

FIJI NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

2025-2029 AND VISION 2050



FIJI **NATIONAL** **DEVELOPMENT** **PLAN**

2025-2029 AND VISION 2050

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Ministry of Finance, Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics Suva, Fiji

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Foreword

The Coalition Government's National Development Plan 2025-2029 and Vision 2050 has been formulated as a blueprint for progress and prosperity for our nation. The Plan is a pathway for empowering our people through 'unity' where all our citizens thrive in a dynamic and resilient economy.

Key policies and strategies in the plan are also drawn from the Manifestos of the Coalition partners.

Our nation has made significant progress since gaining independence 54 years ago. In the 1970s, a population of half a million was primarily engaged in subsistence agriculture and sugar production. Today, with close to one million people, the economy has diversified and expanded with broader range of industries and sectors.

This National Development Plan 2025-2029 and Vision 2050 is about bringing a more transformative change to realise better economic growth and opportunities for greater prosperity of our current and future generations.

As we move forward, we will continue to face headwinds, particularly with the current geopolitical environment which is affecting our global economy. In addition, we are still recovering from the impact of COVID-19. At the same time, we must respond to the reality of climate change, low growth, and high debt.

The implementation of the National Development Plan will ensure that we collectively respond to these headwinds as a nation through building economic resilience, enhancing social wellbeing, and protecting our fragile natural environment.

In the formulation process, we undertook nationwide public consultations and listened to the people. The inclusive approach reflects the needs and ambitions of our people, and I encourage us all to take ownership of the Plan.

We consider the National Development Plan as the 'people's plan' since it outlines strategic priorities in three simple pillars of economic resilience, people empowerment, and good governance.

In the next three years, we are committed to deliver practical solutions to our strategic priorities, for example by providing access to clean drinking water to all our citizens, provision of better infrastructure in both our rural and urban areas, improving and upgrading of our healthcare facilities and associated services strengthening institutions in maintaining law and order, and the delivery of quality education and training our people.

Our success will depend on the collective efforts - viz-a-viz the public sector private sector, civil society, and all citizens alike. We must work together with a shared sense of purpose and responsibility to deliver the actions and realise the goals set out in this document.

As we embark on this journey, I am confident that the resilience, creativity, and determination of our people will drive us forward. Let us embrace this moment to build a future that is vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable.

We must come together as one nation and share a common vision. We must ensure sustainable political stability to build and restore confidence to facilitate a process of uninterrupted nation building. Our new Plan embodies the will and aspirations of our people and sets in motion the process of nation-building. Many people from all sections of our communities were consulted during the process of formulating our Plan, which covers the 3 broad pillars of development, namely economic resilience, people empowerment and good governance.

I wish to thank members of the Thematic Working Groups for your direct involvement, commitment, selfless effort and contribution. I also greatly appreciate inputs received from the members of the public who attended the public consultations held around the country, including rural and outer islands.



On behalf of the Coalition Government, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge those that have contributed their time and expertise, particularly those from outside Government in the formulation of the National Development Plan 2025-2029 and Vision 2050.



Honourable Sitiveni Ligamamada Rabuka CF, OBE, MSD
Prime Minister & Minister for Foreign Affairs, Climate Change, Environment, Civil Service,
Information, Public Enterprises and Veteran Affairs

Message

The National Development Plan 2025-2029 places the people at the centre of development and it is the people's plan. It is a product of extensive consultations with people from all walks of life. Over 21,000 people were consulted including civil society organisations, industry groups, disciplined forces, academia, students and faith-based organisations to understand people's concerns and solicit their views and ideas. This Plan therefore represents the aspiration of our people, reflects their concerns and what they want. The ultimate objective of this Plan is to uplift the social wellbeing and bring sustainable prosperity to our people. Everyone should feel a sense of enrichment and a tangible improvement in their quality of life, while no one should feel a sense of deprivation or be left behind when this Plan is implemented.



This Plan is designed to be holistic. It covers all dimensions of development – economy, social, environment and governance. In terms of the economy, the Plan identifies strategies to catalyse economic growth and build greater resilience, among others through diversification of the economy, moving up the value chain, promoting greater participation of the private sector in the economy and increasing the contribution of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises. Special emphasis will also be devoted to research and development and innovation, and adopting new and advanced technologies to increase productivity, accelerate economic growth and raise incomes. The Plan sets out to enhance the social wellbeing of our people by alleviating poverty and providing better quality of education, housing, healthcare and transport as well as increasing access to clean water, electrification, sanitation and the development of our rural and outer islands. Increasing indigenous community participation in development, protection of women and children, and addressing the needs of the disabled will be given adequate attention. The Plan also puts in place policies and strategies to conserve our environment and strengthen resilience to the impacts of climate change and natural disasters.

Good governance, transparency and accountability is the bedrock of the Coalition Government. This is underscored in the Plan through commitments to bring institutional reforms, including through the strengthening of the Rule of Law, Judiciary, State Administration and Parliament. The capacity and capability of the civil service will also be enhanced to increase efficiency and improve public service delivery and implementation.

This Plan intends to be specific in terms of its outcomes. It is for this reason that we are incorporating measurable Key Performance Indicators in the Plan. We are setting clear achievement targets for the 3 and 5 years. The first 3 years, our focus will be on addressing critical issues that need immediate attention or rather **'getting the basics right'**. This will include providing clean drinking water, improving roads and drainage, upgrading healthcare facilities, affordable housing and school infrastructure in the locations that are most affected. The focus will also be in areas that can provide impactful quick wins to catalyse economic growth including undertaking regulatory reforms, rationalising processes and eliminating bureaucracy to improve interaction with Government, increase efficiency and remove impediments to private investment. We will also take measures to mitigate against possible downside risks arising from natural disasters and external shocks.

While this Plan allows us to set out the development priorities and guide public sector resource allocation in the short and medium-term, the implementation of this Plan is not the sole domain of the Government. The successful execution of the Plan will require the commitment and participation of all development stakeholders, in particular the private sector and civil society. The private sector and civil society have an important role to play in all dimensions of development either independently or in partnership with the Government.

The Vision 2050 for Fiji which is enveloped within this Plan portrays how we see ourselves in 25 years. It is not a pipe dream. It is built upon our inherent strengths and our potential to break boundaries and reach new growth frontiers. The Vision is intended to define the way forward and to set in motion the journey to transform Fiji into a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable nation. The fruition of this Vision for Fiji will totally depend on the single-mindedness and commitment of all Fijians to work on the building blocks towards attaining the Vision. To make this journey, we must commit to governance and institutional reforms, and have zero tolerance for corruption. Most importantly, there must be a strong commitment to maintain peace, security and stability.



Honourable Professor Biman. C. Prasad
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Strategic Planning, National Development
and Statistics

Acknowledgement

The National Development Plan 2025-2029 and Vision 2050 was prepared under the overall guidance of the Strategic Planning Office, Ministry of Finance, Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics.

The Plan benefited from substantive inputs through 11 Thematic Working Group meetings. We take this opportunity to thank the Chair and members of the Thematic Working Groups for their guidance, comments and inputs. Through the Thematic Working Group and individual meetings, the Strategic Planning Office engaged with and received specific inputs, including policy guidance, from academia, representatives of political parties, international organisations, civil society organisations, private sector, and development partners.

The Government of Fiji also greatly appreciates inputs received from members of the public who attended the public consultations held around the country.

Technical support from The World Bank is gratefully acknowledged, with special recognition to the team covering the Pacific Islands region.

Special thanks are extended to Permanent Secretaries and senior leadership of Fiji Government civil service for their partnership and guidance in preparing the NDP.

Finally, the team apologises to any individuals or organisations inadvertently omitted from this list and is grateful for the help received from all who contributed to the NDP, including those who may not be acknowledged here.

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Vision

Empowering the People of Fiji through Unity

Mission

**The Government prioritises the needs of all the people of
Fiji at the centre of its national development policy and planning**

Executive Summary

The National Development Plan (NDP) 2025-2029 is founded on the vision of Empowering the People of Fiji through Unity. This vision is translated through 3 pillars, namely economic resilience, people empowerment and good governance. The ultimate goal is to improve social wellbeing and bring greater prosperity to the people and the nation. The people will be at the centre of development and the NDP therefore is configured as a Plan for the people. The Plan is intended to be inclusive and to ensure that no one is left behind from mainstream progress and prosperity of the nation, which resonates with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

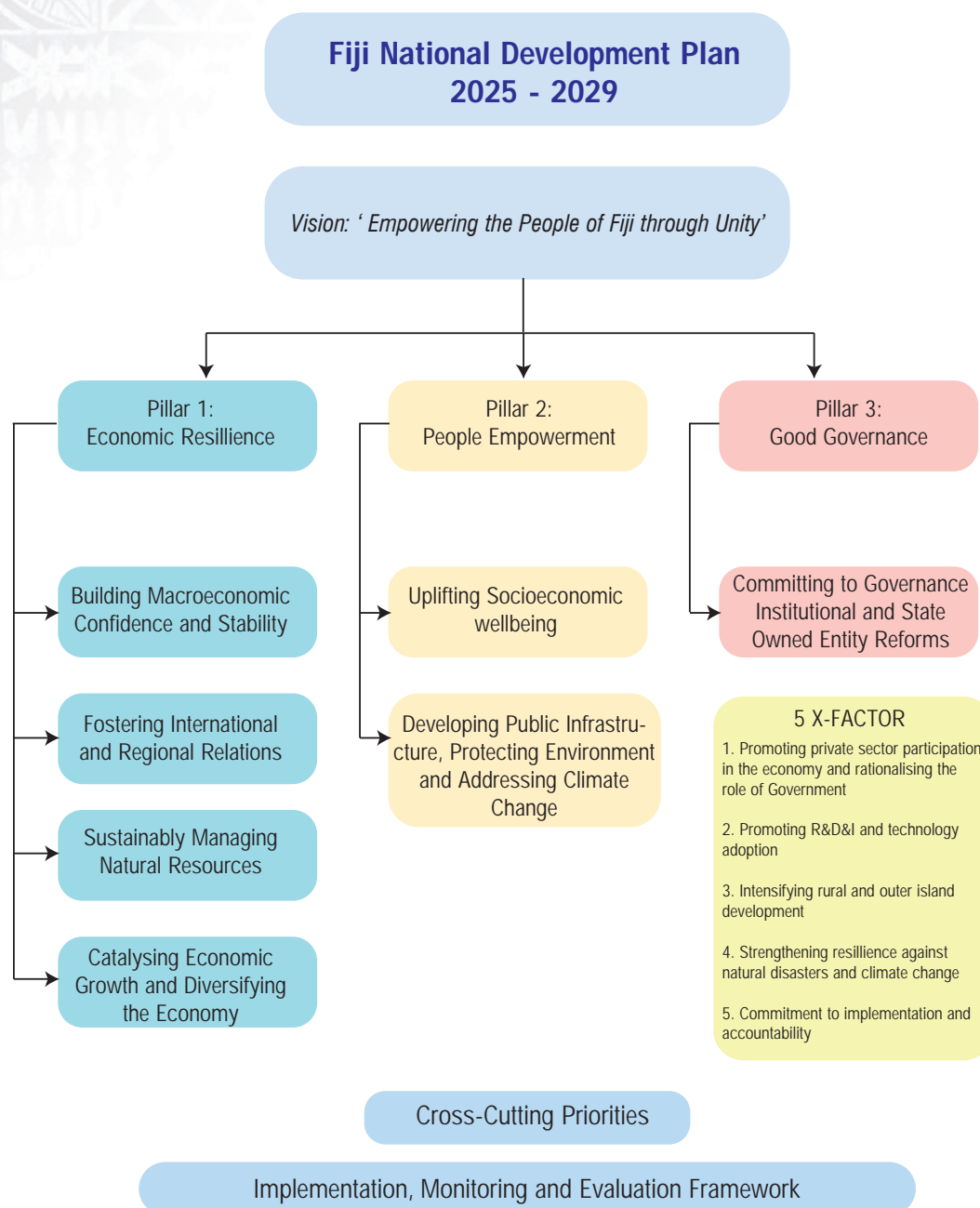
This is manifested through the extensive engagements and consultations that were undertaken to understand the concerns and issues confronting the people across the country, which began with the National Economic Summit in April 2023. This was followed by Technical Working Group meetings with all stakeholders including the private sector, civil society organisations (CSOs), academia and multilateral and bilateral development partners to obtain input and feedback on specific areas of development. This culminated in the face-to-face consultations with over 21,000 people across the 4 divisions of Fiji which was well represented by women and youth who provided feedback and ideas on what they want the Government to do.

The Plan distinctly specifies the outcomes to be achieved in the first 3 and 5 years. During the first 3 years, there will be greater emphasis on getting the basics right including improving access to clean drinking water, improving drainage, upgrading and maintaining rural roads, and increasing access to healthcare that will touch people's lives and tangibly improve wellbeing. It will also focus on impactful quick wins to catalyse and propel economic growth, while mitigating against highly probable downside risks including the impact of natural disasters and climate risks.

This document also presents Fiji's Vision 2050, a 25 year long-term vision for Fiji. The vision outlines the long-term development goals based on the aspirations of the people on how they see themselves and picture Fiji in 25 years. The long-term vision will guide the future short and medium-term plans for Fiji. The Plan is guided by 6 principles, namely an inclusive and participatory approach, sustainable economic recovery, good governance, mitigating the impacts of climate change and protecting the environment, informed by evaluation and data and leaving no one behind.

The Plan takes into account Fiji's international obligations under the United Nations and other international and regional bodies and conventions. The Plan has consciously aligned itself to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which are relevant to Fiji and where data is available. The NDP also mainstreams cross-cutting priorities including gender balance, community empowerment, addressing climate change, upholding moral and ethical values, good governance and the commitment to political stability which are imperative to achieving holistic and balanced development.

The NDP framework flows from the vision and is supported by 3 Pillars which encompass 7 Focus Areas. The NDP also presents 5 X-Factors within the Focus Areas which are transformational, impactful and reset the nation's development trajectory. The Plan is underpinned by cross-cutting priorities and supported by an implementation, monitoring and evaluation framework.



Pillar 1: Economic Resilience

Focus Area 1: Building Macroeconomic Confidence and Stability

Fiji is forecast to experience a broad-based growth of 2.8% in 2024, 3% in 2025 and 2026 following the economic recovery post COVID-19 pandemic and rebound in tourism and related sectors in the medium-term. However, downside risks have increased with the fragile global economy, rising global commodity prices, increasing cost of doing business and loss of domestic skilled workers. Labour market conditions remain tight as demand for labour continues to rise reflecting growth in economic activity coupled with increased worker emigration. Outlook for inflation and foreign reserves is expected to be within the comfortable range over the short to medium-term, however with considerable downside risks to external balance. During the Plan period, the focus will be to strengthen macroeconomic stability by narrowing the trade deficit in the balance of payments, achieve price stability through a prudent monetary and fiscal policy, and improve the fiscal position through a more judicious expenditure strategy that is consistent with revenue and debt strategy. Monetary policy will focus on maintaining low and stable inflation and an adequate level of foreign reserves.

Focus Area 2: Fostering International and Regional Relations

Fiji's foreign policy is underpinned by 3 pillars which are sovereignty, security and prosperity.

Together the 3 pillars highlight Fiji's relationships and strategic interests, marshal efforts to alleviate poverty, build bridges to market access and enhance development. The goal is to strengthen sovereignty, security and prosperity through strong relations and meaningful engagement so that the people achieve prosperous and worthwhile lives. Sovereignty will include safeguarding Fiji's territorial integrity, promoting Fiji as a regional hub, and responsible participation in bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation to enhance trade and investment. Security will entail promoting democracy, accountable government, rule of law and human rights as well as strengthening security alliances with countries of similar value and system and embracing regional security arrangement and cooperation. In terms of prosperity, the strategy, among others is to seek out poverty alleviation opportunities, improve the economic position of indigenous Fijians, and explore development cooperation and diplomatic engagement for trade expansion, new markets, foreign direct investments and new funding streams.

Focus Area 3: Sustainably Managing Natural Resources

The sugar industry will be enhanced through the implementation of cogeneration projects, developing climate resilient cane varieties, undertaking research and development and attracting youth into sugar farming, improving quality and standards in line with international requirements, promoting intercropping, down streaming into higher value products, and expanding export markets. The non-sugar sector will be aligned to meet food and nutritional security needs and strengthening commercial agricultural production. It will focus on crop diversification and developing improved varieties of food crops and livestock. The non-sugar sector will also serve to improve the livelihood and income of farming households. In addition, the NDP will promote commercial agriculture for major commodities by improving access to land and financing, adoption of modern technology and mechanisation and provision of quality planting materials.

In forestry, the focus will be to develop and sustainably manage Fiji's forest resources by encouraging private sector participation. The marine resources sector offers an opportunity to diversify the economic base. The NDP will promote the sustainable management of offshore and inshore fishing, review of legislations, and enhancement of related infrastructure. It will promote greater private sector participation in inshore and offshore fishing as well as aquaculture.

Recognising that access to land is an essential asset to support economic activities and social wellbeing, the NDP outlines several strategies to improve access to land including the review of institutions and legislations, fast-tracking lease applications and initiating iTaukei land legislation reforms. There is a need to adopt a holistic approach to mineral and groundwater resource management by balancing economic development with environmental preservation and social welfare. The focus during the Plan period will be to promote sustainable development of groundwater resources and review legislations and regulations to strengthen compliance and monitoring of mineral exploration and quarrying activities.

Focus Area 4: Catalysing Economic Growth and Diversifying the Economy

The NDP will promote greater private sector participation across all sectors to become the driver of economic growth. In this regard, the Government will reduce policy and regulatory impediments to private sector investment, create a conducive ecosystem for efficiency-seeking investment, reduce bureaucratic red tape, address labour and talent constraints and improve access to land. The Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) will be given special attention to increase their contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) through initiatives to improve access to finance, capacity building and transition of more businesses to formal economy.

X Factor 1: Promoting Private Sector Participation in the Economy and Rationalising the Role of Government

Rationale: The real GDP growth of Fiji has averaged about 2-3% over the last decade, performing below its growth potential. Private sector participation in the economy has been limited to only a few sectors of the economy. In many cases, private sector participation has been constrained by heavy regulatory and bureaucratic burden, and high cost of doing business. Further, the Government is involved in several economic sectors through State Owned Entities (SOEs), which at times crowds out private investment. Promoting and facilitating private sector investment across all sectors of the economy and rationalising the role of Government in economic activities has the potential to open new space for private investment, increase efficiency and productivity and unleash Fiji's economic growth and elevate it to a higher growth trajectory.

What will be done? Under the NDP, the Government will consciously create a conducive ecosystem for both domestic and foreign private sector investment in the economy. The Government will create a conducive ecosystem by reducing policy and regulatory impediments, reducing bureaucratic red tape, addressing labour and talent constraints, improving access to land and consider appropriate incentives. The MSMEs will be given special attention to increase their contribution to GDP particularly by improving access to finance, capacity building, and transition of more businesses to formal economy. The Government will also open new opportunities for private sector investment in areas which have been predominantly under the ambit of the Government such as public infrastructure and amenities, housing, healthcare and tertiary education and skills training including through Public Private Partnership and other modalities. The Government will concertedly rationalise its participation in the economy through SOEs by gradually divesting, where appropriate.

The Plan incorporates goals, policies and strategies that will diversify the economic base and enhance productivity. Whilst we enhance Fiji's trade and economic position globally, as well as strengthening the tourism sector, it will facilitate expansion into manufacturing, non-sugar crops and livestock agriculture, and other service industries. More importantly, this will diversify Fiji's economy. The NDP will bolster the tourism sector through better promotion and marketing, create new tourism products and activities, address skill gaps, enhance tourism related infrastructure including transportation, accommodation, ports and airports, and improve safety and security.

The outsourcing industry will be promoted by availing better infrastructure including proper workspaces and Information and Communication Technology (ICT), competitive tax incentives, diversifying markets, moving into higher value segments, and strengthening the policy and regulatory framework particularly for data protection and cybersecurity. The construction sector will be revitalised to increase its contribution to the economy and among the initiatives are a review and enforcement of several related legislations, addressing the skills gap, enhancing environmental and climate resilience standards, and promoting entrepreneurship.

Financial services will also be an important source of economic growth besides ensuring adequate liquidity and credit growth. This will be facilitated through the modernisation of related legislations, further developing the capital market, expanding the insurance industry, digitalising financial services, promoting financial inclusion, and improving access to finance for MSMEs.

The manufacturing sector will see value addition through greater research and development, introduction of new technologies and innovation, moving into higher value products and improving access to markets. Research and Development and Innovation (RDI) will be given renewed emphasis to facilitate the adoption of advance technologies and innovation across all sectors to increase productivity and output by providing the policy and institutional framework, improving access to funding and enhancing research and development capability and capacity.

There will be renewed focus on commercial agriculture and agro-processing. This will be facilitated through the Commercial Agriculture Taskforce that is overseeing a number of commercial initiatives with private sector investors in the development of the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sector and to the achievement of the development goals. This will create new opportunities and open new market for exports, employment creation, generate revenue and promote economic diversification.

X Factor 2: Promoting Research and Development and Innovation and Technology Adoption

Rationale: Currently, there is minimal RDI activities being undertaken in both public and private sectors. Generally, there is lack of understanding on the importance, benefits and returns from RDI. Given the onset of the 4th Industrial Revolution (IR 4.0), which is being driven by digitalisation, Fiji needs to adopt and apply these technologies in all aspects of its operation and development. RDI and application of technology across all sectors of the economy as well as service delivery will increase productivity, raise incomes, open new opportunities for investment, create new high value jobs, and open the path to move up the value chain and diversify the economic base, which is crucially needed to build economic resilience in Fiji.

What will be done? The Government in consultation with the private sector will create and implement the policy, strategy and institutional framework for RDI and promote technology adoption. RDI initiatives will focus in strategic areas that are consistent with development priorities such as in agriculture and in potential areas in the manufacturing and services sector as well as in environmental conservation and disaster risk management. There will be special attention on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and harnessing its benefits. The Government will also consider appropriate incentives, funding modalities and capacity building to support RDI.

