

Gender and food security in Fiji



A community-based gender analysis in Macuata Province, Vanua Levu

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Cover photos (Sarah Whitfield, CARE)

Anasimeci Rabusa outside her garden, Raviravi village, Macuata Province

Daya Wati showing her rice with *suluka* pandanus drying in the background, Vunivutu settlement, Macuata Province

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Abbreviations

ACAIR	Australian Centre for International Agriculture Research
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
CSO	Civil society organisation
FGD	Focus group discussion
FSL	Food security and livelihoods
HIES	Household Income and Expenditure Survey
IWDA	International Women's Development Agency
MOHMS	Fiji Ministry of Health and Medical Services
NCDs	Non Communicable Diseases
NGO	Non-government organisation
SPC	Pacific Community
TC	Tropical cyclone
WASH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene
WPHF	Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund

Message by the Commissioner Northern

This report offers a unique opportunity to reflect upon the challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls. The government believes that women play important roles in the rural economy. They work as farmers, wage earners, entrepreneurs and custodians of traditional knowledge that is crucial for their community's livelihoods, resilience and culture. In addition women make a unique contribution to natural resource management.



The government is committed to seeing that Vanua Levu undergoes rapid expansion as outlined in the Look North Policy. The policy aims to pave way for greater economic activities in the region, which is to subsequently improve Vanua Levu's overall GDP. Currently the upgrading and sealing of roads is a testimony to this, with the improvement of water reticulation, and extension of the power grid as high cost projects that government is planning.


The 2017 census report states that in Macuata Province, there are more rural women than urban women even though the numbers are decreasing as compared to the 2007 census.

Yet women in rural areas face constraints in engaging in economic activities. Government supporting the SDG pledge of "leaving no one behind" means there is no leaving women behind anywhere. Promoting and ensuring gender equality through decent work and productive employment, not only contributes to inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

This will also improve the effectiveness of poverty reduction and food security initiatives, as well as climate change adaptation efforts.

Rural women at work as "agents of change" are the future of the rural economy. The government will continue to work on the framework for action ensuring equal treatment and equal opportunities for rural women and men inclusively.

Thank you.



**[JOVESA VOCEA] MR
COMMISSIONER NORTHERN DIVISION
Government of Fiji**

FOREWORD

The Fiji Food Security and Livelihoods (FSL) Cluster is the medium by which national actors within the food security and agriculture sector effectively and efficiently support and improve the lives of disaster impacted communities in Fiji's 14 Provinces. The Cluster arrangement brings together key Government Ministries with national and international humanitarian partners before, during and after natural disasters.

We work closely with key stakeholders, ADRA Fiji is one of the active FSLC members working with us during the Disaster cycle: Preparedness, response, recovery/rehabilitation.

The Food Security and Livelihood cluster is committed to support the recommendations under the Community-based gender and food security analysis in Macuata Province, Fiji to develop strategies to ensure women have equal opportunities to access information and meaningfully participate in FSLC activities and training; and to foster and support women's participation and leadership within a broader gender-responsive activities, taking small but meaningful steps in communities where women's participation is low, creating safe spaces and an enabling environment.

We are grateful for the initiative of local CSOs as The Adventist Development and Relief Agency ADRA Fiji for sharing the finding of the report but more important to work in partnership with the FSLC for the development, inclusion and food security of women in rural areas.

Sera B. Bose

Food Security and Livelihood Cluster Coordinator

Executive summary

This report presents the results of a community-based gender and food security analysis that was carried out by ADRA Fiji in partnership with CARE International with funding from the WPHF, administered and supported by UN Women. The main purpose of the gender analysis is to gain a better understanding of the varying gender dynamics and socio-cultural contexts that can positively and negatively impact household and community food security and resilience in the context of climate change and disasters.

The findings and recommendations of the analysis are intended to strengthen the gender equality impacts of ADRA Fiji's *Vakarau Wai*¹ Pro-Resilience Project, as well as inform the agency's other programming. As part of the wider project the intention is also to more broadly share and discuss the findings to strengthen awareness among food security and livelihood stakeholders that localised social and gender context analysis is critical to ensure effective and sustainable food security in Fiji's ever-changing climate environment and to also ensure food security and livelihoods (FSL) initiatives, foster gender equality and support women's meaningful participation in decision-making in homes and communities across Fiji.

For this study data was collected and analysed from two communities, an *iTaukei* village and a settlement largely comprised of Fijians of Indian descent in Macuata Province, Vanua Levu. The aim was to identify gender specific needs, vulnerabilities and capacities, particularly among high risk and marginalised groups, and how these dimensions affect food security and household and community resilience and women's empowerment. A total of 71 people (35 female and 36 males) ranging in age from 20 – 83 years old contributed their views for this study, including six people with impairments (four with difficulty walking and two with varying levels of visual impairment), as well as four widows and two widowers. Data was collected in relation to four core areas of inquiry namely: access to and control over resources, gender roles and divisions of labour, household decision-making, and participation in public decision-making, using focus group discussions and key informant interviews, along with several transect walks.

Key findings relating to these core areas of inquiry are as follows:

A. Access to and control over resources

As is the case throughout Fiji, land is generally owned or leased by men, decision-making about land largely rests with men, and government officials consult only male landowners and lessees. While some widows inherit land, legal ownership does not guarantee women control and decision-making often rests with their late husband's male relatives or sons-in-law. In some cases, women may be required to vacate property or give up land upon the death of their husband. The most fertile land is dedicated to root crops or sugar cane production and while these are largely considered an area of male responsibility and control, food and income derived from these activities is generally used to meet the needs of the family and ensure they have security of tenure. Women in the settlement have less access to marine resources than men, however fish caught by men are mainly for household consumption. Women and men share the same views regarding the availability and quality of water in their respective communities, however while women generally have the same access to water as men they do not participate in community water resources management in either community.

Channels of communication and access to information

¹ *Vakarau Wai* in Fijian means 'Get water ready'.

Overall, women in the settlement have extremely limited opportunities to access information and significantly less access compared with their male counterparts and women living in the village. Women in the village access information via traditional governance structures and are generally well informed about upcoming visits and activities. Channels of communication appear to be less effective in the settlement. While communication can also bypass certain men and families living in more remote and less accessible areas, most women and especially widows living on their own, as well as people with disabilities, are much less likely to receive information. Few women in the settlement are consulted during post disaster needs assessments or listed as direct beneficiaries, although some may be informed of assistance to support food security and rebuild livelihoods by husbands or fathers. Women interviewed in the settlement have very limited awareness of climate change, however men who belong to cane farmer associations may have more access to climate information. Both women and men in the village are aware of climate change and eager to receive more information and technical support to improve food production.

B. Gender roles, divisions of labour and workload

Agriculture and livestock

Gender roles related to agriculture are generally divided and fixed, with men responsible for preparing the land to grow and harvest root crops while women tend vegetables gardens closer to home. In some households, husbands work together with their wives in the garden or help them occasionally, and in a few cases, men take complete responsibility for vegetable gardening. Women and men take on a variety of similar and complementary tasks related to livestock, however certain roles are based on gender norms, for example men's role in killing birds or women's role milking cows. Women in the village sometimes require additional labour, and even those with husbands sometimes call upon male youth to work in their gardens or to help raise pigs, paying them in cash or exchanging livestock for labour.

Fishing

Fishing activities in the village are undertaken by both women and men on a regular basis. Women appear to have considerable freedom to fish when and with whom they choose, at times going out alone on the flats, or with other women or in large mixed groups to fish on the reef. In the settlement, it is mainly men who fish, whereas women who go out fishing do so occasionally and only with their husbands or together with another couple. Both women and men from the village sell fish in the market with women generally concentrating on the sale of seafood. In both communities, men generally highlighted fishing as a subsistence and income-generating activity, whereas women also emphasised the social aspects of fishing.

Other income-generating activities

Women sell surplus vegetables and fruit in the market, from their homes, and to people in the community. They also occasionally sell livestock from home, signalling their interest through word of mouth. Both women and men face challenges getting their goods to market due to the distance and expenses involved. Women from the settlement stated they never go to Labasa alone or with other women but only go with their husbands. Men are largely responsible for growing and harvesting sugar cane, although women play key roles in certain stages of sugar cane production and in some cases, work as labourers. Men and women in the settlement make *suluka* and sell it in the market. Although women play a key role in these activities, men usually control the income using it either to shop with their wives or giving them the money to buy food and household items. Although largely designed as a 'women's project', harvesting and making pearl jewellery provides income for both men and women in the village with activities often designated according to gender and men receiving slightly more money based on the physical effort involved in the task. Both women and men in the village appear to have benefited from external technical support, while in the

settlement men have largely been the main beneficiaries of technical support, mainly for sugar cane, although wives and families benefit indirectly.

Household roles

Women are largely responsible for household chores such as cleaning the house, washing clothes, and caring for children, elderly and people who are ill within their immediate and extended families. They also prepare meals, cook for family and relatives, and clean up and wash dishes. Some men occasionally help with food preparation or cooking, for example when women are busy with other work, although some men, particularly in the settlement do not assist with meals at all. Some women stated a preference for food that can be prepared and cooked quickly - highlighting their interest in reducing their food-related workload. Daughters help their mothers with household chores and food-related activities and sons might also help with some of these tasks. Gathering firewood is a daily activity for women in the village and men also collect firewood, especially when heavy rain or storms are forecasted. In the settlement, it is primarily men's responsibility to collect firewood from nearby bushes and mangroves and they often use bullocks to pull heavy loads and are sometimes accompanied by their wives. Women's daily use of indoor fires for cooking places their respiratory health and vision at risk. Women in the village dry fish and some pickle fruits. Women in the settlement preserve a much larger quantity and range of food, drying fruits, making chutneys and jams, and freezing food when there is an oversupply to eat in the off-season, as well as to prepare for extreme weather conditions and disasters and sometimes their husbands help with this activity.

Awareness of NCDs and responsibility for nutrition

There appears to be limited awareness among women or men of the prevalence of anaemia or special dietary needs of certain groups. However, women and men are aware of non-communicable diseases and the importance of good nutrition and are keen to receive more specific guidance about healthy eating. Women and men in the settlement tend to view nutrition as a shared responsibility, whereas women and men in the village generally feel this responsibility lies with women. Some men in the village stated that they promote family nutrition, for example discouraging their children from eating noodles and junk food.

Workload, seasonal variation, hazards and other challenges

Women generally have long days and get up earlier and go to bed later than men. Some, but not all, husbands occasionally help their wives, for example when they have too much work or are ill. Men generally have more leisure time than women and some drink kava in the evenings. Women's relaxation time in the evening often involves carrying out other activities such as childcare, other household chores, or income-generating activities. While the presence of young children generally results in heavier workloads for mothers, older children often help to relieve the workload, particularly during school breaks and holidays where they take on gender-designated roles that align with those of their parents. As children move out of the house, and increasingly away from the community altogether, some women find their workload increases without these extra hands to help around the house. For church functions, community and family events and religious holidays women come together to prepare and cook food, collect firewood, do extra cleaning and decorate, and various other tasks. Although these additional chores add to women's workload they are generally considered enjoyable due to their social dimension. Men also carry out a range of tasks to prepare for these events but may have more time to relax and enjoy the occasion since women are largely responsible for serving food and cleaning up afterwards.

Women and men in both communities carry out physically arduous and time-consuming tasks. Some of the more difficult tasks undertaken by men, such as preparing land or harvesting crops and sugar cane are mainly seasonal and have a fixed time frame, whereas most activities carried out by women are done on a daily basis throughout the year. Both women and men face increased workloads during extreme wet and prolonged dry seasons and after disasters and carry out a range of tasks that typically align with their normal gender-differentiated roles. In the dry season

women collect extra water for drinking and other household chores and spend more time watering the garden. In the settlement where water quality is poor, women are generally responsible for filling containers with rainwater and may be assisted by children. Men also help to collect water when supplies run low or they hear a cyclone warning, and in the rainy season collect extra firewood, dig drains for gardens and fields and around houses, cut cassava plants and harvest extra root crops. Household relations can deteriorate following extreme or prolonged weather events as workloads increase, food production slows, and savings are used to buy food.

Access to support and groups at risk

Intersecting risks coupled with caregiving responsibilities can seriously comprise some women's food security and health. Widows and people with disabilities are particularly at risk of food scarcity or poor nutrition and often face challenges to meet their basic food needs and access social welfare. Heavy workload and loneliness particularly affect the food security and mental wellbeing of widows. Traditional safety nets, social assistance, and money sent by family members are often insufficient to meet the needs of the most vulnerable, particularly during difficult planting seasons or following disasters. This study suggests an apparent lack of coordination to ensure the needs of people most at risk are adequately addressed in normal times or when the whole community is struggling.

C. Participation in household decision-making

Household decision-making takes various forms. Many women make decisions such as what and where to plant, what to buy, and what to eat together with their husbands. In some families, these decisions rest largely with men and this is more apparent in the settlement where some women have little to no role in household decision-making. In general, men often have more flexibility to make decisions about the use of their own time, and for example may arrive late for dinner after drinking kava. However, when dinner is not ready on time arguments can sometimes ensue with verbal abuse from husbands towards wives.

Women and men in these communities have very limited discretionary income and generally use money to pay for family expenses such as food and household items, school supplies, and occasionally for personal items. Both women and men are aware of the need to save for unexpected events, including disasters, although some people earn too little money to be able to put any aside. Both women and men hold traditional ideas about men being the main breadwinner, even when women play key roles in generating income for the family. While some women earn and control their own money, more often their earnings are controlled by men, especially among those living in the settlement. Few men in the village 'allow' their wives to control family income 'in order to avoid arguments.' Some women make their own decisions about money for example to save money, open a bank account or to help others.

D. Meaningful participation in community decision-making

Women face a range of barriers to meaningfully participate in community decision-making and these are often further constrained by additional factors such as disability. Women in the village have opportunities to participate in some, but not all, community discussions and decision-making via community governance structures. Women in the village are elected members of village committees - except the Water Committee - and both women and men feel they have a voice in these settings. Women in the settlement do not attend meetings and do not belong to any committees. In both communities, leadership positions of all committees are held by men. Women and women's groups have not been involved in response activities. Men in the village, including the *Turaga ni Koro*, are generally supportive of women's participation in meetings and on committees, whereas men in the settlement are much more resistant to women participating in public meetings. Although some men appear to be open to change there is significant male peer pressure to maintain existing gender norms and some sense of overall control over women. While some women in the village feel comfortable sharing their views in meetings, others lack the self-confidence and skills needed to effectively contribute to discussions.

Recommendations

The following suggested actions were developed based on CARE's gender transformative approach and designed to strengthen the project's focus on gender across all areas of CARE's Gender Equality Framework, namely: to build women's agency, change relations, and transform structures. A few key recommendations are also included to support gender-responsive social protection and emergency response and cash programming activities in food security and livelihoods. The final set of recommendations are intended to strengthen the team's overall approach to gender.

It is important to note that these recommendations are based solely on an analysis of the contexts of the communities involved in this small study. Gender issues and relations are similar in many situations (and to some extent universal) but also vary considerably in different settings. Clearly food security, livelihood and nutrition needs and priorities will differ for women and men living in urban and peri-urban areas, and in more remote rural areas in the interior, as well as small islands in Fiji. Different contexts will require different combinations of interventions and priority areas of focus.

Gender equality and women's empowerment	
Build agency: strengthen women's capacity, confidence and skills (Individual)	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure women have equal opportunities to access information and meaningfully participate in project activities and training, particularly in areas where women do not normally attend community meetings and training. Ensure women are informed and involved in all water infrastructure aspects of the project. 2. Work with community leaders and female and male community members to identify individuals with high risk factors, including widows, people with disabilities, single mothers, and others and develop strategies to ensure they benefit equally from the project. 3. Foster and support women's participation and leadership within a broader gender-responsive project. Take meaningful steps in communities where women's participation is low to create safe spaces and an enabling environment (for example conducting same sex meetings and training sessions) to build women's capacity, self-confidence and skills. 	
Change relations: enabling more equal relationships and social norms (Relations)	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Work with women and men separately, as well as together to address power dynamics, unequal workloads, and to promote shared decision-making in the home, including about own and household income. Integrate appropriate gender equality messaging into community training, awareness campaigns, manuals and radio programmes. 5. Train men, as well as women in nutrition and food preservation techniques, using men's interest in nutrition as an entry point to raise awareness about women's workload concerning to food-related activities and household chores generally and promote a more equitable division of labour in the home. 6. Engage men and boys to support gender equality and changes in gender relations, while also identifying risks and developing strategies to mitigate against potential backlash. Consider including approaches that support healthy relationships and effective household conflict resolution. Work with traditional, religious and community leaders to begin to initiate changes in decision-making and gender relations within their own households and actively promote gender equality within the larger community. Identify and support potential 	

male role models and champions of gender equality.

**Transform structures: influencing formal and informal institutions
(Structures)**

7. Promote gender-balanced membership and women's meaningful participation in community decision-making structures and processes, particularly in communities where women do not have a strong voice, identifying and addressing barriers and constraints faced by women and marginalised groups at risk.
8. Conduct ongoing awareness raising and advocacy for women's participation and decision-making with local government officials and food security stakeholders at all levels, including during disasters (see additional recommendations for disasters below.)
9. Increase the engagement of local women's groups in the project and explore opportunities and partnerships to strengthen the capacity of women's groups to support food security and livelihood initiatives, including during disaster response and recovery.

Social protection, gender and emergency FSL interventions and cash transfer programming

Safety net programs	a) Work with community leaders and gender-balanced committees to ensure all women and men in all their diversity and individuals and households most at risk of food insecurity and poor nutrition are identified and strengthen linkages with social welfare programs.
Gender and emergency FSL interventions	b) Collect and analyse data disaggregated by sex, age, disability and other risk factors and ensure gender issues are substantively addressed in all post disaster needs assessments. c) Ensure women, particularly those with higher risk factors, and marginalised groups are consulted at all stages of the response and have opportunities to provide feedback. d) Support the meaningful engagement of local women's CSOs in all humanitarian action.
Cash and vouchers	e) Ensure women, as well as men receive cash and vouchers and have equal opportunities to be involved in FSL cash-based interventions before and after disasters. f) Together with communities and affected groups and individuals, identify and develop solutions to address specific barriers and constraints faced by women and certain groups to access and benefit from the assistance (especially widows, people with disabilities and their caregivers, young single mothers and female headed households with very low incomes). g) Advocate to government and FSL Cluster members to ensure women, as well as men receive cash and vouchers and have equal opportunities to be involved in cash-based interventions, ensuring any associated risks of gender-based violence are identified and mitigated.

Recommendations for the overall approach

1. Develop a gender action plan with priority actions that can be implemented for the remainder of the project.
2. Ensure male and female staff use approaches that continually foster gender equality, equal opportunities and shared decision-making. Support gender training for male and female staff and volunteers and use approaches to engage male staff, volunteers and male community members and leaders to avoid backlash as well as support male champions for gender equality.
3. Support community ownership of the program, including of its gender equality objectives, among both women and men so they can see and sustain positive changes and address any challenges.
4. Ensure targeted communities have both a female and male ADRA project representative with shared roles and responsibilities and gender-balanced committees with shared roles and opportunities for leadership.
5. Explicitly target communities where women's participation in public decision-making is very low and develop strategies to address barriers and constraints, taking small incremental steps towards change.
6. Strengthen diversity and involve Indo-Fijian women, as well as men, in the project as staff and volunteers particularly to support community engagement and training in the settlements.
7. Work with women and men in communities to identify and address any barriers or constraints to women's meaningful participation and decision-making in the project. Ensure activities do not increase women's workload and involve men to help alleviate women's workload.
8. Continue to advocate for and champion gender equality and women's empowerment in all ADRA programming identifying appropriate entry points and drawing on the organisation's wider community-focused approach.²
9. Support transparency and accountability by involving women and men in participatory self-assessments and monitoring of impacts, especially those related to gender equality and women's empowerment. Ensure women have regular access to information about the project and related FSL activities in their community and have regular opportunities to provide ideas and feedback. Disaggregate and analyse data to the widest extent possible to identify groups that are making progress towards gender equality or facing particular challenges.
10. Reflect and report on progress and challenges to support gender equality. Use qualitative and quantitative gender-sensitive indicators to monitor, evaluate and share learning related to the positive (and any negative) impacts on women and men and any changes related to gender equality and women's empowerment in each domain of the Gender Equality Framework namely Agency, Relations and Structures.

² The *Turaga ni Koro* noted that he thought 'gender' is always about women's rights and LGBTQ but said that he was happy with the discussions and approach of the study since it enlightened him on what gender actually means and how women and men have different needs. He recommended that gender awareness training be conducted in the village by organisations like ADRA that are seen as neutral.

1. Introduction

The following gender analysis was undertaken by ADRA Fiji in partnership with CARE, who provided technical support and guidance for the overall approach, methodology and analysis through funding from UN Women under the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF). Gender data was collected and analysed from two communities in Macuata Province to identify gender specific needs, vulnerabilities and capacities, particularly among high risk and marginalised groups and examine how they affect food security and household and community resilience. The findings and recommendations of the analysis are intended to inform ADRA Fiji programming. They are also directed to strengthening awareness among food security and livelihood stakeholders in Fiji that localised social and gender context analysis is critical for effective and sustainable food security in Fiji's ever-changing climate context; and an essential part of the government's wider goal to foster gender equality and support women's meaningful participation in decision-making in homes and communities across Fiji.

