


Building Resilient and Thriving Rural Fiji: A Commitment to Inclusive Development



Rural development remains central to Fiji's national development priorities. With **44.1%** of Fiji's population residing in rural areas and almost 71,000 agricultural households identify farming as their main economic activity, agriculture remains the backbone of rural livelihoods and a critical driver of social and economic well-being in these communities. Nevertheless, the Government is supporting the development of other non-agricultural economic sectors in its efforts to tap into the huge potential to enhance growth and improve living standards of our rural citizens. The Coalition Government launched its National Development Plan 2025-2029 and Vision 2050, which sets the overall strategy for the development of our nation, having a vision of Empowering the People of Fiji through Unity. The Plan focuses on three pillars of economic resilience, people empowerment and good governance. The Plan affirms Government's commitment to undertake transformation that will gradually reduce the development gap between the urban and rural areas of Fiji. In addition, the Plan also promotes that disaster risk reduction initiatives need to be adopted if development is to be sustainable and resilient. Through its core mandate of promoting inclusive and resilient

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development in remote rural and maritime communities across Fiji, the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management (the Ministry) currently co-ordinates planning and programme implementation through the Divisional Commissioners' Offices. The Integrated Rural Development Framework, which is currently under review, had been in place since 2009 is the mechanism used to consolidate efforts of all the Government agencies to serve the rural Fiji.

The Coalition Government is prioritising enabling access for service delivery. It has mapped out measures to improve connectivity and accessibility through the construction of better roads and jetties, and provision of basic infrastructure through bridges, coastal protection, water and sanitation facilities, electricity, better drainage, communication and transportation. The Government also prioritises mobility and access to markets through the construction, upgrading and maintaining of rural roads. In addition, measures are being taken to improve the condition and quality of schools and access to health care.

The Ministry's Community Access Road, Footpaths and Footbridges complements the Fiji Roads Authority and Ministry of Public Works, Meteorological Services and Transport's rural roads programmes. The target in the National Development Plan is to construct 500 kilometres of new sealed roads in rural areas. In addition, the Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways' target in the five years is to construct and upgrade 180 farm access roads to assist the farmers, most of whom are based in the rural areas. As for rural electrification, the Government is targeting 93% of the rural population to be accessible to electricity, and 67% of the rural population to be accessible to clean and safe water in adequate quantities. The agencies that contribute to accessing clean and safe water are the Water Authority of Fiji (WAF), the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources, and the Ministry. The Ministry and WAF also have budgetary allocation to reach out to affected areas when there are water supply disruptions arising from dry-spells or droughts.

A significant tourism project that will boost the economic growth of the Northern Division's rural areas is called 'Na Vualiku Programme'. It is aimed at transforming Fiji's second largest island into a leading and thriving tourism hub. This is a \$400 million Fiji Government and World Bank collaboration to be implemented in three phases over the next 10 years. The Government will ensure

that the project achieve its aims to support sustainable tourism development, having resilient tourism infrastructure development, investments in nature-based tourism attractions and essential services and facilities, and promotion and management of protected areas. The project encourages private sector participation, targeting local resource owners as well. The project has great potential to create employment and even small and medium enterprises established by local communities.

The agriculture sector is generally associated with the rural areas across many developing countries, and the empowerment of women has been a common strategy across member CIRDAP member countries. Fiji, launched its 2022-2027 Gender in Agriculture Policy to address the gender gap in Agriculture in the country. The Gender in Agriculture policy is based on the data analysis from the Fiji Agriculture Census 2020 that shows some inequalities between women and men in the sector. The 2020 Fiji Agriculture Census recognized women's contribution to the agriculture sector, with 14% of farmers in Fiji being women. Through this Policy, Fiji is committed to achieve gender equality in agriculture, a sector of the economy that is a basis for food security, livelihoods and economic growth, including through tourism and trade.

Fiji acknowledge that CIRDAP is giving more attention to climate change and disaster risk reduction. The mainstreaming disaster risk reduction is the major thrust of the National Disaster Risk Management Act 2024, and is a core responsibility of the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development. In addition, the Ministry works closely with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change for any community that has been identified for possible relocation.

Last but not the least, the development of a National Rural Development Policy has been recognised by the Coalition Government to be key in ensuring that there is better cohesion and co-ordination in its efforts to improving the quality of life of our rural people and reducing poverty. As we commemorate World Rural Development Day, the Ministry reaffirms its commitment to building resilient, self-reliant, and thriving rural communities. Being a small island state that is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, the Ministry will collaborate with its counterparts in Government, development partners, and stakeholders to ensure that development of rural and maritime areas is undertaken responsibly and to lay the groundwork for a more equitable and sustainable Fiji. **Thank You!**