Pillar 2: People Empowerment

Focus Area 5: Uplifting Socioeconomic Wellbeing

The NDP takes a holistic approach towards uplifting the social wellbeing of the people which will include addressing poverty, education, healthcare, affordable housing, urban development, empowering women, and the protection of children and people with disability. Poverty alleviation will be an important agenda under the NDP where it reaffirms the Government's commitment to reduce the incidence of poverty to 18% by 2030. In this regard, the NDP focuses on developing income-generating opportunities, promoting financial inclusion, affordable housing, national insurance and social protection under the Integrated National Poverty Eradication Programme. It will also empower the vulnerable and disadvantaged through social protection including family assistance, social pension schemes and bus fare concessions. Education and skills training will be an important component of poverty alleviation efforts.

Acknowledging the importance of education as a driver to bring upward social mobility, the Government will continue with its policy to ensure universal access to education by providing free primary, secondary and tertiary education. The focus under the NDP will include enhancing the quality of education at all levels, strengthening the provision of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), and revitalising Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and lifelong learning to increase employability and meet the requirements of the labour market.

In healthcare, the emphasis will be to improve access to quality healthcare services. This will include expanding primary and secondary healthcare and improving effectiveness of healthcare delivery through a multi-sectoral approach to risk management, improving early detection for Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) and strengthening resilience to climate change and natural disasters. Healthcare related infrastructure and equipment will be modernised, and maintenance will be strengthened. Access to clinical health services will be improved through the decentralisation of services and use of ICT.

In terms of housing, the NDP aims to increase house ownership and address the issue of informal settlements. In this regard, the NDP will provide several modalities to increase the supply and access to affordable, decent and climate-resilient housing, particularly for the low-income group including through strata title housing, increase in home insurance, allocation of appropriate land for housing development, and encouraging private sector participation. Informal settlements will be upgraded through the provision of basic services.

The NDP pays special attention to marginalised communities such as women, children, youth and people with disabilities. The Plan promotes greater participation of iTaukei in development by economically empowering them through enhancing skills, encouraging greater participation in business, reviewing the role of iTaukei Institutions to increase their effectiveness, and improving their overall wellbeing. Women will be empowered by facilitating greater participation in formal and informal employment, increase in leadership positions in government, private sector and civil society, addressing violence against women, improving access to life cycle healthcare and strengthening the policy and legal framework for gender balance. Protection of children will be strengthened through review of legislation. The welfare of people with disability will be improved by facilitating their greater participation in decision-making and providing friendly public facilities and infrastructure.

Urban development is an integral part of improving the social wellbeing of people, as approximately 58% of the population reside in urban areas and is increasing due to migration from rural areas. Fiji's approach to urban development is inclusive, and focuses on spurring economic activities, enhancing liveability, harmonising with environmental sustainability, and increasing resilience to the impacts of climate change. Among the strategies are enhancing service delivery through the review of legislation for management and creation of townships, land-use planning and promoting private sector investment in urban development as well as incorporating climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction measures in urban centres.

There will be renewed emphasis on rural and outer island development to ensure that there is balanced development across all areas and to bridge the gap between the rural and urban areas. Measures will be taken to improve connectivity and accessibility through better roads and jetties and provide basic infrastructure including bridges, seawalls, electricity, water, drainage, transportation and communication. Constructing, upgrading and maintenance of rural roads will be given priority to improve mobility and facilitate access to markets. Growth of the rural economy will be emphasised by promoting sustainable and resilient resource-based economic activities. Disaster risk reduction will be mainstreamed in all aspects of rural and outer island development.

X Factor 3: Intensifying Rural and Outer Island Transformation

Rationale: Development in the rural and outer island areas have lagged, and the rural-urban gap has widened although slightly less than half of the population reside in the rural and outer islands. The incidence of poverty is also higher in rural and outer islands compared with the urban areas. Access to basic facilities such as clean drinking water, electricity, proper sanitation and sewerage, and internet connectivity is still lacking. Transport and mobility is also an issue due to the poor condition of rural roads, bridges and jetties and inefficient modes of transportation. Schools in many of these areas also need upgrading of buildings and facilities and access to proper healthcare facilities is also a challenge. Many of these areas are also more vulnerable to the impacts of natural disasters and climate change. These conditions have also caused an increase in rural to urban migration.

What will be done? The NDP will intensify efforts and will allocate greater resources for rural and outer island development to ensure that there is balanced development across all regions and to bridge the gap between the rural and outer island, and urban areas. Measures will be taken to improve connectivity and accessibility through better roads and jetties and provide basic infrastructure including bridges, seawalls, electricity, water, drainage, transportation and communication. Constructing, upgrading and maintaining rural roads will be given priority to improve mobility and facilitate access to markets. Growth of the rural economy will be emphasised by promoting sustainable and resilient resource-based economic activities. Measures will also be taken to improve the condition and quality of schools and access to healthcare. Disaster risk reduction will be mainstreamed in all aspects of rural and outer island development.

Focus Area 6: Developing Public Infrastructure, Protecting Environment and Addressing Climate Change

The NDP aims to systematically improve accessibility, quality and efficiency of infrastructure as it is imperative to support growth and enhance the standard of living of the people. In terms of transport, the Government seeks to achieve an integrated and eco-friendly transport system that is efficient, sustainable and safe. In this context, it will undertake upgrading and proper maintenance of roads, port and wharves, rural airstrips, airport runways and associated infrastructure as well as outer island bridges and jetties. Public transportation including Maritime will be made more efficient and safety will be prioritised. The transport sector will be gradually decarbonised with the promotion of electric vehicles, and re-fleeting Government vessels and domestic aircrafts that are energy efficient. An assessment of Fiji's air access infrastructure, current routes and pricing will be undertaken to improve access and affordability.

In the energy sector, the aim is to transform the sector to become more resilient, resource-efficient, reliable and environment-friendly. Among the strategies are increasing access to affordable, reliable and renewable energy sources, providing a supportive regulatory framework for private sector participation, upgrading electricity infrastructure and enhancing energy efficiency by expanding coverage of minimum performance standards to more electric products and increasing compliance with energy efficiency requirements in construction.

Increasing access to clean drinking water in both the urban and rural areas will be a priority under the Plan. In this regard, water sector planning and water resource management will be strengthened including the formulation of the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Master Plan and review of water tariff. The institutional and legal framework will be reviewed to ensure equity in the provision of water and sanitation services, and long-term sustainability in the provision of freshwater resources and catchment security will be emphasised.

Mitigating the impact and increasing preparedness to climate change is given importance in

the Plan considering Fiji's geographic location and its topography. The Plan sets out several strategies including climate change adaptation and mitigation measures such as integration of climate change projections and disaster risk reduction across all sector plans, increasing ecosystem protection and natural resource redundancy and the migration to renewable energy sources. Capacity development and leveraging of sustainable financing sources will be strengthened to increase preparedness to climate change and disaster risk reduction.

X Factor 4: Strengthening Resilience against the Impacts of Natural Disaster and Climate Change

Rationale: Fiji due to its geographic location and topography is highly exposed and vulnerable to the impact of natural disaster and climate change. Tropical Cyclone (TC) Winston which brought significant property loss and set back economic and social progress, underscoring the urgency to take a comprehensive approach to build Fiji's resilience and mitigate against these events. The Government acknowledges that measures to strengthen resilience and minimise the impact from these events must be taken in parallel with strategies to promote economic growth and social wellbeing to safeguard development gains.

What will be done? The NDP places critical importance and emphasis on strengthening resilience to natural disasters and climate change and introduces a comprehensive policy and strategy framework with various innovative approaches. Among them are mainstreaming climate resilience and disaster risk reduction measures in development planning including in infrastructure, spatial and sector planning. There will also be enforcement of stricter compliance to related standards and codes. The Government will increase investment in adaptation measures as well as increase national capability to undertake risk foresight for early detection of these events. The commitment of the Government to this issue is manifested in the setting up of the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO). The NDMO will develop a joint action plan for climate change and disaster risk reduction, develop a Disaster Risk Financing Policy which will include innovative financing solutions as well as strengthen the multi hazard warning system by taking a people centred approach.

Pillar 3: Good Governance

Focus Area 7: Committing to Governance, Institutional and State-Owned Entity Reforms

The NDP emphasises the need for strengthening governance and undertaking institutional reforms to support and ensure the holistic, effective and efficient implementation of the Plan. It will encompass civil service reforms, Rule of Law and Justice, State Administration and Parliament, and SOEs. Civil service reforms will include improvement in service delivery, skill and capacity building, performance and strengthening transparency and accountability. Among the strategies that will be pursued to strengthen the rule of law are reviewing the regulatory framework, maintaining sovereignty and territorial integrity, improving the efficiency and transparency of the judicial system, improving the capacity of the policing system and upholding human rights. Initiatives will be put in place to strengthen the Parliamentary process to promote sustainable democracy, its legislative capability and accountability. With respect to SOEs, the focus of reforms will be to enhance their performance, rationalise to allow greater private sector investment, and improve their overall governance, transparency and accountability.

Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

The NDP includes a comprehensive Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation (IME) framework with targets and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to ensure effective implementation of the policies and strategies to achieve the development outcomes. Where relevant, the targets and KPIs are aligned to the SDGs. The IME framework also includes a transparent reporting mechanism to ensure accountability. The Government will be accountable to report quarterly on the implementation progress and an annual report card on the achievements.

X Factor 5: Commitment to Implementation and Accountability

Why? A plan defeats its purpose if it is not implemented, and its progress not monitored. This has been the fate of many national and sectoral plans, not exclusive to Fiji alone. Good governance requires that there be institutionalised platforms for people to hold the Government accountable to deliver on its commitments. An IME framework is essential to ensure timely implementation of policies and strategies, optimise resource allocation,

improve the effectiveness of programmes and enable stakeholder engagement and feedback. It will enable corrective measures to be taken in a timely manner to ensure outcomes are achieved.

The NDP is underpinned by an integrated IME framework which will be set up to keep track of the quarterly and yearly implementation of the Plan. The policies and strategies are accompanied by high level outcomes which were identified in consultation with the implementing Ministry, and which will also be the KPIs of the respective Permanent Secretaries. Based on these outcomes, the Ministries will develop credible and realistic outputs. The implementing Ministries will be required to report on a quarterly and annual basis on the progress of implementation of the respective policies, strategies, and programmes. To institutionalise the IME, a Cabinet Sub-Committee on IME is proposed, and this will safeguard taxpayer's funds, optimise resource utilisation and maximise policy impacts.

Vision 2050

The Vision 2050 for Fiji which is enveloped within the NDP portrays the long-term aspiration of the people and how they see themselves in 25 years. It is built on Fiji's inherent strengths and the potential to break boundaries and reach new growth frontiers. The Vision is intended to define the way forward and to set in motion the journey to transform Fiji into a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable nation. In 2050, Fiji aspires to be a high income and advanced economy, a regional leader in technology and innovation in areas where it has competitive advantage, have modern and efficient infrastructure, is environmentally astute, boasts a society with high moral and ethical values, rich culture and heritage as well as entrenched in high standard of governance and excels in sports.

The fruition of this Vision for Fiji will totally depend on the single-mindedness and commitment of all Fijians to work on the building blocks towards attaining the Vision. To make this journey, Fijians must dare to unlearn and relearn, pioneer into new areas, embrace new work processes, innovation and technology, commit to governance and institutional reforms, and have zero tolerance for corruption. Most importantly, there must be a strong commitment to maintain peace, security and stability. This Vision will be realised through the roll out of the medium-term national development plans.



National Development Plan 2025-2029: Selected Targets

Indicator	Target
Pillar 1: Economic Resilience	
Average Annual Growth Rate (%)	4 - 5
Net Fiscal Deficit (% of GDP)	2.5
Debt (% of GDP)	74.0
Forest area as proportion of Total Area (%)	64
Investment to GDP (%)	20
Contribution of Manufacturing to GDP (%)	21
Visitor Arrivals (number in million)	1.5
Contribution of MSMEs to GDP (%)	22
Adults owning Bank Accounts (%)	95
Mobile Network Coverage (% of population)	96
Pillar 2: People Empowerment	
Incidence of Poverty (%)	18
Informal settlements formalised and upgraded (number)	6
Net Enrolment rate for Early Childhood Education (%)	100
Rural Population with Electricity Access (%)	93
Rural Population with Access to Clean and Safe water in Adequate Quantities (%)	67
New Sealed roads in Rural Areas (kilometres)	500
Unemployment Rate (%)	3.8
Women Participation in Board directorship in Public and Private sector (%)	50
Access to clean and safe water in Adequate Quantities (% of total population)	88
Renewable Energy share in Electricity Generation (%)	100
Pillar 3: Good Governance	
Corruption Perception Index (PCI)	60
Civil Servants (number)	25,000





Cross Cutting Priorities



ROLE OF GOVERNMENT : 4 KEY AREAS

1. Review the role of Government
2. Removal of regulatory barriers
3. Quality public goods
4. Public Private Partnerships

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Good Progress : 14%
Achievable: 27%
Regressed in Targets: 17%
Could not be measured: 43%.



COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

Community can participate actively in decision-making, shaping their future and to take advantage of development opportunities

MORAL AND ETHICAL VALUES

Place a strong emphasis on continuing to instil moral, ethical and social values particularly among children and youth



STRENGTHENING GOOD GOVERNANCE

Government will support and protect fundamental human rights of all to live in peace and respect for each other.

MAINSTREAMING CLIMATE CHANGE

Empower all Fijians to better adapt to the impacts of climate change



GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Integrate gender considerations into the development process, sectoral policies and strategies and government budgeting for sustainable development ensuring equality and inclusivity



Introduction

The National Development Plan 2025-2029 (NDP) identifies several development priorities that underpin and cut across almost all macro and sectoral policies and strategies. Among them are the role of Government, community empowerment, UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), upholding moral and ethical values, commitment to political stability, good governance, addressing climate change and gender mainstreaming.

Role of Government

The debate on the role of government has been long outstanding and sits at the heart of Fiji's endeavour to secure economic resilience. There is a consensus that the Government has taken an interventionist and overly regulatory approach to development. This strategy has constrained and crowded out private sector investment and has been a drag on economic growth. Recalibrating and resetting Fiji's development pathway to secure more vibrant and sustainable economic growth and prosperity for the people will require a shift in the development approach to one that is facilitative and supportive of the private sector. The Government will gradually rationalise its role in economic activities and not compete directly with the private sector. It will also create a conducive environment for the private sector to flourish including by ensuring policy consistency and building investor confidence. The Government's role will be confined to 4 key areas:

- reducing the size and role of Government in the economy to avoid stifling private sector expansion;
- efficient public service facilitation of private sector activities and investment through the removal of regulatory barriers;
- provision of quality public goods to the people based on well-planned and targeted public sector spending; and
- establishment of public and private partnerships where feasible to support growth.

People and Community Empowerment

People and community empowerment forms the foundation of a democratic society where people and members of the community can participate actively in decision-making, shaping their future and to take advantage of development opportunities. Communities particularly the poor, disadvantaged and vulnerable will be empowered to participate in decision-making at municipal and national levels to build an environment of inclusivity and mutual co-existence. The people will be provided the opportunity to decide on the development of their towns and cities through the democratic process of electing their representatives to Municipal Councils. The NDP itself took a very inclusive and bottom-up approach to the process of national planning with extensive consultations across all segments of society in all 4 divisions to capture the concerns and development aspirations of the citizens.

There will be greater openness to listen to critics and work with the opposition. Government believes in the spirit of genuine dialogue and consultation and shall further empower the community so that the citizens can meaningfully participate in the process of nation building. This will be done through improved access to education and information, removal of all forms of discrimination and provision of equal opportunities, as well as better access to healthcare and other social amenities. The youth and women will also be provided the enabling environment and opportunity to play a leadership role in defining the future identity of the nation.

Community organisations including faith-based, social, arts and sports will be brought to the centre of policy and law making through greater outreach. The NDP also encourages, and supports plans and programmes conceptualised at community level such as in the areas of poverty eradication, provision of basic amenities, creation of economic opportunities, social enterprises, women, youth, and child development, and those relating to improving their livelihood and quality of life. The development of cooperatives will also be promoted as a powerful vehicle for communities to come together and collectively make their decisions to achieve a common cause to improve their wellbeing.

Fiji cannot move forward without addressing the development aspirations of the iTaukei community. iTaukei land will be leveraged as an asset for investment in partnership with other communities, as well as foreign investors to create a multitude of opportunities. The rights of marginalised communities will be protected by providing security to land tenancy to create confidence and communal economic empowerment.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

Fiji presented the Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the UN SDGs in 2023. Generally, progress on SDGs in Fiji has been mixed. While it made significant progress in some areas, it has been less satisfactory in others. Out of the 169 SDG targets, Fiji has made good progress in 24 (14%), 45 (27%) could be achieved but require accelerated action, regressed in 28 (17%) targets while 72 (43%) could not be measured. Fiji's progress on the SDGs was impacted by the recurring natural disasters, impacts of climate change, COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical events.

Fiji remains a strong advocate for the adoption and high level ownership of the SDGs within the country. The SDGs are viewed not merely as a global commitment but has become part of Fiji's development goal and serves as a guiding framework for the nation's development planning including this NDP. The policies and strategies across all areas are consciously aligned to the SDGs. The implementation of the NDP and efforts to improve SDG related data gathering will improve Fiji's achievement of the SDG goals.

Moral and Ethical Values

Moral, ethical, and spiritual values are an inextricable part of Fiji's social fabric and way of life. The NDP places a strong emphasis on continuing to instil moral, ethical and social values particularly among children and youth. It is acknowledged that there is an increasing incidence of crime, domestic violence, indiscipline and drug abuse and this partly reflects decadence of moral and ethical values in the society. The family unit, education system, civil society organisations (CSOs), faith-based organisations and the community at large will be harnessed to play a more prominent role towards building a society with high moral, ethical and spiritual values. The Government will provide appropriate support to these institutions and will most importantly lead by example. Morality, ethics and fairness will be the basis upon which the Government will operate and deliver its services. It will be an accountable Government with no tolerance for corruption.

Commitment to Political Stability

Government accepts that Fiji's development over the past three decades has been politically and economically unstable. History indicates that economic, ecological, political and global shocks do not discriminate against race and social status. As a nation, all Fijians must move forward in unity based on mutual respect for all, equal and universal access, and mutual co-existence.

The Government is committed to the principles of good governance, accountability, and the rule of law at all levels. Government recognises that in any true democracy, the changing of democratically elected Governments through force is unlawful and unconstitutional. Government is resetting Fiji's political future to achieve political stability. In this context, the Government is committed to raise awareness on the importance of National Elections as the only democratically elected means by which Fiji's nationals can exercise their legitimate democratic rights under the law to vote their representatives into Parliament. The protection of Fiji's democracy is vitally important, and all avenues will be evaluated to ensure this is achieved.

Strengthening Good Governance

The Government will support and protect fundamental human rights of all Fijians to live in peace and respect for each other, as in a true democracy. Fiji's people will be empowered through education about the essence of freedom, democracy, and human rights. In this context, Government will address unfair discrimination, curtail arbitrary abuse of wide discretionary application of laws, insert safeguards against abuse of discretionary powers and remove provisions that prohibit judicial review of administrative discretionary powers bestowed to Ministers and public officers.

The Government espouses the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) definition of good governance which encompasses 8 major characteristics, namely, participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law. This Plan will set the platform for strengthening governance institutions and ensure that the UNESCAP's 8 key characteristics of good governance are practised at all levels of government.

The Government is also committed to ensure that corruption is minimised, the views of minorities are considered and that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard in decision-making. It will also be responsive to the present and future needs of society.

Addressing and Mainstreaming Climate Change

Fiji's Climate Vulnerability Assessment (CVA) estimates that tropical cyclones and floods currently cause average losses of more than \$500 million per year, equivalent to 5% of annual Gross Domestic Product. Fiji is bound by its commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30% by 2030 and achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. This is a clear manifestation of Fiji's leading international role in climate change diplomacy and negotiations. Fiji recognises that even if global warming is limited to 1.5°C, vulnerable regions including the Small Island Developing States, are projected to experience a multitude of inter-related climate risks, resulting in loss of livelihoods, food insecurity and large-scale population displacement. Fiji accepts this reality, as it lies on the frontline of adverse climate change impacts and will be facing some of the most severe climate-related challenges in the coming decade. The Government will empower all Fijians to better adapt to the impacts of climate change, and response to natural disasters and climate change is mainstreamed across many areas of the NDP including education, healthcare, housing, infrastructure and public utilities, rural and urban development as well as women and youth empowerment.

Gender Equity and Mainstreaming

The NDP recognises that although progress has been made to achieve gender equity and empowerment, it is still lacking in many facets of Fiji's national development. Although females make up 49.3% of Fiji's population, they are under-represented in many economic and social aspects. The World Economic Forum (WEF) 2022 Global Gender Gap Report ranked Fiji 107 out of 146 countries. The Government takes this seriously and the NDP ensures that achieving gender balance and empowerment is mainstreamed. Gender inequality is rooted in traditional norms, customs, and models of decision-making that give more power to men than women.

The Government aims to integrate gender considerations into the development process, sectoral policies and strategies and government budgeting for sustainable development ensuring equality and inclusivity. The NDP underscores the need to institutionalise gender mainstreaming and integrate gender perspectives across all levels to foster equal opportunities, address systematic inequalities, protect fundamental rights and address gender violence.