2. The context of gender and food security in Fiji

2.1 Health and nutrition

Food security in Fiji is influenced by a wide range of factors including but not limited to ethnic background, area of residence and gender. The burden of malnutrition, underweight, overweight and micronutrient deficiency is occurring particularly among the poorest and most vulnerable households who already use most of their income on food, and is disproportionately affecting children and elderly. Overall household self-sufficiency in food has seriously declined in a very short period³ and major changes are taking place in food consumption of most items.⁴

According to the Fiji National Nutrition Survey report (2015):

- Rates of food production for home use are falling with 78.9% of households growing some food for home consumption, compared to 84.6% in 1993. While all households reported being able to feed their families, a small number of households (10%) reported not having enough food to eat properly on occasion and in those circumstances, the mother usually went without food.
- The national rate for anaemia was 27% and is a particularly serious concern among children and women. Overall, 55.6% of pregnant women were anaemic (61.5% Fijians of Indian descent and 52% *iTaukei*). While anaemia in pregnant women has decreased since 1993, rates in young children have increased. Forty percent of children under 5 years and 32% of women over 15 years were anaemic compared to 16% of men. Women of Indian descent had a higher rate (38%) of anaemia than *iTaukei* women (26%). Almost one in five women of childbearing age have iron deficiency (19.7%), vitamin A deficiency (18.3 %), and zinc deficiency (19%). The mean birth weight of female infants in both main ethnic groups appeared to have worsened and attribute the change is attributed to poor complementary feeding, adolescent mothers and other factors.
- Obesity has become a national epidemic with 33% of persons aged 18 years and over either overweight or obese. More women than men were overweight and obese (41% women and 24% men) and the highest rate of obesity was among *iTaukei* women at 47%. Further, 4.8% of children under five years old and 7.2% of those between 15 to 17 years old are overweight.

³ 2008-09 Household Income and Expenditure Survey (2011). It is hoped that a comprehensive gender analysis of the upcoming HIES will shed further light on the gender dimensions of food security and livelihoods.

⁴ These are the result of changing preferences, as well as relative price.

Mean life expectancy is approximately 66 years for men and 71 years for women and approximately 78% of all deaths and 40% of premature deaths before age 60 are due to non-communicable diseases (NCDs) (MoHMS National Strategic Plan, 2016 – 2020). NCDs continue to be the major cause of morbidity and mortality with half the population at risk of diabetes, hypertension, cardiac diseases and cancer. Death rates attributed to non-communicable diseases have doubled since 1990 and in 2002, 82% of all deaths were due to NCDs. There was an overall increase in the rates of hypertension in all ethnic groups from 9.8% in 1993 to 17.1% 2004 with slightly more females (19.2%) than males (14.4%) having hypertension.

2.2 Gender equality in Fiji

Studies have shown that women contribute to routine agricultural activities and engage in subsistence cultivation, marketing of farm produce, collecting shellfish, and selling shellfish.⁵ While rural women in Fiji may be able to access resources, they are less able to access agricultural extension services which are mainly provided by men and generally targeted at high income earning crops sold mainly by men. Lack of land ownership, coupled with patriarchal governance structures result in women having few opportunities to participate in decision-making to support their own food security.

Land Ownership and use

Members of the *mataqali* (patrilineal landholding units) own and control reserve land and allocate plots of variable size and quality among its male members. Although all members of the *mataqali* are officially registered not all have access to land and women rarely inherit rights to use customary or native land. Inheritance laws practised by both major ethnic groups in Fiji usually exclude women from inheriting land or other fixed assets. In many cases, women's legal ownership of land does not automatically equate to control or decision-making. However, in *iTaukei* villages women are granted customary usage rights.

Agriculture

Women and men cooperate in productive activities but generally have different roles and responsibilities. Men tend to operate and manage larger-scale plantation agriculture where they grow crops like dalo, cassava, ginger, kava, pineapples, and papaya and/or work in sugar and rice production, while both men and women work for cash in planting and harvesting for large market operations and sell produce at local markets. Women are largely responsible for most family food production, although men may also be involved, and men usually clear and prepare land and put up fencing. In some locations, agricultural activities are done interchangeably by men and women. There are also differences based on ethnicity with Fijian women of Indian descent generally doing less agricultural labour than *iTaukei* women (ADB 2015). Provision of technology, training, and subsidies for agriculture tends to be targeted toward men, especially those producing cash crops.⁶

Fishing

Fishing beyond the reef is mainly considered the domain of men, while women tend to concentrate their fishing activities and collecting seafood within lagoons and inshore areas. In many parts of Fiji, women fish regularly to feed

⁵ Schoeffel P., Moce K. and Makasiale K. Participatory Assessment of Social, Poverty and Gender Impacts, Supplementary Appendix to the Report and Recommendation of the President of the Board of the Directors on a proposed loan and technical assistance grant to the Republic of the Fiji Islands for the Fiji Fourth Road Upgrading (Sector) Project, Manila. Asian Development Bank, July 2005.

⁶ UN Women, in partnership with the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation and local government supports women market vendors in Fiji. Objectives include improved and more equitable market governance, awareness raising with local government that manage market facilities, and upgrades to infrastructure including toilets and secure locations for women to stay overnight and store their products. Under the same project, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is providing financial literacy and business training.

their families using lines or nets and glean reefs for shellfish, octopus and seaweed and collect mud crabs and other seafood from mangroves and coastal areas. As with land-based resources, women have varying ownership and user rights to fishing grounds and marine resources based on their location of birth, marital status and husband's clan. The Fisheries Department has identified pearl farming and seaweed cultivation as areas of opportunity for women, and has provided support for these activities in Vanua Levu. The Ministry of Fisheries collects sex-disaggregated data to track numbers of men and women participating in training and their annual plan includes gender-related outputs. The Women and Fisheries Network and other partners continue to work collaboratively with government to support gender mainstreaming in the fisheries sector. (Vunisea, n.d)

Livelihood and income generation

Approximately 85% of men of both ethnicities reported earning their own income, while 68% of *iTaukei* women and 22% of women of Indian descent reported earning their own income (ADB 2015). Most agricultural and fishing activities done by women are for household consumption. Evidence suggests women spend more time than men on work overall, have fewer hours in paid work, and in general have less discretionary time than men (UNDP 2008). Social protection programmes have expanded from welfare allowances to support the living expenses of needy families. The elderly and people with disabilities and women constitute the majority of beneficiaries under the Social Welfare Department's Family Assistance Scheme.

Participation in public decision- making

At all levels women are underrepresented in government and leadership roles, with men tending to dominate leadership and decision making. Women make up less than a quarter of staff at local government level with only 2% of females employed as field staff (Commonwealth Local Government Forum, n.d)⁷ District Officers, Assistant District Officers, Advisory Councillors and *Turaga ni Koro* (village headman), along with agriculture and fisheries field officers who support community development and field based coordination and assessment of relief, recovery and reconstruction are largely positions held by men. It is often easier for women to share their concerns one-on-one rather than attend public meetings that are often dominated by men and as a result, women often lack information. At times this can include limited access to hazard and climate forecasts.⁸ A wide range of stakeholders are working together at different levels to improve the involvement and participation of women in decision making bodies.

Gender- Based Violence

Fiji currently has one of the highest levels of domestic violence in the world and women across the country and from all sections of society experience gender-based violence. Recent studies highlight that up to 72% of women aged 18-64 years have experienced at least one or more forms of physical, sexual, or emotional violence, by their husband or partner in their lifetime (Fiji Women's Crisis Centre 2013). FWCC also notes that women and children are at greater risk of domestic violence as the country faces a future of climate change challenges and disasters. The Northern Division recorded the second highest rates of child abuse in 2017⁹ indicating the need for continued actions to prevent and mitigate the likelihood of increased violence during and after disasters or resulting from climate stresses. The government has developed domestic violence legislation¹⁰ and the prevention of gender-based violence has been

⁷ http://wilgpacific.org/files/5414/0425/7392/Low_Res_Fiji_SWPMG_Position_Paper_2_Service_Delivery_Final.pdf

⁸ Women's Weather Watch, launched in 2009 by fem'Link aims to keep women informed about upcoming storms, rainfall and flooding.

⁹ <http://www.fbc.com.fj/fiji/48759/north-records-second-highest-number-of-child-abuse-cases>

¹⁰ In line with Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Gender equality and women's empowerment) the National 5 Year and 20 Year Development Plan aims to 'review legislation and policies to enhance their relevance to women and gender equality. This will include the Family Law Act and Regulations, the Domestic Violence Decree, the Crimes Decree, the Criminal Procedure Decree,

prioritised by government, working in close partnership with police, the judicial system and NGO partners as part of an overarching approach to eliminate violence against women and children in Fiji.

Gender policy Commitments

The **Constitution** (2013) of the Republic of Fiji prohibits any form of discrimination against women and girls on the grounds of sex, race, ethnicity, religion or belief system, health status, disability and age and enacts Article 4 of policy reforms to address gender stereotypes and unequal power relationships that lie at the core of gender. Fiji ratified the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)** in 1995 and has enacted various legislation and inequality and gender-based violence. Fiji's fifth periodic CEDAW report specifically articulates the gender dimensions of climate change and disaster risk reduction.

The Government of Fiji explicitly recognises and aims to address gender-based violence; women's lack of participation in decision-making and leadership generally and in development planning; women's unequal workload particularly with regard to household tasks and child care; and gender stereotypical occupations that limit the country's ability to prosper.

The **National 5 Year and 20 Year Development Plan** aims to ensure '*women will be empowered, allowing them opportunities for greater participation in leadership and decision-making across all sectors*'. Furthermore, it states that '*women will be included and consulted in all planning for future development projects, and their input will be translated into tangible project outcomes. This includes adaptation planning at the community level, where women can be key agents to change unsustainable production and consumption practices within the family and community.*' The government recognises women's unequal distribution of work in the home and states that '*it is expected that home duties in caring for children and household work will be shared by the spouse or partner.*'

The **Fiji National Gender Policy** (2014) aims to '*set Fijian society of all of gender-based discrimination and to ensure that both men and women participate fully in and enjoy equitably the development processes and outcomes*' and '*contribute to the elimination of gender inequalities in all sectors of national life, in order to achieve the nation's goal of sustainable development.*' The policy calls for gender inclusive recovery programs, sensitivity to gendered vulnerabilities and risks, as well as gender aware disaster relief strategy. The **Women's Plan of Action (2010-2019)** aims to support women's social, political and economic development and enhance women's representation at all levels of decision making within an enabling environment that is free from violence. These international and national commitments highlight that women should be equal partners in decision-making and implementation rather than simply beneficiaries. The Plan of Action acknowledges the importance of allocating sufficient resources to address specific issues faced by women related to disasters and climate change and recommends '*development programs include actions to assist elderly women, widows, and single mothers who are highly vulnerable to social economic pressures or disasters and who may have a high risk of poverty related diseases.*'

CEDAW, Food Security and Livelihoods

Article 14 of CEDAW referring to rural women notes that State Party must eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and girls in rural areas, for various reasons including so that they can **participate in and benefit from rural development planning at all levels and access to all types of training and education.**

the Sentencing and Penalties Decree, the Child Welfare Decree, the Employment Relations Promulgation, the Constitutional Redress Rules, the Human Rights Commission Decree and the HIV/AIDS Decree.'

2.3 Gender and resilience

Fiji experiences a range of rapid and slow onset hazards and an ever changing and increasingly unpredictable climate. The impacts on women, men, boys and girls in these conditions will differ and certain groups face additional risks. Pregnant and lactating women, elderly people and those with chronic illnesses and compromised immunity, as well as marginalised groups with low economic status including, for example, women with disabilities, young single mothers, and widows are likely to face specific food security and nutrition challenges before, during and after disasters. Interviews with women still recovering from TC Winston revealed a lack of nutritious food as they stated, *'we were eating only the tinned stuff. But when you are pregnant, you need your iron,'* and *'if you don't have that with your diet, then you need to go to the hospital'* (Narang 2017). Women faced enormous losses when TC Winston wiped out farms and damaged or destroyed markets. Mainstreaming gender and protection was noted as a priority in all sectors during the TC Winston response^{11,12} and lessons learned from TC Winston underline the need for greater understanding and support for gender analysis and social inclusion.

Acknowledging that gender inequalities exist before disasters and are rooted in negative gender stereotypes and power imbalances, the Government of Fiji increasingly recognises gender as a priority in humanitarian actions for response and recovery. The **National Humanitarian Policy** has been developed to align with social welfare policies, including in relation to gender, disability, vulnerability, child protection, discrimination and poverty alleviation. Other key policies, plans and legislation, including the *National Disaster Management Act (1995)*; *National Disaster Risk Reduction Policy*; and *Fiji's 5 -Year and 20-Year National Development Plan*¹³ are currently being reviewed. A 2012 study on gender and disaster management found that in many cases women are relatively active in disaster preparedness but are rarely consulted for planning and policy making¹⁴. Various civil society organizations (CSOs) and gender advocacy groups continue to advocate for changes in government policy, legislation and the implementation of stated gender commitments. Groups such as the Fiji Women's Rights Movement highlight the need for policies and legislation that substantively address gender, including in relation to food and supplies; the collection and analysis of data disaggregated by sex, age and other factors in order to specifically identify and address gender-specific needs and those of vulnerable groups; and the explicit recognition and support of women and women's CSOs as active agents in preparedness plans, relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction, encouraging action at all levels - national, divisional, district, municipal and community.

2.4 Fiji Pro-Resilience Vakarau Wai Project

ADRA is currently working on Fiji Pro Resilience Project called *Vakarau Wai*¹⁶, a 34-month project (January 2018-October 2020) funded by the European Union which seeks to improve the resilience and adaptive capacities of 10,000 subsistence farmers (including at least 30% female farmers) and 3,000 additional women in 150 targeted vulnerable communities in Ba and Macuata Provinces.

Since water scarcity is a recurring phenomenon in Fiji, improving the capacities of communities including male and female subsistence farmers through training and demonstration of good adaptation practices is the most sustainable

¹¹ Safety & Protection Fiji Tropical Cycle Winston Snapshot, 1st April 2016.

¹² See Rapid Gender Analysis Tropical Cyclone Winston, CARE Australia 2016

¹³ Fiji Roadmap for Democracy and Sustainable Socio-economic Development (2010-2014) notes the importance of *'promoting rural women's advancement in economic activities without destroying sustainability of women's fisheries and therefore household food security'*, as well as the *'impact on women's health of imported, low quality foods.'*

¹⁴ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women 2012. The Fiji Floods, Gender Sensitivity in Disaster Management: A qualitative Review of Gender and Protection Issues in Disaster Response. Suva: UN Women

¹⁶ In Fijian *Vakarau Wai* means 'get water ready'

way of empowering communities to be more resilient to future El Nino induced drought conditions. The project also assists in the restoration of biodiversity, especially in the drought prone provinces of Macuata and Ba and further empowers government officers, community workers and community leaders to be agents of change on climate change resilience and adaptation. The project recognises that communities in Fiji experience multiple hazards and tailors approaches to suit particular conditions. A project office has been set up in Labasa and activities to date include baseline data collection, community training, awareness campaigns, dissemination of manuals and radio programmes to increase community knowledge on the best practices of drought adaptation and food security, as well as the distribution of water tanks, irrigation systems, solar water pumps and agriculture kits. The team has also supported the development of a Disaster Management Plan for Labasa Town, and helped communities establish Resilience and Agriculture Committees, as well as Disaster Committees (which in many cases may end up being the same committee).

ADRA Fiji has implemented food security, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and disaster management projects in Vanua Levu, Koro, Vanua Balavu, and Ba Province and has ongoing programming related to education, food security, health, economic empowerment, and emergency preparedness and response.

3. Approach and methodology

3.1 Objectives of the study

Women and men have different perceptions of risks, along with specific capacities to respond to shocks and stresses. These are considered in relation to their differing access to and control of resources and services, as well as degree of meaningful participation in decision-making within the household and in the community.

The main purpose of this gender analysis is to enhance and strengthen the gender equality impacts of ADRA Fiji's *Vakarau Wai* Pro-Resilience Project. The study seeks to gain a better understanding of the varying gender dynamics and socio-cultural contexts that can positively and negatively impact household and community food security and resilience in the context of climate change and disasters. The project seeks to use this gender analysis as an entry point to raise awareness and initiate a dialogue about the gender dimensions of food security among key local and provincial stakeholders including government officials and women's organisations in the targeted areas.

Findings and recommendations from this study are not only intended to guide and improve ADRA Fiji's *Vakarau Wai* Project, but as a pilot project the aim is also to reflect and capture lessons learned from this process to support the integration of gender analysis across other programming areas and particularly those that are working to encourage local women's leadership in disaster preparedness and response. Capacity building of ADRA Fiji staff is also considered an integral part of this study. Learning about gender analysis through participatory engagement in the design of the data collection and analytical process, as well as opportunities to advocate for gender in FSL is considered as important as the findings and recommendations contained in this report.

The study seeks to provide localised information on gender and protection to build awareness and support advocacy among members of the recently activated Fiji Food Security and Livelihood Cluster, NDMO, as well as the wider humanitarian stakeholders to strengthen the focus on gender in FSL activities to foster gender equality, promote gender-responsive and ideally gender transformative approaches, and the meaningful participation and decision-making of women in all stages of preparedness, relief and recovery.

3.2 Analytical framework

The approach and methodology was developed by CARE's Pacific Resilience and Gender Advisor in consultation with the ADRA Fiji Country Director and Program Director. The analytical framework for the study is based on CARE's *Gender Analysis Good Practices Framework*. Core areas of inquiry that were deemed most relevant to the study include:

- Access and control of resources
- Gender roles and division of labour
- Household division of labour
- Participation in public decision-making

The analysis also considered how gender intersects with other factors, such as marital status and disability, that can increase vulnerability. Key aspects of food security including food access, food availability and food use, were woven into the study. The table below outlines the specific areas of focus for the study.

Gender analysis is the systematic attempt to identify key issues contributing to gender inequalities. It collects, identifies, examines and analyses information on the different roles of women and men and examines gender relations at inter-personal, household, community, and national levels in both public and private spheres. It seeks to understand the differing priorities, needs, activities and responsibilities of men and women, boys and girls across different life stages. At its core gender analysis explores how gendered power relations give rise to discrimination, subordination and exclusion in society, particularly when overlaid across other areas of marginalisation due to ethnicity, age, disability status, sexuality, and other factors.



Core areas of inquiry selected for the Gender and Food Security Analysis	Specific areas of focus for the Gender and Food Security Analysis
Access to and control over resources	
Ownership and control over resources have important implications on how individuals or groups can pursue their aspirations and protect themselves from shocks. To strengthen community livelihoods, resilience to shocks and social protection, it is essential to understand how gender influences who has control over and benefits from various productive assets – in terms of ownership of land and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access and ownership of fertile land and other resources and assets (tools, seeds, etc.) • Access to relevant technical information and support (e.g. extension training) • Impacts of climate-related risks and hazards, environmental shocks and climate change • Access to, understanding of and use of climate and weather information, early warnings and long term climate forecasting

Core areas of inquiry selected for the Gender and Food Security Analysis	Specific areas of focus for the Gender and Food Security Analysis
property, household assets, livelihood opportunities and money.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge, attitudes and practices related to climate and disaster resilient food security
Sexual/Gendered Division of Labour	
Gender norms influence who can do certain types of work and who is expected to complete certain tasks. Gendered divisions of labour can exist in all realms of work – whether paid or unpaid, informal or formal, productive (commercial) or reproductive (domestic, care-giving, household-maintenance).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roles (household and community) and workload in general and related to food and nutrition before, during and after disasters ‘Reproductive’ or caregiver roles including care of children, sick, elderly, people with disabilities Productive/income-generating roles in general and related to food (vegetables, crops and care of livestock)
Household decision-making	
In many societies, the household comprises the heart of private life. Within households, access to decision-making and resources can be variable although all members are affected by these decisions and practices. Patterns of decision-making vary by location, age, ethnicity and so on. Within a given group, decision-making will vary from household to household	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation in decision-making in the home, generally and including over resources, income, livelihoods Decision-making in the home related to food (e.g., types of food and preparation, timing of meals, etc.) Decision-making in the home related to time use and activities
Participation in public decision-making	
It is important that groups and individuals can participate meaningfully in public decision-making. These spaces may include village meetings and committees, government administration and political offices, and other public groups and forums. The ability to participate meaningfully in public spaces goes beyond token representation and quotas for under-represented groups. Meaningful participation requires environments where people can actively contribute to decisions, where their ideas are heard and considered, and where they can take part in leadership or decision-making.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Socio-cultural and gender norms and practices related to community/public decision-making Decision-making about land, its use and community risk-reduction and adaptation measures to enhance food security Role and influence of groups and associations, including those related to food and water

3.3 Methodology

A desk review was conducted of a range of secondary sources of data in Fiji to gain a broader understanding of the gender dynamics, particularly in relation to the food, security and livelihood aspects of the study. Documents reviewed included national reports and analyses such as the National Census, the National Nutrition Survey and the National Housing Income and Expenditure Survey, as well as various policies and reports relating to gender equality and humanitarian response and recovery in Fiji. The baseline report for the project, updates of activities, as well as basic gender and age disaggregated data in the communities collated by ADRA Fiji were also reviewed.

Apart from some baseline data recently collected by ADRA Fiji, there is limited gender-disaggregated data available for the communities selected for this study as most if not all surveys are done at district, provincial and national level. Care was taken to avoid drawing conclusions for the communities involved in the study given the significant differences and diversity in Fiji in terms of culture and context. A list of references and potentially useful resources relating to gender, food security and livelihoods is attached as Annex C.

