Modern governance systems are seen as presenting a number of problems namely:
 - *They are top-down with little or no input from communities*
 - *They make unilateral decisions without consultation*
 - *They are seen as unsympathetic to the requirements of communities*
 - *There was a concern expressed that modern governments are a black hole to requests made by communities. Requests are submitted without reply or in some cases acknowledgement.*
 - *They are viewed as a threat to traditional authority as traditional community leaders no longer have the authority to make decisions without reference to modern governance agents.*

In August 2003 the Chief of Dreketi in Macuata Province in Vanua Levu announced that he no longer saw 'race' as an issue and that all people living on his land were part of his community, which included many Indo-Fijian families and their settlements. The Chief's statement received wide media coverage.

The implication of such an event is that all the people living in such a *Tikina* will accept the governance process, thereby reducing the various systems from two or three to one. In this case the *Tikina* council can consider the Indo-Fijian settlements the same as the Fijian Village, with representation on the *Tikina* Council, whereby issues concerning all the people can be adequately dealt with.



The Story of Jubaniwai Foundation

F-202 Participants at the PCDF Good Governance Workshop (Nayawa Village, August, 2002) decided to form a committee to act as their voice with relevant authorities, including the provincial office. This committee, called the Jubaniwai Foundation, would comprise representatives from all of the villages, thereby guaranteeing that the voice of each community was heard as part of the development process.

F-203 The role of the Jubaniwai Foundation is to undertake economic development activities within the framework of a legal organization.

F-204 The motto of the Jubaniwai Foundation is "To the future, for the future", reflecting the fact that these communities are concerned about the future for their children. The formation of a formal organization such as this would enable them to establish good governance practices with transparency, trust and trustworthiness as being requirements for such a foundation to be able to work for the benefit of the community and build an economic future with a purpose for everyone.

F-205 The Jubaniwai Foundation has sought assistance from PCDF to identify technical and financial support needed for the implementation of their action plan identified during the PLA.

F-206 For the Fijian communities, the use of their community governance system (which operates for social order) as the base of an economic structure with the involvement of "outside" businesses and organizations such as the Sigatoka Town Council is unique. There will be many lessons to be learned by this development – such as how the Foundation interacts with the traditional governance structure to bring it closer to modern systems such as computers, email and other business skills is an example. In addition, how the work of the Foundation, if it provides employment for the youth, will interact with the traditional work of subsistence farming, community work and social obligations is of interest. Other attempts to involve Fijian communities in economic development – such as sugar cane farming – have not succeeded with social obligations taking priority, leaving the work of the business undone with consequent failure.



Part 6: Lessons and Recommendations

- F-207* This participatory, community-based research project focused on understanding the concept and practice of grassroots governance in five case study sites. The study involved two Fijian communities (Nukutubu Village and Jubaniwai District), two Indo-Fijian communities (Busabusa Settlement and Tavarau Settlement) and one Melanesian community (Muanikoso Settlement). These communities were selected because of their socio-cultural, economic and ethnic diversity and willingness to participate.
- F-208* Data was gathered using various participatory learning and action (PLA) techniques, knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) surveys and through interviews with community-based stakeholders and external experts. Results of a limited literature review on the evolution of governance in Fiji were also incorporated.
- F-209* The study explored the connections between traditional and modern governance systems, with specific attention to areas of actual and potential interface. Governance processes were considered primarily from the perspective of families and communities; issues related to gender, ethnicity and migration were considered throughout.

6.1 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- F-210* The primary governance themes emerging from this study concern land, security, livelihood/employment and the process of governance itself. Participants do not view these issues as distinct from one another.

Structure and Systems

- F-211*
- In large part, the traditional Fijian governance system still exists and has evolved to meet emerging social conditions and requirements. The people living in Fijian villages surveyed are governed more by traditional than modern approaches. However, their representatives in District Councils are able to interact with the modern system enabling them to access resources for development purposes. The Fijian governance system represents an evolutionary process, allowing modification of the traditional system to work with the modern system, which has been imposed from “outside” through the colonial government to the government of Fiji’s independence. Since this evolutionary process has permitted the communities to continue with an internal governance process that deals directly with many of their needs, it is recommended that it be the focus for further development with a greater interaction between the community governance and the modern governance. The Jubaniwai Foundation has the potential to explore such a relationship.
- F-212*
- All respondents believe the modern governance system does not meet community needs; this is especially true for Indo-Fijian communities. The basic needs for food, shelter, clothes, water, communications and a means of livelihood were not being met with the modern governance system as reflected in the issues discussed in the surveys. In particular the failure of the modern system to deal with the expiring land leases has actively contributed to poverty in Fiji and not just for the



tenants having to leave their farms; the Fijian land owners no longer receive lease money from the use of this land and this is impacting on that community's ability to meet its financial obligations. The incident of the Chief of Dreketi in Macuata Province considering all people in his area as one, gives clues as to how this issue can be approached, with variations according to the location and understanding of the people. That community governance can incorporate the concepts in traditional governance and interact meaningfully with the modern governance is an issue that needs to be further explored.