Pillar 1

Economic Resilience




FOCUS
AREA
1

Building Macroeconomic
Confidence and Stability



FOCUS
AREA
2

Fostering International
and Regional Relations



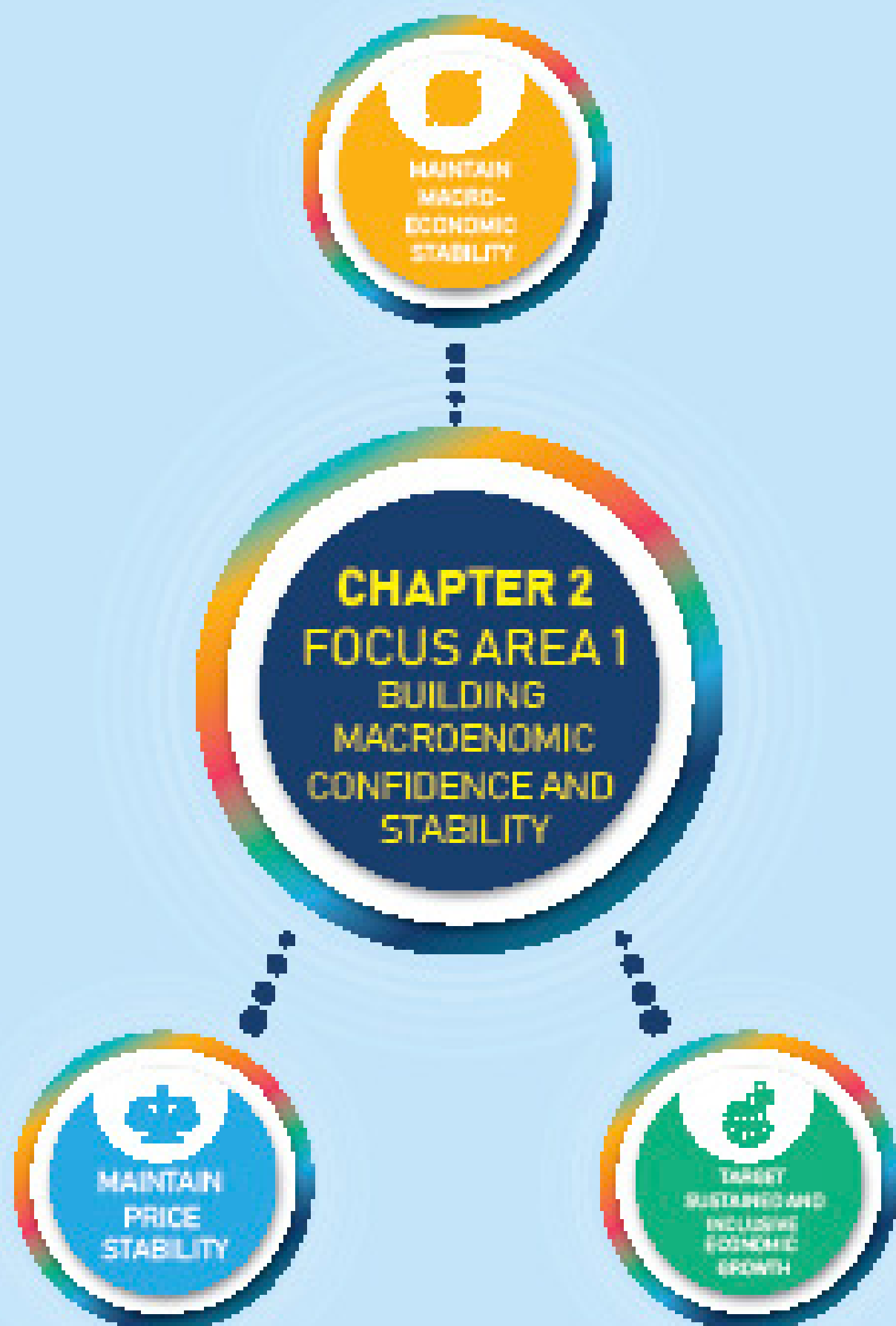
FOCUS
AREA
3

Sustainably Managing
Natural Resources



FOCUS
AREA
4

Catalysing Economic
Growth and Diversifying
the Economy



*'Achieving macroeconomic stability for sustained growth'***Introduction**

Fiji has experienced low growth for most of its post-independence history. From 1971 to 1980, economic growth averaged 4.8%, 2.4% between 1981 and 1990, 2.5% between 1991 and 2000, 1.4% between 2001 and 2010, and 1.3% during the period 2011 to 2020.

More recently, the economy was negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and a series of natural disasters, causing production disruptions, job losses and affecting socioeconomic conditions and outcomes. Real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) declined by 17% in 2020 followed by another 4.9% contraction in 2021. The economy is predominantly a services economy which accounts for almost 70% of GDP. The Government's long-term vision is to ensure that a stable political environment and governance framework commits to broad based macroeconomic stability. Without long-term political stability, there will be significant missed opportunities as Fiji has experienced during the political events of 1987, 2000 and 2006.

Global and Regional Commitments

Macroeconomic stability provides the broad framework through which the Government can institute policies to address development priorities contained in the National Development Plan (NDP) 2025-2029. It will thus enable the Government to achieve all the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Current Status***Economic Growth***

According to the International Monetary Fund, global growth was estimated at 3.2% in 2023 and is projected to grow at the same pace in 2024 and 2025. However, the World Bank has downgraded its global growth projection for 2024 to 2.4%, the third consecutive year of deceleration. The downward revision reflects the lagged and ongoing effects of tight monetary policies to rein in decades-high inflation, restrictive credit conditions, and anaemic global trade and investment.

The recent conflict in the Middle East and the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine have heightened geopolitical risks. Conflict escalation could lead to surging energy prices, with broader implications for global activity and inflation. Other risks include financial stress related to elevated real interest rates, persistent inflation, and weaker than expected growth in China, further trade fragmentation, and climate change related disasters.

On the domestic front, the economy rebounded strongly with 19.8% growth in 2022. As of 2023, the economy grew by an estimated 7.5% with a forecast growth rate of 2.8% for 2024. Fiji's remarkable pace of vaccinations had enabled the Government to gradually ease COVID-19 restrictions and ultimately re-open international borders in December 2021. The Government had also reduced major taxes applicable to the tourism sector and introduced an attractive tax incentive regime in the post COVID-19 National Budget to stimulate growth in the tourism sector. Other policy measures were put in place to support and grow new economic sectors with the objective of further economic diversification.

Given that tourism accounts for roughly 40% of GDP, tourism recovery was critical for wider recovery prospects. However, this illustrates the risk of being overly dependent on one sector to drive the economy. Visitor arrivals totalled 929,740 in 2023 and represents an increase of 46.1% compared to 2022. The highest number of visitors were from Fiji's top two source markets, Australia (434,533 or 46.7%) and New Zealand (220,963 or 23.8%) which equates to an average daily arrival of 1,191 and 605 respectively. A concerted effort at broadening Fiji's economic base is fundamental for achieving macroeconomic stability. Moreover, revitalising existing industries in which there exists comparative advantage will be required to achieve a broad-based contribution to growth.

With the projected economic recovery and rebound in tourism and related sectors in the medium-term, a broad-based growth of 2.8% is forecast in 2024, followed by 3.0% in 2025 and 2026. However, downside risks have increased with the fragile global economy, rising global commodity prices, increasing cost of doing business and loss of domestic skilled workers. Whilst the current economic growth forecast is around 3% in the 2025 and 2026, Government medium to long term economic growth target is 4-5% per annum.

Labour market conditions remain tight as demand for labour continues to rise reflecting growth in economic activity coupled with increased worker emigration. Cumulative to March 2024, job advertisements increased by 15.6% to 4,096 vacancies. Enhanced recruitment intentions were observed in sectors such as community, social & personal services; construction; and transport, storage & communication. However, persistent emigration remains a challenge in the labour market, leading to shortages of both skilled and semi-skilled workers. As of January 2024, Net VAT and PAYE tax collections recorded annual increases of 34.6% and 16.8% respectively, while commercial banks' new lending for consumption purposes contracted by 7.1%.

Monetary Policy and Balance of Payments

The financial sector remained stable and conducive for growth. At the end of January 2024, liquidity stood at \$1,991.6 million, interest rates remained low while private sector credit rose by 8.5%. The Reserve Bank of Fiji (RBF) has maintained an accommodative monetary policy stance to support growth. Foreign reserves stood at \$3.2 billion at the end of February 2024 equivalent to 5.1 months of retained imports (MORI). Outlook for inflation and foreign reserves is expected to be within the comfortable range over the short to medium-term, however with considerable downside risks to external balance.

On the external front, Fiji's trade deficit widened by 5.4% to around \$3.7 billion in the year to October 2023 on the back of rebounding domestic economy and elevated commodity prices, which led to a higher growth in imports relative to exports. Cumulative to September 2023, the current account deficit (excluding aircraft) is estimated to have improved to \$509.1 million compared to a deficit of \$1,462.0 million in the same period in 2022, supported by tourism and travel receipts, inflows of personal remittances and government grants. In the medium-term, however, proactive measures are needed to address Fiji's underlying balance of payment challenges due to downside external risks. Expanding Fiji's exports and services base is fundamentally necessary for a supportive macroeconomic framework for the Vision 2050.

In terms of consumer prices, the 2023 year-end inflation stood at 5.1%, which is higher than the 3.1% recorded in the same period in 2022. The outcome was driven by higher prices recorded across most major categories, particularly food and non-alcoholic beverages; transport; alcoholic beverages, tobacco; housing & utilities and restaurants & hotels. Going forward, the year-end inflation outlook for 2024 is expected to remain around the 2023 level. However, developments in the global front such as geopolitical tensions and unexpected commodity price shocks could alter the forecast. Monetary policy during the Plan period will focus on maintaining low and stable inflation and an adequate level of foreign reserves.

Fiscal Position

On the fiscal front, government expenditure generally trended upwards after 2014 and over the last 5 fiscal years (from FY2015-2016 to FY2019-2020) averaged around 31% of GDP and increased to around 35% in FY2020-2021 and FY2021-2022. This was largely driven by higher investment spending, increased outlays in health and education sectors including disaster related construction spending and introduction of social protection support schemes. Total expenditure stood at \$3,589.2 million (30.2% of GDP) in FY2022-2023, higher by 5.1% (\$175.5 million) when compared to the previous fiscal year.

On the revenue side, the tax to GDP ratio averaged 24% between FY2015-2016 to FY2019-2020 period which declined to around 15.5% in FY2020-2021 and rose slightly to 16.8% in FY2021-2022. The revenue reforms implemented in the 2023-2024 National Budget is estimated to add around 5 percentage points of GDP to Government revenues, mainly through increasing the VAT rate on most goods and services from 9% to 15%. On the other hand, non-tax revenue to GDP ratio averaged around 3-4% pre-COVID and rose to 8% in FY2020-2021 and 5% in FY2021-2022 mostly due to budget support grants from donor partners. Revenue to GDP ratio is to be increased to around 28% of GDP by FY2023-2024 and maintained around similar levels from thereon.

Tax collections declined by almost 50% during the pandemic, placing immense pressure on Government finances, as business and economic activity stalled. A counter cyclical fiscal response was implemented with increased borrowings from both external and domestic sources to maintain public expenditures at pre-pandemic levels, which included over \$500 million provided in unemployment support and other relief measures. This led to a significant increase in Fiji's debt levels to around 90.6% of GDP by the end of July 2022 compared to around 49% of GDP pre-pandemic.

Table 1 shows the Government's fiscal position since FY2019-2020. Double-digit deficits were incurred during the pandemic due to significant declines in revenues while expenditures were maintained at pre-COVID levels to deliver essential services and assist affected households. In FY2021-2022, the Government recorded a net deficit of -12.1% of GDP, higher than the deficit in FY2020-2021 of -11.5% of GDP. For FY2022-2023, the Government had budgeted for a lower fiscal deficit of around -7.1% of GDP.

Table 1: Fiscal Performance

	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024 Revised- Budget
Total Revenue	2,717.1	2,143.0	2,190.8	2,749.8	3,577.6
As a % of GDP	25.5	23.6	21.7	23.2	27.2
Tax Revenue	2,194.0	1,412.6	1,692.0	2,285.0	3,305.9
As a % of GDP	20.6	15.5	16.8	19.3	25.1
Non-tax Revenue	523.1	730.4	498.8	464.8	541.7
As a % of GDP	4.9	8.0	4.9	3.9	4.1
Expenditure	3,353.5	3,190.3	3,414.1	3,589.2	4,106.2
As a % of GDP	31.5	35.1	33.9	30.2	31.2
Operating Expenditure	2,333.6	2,189.0	2,261.5	2,566.4	2,984.1
As a % of GDP	21.9	24.1	22.4	21.6	22.7
Capital Expenditure	988.1	973.3	1,123.0	983.7	1,039.0
As a % of GDP	9.3	10.7	11.1	8.3	7.9
SEG 13 VAT	31.7	28.0	29.6	39.2	83.1
Overall balance	-636.4	-1,047.3	-1,223.3	-839.4	-528.6
As a % of GDP	-6.0	-11.5	-12.1	-7.1	-4.0
Nominal GDP	10,660.7	9,098.8	10,082.4	11,868.7	13,170.2

The Government managed to keep its Debt to GDP ratio within the internationally accepted benchmark of around 45% of GDP before 2016. However, the debt level rose sharply during the COVID-19 pandemic and increased to 90.6% of GDP by the end of FY2021-2022 as the Government borrowed to finance large deficits (Table 2). In the medium-term, debt to GDP ratio is projected at 73.6% of GDP by 2026, due to revenue as a percent of GDP maintained at around 27% of GDP. As a first step towards expenditure reforms, the Government has revised overseas allowances of Members of Parliament, and similar revenue reforms are anticipated in future.

Table 2: Government Debt

	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024 Budget
Debt (\$m)	6,686.0	7,663.7	9,131.5	9,747.5	10,386.7
As a % of GDP	62.7	84.2	90.6	82.1	78.6
Domestic Debt	4,976.5	5,241.2	5,767.4	6,170.5	6,611.6
As a % of GDP	46.7	57.6	57.2	52.0	50.1
External Debt	1,709.5	2,422.5	3,364.1	3,577.0	3,775.1
As a % of GDP	16.0	26.6	33.4	30.1	28.6

Contingent liabilities stood at \$1.7 billion, equivalent to 13.0% of GDP as of October 2023. This includes Government guaranteed debt of \$1,041.6 million (equivalent to 7.9% of GDP), other explicit contingent liabilities of \$592.9 million comprising of government shares held with multilateral banks (equivalent to 4.5% of GDP) and other implicit contingent liabilities of \$88.9 million (equivalent to 0.7% of GDP).

Challenges and Opportunities

The main catalyst for growth in the immediate term will be largely dependent on tourism activity. While Fiji had benefited in 2022 due to a higher vaccination rate and earlier opening of borders relative to competitor countries, these contributions to tourism growth are expected to wane this year. Fiji further continues to remain vulnerable to price competition from Southeast Asian destinations where cost structures are lower. However, an over reliance on the tourism sector to sustain Fiji's economic growth is an unsustainable strategy.

In the medium to long-term, an aggressive economic diversification strategy needs to be harnessed to shift the over dependence away from tourism into potential growth sectors and ensure that macroeconomic stability is sustained. Fiji needs to tap into areas of competitive and comparative advantage such as medical tourism, creative industries, retirement villages, manufacturing, agricultural value addition and other niche areas. In the agricultural sector, large-scale commercialisation will be required to compete in the export market and effectively meet the demand for the local tourism industry. Fiji has a reliable and advanced telecommunications infrastructure as well as a young and educated labour force, which needs to be capitalised to further stimulate growth in the services sector.

Another key challenge facing Fiji in the medium-term is the anticipated slow global growth in major trading partners, including global price shocks, monetary tightening in developed economies, and disaster and climate related risks which further threaten macro-fiscal stability in Fiji. Public debt rose from a pre-crisis level of below 50% of GDP in FY2018-2019 to almost 82.1% of GDP at the end of FY2022-2023. Thus, the immediate priorities are to restore financial discipline, re-build fiscal buffers, put the public debt situation on a path of sustainability and reorient economic policies for sustainable economic growth.

With the current level of debt, there is limited room to further expand fiscal deficits in the upcoming budgets. Contingent liabilities further represent a potential risk to the Government's balance sheet. Should the guaranteed entities default on their loan repayments, lenders can exercise rights and call on Government guarantee, and the Government will have to assume the liability to settle the debt, ultimately increasing its debt stock.

Further, high cost of living remains a pressing issue for households. Addressing the high cost of living requires a comprehensive approach, encompassing measures to regulate prices, increase social welfare assistance and address taxation policies. The Government's commitment to VAT exempt essential items and augmenting social welfare assistance is necessary to alleviate the financial burden on families. In addition, policies to decrease taxes on essential imports remain an option, and initiatives to monitor development projects and prioritise fiscal discipline are essential to manage Fiji's high debt levels and ensure sustainable economic growth. Reforms to enhance the ease of doing business are imperative to stimulate investment and foster economic development.

Goals, Policies and Strategies

Goal: Achieving macroeconomic stability for sustained growth	
Policies	Strategies
Maintain macroeconomic stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain external balance by narrowing the trade deficit in the balance of payments. • Achieve price stability through prudent monetary and fiscal policy strategies. • Implement fiscal policy comprising of an expenditure strategy that is consistent with revenue collection trends and debt management strategy. • Consider the impacts of climate change on the structure and cyclical dynamics of the economy and the financial system.

Policies	Strategies
Target sustained and inclusive economic growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the ease of doing business and regulatory regime in areas relating to access to land, environmental permits, immigration, foreign investment, reporting regulations and company registrations. • Improve access to finance especially for micro, small and medium businesses. • Address the lack of skills and labour shortage issue. • Raise productivity through economic diversification and tapping into areas of competitive or comparative advantage. • Encourage more private sector participation in public infrastructure projects and delivery of other public services through Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) and other innovative arrangements. • Integrate expenditure policies geared towards debt reduction, with specific emphasis on prudent capital expenditure. • Review and reform taxation policies to alleviate the tax burden on citizens. • Implement revenue and expenditure strategies towards debt sustainability.
Maintain price stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish robust regulatory mechanisms to monitor the prices of essential goods and services. • Implement measures to oversee pricing practices in the market to prevent unjustified price increases. • Ensure essential commodities remain affordable through effective oversight and regulation.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
Average Annual Growth Rate (%)	8.2	3.0	4-5
Inflation Rate (%)	5.1	Below 3	Below 3
Net Fiscal Deficit (% of GDP)	4.8	3	2.5
Debt (% of GDP)	82.0	76.0	74.0
Domestic to Foreign Debt borrowing mix (ratio)	65:35	70:30 (+/- 5%)	70:30 (+/- 5%)
Total Government Expenditure (\$b)	4.33	4.45	4.80
Capital/Operating Mix (ratio)	30:70	30:70	30:70
Tax Revenue (% of GDP)	23.5	23.9	23.9
Revenue (% of GDP)	28.0	27.0	27.0

SOVEREIGNTY



CHAPTER 3
FOCUS AREA 2
International and
Regional
Relations



SECURITY



PROSPERITY

‘Strengthen Fiji’s sovereignty, security and prosperity through strong relations and meaningful engagements so that the people can achieve prosperous and worthwhile lives’

Introduction

The outlook for the region and globally today is more uncertain than at any time since Fiji gained independence. Fiji is in the midst of what is likely to prove to be a long transition from the US led international order to a more multipolar world. The old liberal international order, from which Fiji was a beneficiary saw an unprecedented level of global cooperation and economic interdependence.

In the Indo Pacific, the project of building region wide institutions has come to an abrupt halt, due to US-China strategic competition. These institutions remain in place but with a stalled agenda and little forward momentum. Just as the geopolitical order is shifting, so too is the international economic order. Protectionism is on the rise and self-reliance has acquired a renewed appeal. Supply chains are being re-organised away from a political economy perspective. Open economies in some policy instances are increasingly regarded as a vulnerability. Economic policy is increasingly shaped by national security concerns.

This is the context of uncertainty and risk within which Fiji must navigate its foreign policy which sets out the path that Fiji will follow to deal with the many challenges in its foreign policy space. Central to that path is a whole of nation approach which integrates all elements of policy, domestic and external, and recognises that our security and prosperity ultimately depends on a clear-eyed view of our national values and interests and how best to advance them.

Current Status

Pillars of Foreign Policy

Fiji’s foreign policy is underpinned by 3 pillars which are sovereignty, security and prosperity. Together they inform our relationships and strategic interests, marshal efforts to alleviate poverty, build bridges to markets and enhance development.

Sovereignty starts with a clear sense of Fiji’s national identity and what Fiji believes in as a nation state in the global economy. How Fiji presents itself to the world, the characteristics that define Fiji’s society, the values that bind the country and how Fiji engages with the world determines Fiji’s international development priorities. In this context, Fiji needs to define its interests, international relations priorities, its competitive position and contribution to building a stronger region. All these priorities flow from Fiji’s sense of values which shape the Fijian society.

Security is more than Fiji’s physical security and the protection of its borders. Security encapsulates the economy, environmental sustainability, the capacity to address so-called non-traditional threats to security and challenges to social cohesion. As a small state, Fiji does not have the capacity to shape the broader strategic environment in the way larger powers can exert influence. But while a small state may be a strategic price taker, it is not without agency. Fiji does not face a direct external military threat. Fiji’s largest security threat lies in the prospect of a region which is driven by division, insecurity and instability. Contributing therefore to a stable Indo Pacific region is Fiji’s strategic priority.

Prosperity is the goal pursued by every country, at the centre of which is the commitment to safeguarding the dignity of the people. This is pursued through creating conditions to alleviate poverty, achieving decent living standards, facilitating trade and development, lowering cost of living, creating jobs and the conditions for people to live prosperous and worthwhile lives.

Goals, Policies and Strategies

Goal: Strengthen Fiji's sovereignty, security and prosperity through strong relations and meaningful engagements so that the people can achieve prosperous and worthwhile lives	
Policies	Strategies
Sovereignty (Pillar 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define our identity, values, beliefs and the characteristics that present our society to the world. • Respect the sovereign integrity of nations, non-interference in domestic affairs of nations and peaceful resolution of disputes. • Safeguard Fiji's territorial integrity. • Promote Fiji's regional hub status and responsibilities. • Establish a Forum Officials Committee Sub-Committee on the 2050 Strategy. • Support Fiji's participation in bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation to enhance Fiji's trade and investments goals. • Strengthen diaspora participation and spearhead circular migration. • Enhance the functions of Diplomatic Missions. • Develop Fiji's Foreign Policy White Paper and manage the delivery of foreign policy goals.
Security (Pillar 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote democracy, accountable government, rule of law and human rights. • Foster participation in assessments, defence and security cooperation and arrangements. • Strengthen security alliances with countries of similar values and systems, and mutual interests. • Support the maintenance of the international rules-based order. • Maintain Fiji's role in the maintenance of international peace and security. • Initiate ideas and arrangements for the security and stability of the Pacific region. • Advocate for and uphold the Pacific as the Ocean of Peace. • Embrace regional security arrangements, strategies and cooperation frameworks. • Strengthen cooperation in the international fora to protect oceans, environment and natural resources. • Build capacity for emergency assistance to regional neighbours as a consequence of natural disasters and the climate crisis. • Enhance capacity to support the delivery of National Plans and Sustainable Development Goals. • Foster cooperation to dealing with non-traditional security challenges.