Primary data Collection

Fieldwork was conducted in two communities in Macuata Province, namely Raviravi village and Vunivutu settlement from 4–8 February 2019. The selection of communities was based on various factors including diversity in terms of ethnic and socio-cultural context, prior community engagement in the Vakarau Wai Project and location. Together the sites provide a snapshot of Fiji's two main ethnic groups which differ in many ways in relation to livelihoods; land ownership and use; ethnic, social and cultural makeup; and governance structures. Raviravi is a village largely comprised of *iTaukei* and Vunivutu is a settlement largely comprised of Fijians of Indian descent, along with a few *iTaukei*. In addition, the communities were deemed relatively accessible within the timeframe of the fieldwork.

Two people, one male and one female, were contracted to support the project and they travelled to Labasa in December 2018 to meet the ADRA Project staff to explain the project and data collection process, initiate engagement with the selected communities and meet with key government stakeholders. The **data collection team** in the field consisted of a total of nine (9) people (6 female and 3 male) which included the Suva-based ADRA team, the CARE Pacific Resilience and Gender Advisor and a female volunteer who travelled from Suva, as well as six additional volunteers (2 male and 3 female) from the Labasa area who had previously been enumerators during the baseline data collection for the Pro-Resilience *Vakarau Wai* project. The *Vakarau Wai* project Manager (male) also joined the team in Raviravi village on the first day and ensured proper protocol was followed, including the presentation of a basket of useful community items (instead of *yaqona*) in keeping with standard ADRA Fiji practice.



One day prior to fieldwork the team gathered in Labasa to participate in a briefing about the purpose and approach of the study, sign codes of conduct, and familiarise themselves with the tools. Due to insufficient time to test the tools prior to fieldwork a 'learn-by-doing approach' was employed and team members quickly became familiar with the tools, questions and content. The team was also instructed to introduce and discuss potentially sensitive topics such as violence against women in an appropriate manner and received a briefing and referral pathways which they were instructed to bring to every focus group discussion and interviews in case they were needed.

The team consulted women and men to identify suitable times for FGDs and KIIs and made efforts to avoid disrupting women's activities or increasing their workload, for example related to preparing food for the data collection team. Nevertheless, some women in the village were inevitably occupied with these tasks but had agreed beforehand, were paid for the catering, and were also interviewed separately since they were not able to share their views during the group discussions. FGDs, interviews and transect walks were conducted by facilitators and note-takers of the same sex as the participants or key informant at locations agreed to by the participants. All participants received an explanation of the purpose of the study, understood that their participation was completely voluntary and they were not obliged to answer any or all of the questions and were given an opportunity to ask questions. All participants gave their written informed consent. Discussions and interviews were conducted in *iTaukei*, Hindi and English and sometimes a combination of languages. Two of the team members (one male and

one female) could speak Hindi and in one focus group discussion one of the participants assisted with occasional translation. Debriefings were held at the end of each day during which team members recounted and reflected on the findings and data collection process.

A total of 71 people (35 females and 36 males) ranging in age from 20 – 83 years old contributed their views for this study. Specific efforts were made to speak with people who would not normally attend community meetings or activities due to various barriers and constraints. Interviews were conducted with six people with impairments (four had difficulty walking and two with different levels of visual impairment), as well as four widows and two widowers. A full list of participants involved in the data collection including details of their key roles is attached as Annex B.

Table 1 Participants in the Gender and Food Security Analysis

	Total number and % of participants	Age range	Impairments	Widowed
Female	35 (49%)	20 – 73 years	Two (2) women with impairments	Four (4) widows
Male	36 (51%)	25 – 83 years	Four (4) with impairments	Two (2) widowers

Data collection tools

Tools used for the study were mainly informed by *Gender and Inclusion Toolbox: Participatory Research in Climate Change and Agriculture* published by the *Consortium of International Agricultural Research Centers* (CGIAR) Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS). Tools were adapted to meet the objectives of the study and condensed to fit the relatively short timeline for the fieldwork. In some cases, participatory tools were used to introduce and open an area of discussion and also served to encourage active engagement of participants during the data collection process.¹⁵

Table 2 Data collection tools

No.	Name of tool	Core areas of inquiry
1.	Activity, livelihood and activity mapping	Access to and control of resources and livelihoods, gender roles, decision-making, livelihood, gender divisions of labour, financial decision-making
2.	Daily activity clock	Comparative data on gender (and age) roles and responsibilities related to FSL, workload and time use and changes over time
3.	Food security assessment	Access, quantity, quality of food, nutrition, food-related illnesses, social, cultural, gender barriers, at risk populations
4.	Perceptions of risk, impacts and change	Access to resources; perceptions of resources at risk, impacts and changes due to hazards and climate change; gendered climate change impacts and coping strategies

¹⁵ Please see the following link to access the gender and food security analysis tools prepared for this study. Stakeholders are most welcome to adapt these tools for their own purposes providing reference is made to the original source.

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/3f9440b4in1vcsu/Gender%20and%20food%20security%20research%20tools%201-7.docx?dl=0>

No.	Name of tool	Core areas of inquiry
5.	Information flow map	Access to information (generally and specific to climate and hazards, preparedness, response and recovery); participation and access to decision-making spaces, role of collectives in sharing information
6.	Climate and hazard forecasting	Access to hazard and climate information Perceptions/salience of information and sources, understanding and use of scientific forecasting
7.	Key Informant interview guide and questions	Gender divisions of labour, roles and workload; access to and control of resources; Household and public decision-making. Questions for representatives of women's groups particularly focused on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to food security and nutrition • Access to and use of climate information and early warnings and long term climate forecasting. • Capacities and access to relevant technical support • Participation of women and women's NGOS in food security related decision-making including during disaster preparedness and humanitarian response and recovery.

Focus group discussions (FGDs) were used to gather qualitative data. In total, 27 people in Raviravi (15 men and 12 women), 25 people in Vunivutu (19 men and 6 women), and 13 people in Labasa (11 women and 2 men) participated in the FGDs. FGDs in Raviravi consisted of nearly all the women and men present at the time in the village apart from a few women helping to prepare and cook the food, a few male teenagers and several people with disabilities who were later interviewed separately. Many more men participated in FGDs conducted in Vunivutu and reasons for this gender imbalance quickly became apparent during the fieldwork and are noted in the findings of the report. A separate focus group discussion was also held in Labasa with 12 participants from women's groups and two male stakeholders, including Mr Waisale Tuidama, Programme Manager for Northern Development Programme who gave a briefing on women's role in the economic development of Vanua Levu.

Focus group discussions lasted approximately three hours and were broken up with morning tea or lunch. Data was collected in Raviravi using Tools 1-3 on the first day and Tools 4-6 on the second day and consisted of separate sex FGDs with the same groups of women and men. In Vunivutu, the men's focus group used Tools 1-6 during one morning session while Tools 1-3 and 4-6 were used with two different groups of women in FGDs spread over two mornings. Tool 7 included specific questions for women's groups and was used during the FGD in Labasa. The interview guide and questions (Tool 7) was used concurrently or after FGDs in both communities.

Semi-structured and key informant interviews were undertaken with community members to gather additional data and cross-validate the findings of the FGDs and with key informants to provide key insights, as well as to gauge the general views of community leaders. Teams worked with community leaders and used a 'snowball technique' to identify potential informants. Specific efforts were made to interview individuals with particular risk factors such as female-headed households, widows, and people with disabilities. In total 17 interviews were undertaken with 12 women and 5 men including widows, women with disabilities - including a widow with an adult daughter with a disability, a man with a disability, a male community leader and father with a grown son with a disability, and a

community nurse. Several other people interviewed had specific roles and were also members of different committees in their respective communities.

Transect walks were also undertaken with several individuals during or after some interviews to gather data in a more relaxed and informal setting, as well as observe different aspects of people's food security and livelihoods.

Table 3 Participants in focus group discussions and interviews

	Focus group discussions					Semi-structured and key informant interviews				
	Total	Female	Male	% Female	% Male	Total	Female	Male	% Female	% Male
Raviravi	27	12	15	44%	56%	7	4	3	57%	43%
Vunivutu	25	6	19	24%	79%	9	7	2	78%	22%
Labasa	13	11	2	84%	15%	1	1	0	100	0
Total	66	29	36	44%	55%	17	12	5	71%	29%

Organisational capacity building was considered an important part of the process and therefore a Participatory Gender Analysis Workshop was held at the ADRA Fiji office in Lami with support from CARE. In total nine (9) people (4 female and 5 male) took part in the workshop gaining valuable practical experience in analysing qualitative data and identifying preliminary findings related to gender equality.

At this workshop participants received an overview of the gender analysis and fieldwork and introduction to CARE's Gender Analysis Framework and the core areas of inquiry. They were then given the raw data that had been typed up, cut up into small pieces of paper, and coded, and asked to sort them based on the different core areas of inquiry. After this was complete participants identified common themes within each core area, grouped the data further, and then examined the data to identify themes or patterns relating to gender equality and women's empowerment.



Findings and recommendations will be discussed further with ADRA staff in Labasa and members of the communities involved in the study. Furthermore, since the timing of meetings did not allow the team to present the initial findings to relevant cluster members, a separate workshop was scheduled for mid-April 2019 to provide key FSL and gender and protection stakeholders an opportunity to engage in a meaningful discussion of the study's findings and recommendations and potentially consider next steps for the clusters.¹⁶

3.4 Limitations

Despite concerted efforts to ensure diversity, the team, including the group of volunteers from Labasa was entirely composed of *iTaukei* - which in some ways reflects the composition of the project team - and to a certain extent this precluded a more in-depth understanding of the gendered socio-cultural dynamics of Fijians of Indian descent.

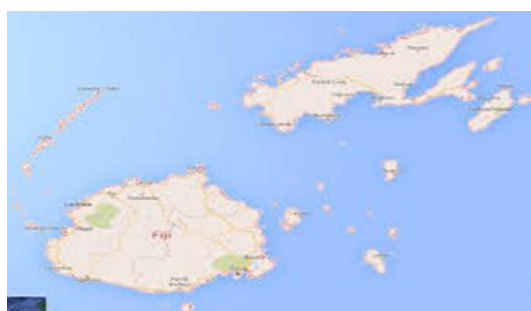
¹⁶ Widespread dissemination of the report to a range of clusters and stakeholders and at various fora, including at the Pacific Resilience Meeting in May 2019 is expected to further support shared learning about gender and food security in the region.

The original intention was to include the study team and ADRA staff from the Labasa office in the participatory analysis of data, but budget and time constraints precluded this activity. It was also hoped that preliminary findings would be discussed and validated with the participating communities, as well as women's CSO leaders and key stakeholders and government representatives in the area. Although budget and time constraints precluded these activities, the findings and recommendations will be shared and discussed with communities at a suitable time, ideally coinciding with other project activities to minimise disruption to people's daily work programmes and meetings. The findings will also be discussed with women's CSOs and key government stakeholders in the targeted areas as part of the ongoing programming of the Fiji Pro-Resilience *Vakarau Wai* project.

4. Description of area and selected communities

Macuata Province

According to the Fiji Census Report 2017, Macuata Province has a population of 65,983 people or 8.9% of Fiji's total population of 837,271 (51% male and 49% female). The province's population is approximately 8.9% lower than a decade ago continuing a trend that was first observed during the inter-censal period of 1996 and 2007. This decline is due to various factors including the non-renewal of agricultural leases and rural-urban drift, particularly among young people who move to urban centres to further education or to look for work.



Communities selected for the study in Macuata Province: Raviravi village (Macuata District) and Vunivutu settlement (Nadogo District)



The selected communities have quite distinctive and differing social, economic and cultural contexts and a brief description is provided below. Additional demographic and health data is included in Annex A.

Raviravi village

Raviravi is located north west along the coast approximately 57 kilometres from Labasa Town. At present the village is located very near the ocean and is slated for relocation due to coastal erosion. To protect the area until it is relocated mangroves have been planted on the foreshore with the support of the World Wildlife Fund. In addition, a significant part of the village contains tracks of forested land where plants are harvested for food, medicine, handicrafts, and ceremonial purposes and firewood. Land owned by *Mataqali* (land-owning units) is allocated in plots owned and/or accessed by male villagers and the size and quality of the plots vary considerably. The total area cultivated in Raviravi is 3 hectares or 7.41 acres. Women have usage rights to the land but some plots may be too small or of unsuitable quality for commercial agricultural farming.

About 150 *iTaukei* Fijians reside in the village in a total of 34 households. The village children attend the Korotolutolu Primary School and Seaqaqa Central College. Most parents of school age children reside in Korotolutolu during the

week and then return to the village on the weekend. There is no hired vehicle in the village and villagers walk several miles for about an hour to catch the bus at the main road. Due to its geographical remoteness, infrastructure development in the area is very slow given the poor road conditions. The nearest public utilities and services and markets are located in the small town of Seaqaqa about 36.4 kilometres away and in Labasa. In terms of public health services, villagers go to Seaqaqa or Labasa or travel by boat to visit the health centre located in Naqumu.

The village has its own water supply system and the main water source is from a spring located outside the village boundary. Water comes from a spring-fed reservoir built by the men and located close to the village and transported via tap to homes. Villagers also collect rain water but do not have any rainwater tanks in the village. During the dry season, animals sometimes damage the water pipes so they can drink water. ADRA has delivered two water tanks to the village intended mostly for drinking water that will be installed by the Water Authority of Fiji. The village has a standing Water Committee. There is a village generator that supplies power in the village and some of the homes use solar power/electricity.

The villagers' diet consists mainly of fish and seafood, *rourou* and *bele*, fruits and other recently introduced vegetables mainly planted by women including capsicum, cabbage, beans, cucumber, eggplants, carrots, pumpkin, ginger, and others. Cassava is grown but takes a year to mature and the soil is not suitable for *dalo* and *kumala*. The Ministry for Agriculture Research Station database for farmers in Labasa includes information on twenty subsistence farmers in Raviravi village and all are male.¹⁷ They grow cassava and breed livestock which are both only for family consumption. The main economic activity for these men is fishing that is generating an estimated total annual income of FJD192,000 and an average income of 10,000 although these figures have reduced substantially since diving for beche de mer or *sucuwalu* has been banned. Women are also major subsistence producers and small-scale marketers of agriculture produce, seafood and handicrafts. They do most of the day-to-day subsistence fishing in mostly coastal and nearby streams. Slow rural infrastructure development is one of the main challenges and pressure on inshore marine resources due to overexploitation and destructive fishing methods threatens the sustainability of women's fisheries and household food security.

Vunivutu settlement

Vunivutu is a rural community located on the northeast coast of Vanua Levu approximately 30 kilometres from Labasa Town. It has an estimated terrain elevation is 50 metres above sea level. A small shop is located next to Wavuwavu Primary School and the nearest market and other services are located in Labasa.

The total population of the whole area of Vunivutu is 1,129 people and 104 households residing in 14 settlements, (one of which is also called Vunivutu) which are mainly comprised of sugar cane farming families of Indian descent and practicing Hindus, as well as two *iTaukei* villages whose population is predominantly Christian. The area has three kindergartens, three primary schools with a total population of 39 students. Students at secondary level or in vocational schools have to travel outside the area. The total population of Vunivutu settlement – the other community selected for this study - is 106 people with 62 females (58%) and 44 males (42%) who reside in 29 households, of which four are headed by females.

¹⁷ The Ministry of Agriculture has an Extension Services Office in Seaqaqa are responsible for providing technical support and services to Raviravi village, as well as the Seaqaqa Research Station. Initial data collection carried out for this study suggest that the Ministry's involvement with farmers in Raviravi village has been very limited.

Land tenure is freehold and on lease from iTaukei land owners. Sugar cane farmers hold agriculture leases of *mataqali* land from the iTaukei owners for their cane farms. They live on plots of leased land and most farms are shared between two or more brothers and their families. Sugar cane and rice are grown on larger plots and vegetable gardens are usually located on smaller plots closer to home, giving easy access to food. When shared farm income is insufficient to support two or more households, farmers work on other farms as labourers.

Most households access water via tapped water from the reservoir. In addition, some have wells and boreholes which they rely on during the dry season. People living near the hill are especially affected by limited water supply during the dry season while the gardens of people living in low lying areas can be affected during the rainy season. The quality and quantity of water in Vunivutu is an issue for many people.

There were no significant hazards for the past 10 years, however severe drought in 1997-98 lasted eleven months affected Vunivutu. During this time gardens withered and livestock died as streams, aquifers and wells dried up. Impacts were felt most acutely by people living on marginal lands closest to the sea and those with farms and gardens on slopes 12 degrees and greater, unsuitable for cultivation, exposed to fire hazard from nearby forests, and vulnerable to adverse climatic conditions. The worst affected were farm-dependent families who are totally reliant on the success of farmers who own the land. Though no mortality was directly linked to the effects of this drought, previously existing malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies were exacerbated by the hardship.¹⁸

5. Findings

5.1 Access to and control over resources

Land and other resources

Access to resources differs for the two communities and this is largely determined by land ownership. In Raviravi land is plentiful and everyone has access to the sea and forest. Men noted, ***'accessibility to land and food is not an issue, we have an abundance.'*** The village headman noted there is no barrier for anyone in the village – women or men - to plant and access food and the chief has given approval for anyone who wants to plant anywhere they wish. Food, such as wild yam is readily available and anyone can access it, including after a disaster. This was also noted by women who stated, ***'we have a lot of land in the village'*** and ***'land for farming is used by the whole village and we are given the freedom to plant our village land.'*** Produce that is planted in gardens is consumed by households and used during village gatherings for example, church activities, weddings and other special events.

In Vunivutu access to sufficient fertile land is a concern for many families who are not landowners. Several women and men from this area noted a lack of arable land generally and limited good quality land. As one women noted ***'we don't have much land but we use it wisely.'*** The shopkeeper in Vunivutu noted that her family has limited land, that it is very rocky and not good for planting, and that the only arable land is planted with sugar cane to pay for their lease. Women noted that when fertile land is scarce some people ***'purchase and use a lot of goat and bullock manure and spread it everywhere.'*** Livestock such as cattle are usually tied up on barren land and are brought elsewhere to graze - a task that is normally undertaken by women. Men also buy lime from the Sugar Cane Corporation to increase production.

¹⁸ Fiji – Drought OCHA Situation Report No. 2 OCHA/GVA 98/0360, 16 December 1998.

Sometimes women are not adequately informed or lack access to first-hand information and this can limit their contribution to household decision-making regarding resources. As a woman in Vunivutu noted, some workers from the Water Authority and Fiji Electricity once came to her house to talk about a water project and electricity but, ***‘they only spoke with our husbands because they are the owner of the house and only their names are on the lease. They never talk with the women.’***

Widows in both communities face challenges related to land and labour and this can present challenges related to food and income. In Vunivutu plots of land are usually leased, purchased, owned and controlled by men and inheritance usually follows male lines. However, an elderly widow interviewed stated that while ownership of the land is in her name, the power of authority rests with her son-in-law who grows sugar cane and gives his mother-in-law 50% of the profit. He also uses this land to grow vegetables for his family and sometimes shares some of them with her. Another widow in the area lives on land that is in her mother-in-law’s name. She does not plant cane herself however she received money from left over sugar cane that was planted by her late husband. The previous year the cane wasn’t harvested due to a shortage of labourers - a problem affecting many cane farming families. In several cases, widows noted that they sometimes visit grown children and ask relatives or neighbours to care for livestock and return to find everything in the garden has died.

Access and availability of food resources

Women and men in both communities, but particularly in Raviravi, noted that the availability of food was not a concern. Women in the village noted that ***‘food sources are always plentiful’***, ***‘we have everything we need – good soil and water’*** and listed various fruits such as *vudi*, breadfruit, soursop, guava, chestnut, mango, pawpaw. Both women and men noted that much more food has been planted in recent years. Men also stated ***‘there is no shortage of any resources’*** although they catch less fish and seafood in the wet season and harvest less food from the land during the dry season. Both women and men noted relatively easy access to food but added that they have benefited from access to information provided by ADRA about eating healthy and nutritious food and eating a balanced diet. Women and men share more or less the same views regarding priority foods including: fish, crabs, seaweed and seafood as these resources are abundant; vegetables from their own gardens because they are healthy; and wild yams grown in their own gardens and in the forest because they can withstand hazards. Several women noted that their preferred foods, for example *bele* were those that were quick and easy to grow, prepare and cook. Villagers buy a few additional items such as flour, rice, sugar and tinned food in town, particularly to help them through difficult times after a disaster. As one woman stated, ***‘We hardly buy food from the shop, only sugar, rice and flour, just to complement the other food we eat. We prefer to eat whatever we grow in our village as there is more than enough here for us. And it is also healthy for us.’***

Men in Vunivutu reported that ***‘vegetables, livestock, and marine resources are plentiful’*** and women stated that ***‘everyone eats good healthy food that they grow themselves’***. A wide range of vegetables are grown including beans, chillies, cucumber, okra (*bhindi*), eggplant (*baigan*), cabbage, tomato, lettuce, carrot, *bele*, *tubua*, (both dark green leafy vegetables) sweet potato (*kumala*), radish, as well as watermelon, pineapple, coconut, rice and herbs such as coriander (*dhania*) and mint. Seeds are usually purchased in Labasa. Women also noted that they used to buy more vegetables but now plant more due to training from ADRA on drought resilience with tips on suggested crops and vegetables to mitigate against the dry season. Priority foods for men in Vunivutu include *dhal* and potatoes which are purchased from the shop, as well as fish, beans and cabbage. Men noted *dhal* as a priority because it is inexpensive, as well as potatoes because they are low in fat and cholesterol signalling an awareness of health and nutrition. The remaining priority foods were highlighted due to their easy accessibility from the sea and own gardens. Women named the same priority foods highlighting health and convenience and also noted that some

food items, such as tin fish, onions, garlic, potatoes, oil, and dhal are purchased regularly from the shop, as well as vegetables if needed during the dry season. Sugar, considered a staple food in both communities, is readily accessible to families in Vunivutu that grow and harvest cane.

