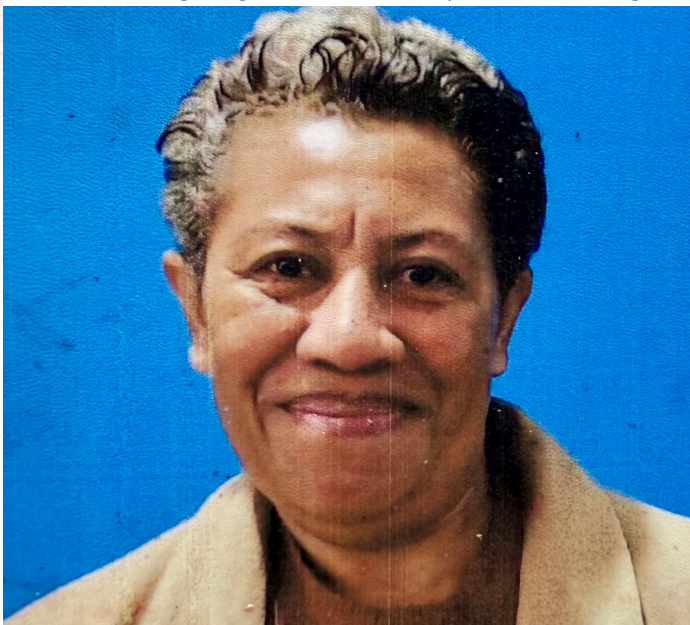


From Highlands to Islands, Fiji Champions People-Centred and Climate-Resilient Rural Development

Across the Pacific, from the windswept islands to the inland highlands, rural and maritime communities remain at the heart of our region's identity - rich in culture, strength, and resilience. In Fiji, these communities are not just part of our story; they are central to our future. At the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Risk Management (the Ministry), we are driving a transformative agenda to ensure these communities are not left behind but instead are empowered as engines of national prosperity and regional sustainability.

With a mission to eliminate poverty, strengthen climate resilience, and bridge service delivery gaps, the Ministry has pioneered a holistic model of rural development that centres people, place, and partnership. Fiji's experience offers a powerful blueprint for other island and coastal nations navigating similar development challenges -



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one that blends traditional knowledge with modern innovation, decentralised governance with central coordination, and local needs with national priorities.

STRUCTURE AND MANDATE: A WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT APPROACH

The Ministry leads Fiji's national vision for inclusive and resilient rural development. The Ministry's core responsibilities are grouped into two major categories, namely, Rural Development Programmes service delivery and National Disaster Risk Management. Our roles as outlined in our current 2021-2031 Strategic Development Plan are: (i) Rural Development Facilitator and Coordinator; (ii) Knowledge Broker; (iii) Relationship Manager; and (iv) Risk Reduction, Response and Recovery Coordinator.

The Ministry's operations are currently guided by the Integrated Rural Development Framework (IRDF) and the National Disaster Risk Management Act 2024. The implementation of development programmes is decentralised across four divisional offices - Northern, Western, Eastern, and Central - and with the district development offices that maintain a vital presence within communities.

This integrated structure enables a seamless interface between central government, local communities, civil society, and development partners, ensuring no village, settlement, or island is left behind.

FUNCTIONS AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The Ministry's core functions span across rural infrastructure, community empowerment, service delivery, and climate adaptation. Its mandate is aligned with the Fiji National Development Plan 2025-2029, the 2050 Blue Pacific Strategy, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Key priorities include:

- i. Expanding access to safe and clean water;
- ii. Facilitate access to adequate and safe housing and sanitation facilities;
- iii. Enhancing rural connectivity through roads, bridges, transport and communication links;
- iv. Empowering rural communities including women, youth, and vulnerable groups;
- v. Promoting innovation and wealth creation; and
- vi. Promote climate-resilient infrastructure and food security systems through mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction; and
- vii. Coordinating inclusive service delivery through decentralisation.

The Ministry ensures that the most geographically and socioeconomically marginalised communities—particularly those in outer islands—are prioritised in policy and practice.

PROGRAMMES THAT DRIVE TRANSFORMATION

A suite of innovative and impactful programmes implemented by the Ministry that underpins its vision of having inclusive development for productive, sustainable and resilient rural communities:

i. Rural Housing Assistance Programme (RHA)

This programme addresses housing insecurity for low-income rural families by co-funding cyclone-resilient homes. The RHA supports community dignity, health, and disaster preparedness - building safe homes and safer futures.

ii. Rural and Outer Island Development Programme (ROI)

The ROI Development Programme targets the specific needs of isolated rural communities, delivering basic infrastructure for transportation, market collection centres, communication solutions, delivering solar energy equipment, and food processing equipment. It reinforces equity across Fiji's geographic divide and affirms that no community is too far to serve.

iii. Community Access Roads, Footpaths and Footbridges Programme (CARFF)

CARFF is a programme that facilitates vital access to markets, schools, health centres and other essential services for thousands of rural Fijians. It also assists communities in providing climate adaptive solutions that allows safer movements within their communities, with other communities or facilities and amenities, particularly in disaster-prone areas or low-lying communities.

iv. Seafarers Entrepreneurship Assistance (SEA)

The SEA Subsidy Programme aims to promote better accessibility in the maritime, coastal and riverbank

communities through the provision of Government subsidy by way of grant.

v. Emergency Water Services and High-Risk Water and Sanitation Programme

As climate change intensifies and brings more frequent dry spells, droughts, cyclones, and floods, the Ministry's water-focused efforts have become a lifeline for many communities. The Ministry delivers emergency water to communities affected by these natural hazards, installs resilient infrastructure in high-risk areas, and builds long-term community systems for water security and sanitation health.

vi. Self-Help Programme (SHP)

SHP is a hallmark of local empowerment, with the Government supporting two-thirds to the one-third community contributions to implement priority development projects. Villagers gain ownership and build capacity, with outcomes including social and income-generating assets.

vii. Disaster Risk Reduction

The enactment of the National Disaster Risk Management legislation in 2024 will facilitate the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction in the country's development programmes.

A MODEL FOR THE REGION

Fiji is the only member country that has, as part of its operational arm, an inherent mechanism through the abovementioned law to support resilient and sustainable development. Being a small island development state that is prone to natural disasters and the impact of climate change, the country has an added advantage in this regard. Since 2021, the Ministry has been gradually integrating risk-informed development into its programmes, marking a key step in mainstreaming disaster risk reduction across all its work.

We remain committed to this journey as we aspire to achieve our vision for our rural and maritime communities, helping them to be productive, resilient and sustainable.

We extend our hand in partnership to CIRDAP and non-CIRDAP member countries, development partners, non-government organisations, and civil society organisations that share in the same vision as Fiji - to leave no one behind. Through our united efforts and shared purpose, we can make rural development a driving force for lasting prosperity - across our region and around the world.

Vinaka vakalevu. Dhanyavaad. Thank you.