Policies	Strategies
Prosperity (Pillar 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek out opportunities for poverty alleviation and development. • Build an economy which provides employment and raises the living standards of all communities and all Fijians. • Improve the economic position of the indigenous Fijians and increasing their involvement in commerce. • Participate in trade cooperation to address common challenges and optimise opportunities in line with Fiji's economic policy. • Build capacity to strengthen resilience, economic independence and Fiji's economic space. • Explore development cooperation to buttress existing multilateral trade agreements and arrangements. • Strengthen diplomatic engagements to secure cooperation, new markets and new funding streams. • Promote the use of technology to catalyse communication, research, and creativity. • Maintain minimum optimum capacity to maximise Ministry delivery and coherence. • Strengthen partnership to improve coordination within and outside the government system.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
Diplomatic Missions to be opened	NA	1 (Israel)	NA
Diplomatic Missions re-opened	NA	1 (Washington Embassy) 1 (Port Moresby High Commission) 1 (Kuala Lumpur High Commission)	NA
Visa Free Agreements	NA	1 (Australia)	1 (New Zealand)
Successful agreements through regional and international arrangements (number)	NA	2	3
Fiji candidacy on multilateral, regional and sub-regional organisation (number)	NA	2	3
Implementation of the Fiji – New Zealand (NZ) Duavata Partnership (2023-2025)	NA	2 Fiji-NZ Duavata Partnership meetings leading to new development initiatives	2 Fiji-NZ Duavata Partnership meetings leading to new development initiatives
Implementation of the Fiji-Australia Vuvale Agreement (2023-2028)	NA	2 Vuvale meetings leading to new development initiatives	2 Vuvale meetings to new development initiatives



4.1: Sugar

‘Improve sustainability of the sugar industry and income of growers’

Introduction

The cultivation of sugar in Fiji traces its roots back to the 19th century, and its significance extends beyond direct economic impact, playing a crucial role in shaping the socioeconomic fabric. Over the decades, the industry had evolved to become a vital pillar of the Fijian economy. However, this changed with the industry’s declining performance since 2000 due to a number of factors. Government policies and strategies for the sugar industry have a strong focus to revitalise the industry.

Global and Regional Commitments

Fiji’s sugar sector is closely aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 2 on Zero Hunger, SDG 1 on No Poverty and SDG 13 on Climate Action. The industry aims to generate additional revenue streams, benefiting farmers and communities, ensuring inclusive rural development, marked by infrastructure development, and addressing poverty and improving the living standards of people.

Current Status

In 2022, the sugar sector contributed 1% of GDP, in contrast to 3% over the last decade. Fiji exported sugar and molasses, amounting to \$132.8 million and \$26.9 million, respectively in 2022. However, compared to 2002, the export of sugar has decreased substantially from \$234.4 million, while molasses increased from \$12.4 million. The under performance is attributed to multiple factors such as aged infrastructure, aging farmers, climate change, high production costs and lack of economies of scale. Thousands of Fijians and more than 10,000 farmers are dependent on the sector.

Over the last decade, the Government has allocated over \$500 million with most of it utilised for grants, farmer assistance, research and development, support to Fiji Sugar Corporation (FSC), cane access roads and weedicide subsidies. Despite the substantial injection of resources to the industry, performance is still lacking with production falling. The number of active cane growers also declined to just a little over 11,000 farmers and production levels halved over the past two decades. Additionally, the amount of sugarcane needed to produce high levels of sugar has decreased.

The Government has announced several reforms to revamp the industry. Key announcements include use of drones for fertiliser application, addressing labour shortages, strengthening the role of the Sugar Research Institute, renewal of micro bundled insurance offered by the Sugar Cane Growers Fund.

Challenges and Opportunities

The industry’s resilience has been tested by the escalating frequency and intensity of natural disasters, which has reduced yield, caused lasting damage to the sugarcane fields and affected overall quality of sugarcane. Lower quality has resulted in reduced prices in overseas markets and eroded competitiveness.

The termination of the sugar preference scheme (preferential trade agreement) with the European Union (EU) necessitated the industry to navigate new trade conditions in a competitive market and caused financial strain on the Government. Additionally, the volatility of global sugar prices directly affected the income of local farmers.

Aging infrastructure is a significant impediment to the sector’s efficiency, as the current infrastructure is over 130 years old, contributing to operational inefficiencies and increased production costs. The locomotives and tramline infrastructures require a lot of resources for maintenance. Farmers face difficulty in transporting produce to markets due to poor road infrastructure and absence of intermediary processing centres or juice extraction facilities along transportation routes. Farmers bear significant costs to transport cane to factories, often resulting in damage or quality deterioration during transit.

The FSC, a key player in the sector, faces challenges despite considerable Government investments exceeding \$500 million over a 12-year period. These investments, directed towards farmers and machinery, were intended to facilitate a transition to high-quality products.

However, the anticipated transformation has yet to be realised and benchmarks in areas of production efficiency and product quality have not been met. This presents an additional layer of complexity for the sector, affecting the returns on Government investments and posing challenges to the overall sustainability of the industry.

A major gap in the industry's strategy is the lack of emphasis on product diversification. Embracing strategies that promote value-added sugar products could enhance market resilience and mitigate the risks associated with dependence on raw sugar exports. The aim of the Sugar Research Institute is to facilitate research and development for the industry. Currently, much of the research conducted focuses on addressing pests and diseases affecting crop yields, such as Fiji leaf gall, Downy mildew, and Ratoon stunting disease. Moving forward, the Institute will also need to undertake research activities in areas of cane and productivity improvement.

Land access is also a challenge facing the farmers in the industry. Farmers are required to obtain a certain threshold in production/harvesting to be provided with a land lease on which land rent is raised every 5 years, financially straining farmers. Land use pressures and competition for arable land introduce complexities to the sector's expansion and sustainability efforts. As urbanisation and alternative agricultural activities vie for space, maintaining or increasing the acreage dedicated to sugar cultivation becomes a delicate balancing act that requires effective land use planning and sustainable agricultural practices.

Considerable attention is also brought to aging farmers and reluctance from the youth to enter farming. Around 74% of sugarcane farmers are above the age of 50, with successors of farmers unwilling to engage in sugar cultivation. As a result, valuable arable land remains idle, and the generation-to-generation shared knowledge is affected. There are also farmers unwilling to utilise or transfer their land to others who are willing to produce. Moreover, pests and diseases pose a persistent threat to sugarcane crops, necessitating ongoing efforts and resources for effective pest management. As these challenges continue to evolve, the sector must remain vigilant in implementing strategies that safeguard cane health and ensure consistent yields.

Goals, Policies and Strategies

Goal: Improve sustainability of the sugar industry and income of growers	
Policies	Strategies
Improve milling efficiency and value addition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out feasibility to evaluate the setting up of refinery and ethanol plants and expansion of co-generation capacity. Negotiate trade agreements and explore new export opportunities. Implement and promote quality standards for Fijian sugar to meet international requirements. Encourage value-added sugar products. Reduce volume of burnt cane. Introduce a quality cane payment system. Target investments in sugar mills to increase reliability and improve throughput.

Policies	Strategies
Improve cane production and yield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote programmes to attract young and active farmers into sugarcane farming. Improve the efficiency of FSC estate farms to support production. Establish commercial farms to promote economies of scale. Improve the capacity of farmers and industry by developing relevant training programmes to impart knowledge on modern agricultural practices, technology adoption and business management. Enhance farming in unutilised arable land. Encourage intercropping in sugarcane fields to enhance income diversification. Optimise use of available land. Improve varietal diversification to improve Tonnes of Cane per Tonnes of Sugar (TCTS). Provide incentives for farmers to increase cane production and improve welfare such as financial inclusion opportunities.
Strengthen Research and Development and Technology Transfer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop climate resilient varieties. Develop high quality seed cane materials. Undertake Integrated Nutrient Management including fertiliser, soil-health of sugarcane farms, trash management, green manuring and liming. Strengthen research capability and capacity. Improve research outputs through collaboration with regional and international academic and research institutions.
Improve efficiency of cane harvesting and transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrade or restore rail networks and cane access roads. Increase supply of cage bins. Promote mechanised harvesting. Regulate transportation and harvesting rates.
Review institutions and legislations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review relevant legislations to improve governance and introduce reforms and restructuring to support growth of the industry. Improve efficiency of institutions and service delivery.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
Average amount of sugarcane produced per hectare (tonnes)	47	52	55
Area under cane (ha)	33,572	36,000	38,500
Annual increase in sugarcane farmer income (%)	\$3,500	25	20
Sugar mill efficiency (TCTS)	10.5	10.5	10
New farmers (number)	80	400	700

4.2: Non-Sugar, Crops and Livestock

‘A competitive, resilient and sustainable agriculture sector’

Introduction

The non-sugar, crops and livestock contributes significantly to Fiji's economic resilience and social wellbeing. The sector provides a vital source of employment and income, particularly in rural areas, where farming is not just an occupation but a way of life. While sugar dominated the agricultural landscape for decades, recent years have witnessed a concerted effort to bolster the non-sugar segment. However, more domestic and foreign investments are required to ensure sustainable growth of non-sugar, crops and livestock farming as the basis of achieving export diversification and economic transformation.

Global and Regional Commitments

The sector is closely aligned to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as SDG 1 on zero poverty, SDG 2 on zero hunger and ensuring food security, SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth, SDG 9 on industry, innovation and infrastructure, SDG 13 on climate action and SDG 15 on life on land. The goals strategically focuses on improving market access and strengthening value chains by developing market infrastructure, facilitating access to credit for farmers and agribusinesses, promoting fair trade practices, emphasising the need to empower farmers and stakeholders with skills and information necessary to adapt to evolving challenges, ensuring implementation of strategies that enhance resilience to climatic variability and ensuring that the sector contributes to sustainable economic growth.

Current Status

Fiji's non-sugar, crops and livestock sector comprises around 98,000 farmers which is mainly dominated by small scale farmers. In 2022, the industry contributed 7% of Gross Domestic Product, attributed to crops such as kava, rice, taro, fresh and chilled vegetables, turmeric, ginger, watermelon, cassava, and yaqona. On the export front, commodities that recorded decreases were kava (3%), turmeric (5.6%), mixture of spices (26.4%), eggplant (18.8%) and pawpaw (34.7%). While commodities that increased were taro (10.8%), ginger (8.9%), egg (93.3%), other vegetables (5.3%), meat of chicken (5.6%) and cassava (16.4%). A significant decline in both volume and value of import was recorded for rice, 25.4% and 19% respectively.

In recognition of the sector's importance, the Government, since 2010, has allocated over \$900 million and implemented various initiatives such as financial incentives, training programmes, and infrastructure development projects aimed at enhancing the overall agricultural value chain. It has also announced various other initiatives and policy reforms such as boosting cocoa production, investing in research and development, capacity building, market access initiatives, re-tapping into the coconut industry, enhancing rice production and delivering the Farm to Fork initiative. In addition, the Agricultural Marketing Authority assists geographically challenged farmers including in Maritime Islands who are unable to bring their produce to markets due to high transportation cost by purchasing and reselling at the market.

Challenges and Opportunities

The non-sugar, crop and livestock sector faces a myriad of challenges. At its core is its vulnerability to climate change significantly impacting crop yields. Coupled with climate change is poor infrastructure, particularly farm access roads and inadequate drainage systems. Poor farm access roads make it difficult for farmers to transport their produce to markets efficiently, leading to increased transportation costs and delays, and reducing profitability. Moreover, during periods of heavy rainfall, impassable roads isolate farms, making it impossible for farmers to tend to their crops or livestock. Similarly, improper drainage systems exacerbate the problem by causing waterlogging and soil erosion, damaging crops and degrading pastureland.

Domestic and international market access is yet another challenge. Domestic market access is limited for farmers in the interior Rural and Maritime Islands due to exorbitant transportation costs for exporting produce to the mainland, which diminishes farmer profit margins. Inadequate infrastructure, encompassing transportation, storage, and market facilities, particularly in rural areas, poses a constraint to the sector's development. Limited transportation networks, storage facilities, and processing units impede the efficient movement of agricultural products from farms to markets. While there is growing interest in Fijian agricultural products, ensuring

consistent quality, adhering to international standards, and navigating complex trade regulations is key. Establishing market linkages, improving information dissemination through digital platforms, and facilitating farmer-market partnerships can enhance market access and profitability for farmers.

The sluggish adoption of modern agricultural technologies emerges as a critical impediment, hampering productivity and efficiency. Access to finance and credit proves a hurdle for many farmers. It curtails their ability to invest in modern farming equipment, quality seeds, and other inputs vital for sustainable and profitable agriculture. The cyclical nature of farming, with income often tied to seasonal harvests, amplifies the financial challenges faced by farmers.

Moreover, insufficient investment in research and development stifles innovation and the adoption of best practices. The lack of localised research further constrains the sector's ability to address specific challenges and capitalise on emerging opportunities. This includes the introduction of new crop varieties that are better adapted to Fiji's conditions, improving overall yield and addressing the issue of pests and diseases. The human capital dimension is critical, with declining farming population and diminishing interest from the younger generation. Another area of concern is the knowledge and skills gap among farmers. Land use constraints, including limited access and complex leasing procedures present another pressing challenge. Pest and disease management is a perpetual concern as it leads to devastating losses, affecting both crop and livestock production and, consequently, food security and livelihoods of communities. Investing in disease-resistant crops, implementing effective pest control measures, and providing training on pest management can safeguard crop health.

Outdated laws and regulations limit the growth and adaptability of the sector, innovation and competitiveness. Additionally, they lack provisions for emerging industries, as such, there is a need to undertake a legislative reform, ensuring that laws are regularly updated to reflect evolving economic landscapes. The sector can further benefit with the continuation of existing support to farmers on weedicide and fertiliser subsidy for rice, ginger, dalo and cassava, and further consideration on expanding the subsidy to other crops. The concept of agri-tourism emerges as a unique opportunity, capitalising on Fiji's natural beauty and agricultural richness. Initiatives that allow visitors to experience farm life, participate in harvesting activities, and learn about sustainable farming practices can diversify income streams and attract environmentally conscious tourists. Fiji's future economic transformation relies on rural infrastructure development to support commercial agricultural group.

Goal, Policies and Strategies

Goal: A competitive, resilient and sustainable agriculture sector	
Policies	Strategies
Strengthen food and nutrition security for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve production and access to local, safe and nutritious food. • Undertake crop diversification to cultivate a variety of nutritious foods. • Develop improved crop varieties and livestock breeds. • Implement resilient backyard models in peri-urban communities. • Improve multi-sector coordination of national food and nutrition security action. • Implement the Food and Nutrition Security Policy. • Implement school nutrition programmes.
Improve livelihood of farming households	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue financial support mechanisms. • Implement a farming community infrastructure programme. • Improve rural infrastructure including farm access roads. • Improve women and youth participation in farming.

Policies	Strategies
Strengthen local and international market access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve connections and links between farmers, and local and overseas markets. • Provide necessary marketing support including by setting up collections centres for farmers' produce in strategic locations. • Develop new, and upgrade and maintain farm roads. • Undertake bilateral, regional and multilateral markets access negotiations through trade agreements for strategic markets.
Improve community resilience and adoption of Sustainable Resource Management and Climate Smart Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a National Climate Change Disaster Risk Management Policy. • Undertake research projects on the farming system. • Undertake promotion of organic farming. • Continue dissemination of new technologies to farmers. • Improve land and water resources management in farming communities. • Reform degraded agricultural land. • Improve Disaster Risk Management and Recovery. • Develop an Agriculture Drought Policy.
Enhance commercial agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen commercial agricultural development through domestic and foreign investments. • Improve domestic agricultural production via dedicated plans for major commodities. • Promote downstream processing of crops such as cassava, dalo, turmeric, ginger, kava, cocoa, coconut, mango, tomato, fruit and aromatic and medicinal plants. • Improve adoption of modern technologies, and renewable energy sources, and provide mechanisation support to farmers. • Develop and provide quality seeds and planting materials to farmers. • Improve access to land and financing for commercial agriculture. • Develop agriculture land lease policy. • Consolidate database of available arable land in collaboration with relevant agencies. • Continue the update and development of the National Farmers Database. • Improve supply of domestic produce to tourism and export markets. • Undertake formalisation of clusters into cooperatives. • Establish new export market opportunities. • Conduct ad hoc community surveys and a National Agriculture Census.

Policies	Strategies
Develop necessary policies to facilitate iTaukei business venture ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leverage the iTaukei Solesolevaki participation modality and framework to create new business ventures in existing and new upstream agricultural crops development. Facilitate necessary agricultural tax and subsidy assistance schemes specifically for iTaukei resource owners to invest directly in agricultural processing facilities for midstream and downstream value adding. Secure domestic and international market access support for iTaukei owned business sales of fresh and processed agricultural products.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
Volume of non-sugar crop production (% increase)	378,900 mt	6	10
Volume of livestock production (% increase)	74,220 mt	3	5
Volume of fresh/chilled crop and livestock export (% increase)	15,700 mt	5	10
Volume of vegetables production (% increase)	55,000 mt	20	30
Agricultural productivity of small-scale producers (%)	NA	25	50
Income of small-scale food producers (%)	NA	25	50
Agricultural area under productive and sustainable agriculture (% increase)	NA	40	60
Farm access roads constructed/upgraded by Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways (number)	30	120	180
iTaukei investors engaged in upstream and midstream processing (number)	4	55	110



4.3: Forestry

‘Sustainable management and development of forestry resources’

Introduction

The forestry sector has played a crucial role in the economic development of Fiji since the sandalwood trade of the early 19th century. The Government is committed to elevating the forestry sector to contribute to socioeconomic growth and uplift the livelihoods of forest dependents by working closely with the pine and mahogany industries and forest resource owners. The policies and strategies for the sector aim to manage and develop Fiji's forest resources to strengthen sustainable forest management by encouraging private sector participation in plantation development and the development of more timber and non-timber value added products. Forest resources will always have conflicting and competing demands hence forest landscape restoration for climate benefits and resilience ensures a broad landscape approach to sustainably manage forests for all the products and services they provide.

Global and Regional Commitments

Fiji is committed to the UN Sustainable Development Goal 15 which aims to protect, restore and promote the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss. Fiji is also a signatory to the Forest Emission Reductions treaty signed in 2021 with the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), a global partnership of the World Bank for increasing carbon sequestration and reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. Fiji is the first small island developing state to sign an Emission Reductions Payment Agreement (ERPA) with the World Bank's FCPF.

Current Status

Fiji's forest cover is about 1.1 million hectares which is equivalent to 60% of Fiji's land area. Out of this, natural forests account for 82%, softwood plantations 7.4%, hardwood plantations 6.5% and mangrove forests 4.1%. The sector contributed 0.3% of real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2022 and formal employment in the sector stood at more than 750 in 2020, excluding Government employees.

The Government initiated a national tree planting campaign to plant 30 million trees in 15 years (30MT15Y) in September 2019 with the aim to strengthen Fiji's commitment to addressing climate change and to increase the forestry sector's contribution to economic growth. As of April 2024, a total of 19,129,390 trees involving 17,212 hectares have been planted and forest landscapes restored. The forestry sector is also committed to global and environmental climate change mitigation and adaptation programmes. The REDD+ project areas not only protect forests, but also increase financial capacity through carbon trade mechanisms.

Challenges and Opportunities

Achieving sustainable forest management across Fiji will require the strengthening of capacity and capability in the sector across the value chain, including extension services, enforcement, forest monitoring and ensuring adequate funding in the sector. There is also a need to review relevant regulations and standards to ensure sustainable forest management practices and compliance are on par with current best practice standards. A variety of policies and legislations are being examined including the REDD+ Policy, the Forest Act 1992 and Sawmill and Forest Preservative Treatment Regulations. The Government will need to review legislation to create a transparent and simple system that reflects the true value of forest resources and stimulate investment in sustainable forest management and processing.

Illegal logging undermines the goal of sustainable forest management. It will therefore be necessary to strengthen national monitoring and coordination with relevant agencies, conduct training and refresher courses for all players in the forest sector, review penalties as well as complete and activate forest certification. Forest Landscape Restoration or replanting is crucial. While contributing to international commitments and improving livelihoods due to payments for seedlings, potting and planting, more engagement with communities is required to increase the level of forest restoration/replanting. The Ministry of Forestry also has a programme to restore and reforest degraded land.

The forestry sector also brings several opportunities. There is potential to contribute to the development of cottage industries and the Government will also look to support this initiative. To continue assisting Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and communities, digital application systems have been developed for ease of doing business in the forestry sector. In addition, the implementation of the Emissions Reduction Programme (ERP) will generate revenue opportunities through carbon trading and improve the livelihoods of resource owners. Through this programme, more rural communities will be engaged, and it will also promote conservation and contribute to Fiji's international commitments.

The development of the plantation sector will also contribute to Fiji's international commitments. It will also help ease native logging, boost exports, and increase returns to landowners. Research and Development also provides scientific advice for forest health and timber species which will further contribute to exports and promote conservation. Wood and non-wood forest product development, including value added products, has the potential to improve the economy as well as livelihoods. Government will look at diversifying and promoting other timber species, as well as developing non-timber forest products such as bamboo, candlenut (sikeci) and dilo and utilising forest residues.