Women in both communities own livestock including chickens, goats, cows and bullocks either alone or together with their husbands or in some cases, extended family members. Some households in Vunivutu also own ducks and these are consumed by the family as well as sold. In Vunivutu, chickens and goats are consumed by the family and in some cases sold – always live. As one woman pointed out, owning livestock allows people to save money as they do not have to buy meat which is expensive. Women in Vunivutu noted that Hindus are not supposed to eat beef or pork but noted that some people do eat pork. Also during religious holidays like Diwali, no one eats meat and for funerals and other events, family members avoid meat for certain periods of time. Women in the focus group discussion said they do not eat meat on Monday, Tuesday or Friday and that some women fast one day a week during 16 week periods, and eat nothing all day and only eat vegetables after sundown, but this ritual is practiced only by some women. Women in Raviravi also noted that some people practice some taboos based on their own personal or religious beliefs, for example Seventh Day Adventists do not eat pork and some seafood or drink kava.

Water resources

In Raviravi both women and men stated that the water quality is good and considered safe and is used daily for drinking, cooking, washing, bathing and watering gardens and at times for livestock. Men stated that water rarely runs out and women stated **‘there is always enough’** but added they need to water some vegetables more in hot weather. However, women noted that the reservoir can dry up in the hot season and animals cross the water source and drink from it. Personal safety is not a concern for women fetching water since it comes directly to each home. Women stated that in general there was less work in the wet season as they did not need to water the garden. Men also noted that their work load increases in the dry season as there is a need to collect more water and store food. At this time, people eat more wild yam. They also mentioned that there is less time to spend with family as everyone is out doing their respective activities and people are not able to support others if needed. On the positive side, the men also noted that it was a good time to catch and sell fish and seafood due to the good weather.

Women and men in Vunivutu shared similar concerns with the water supply, noting that it is very dirty in the rainy season and that it runs out in the dry season and stated a need for support from government for water tanks and water pumps. Women noted that it is unsafe to drink at these times and fill and store extra rainwater. This is normally women’s role although sometimes children will help. Men noted that they have formed a water committee **‘that deals with pipe repairs’** and is tasked with the overall management of the water services. There are no female members on the water committees¹⁹ in either community.

Firewood and cooking fuel

¹⁹ CARE’s [Water Smart Agriculture \(WaSA\)](#) tools build on conservation agriculture, integrated natural resource management and climate smart agriculture. Although WaSA tools have been implemented outside the region many can be adapted to Fiji and the Pacific.

In both communities, women rely heavily on firewood for most of their cooking as it is cheap or freely available, abundant, and relatively easy to access. Cooking fires are located in kitchens inside the house with gaps in the roof to let out the smoke. According to the National Nutrition Survey report (2015) 77% of rural households use firewood for cooking with damaging health effects that cooking over open fires has on the persons involved, who are mostly women and girls.

Women in Raviravi stated that women collect firewood everyday just on the outskirts of the village, although sometimes they also travel some distance. Men also collect firewood, especially if they receive early warnings of bad weather. In Vunivutu, men stated that they collect firewood about twice a week from nearby bushes and mangrove swamps close to their houses. Men are always responsible for collecting firewood but sometimes women assist. Women also noted that they collect firewood with their husbands, who often use bullocks to carry larger loads of wood. One woman in Vunivutu stated that she uses gas when she makes tea for relatives who come to visit since it is fast or uses a kettle to boil the water but generally prefers to use fire to keep down the cost of electricity. Gas bottles are purchased from town.



Tools, animals, inputs and technical support

Men in Raviravi noted that people use animals and machines to plough and make their work easier and own fishing gear. The *Turaga ni Koro* noted that some families have tools for farming such as fork, spade, cane knives, spray can and hoes and they normally share tools with other men who do not own any when they want to plant. With tools provided through a grant from the Ministry of Agriculture, the village headman is a keen farmer and stated that he has had good harvests and sales of watermelon grown in Korotolutolu which he sells in the Seaqaqa, Labasa and Savusavu markets.

Men in Vunivutu noted the same, adding that machinery, equipment and bullocks used to plough and work the land saves time and eases workload, although added costs are involved at some stage. When asked about ownership of animals and tools they also mentioned these items as jointly owned by the family although some items such as bullocks and ploughs were used more by men, while women noted garden tools such as forks, hoes, rakes and cane knives. The couple who run a shop rent the house and do not have a garden and therefore have limited use for tools or animals although they own hoe, fork and knife. One woman stated that the most useful tool is a fork but she didn't own one. In Vunivutu women also use winnowing baskets to separate the grains of rice from the shaft. Women and men reported using pesticides, fertilisers and manure, though some stated that they do not use them for financial or other reasons. One man interviewed noted that he did not own livestock or go fishing, did not have enough resources and wanted more seedlings to plant and farming tools.



In Raviravi, both women and men appear to have benefited from training and support. Men noted general support to the community food security and livelihoods including fisheries support to the women for pearl farming, ADRA seeds and water tanks for households, and employment skills training for youth (type of training and number of female and male participants unknown) from the Ministry of Youth. The *Turaga ni Koro* noted that the community has never received technical support from the Ministry of Agriculture. Women also noted support from other NGOs and the Australian Centre for International Agriculture Research (ACIAR) who assisted the community to build a sea

wall and plant mangroves on the foreshore since government recognised the area as high risk due to climate change and there are plans to relocate the village further inland. One woman in Raviravi stated that ADRA staff had visited her home, provided *kumala* cuttings, and talked to her family about planting and how to make use of their small amount of land. Another woman in Vunivutu noted that she had learned from other people who attended the training by ADRA about different ways of planting but had not put this learning into practice.

Seasonal variations, hazards and other challenges

Both communities frequently cope with periods of excessive or insufficient rain and in some cases changing weather conditions are posing a challenge for farmers. During the rainy season women in both communities noted that they cannot plant certain kinds of food when it is raining heavily. Women in Raviravi noted the need to clean up and dig drains around their houses and gardens so that houses are not flooded and one women interviewed stated that she pays one of the boys \$25 a day to make a drain in her garden or her husband does it if he has time. Another noted that sometimes there is too much water for the vegetables and she wanted to build a 'greenhouse' to protect the cabbage. Women in Vunivutu stated that planting and gardening is difficult during the rainy season when the ground is very muddy, noted an increase in weeds overall and new types of weeds in the rice fields, and a decrease in cane overall and sugar yield due to large amounts of rain.

Several people in both communities stated that they use pesticides, while others said they do not use chemicals (it is unknown if this is due to cost, health concerns or other issues). Women in Raviravi said they did not generally have any problems with insects in the garden, although one women noted the need to hire someone to spray her garden with pesticide. During an interview one women noted that they purchase and use chemical pesticide '**on everything**' in their garden. Later the husband stated that he was applying Neem leaves to control insects which he had learned from ADRA and it was apparent he had not shared this new learning with his wife.

Women in both communities stated that there are no major concerns overall about food during the dry season, however added that some vegetables wither and die in the hot sun. Women in Vunivutu noted that while some vegetables like eggplant and *bhindi* can be grown all year others tend to be seasonal or some might need a lot of watering in the dry season. They also noted that during an extreme or prolonged dry season when there is a shortage of vegetables sometimes additional food is purchased at the market or supermarket. They also noted that it is unsafe to drink water at these times and it is normally women's responsibility to fill containers with rainwater, although sometimes children help. In the village, when the water level in the reservoir is low, extra water is stored for cooking and drinking and women fill buckets and containers and water their gardens more often. One woman interviewed in Vunivutu stated that there is little difference in the type or amount of work in different seasons, however women in the focus group discussions stated there was more work during extreme wet or prolonged dry seasons and sometimes relations in the home can deteriorate.

'Everybody has their own struggles. It can be stressful and it is more work. During these times and especially after big disasters there can be arguments at home. It's a lot of work replanting so nobody can help anyone else who might need it.'

woman in Vunivutu

Men in Vunivutu also noted shortages of vegetables during both the dry and wet seasons stating, '**it's a struggle for men to cope without vegetables**', adding that for some people this could result in only two meals a day consisting only of tea, roti and curry tin fish with no vegetables or greens for several days. Men also stated that they tend to eat less in the dry season and sometimes need to buy additional food in the wet season. To cope with added expenses, women and men noted increased *suluka* production. On the positive side men noted that ginger

production increases in the rainy season and results in better quality and stated that the family tend to spend more time together during bad weather. Men in Raviravi stated that during the wet season people refrain from going to sea, harvest less food and sell less produce, and mosquitoes increase. They added that there is less work outside the home and in the gardens since activities such as planting crops and vegetables and collecting firewood are done when it is dry. At this time men look for work to support the family, for example making between \$10-\$20 a day for three to five days of weeding or planting. During the dry season, men might walk long distances to collect firewood or travel to town areas to barter or exchange fish for vegetables.

Both women and men in Raviravi highlighted damage to crops such as cassava, vegetable gardens and fruit trees following a cyclone, as well as decreases in fish and seafood catches. Women also noted damage to the reef and dead coral following Cyclone Tomas (2010). Women stated that they ***'make sure that food is there during the hazard season'²⁰***, ***'work harder when sources of food are damaged'*** and ***'purchase and eat a lot of flour and rice when they are impacted by cyclone or drought.'*** Upon hearing cyclone warnings women fill buckets with water and collect firewood, purchase gas and matches, and help to put up shutters on the windows. They also buy biscuits, tin fish, and flour in town or in the shop and harvest any vegetables or crops that are ready to eat. They stated that they cut cassava if it is high or dig it out if it is mature. A women's representative in Labasa said they talk a lot in community meetings about how to prepare when they hear cyclone warnings and activities include cutting off the top of cassava plants ***'so they are not wasted or ruined during these disasters.'*** One woman noted ***'I tell people they have to prepare and get water ready' But I'm not really sure what to do for drought for my garden. But I know we are supposed to plant lots of dalo if it's going to be a big rainy season.'*** Women also stated that they stored more water and bought vegetables and peas when they heard the drought forecasts in 1998.

Men in Raviravi did not report taking any specific actions when they hear seasonal forecasts or drought warnings but did report that more food, including processed food, is purchased during prolonged dry seasons or after cyclones when crops and vegetables are destroyed. However, they stated that they collect firewood and water and buy items such as kerosene, tin meat, rice and flour when they hear cyclone warnings. Both women and men said they dry fish and cope by eating wild yam. Men noted that depending on the season or following a disaster, substitute foods are available, for example rice can be purchased when root crops are not yet mature or they can eat wild yams and *dalonitana*. They stated that they have to work harder and walk long ways to harvest these crops, although one man added that they used to collect yam growing wild in the bush but since ADRA's training they now plant crops that withstand drought. These crops, along with breadfruit are harvested and stored to prepare and cope with severe weather events.

Men in Vunivutu stated that they only do minor changes to prepare and reduce risk noting that they try to save some money in the bank to prepare for ***'the worst'*** and ***'unforeseen circumstances'²¹***; store food like rice, dhal, sugar, salt, curry spices, tin meat (except beef) and dry biscuits; and plant more peas and vegetables. During drought, they said they store more water and ***'don't waste seeds since there will be less vegetables'***. Women in this area noted that ***'disasters make life difficult especially if the cane is not ready to harvest'*** and highlighted the high costs of necessary purchases stating ***'everything is so expensive'***. Women and men in both communities note

²⁰ The National Nutrition Survey (2015) notes that women were more likely to go without food in times of food shortage, and however there was no indication of this practice in this small study.

²¹ The Pacific Financial Inclusion Programme report (2012) states that 74% of women stated they tried to put money aside compared to 55% of men. However various men, as well as women in the communities noted efforts to save money.

increased spending on food during periods of prolonged dry weather and continuous wet weather and after disasters pass through the area. They noted that all vegetables were destroyed during TC Keni (2018) and they had to plant again, adding that the men mostly replanted the sugar cane and rice while the women replanted the vegetables. One man stated that he now plants food that can withstand cyclones.

Food preservation

Women in both communities stated that they preserve food, however this was much more common in Vunivutu where women indicated that they preserve a variety of different foods. This is in line with recent data from the National Nutrition Survey that reports a higher proportion of Indo-Fijians (88.6%) than iTaukei (53.5%) preserve foods. Women in the settlement noted that food preservation is mainly done by women when there is an oversupply or so certain food can be eaten when it is not in season, as well as to prepare for disasters. Women in both communities pickle mangoes when they are abundant in season with men stating that they sometimes help women with this task. Women in Vunivutu also dry mango, tamarind and rosella and women who have access to freezers half cook, pack and freeze jackfruit, pawpaw, bean and other food which can last for up to six months. Women stated **'when we hear there will be a drought or very dry weather coming we take out vegetables and freeze them.'** They also added that they buy food when it runs out but **'we don't do anything else to prepare'**. The Catholic Women's League representative in Labasa also stated, **'we make chutneys, jams and dried fruits that are in season such as mango, wi, tomato, guava and freeze root crops.'**

Channels of communication and access to information

Access to new information and opportunities to meet and discuss issues with government officials and learn new ideas and techniques from NGOs and other community members can increase women's confidence and ability to contribute to family decision-making, as well as increase men's appreciation of women's knowledge and ability to contribute to family decision-making.

In **Raviravi**, women and men noted that the village headman or *Turaga ni Koro* is the first to receive information by telephone about visits, training or consultations that will take place in the village. As the focal point paid by government he meets with government officials and external representatives when they come to the village. The *Turaga ni Koro* then relays information to the chief and contacts individual households or calls a village meeting informing members living in both Raviravi and Korotolutolu about any upcoming visits or activities and relays information to all committees or during a village meeting. When an NGO intends to visit the *Turaga ni Koro* will inform committee members. Decisions made by committees are relayed by the *Turaga ni Koro* to the whole village or announced in the village grounds. Women also noted that the *Turaga ni Koro* receives monthly reports from the community health worker and these were shared with Raviravi and Korotolutolu villages and the school.

Men noted that women are usually part of information dissemination during village meetings and if the village headman consults individual households then women are part of the discussion. Women noted that it is the duty of all those who attend the meeting to inform members of the community who were not present and added that youth are also included. One woman noted that she only listens to the radio sometimes and while she added **'we share information here'** other women stated that **'information tends to be relayed to men more than women'** and highlighted that **information is often shared and discussed during kava sessions and normally only men are in attendance.'** Men noted that people with disabilities would be the last to receive information.

The *Turaga ni Koro* noted that many positive changes and improvements have taken place in the village with the support of ADRA. He said women are now more involved in planting and have developed a passion for gardening, adding that at times there is a healthy competition against one another to plant more or have a better harvest. One woman in Raviravi stated during an interview, ***'I share my seeds, plants and skill. But I tell them (laughing) - I will still be smarter than you.'*** Access to information can stimulate new ways of thinking. Taking risks and the initiative to try new techniques are important aspects of resilience. Support and information provided by ADRA has helped to encourage new ideas and behaviour. This was evident as a woman interviewed enthusiastically shared her ideas about growing new vegetables in different locations.

'I want to change something. Sometimes I want to do something different again. I break off shoots of tomato plants and just try different ways of doing things. I want to put capsicum, tomatoes and chilies in pots around my house and I want these to be my flowers. In my backyard, I want to grow cucumbers. It looks nice and I want to grow the long hybrid kind. They year I also want to grow celery.'

Alani Seniceva, Raviravi village

In **Vunivutu** there are various factors influencing people's access to information. People who live far away from communal areas such as the school often do not receive information. Those that live far from the main road do not attend meetings and this is even more the case for women as very few attend meetings. In turn, it is often difficult to access all households and the cost of fuel to meet with individual families is also a factor. Like the *Turaga ni Koro*, the Area Councillor meets with government officials and external representatives and is the first person to receive information and then calls people to inform them about a meeting, situation, training or support. However not all the people receive the information and men in particular noted that information is not disseminated to all households, let alone to women. It can be difficult to reach some people since the Area Councillor does not have everyone's contact details and phone batteries might be low. Several men also noted receiving climate forecasting information from the Fiji Sugar Corporation. Once people receive information they inform their family and neighbors or sometimes other people they might meet somewhere.

During focus group discussions women stated that it is mainly men on the Area Councilor's contact list, though some women sometimes received calls. If women receive important information they tend to share it mainly with extended family members living on the family compound and they noted that sometimes they might discuss food-related issues with family members or neighbors living nearby. Men noted that people with disabilities, widows living alone and houses located far away usually do not receive information, however they did not specifically mention women's limited or inequitable access to information. In some cases, even children have more access to information than their mothers, as some children informed their parents about ADRA's visit for this study after learning about it at school.

Women in Vunivutu reported sharing general information with family, neighbours and friends at family or social gatherings or when visiting other homes or maybe with someone they might meet in town or at school. One of the few locations and occasions where women in the settlement meet and share information is in the temple. Women noted that they enjoy opportunities to go out to the temple and sometimes might talk about how to plant vegetables or how to use bullock fertilizer. At times, workload can affect women's ability to go to the temple or meet with other women. Even women who have the time may be restricted at certain times of the month since Hindu women who are menstruating may ***'not be allowed to go to the temple or pray at home'*** and ***'menstruating women are not allowed out of the home after 6pm, as evil spirits will make them sick'*** (IWDA 2017). Depending on the type and severity of the impairment, women with disabilities may not go to the temple at all and have very

few opportunities to meet with other people. As one woman who is physically impaired noted, ***'I don't go the temple, I don't go anywhere but just stay at home'*** adding that she gets information occasionally from the Health Department who come once a month to give medicine for her and her epileptic daughter and ADRA also came to speak with them.

Access to information about nutrition and NCDs

In both communities, women and men stated that family members generally eat the same things with one woman in Vunivutu stating ***'everyone deserves to eat everything.'*** While it may have simply been an oversight, no mention was made by women or men of differing diets for very young children, pregnant or breastfeeding women, or people with special dietary needs, apart from a woman with diabetes who was very aware of her special dietary needs and prepared separate food for herself. One woman interviewed from the area stated with pride that she breastfed all her children, highlighting good awareness of the benefits of breastfeeding. The Vunivutu Nursing Station recorded three cases of malnutrition, two involving babies between 2 and 8 months old and one aged 13 months. The nurse noted that this was due to ignorance on the part of mothers of the need to start introducing supplementary food at six months of age.

Although data would suggest otherwise, women interviewed in Vunivutu stated that there were no cases of diabetes, high blood pressure or anaemia. Given women's limited channels of communication and mobility it is likely that the people who contributed their views for this study are unaware of the health needs of people beyond their immediate families. They noted that the absence of anaemia in the community was due to eating fish. Since fish is not recommended as a particularly good source of iron this would suggest the need for increased awareness of anaemia, along with specific dietary guidance for women, especially those who are pregnant and breastfeeding, as well as mothers and fathers of young children, to ensure young children receive the necessary amount of vitamins and minerals in their diets.

Both women and men seem to be aware of the high prevalence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and appreciate the need to eat healthy food. The importance of physical exercise was not mentioned in either community or during the focus group discussion in Labasa. Women and men in the village generally named boiled food and fish as part a healthy diet, along with vegetables and a woman in Vunivutu said she had a healthy diet and ate a lot of green vegetables like cabbage, bean and *bhaji*. Meat was often named as an unhealthy food choice by both women and men, and to a lesser extent salt and sugar. A women's representative in Labasa stated ***'nowadays we only buy brown rice and wholemeal flour.'*** She went on to say ***'we love to eat cakes, meat and drink juice, tea and coffee instead of drinking water. There are a lot of people who are too fat and one big reason is that they are not eating the right food, they eat a lot of meat. I make sure that my family eat a lot of vegetables and not too much fried food and meat. Instead we eat a lot of fish.'*** Food choices are often culturally defined and associated with socio-economic status, as one women's representative stated, ***'some families eat a lot of fish and meat because in the Fijian culture eating more vegetable is considered only for poor families.'***

Women in Raviravi stated that there are no major challenges related to food but NCDs are a concern and more attention to nutrition is required. As one woman adding, ***'farming is really necessary because we have to have nutritious and healthy food to eat because of the rising cases of NCDs.'*** The National Nutrition Survey notes that the most important sources of information on nutrition were health personnel and radio and this would also seem to be the case in these communities where awareness of health and nutrition is largely due to ongoing dissemination of key messages via radio, in some cases television, visits to the doctor or from workers from the Ministry of Health, as well as recent training conducted by ADRA. One of the women interviewed in Raviravi said the medical staff usually visit every three months and talk about NCDs and anaemia. However, all women do not always have the same access. A woman in Vunivutu said she knows about healthy eating from friends or people in town but mostly from the radio. She had never spoken with anyone from the Ministry of Health or anyone else about nutrition.