- F-213*
- There was a high degree of consensus amongst communities regarding the roles of men, women and youth and the impact of globalization on family and community dynamics. However, notions about individual/family relationships with the wider community varied considerably. The Fijian community still considered that the community takes precedence over the individual and the youth are expected to work for the community unless their education has provided skills that call for their services elsewhere, such as teachers, doctors and nurses. The Indo-Fijian community youth, under the modern influence of television and westernization were felt to be more likely to pursue an independent life and leave home, instead of remaining with the family and caring for the parents as they did in the traditional situation. With the stress of having to leave properties where some have spent several generations, the break up of the Indo-Fijian families will follow the patterns of disrupted societies throughout history.
- F-214*
- At the bottom of all governance issues is the inability of communities to influence decision-making processes. People feel removed from planners and policy-makers and are concerned about inadequate representation at district and national level. Development needs to function from within, not outside kinship/tribal networks. These networks provide for improved forms of communication and perform critical roles in the success of development initiatives. The process of governance needs further discussion at community level; government cannot prescribe potential solutions such as the introduction of a modified GSS and *Panchayat* system. These ideas must come from the people—the users and beneficiaries of the system—for they will be the ones who determine if the system succeeds or fails.
- F-215*
- Modern governance processes need to recognize the richness and depth of social capital in both Fijian and Indo-Fijian cultures. Social capital in Fiji is the strong family and tribal linkages which are reinforced at funerals, weddings and religious functions where people exchange their views on current issues and in some instances where critical decisions are made. It operates at different levels of social organization and includes specific governance mechanisms (i.e., dispute resolution). The strength of this was made clear in the 2000 prorogue of parliament, when the communities from Naitasiri and Talievu in particular supported the parliamentary take over as a consequence of information fed to them by the dissidents. In the positive sense it will be used for the development of the Jubaniwai Foundation.



Land

- F-216* • Land is a key issue for Fijian communities because the increasing population is putting added pressure on land used for food production. For Indo-Fijians, concerns center on expiring land leases as these tenancy arrangements have provided shelter and means of livelihood for generations. When leases expire and Indo-Fijian families are forced to vacate their homes, they face great difficulty securing alternative housing and employment. Similarly, Fiji-Melanesian communities have no legal entitlement with respect to land tenure or use.
- F-217* • The impact on land issues varies throughout the country; demands for occupancy depend on the space available for displaced families in established and new settlements. Indo-Fijian and Melanesian communities report feeling insecure and highly vulnerable to the demands of landowners. Uncertain livelihoods have resulted in increased crime and domestic violence, higher suicide rates and substance abuse, especially among young people.
- F-218* • Muanikoso and Indo-Fijian communities need moral and technical support and improved negotiation/conflict management skills to improve relationships with Fijian landowners. Similarly, mechanisms need to be established to enable greater dialogue between landowner and tenant groups. Constructive dialogue on land issues needs to take place at community level. Churches and NGOs could play an important facilitating role in this process. The Native Land Trust Board needs also to play a critical role in the use of land and the relationship between landowner and tenant. It is clear from the media (report of 24/10 TV news and Fiji times 25/10) that the NLTB staff are not diligent in doing their work whereby a tenant had not been given his lease documents although all was in order after 20 years. The internal workings of the NLTB need investigation and sorting through if the land issues are to be properly resolved. It is clear that the principles on which NLTB was established was helpful to the nation to manage the land on behalf of the native tribes, however the refusal of the manager in 2001 to allow Fijian landowners wanting to re-lease their land to their Indo-Fijian tenants was not justice. While the new manager has not taken that stand, there is still much to be done.

Poverty and Employment

- F-219* • All communities identified unemployment as a major concern; this issue is linked to land problems and loss of jobs in the sugar industry. Unemployment is considered a major contributor to the growing list of social problems, including poverty.
- F-220* • Poverty alleviation efforts need to focus on articulating traditional and modern governance systems and exploring possibilities to blend “the best of both worlds”. There are many ways the traditional system could enhance the effectiveness of the modern system. For example, in the modern system employment is understood to be that a person is working for a cash income, either a weekly wage or remuneration for the sale of goods and services. Thus the traditional system of subsistence farming does not have credence of providing “employment” where people work and are able to feed, clothe and house them without an obvious



income. Reports on poverty in Fiji have defined the poverty level as a given income, making it difficult to define poverty for subsistence living. Defining poverty may require that a “cash equivalence” be established for the subsistence community to allow for the needs of meeting payment for such things as school fees and utility services such as electricity, water and communications, which some subsistence communities can meet and others cannot. Within the traditional governance structure the poor, sick and elderly were cared for and did not fall into the poverty associated with the modern system. However that is beginning to emerge as families migrate and leave the elderly behind. The traditional system needs be strengthened to meet this situation.