Goal, Policies and Strategies

Goal: Sustainable Management and Development of Forestry Resources	
Policies	Strategies
Strengthen sustainable forest management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen efforts on forest conservation, sustainable forest harvesting practices and climate change mitigation and adaptation. Promote long-term leasing mechanisms to support forest conservation, forest concession and plantation leases. Undertake monitoring activities across the forestry value chain including, inter alia, timber processing facilities and sawmills.
Review of policies, laws and regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and update legislation and regulation to meet the goal of sustainable forestry management and meet Fiji's international commitments. Review and update as required the REDD+ Policy, Forest Act 1992, National Plywood Standard, National Rural and Forest Fire Strategy, Sawmill Regulations, Forest Preservative Treatment Regulation, National Code of Practice in Wood Processing, and Fiji Forest Harvesting Code of Practice 2013.
Encourage private sector participation in plantation and growth of timber product development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a Plantation Policy that will ensure better management, development, and production. Support the formulation of a National Land Use Plan. Provide the enabling environment for private sector investment in plantation development and value added production. Continue supporting both Fiji Hardwood Corporation Limited (FHCL) and the Fiji Pine Trust in their operations and development.

Policies	Strategies
Encourage the growth of wood and non-wood forest product development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen wood and non-wood forest product research, development, and promotion through the provision of appropriate infrastructure and expertise including facilities, machines and equipment. Support MSMEs in the development of niche products. Review and pursue re-planting strategies of pine trees locally in villages. Provide portable sawmills to villages for building houses in rural interior areas.
Establish sustainable life cycle management of forest resources in Fiji	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refine, review, update and develop relevant policies, regulations, certifications, and standards to support the aim of sustainable forest management in Fiji.
Introduce and implement Sustainable Forests Management Frameworks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct forest resource assessment, forest inventory and production of forest maps. Develop the Emissions Reduction Programme for Fiji. Develop and refine the National Forest Inventory to include functions for both wood and non-wood. Develop plans for the sustainable management of forest resources through the development of relevant forestry related models including the development of volume and biomass allometric equations for the major tree species of Fiji. Develop or enhance Forest Monitoring Systems and Review Overall Governance Framework of forest related boards and committees.
Improve capacity and capability to strengthen sustainable forest management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship at all levels of education and training related to forest management. Enhance forest research capabilities. Enhance regional and international collaboration on training and applied research for forestry. Equip and use state of the art technology of Remote Sensing and Geographical Information System.
Improve the socioeconomic impact of Forests Stewardship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide technical training and support to all stakeholders. Establish Forest Products Marketing Framework. Promote community-based businesses for product development and suppliers to the local market. Provide technical support for the utilisation of wood residues from forest harvesting areas and timber processing facilities. Increase participation of youth and women in forest-related businesses through initiatives such as technical training. Develop the standard of forest products to comply with international standards.

Policies	Strategies
Contribute positively to the Global Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure Fiji meets its international obligations covering, where relevant, United Nations SDG targets, Global Forest Goals, CBD-Aichi Targets and other international obligations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Develop a coherent and inclusive Carbon Trading Policy and mechanisms. Develop outreach programmes on Climate Change and REDD+. Collaborate with Municipal Councils and other relevant stakeholders on the development of an urban forestry programme. Enhance the participation of women in forest related activities through the development of various tools including the development of initiatives and guidelines.
Review current legislative framework on mahogany and other forestry resources to empower and raise benefits to iTaukei investors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the Mahogany Industry Development Act 2010 to ensure it aligns with the overall goal of sustainable forest management, to improve governance and encourage the development of the sector. Review and amend the Fiji Pine Act 1990 to ensure it aligns with the overall goal of sustainable forest management. Encourage iTaukei Institutions ownership of FHCL.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
Forest reserves and parks under long-term conservation (number)	17	18	19
Forest area as proportion of total area (%)	60	63	64
Restoration of mangrove ecosystem (ha)	47,000	48,000	50,000
Reforestation of Degraded Areas (\$m)	1	1.8	2.8
Protection of 17% of total land mass under Protected Area for Biodiversity Conservation (Aichi Target)	7	11	17
Shares in FHCL distributed to iTaukei landowners (%)	0	Govt - 90; FMT - 10	NA
Shares in new FHCL mahogany milling and processing subsidiary (%)	0	FHCL - 49; iTaukei Institutions - 20; Landowner Trust - 21; Strategic Investors - 10	NA

4.4: Land Management and Development

‘Mobilising iTaukei and state land resource for economic empowerment’

Introduction

Land is a crucial natural resource, sustaining lives, providing life-support systems, and forming the foundation of the economy. It is an inextricable part of the social system of indigenous Fijians. Almost 90% of Fiji's land is under customary ownership, with most in rural areas. Increase in population, rural to urban migration, the need for affordable housing and upgrading of informal settlements has increased the demand for land and this has put pressure on arable agricultural land and those situated along the coast and near towns and cities.

The Department of Town and Country Planning is the primary regulatory body for land resource development and management. The two main agencies which administer land tenure are - iTaukei Land Trust Board for customary land and Department of Lands under the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources for non-customary land. The Department of Lands administers a total of 19,800 state land leases covering about 4% of the total land mass in Fiji. The remaining 6% which is freehold land is privately owned by individuals.

Global and International Commitments

In line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in terms of land management, Fiji has reaffirmed its commitment to SDG 5 which relates to protecting, restoring and promoting the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss. Access to and management of land is also crucial to support the achievement of multiple SDGs including SDG 1 on poverty, SDG 2 on food security, SDG 6 on access to clean water and sanitation.

Current Status

The administration and development of land in Fiji is governed by a number of legislations. Among the key legislations are the Town Planning Act 1946, iTaukei Lands Act 1905, State Lands Act 1945 and the Agricultural Landlord and Tenant Act (ALTA) 1966. Complementary legislations include the Surveyors Act 1969, Rivers and Streams Act 1880, Land Transfer Act 1971, Land Conservation and Improvement Act 1953, Property Law Act 1971, State Acquisition of Lands Act 1940, Land Transfer Act 1971, Environment Management Act 2005 and Local Government Act 1972. Several of these legislations need to be reviewed in line with the current needs.

The establishment of the Land Use Unit within the Department of Lands under the Land Use Act 2010, stipulating the responsibility of the state to promote equitable and sustainable development of all idle and underutilised state and native land has effectively changed land administration in Fiji. The other objectives of the Unit include the utilisation of designated iTaukei land for purposes that are in the best interest of the landowners, upon procurement of 60% written consent of relevant iTaukei landowners who are 18 years above; utilisation of designated State Land for purposes that achieve optimal return to the State; and provision of longer tenure of leases for progressive development of the agricultural and commercial sectors.

Additionally, the iTaukei Wealth Fund was formed as one of the strategic initiatives aimed at empowering landowning units through wealth creation. This fund represents a significant step forward in the Government's commitment to enhance the economic potential and prosperity of iTaukei communities. It is designed to assist landowning units with the repurchase of selected expired leases and help address challenges faced by these units in accessing capital from commercial banks and financial institutions. The online State Land Application platform was introduced as a key enabler for business, and it has improved customer convenience and service efficiency. It allows potential lessees to apply for a State Land lease without leaving their home, business, or farm.

Challenges and Opportunities

Retaining agricultural land from being converted or rezoned for other usage is one of the key challenges. Between 2019 and the beginning of 2023, there were a total of 960 rezoning approvals for agricultural land of which 750 applications (80%) were rezoned for residential purposes. Half of the rezoning applications were from the Western Division where good quality of agricultural land is situated. This has raised concerns on the availability of adequate arable land to guarantee food and nutrition security in the medium to long-term. Outdated institutional and legislative framework also poses a challenge as they are not supportive of the evolving need of landowners and requirement of investors. The State Lands Act 1940, Land Use Act 2010 and Mining Act 1965 need to be reviewed in line with current needs. It is also necessary to formulate a National Groundwater Management Act.

Illegal development such as in Vakavanua and illegal gravel sand extraction is also a growing concern. There is a need to regularise illegal settlements where appropriate as well as strengthen enforcement of laws on illegal sand and gravel extraction with heavier penalties. It is also critical to develop land-use masterplans in the greater Central/Eastern/Western/Northern Regions. Access to data for proper planning and development is also a challenge. It will be necessary to create a centralised database that is accessible for planning, research and decision-making as well as for public use. Lack of clear demarcation of land boundaries and unsurveyed iTaukei and State Land is a hindrance to development. The shortage of surveyors poses a challenge to undertake land development and land survey. Protracted timeliness and delays in land transaction approvals from relevant authorities is an ongoing challenge. There is a need to implement an online digital platform where the status of each application can be monitored by the relevant stakeholders.

Goals, Policies and Strategies

Goal: Mobilising iTaukei and State Land resource for economic empowerment	
Policies	Strategies
Review policies and legislations to eliminate overlapping and inconsistent practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the State Lands Act 1945, Land Use Act 2010, Surveyors Act 1969, ALTA 1966 and State Acquisition Land Act 1940. Formulate and implement a Valuation Act. Formulate a National Groundwater Management Act. Formulate a Land Use Master Plan. Develop a policy on informal settlements.
Increase the supply of land management related professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the number of land management related professionals including valuers and surveyors. Introduce study programmes in tertiary institutions to produce qualified workforce on land management including in land valuation, surveying, mapping and mining.
Ensure adequate supply of land for development and promote its utilisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that natural resource-use laws do not inhibit the development of viable processing industries based on land derived products. Digitalise land lease applications and overall land management database. Streamline and fast track lease and sub-division applications and all land dealings and subsidise cost for development of utilities by developers. Acquire, survey and supply land for rural and urban development projects.

Policies	Strategies
Ensure adequate supply of land for development and promote its utilisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote utilisation of land through land bank reforms and land investment plans for the benefit of resource owners and investors. Promote utilisation of State land and foreshore land for development. Develop Public Private Partnership in land development initiatives and provide incentives for land development. Improve collection and management of national spatial data sets and infrastructure.
Initiate iTaukei land legislation reforms to empower iTaukei resource owners to utilise their land as direct equity participants in business opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt the Solesolevaki framework to stimulate equity ownership and participation to maximise the utilisation of land resources for business creation. Review relevant policies under iTaukei Land Trust Board (TLTB) such as premium and rental policies and establish clear and transparent land policies to make iTaukei lands conducive for development. Prepare land lots under the TLTB Master Plan. Facilitate infrastructure connectivity and continue to develop improved sound land use practices. Implement a tax break for iTaukei and local development companies to invest in housing development.
Increase public awareness on the sustainable management of land resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess rural communities and sectoral attitudes to land degradation and develop appropriate education and awareness programmes for sustainable resource management. Enhance capacity building for planners to better deliver the National Land Use Master Plan. Create opportunities for community and land users to be involved in planning and implementing sound land use practice programmes. Provide improved access to education and training on sustainable land management to people living in or working in rural areas.
Create vibrant and environmentally sustainable urban centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make land available for the relocation of squatter settlements. Implement the National Land Use Master Plan. Encourage mixed development. Identify niche markets for land based high value products and disseminate market information widely.

Policies	Strategies
Ensure the sustainable management of iTaukei land resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct re-definition survey for all iTaukei land. • Complete survey of unsurveyed iTaukei land. • Digitise iTaukei Land and Fisheries Commission (TLFC) records. • Leverage technology to improve TLFC services. • Enhance preservation and conservation of TLFC records. • Decentralise the Vola ni Kawa Bula services.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
Registered Surveyors/Valuers and Drillers (% increase)	97	20	40
Lots developed with utilities in the outer Suva Peri-Urban area (number)	0	1,000	5,000
Land Bank Investment – Adequate supply of land and utilisation (land designation and leases)	6	18	30
Joint venture operations created using the Solesolevaki framework based on the iTaukei land and property development with investors and provincial councils (number)	0	10	25
iTaukei residential and agricultural lands TLTB lots prepared for leasing (number)	0	800	2,500
Total value of investment from the sale of iTaukei TLTB lots at \$50,000 per lot (\$m)	0	250	500



4.5: Mineral and Groundwater Resources

'Sustainably managed mineral and groundwater resource for balanced economic growth and environmental sustainability'

Introduction

Fiji adopts a holistic approach to mineral and groundwater resource management by balancing economic development with environmental preservation and social welfare. The Government recognises that the private sector is the most able developer of Fiji's mineral resources, and therefore confers mineral exploration and development rights to private sector developers. The geographical and geological setting of Fiji has attracted multinational exploration companies to invest and successfully prospect for mineral deposits to extract gold, silver, bauxite and iron sand. Mineral water extracted from groundwater sources is also an established sector in Fiji.

Global and Regional Commitments

Fiji is committed to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) where SDG 6, 12 and 13 are closely linked to groundwater, and SDG 11 to minerals.

Current Status

The mining and quarrying sector contributes to 0.5% of Real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and recorded a 14.6% decline in 2022. Mineral and ground water management is under the purview of the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources. The legislations governing the sector include the Mining Act 1965, Fair Share of Mineral Royalties Act 2018, Explosives Act 1937, Quarries Act 1939, Petroleum Exploration and Exploitation Act 1978, and Environmental Management Act 2005.

The National Groundwater Resources Development and Management Policy sets out the enabling framework for the sustainable, effective, and efficient management and development of groundwater resources in Fiji. It is further guided by the Green Growth Framework, which emphasises sustainable practices in mineral extraction and development. The Government's role extends beyond regulatory oversight where it is engaged in reticulation programmes to develop groundwater resources and ensure the distribution of clean, safe drinking water particularly to Rural and Maritime areas.

Recognising the importance of equitable benefit sharing, the Fair Share of Mineral Royalties Act 2018 stipulates that 80% of mineral royalties be given to landowning units or customary fishing rights holders and 20% be retained by the State. By allocating a significant portion to landowning units and customary fishing rights holders, it aims to boost economic activity in rural areas and empower indigenous communities. This approach fosters a sense of partnership and participation in the benefits derived from mineral resources.

To ensure the sustainable development of Fiji's rock resources, the Government is undertaking a comprehensive baseline survey of potential river aggregate sites to assess and identify viable river gravel locations, providing crucial data on resource availability throughout Fiji. The Government is also undertaking geochemical analytics services on rocks, sediments, and water to ensure a thorough understanding of the composition and characteristics of these resources, contributing to informed decision-making and responsible resource management.

Challenges and Opportunities

The potential for expansion of a mineral sector in Fiji is promising given its geological formation and location in the Pacific. Fiji is a consistent exporter of minerals, primarily gold which is valued at \$79.1 million in 2023. The contribution of the mineral sector to GDP is expected to increase due to new mining investments and sustained interest in mineral exploration. Global demand for minerals and its products has shifted to deep sea mining, of which Fiji has significant potential.

There is a need to review legislations pertaining to mineral resources and formulate groundwater management regulations and laws in line with current development. A review of the Mining Act 1965, Quarries Act 1939 and Explosives Act 1937, and development of a Groundwater Management Act is necessary. The review of the legislation will include introducing more equitable fees, updated permitting provisions, and stringent penalties for breaches. The review of the Mining Act 1965 will address environmental standards, pollution control, and

safety and precautionary measures for workers. As part of this review of legislation, the equity participation of iTaukei landowners in the commercial development of mineral and groundwater resources also needs to be addressed.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in mining is mandatory. It is important to ensure that the EIA is undertaken to prevent damage to the environment and prevent long-term harm to ecosystems, habitats, and natural resources. Additionally, in view of increasing demand for mineral resources, it is necessary to ensure that new discoveries and the development of resources to meet demand is undertaken in an environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable way. There needs to be a balance between the development strategies and other legislated requirements for environment protection. With respect to ground water extraction, some communities face difficulties in securing funds or assistance to reticulate water from the borehole and in some cases the borehole is left unused and damaged. Appropriate measures must also be taken to ensure that ground water extraction does not exceed sustainable limits. There is also a need to address the shortage of professional and technical capacity particularly for semiologists, engineers, and hydrogeologists.

Goals, Policies and Strategies

Goal: Sustainably Managed Mineral and Groundwater Resource for Balanced Economic Growth and Environmental Sustainability	
Policies	Strategies
Promote the sustainable development of groundwater resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop sustainable groundwater extraction guidelines and initiate pilot projects. • Update the Groundwater Inventory for Fiji. • Empower communities in safe water management and resource protection. • Improve analysis of water and geochemical samples quality. • Improve access to clean drinking water in rural communities. • Strengthen legislation on water quality control, standards and use. • Undertake groundwater assessment in potential areas for water bottling plants. • Undertake capacity building in geosciences to ensure better management and control of groundwater resources. • Develop groundwater allocation framework on the basis that groundwater is a natural resource managed by the State.
Review legislations, regulations and laws	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the Mining Act 1965, Quarries Act 1939 and Explosives Act 1937. • Conduct community, public and stakeholder consultation on the Mining Act 1965, Quarries Act 1939 and Explosives Act 1937. • Revisit the International Seabed Mineral Management Act 2013 and explore the development of a National Deep Seabed Mining Policy and Law.

Policies	Strategies
Review licensing, and strengthen compliance and monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the maintenance of mineral exploration and licensing structure. • Streamline quarry approval and licensing process. • Improve drilling activity and strengthen drill core data collection and maintenance to build mineral resource confidence. • Review the procedures for mining, quarrying, river, and sand extraction to ensure compliance with licence conditions. • Monitor mining and rock extraction operations for compliance with environmental law. • Conduct geological mapping and update Fiji's geological information. • Update Fiji's hard rock and river gravel resource inventory, hydrocarbon data, geothermal energy data and deep-sea minerals inventory. • Develop and promote GeoData Packages.
Enhance public awareness of mining and resource extraction activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct public awareness on mining, environmental statutes relating to mineral exploration, river gravel extraction and foreshore State Land development. • Establish monitoring systems to gather baseline data. • Develop and implement erosion control measures and monitor effectiveness.
Strengthen capacity for specialist professionals in geology and mining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore succession plans to manage and retain specialist professionals such as mine engineers, geologist, hydrogeologist, seismologist, marine geology, engineering geologist and resource geologist.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
Groundwater borehole assessments, monitoring and investigation completed, drilling and reticulation (%)	50	80	90
Digitalisation of geological information (%)	35	70	83
Implementation of sustainable mining including erosion and sedimentation (%)	30	60	90

4.6: Marine Resources

‘Achieving sustainable management, development and protection of Fiji’s fisheries resources’

Introduction

Fiji’s marine resources are integral to the country’s ecological, economic, and cultural wellbeing. With 330 islands and a population of around 900,000, Fiji’s exclusive economic zone spans approximately 1.28 million square kilometres, offering a rich tapestry of marine resources.

Global and International Commitments

Fiji is a member of the Forum Fisheries Agency, the Western Central Pacific Fisheries Conference, and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community. These agencies are responsible for the management and conservation of the Pacific region’s fishery resources. In 2019, Fiji ratified the Food and Agriculture Organisation Port State Agreement, a binding international accord specifically designed to combat Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing. By preventing vessels engaged in IUU fishing from using ports and landing their catches, Fiji’s ratification of this agreement demonstrates its commitment to eradicating harmful fishing practices and promoting responsible fisheries management.

Current Status

In 2020, the fisheries sector contributed \$61.1 million, followed by a decline in 2021 to \$50.8 million and a recovery in 2022 to \$56.7 million. The total provisional catch by the domestic longline fleet reduced from 15,060 metric tonnes in 2018 to 10,360 metric tons in 2021, with 91% of the catch attributed to tuna. The pandemic led to challenges such as supply chain disruptions, market closures, reduced export opportunities, and affecting the overall performance of the sector.

The fisheries sector is categorised into 3 main sectors which are offshore fisheries sector, inshore coastal fisheries sector and aquaculture sector. Additionally, there is a separate category for freshwater fisheries. The management of Fiji’s marine resources is guided by two legislations and complemented by various policies and plans. The Fisheries Act Chapter 153, enacted in 1941, governs diverse facets of fisheries management, conservation, and regulation in Fiji. The Offshore Fisheries Management Act 2012 plays a crucial role in shaping the sustainable utilisation of Fiji’s offshore fisheries. Other related legislations are the Marine Spaces Act of 1977, Environment Management Act of 2005, Maritime Transport Act 2013 and Ship Registration Act 2013.

The Government, through the Ministry of Fisheries, in collaboration with relevant agencies, is actively engaged in a multitude of coastal fisheries and aquaculture programmes. Among them are the Pearl and Mangrove Oyster Research and Development Programme, Makogai Mariculture Development Centre, Coastal Fisheries Development Programme, Brackish-Water Development Programme, Freshwater Aquaculture and Mariculture Programme and Seaweed Development Programme.

Challenges and Opportunities

Overfishing, driven by both domestic and international demand, poses a significant threat to the sustainability of fish stocks in Fijian waters. IUU fishing remains a major concern, and the Government recognises the need to control IUU fishing. This illicit activity not only undermines the Government’s conservation and management efforts but also poses a significant threat to the depletion of the tuna fishery stocks.

With the expansion in demand following the increase in population over the years, fish stocks are likely to decrease. Establishing and effectively managing Marine Protected Areas (MPA) can help conserve biodiversity, protect critical habitats, and support sustainable fisheries. While efforts are being made to establish MPA and introduce management tools to replenish fish stock populations, additional conservation measures, including increasing awareness of sustainable fishing, must be taken in line with the blue economy initiative. Effective site monitoring is crucial for MPA, such as the Lau Seascape, to fully recognise the conservation of marine and terrestrial ecosystems.

The reduction in fish stocks also calls for alternative fisheries products. Responsible aquaculture practices can provide an alternative source of seafood, reduce pressure on wild fish stocks, and contribute to food security and economic diversification. Insufficient infrastructure

and technology in the fisheries sector can limit the ability to monitor, manage, and enforce sustainable fishing practices. The high capital investment required poses a barrier for small-scale fishing groups. There is a need to provide innovative financing modalities to support infrastructure such as fish holding capacity, storage facilities, and standardised fishing boats for inshore commercial fishers. Climate change is increasingly impacting coastal communities and marine ecosystems in the Pacific, and Fiji is no exception. Rising sea temperatures, ocean acidification, and extreme weather events associated with climate change can negatively impact coral reefs, fisheries, and the overall health of marine ecosystems. Ocean warming, acidification, and sea-level rise are becoming more frequent and are contributing factors to the reduction of marine resources. To mitigate the impacts of climate change on marine biodiversity, more adaptation measures must be explored.