'The biggest issue is NCDs. There are people in the village who have NCDs but they don't know the right food to eat. They don't have a strict diet to tackle the problem. We need workshops to educate us in nutrition, balanced meals, and the right portions of food to eat.'

woman in Raviravi

Although women are largely responsible for food preparation, cooking and food choices, men showed considerable interest in healthy eating and stated that they lack detailed information about nutrition. As a man in Raviravi noted ***'the biggest issue or challenge related to food and nutrition for this community is the lack of awareness of the nutritious value of the food we are eating. We thought eating fish every day is healthy and we don't know whether our food and meals are balanced so we need a workshop and awareness to tackle all these challenges.'*** Similarly, a woman in Vunivutu stated ***'the biggest issue is we don't know the right food to eat to be healthy.'***

Access to weather and climate information

The majority of people in Vunivutu, particularly families with limited resources, access weather and climate information via radio and listen every day, especially in the evening before going to bed. Radios are powered by battery and mobile phones are charged using electricity or solar power. Women noted that phones are always charged and recharge cards are purchased in the shop or in town but sometimes they did not have credit. Women noted that they might be the first to hear about a cyclone warning if they wake up earliest and listen to the radio. Several women and men noted receiving information from neighbors and a few receive information on the television or via internet. However mobile and internet services are available only in certain areas). Women interviewed stated that they do not read newspapers or ever receive any written information.

Following a disaster, the Ministry of Agriculture usually communicates information via a radio announcement or by calling the *Turaga ni Koro* or Area Councillor. Women in the village noted that weather and climate information would be transmitted through the *Turaga ni Koro* (or the recently established Disaster Committee) who would then advise or request assistance or information from the Fiji Water Authority or government. When the *Turaga ni Koro* hears early warnings he travels house to house to advise people about the forecast and instructs them to dismantle any freestanding sheds, put up shutters, cut down tree branches, as well as fill and store water. A man with a disability noted that he did not receive any weather or climate information while men in the focus group noted that some elderly men staying at home are ***'glued to the radio all day'*** and the *Turaga ni Koro* asks them about the latest weather updates. This was confirmed by the *Turaga ni Koro* who said he went to see these men when he personally noticed changing weather patterns based on traditional information passed down from elders in the village. Men also noted that their belief or trust in the information conveyed in early warnings depended on the information,

stating it **'must be accurate'** and that they also read **'signs around them - from the sea and the plants'** to tell them about the weather in the coming months.

Women in Vunivutu referred to TCs Keni and Mona (January 2019) and associated warnings about heavy rain, strong winds and flooding. They mentioned the weather warning on the radio on the very morning of the focus group discussion. Women and men stated that climate information and warnings were clear and they understood approaching hazards such as a cyclone, flooding or drought but did not necessarily understand the scale or magnitude of the event. Men in particular stated that people are not aware of the effects of different hazards and asked if the relevant authorities could accompany warnings with simple instructions. They also noted that they always look forward to weather forecasts since they are farmers and fishermen. The stated that warnings were taken seriously as **'it can save lives'** and **'many now realize the importance of being pro-active rather than re-active'**. However, men also stated **'at time forecasts do not eventuate or are misleading...at times it's useful because our time and resources are not wasted. However, at times we prepare for a cyclone and it doesn't happen but we had done all preparations like buying and storing food, securing our homes and all of this involves money and time.'** Some men noted that their opinion of the information can change based on their experience and interpretation of the data stating, **'for example, if the weather station is sending warning to North East Labasa and the wind forecast route is coming through Yasawas then it will miss Vunivutu.'** Regarding cyclone warnings and drought forecasts, women said **'we always believe it'** and **'we take these warnings seriously, except maybe for tsunami'** and noted that they consider them to be useful because they can get prepared.

Women noted they buy more *dhal*, flour, and tinned food when they hear cyclone warnings and collect water in drums when there is a drought forecast. However, they also added that they do not really prepare ahead of time and only act when they hear the warning. Even after a warning they continue to do the same work, wait until the next radio update, and only begin preparations in earnest when the cyclone gets close. Women living far away from the main road noted that they would not go to the evacuation centre at Wavuwavu Primary School even in the event of a serious cyclone warning as it would take two or three hours to walk there. One woman added that her house has been strengthened with wire by her late husband but it probably would not be able to withstand a very strong cyclone. Women also noted that they were afraid to hear tsunami warnings because they could not do anything. They said once they heard a tsunami warning on the radio and knew they were supposed to go uphill but did not go or do anything and do not have everything prepared even though they know they should. They also said they did not know what to do in the event of an earthquake and it was evident they were unaware of the link between an earthquake and tsunami. However, a woman interviewed stated she and her family moved to higher ground when they heard the last tsunami drill.

In relation to longer term climate changes, several women in Vunivutu noted that the dry season is hotter and longer than before, the soil is harder, and vegetables like cabbage and bean do not grow well. One woman stated that it is much hotter compared with five years ago, crops are not growing like before and she is not able to work as much in the garden because of the heat. At the same time, some women did not identify any major changes in their environment or resources and stated **'we do not talk about climate change and do not know anything about it.'** Women in both communities noted that fish are now smaller and there are less overall. They mainly attributed this to over-fishing, as well as climate change in Raviravi, but overall were uncertain of the causes.²² Women in Raviravi stated that poor second harvests were possibly due to climate change. During a transect walk a woman stated that

²² Evidence suggests that the inshore fisheries of Fiji are in decline. (SPC Women and Fisheries Bulletin ref).

some of her plants – eggplant and capsicum – are turning yellow and dying and tomatoes were getting smaller but did not know the reasons, suggesting that it was maybe caused by salt water intrusion or too much water or heat. She noted that her husband told her to make a deep drain and that women sometimes talk to the *Turaga ni Koro* about these issues, and some people told her the problem is caused by sea level rise. These comments highlight that although women in Raviravi appear to receive conflicting information and advice, they have various opportunities to discuss food and income related issues not only with their husbands and other community members, but also have access to a community leader who listens and cares about their needs. Data collected for this study suggest that women and men would benefit from accurate information and additional training about locally-specific climate change impacts and mitigation and adaptation measures to improve food security.

Access to support

Family and social networks are often an important part of resilience. Men in Raviravi noted that in worst case scenarios relatives in other villages or from urban or unaffected areas brought food supplies to the village. Men in the village men stated that support from immediate family **‘first and foremost’**, as well as from other families and the wider community, help to ensure people with specific needs are fed. Women and men noted that churches and religious leaders take turns to assist and visit people with disabilities, the elderly and widows once every two or three months to offer food and during community functions women will prepare a plate for these individuals so nobody is forgotten. However, men also stated that there might be occasions when people with disabilities might not eat three meals a day or their nutrition might be in question when family members are away from home or travelling outside Vanua Levu, even though neighbours are meant to care for them.

In Vunivutu men noted that they might work collectively to help a friend or neighbour during periods of too little or too much rain, while women added that during major weather events or disasters everybody is busy and struggling to meet their own family’s needs and usually unable to help others. Similarly, women stated that while they share cooked food with relatives living nearby, some people might still be overlooked and in some cases disputes can at times influence levels of support to family members, including widows. One woman stated that people today are busy and no longer help others, or only if there is a financial benefit.

In some cases, there seemed to be an immediate reaction among some people to blame people who do not have enough to eat. Women in Vunivutu noted that some families do not have enough to eat **‘because they are lazy to garden and work the land.’** They added that sometimes **‘these women come and ask to do washing and cleaning to get money to buy food’** and sometimes they give them extra vegetables or clothes but **‘not often’**. They said there are no groups or organisations to help them. Similarly, a woman interviewed in Raviravi noted that some people do not have enough to eat stating **‘this is mostly because they are lazy and don’t work’** but also added that some people are helped by social welfare if they do not have any income.

Women in Vunivutu stated that they had never received any distributions of food rations after a disaster and were not aware of anyone who ever had. Men in Raviravi, including the *Turaga ni Koro* stated that seeds or kumala seedlings are normally distributed to households - rather than individual women or men - and both women and men mentioned the cash vouchers that were distributed by the Ministry of Agriculture in town to buy tools, seeds and fertiliser following TC Keni. Women in Vunivutu also noted these vouchers, adding that some received it and others missed out as they were not included on the list. While information and decision-making related to this initiative seems to be largely in the hands of the Area Councillor, women’s awareness about this mode of delivering assistance, as well as comments related to inequitable distribution of relief, highlights that women in some families

at least are aware of support provided after a disaster, even if they do not receive information directly or are listed as beneficiaries.

Groups at risk: widows and persons with disabilities

Older women and men who are either divorced, separated or widowed often have living arrangements that make them dependent on others for support, while some struggle on their own to meet their basic needs. Older widows in both communities faced various challenges and for some, the addition of a physical impairments and dependents adds a considerable burden. Disabilities significantly alter the lives of both women and men and can affect their ability to access food and resources. One widower in Raviravi with a visual impairment does not access any land or resources or own any livestock, cannot find his way in the garden, and is dependent on others to provide food. He noted that everything he used to do stopped when he became blind and it has completely changed his way of life. Similarly, an elderly woman with an intellectual impairment who was born blind noted that while she used to cook food and fetch firewood and water when she was younger she no longer performs these tasks. Women with limited land and resources or physical constraints due to age or disabilities stated that they did not use climate or weather information or change their behavior in any way.

5.2 Gender roles, divisions of labour and workload

Both women and men play key roles related to food security in their homes and communities. These are largely based on existing gender and social norms and expectations. Household activities are undertaken either alone or with the support of spouses and children and extended family. In some cases, women and men work together with other members of the community or groups of women or men to support their livelihoods and community events.

Agriculture

In Raviravi and Vunivutu, both women and men play key and often complementary roles related to food production. Several women and men reported that farming is not just a means of livelihood but a passion and an integral part of their way of life that they enjoy and want to encourage in others. As one man in Raviravi noted, ***‘living island life as a farmer is not only my dream but it is part and parcel of my life...I brought with me the passion for farming and that somehow moves a lot of male friends to plant too, apart from fishing.’*** Further evidence that women enjoy their roles is noted in the report. However, at times it is not an easy way of life and men in Raviravi stated that subsistence farming takes up most of their time.

In most cases men usually prepare land for root crops and vegetable gardens while women generally plant and tend vegetable gardens. The *Turaga ni Koro* in Raviravi stated ***‘men just do land preparation and the women transplant and look after the backyard garden.’*** Similarly, men in Vunivutu stated, ***‘wives take the lead in planting vegetables’*** and women stated that planting and selling of vegetables is done by women. However, these roles can vary and one woman reported that her husband undertakes all work related to the vegetable garden, planning and making all decisions about what, where and when to plant. One woman noted that her husband does the harvesting but many women also harvest sugar cane

Sometimes women need to call on men to provide labour to prepare land or help in the garden, especially if there are no men or male youth in the home. A woman in Raviravi noted that she usually hires a young man in the village for \$20 a day to come and clear the land and spray pesticide on her garden and also needs someone to help her put up mesh. Sometimes the collective labour of women is used to support others in the community. A woman in Raviravi reported that the biggest challenge to food security in the village is roaming cows, horses and wild pigs that destroy the gardens and crops. She added that calls to the police and the Agriculture department had not helped

and the only solution is to kill the animals. Women in the village who belong to the Assemblies of God church purchased some fencing and put it up to keep out the cows, pigs and horses from the Pastor's garden.

Livestock

Women and men in both communities raise chickens and goats for household consumption and sale. In the village they also raise, eat and sell pigs and in the settlement they also raise ducks. The National Nutrition Survey reports that 59.6% of iTaukei and 77.6% of rural households of Fijian Indian descent keep livestock and birds for home use. Chickens generally run free in the village but in Vunivutu they are also kept in coops – and along with ducks – are generally cared for by women. Men and older boys are usually responsible for killing and plucking the birds. As one woman in Vunivutu noted, ***'It is not in our belief or culture for women to kill livestock.'*** Sometimes women will kill chickens or ducks, particularly if there are no men or boys in the home or when husbands are elderly. Cows and bullocks are cared for by both women and men but, according to the women in Vunivutu, it is always women who milk the cows. Milk is used to make ghee and yoghurt and for the family to drink and never sold.

Fishing

Discussions in both communities reveal that fishing is an important source of food for the family, a means of livelihood, but also a pleasurable activity for women and men. Many women in Raviravi fish regularly and have considerable freedom to go out with whom and when they wish. They often go out to fish with groups of men and women from the village or head out together with other women to catch octopus and collect oysters and other seafood to sell in the market. They also do in-shore fishing, regularly collecting mud crabs, clams, sea shells, sea grapes and other seafood to feed themselves and their families. Data from the National Nutrition Survey notes that 86.8% of households used most of the fish catch for home use. Women in the focus group said they decide themselves whether to go fishing and if they head out during day they do the cooking, wash clothes, clean the house and then clean up their surroundings afterward.

The extent of women's fishing activities in Vunivutu is unknown however within this small sample it does not appear to be a common activity particularly among women of Indian descent. A couple of women said that they enjoyed going out to fish sometimes in boats to catch small fish, gather mussels or collect mud crabs in the mangroves. These activities are always done with their husbands, sometimes with another couple or family but never alone or with other women. The women who reported fishing together with their husbands shared this information happily and with a certain enthusiasm, suggesting it was as much a social and leisure activity as a way to provide food for their families. Another woman said she did not go out fishing or collect seafood and only her husband did this, emphasising that the income from fish sales was needed to pay for school-related expenses.

Men in Raviravi stated that many of them prefer fishing to working the land especially on hot days when they ***'stay in the house and don't do much until evening when we go out fishing and diving'*** – even though they felt fishing and diving are time-consuming and involve risks such as cold water, bad weather, sharks and engine failure. While many men no doubt enjoy fishing they said that fishing, as well as farming were 'rewarding' activities because they are a way to earn money. Women in the village emphasised and seemed to take great pleasure in the social aspects of fishing activities. Living close to the sea is important for this community as it provides sources of food sources and livelihood and helps to strengthen social cohesion. As one woman explained, ***'we go on the boat – a big group, women and men, whoever wants to go – to collect kaikoso, cici, clam, nama. Sometimes we go for hours fishing. When we go fishing we pay \$10 each for fuel.'***

Men in Raviravi also occasionally hunt and sell boar to Chinese restaurants in town and noted that this activity generates a lot of income.

Food preparation, cooking and clean up

Data from the National Nutrition Survey notes that women or wives planned and prepared food in 71.7% households in Fiji. Women and men from both communities in this study stated that women are responsible for preparing and cooking for the family and cleaning up afterwards 'every day and for every meal'. Women prepare and cook lunch in the morning if their husbands go out fishing or to work in the cane fields. Men in Raviravi



stated that sometimes men help with cooking if the women are busy with other work and might assist women with cooking or weaving if needed following a disaster. During the fieldwork, mainly women were observed preparing and serving food and cleaning up and washing dishes after meals, though a younger boy was helping to cut coconuts and one woman's husband appeared to 'oversee' the process.



Women in Vunivutu stated that women do most of the food preparation and cooking. Though some husbands, sons and sons-in-law help sometimes, for example to clean, chop and cook, some men do not help or cook at all. Women also stated that when women make sweets for special occasions, then men might do some cooking. Several women reported cooking for their husband's family. For example one woman cooks for a brother-in-law and his wife who come sometimes from Labasa on the weekends. Women stated that they are largely responsible for clearing away the dishes and only women wash dishes. Several men in Vunivutu stated that they might help with cooking activities 'a little bit', however one man stated that even if his wife is sick he simply waits to be fed dinner rather than help her. During the FGD in Labasa a representative of the Women's Muslim League stated that every day she cooks roti and curry in the morning for breakfast and packs roti parcel for her husband's lunch as well as school lunch for her children. She also cooks for everyone's dinner adding, ***'but these days husbands sometimes help do the grocery shopping. He works in our backyard gardens after work and during weekends. This is how we save money buying from the market.'***

'Women are carers of families and this role includes looking after old people, people who are sick and children born out of wedlock. In our Fijian culture, women take care of the home and so we are responsible for food shopping, cooking, cleaning and these roles are only for women and girls. Apart from these roles I also sell cooked food in the church canteen five days a week. We mostly cater for working people and they buy lunch from us. My family also attend and contribute to a lot of church functions, traditional functions, funerals, weddings, birthdays. Women do the cooking, men do the lovo and women and young girls serve the food' (women's representative, Rarasea Methodist Church).

Daughters, and to a lesser extent sons, are often a big help to women in the kitchen. As children grow and leave home there are less mouths to feed, however this also means there are less hands to help with household chores and to prepare and cook food.

I prepare the food, do the cooking. Sometimes, only sometimes, my husband helps. When I have too much work to do, he helps me. Maybe he helps with one meal in a week. My eldest daughter helped with the cooking. My son also helped to bring in the food from the garden and to clean the fish and chop the

chicken. Since my daughter is away and my son is now in town my husband has to clean the fish. My other young daughter helps to cook once the food is prepared. (woman in Vunivutu)

In both communities, most meals are usually eaten together as a family. Women in Raviravi stated they generally have roti, rice and curry for breakfast and lunch, while some might eat rice with *lolo* for breakfast. Important foods noted by women include fish, cassava, *bele*, *rourou*, *vudi*, breadfruit, pumpkin, land crab and others highlighting considerable diversity and options in their diet.

Men in Vunivutu stated that it is a cultural belief among some Hindu households that women are not allowed to touch and cook during menstruation, although adding that this practice is no longer widespread. In these cases, when wives are menstruating, responsibility for food preparation and cooking usually falls to daughters or other female relatives who are called upon to assist. Where other women and girls are not available to help, husbands, sons or sons-in-law have little option but to take on these tasks. Recent research undertaken related to menstruation in Fiji found that taboos related to menstruation and food restriction are uncommon, however Hindu women stated that menstruating women cannot cook for their husband if he is a priest and cannot touch cooked food being taken to the temple.²³

Caregiving and responsibility for nutrition

In Raviravi women noted that they were responsible for the nutrition of family members, since they usually go out and fetch fish and collect other food to prepare and cook for the family, adding that husbands will eat whatever food they prepare. However, men from the village also noted that they were responsible for the nutrition of the family and encouraged their children to eat more vegetables during meal times and not buy and eat junk food from canteens in the village. The *Turaga ni Koro* stated that it is mainly his responsibility to ensure his children are eating ***'lots of fruits and vegetables and less junk food.'*** He noted that he makes an effort to stop his children from buying noodles but added ***'they probably buy it when I'm not around.'*** He also noted that he had learned from ADRA how to cook vegetables properly and not boil them for too long to ensure they maintain maximum nutritional value.

In Vunivutu women noted that both women and men are responsible for the health and nutrition of the family. However they also noted that only women care for children when they are sick. Women stated that it is mostly women who remind children and husbands about hygiene such as washing hands, although one woman noted that her husband also reminds the children. Women and men in Raviravi also noted that women are responsible for caring for sick family members and are the only ones who normally take them to the hospital or health centre. They also noted that they seek advice from the village nurse and sometimes just give herbal medicine ***'to relieve them of their sickness'***.

Family ties and social obligations are important among women and men in both communities. In Vunivutu among women of Indian descent these responsibilities extend to the welfare of family members acquired through marriage, especially parents-in-law and brothers-in-law. In some cases, these obligations can lead to difficult choices for women. For example, a widow who periodically visits her grown children who have moved away revealed that she

²³ The study also reported that women living in Rabi, a small Fijian ethnic group whose descendants are from Kiribati are not allowed to cook when they are menstruating 'because the boys and men will get lazy' and 'are not allowed to pick fruits (such as mango and eggplant) because the fruit will die.'

would like to join them but as the eldest daughter-in-law she feels obliged to stay to care for her mother-in-law, stating ***‘what will my husband’s family think if I leave her and go to other places. I went but I have to come back.’*** In comparison, widows in Raviravi appear to have more personal decision-making power as one widow shared her decision and plan to move to Korotolutolu to look after her grandchildren. In general, interviews with women in both communities highlighted the extent to which women consider the needs of other family members above their own. While *iTaukei* women can get separated and divorced, it is largely considered socially unacceptable for Fijian women Indian descent. A double standard is apparent as men of Indian descent are able to marry, separate or divorce, or remarry and tend to face fewer restrictions and social or moral judgment.

Community activities

Religion plays a big role in the lives of many Fijians and this is also evident in the communities involved in this study. Women and men in Raviravi attend either services at the Methodist or Assemblies of God church in the village on a weekly basis and in Vunivutu go to the temple if they are Hindu. Women who participated in this study said they go to the temple once a week at around 10 am -2pm by themselves or with other women in the women’s club, mainly to pray.

Workload for women in Raviravi increases when there are community events. They noted that it usually takes two to three days to prepare for activities or events in the village such as church gatherings, religious holidays, weddings, funerals. During these times, women work together in one place in the village as they find it easier to help one another and find the activities enjoyable, largely due to the social aspect. They assist one another to prepare and cook food, bake, collect firewood and prepare the lovo, clean and decorate the village hall, wash dishes and other tasks. These community events also result in additional work for men but they added that everyone works well together and ***‘teamwork in the village is well practiced.’*** Women noted that ***‘during preparations for weddings the whole village gets together to help each other in whatever duties need to be done and duties are allocated by the Village Headman or by the Vanua.’*** Similarly, women in Vunivutu cook extra food, do extra cleaning and decorating for special events and find these activities enjoyable. Women make food for funerals of neighbours, *puja* and *Ramadan*— religious holidays, as well as vegetarian food and sweets for religious days about once a month or maybe 12 times a year.