Political Marginalisation

- F-221
- Women and youth need encouragement and support to confidently engage in political processes at all levels. NGOs have made great strides in promoting gender equity at the national governance level (i.e., the recent enactment of Family Law legislation) but more still needs to be done—especially at the grassroots—to increase women’s political space. Youth must also be given meaningful opportunities to engage in consultative process, particularly in relation to livelihood issues.

Gender Issues

- F-222
- This study showed that in all of the case study communities the “voice” of the women is heard, particularly in the home. There is still much to be done to bring the voice of the women (and youth) to the decision making process. More work needs to be done to involve women and to train them in the skills of governance processes.

Youth

- F-223
- In all of the case study communities, youth were seen to provide the work force for community activities. It was also found from the surveys that youth are involved in clubs and sports activities. These should be seen as fora for training the youth in the processes involved in governance. The communities in Fiji should be encouraged not only to deal with the processes of governance to deal with the issues that confront them, but also engage the youth to develop their skills for the future of the nation.

6.2 LESSONS FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENTS AND POLICY-MAKERS

F-224 Through the course of conducting this research and the ongoing work of the *Voices and Choices* project, a number of important themes have emerged which offer valuable insight for development practitioners, planners and policy-makers.

- F-225
- There is a need for more frequent and in-depth community-based consultation to enable individuals/groups to meet with development agencies and government



officials to share their concerns and ideas. Such gatherings can provide tangible ideas to enhance collaboration, improve understanding and access to government machinery (especially for peripheral communities), and produce incredible learning for all concerned. The Jubaniwai stakeholder consultation and follow-up action by this community is a case in point.

- F-226*
- Community development agents need to make better use of traditional knowledge and acknowledge community efforts to be self-reliant. It is also important to incorporate traditional knowledge in the wider “global” picture and to affirm that governance practices handed down through the generations are credible. For example, PCDF initiated its activities by requesting permission through the traditional governance process as the community, district and provincial level, ensuring that there was no sense of “extraction”, including intellectual knowledge. Simultaneously PCDF engaged the modern system – involving the civil servants, private sector, and, where appropriate, regional and international agencies – to ensure that all activities undertaken met the legal requirements and fitted with the Government development plans. All projects undertaken were aligned to international standards, ensuring that the local communities were trained to understand what was required. All activities were linked to government processes. In PCDF activities, the community “owns” the project. The project incorporates the decisions for its sustainability into the governance processes – traditional and modern – and is competent to meet future challenges in the given discipline, interacting with the government departments and processes.
- F-227*
- There is an important role in the community development process for outside agencies (i.e., government officials) in explaining plans and policies that will impact communities. For initiatives to be successful, government and community development workers must seek input from villagers on the design, implementation and evaluation of each initiative.
- F-228*
- Since 1990, PCDF has worked with communities throughout Fiji on a wide range of development and governance issues. This experience has demonstrated the importance of participatory and interactive methodologies (i.e., popular theatre techniques like stop-action role plays) in promoting self-help action. Clearly, communities know the answers to their own problems.
- F-229*
- Participatory learning and action tools provide an excellent opportunity for communities to reflect on their history, their present circumstances and their preferred future. It is important to use KAP surveys and other PLA techniques from the outset in order to obtain base-line data needed to monitor change. In addition to assistance provided for assessment and action planning purposes, communities also need training in financial management, leadership and monitoring and evaluation.
- F-230*
- Donors and development agencies must clearly understand that there is no “quick fix” solution to long-standing governance problems. A period of inertia is to be expected when moving people through any process of change; in fact, PCDF believes planners must allow 12 months “comprehension time” for new ideas to be introduced and assimilated. Once an idea takes hold, word will travel quickly, making it easier to work in other communities. A minimum period of five years is



required to establish a project; ten years before the community can sustain the project on their own. This time frame does not fit the political life of elected officials.

F-231

- Churches and development workers have a key role to play in helping the people of Fiji recognize their “oneness” as human beings, without political threat or inducement. The Tui Dreketi’s announcement that all people in his district are equal irrespective of race is the kind of action needed to address the fundamental ethnic divide.



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