Goals, Policies and Strategies

Goal: Achieving sustainable management, development and protection of Fiji's fisheries resources	
Policies	Strategies
Strengthen offshore, inshore and aquaculture fisheries with a sustainable market access environment supported by sound governance and innovative service delivery	<p>National</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a comprehensive review of fisheries laws, legislations, and regulations to ensure alignment with sustainable management principles. • Finalise and implement the National Fisheries Policy to provide a strategic fisheries management and development roadmap. • Ensure that existing policies are updated and to be on par with the market demand. • Establish and strengthen new and existing markets and bilateral and regional trade agreements. • Join formally neighbouring regional fisheries management organisations for Fiji's national fleet to access. • Invest in research on the culture of highly valued marine species to support biodiversity conservation and sustainable aquaculture practices. • Develop and fortify institutional capacities for fisheries research and management to enhance data-driven decision-making and innovation. • Enhance marine-managed areas to protect critical habitats and ecosystems, fostering sustainable fisheries and biodiversity conservation. • Promote women and youth participation in fisheries activities through targeted capacity-building initiatives and inclusive policies. • Strengthen bilateral and regional trade agreements with neighbouring countries and strengthen participation in regional fisheries bodies. • Research on the culture of highly valued marine species. • Develop and strengthen research institutional capacities. <p>Offshore Fisheries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a sustainable market environment for non-tuna species.

Policies	Strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a feasibility study to set up a regional processing hub and fisheries port. • Create a conducive environment for non-tuna species through market incentives, certification programmes, and sustainable sourcing initiatives. • Reduce operational costs for the tuna long-line industry to enhance competitiveness and sustainability. • Strengthen hook-to-fork traceability systems to ensure transparency and accountability in the seafood supply chain. • Implement automated monitoring processes and the Electronic Monitoring System to combat IUU fishing activities. • Ensure that Fiji's offshore waters are sustainably managed through a well-resourced human resource and funding. <p><u>Inshore Fisheries</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Customs Law that prohibits Aquarium trade. • Strengthen market pathways for coastal and Maritime Islands to improve market access and economic opportunities for small-scale fishers. • Review and update the Inshore Fisheries Management Policy to address emerging challenges and promote sustainable practices. • Develop and implement an inshore E-payment system to facilitate transactions and financial inclusion among fishers and seafood traders. • Strengthen the operation of fisher cooperatives and associations to promote collective action and resource management. • Establish a Fisheries Satellite account to enhance data collection, analysis, and reporting on fisheries' contributions to the national economy and livelihoods. <p><u>Aquaculture</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance the Public Private Partnership Framework to foster collaboration and investment in the aquaculture sector. • Review and update the National Aquaculture Plan to align with current priorities and emerging trends. • Develop and implement aquaculture laws and regulations to provide a legal framework for aquaculture practices and investment. • Complete an inventory of aquaculture farms to improve planning and resource allocation. • Develop diversified market pathways for aquaculture products, including exploration of domestic and foreign markets, to enhance market access and profitability.

Policies	Strategies
Provide supportive legislative framework to facilitate iTaukei fishery business ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish offshore fishery licences in Maritime Provinces. Establish cold storage facilities in designated sites. Support offshore fishery licenced Maritime Provinces with tax breaks, fuel subsidies and market access.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
Monitoring schemes implemented to control IUU fishing (number)	1	2	3
Small-scale group's financial assistance offered (number)	20	30	50
Volume of tuna catches (albacore, yellow-fin and big eye) (tonnes)	10,360	13,712	14,080
Volume of aquaculture produced (shrimps, tilapia, and prawns) (tonnes)	Less than 100	500	1,000



CHAPTER 5
FOCUS AREA 4
Catalysing
Economic
Growth and
Diversifying
the Economy

5.2

PRIVATE
SECTOR GROWTH
AND PARTICIPATION

5.3

MANUFACTURING

5.4

TOURISM

5.5

MICRO, SMALL AND
MEDIUM
ENTERPRISES
AND CREATIVE
INDUSTRIES

5.6

AUDIO VISUAL
INDUSTRY

5.7

FINANCIAL
SERVICES

5.8

CONSTRUCTION
INDUSTRY

5.9

OUTSOURCING
INDUSTRY

5.10

INFORMATION AND
COMMUNICATION
TECHNOLOGY

5.11

RESEARCH,
DEVELOPMENT
AND INNOVATION

5.1

TRADE AND
MARKET
ACCESS

5.1: Trade and Market Access

“Enhancing Fiji’s trade and economic position globally”

Introduction

International trade remains a key driver of economic growth, poverty reduction, and sustainable development for Fiji. Fiji’s international and regional trade commitments reflect our commitment to open and transparent trade policies, and our desire to integrate into the global economy. These commitments also provide a framework for Fiji’s trade relations with other countries and ensure that Fiji’s trade policies are consistent with international standards and best practices.

Moving forward, as we build on our Trade Policy Framework (TPF) 2015-2025, the Government is committed to adopting a holistic approach to trade, ensuring it aligns with Fiji’s broader development goals and supports sustainable and inclusive growth. After a holistic review, a new TPF would be drafted and adopted.

Fiji was the first Pacific Island nation, and the fourteenth country, to join the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) for Prosperity. The IPEF is centred on four pillars of cooperation namely (i) Pillar I – Trade, (ii) Pillar II – Supply Chain, (iii) Pillar III – Clean Economy, and (iv) Pillar IV – Taxation and Anticorruption.

The IPEF is a regional initiative, launched in May 2022, aimed at promoting cooperation, stability, prosperity, development, and peace within the region. The IPEF comprises 14 partners, including Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, the United States of America, and Vietnam.

The IPEF collectively represents 40 percent of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 28 percent of global goods and services trade, underscores our shared commitment to advancing economic activity, investment, sustainable and inclusive growth, ultimately benefiting workers and consumers across the region.

In addition, trade is intricately connected to national quality infrastructure and its pillars such as standards and metrology. These are fundamental elements to facilitate and enhance the role of international trade. In enhancing Fiji’s trade and economic position globally, Government envisions to also position Fiji as a regional hub in Quality Infrastructure focusing on metrology and standardisation.

Quality infrastructure assists in facilitating trade by fostering confidence and reliability, as it encompasses institutions, systems and processes which ensures that goods and services fulfill requirements of standards. Standards promote cross-border trade by building consumer and business confidence, serving as an effective tool for the Government to ensure quality, reliability and safety of products, services and systems. Metrology is essential in supporting trade, as it ensures consistent and accurate measurements to validate product quality and compliance to standards.

Fiji’s economy can be boosted through the promotion of Quality Infrastructure and its pillars, as it will enhance Fiji’s trade efficiency, reduce barriers and increase consumer confidence in our products.

Global and Regional Commitments

In terms of our commitments to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), trade plays an important role as it deals with cross-cutting issues and transects all of the SDGs and in particular SDGs 8,12,14, 17. Standards and metrology are integral in advancing Fiji’s pursuit in SDGs as it provides mechanisms which support sustainability in the social, environmental and economic spheres. In essence, standards and metrology addresses overarching issues across all of the SDGs, especially SDGs 3,6,7,11,12,13.

Fiji’s trade policies are guided by the principle of sustainable development and are aimed at promoting economic growth, job creation and innovation, poverty and inequality reduction, and environmental sustainability.

As a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) since 1996, Fiji has made various international trade commitments that govern our trade relations with other member countries. Fiji is a party to several agreements that govern international trade and promote the liberalisation

of trade barriers. These agreements cover a wide range of topics related to trade in goods, services, and intellectual property, as well as dispute settlement and trade policy reviews.

Further to WTO commitments, Fiji has also entered and is part of various bilateral and regional trade agreements which includes the Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA), South Pacific Regional Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement (SPARTECA), the Melanesian Free Trade Agreement, Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER), Interim Economic Partnership Agreement, the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) with the United States and the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity.

The Government undertook a significant step in its commitment for a sustainable and prosperous future, following the signing and ratification of the IPEF Clean Economy Agreement, Fair Economy Agreement, and the Overarching Agreement on IPEF in May 2024. This followed the ratification of the IPEF Agreement relating to Supply Chain Resilience in November 2023 and its entry into force in February 2024.

Fiji is the first Pacific Island Country to ratify the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies. Fiji deposited its instrument of acceptance of the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies to the WTO on 24 October 2023, after Fiji's Parliament unanimously approved the Agreement. This agreement, achieved after over two decades of negotiations, is a monumental step toward promoting sustainable fishing practices, protecting oceans, and ensuring equitable access to marine resources.

Notably, Fiji is also a member of the International Organisation for Standardisation; Pacific Area of Standards Congress; Asia Pacific Metrology Programme and the Pacific Islands Standards Committee. Fiji is an affiliate member of the International Electrotechnical Commission; an associate member to the International Organisation of Legal Metrology and has Memorandum of Understanding with Standards Australia including the American Society for Testing and Materials International.

Current Status

In respect to merchandise trade, total annual exports increased by 20.3% to \$2,323 million, whereas total annual imports rose by 36.9% to \$6,599 million, for the period 2016 to 2022. Fiji's share of exports and imports in GDP stood at 97% in 2016-2017, and increased to over 100% in 2018-2019, before declining significantly due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Fiji exports of goods and services as a percentage of GDP is 27.31% and imports of goods and services as percentage of GDP is 54.58%.

As a small island developing state (SIDS), trade will continue to be a critical aspect of Fiji's economy. Policies and strategies are needed to expand international market opportunities for Fijian goods and services, and broaden Fiji's export product portfolio. Fiji's leading export markets for main export products, primarily agricultural products and agri-food preparations are Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. Most imports emanate from Asia or Oceania with food products, petroleum, industrial and electrical equipment, and transportation equipment being the top imported products.

Challenges and Opportunities

Fiji faces numerous challenges with international trade due to small size and remote location, small-scale manufacturing base, lack of sector diversification, isolation from key markets and susceptibility to external shocks including global supply chain disruptions, and above all, the existential threats posed by climate change and environmental degradation.

From the standards and metrology lenses, challenges arise on the need for increased capacity building in the field of metrology, standardisation, conformity assessment and market surveillance; as well as access to new equipment that complies with international standards and best practices. Fiji has the potential to become the regional hub of Quality Infrastructure, provided there are appropriate resources channeled to establish the National Quality Infrastructure.

There is an opportunity provided by IPEF to contribute to Fiji's ambition of trade development, supply chain resilience, long-term climate ambition, and preventing and combating corruption and curbing tax evasion. Given Fiji's vulnerabilities as a SIDS, the Government is committed to participating in international initiatives, such as the IPEF, that aim to address these vulnerabilities through a multi-faceted approach that involves building resilience and promoting sustainable economic development.

Following Fiji's successful fourth Trade Policy Review at the WTO in July 2023, we will continue to engage in constructive dialogue with our trading partners and stakeholders. The insights gained will inform the development of a robust trade policy framework for the next 10-years,

re-aligned with global best practices, national development goals, and meet emerging trade issues such as digital trade, climate change, and supply chain resilience.

A conducive national quality infrastructure that assures the quality of products and services is indeed a critical enabler for businesses to access and compete in both domestic and foreign markets. sMost importantly, it will serve the needs of Government, businesses, and consumers by ensuring that products and services meet established standards and regulations, which promotes trust and reliability.

Goals, Policies and Strategies

Goal: Enhancing Fiji's trade and economic position globally	
Policies	Strategies
Participate and shape beneficial innovative trade and economic partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the TPF and adopt a forward looking revamped TPF that will guide Fiji's Trade for 2025-2030 period. • Enhance Fiji's participation in the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework by implementing agreements and pillars negotiated under IPEF. • Review and reconsider the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER) Plus. • Explore participation in Trade Agreements such as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). • Explore participation in Trade Agreements such as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). • Participate in negotiations for regional and multilateral trade agreements and initiatives. • Strengthen Fiji's role as a regional trade hub through collaboration with Forum Island countries. • Conduct an analysis of Fiji's participation in multilateral trade negotiations, including joint statement initiatives to identify opportunities and strategies that will enhance Fiji's trade performance and support its transformation into the modern hub of the Pacific.

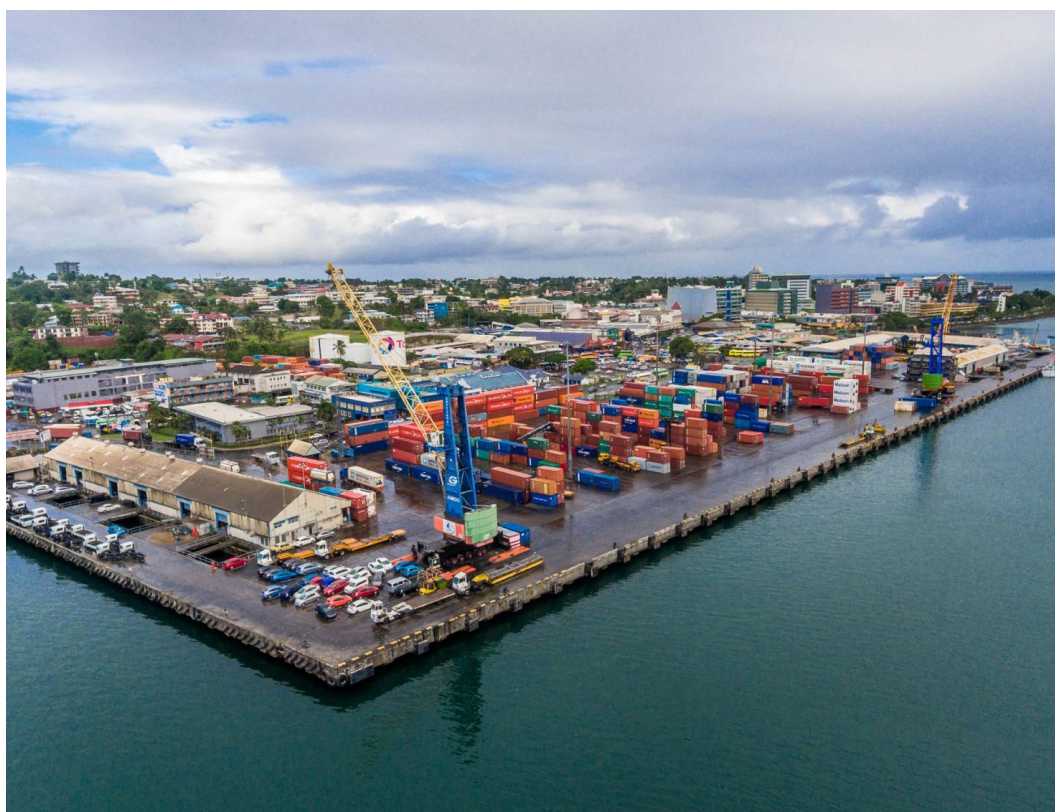
Policies	Strategies
Support export diversification and promote market access for Fijian Products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct in-depth market research to identify new export opportunities and assess market demand. • Encourage value addition and innovation in export products through collaboration with technical/development partners and key agencies. • Develop market-driven export promotion policies. • Implement robust marketing campaigns to promote Fijian made products in international markets, such as through participation in international trade shows and exhibitions. • Reduce dependence on specific markets by diversifying export destinations. • Identify and prioritise new markets based on trade potential and demand. • Identify and target emerging markets for Fiji's key exports. • Conduct market research to understand demand, trade barriers, and regulatory requirements, tailoring strategies to maximise market penetration. • Pursue trade agreements, arrangements and discussions that secure favourable market access conditions for Fijian-made products, particularly in sectors with a comparative advantage.
Simplification and modernisation of Fiji's cross-border trade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. • Establish a single window system that integrates all relevant government agencies involved in trade processes. • Implement IPEF Customs Administration and Trade Facilitation Commitments. • Review and align national trade related regulations with global best practices. • Collaborate with regional partners to streamline trade regulations. • Foster collaboration between the government and private sector to identify and address bottlenecks in cross-border trade through the National Trade Facilitation Committee.
Enhancing Digital Trade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the National E-commerce Strategy. • Develop policies to promote e-commerce and digital trade. • Implement e-government initiatives for trade documentation and streamline e-commerce regulations. • Enhance capacity building for MSMEs to embrace online platforms. • Increase in the use of digital platforms for trade facilitation, reduction in processing times. • Participate in regional and multilateral rule making process for Digital Trade.

Policies	Strategies
Enhancing the nexus between trade and sustainable development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to Fiji's efforts of transitioning to a renewable energy country and promotion of Sustainable Trade Practices for Environmental Preservation. • Negotiate the second wave of the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies and the implementation of the agreement to prevent fisheries subsidies from harming global ocean health. • Participate in discussions at the multilateral level to help develop trade-related measures aimed at protecting the environment. • Participate in the cooperative efforts contemplated under the IPEF Clean Economy Agreement such as, designing Cooperative Work Programs (CWP) to prioritise focus and resources towards a common goal on topics such as blue carbon, sustainable finance, mainstreaming of green jobs, embedded emissions accounting, methane abatement, biofuels, e-waste solutions, clean electricity, carbon markets, and sustainable aviation fuels under consideration.
Promoting inclusive trade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement trade policies that promote inclusive trade that support MSMEs, indigenous peoples and women entrepreneurs participate in international trade.
Increasing supply chain resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist businesses to diversify supply sources to reduce dependency on specific regions. • Create policy coordination that reflects lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent supply chain shortages.
Investment promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attract foreign direct investment (FDI) and foster partnerships with the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) Partner countries. • Streamline regulatory processes for foreign investors. • Promote sectors with high potential for foreign investment.
Regional collaboration and partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen regional cooperation with MSG, PICTA, IEPA and IPEF partners to address common challenges and leverage shared opportunities. • Participate in joint initiatives for research, development, and innovation. • Participate in Pacific Islands Standards, Metrology and Testing Committees to strengthen quality infrastructure, regionally. • Collaborate on regional IPEF projects under Supply Chain Agreement, Clean Economy Agreement and Fair Economy Agreement, that benefits multiple partner countries.

Policies	Strategies
Improving the legal and institutional framework that supports national quality infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formulate a national quality policy tool that provides guidance in the organisational structures, arrangement of responsibilities, and coordination among quality infrastructure institutions. • Develop a National Standardisation Strategy and relevant national standards. • Develop National Metrology Policy. • Establish an accredited National Metrology Laboratory that could serve regionally as well. • Update the Trade Standards and Quality Control Act 1992 and the National and Trade Measurement Act 1989. • Develop good regulatory practices aligned to international best practices provided by international metrology and standardisation organisations.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
Annual increase in Total Trade (%)	5	6	10
Annual increase in Total Exports (%)	3	6	10
Obtain Market Access in Major Trading Partners for Fijian Made/Grown Products (number)	NA	2	2
Formalise new market access arrangements (number)	NA	1	2



5.2: Private Sector Growth and Participation

‘Promote private sector participation to spur economic growth’

Introduction

The private sector has the potential to spur economic growth and contribute to sustained inclusive socioeconomic development for Fiji. Increased private sector investment is imperative to broaden the economic base, create jobs, lead innovation, and strengthen the resilience of the economy. Despite the incentives and recent reforms to improve the investment climate, including the removal of business licence requirements and the introduction of treatment and protection guarantees for investors, private sector investments remain relatively low. The aim in the medium term is to facilitate private and public investment to grow to 18% of GDP.

Fiji is well placed to be a regional investment hub for the Pacific because of its central geographic location, good transport connectivity and the relatively better infrastructure and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector compared to neighbouring Pacific Island countries. Moving forward, the Government is committed to strengthening private sector investor confidence by creating a more conducive ecosystem to stimulate and vigorously increase private sector participation in the economy. The Government will continue to undertake further reforms to address impediments to private sector participation in the economy including reviewing the regulatory framework, reducing bureaucracy, eliminating red tape and reducing cost of doing business in Fiji. The Government will also improve access to finance, infrastructure, transport and logistics, ICT and utilities to improve the business environment.

Current Status

In the 2023-2024 financial year, the Government allocated \$9 million to promote Fiji as an ideal investment destination. Government established the Investment Facilitation Committee aimed at providing investors a platform for raising issues that hinder private investment. Government has also streamlined the tax system by removing the 3-tier VAT rates to just 2 rates of zero and 15%.

Investments valued at approximately \$241 million for 104 proposed projects were registered with Investment Fiji in 2022 predominantly in the tourism, manufacturing, wholesale & retail and services and agriculture sectors. There is an increased interest from the private sector in tourism, Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) and real estate. While Fiji holds potential for private sector investments across all sectors of the economy, addressing challenges related to infrastructure, human capital, finance, and regulatory framework is crucial for fostering a more robust and diversified private sector landscape.

While focused on driving growth, the private sector is also engaged in uplifting the socioeconomic wellbeing of the people in partnership with the public sector. To meet socioeconomic development targets, the Government has embarked on Public Private Partnerships (PPP) with the private sector in the housing and health sectors, recognising limitations of the public sector in terms of financial and technical capacity.

As part of the Government's digital endeavour and to foster a business enabling environment for a thriving private sector, the Government is developing an integrated digital platform called Fiji's Integrated Licences and Permits Approval System. With the concept of unified access, businesses would be able to access various Government services from one platform, reducing the need to visit multiple agencies. The platform has the potential to host multiple processes and applications, whereby the inaugural Subsystems are 'Starting a Business Subsystem' and 'Obtaining Construction Permits Subsystem' which will streamline and digitise 25 e-services from more than 16 different agencies.

Global and Regional Commitments

In terms of commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the private sector is seen as a critical player towards achieving the SDGs. The role of the private sector cuts across multiple SDGs and in particular SDGs 1, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11. Private sector participation and partnership is vital for Fiji's attainment of the SDGs by reducing poverty, generating employment, fostering skill development, encouraging innovation, delivering essential infrastructure, promoting environmental sustainability, addressing climate change and in the provision of affordable goods and services.

Challenges and Opportunities

There has been growing interest and potential to attract substantial private sector investments in outsourcing services, healthcare, and agri-logistics. Fiji holds a comparative advantage in these sectors due to the availability of a skilled young population, relatively better infrastructure, geographic location, and lower labour costs. However, several constraints including transport, storage and logistics need to be addressed to promote private sector investment. Although the Government has taken measures to strengthen Fiji's transport connectivity, some gaps remain. The lack of an integrated transportation network and Fiji's remoteness to global markets is among the factors limiting export competitiveness and participation in the global value chain. Nonetheless, developments in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) could reduce the disadvantages related to remoteness to global markets.