Income generating activities

Income generating activities in both communities are mainly linked to available natural resources. Women in both communities sell vegetables and fruit in the market if they have a surplus. Along with seafood, women in Raviravi collect fruits such as *wi*, mangoes, *tarawau* and oranges, and harvest and sell their vegetables on a weekly basis to earn an average income of \$350 per week. Women in Vunivutu also said they go to town about once a week to sell but not on Saturday because it is too busy and any remainder is sold in the nearby village or even to school teachers.

In Vunivutu both women and men who rent a house or lease land stated that half or more of the money earned from working the land and growing sugar cane is given to the landowner. This places considerable pressure among both women and men to earn sufficient income to be able to stay on the land. Men in this area are heavily involved in sugar cane farming, ploughing the land and preparing the fields using bullocks and planting. Women also play a key role in sugar cane production. Women noted that both husbands and wives plant sugar cane but harvesting is mainly done by men, although also by women. In addition to planting and caring for bullocks, men noted stages when wives assist include weeding and applying fertiliser. Women in the family are called upon to provide additional labour where needed or when there is a shortage of labourers. Some women are also hired as labourers. During the focus group in Raviravi women also noted ***‘we concentrate on cane farming and cane cutting during***

sugar cane season'. They commented on the difficulty of accessing money generally, however they did mention a range of livelihoods.

Fishing activities provide much needed protein and supplement incomes for both men and women in Raviravi. Women in the village sell clams seafood and land crabs at Seaqaqa market on Saturdays and sometimes at the Labasa market. In addition to the need to buy licenses to sell fish and seafood, government has introduced restrictions on fishing to support conservation and placed a ban on all harvesting and export of *beche de mer* or *sucuwalu* which used to generate a lot of money for the men. Women stated that they consider the ban a blessing because men are no longer at risk. Previously this activity had resulted in several premature deaths and cases of paralysis in the village.²⁴ Women and men Raviravi also benefit financially from pearl farming and the production of a type of jewellery pearl called *melamela*. Pearl farming was originally established several years ago with the support of a ACIAR-funded project implemented through the Department of Fisheries (see box following).

Men and women in both communities stated that taking their agricultural produce and seafood to the market was a challenge. Women in Raviravi stated that it costs \$60 each way to hire a carrier to take their produce to Seaqaqa and \$200 for a return trip to the Labasa market adding, **'our problem here is the road access. It is difficult for us to take our produce to market as it is quite expensive to travel or hire a carrier to get to the market to sell our produce.'** Given the travel costs women in both communities generally preferred to sell from their home if it was possible. One woman in Raviravi recalled a time when she wanted to rest **'and medical people came to the village and bought beans, cabbage, everything. I was very happy.'**

Both men and women in Raviravi own pigs and buy heavy bags of meal mix in town for about \$23 a bag that lasts three or four months. They transport it back to the village by carrier seeking assistance if needed from people on the carrier. Some widows or females living alone arrange for male relatives to carry the meal and feed their pigs daily, with one woman giving three of her seven pigs in exchange for such services. In Vunivutu a woman noted that her family has 10 goats and about three or four times a year the goats are sold for about \$250 each. In both communities, the sale of livestock appears to be done in a relatively informal way. In Raviravi most of the women stated that they do not really need the income but sell to people in the village or nearby when they come and ask or sell them for certain occasions like funerals and weddings. In Vunivutu people generally inform others by word of mouth that they have livestock to sell and customers come to the house to pay and pick up the animals.

A widow with two grandsons at the school in Korotolutolu had a sad story to tell about her 200 goats that ran away because someone left the fence open. When her husband died she had to move out of her house because his younger brother became chief and was then entitled to stay in the house. She was depending on the sale of the goats to buy material to build a house. She is now thinking about moving to Nadi.

²⁴ A young mother with four sons takes care of her paralysed husband who now uses a wheelchair. She has a vegetable garden in Korotolutolu and sells produce from her garden as well as seafood at the Seaqaqa market every week. Also, a young boy who should have been in form 7 suffers from seizures on a daily basis and his late father never returned home from a diving trip more than 10 years ago. The boy's mother has remarried and takes care of two sons as well as her sick teenage son. Both families have moved to Korotolutolu.

Earning an income from *melamela* in Raviravi: a shared endeavour

Raviravi women are driving important changes and developments in the villages however this is not taking place in isolation or at the exclusion of men.

A *civa* pearl farm (black-lipped oyster) was established through a project funded by ACIAR and the International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) and implemented with support from the Ministry of Fisheries. Run by the women's group established by the project, the farm as well as harvesting structures were damaged by TC Tomas. The women decided that the structures are not going to be repaired and made the switch to *melamela* (giant winged oysters) because they still get very good sales and are not as much work as pearls. Along with small tools and materials, the women's group now own a boat which is used only for activities related to the *melamela*.

They have already had two harvests of *melamela*. The first sale of 67 pieces of jewellery earned the women \$3,800 and the head of the women's group explained that she was able to build her house with *melamela* sales earned in the first six months. In one or two years the women expect to earn approximately \$6,000 – 7,000 from *melamela*. They are now working on an order from the leading handicraft seller in Fiji who will purchase \$38,000 - \$67,000 worth of jewellery in May –June and have asked the men in the village to assist in processing, grinding and varnishing.

The group has a treasurer but has not opened a bank account. Money earned from the sales is used to pay labourers. Harvesting is done every two months and approximately 10 women and 3 men are involved. There is a clear gender division of labour with men earning \$20 a day to harvest the *melamela* and women earning \$15 a day to clean them because this work it is considered easier (it is unknown how much time each activity takes). The women have also asked men to assist in processing grinding, varnishing and processing the *melamela*. Regardless of how many pearls are harvested or how much jewellery is made or sold each woman in the group receives **\$50 at the end of the year** and the women's group saves a lot of money earned from these sales. IS THIS correct? Could you explain it a little better?

The Ministry advised the women about how to protect the *melamela* when they hear a cyclone warning. Now aware of how to protect their investment and main source of income, when they heard the warning about TCs Keni and Josie in March 2018 women and men in the village took the boat out to loosen the buoys and drop the oysters to the ocean floor.





One of the main income generating activities for women and men in Vunivutu is the production *suluka*, which is a type of pandanus that is collected, dried and wrapped into small bundles and sold in the market in Labasa to make hand rolled cigarettes. One woman noted that money earned is used to buy groceries and pay electricity bill and any extra might be saved. Men stated they always sell *suluka* every weekend and some might give the money to their wives to buy food of other household items. Even though many women earn money, traditional perceptions persist as one of the women's representatives in Labasa stated, '**men are the main breadwinner of the family and women also work to supplement the main source of income.**'²⁵

Table 4 Men's FGD in Vunivutu

Men's FGD in Vunivutu			
Priority income-generating activities	Why	Who sells it and how often	Who gets the income
1. Selling <i>suluka</i> (tobacco raw material) Usually it goes for \$6/bundle and 20 bundles can be done in two weeks, so earnings approximately \$120 a fortnight.	The pandanus tree grows well in the area.	Men always sell every weekend.	Men gets the income however few men gave the income to the wife whereas some do not give at all.
2. Harvesting sugar cane	They are registered sugar cane farmers	Men involved at all stages	The family gets 4 different payments from Fiji Sugar Corporation, and income after all deductions is kept by husband and wife.

In both communities, several women also earn money from running small canteens sometimes by themselves or together with their husbands. However, income from these shops is not guaranteed or steady as one women in Vunivutu noted, '**running a canteen is not easy. There are certain times in the year when we don't have a lot of customers so only make about \$50 a day. The busy time is the crushing season from June to December because then people have money and we can make more than \$100 a day.**'

²⁵ According to the PFIP report (2012) approximately 85% of men reported earning their own income. Sixty eight (68%) of *iTaukei* women reported earning their own income, whereas only 22% of Fijian women of Indian descent reported earning their own income. This study suggests there may be different understandings of 'own income' depending on who sells the produce and whether a woman has sole or joint decision-making over the money.

During the FGD with women's groups in Labasa the Programme Manager for Northern Development briefed participants about women's important role in the economic development of Vanua Levu and the government's support for micro-enterprises. They provide grants and loans and help people develop business plans working closely with the women's programme of the Provincial Office. He noted that out of 2,294 projects 307 or 13% are 'women projects' involving female business owners. One of the women noted that few women in Fiji own land and therefore do not have collateral to get a loan to start their own agriculture or livestock business. She added that her small women's group in the village took a loan from the programme to start chicken farming business but it failed. So she wanted to run her own chicken farming business but is not able to get it off the ground because she does not have the financial capital and is unable to get a loan to finance the business.

Workload

Women and men in both communities were asked to list the activities they did in an average day.²⁶ On the whole everyone works hard to feed themselves and their families and earn a living. Men in Vunivutu felt work in the sugar cane to be labour intensive and time-consuming and had less work to do during the rainy season. Hard work noted by women in Vunivutu included cutting and harvesting rice, husking the rice in the hot sun, working on the cane farm and cutting and raking grass in the heat. They noted that washing clothes mostly by hand was time consuming, adding that only women ever do the washing. Few women in the area have either washing machines or electricity and wash all clothes by hand. They also noted that although time-consuming making *suluka* was an easy and enjoyable activity. Women in Raviravi noted that they spend a lot of time in relation to special activities in the village and have to leave aside their household chores to help in the community. They also mentioned tasks laid out in the Village Development Plan, adding that government or NGO representatives should only come during the second week of the month, given women had to carry out chores in the home, as well as undertake activities in the village.

Certain men have additional roles and responsibilities for example, the *Turaga ni Koro* who manages village affairs, as well as provides for his wife and two sons in Korotolutolu and cares for an epileptic son who stays in the village. ***'I look after our livelihoods by selling fish and seafood and my wife helps me with farming. This is my main income so I have to keep working...It is like I have to earn to support and make sure that we have two separate breakfast, lunch and dinners as my children are there (in Korotolutolu) and I am here with my other son.'*** (EQ, TnK, Raviravi)

Women in both communities tend to get up earlier and go to bed later than men. Women in Vunivutu stated that the daily activities are the same for women on Saturday and Sunday although they might wake up a bit later around 6:30 am but would then have the same routine. Men also stated that every day is the same routine: attending to the sugar cane farm, changing and feeding livestock, cutting firewood and kava drinking while awaiting dinner. Men appear to have less work and more leisure time, especially in the evenings when they drink kava, unlike women. Women spend every evening cooking and serving food, cleaning up and washing the dishes or helping children with homework and usually carry out other household tasks or income-generating activities while relaxing.

²⁶ Although it was not possible in this study, daily clocks developed by women and men can be presented and discussed together with the whole community to increase awareness and initiate a dialogue about time use and women's workload.

Table 5 Activity clocks for Vunivutu

Activity clocks from Vunivutu

Time	Men	Boys
5 am – 7 am	In the farm, making land prep, etc.	Preparing for school
7 am – 9 am	In the farm	In school.
9 am– 12 noon	Breakfast and rest	In school
12 – 3 pm	Lunch and make repairs or servicing of farm tools	In school
3pm – 6pm	Back in the farm	Back home and help mother with chores and food prep.
6pm – 9pm	Dinner and have a bowl of grog. Sleep	Dinner, school work and sleep

Time	Women
4:30 am – 5:00 am	Wake up, prepare breakfast, cook curry, roti, tea and make lunch for husband and children
	Get children ready for school, comb and braid their hair, get their things are ready, books, give husband and children their lunch
	Husband maybe goes to the farm at 5:30 am, children leave for school at 6:30 am
7:00 am – 8:00 am	Clean up the dishes, clean the house, toilet, milk the cow, take the cow to the paddock, mopping
8:00 am – 10:00 am	More washing, other house chores, do everything before 10 when it is too hot then have breakfast
10:00 am – 11:00 am	Have breakfast, start getting lunch ready if not already prepared earlier, especially when visitors come
1:00 pm– 3:00 pm	Eat lunch, rest, watch tv, other house chores
3:00 pm - 5:30 pm	Children return from school, give them ‘proper’ cooked food, do raking, do gardening, outside chores, water cows, bring goats home and give them water
5:30 pm -8:00 pm	Prepare and cook dinner and eat around 8 pm, help with children’s homework
8:00 pm- 9:30 pm	Make suluka, watch tv, a few might go out fishing with husbands
9:30 pm or 10:00	Go to sleep

The shopkeeper in Vunivutu noted that she looks after the shop, does the housework, laundry but her husband sometime helps if she is busy with chores or in the shop. She stated that she has little time to devote to gardening or crops and noted that she and her husband mostly go together to do grocery shopping in town and buy food from the market rather than plant food and considers the food she feeds her family to be nutritious.

Men in Vunivutu highlighted particularly rigid roles for women in the home, stating that roles and division of labour are evenly distributed and workload is balanced **‘as men cater for the welfare of the family while women do house chores.’** Another man stated **‘work is done evenly and equally. No one works more or less on the farm’** while another noted that work load is shared within the family, including among sons and daughters. Several women in Vunivutu held the same view stating the work is balanced between men and women and they did not have any concerns about roles or workload. However, unlike some of the men, there was general recognition among women

that men also had responsibilities for ‘house chores’ and as one woman noted, ***‘if the husband is not helping enough in the home the wife has a heavier workload.’***

Women in Raviravi stated that they felt all activities in the village should be done by both women and men, noting ***‘sometimes we all work together as husband and wife’, ‘we do assist each other sometimes’, and ‘some husbands sometimes help if their wives are busy’***. One woman who was remarried praised her husband for his helpful nature, noting that he does the cooking and the washing and that they plant and work in the garden together.

At the same time, heavy workloads or an unequal balance of chores was noted by women in both communities who for example stated, ***‘our workload is so much, as we do so much from January to December’, ‘we women have a lot more duties and workload in the village compared to men’ and ‘without us nothing can be achieved in our household’***. They noted that one of their main challenges is the time needed to fetch and prepare food during periods of extreme heat or rainfall. During focus group discussions men stated that work is well distributed among women and men, however a few noted that women tend to do more work than men.

The shifting demographics in the village would appear to be affecting the workload of both women and men. During the week school children and their parents live in Korotolutolu where the school is located and many young adults work in town. Women and men from both communities noted that children often help with household chores, particularly on the weekends and during school holidays. One woman who resides in Korotolutolu noted, ***‘we are more relaxed during school holidays as we do not have to wake up early and prepare things for our children.’*** The chores of boys and girls are divided according to gender as boys help their fathers on the farm and girls help in the home with housework. As children, and particularly girls grow up, have their own families or move away from home the work shifts back to mothers. As one mother noted, ***‘when I had my older daughter at home I had less work. Now that she is gone I have more work to do because she isn’t here to help me.’***

Women in both communities recognise that widows in the village work very hard, perform the same tasks as other women - and sometimes men - and therefore have a heavier workload. Older women in Raviravi noted they have slowed down and old age affects their ability to carry out certain tasks.

Women’s representatives in Labasa echoed these views saying that women bear a heavy workload, especially ***‘working women’*** who continue to carry out household tasks such as cooking, laundry and cleaning, although in some cases men, as well as women work in backyard gardens.

‘There is nobody to help with household chores... I do all the housework by myself, all the chores and the backyard gardening. I don’t want to ask people to come and help me because nowadays people don’t help because they are very busy and doing their own thing. People will only help you if you pay them.’

woman from Vunivutu

‘Sometimes I have a lot of work to do, sometimes less. But I have to do it. Who else is going to do it? My parents say ‘You are working so hard.’ Sometimes it’s too much. I am very tired – cook, cook, cook, washing, cleaning, gardening. I am tired. But we have to do all these things.’

woman from Vunivutu

Intersecting risk factors can seriously comprise women's food security and health

The government provides financial support in the form of social welfare to the poorest members of society including those with disabilities. While this is essential for survival, multiple factors can constrain some people's ability to access these funds.

In Vunivutu a widow with serious mobility constraints cares for her adult daughter who has an intellectual disability. She does not have a garden but does have a few chickens that she eats (killed by her son-in-law) and sometimes gets a little bit of food from her son-in-law and daughter. She carries out all household chores by lifting herself up on a chair to help her move around the house, and needs assistance to help her to go to town or to the hospital. She is almost completely reliant on food purchased from the shop, receives a small income from social welfare income, and last year was only able to harvest half the sugar cane planted by her late husband due to labour shortages. On occasion her sons in Suva send money but she stressed that this does not help her to do the work around the house. She has to travel into town to access social welfare as the sole caregiver and with nobody to support she brings her daughter and meets her widowed daughter-in-law who helps her with banking and shopping. Over a third of the money she receives pays for transportation to and from town and the rest is used to buy groceries and pay the electricity bill.

'My biggest challenge is my disability and looking after my daughter especially because I'm not able to walk around. There is nobody in the house to help me with all the work... When I was walking I used to plant vegetables and that's the only time I had nutritious food. Now that I'm not able to walk I have to rely on food from the shop.' (Widow in Vunivutu)

Men in Vunivutu named women living on their own, as well as people with disabilities as being groups particularly at risk of food scarcity or poor nutrition. Widows often face very heavy workloads, often lack money and family support to assist them to produce food and may have no other option but to purchase less nutritious food at a nearby shop. In settlements, people in these circumstances living in nuclear or extended family arrangements and living far from neighbours, face specific challenges and undue hardship to get the support they need to meet their basic needs. The Advisory Councillor's role is to ensure the vulnerable are singled out for government assistance although, comments from various people and observation by team related to this study suggest a lack of coordination to ensure people most in need receive assistance. While immediate needs may be met for some but not all, loneliness and unmet emotional needs feature prominently among widows in both communities who reported eating alone, eating less, and often having little appetite.²⁷

Heavy workload and loneliness affect the food security and mental wellbeing of widows

- *'It's really different now that my husband is gone. I have a double role to play, more work. Five years ago, everything was fine when he was here with me. Now I'm all alone. I have to do the garden by myself, house chores, it's too much.'* (widow Vunivutu)
- *'It's lonely because eating used to be enjoyable when my husband was alive and all the children were around.'* (widow Raviravi)
- *'When my husband was alive we used to sit and eat together. I enjoyed having meals. Now I don't feel like eating. I cook in the morning and eat the same food for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Sometimes I don't have much of an appetite.'* (widow Raviravi)

²⁷ For interesting insights into the lives of older women and widows see 'Women and Ageing: Scoping study on perceptions of ageing among women in Fiji' Fiji Women's Rights Movement, February 2017.

5.3 Participation in household decision-making, including over food and own income

Household decision-making is a complex process and as is often the case, data from this small study highlighted considerable variability. In some households, certain decisions are taken by women while others are taken by men and these often align with gender-defined roles and areas of responsibility. Women and men in both communities noted that some issues are discussed together and decisions taken jointly by both husband and wife. More in-depth research is needed to determine the extent to which women genuinely have an equal voice in family discussions and decision-making, however shared decision-making appears to be more prevalent in Raviravi where men stated that decisions in the home are usually made jointly by husbands and wives.

Decisions about planting, food choices, meal times

Decisions about what and when to eat varied. In Vunivutu women stated that women decide what food to prepare, cook and serve, while one woman interviewed stated that sometimes she asks the family or decides by herself. Another woman noted that decisions about what to eat are largely dictated by their young daughter. In Raviravi both men and women stated that women always decide what to cook for all meals and it is fairly routine with little change in meal times. Women and men in both communities noted that they usually eat together as a family and men usually eat first, unless husbands are out drinking kava. In both communities when husbands go out to drink kava usually wives will eat earlier and sometimes go to bed before he returns. Before she goes to bed she gets her husband's food ready which he eats when he gets home. Decisions about time use are often more flexible for men and their decisions can have repercussions on family nutrition. In Vunivutu women noted that if men are not home on time to assist with dinner, for example to kill or cut up meat then women **'fetch other food for dinner and probably buy tin meat to prepare for dinner.'**

Women in Vunivutu stated that decisions about planting and selling vegetables is usually made by both husband and wife. However in some cases decision-making is largely taken by male family members and particularly husbands. One woman stated that **'husbands decide what work needs to be done'** and another stated that she does not have any say in the areas that are used for gardening or the types of vegetables that are planted as these decisions are taken solely with her husband. She states, **'my husband makes decisions about food – what we plant – what we eat – what we have to do. He decides what we eat each meal – breakfast, lunch and dinner.'** She added that perhaps she could share her opinion but she rarely does. While she would like to have chickens and eggs these now have to be purchased from town because they no longer own chickens. Her husband says they eat everything in the garden and he does not plan to build a chicken coop. Another women stated **'men make the decisions all the time about farming issues'** while another stated that women decide what to plant and cook. Men in the focus group said **'women list what to buy'**, adding that sometimes men make these decisions. Women's ability to move about freely and independently would appear to be much more restricted in Vunivutu where all women, apart from widows, stated that they never went shopping in town alone, only with their husbands.

Sometimes wives make decisions without their husbands knowing to help their family or other community members. One woman explained that she gives sugar, salt, oil or other things to people who come and ask and only tells her husband about it afterwards. Widows who live by themselves or with their children usually have complete freedom to eat what and when they like or eat, however unilateral decision-making can have its drawbacks. **'I have to do all the decisions now because I'm alone. Before we used to share thoughts and make decisions together. Now if I have enough livestock I can sell it but it's mostly for eating.'** Decision-making in the home often becomes the sole responsibility for elderly widows and this is not necessarily a welcome change as one woman in Vunivutu laments, **'I'm all alone and there is nobody to share decisions about cooking and what to eat. I have to plan**

everything by myself. In Vunivutu, limited access to information and experience in making key household decisions would suggest many widows are ill equipped to make the transition. Women and men with disabilities eat food that family members or others have prepared and rarely have any say in the matter, even if they do not like the food.