Adequate supply of skilled labour is a critical prerequisite to attract private sector investments. Fiji is currently faced with outmigration of skills from both the public and private sector. There is a need to introduce appropriate measures to retain and attract skills. Access to finance is also a critical determinant of private sector investments. Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), in particular, face difficulties in accessing financing through commercial banks. Land ownership in Fiji presents unique challenges for investors. Foreign ownership of land is regulated under the Land Sales Act 1974. Non-residents seeking to acquire parcels of land of more than an acre require special consent, lands are to be outside of the town and city boundary should it be for residential purposes, creating a lengthy and burdensome process. Obtaining State leases, including foreshore leases is subject to bureaucratic processes that cost additional time and money for investors.

An efficient and transparent judiciary system is important to boost confidence and protect the interest of investors. Although Fiji has made progress in improving the judicial system, including in relation to commercial disputes and international arbitration, the system continues to face a backlog of cases. Government must continue to initiate appropriate measures to improve the efficiency of the judiciary to instil investor confidence.

Several aspects of the institutional, legal, and regulatory framework will need to be reviewed to make Fiji more investor friendly. Significant investment gains could be achieved by simplifying investor visa and work permit processes. Currently, foreign investment in certain sectors is governed by requirements related to local ownership and minimum investment thresholds. Additionally, foreign investment in restricted activities is limited by the amounts specified in the Investment (Reserved & Restricted Activities) Regulation 2022. While these measures are essential for maintaining national security and economic sovereignty, there is a need to review these restrictions in some sectors to unlock their full potential and promote domestic investment. Maintaining local ownership ensures that critical industries, such as telecommunications, energy, and defence, remain under domestic control, protecting national interests and ensuring strategic autonomy.

The development of Fiji's Integrated Licences and Permits Approval System (FILPAS) offers a major opportunity to streamline and digitise more of essential Government processes expeditiously, eliminating the need for extensive infrastructural development. This system will significantly enhance the speed and effectiveness of approvals, leading to a more responsive, efficient and user-friendly public administration. Currently, the Ministry of Trade, Cooperatives, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and Communications is addressing two major areas through the ongoing Ease of Doing Business Project, these are the digitalisation of; Starting a Business, and Building Permits Approval processes. After the completion of these two subsystems in 2024 and 2025 respectively, other Government processes will also be digitalised on the FILPAS platform, making it the primary approvals platform for businesses in Fiji.

Private sector investments have been crowded out due to the presence of State-Owned Entities (SOEs), particularly in sectors that could be owned and more efficiently operated by the private sector such as cattle farming, fish processing and sugar milling. The prevalence of SOEs impacts Fiji's competitiveness as it limits private sector investment in these sectors. The participation of SOEs in the economy will need to be rationalised to open new opportunities for the private sector and spur greater private investment.

Goals, Policies and Strategies

Goal: Promote private sector participation to spur economic growth	
Policies	Strategies
Review legislations and streamline regulatory processes to promote private sector investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a comprehensive review of the Investment Act 2021 with the stakeholder input to identify, address excessive regulatory barriers and strengthen it, while maintaining essential protections for public and national interest. • Undertake legislative reforms across the board to facilitate private investment including hotel and liquor licensing. • Review and streamline investor visa and work permit processes to support domestic and foreign investments. • Implement mechanisms to encourage foreign investments by re-strategising participation limitations, local ownership requirements, and minimum thresholds while preserving and promoting domestic investments. • Complete the digitalisation of Starting a Business and Building Permits Approval processes on the Fiji Integrated Licence and Permit Approval System (FILPAS) as part of the Ease of Doing Business Project. • Expand and optimise the on-going Ease of Doing Business Project to enhance the integration and expand the services offered on FILPAS by including other service offerings, subsequent approvals and licenses (e.g. hotel, tobacco and liquor licenses, LTA applications). • Reduce manual compliance stages for business and investment approval to minimise costs and time for investors. • Improve access to land for private sector investment. • Eliminate anti-competitive practices.
Build sufficient human capital to cater for increased private sector investments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide comprehensive training and skills development programmes, specifically tailored to the needs of promising sectors. • Streamline and fast track visa approval process for foreign workers. • Collaborate with educational institutions, international organisations, and the private sector to align training programmes with industry requirements.
Create formal sector jobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce incentives to encourage the creation of formal job opportunities in the private sector. • Explore actions to transition job market entrants from low-wage sectors into high-wage industries.
Enhance access to finance for MSMEs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage commercial banks to increase lending to MSMEs. • Continue targeted financial incentives or guarantee programmes to facilitate better access to finance for MSMEs.
Strengthen institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement reforms to address weaknesses in the institutional, legal, and regulatory framework. • Evaluate and rationalise the presence of SOEs in sectors that could be operated more efficiently by the private sector. • Strengthen inter-agency coordination. • Improve efficiency of the judiciary to instil greater investor confidence.

Policies	Strategies
Promote efficiency seeking investments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foster an environment conducive to efficiency seeking investments. Provide appropriate and competitive incentives to attract private investment. Simplify bureaucratic processes for businesses seeking to start-up or expand. Create a dedicated agency or task force to facilitate investments, ensuring that policies and regulations do not impede the ease of doing business.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
Lending to private sector for commercial purposes (\$b)	0.5	0.7	0.9
Investment to GDP (%)	13	18	20
Value of Foreign Direct Investments (\$b)	NA	0.3	0.5
Time taken to start a business (days)	40	30	20



5.3: Manufacturing

'Fiji as an E-Commerce and Innovation Hub with sustainable manufacturing and export diversification'

Introduction

Fiji's manufacturing sector has undergone significant transformations over the years. Although it has been expanding slowly, it is a significant contributor to the economy. Challenges such as market access, limited product value enhancement, and burdensome trade procedures necessitate a focused and comprehensive approach to position the sector for further growth. Manufacturing has the potential to attract a higher level of investment and increase its contribution to growth.

Global and Regional Commitments

The manufacturing sector is related to several UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and in particular goal 8 which deals with decent work, and inclusive and sustainable economic growth. The sector also contributes to poverty eradication as well as SDG 12 which focuses on sustainable production and consumption.

Current Status

The contribution of the sector to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has averaged 19.8% over the last decade. The sector employs 25,301 people or 13.9% of total paid employment. The sector was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to an average annual decrease of 4.5% from 2019-2022. The manufacturing sector in Fiji encompasses a diverse range of industries, including food and beverages, textiles, wood and wood products, metal products, and chemicals.

Fiji's 2015-2025 Trade Policy Framework (TPF) highlights the vision of maximising development benefits by placing the Fiji economy on the global map by enhancing industry output, investment, and trade. By promoting local manufacturing and fostering an enabling business landscape, the TPF seeks to increase its export capacity. Additionally, Fiji seeks to attract foreign direct investment and strengthen its trade relationships with key global partners.

Challenges and Opportunities

Inadequate infrastructure including transportation, energy and telecommunication networks pose a hurdle to the growth of the sector. Limited road networks and insufficient connectivity to domestic and international markets affects the movement of goods and increases transportation costs.

Inadequate and unreliable power supply disrupts production schedules, affects efficiency, and increases operational costs. Access to high-speed and reliable internet is also key to support the adoption and application of innovation and technology and facilitating trade. There is also a need to expand existing markets and increase market access to new markets. The lack of labour and skilled workforce due to outward migration is also posing a challenge and affecting productivity.

Regulatory reforms are imperative to create an enabling environment for businesses to thrive. There is a need to undertake a comprehensive review of existing regulations, with the aim to streamline processes, reduce bureaucratic complexities and ensure a transparent and predictable business environment to retain and attract more investment into the sector. This is particularly important to expand and diversify the industrial base. Another key challenges is to raise agriculture, forestry and fishery primary production inputs for substantial transformation and value addition.

Goals, Policies and Strategies

Goal: Fiji as an e-commerce and innovation hub with sustainable manufacturing and export diversification	
Policies	Strategies
Position Fiji as a regional commercial hub of the Pacific	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen partnership in regional and international collaborations. Promote trade in the region and globally. Promote Fijian made goods. Implement the 5-year National E-Commerce Strategy.
Improve the quality of domestic production and packaging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incentivise the use of eco-friendly and biodegradable packing material to improve the quality of packaging and shelf life. Increase training and capacity building particularly for MSMEs. Collaborate with international brands. Partner with civil society organisations to assist in improving agricultural practices.
Expand the industrial base and increase value addition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote and facilitate Public Private Partnership projects. Support the private sector to undertake research and development in new technologies. Enhance collaboration with other sectors to increase value-added manufacturing. Participate in regional and multilateral trade negotiations to increase market access. Implement environmental sustainability practices across the supply chain.
Expand private sector investment in competitive industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve regulatory procedures to increase investment. Promote public-private partnership development. Increase ease of doing business. Increase awareness on business linkage and value chain development. Improve transportation, utilities and communication infrastructure.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
Contribution of manufacturing to GDP (%)	9.4	12	15
Annual average growth rate (%)	4.5	4.8	5
Manufactures Exports (% of merchandise exports)	16	18	20
Proportion to total employment (%)	13.9	15	17

5.4: Tourism

'A Greener and Innovative Tourism Industry in Fiji'

Introduction

Tourism industry has emerged as one of the key growth sectors and a significant contributor to employment and economic growth. The externalities from the sector have helped to build the country's brand value, reputation and position globally. The economic recovery post pandemic and recent economic growth has been primarily driven by the tourism industry. As a result, this industry is expected to play a key role in driving growth in the short to medium term.

Global and Regional Commitments

Fiji has been a member of the United Nations Tourism Organisation (UN Tourism) under the Commission for East Asia and the Pacific. This collaboration with UN Tourism has allowed formation of new and stronger alliances to develop the industry.

Regionally, Fiji has signed the Pacific Leader's Sustainable Tourism Commitment and shares the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework (PSTPF) values as the basis for localising and contextualising regionally agreed priorities into nationally led and driven priorities. The PSTPF sets the vision, policies and actions needed to transform tourism to make it more sustainable and provide greater benefits to the communities of the Pacific.

Given the importance of the tourism sector to Fiji, it is critical that its future growth and expansion is sustainable and that it must continue contributing towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Current Status

Tourism contributes significantly to the Fiji economy through employment, economic activity and as a multiplier for other sectors that benefit from tourism workers' disposable incomes. The sector contributes to nearly 40% of GDP (both directly and indirectly) and is the largest formal employer in the country with over a third of all workers working in the sector.

Tourism earnings have also shown significant growth. In 2023, Fiji received a record 929,740 visitors who contributed \$3.2 billion to the economy. Approximately 46% of spending occurred prior to arrival (\$1.48 billion) and approximately 54% of spending occurred after arrival (\$1.74 billion). The average visitor spent \$404 per night and \$3,462 per trip. In 2013, the earning was \$1.3 billion with slight increase in 2014 of \$1.5 billion and 2015 of \$1.6 billion. In 2016, tourism earnings were \$715.1 million and continued to increase in 2017 of \$1,800.2 million. There was a further increase in 2018 to \$2,010.3 million and \$2,065.4 million in 2019. However, there was a significant reduction in tourism earning in 2020 to \$314.9 million and in 2021 to \$36.5 million. This was due to the COVID-19 pandemic that has badly affected the tourism industry.

Fiji Airways plays a vital role in supporting the tourism industry. The airline's route network spans 23 destinations in 12 countries. As a result, the airline is committed to supporting the growth of tourism in the region.

A new World Bank-supported project that aims to support Fiji's efforts to develop the tourism potential of Vanua Levu is currently underway and is expected to benefit at least 60,000 Fijians through the creation of new jobs and tourism infrastructure investment. This project will help Fiji deliver its vision for a more sustainable, inclusive, and resilient tourism across the country. This project will further improve access to markets and essential services for local farmers and communities through upgraded roads and empower communities in the sustainable management of marine and coastal areas. Vanua Levu is part of a longterm vision in Fiji to develop a more diversified and sustainable tourism sector.

Challenges and Opportunities

The Fiji National Sustainable Tourism Framework 2024-2034 (NSTF) highlights the key challenges that the tourism industry faces, and these include poor infrastructure, labour shortage and retention, and climate and biodiversity loss. Moreover, a burdensome regulatory

environment, poor coordination and financing gaps constrain investment particularly for small and community led operators. The sector also faces existential multiple external shocks. The current global and domestic economic outlook is vulnerable to several ongoing challenges and uncertainties and could adversely impact the sustainable growth of the tourism sector. These include pandemics, geopolitical conflicts, and its implications on commodity prices on the international front.

The 10-year NSTF outlines the collective vision “By 2034, our sustainable, thriving and inclusive tourism sector promotes community wellbeing, provides equitable opportunities, and restores and protects our unique cultural heritage and biodiversity.” The vision seeks to contribute to the overall development priorities of the current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their development goals. It lays out a clear policy direction, with the high-level framework accompanied by an initial 3 year Action Plan (2024-2027) striving for sustainable growth.

Continued investment in new and upgrading of existing tourism related infrastructure that is climate resilient is critical to cater for increased capacity demand and ensure that tourism products are dispersed and accessible. Tourism dispersal will also require investment in roads, airports, wharves, jetties, energy, water, and communications connectivity to reduce the capital investment required by investors and make investments in more remote areas viable.

Further, the accommodation capacity needs to be increased. Due to the increase in the visitor arrivals, there is a need to have in place the right incentives to attract domestic and foreign investments in accommodation that aligns to the overall goals of diversifying accommodation and experiences. This could include smaller scale accommodation such as those based in communities. The sector would also benefit from development in the green industry. Affordable and green transport will attract more tourists while protecting the natural and pristine environment of Fiji. The increased use of electric cars will allow affordable and greener transportation services to tourists as well as people of Fiji.

Goal, Policies and Strategies

Goal: A Greener and Innovative Tourism Industry in Fiji	
Policies	Strategies
Develop a prosperous visitor economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Hotel and Guest Houses Act 1973 and other tourism related legislations to modernise definitions and purpose, and to streamline licensing processes. Introduce Sustainable Tourism Standards in line with regional and global best practices. Create Fiji's first Tourism Act under the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation that addresses tourism related institutions, laws and regulations, including Sustainable Tourism Standards Establish strong online presence of Fiji's tourism sector and brand. Target niche and experiential growth segments such as luxury, health, wellness and medical tourism, meetings, incentives, conferences and events (MICE), retirement villages, sports tourism, educational tourism, film productions, experiential and immersive tourism such as ecotourism and agritourism. Develop partnerships with research institutions and agencies to expand the quality and relevance of tourism research. Create a Tourism Statistics committee to share information and harmonise key statistics on the visitor economy.

Policies	Strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure adequate financing support for Tourism Fiji to enable marketing reach for new destinations. • Provide support for new and upgrade of sewage treatment, renewable energy, recycling and waste management and other critical infrastructure and utilities in tourism hotspots and potential new growth areas. • Modernise and expand points of entry into Fiji – airports and seaports. • Upgrade wharves and jetties. • Implement fiscal incentives and concessional finance tied to national sustainable tourism standards and/or green building standards compliance and green investments. • Increase capacity and visibility of tourist police, including training and upskilling for tourist police on handling tourist related complaints and investigation. • Incentivize and promote investment in accommodations to meet future demand.
Create thriving and inclusive communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen participation of resource owners through the development of heritage places and monuments for tourism purposes. • Develop tourism focused incubation programmes that support rural and community-based operators to acquire and maintain the skills needed to develop and manage tourism products and experience. • Accelerate policy reforms to overcome barriers to entry for small and community led businesses to promote tourism diversification and strong tourism value chains. • Create linkages between tourism and other sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, retail and culture. • Establish marketing linkages, such as databases of suppliers and regularly updated product information to ensure that hotels are aware of available local produce options. • Promote the Fijian Made, Fijian Grown, Fijian Crafted and Fijian Organic brands in the tourism industry. • Support development and institutionalisation of industry-led training and hospitality courses and apprenticeships.
Develop visible and valued cultures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incentivise the rejuvenation and management of existing cultural and heritage sites for tourism using public private partnership models. • Develop partnerships with relevant cultural organisations provide training for local guides, tourism operators, and tourism professionals on the art of storytelling and develop guidance on cultural etiquette to promote responsible and respectful travel.

Policies	Strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage public private partnership investment in the preservation and restoration of heritage sites, buildings, and landmarks to maintain their authenticity. Create and maintain a directory of cultural and creative services providers to encourage local and authentic procurement for events, performances and film productions. Develop partnerships with retailers to improve representation and authenticity of culture and heritage in outlets and in range of products sold, phasing out inauthentic items as local substitutes become available.
Develop healthy islands and oceans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incentivise mechanisms of green transportation services. Mainstream risk mitigation into tourism policies. Strengthen and institutionalise crisis management systems such as the Tourism Recovery Team. Conduct an audit of available toolkits/resources for mainstreaming sustainability best practices, and adopt/adapt/develop Fiji-specific user-friendly toolkits for operators to support adoption and to meet requirements of the Fiji Climate Change Act 2021. Introduce fiscal incentives and concessional finance tied to national sustainable tourism standards and/or green building standards compliance and/or green investments.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
Visitor Arrivals (number)	929,740	1 million	1.5 million
Tourism Earnings (\$b)	3.2	3.3	3.5
Hotel Rooms available (number)	12,000	14,500	20,000
Room occupancy rate (%)	76	80	80
Direct tourism employment (number)	28,000	30,000	35,000



5.5: Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and Creative Industries

‘Enhancing MSMEs contribution to Fiji’s economy’

Introduction

Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) provide employment for approximately 60% of the national labour force. Additionally, the creative industries play a vital role in national development by fostering innovation, driving economic growth, and promoting cultural diversity. These industries encompass a wide range of sectors, including arts, fashion, design, film and music to name a few.

To support MSMEs in all industries, including the creative industries for growth, it is essential to provide a conducive business environment. This includes access to affordable financing, simplified and streamlined regulatory procedures, targeted training and capacity building programmes, and access to dedicated digital and physical MSME infrastructure and facilities. Furthermore, fostering collaboration between these businesses and larger corporations can create synergies and facilitate knowledge transfer.

Global and Regional Commitments

At the global level, MSMEs account for 90% of businesses, 60% to 70% of employment and 50% of GDP worldwide. Hence, it is evident that MSMEs are key drivers of employment, entrepreneurship, innovation, and economic growth worldwide. MSME businesses operate across many sectors, in manufacturing, agriculture, tourism, services, and are often regarded as agile innovators discovering new ways of doing business. Above all, MSMEs directly relate to UN Sustainable Development Goal 8 which aims to promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

In addition, MSMEs are essential players in the development of both the Blue and Green Economies, as they account for a significant share of employment and economic activity. The 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent to which Fiji is committed, envisions to diversify our investment portfolios, increase the role of the private sector in important areas such as fisheries, agriculture, forestry, mining and tourism, and cultural industries and create employment and entrepreneurial activity in the MSMEs development.

Current Status

Pre-COVID-19, MSMEs in Fiji play a significant role, contributing 18% to the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and accounting for 60% of total employment. Over the years, the number of MSMEs have been increasing, and providing livelihood to many Fijian families. The economic benefits of the creative industries are globally recognised. Data that is available shows that the contribution of the cultural industries was estimated to be worth \$100 million (1.6% of GDP) in 2016. However, it is important to consider that this data is limited to the cultural industries and does not encompass creative industries.

The mandate for the establishment of MSME Fiji was for the formulation and implementation of policies and strategies that facilitate the development of MSMEs. MSME Fiji is currently administered under the Ministry of Trade, Co-operative, Small and Medium Enterprises and Communications. Currently, the MSME Fiji unit administers 5 grant programmes, namely the Integrated Human Resources Development Programme, National Export Strategy Programme, Northern Development Programme, Young Entrepreneurship Scheme, and the Trade Enhancement Programme. Whilst, there is a dedicated Unit that administers grant programmes for MSMEs in Fiji, there are other Ministries such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways and the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development, and National Disaster Management that provides financial assistance to MSMEs.

Challenges and Opportunities

MSMEs in Fiji continue to face several challenges, ranging from difficulties in accessing affordable and timely financing, difficulties with technology adoption due to lack of capacity, access to markets for the vulnerable and marginalised groups and burdensome regulatory procedures. In addition, lack of dedicated MSME infrastructure and facilities within municipalities and local Government areas, as well as digital infrastructure is a major challenge. In addition, lack of cohesion within the MSMEs ecosystem limits collaboration and growth. Currently, there is a slight disconnect between the policy, support mechanisms, investment, and market

development initiatives for start-ups and MSMEs, impeding entrepreneurial ventures. There are many informal businesses yet to be registered or formalised. Whilst this is a challenge for the MSMEs, it is also an opportunity to formalise the many informal businesses through streamlined registration processes.

There is also an opportunity to leverage the use of natural resources to develop the MSMEs. Diversifying domestic businesses is a tremendous opportunity and could be supported through establishment of cooperatives. This presents a significant potential for developing the MSMEs particularly in the Rural and Maritime Areas. By sustainably managing natural resources, MSMEs can promote sustainable practices and create employment opportunities in rural areas.

Goals, Policies and Strategies

Goal: Enhancing MSME contribution to Fiji's Economy	
Policies	Strategies
Improve MSMEs access to finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review MSME related grant programmes across Ministries and coordinate assistance to MSMEs, through a centralised database. • Develop cohesive policies and funding programmes through MSME Fiji to enhance impact on women, rural, young and vulnerable entrepreneurs. • Increase the provision of finance available through government-funded programmes for women, youth and the vulnerable groups. • Develop alternative financing options such as small offers and crowdfunding. • Increase easier access to re-financing through Fiji Development Bank (FDB). • Re-introduce Credit Guarantee Scheme through FDB. • Develop secured transactions framework that will allow for the use of movable property as collateral. • Develop a legal and regulatory framework to govern microfinance service providers. • Incentivise commercial financiers to avail MSME friendly financial products. • Develop a common platform where banks can promote their products, allowing MSMEs a range of options. • Develop and promote micro-insurance products to safeguard MSME assets against climate related events. • Develop partnerships with private sector partners to undertake independent monitoring & evaluation of MSMEs who are recipients of grants and loans. • Establish resource owners MSME Banks by Fijian Holding Limited through Merchant Finance Limited.