Household conflict

While women in both communities often make decisions about food choices for meals either by themselves or together with their husbands, decision-making about meal times can sometimes be another matter. Given often heavy workloads, there are times when women are busy and unable to prepare meals on time. In these cases, men in Raviravi noted that this could sometimes result in ***'verbal abuse and exchange of words' or 'heated arguments'***. Men in Vunivutu stated that when men drink kava alone or with neighbours it sometimes leads to arguments. One woman in Vunivutu stated, ***'sometimes my husband gets angry when the food is late. I just say wait' adding 'I understand if he gets angry because he works hard and gets hungry.'*** Men also noted that arguments between husbands and wives sometimes arise related to food shortages and added that religious leaders encourage couples to help each other during times of crisis. A woman interviewed also noted that husbands could get angry if food is not prepared on time.

During the focus group discussion women in Raviravi stated ***'we hardly have any conflicts within our families'; 'our family understands if meals are not prepared on time as we women sometimes are busy the whole day doing other duties like washing, collecting firewood, fishing, gardening...'; and 'we have never experienced anything like domestic violence in our village.'*** One man in the village noted ***'when dinner preparation is late by women, then there is an exchange of words or sometimes verbal abuse by men to the women in front of the children which can be heard by neighbours.'*** According to the community health nurse, there has been no reported rape case or injuries sustained from case of domestic violence. Comments suggest that women do not consider verbal abuse to be a form of violence.

Decisions about money

Access and control of income varies among households.²⁸ In Vunivutu women and men stated that women and men usually make decisions together about household income, for example to sell livestock. Women and men generally noted similar purchases and expenses such as food, spices, clothes, school stationery, dish soap and washing power, insect repellent, medicine, education, and transportation, seedlings and other personal items. Some of the women said that they save money to buy gold or clothing for special occasions like Diwali and weddings and listen to the radio for any sales. Another woman interviewed said her family overseas sent clothes and shoes and she spent all of their money to buy school supplies and food, adding ***'everything is expensive here so I don't buy clothes and things for Diwali and other times.'***

The shopkeeper in Vunivutu noted that she and her husband discuss and decide on all food-related needs, issues and purchases together. ***'We discuss the running of our small shop together, make joint decisions about stock for the canteen, and discuss other family issues and who should do what and when.'*** She noted that she did not have a bank account or any savings and divided her money into three – for rent, to buy canteen goods and to pay for family

²⁸ According to the Financial Competency of Low Income Households in Fiji (2012) men were more likely to state they were responsible for the management of household income and spending. Seventy percent of men stated they or they and their spouse were responsible for the management of household income, compared to 54% of women. Sixty three percent (63%) of men stated that they, or they and their spouse, are responsible for the management of household spending, compared to 45% of women. This was generally consistent across both iTaukei and Fijians of Indian descent. However, generally, women appear to be more prudent financial managers than men. Seventy four percent (74%) of women stated they tried to put money aside to pay for essential spending, compared to 55% of men.

expenses, bills, food and other things adding ***‘we don’t earn extra money to buy much for ourselves’***.²⁹ In other cases, men look after money that women earn. A man interviewed stated that ***‘women decide the menu but men control the money’*** and a woman reported that she gives the money from sales of goats, beans and cabbage to her husband to manage since he makes decisions about how to use the money and decides how much they will save and how they will spend. Another woman earning money from selling *suluka* stated that they both she and her husband make decisions about the use of money while another said earnings from *suluka* that she sells to women in the market is given to her husband to look after and which is then used to buy food.

Both men and women are aware of the need to save money in response to food scarcity due to prolonged wet or dry seasons or extreme weather events. Men said they mostly discuss with their wives to take out savings to pay for food during times of drought, adding that a few households struggle at that time to have three proper meals a day. One woman noted that she saves some money for the dry seasons when she has to buy more food. As with their male counterparts, women mainly said money was saved for ***‘unexpected events or put it away just in case’***.

In Raviravi men noted that money is used to buy sugar, salt, noodles, tin fish sometimes, egg, yeast, flour, rice, batteries, Panadol, washing powder and bath soap, adding they also buy cigarettes, *yaqona* and alcohol but only sometimes. Men noted that they decide if and how their own income will be spent or saved and that although both women and men earn money men still control how income is used. In some cases, women find a way to circumvent this control. One woman stated that although her husband only wants them to have one bank account in his name several years ago she opened her own account without his knowledge. She did this ***‘to save some money on my own because of my children’s future’***, adding ***‘it’s a bad idea keeping money at home.’*** Another woman also in the village stated that she has a bank account with ANZ with savings from selling pigs and money earned from canteen sales and spends her earnings on clothes, food, and things for her grandchildren. Women in the village also noted that they use money to meet community obligations – church village, school, and other village committees.

The *Turaga ni Koro* recognises that women should have opportunities to earn income but personally prefers to take on this role. He explains his position by saying ***‘in this time and era I support the view that women can help in any way they can. However, for me I rather have my wife at home, to look after our home affairs while I go and look for money.’*** Any money earned is given to his wife to manage ***‘as she budgets well and then we have less arguments.’*** They discuss together what to buy for the week or month and have to budget well since his son travels daily to Seaqaqa go to secondary school.

Women and men interviewed who have a disability do not earn any money or make any decisions about money.

5.4 Meaningful participation in community decision-making and leadership

Representation and leadership

The gender dimensions of governance and community decision-making differ significantly between the two communities. Men in Raviravi noted that all the community members can discuss issues, however decisions rest

²⁹ The PFIP report (2012) highlights that overall, men appear to have greater engagement with the formal financial system and were more likely to state they had a bank account and kept savings in a bank as compared with women who were more likely to state they kept savings hidden at home. Gender difference in bank account ownership is particularly acute in rural Indo-Fijian households where forty percent (40%) of women living in rural communities stated they had a bank account compared to sixty four percent (64%) of Indo-Fijian men.

with the *'bose vanua'* – the meeting of clan or *mataqali* leaders who have the final say in terms of development, rules and laws at village level and as is the case throughout Fiji, all of these leaders are men.

Religion plays an important role in the spiritual lives of both women and men in both communities. In villages, religious leaders respect and adhere to existing traditional leadership structures and traditional rules and obligations and advise people on spiritual, family and traditional matters and social issues. Religious leaders are largely male and they consult with village chiefs about plans and advise them on related matters. With few exceptions, positions of village and religious leadership are held by men. Men in Raviravi noted that male village elders normally take on leadership roles in the community and the village headman was elected by the community based on his hard work and contributions to his family and the community.

Men in Raviravi noted that all community members above age 18 should attend village meetings and this included men, women, youth, elderly and people with disabilities. Women also agreed saying that every member of the village attends meetings called by the Turaga ni Koro except those who are sick and added, ***'women are given the freedom to voice our opinion during village meetings.'*** Men stated that men actively participate in village meetings and are part of most committees including those relating to water, food security and the school, but also felt ***'women have a voice and strong participation and presence in village meetings.'*** It would however appear that participation is not exactly equitable, as men noted, ***'men always participate in all discussions, however if issues arise relating to women, then women actively participate.'*** The Turaga ni Koro stated that women participate in meetings and their views are usually considered, stating that women ***'are part and parcel of the discussion and their voice and comments are taken into consideration at most times.'*** One woman interviewed stated that she always attends village meetings and is allowed to voice her opinion and sometimes speaks her mind but added that some of the women are always quiet at meetings. Although women are given the opportunity to contribute to some, but not all discussions, barriers to meaningful participation, including in decision-making, remain.

Women in Vunivutu do not participate in public decision-making of any kind or hold any community leadership positions. Women stated that they do not attend any meetings, apart from those organised by religious or church groups for women's groups held in their temple. When asked about women's participation in community meetings men stated that ***'women mostly attend to chores in the home', 'the walk is far and they prefer to stay home'*** and ***'in most cases the men tell wives to stay back.'*** They added that men make most decisions without consulting women and youth, apart from decisions men make jointly with women about temple issues. Overall they said that there have been few changes or progress in women's attendance, participation and leadership in the community. One man noted that ***'there would be improvement if men gave opportunities to women to participate and for women's voice to be heard'***. While a small minority of men in the discussion felt this way, most men in the evidently did not feel the same and made side comments such as ***'you men are soft on your wives.'***

A women's representatives in Labasa stated that she attends a lot of meetings, for example for the Catholic Women's group, *Soqosoqo Vakamarama*, and Retired Teachers but added ***'most women are really not interested in discussing or taking part in any of these meetings.'*** She also attends church group meetings where they discuss healthy diets and sometimes shares information with others seeking advice about nutrition or when they are ill.

Findings from this study suggest that overall women are not involved in response activities. As one women's representatives stated, ***'In reality very few women participate in the relief work. Men always making decisions and gender dimensions are never addressed at all.'***

Various factors influence women's ability to participate in public discussions and decision-making. Women stated that the Area Councillor normally calls a meeting about NGO activities or visits from government but only men attend, adding ***'we really don't know much about any of this because only the men go.'*** Reasons given for their lack of attendance at meetings include ***'we very busy with housework, looking after everything'***, ***'it's difficult for women to participate because they are too busy, have too much to do'*** and ***'men have more time.'*** They also highlighted the long distance to travel to get to meetings - which presumably is the same for men. Lack of experience and limited self-confidence also play a role as ***'many women would not feel comfortable saying anything at meetings because they are too shy'***. Women also said that they would need permission from their husbands to attend a meeting and might be interested to listen, but not necessary speak; saying if offered the opportunity ***'we could maybe go and listen if they came but it's never happened.'*** They added that they would be less keen to go to a meeting if it did not seem relevant, for example a visit by a government official³⁰, but added that they would try their best to attend if it was held by ADRA because ***'we want to learn something.'***

Ideal times for women to attend community meetings and activities are between 10 am – 12 pm after they have finished all the early morning work since they are also busy in the afternoon and do gardening and cooking in the evening. They noted that even if they were free they would not go at night. As noted previously, attendance at any activities after 6 pm would be particularly unlikely among Hindu women who are menstruating.

Physical impairments coupled with stigma and negative attitudes of others can further hinder the participation of both men and women in public discussions and decision-making fora. In both communities, women and men with disabilities said they do not attend community meetings and usually receive information from family members. Men in Raviravi noted that people with disabilities can face physical challenges to attend village meetings, as well as discrimination stating ***'they might feel their inputs are not considered and most times taken as jokes.'*** An elderly man with a disability stated that he stays home, does not attend any village meetings or participate in any community activities ***'because of his disability'*** stating ***'only people who do the work talk so I just better stay home.'*** He does not make any contributions to any decision-making whatsoever but added that he is happy with everything and ***'goes around the village to talk, laugh and joke around'*** and is well cared for by his relatives. Caregivers of people with disabilities and very young children face an additional hurdle to be able to participate in meetings and activities.

Committee membership and leadership

Both communities have various committees for example dealing with water, health, school and religion as well as the 'ADRA Committee' and Disaster Committee which is also being set up by the project. In Raviravi women noted that the village had formed two committees, namely the Health Welfare Committee and the ADRA Committee. Unlike the men, women did not refer to the Water Committee, likely because it does not include any female members. Women's

³⁰ Men in Vunivutu stated that they found attendance at consultations that did not relate to agriculture or sugar to be least enjoyable or rewarding.

membership on these committees differs significantly. In Raviravi most, but not all committees have both female and male members, who are nominated by community members. Referring to her participation in the School and Disaster committees one woman stated ***'it is a big role but I love to participate in everything.'*** Men noted that there is equal decision-making by women and men on the committees. Apart from the women's group set up for pearl farming, all committees in the village have male leaders.

In Vunivutu, membership in all committees is exclusively male, except for the temple association. Women stated that they do not have any committees but then added ***'there is a school committee but only men are members and a few women may be aware of other committees.'*** Other women noted that ADRA had helped to establish a Disaster Committee and also an Agriculture Committee but added ***'we don't know anything about it or who is on it.'*** All of the committees are led by men and men stated that men decide by consensus and have the final say with little input from women. Leadership in the temple also rests with men. As one woman noted, ***'the men mostly hold leadership roles. I don't think women have even been in any decision-making role ever in this community.'***

Table 6 Participation in community decision-making

Participation in community decision-making Committee membership and leadership		
	Raviravi	Vunivutu
Water committee	Male members only (M 100%)	Male members only (M 100%) Looks after water services such as plumbing and collecting \$15 water bill for a year.
Health and Welfare Committee	4 members: 2 male and 2 female (M 50 %, F 50%) including the village nurse. Purpose: <i>'To look after the welfare of the community'</i> (Men's FGD) According to women duties of the committee include: <i>'Clean village surroundings, water, dig up drains, upkeep of livestock, clean rubbish dump, check toilet facilities, clean up foreshore, plant vegetables. All women take part in these activities and (male) landowners give their consent to use the land.'</i>	Male members only (M100%)
Resilience and Agriculture Committee (Generally referred to as the 'ADRA Committee' by community members)	7 members: 4 men and 3 women (60% M, 40% F – including the Chairman (M), the <i>Turaga ni Koro</i> (M), secretary (F) and village nurse (F) Also called ADRA and Agriculture Committee by some. Purpose: focal point of discussion to implement ADRA's Pro-resilience project.	7 members, all male (M 100%) including the Chair and Community Leader
Disaster Committee	6 members: 4 women and 2 men (F 67%, M 33%) Role and work to be discussed by village meeting whether ADRA Committee will be the same membership as ADRA Committee	Being discussed by ADRA Committee likely to be same membership as ADRA Committee

School	Female and male members	Male members only (M 100%) Deals with school issues and management
Faith-based groups	Women's groups – all female members (100% F)	Temple, <i>Ramayan Madali</i> – both women and men, some said mainly women
Fiji Sugar Corporation (FSC)		Male members only. Looks after sugar cane farmers' interests.

5.5 Summary of key findings

A) Access to and control over resources

As in the case throughout Fiji, land is generally owned or leased by men, decision-making about land largely rests with men, and government officials consult only male landowners and lessees. While some widows inherit land, legal ownership does not guarantee women control and decision-making often rests with their late husband's male relatives or sons-in-law. In some cases, women may be required to vacate property or give up land upon the death of their husband. The most fertile land is dedicated to root crops or sugar cane production. While these are largely considered an area of male responsibility and control, food and income derived from these activities is generally used to meet the needs of the family and ensure they have security of tenure. Women in the settlement have less access to marine resources than men, however fish caught by men are mainly for household consumption. Women and men share the same views regarding the availability and quality of water in their respective communities. However while women generally have the same access to water as men they do not participate in community water resources management in either community.

Channels of communication and access to information

Overall, women in the settlement have extremely limited opportunities to access information and significantly less access compared with their male counterparts and women living in the village. Women in the village access information via traditional governance structures and are generally well informed about upcoming visits and activities. Channels of communication appear to be less effective in the settlement. While communication can also bypass certain men and families living in more remote and less accessible areas, most women, especially widows living on their own and people with disabilities, are much less likely to receive information. Few women in the settlement are consulted during post disaster needs assessments or listed as direct beneficiaries, although some may be informed of assistance to support food security and rebuild livelihoods from husbands or fathers. Women interviewed in the settlement have very limited awareness of climate change, however men who belong to cane farmer associations may have more access to climate information. Both women and men in the village are aware of climate change and eager to receive more information and technical support to improve food production.

B) Gender roles, divisions of labour and workload

Agriculture and livestock

Gender roles related to agriculture are generally fixed, with men responsible for preparing the land to grow and harvest root crops while women tend vegetables gardens closer to home. In some households, husbands work together with their wives in the garden or help them occasionally. In a few cases, men take complete responsibility for vegetable gardening. Women and men take on a variety of similar and complementary tasks related to livestock, however certain roles are based on gender norms; for example men's role in killing birds or women's role milking cows. Women in the village sometimes require additional labour and even those with husbands sometimes call upon male youth to work in their gardens or to help raise pigs, paying them in cash or exchanging livestock for labour.

Fishing

Fishing activities in the village are undertaken by both women and men on a regular basis. Women appear to have considerable freedom to fish when and with whom they choose, at times going out alone on the flats, or with other women or in large mixed groups to fish on the reef. In the settlement, it is mainly men who fish, whereas women who go out fishing do so occasionally and only with their husbands or together with another couple. Both women and men from the village sell fish in the market with women generally concentrating on the sale of seafood. In both

communities, men generally highlighted fishing as a subsistence and income-generating activity, whereas women also emphasised the social aspects of fishing.

Other income-generating activities

Women sell surplus vegetables and fruit in the market, from their homes, and to people in the community. They also occasionally sell livestock from home, signalling their interest through word of mouth. Both women and men face challenges getting their goods to market due to the distance and expenses involved. Women from the settlement stated they never go to Labasa alone or with other women but only go with their husbands. Men are largely responsible for growing and harvesting sugar cane, although women play key roles in certain stages of sugar cane production and in some cases, work as labourers. Men and women in the settlement make *suluka* and sell it in the market. Although women play a key role in these activities, men usually control the income using it either to shop with their wives or giving them the money to buy food and household items. Although largely designed as a 'women's project', harvesting and making pearl jewellery provides income for both men and women in the village with activities often designated according to gender. Men receive slightly more money based on the physical effort involved in the task. Both women and men in the village appear to have benefited from external technical support, while in the settlement men have largely been the main beneficiaries of technical support, mainly for sugar cane, although wives and families benefit indirectly.

Household roles

Women are largely responsible for household chores such as cleaning the house, washing clothes and caring for children, the elderly and people who are ill within their immediate and extended families. They also prepare meals, cook for family and relatives, clean up and wash dishes. Some men occasionally help with food preparation or cooking, for example when women are busy with other work although some men, particularly in the settlement, do not assist with meals at all. Some women stated a preference for food that can be prepared and cooked quickly - highlighting their interest in reducing their food-related workload. Daughters help their mothers with household chores and food-related activities and sons might also help with some of these tasks. Gathering firewood is a daily activity for women in the village. Men also collect firewood, especially when heavy rain or storms are forecast. In the settlement, it is primarily men's responsibility to collect firewood from nearby bush and mangroves. They often use bullocks to pull heavy loads and are sometimes accompanied by their wives. Women's daily use of indoor fires for cooking places their respiratory health and vision at risk. Women in the village dry fish and some pickle fruits. Women in the settlement preserve a much larger quantity and range of food; drying fruits, making chutneys and jams, and freezing food when there is an oversupply. Preserved food is for eating in the off-season, as well as to prepare for extreme weather conditions and disasters. Sometimes their husbands help with this activity.

Awareness of NCDs and responsibility for nutrition

There appears to be limited awareness among women and men of the prevalence of anaemia or special dietary needs of certain groups. However, women and men are aware of non-communicable diseases and the importance of good nutrition and are keen to receive more specific guidance about healthy eating. Women and men in the settlement tend to view nutrition as a shared responsibility, whereas women and men in the village generally feel this responsibility lies with women. Some men in the village stated that they promote family nutrition, for example discouraging their children from eating noodles and junk food.

Workload, seasonal variation, hazards and other challenges

Women generally have long days and get up earlier and go to bed later than men. Some, but not all, husbands occasionally help their wives, for example when they have too much work or are ill. Men generally have more leisure

time than women and some drink kava in the evenings. Women's relaxation time in the evening often involves carrying out other activities such as childcare, other household chores, or income-generating pursuits. While the presence of young children generally results in heavier workloads for mothers, older children often help to relieve the workload, particularly during school breaks and holidays where they take on gender-designated roles that align with those of their parents. As children move out of the house, and increasingly away from the community altogether, some women find their workload increases without these extra hands to help around the house. For church functions, community and family events and religious holidays women come together to prepare and cook food, collect firewood, do extra cleaning, decorate and various other tasks. Although these additional chores add to women's workload they are generally considered enjoyable due to their social dimension. Men also carry out a range of tasks to prepare for these events but may have more time to relax and enjoy the occasion since women are largely responsible for serving food and cleaning up afterwards.

Women and men in both communities carry out physically arduous and time-consuming tasks. Some of the more difficult tasks undertaken by men, such as preparing land or harvesting crops and sugar cane are mainly seasonal and have a fixed time frame, whereas most activities carried out by women are done on a daily basis throughout the year. Both women and men face increased workloads during extreme wet and prolonged dry seasons and after disasters when they carry out a range of tasks that typically align with their normal gender-differentiated roles. In the dry season women collect extra water for drinking and other household chores and spend more time watering the garden. In the settlement where water quality is poor, women are generally responsible for filling containers with rainwater and may be assisted by children. Men also help to collect water when supplies run low or they hear a cyclone warning. In the rainy season they collect extra firewood, dig drains for gardens and fields and around houses, cut cassava plants and harvest extra root crops. Household relations can deteriorate following extreme or prolonged weather events as workloads increase, food production slows, and savings are used to buy food.

Access to support and groups at risk

Intersecting risks coupled with caregiving responsibilities can seriously comprise some women's food security and health. Widows and people with disabilities are particularly at risk of food scarcity or poor nutrition and often face challenges to meet their basic food needs and access social welfare. Heavy workload and loneliness particularly affect the food security and mental wellbeing of widows. Traditional safety nets, social assistance, and money sent by family members are often insufficient to meet the needs of the most vulnerable, particularly during difficult planting seasons or following disasters. This study suggests an apparent lack of coordination to ensure the needs of people most at risk are adequately addressed in normal times or when the whole community is struggling.

C) Participation in household decision-making

Household decision-making takes various forms. Many women make decisions such as what and where to plant, what to buy, and what to eat together with their husbands. In some families, these decisions rest largely with men. This is more apparent in the settlement where some women have little to no role in household decision-making. In general, men often have more flexibility to make decisions about the use of their own time, for example they may arrive late for dinner after drinking kava. However, when dinner is not ready on time arguments can sometimes ensue with verbal abuse from husbands towards wives.

Women and men in these communities have very limited discretionary income and generally use money to pay for family expenses such as food and household items, school supplies, and occasionally for personal items. Both women and men are aware of the need to save for unexpected events, including disasters, although some people earn too little money to be able to put any aside. Both women and men hold traditional ideas about men being the main breadwinners, even when women play key roles in generating income for the family. While some women earn and

control their own money, more often their earnings are controlled by men, especially among those living in the settlement. Few men in the village 'allow' their wives to control family income 'in order to avoid arguments.' Some women make their own decisions about money, at times without their husband knowing, for example to save money, open a bank account or to help others.

D) Meaningful participation in community decision-making

Women face a range of barriers to meaningfully participate in community decision-making and these are often further constrained by additional factors such as disability. Women in the village have opportunities to participate in some, but not all, community discussions and decision-making via community governance structures. Women in the village are elected members of village committees - except the Water Committee - and both women and men feel they have a voice in these settings. Women in the settlement do not attend meetings and do not belong to any committees. In both communities, leadership positions of all committees are held by men. Women and women's groups have not been involved in response activities. Men in the village, including the *Turaga ni Koro*, are generally supportive of women's participation in meetings and on committees, whereas men in the settlement are much more resistant to women participating in public meetings. Although some men appear to be open to change there is significant male peer pressure to maintain existing gender norms and some sense of overall control over women. While some women in the village feel comfortable sharing their views in meetings, others lack the self-confidence and skills needed to effectively contribute to discussions.

Barriers and constraints to women's participation in community decision-making

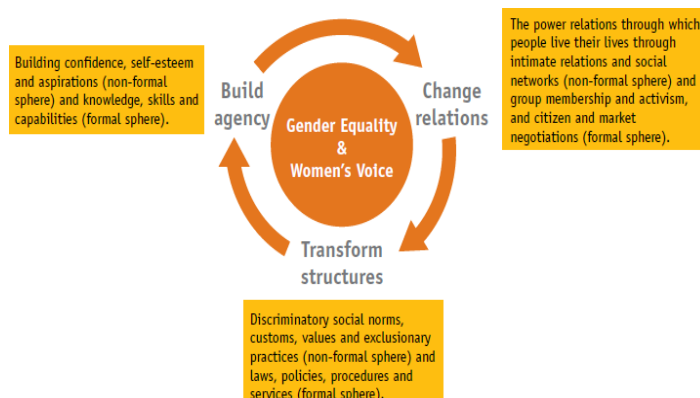
Some of the factors influencing women's ability to participate in public discussions and decision-making:

- Heavy workload
- Taking care of children, people who have disabilities, are elderly or sick
- Limited access to information generally and about community meetings or activities
- Distance to meeting locations, safety traveling to meetings in the evening
- Gender norms
- Resistance from men, male peer pressure
- Household decision-making and control over personal mobility
- Perceived relevance of topic and ability to meaningfully contribute to discussions

6. Recommendations

The following recommendations are intended to inform and guide the Pro-Resilience *Vakarau Wai* project and are based on CARE's gender transformative approach. In other words, program strategies that seek to build social attitudes, behaviours and structures that support gender equality for people and communities. This includes ongoing and intentional approaches to promote gender equality and explicit strategies to engage with men and boys, as well as promote women's empowerment.

CARE's Gender Equality Framework is based on experience that shows that achieving gender equality and women's voice requires change in three connected areas: **agency, structures and relations**. Based on a systematic identification of issues contributing to gender inequalities, the aim is to: build agency of people of all genders and life stages; change relations between them; and transform structures, in order that they realise full potential in their public and private lives and are able to contribute equally to, and benefit equally from, social, political and economic development.



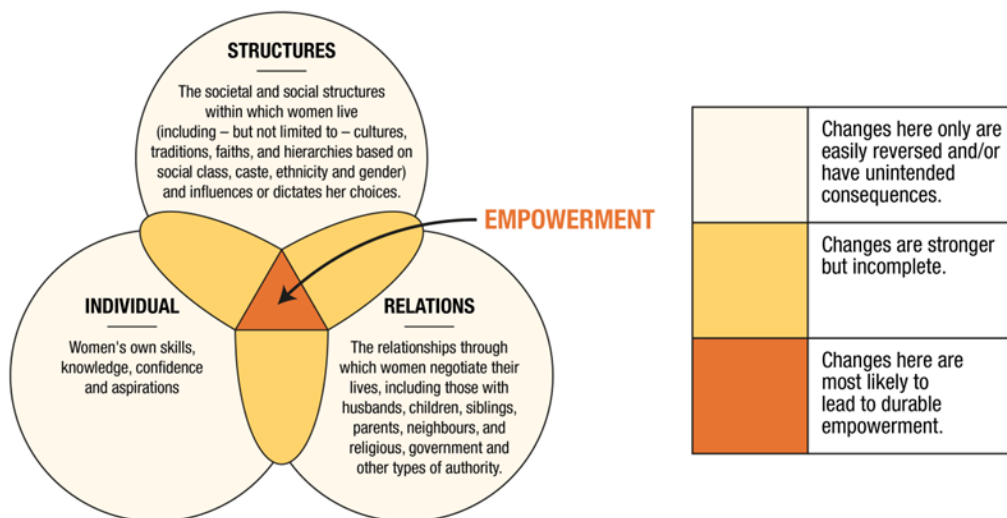
Gender equality and women's empowerment	
Build agency: strengthen women's capacity, confidence and skills (Individual)	
1.	Develop strategies to ensure women have equal opportunities to meaningfully participate in project activities and training, particularly in areas where women do not normally attend community meetings and training. Ensure women are informed and involved in all water infrastructure aspects of the project.
2.	Work with community leaders and female and male community members to identify individuals with high risk factors, including widows, people with disabilities, single mothers, and others and develop strategies to ensure they benefit equally from the project.
3.	Foster and support women's participation and leadership within a broader gender-responsive project. Take small but meaningful steps in communities where women's participation is low, creating safe spaces and an enabling environment, for example conducting same sex meetings and training sessions to build women's capacity, self-confidence and skills.
Change relations: enabling more equal relationships and social norms (Relations)	
4.	Support gender equality programming, with women and men separately, as well as together to address power dynamics, unequal workloads, and to promote shared decision-making in the home, including about own and household income. Integrate appropriate gender equality messaging into community training, awareness campaigns, manuals and radio programmes.

5. Train men alongside women in nutrition and food preservation techniques, using men's interest in nutrition as an entry point to raise awareness about women's workload related to food-related activities and household chores generally and promote a more equitable division of labour in the home. Involve men in child care.
6. Use approaches that engage men and boys to support gender equality and changes in gender relations while also identifying risks and developing strategies to mitigate against potential backlash. Consider including approaches that support healthy relationships and effective household conflict resolution. Work with traditional, religious and community leaders to begin to initiate changes in decision-making and gender relations within their own households and actively promote gender equality within the larger community. Identify and support potential male role models and champions of gender equality.

**Transform structures: influencing formal and informal institutions
(Structures)**

7. Promote gender-balanced membership and women's meaningful participation in community decision-making structures and processes, particularly in communities where women do not have a strong voice, identifying and addressing barriers and constraints faced by women and particularly those at risk.
8. Conduct ongoing awareness raising and advocacy for women's participation and decision-making with local government officials and food security stakeholders at all levels, including during disasters (see additional recommendations for disasters below.)
9. Increase the engagement of local women's groups in the project and explore opportunities and partnerships to strengthen the capacity of women's groups to support food security and livelihood initiatives, including during disaster response and recovery.

Safety net programs	4) Work with community leaders and gender-balanced committees to ensure all women and men in all their diversity and individuals and households most at risk of food insecurity and poor nutrition are identified and strengthen linkages with social welfare programs.
Gender and emergency FSL interventions	5) Collect and analyse data disaggregated by sex, age, disability and other risk factors and ensure gender issues are substantively addressed in all post disaster needs assessments. 6) Ensure women, particularly those with higher risk factors, and marginalised groups are consulted at all stages of the response and have opportunities to provide feedback. 7) Support the engagement of local women's CSOs in humanitarian action.
Cash and vouchers	8) Before and after a disaster ensure women, as well as men receive cash and vouchers and have equal opportunities to be involved in FSL cash-based interventions. 9) Together with communities and affected groups and individuals identify and develop solutions to address specific barriers and constraints faced by women and certain groups to access and benefit from the assistance (especially widows, people with disabilities and their caregivers, young single mothers and female headed households with very low incomes). 10) Advocate to government and FSL Cluster members to ensure women, as well as men receive cash and vouchers and have equal opportunities to be involved in cash-based interventions, also making sure any associated risks of gender-based violence are identified and mitigated.



Recommendations for the overall program approach

1. Develop a gender action plan with priority actions that can be implemented for the remainder of the project.
2. Ensure male and female staff use approaches that continually foster gender equality, equal opportunities and shared decision-making. Support gender training for male and female staff and volunteers and use approaches to engage male staff, volunteers and male community members and leaders to avoid backlash and support male champions for gender equality.
3. Support community ownership of the program, including of its gender equality objectives, among both women and men to allow them to see and sustain positive changes and address any challenges.
4. Ensure targeted communities have both a female and male ADRA project representative with shared roles and responsibilities and gender-balanced committees with shared roles and opportunities for leadership.
5. Explicitly target communities where women's participation in public decision-making is very low and develop strategies to address barriers and constraints, taking small incremental steps towards change.
6. Strengthen diversity and involve Indo-Fijian women, as well as men, in the project as staff and volunteers particularly to support community engagement and training in the settlements.
7. Work with women and men in communities to identify and address any barriers or constraints to women's meaningful participation and decision-making in the project. Ensure activities do not increase women's workload and involve men to help alleviate women's workload.
8. Continue to advocate for and champion gender equality and women's empowerment in all ADRA programming, identifying appropriate entry points and drawing on the organisation's wider community-focused approach.³¹
9. Support transparency and accountability by involving women and men in participatory self-assessments and monitoring of impacts, especially those related to gender equality and women's empowerment. Ensure women have regular access to information about the project and related FSL activities in their community and have regular opportunities to provide ideas and feedback. Disaggregate and analyse data to the widest extent possible to identify groups that are making more or less progress towards gender equality.
10. Reflect and report on progress and challenges to support gender equality. Use qualitative and quantitative gender-sensitive indicators to monitor, evaluate and share learning related to the positive (and any negative) impacts on women and men and any changes related to gender equality and women's empowerment in each domain of the Gender Equality Framework, namely Agency, Relations and Structures.

³¹ The *Turaga ni Koro* in Raviravi noted that he thought 'gender' is always about women's rights and LGBTQ but said that he was happy with the discussions and approach of the study since it enlightened him on what gender actually means and how women and men have different needs. He recommended that gender awareness training be conducted in the village by organisations like ADRA that are seen as neutral.

7. Conclusion

While this small study focused on only two communities in a specific area of Fiji, it is apparent that gender issues and relations are both similar (and to some extent universal) but also vary considerably. However, it is important to note that these recommendations are based solely on an analysis of the contexts of the communities involved in the study. Clearly food security, livelihood and nutrition needs and priorities will differ among and between women and men living in smaller and larger urban and peri-urban areas, more remote rural areas in the interior, as well as small islands in Fiji. Different contexts will require different combinations of interventions and priorities.

In order to get a full picture of gender issues and the gender dimensions of FSL further research is recommended, particularly among urban and peri-urban populations where nutrition is likely to be poorer in some areas, and among households who have less access to land and less time to grow and prepare nutritious food; as well as easier access to processed food and sugary drinks. In these areas women, particularly those of Indian descent, may have more mobility and freedom of movement as compared with their rural counterparts. As a result they may have better access to information and income-earning opportunities. They may also have a higher workload or less time to carry out domestic duties.

It is hoped that ongoing reflection of the findings, as well as the collection of data from additional communities, will help ensure FSL strategies and activities effectively respond to the local realities of women and men of all ages and in all their diversity including those with disabilities and other intersecting risk factors, while also enhancing gender equality and fostering the empowerment of women and girls.

Annex A Demographic details of the selected communities

Raviravi

Source: Village Headman Report 2017

Total population	Total HHs	Total FHHs	Total male	Total female	Infant 0 – 5		Child 6–14		Adult 15-21		22 –35		36 - 65		66 +	
					M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
126	34	0	63 50%	63 50%	8 42%	11 58%	18 67%	9 43%	7 58%	5 42%	8 38%	13 62%	19 51%	18 49%	3 30%	7 70%

Health problem	No. of people	Age
Hypertension/high blood pressure	7	Between 40-75 years
Visually impaired (macular degeneration)	2 (siblings)	Between 60-70 years
Stroke	1	

Source: Raviravi Strategic Development Plan 2017

Vunivutu

Source: Vunivutu Nursing Station, 20 December 2018

Total population	Total HHs	Total FHHs	Total male	Total female	Infant < 5 yrs		Child 5 - 17 yrs		Adult 18 - 55 yrs		Senior >55 yrs	
					M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
106	29	4	44 42%	62 58%		2 100%	6 27%	16 73%	33 50%	33 50%	5 31%	11 69%

Health Problems	Children	Men	Women
Low Weight/Moderate Malnutrition	3		
Skin Diseases (boils, fungal infection, scabies etc.)	6	30	10
Respiratory Conditions (coughing, asthma, etc.)	6	25	25
Musco-skeletal (muscular pain, knee pain, arthritis)		40	10
Digestive Conditions (diarrhea, constipation)	2	25	25
Hypertension/High Blood Pressure		10	50

Source: Community Health Nurse, February 2019

Notes:

- There is limited data was available for Raviravi and available health data is not disaggregated by age or sex.
- Ages were categorised differently in the communities. Available data suggests that people are considered adults at 15 years and above in Raviravi although the official age for children in Fiji is below 18 years of age.
- In Raviravi, there are equal numbers of females and males overall, while in Vunivutu there are more females (58%) than males (42%).
- There are no female-headed households in Raviravi, while almost 12% of households in Vunivutu are headed by females.
- There are slightly more girls than boys under 5 years (58% girls as compared to 42% boys) in Raviravi.
- There are significantly more boys (67%) than girls (43%) between 5 and 14 years of age in Raviravi and almost three times as many girls (73%) as boys (27%) aged 5 to 17 years in Vunivutu. Reasons unknown.
- There are significantly more females (62%) than males (38%) between 22-35 years in Raviravi. Reasons unknown.

- In Vunivutu there are more than twice as many women aged 55 years and above (69% women as compared with 31% men). In Raviravi there are more than twice as many elderly women age 66 years and above. These figures are generally in keeping with national and global trends where women tend to live longer than men.
- Health information provided by the Community Health Nurse in February 2019 highlighted four times as many musco- skeletal issues such as muscle pain, knee pain and arthritis among men as compared with women and five times the rate of hypertension/high blood pressure among women as compared with men. These rates differ considerably with data collected for the National Nutrition Survey (2015) which highlights only slightly more females (19.2%) than males (14.4%) with hypertension. Data for children was not disaggregated by data and no data was provided on the rates of diabetes or anaemia.

Annex B List of participants and key informants

Raviravi village Participants in focus group discussion					
No.	Name	Sex	Age	Role	Impairment
1.	Mere Turagavou	Female	39	Housewife	
2.	Vilimaima Tinaiqasiqasi	Female	34	Housewife	
3.	Vikatoria Ramo	Female	51	Housewife	
4.	Vasemaca Malasese	Female	41	Housewife	
5.	Anasimeci Rabusa	Female	54	Treasurer Pearl Farm Disaster Committee member	
6.	Arieta Vani Raravitu	Female	44	Member of School committee and Disaster Committee	
7.	Sainimili Raravitu	Female	32	Housewife	
8.	Kinisimere Namere	Female	42	Women's group rep	
9.	Akisi Divulo	Female	41	Village health worker	
10.	Salote Tinai	Female	64	Housewife	
11.	Akanisa Didranu	Female	20	Housewife	
12.	Kalesi Nabobo	Female	31	Housewife	
13.	Emosi Qaumila	Male	49	Turaga ni Koro	
14.	Sairusi Matadrau	Male	39	Member school committee	
15.	Viliame Masuila	Male	61	Pastor	
16.	Inia Togadau	Male	28	Fisherman	
17.	Moses Sakaia	Male	18	Fisherman	
18.	Savenaca Qalo	Male	21	Fisherman	
19.	Tevita Bese	Male	53	Farmer	Difficulty walking
20.	Amania Luvuiwai	Male	19	Farmer	Epilepsy
21.	Osea Kisimai	Male	63	Farmer	Cannot speak at all
22.	Manoa Vakaletu	Male	52	Farmer	
23.	Jone Ravouvou	Male	21	Farmer	
24.	Moses Cagimaiwai	Male	37	Fisherman	
25.	Semisi Sonani	Male	34	Farmer	
26.	Inoke Ligairi	Male	83	Farmer	
27.	Inia Togadau	Male	59	Church deacon (Tuirara)	

Several women are likely also members of the Women's/Pearl Farming Group and possibly other committees but did not indicate this on the participant list.

Raviravi village Key informants					
No.	Name	Sex	Age	Role	Disability or illness
1.	Arieta Vani Raravitu	Female	45	Housewife	Diabetic
2.	Anasimeci Rabusa	Female	53	Housewife	
3.	Alani Seniceva	Female	52	Housewife	
4.	Vinau Bamasi	Female	73		Visually impaired and intellectual disability
5.	Niumaia Laivou	Male			Visually impaired
6.	Viliame Masiula	Male	61	Pastor	
7.	Emosi Qaumila	Male	49	Turaga ni Koro	

Vunivutu settlement Participants in focus group discussions					
No.	Name	Sex	Age	Role	Impairment
1.	Kamal Wati Singh	Female	61	President of Wavuwavu Gyan Mahila Mundal	
2.	Kamla	Female		Member of Wavuwavu Gyan Mahila Mundal	
3.	Asha Kinan	Female	49	Housewife	
4.	Daya Wati	Female	53	Secretary of Wavuwavu Gyan Mahila Mundal	
5.	Parvina Devi	Female	34	Administration Officer Wavuwavu Primary School	
6.	Sukh Dai	Female	71		Difficulty walking due to painful knee
7.	Anand Prakash	Male	42		
8.	Subhas Chand	Male	47		
9.	Vinesh Prasad	Male	40	Member of Water Committee	
10.	Ram Krishna	Male	63		
11.	Anwar Deo	Male	40		
12.	Surendra Prasad	Male	61	Member of Water Committee	
13.	Vinesh Prasad	Male	45		
14.	Vinesh Prasad	Male	55		
15.	Suruj Deo	Male	49		
16.	Bimlesh Kumar	Male	40		
17.	Ambika Prasad	Male	37		
18.	Umesh Prasad	Male	46		
19.	Enesh Kumar	Male	42		
20.	Jitendra D. Sharma	Male	49	Wavuwavu Primary School Manager ADRA representative	
21.	Karam Chand	Male	44		
22.	Sanil Gautam	Male	25		
23.	Sanil Naidu	Male	30		
24.	Abnesh Deo	Male	40		
25.	Jagnesh Kumar	Male	38		

Vunivutu settlement Key informants					
No.	Name	Sex	Age	Role	Impairment
1.	Ashwini Prasad	Female	43	Housewife, married to ADRA representative	
2.	Shiu Wati	Female	73	Housewife	Arthritis, can't walk, lives with grown daughter who has epilepsy, intellectual disability and difficulty speaking
3.	Daya Wati	Female	53	Housewife	
4.	Randhiya Devi	Female	41	Shop keeper	
5.	Shanti Devi	Female	50	Housewife	
6.	Isneah Lata	Female	62	Housewife	
7.	Miliana Tinaniimacea	Female	32	Community nurse	
8.	Suren Prasad	Male	61	Community leader for sugarcane in Vunivutu	
9.	Anish Kumar	Male	55	Farmer	

Focus group discussion with women's NGOs in Labasa					
No.	Name	Sex	Age	Role	Name of organisation
1.	Ateca Naigani	Female	65	Representative	Nasea Methodist Labasa
2.	Miriama Niumataiwalu	Female	52	Representative	Nasekula Women's Group Labasa
3.	Ilivani Seruvatu	Female	43	Women's Interest Assistant	Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation
4.	Lavenia Talei	Female	54	Representative	Nasekula Women's Group Labasa
5.	Vasemaca Houyte	Female	67	Representative	Women Market Vendor Association
6.	Laise Soqoqo	Female	53	Representative	Women Market Vendor Association
7.	Siliva Nayaca	Female	50	Representative	Women Market Vendor Association
8.	Anita Devi	Female	57	Member of Advisory Council	Commissioner Northern
9.	Mawam Ram	Female	58	Representative	Labasa Women's Muslim League
10.	Ilisabeta D. Koliloa*	Female	63	Representative	Soqosoqo Vakamarama Macuata
11.	Verenaisi Ditabua	Female	35	Representative	Catholic Women's Group Dogotuki
12.	Samuela Naqa	Male	40	Youth worker	Colatou Youth Group
13.	Waisale Tuidama	Male		Programme Manager for Northern Development Programme	Government of Fiji

*Ilisabeta Koliloa was also interviewed separately.

An informal meeting was also held with Teresia Ragitawa and Sari Tabi from the Labasa Women's Crisis Centre.

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