Policies	Strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen MSME ecosystems to provide comprehensive support to businesses, fostering a conducive environment for growth and sustainability. Strengthen the scale and condition of MSME dedicated infrastructure and facilities within municipalities and local Government. Improve access to market and market information for MSMEs. Incentivise MSMEs through tax exemptions for certain years. Encourage indigenous ownership of MSMEs through utilisation of natural resources.
Enhance digitisation of MSMEs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review current data sources on MSMEs and establish a new MSME database. Establish a Central Online Database for MSMEs to easily access all relevant information/data on services provided by various Ministries/agencies regarding MSMEs. Improve access to market and market information on international trade. Develop a robust e-commerce ecosystem, including secure payment gateways which incentivises MSME users. Enhance streamlining of processes and digital transformations, to support easier registration of MSMEs.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
Contribution of MSMEs to GDP (%)	18	20	22
Employment contribution of the MSME sector to total employment (%)	60	62	65
Credit provided to MSMEs by financial institutions annually (\$b)	1.2	2.2	2.5
Working days taken to process MSME new registrations (number)	3-5	3-5	1-3
New MSMEs established each year (number)	NA	500	700
MSMEs trained through business incubation, training and mentoring programmes annually (number)	750	2,250	3,750

5.6: Audio Visual Industry

“Strengthen and Promote the Audio Visual Industry”

Introduction

The Audio-Visual (AV) industry has a rich history that dates back to the films produced in Fiji since the 1920s. After hosting several successful seasons of the award-winning TV shows, US Survivor and other Survivor series for many years, Fiji has become home for many successful seasons.

Given the immediate and long-term benefits to Fiji's economy, the development and promotion of the AV sector is an area of priority for the Government. The AV industry has boosted Fiji's economy by generating new economic activity, creating local employment and directly assisting local communities through productions, goodwill and gesture.

In 2019, a total of 107 productions were shot in Fiji which generated new economic activity worth \$444.21 million and created 2,787 employment. The number of productions declined to 13 in 2020, resulting in \$946,148 in new economic activity and the creation of only 10 employment during the productions. This reduction was attributed to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, as borders were closed and entry were restricted.

In a bid to promote Fiji as a filming destination, it is imperative that the Government undertake necessary reforms to address barriers to the film production's participation in the economy, such as the need to reduce and streamline processes, including reviewing the regulatory framework and incentives in place.

Global and Regional Commitments

The AV industry which encompasses the production and distribution of large format films, theatrical feature films, show and documentary films, television programs and the likes, contributes to several SDGs, particularly SDGs 8, 9 and 10.

Fiji is a member of the Association of Film Commissioners International (AFCI) which is the official organisation representing Film Commissions from the various regions and countries that assist film, television and video production, globally. As an AFCI member, Fiji would benefit in terms of professional development, access to networking opportunities and resources to enhance our ability to attract film productions.

Current Status

In respect to the AV industry's contribution to Fiji's economy, in 2022 a total of 66 productions were shot in Fiji which created 826 employment and generated \$113.83 million new economic activity from a total local spend worth \$40.6 million.

To better assess the overall impact of the AV industry in Fiji, the Government in partnership with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) commissioned an Economic Study on the same. The Study also seeks to identify the updated multiplier effects on the economy, employment and development and recommend necessary incentives for the development of the AV industry.

Challenges and Opportunities

The AV industry faces a number of challenges due to the lack of necessary infrastructure such as film studios, a large water tank (for underwater filming), adequately trained and skilled crew and support actors.

Notably, there is an opportunity to develop and nourish local talent of aspiring and existing film crew and local producers through the established Film Fiji Audio Visual Lab (FFAVLab) and creation of an AV incubator and ecosystem. Other opportunities exist for collaboration with our AV industry stakeholders which would foster innovation, and contribute to the socioeconomic development of Fiji's economy.

Following the finalisation of the commissioned Economic Study by ADB, we will continue to engage with our development partners, Government agencies and stakeholders to develop and implement strategies to strengthen and promote the AV industry in Fiji.

Goals, Policies and Strategies

Goal: Strengthen and Promote the Audio Visual Industry	
Policies	Strategies
Develop a robust and sustainable AV industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalise the ADB Study on the Economic Impact of the AV Industry and implement recommendations from the Study. Review the current Film Fiji Act 2002 and its related legislations. Develop and implement a Strategy Roadmap to further build a robust and sustainable AV Industry. Promote and incentivise a sustainable AV Industry and review incentives for AV Industry. Create linkages between AV sector and other sectors such as tourism, culture, creative, etc. Design and create an audio-visual eco-system to provide comprehensive support to film productions. Foster collaboration among various Government agencies, resource owners and AV stakeholders to create a unified approach to film-related regulations, avoid redundancies and delays. Design and incorporate pathways from the school curriculum to the AV industry.
Promote Fiji as a filming destination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct in-depth market research to identify film opportunities and assess market demand. Implement robust marketing campaigns to promote Fiji in international markets.
Improve capacity building of local crew and filmmakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design and implement capacity building workshops for local crew and film makers in person and/or online. Encourage involvement of development partners to deliver training and capacity building programmes. Establish an AV incubator and strengthen the Film Fiji Audio-Visual Lab. Establish an annual AV Industry Connect Workshop to facilitate knowledge-sharing and learning.
Enhance and digitise AV processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance streamlining of processes and its digitisation to support film productions, AV Agents including rebate application process. Review the current fee structure for film productions.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
Net spending by film productions (\$m)	80	150	175
Employment contribution of the AV Sector to total employment (crew members)	800	1,200	1,800
Time taken to process film rebate applications (months)	7	5	3
AV film specialised crew and producers trained annually (number)	60	300	500

5.7: Financial Services

‘A sustainable financial services sector’

Introduction

The financial sector is among the key drivers of economic growth for Fiji. This sector is also crucial to the functioning of the economy in terms of facilitating the free flow of liquidity and capital. The financial sector which includes banking, insurance, Fiji National Provident Fund (FNPF) and non-banking sectors contributed 20.7% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2022. Fiji's financial system grew significantly in the last 10 years with its assets valued at \$29.5 billion as at December 2023 compared to \$12.7 billion in December 2013. Foreign reserves remain at a comfortable level equivalent to 5.1 months of retained imports at end February 2024. It employs about 6,100 employees across 120 employers.

The financial sector in Fiji is relatively well developed and is dominated by the banking industry. There are 6 commercial banks of which 5 are foreign owned, 4 credit institutions, and 7 general insurance companies with a total of 5 insurance brokers and 542 insurance agents. The other financial sector institutions are the Unit Trust of Fiji, the Fiji Development Bank (FDB), and the FNPF which is the only superannuation provider. The South Pacific Stock Exchange (SPSE) is the sole licensed securities exchange in Fiji. The Reserve Bank of Fiji (RBF) is the regulator of Fiji's financial sector besides its role in independently determining monetary policy and promoting financial inclusion. The Financial services ombudsman has been recently established within the Reserve Bank of Fiji responsible for resolving disputes between consumers and financial services providers.

Global and Regional Commitment

At least 6 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are relevant to the financial sector, namely SDG 1 to end poverty; SDG 5 to achieve equality and economic empowerment of women; SDG 8 to promote jobs and economic growth; SDG 9 to foster innovation and build resilient infrastructure; SDG 10 to reduce inequalities and SDG 17 to strengthen the means of implementation through global partnership. Fiji continues to develop its financial sector and has taken into account its commitments under the UN SDGs including through its efforts to increase financial inclusion.

Current Status

In general, the financial system in Fiji remains stable and sound coming out of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The capital and liquidity position of the banking industry is at a comfortable level. The insurance industry is gradually growing with strong solvency and a satisfactory level of earnings and liquidity. The FNPF has seen positive operating returns even during the COVID-19 pandemic and has sufficiently met its solvency requirement and has strong buffers. The Fiji National Provident Fund (FNPF) is the country's largest financial institution, with its total gross asset accounting for 34% of Fiji's total financial system assets. Thus, the Fund's operation is critical to the stability of Fiji's financial system. The financial sector has healthy balance sheets and remains profitable.

The payment system in Fiji has been reformed allowing for the modernisation of the financial sector and further promoting economic activity and growth. The National Payment System (NPS) Act was passed in 2021 and its accompanying Regulations came into effect in 2022. The NPS Phase 1: Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) and Central Securities Depository system was launched in November 2022. This has resulted in increased efficiency and smooth functioning of the payment system, remittances, and security settlements across financial institutions and businesses. RBF has further launched the NPS Phase 2: Automated Clearing House (ACH) in November 2023 which will enable bank customers to carry out instant interbank transactions up to a specified limit involving transactions between one bank to another, 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. Furthermore, RBF is liaising with financial banking institutions on the phasing out of cheques.

Financial inclusion has improved significantly contributing to increased financial literacy and increased access to digital finance including internet banking and mobile money. Financial inclusion is expected to improve further with the implementation of the Fiji National Financial Inclusion Strategy 2022-2023 anchored by the RBF. Bank account ownership among adults

increased from 60% in 2010 to 84% in 2021. In terms of gender, 89.4% of male adults and 78.3% of female adults have bank accounts. About 39% of bank holders were registered for internet banking compared to 22.7% in 2018 while 45.4% were registered for mobile banking compared to 17.8% in 2018. The RBF introduced Guideline 10 on the use of Digital ID system in Fiji which will lead to improved customer due diligence. With the electronic Know Your Customer (e-KYC), banks will be able to perform digital customer verification, thus increasing efficiency, reducing workload, and decreasing human errors.

The insurance industry remains resilient with adequate solvency and liquidity positions, and profitable supported by economic recovery. The domestic gross premium pool continued to grow and stood at \$409.9 million in 2022. The insurance industry's total assets grew by 8.4% to \$2.5 billion. Total assets of life insurers expanded by 8.5% to \$1.9 billion, with the general insurance sector assets increasing by 7.9% to \$551.2 million. The combined net profit after tax of the life and general insurance sectors stood at \$49 million. General insurers recorded a profit of \$32.8 million, while life insurers reported a profit of \$16.2 million.

Challenges and Opportunities

There is a need to review several legislations that govern the financial services sector to ensure that they are relevant and in tandem with the fast-changing landscape of the financial sector. The Banking Act 1995, Insurance Act 1998 and Credit Union Act 1954 are now being reviewed to keep pace with the advancement and changes in technology and the introduction of new and innovative financial products and services. The aim in future is to enhance financial system intermediation and prudently manage financial sector risks.

Financial literacy in Fiji is still lacking among the public. There is a need to educate the general population on basic personal financial management, options available for savings, investment, and credit facilities as well as e-banking. Greater awareness needs to be created on scam savings and investment schemes to protect consumers. While there is rapid digitalisation of financial services, particularly the payment system, many households, and small businesses particularly in rural areas continue to be dependent on cash transactions because of poor access to connectivity and lack of knowledge. It is important to bring them on board to avoid financial exclusion.

The uptake of insurance, although increasing gradually, remains low relative to other developing countries. The number of insurance policy holders declined 16% between 2018 and 2021. Although general insurance policy holders more than doubled during the same period, it is still low. The uptake of insurance products increased from 12% in 2014 to 15% in 2020 but only 2% of the uptake was related to climate change. The uptake of insurance for natural disasters is still low.

Goal, Policies and Strategies

Goal: A sustainable financial services sector	
Policies	Strategies
Review, update and modernise the financial sector legislations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and update the Banking Act and Insurance Act to modernise current banking standards to best global practices. Review and update the Exchange Control Act with respect to risks emanating from external markets and its impact on foreign reserves. Review and update the Credit Union Act.
Develop capital market for SMEs and start-ups as an alternative and cheaper source for raising funds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review capital market regulations for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and start-ups to list in the stock market. Make it easier for new businesses to source start-up capital from crowdfunding initiatives by developing rules and regulations. Instate a specialised microfinance institution to target new start-ups and businesses unable to receive initial capital from commercial banks.

Policies	Strategies
Strengthen financial literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve financial literacy courses in the school curriculum. • Educate departing workers under the labour scheme on the importance of savings, investment and financial planning. • Increase outreach of financial literacy programmes to Rural and Maritime Areas, vulnerable groups and market vendors especially women to create awareness of various financial services. • Review and enhance the credit guarantee scheme for women. • Educate citizens about managing remittances effectively and encourage savings, investments and entrepreneurship.
Promote uptake of life and health insurance coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate the importance of life and health insurance to workers in the private and public sector. • Encourage employers to have direct deductions from payroll for life and health insurance payments.
Promote uptake of insurance for damage caused by climate change and weather related risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a universal parametric microinsurance product to protect the vulnerable communities following a natural disaster such as tropical cyclone. • Increase awareness regarding climate related and green insurance products.
Increase digitalisation of the payment system to cashless and card based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incentivise adoption of bank debit cards across Fiji. • Provide incentives for the installation of EFTPOS machines across all businesses and point of sales. • Encourage all commercial banks to have universal EFTPOS and ATM services with development of relevant standards. • Develop a National Cryptocurrency Act to recognise exchange and holding of virtual assets in the investment portfolio. • Encourage banks to further facilitate the usage of M-PAiSA and MyCash.
Improve protection against financial fraud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and revise laws in line with international standards to mitigate financial threats and risks through the Fiji Financial Intelligence Unit and RBF. • Develop a national policy and regulation on virtual assets (crypto assets). • Strengthen the responsibility of individual banks to address financial scam.
Promote financial inclusion	<p>Inclusive Finance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement policies and guidelines for inclusive financial products and services. • Address access and usage gaps to financial products and services.

Policies	Strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen pathways to formal financial inclusion for users of informal financial services. Develop affordable and appropriate financial products and services to mitigate shocks and build resilience to adverse impacts of climate change. Measure access to and usage of a broad range of financial products and services. Develop efficient remittance channels and reduce transaction costs. <p><u>Digital Financial Services</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote technology enabled financial products and delivery channels. Promote full interoperability and create an enabling payments ecosystem. Support digital financial services infrastructure development. Develop a gender sensitive FinTech Ecosystem. <p><u>MSME Finance</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an enabling regulatory framework for MSMEs. Establish a specialised institution for the MSME sector. Develop value-chain financing programmes and initiatives. Develop suitable financial products and services for key target sectors. <p><u>Consumer Protection & Financial Capability</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a consumer protection framework for the financial sector. Establish a Financial Services Ombudsman for the financial sector to address complaints and as a dispute resolution mechanism for financial consumers. Develop and implement a comprehensive and gender sensitive financial literacy strategy. Implement a robust programme for schools to complement the FinEd Programmes. Address and keep track of money laundering in Fiji.
Develop financing and savings products that iTaukei investors can access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RBF to assist with appropriate licences and funding options.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
Financial services legislations	In process of review	Bank Act 1995 and Insurance Act 1998 reviewed	Credit Union Act 1954 reviewed
Adults owning bank accounts (%)	84	90	95
Account holders using digital payment system (%)	33.1	40	60
General policy holders (number)	53,940	60,000	80,000
Life insurance holders (number)	82,393	100,000	120,000
Gender Gap Financial Inclusion (%)	9	5	3



5.8: Construction Industry

‘A robust, sustainable and resilient construction sector’

Introduction

The construction industry includes the development of residential, commercial, and industrial buildings, sports and recreational facilities, and public amenities such as roads, bridges, irrigation, and sewerage systems. It also encompasses construction related professional services such as design, structural engineering and project management. In 2019, the construction sector contributed 2.9% to Gross Domestic Product directly, with 66% classified as formal construction activity. The construction industry provides employment to 10,000 people and has 630 formal employers.

The Construction Industry Council (CIC) is the umbrella organisation for the construction sector and includes architects, engineers, project managers, quantity surveyors, property developers, real estate valuers, building contractors including electricians and plumbers. The Fiji Association of Architects, Fiji Institute of Engineers, Fiji Master Builders Association, Fiji Institute of Quantity Surveyors, Fiji Building Designers Association, and the Insurance Council of Fiji are represented on the Council.

Current Status

The construction industry is governed by a broad framework of legislations including the Public Health Act 1935, Public Health Regulations 2004 (National Building Code), Regulations of Building Permit Act 2017, Regulation of Building Permits Regulation 2020, Climate Change Act 2021, Roads Act 2014 and Fiji Roads Authority Act 2017. The National Building Code (NBC) and Home Building Manual are being reviewed. In response to the damage caused by TC Winston in 2016, additional guidelines have been introduced to existing standards to enhance the safety and resilience of new single-storey houses and schools in rural areas.

Fiji has taken significant steps to strengthen resilience and climate proof new infrastructure developments. Government has undertaken a rapid assessment of vulnerability and adaptability, enhanced early warning systems, dredged river mouths, built retention dams inland, and constructed cyclone resistant houses in the most heavily impacted regions. The restoration strategies are based on the principle of ‘building back better’, particularly for rural housing and infrastructure such as roads, water, and energy. In the agriculture sector, to address the issues of soil erosion, land degradation, and desertification, endemic tree and root crops are being planted. Other mitigation and adaptation initiatives being undertaken are mangrove plantations, seawalls construction, and community relocation.

The construction sector has picked up post COVID-19. The total value of building permits issued rose from \$203.8 million in 2010 to \$305.8 million in 2022. The private sector represents 65% of the construction output and 35% from the public sector.

Global and Regional Commitments

Fiji is committed to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that relate to the construction sector, that is SDG 11 on housing and basic services, resilience to disaster and sustainable and resilient building; SDG 9 on developing reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure to support economic development and human wellbeing with focus on affordable and equitable access; and SDG 13 to combat climate change and its impact.

Challenges and Opportunities

The construction industry faces several challenges. There is a need to review the legislative and institutional framework to better respond to the increasing demand across various sectors. Among them is the need to licence all individuals involved in construction, such as builders and draftsman. This is to ensure that all parties working in the sector possess the required competencies thereby ensuring the overall quality, safety and credibility of the construction industry. There is also the need to address the import of substandard materials which will affect safety and quality, and the capacity of infrastructure to withstand the impacts of climate change and natural disasters.

The construction industry must further improve preparedness to embrace new technologies and innovation to enhance the climate resilience of housing, industrial buildings and public infrastructure. It must rapidly adopt green building practices to achieve greater resource efficiency including in energy and water as well as encourage the use of low carbon footprint materials such as low carbon cement.

The price of building materials witnessed an increase since 2019. The building material price index increased by 18.4% in 2022 compared to 4.8% in 2021. This was attributed to the increase in the price of major imported construction materials such as timber, steel and cement, increase in import tariff rates, strong recovery in construction activity post COVID-19, supply chain disruptions, increase in shipping cost and labour shortage. While the Government introduced ceiling prices for several construction materials to avoid excessive profiteering there is a need to explore other measures.

The industry faces a shortage of labour and skilled workers which is exacerbated by the migration of these workers. Appropriate measures need to be in place to retain skilled workers, attract labour from abroad, and escalate and improve construction related skills training programmes. Significant process reforms within Fiji's immigration department are needed to facilitate entry of foreign skilled and specialized labour currently in short supply, and seriously curtailing the commencement of large construction projects.

There is also a need to develop an Infrastructure Master Plan to strategize and prioritise Fiji's infrastructure development including for roads, water, energy and transport. Currently there is also a lack of baseline data for effective planning and as such, sharing of data among stakeholders is essential.

Goal, Policies and Strategies

Goals: A robust, sustainable and resilient construction sector	
Policies	Strategies
Review institutions and legislations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the National Building Code and formulate a stand-alone legislation on building standards. Develop legislation on the licensing of builders in consultation with industry leaders. Establish an agency to implement, monitor and register builders and construction related professionals benchmarked against international best practices.
Enforce current legislations related to construction activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify an agency within the Government to monitor and enforce the National Building Code and any other sector regulations to improve overall quality of the construction Industry. Raise awareness of the National Building Code and its compliance requirements. Introduce assistance and incentives for compliance with National Building Code particularly for house construction in rural areas.
Reduce brain drain of skilled and experienced construction workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce legislation to bond workers who have been sponsored to obtain qualification and enhance capacity to work in Fiji upon graduation. Introduce apprenticeship programmes in Government agencies, private sector, and training institutes to develop construction skills. Revise and streamline processes related to immigration laws to allow specialised skilled workers to obtain work visas to work in the construction industry. Reform wage structure in the construction sector to retain workers.

Policies	Strategies
Address skill shortage in the construction industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen collaboration between the University of the South Pacific and the Fiji National University with appropriate Australia and New Zealand universities to provide accredited courses on bridge engineering and built environment. Initiate construction training centres for example in Monfort Boys Town with recognition from Fiji Higher Education Commission. Reactivate and introduce apprenticeship programmes within Disciplined Forces and Government Agencies related to construction industry skills. Reduce entry level requirements which is currently Year 12 pass for certificate level programmes related to the construction industry. Foster partnerships between the Government and educational institutions to tailor curriculum and training programmes to align with the needs of the construction sector. Develop international partnerships that allow professionals to gain experience abroad while maintaining a commitment to return and contribute to the construction industry in Fiji to facilitate knowledge transfer and skill enrichment.
Enhance environmental sustainability and climate resilience in infrastructure development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embrace eco-friendly construction by using energy efficient designs and sustainable materials to reduce impact on the environment. Include measures in construction projects to preserve nature including protecting habitats, planting native vegetation, and creating green spaces to support local ecosystems. Design projects with climate change in mind, ensuring they can withstand extreme weather events and other environmental challenges. Educate the local communities about sustainable construction practices through workshops, education programmes and community involvement. Encourage sustainability adoption by offering incentives. Set and enforce clear environment standards for construction projects and promote shared commitment to sustainability.
Reduce the cost of construction materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulate and limit the mark-up on essential construction and building materials. Create an e-commerce platform to disseminate price information on major construction materials and services.
Promote entrepreneurship in construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage entrepreneurship within the construction industry by providing support for start-ups and small businesses to create opportunities for skilled workers to establish their own enterprises.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
Construction Price Index (% reduction)	NA	5	10
Building Permits Issued (number)	1,700	1,750	1,800
Total Completion Certificates	691	700	750
Construction employment as proportion of total employment (% increase)	NA	5	5
Construction Industry contribution to GDP (%)	2.9	3	3



5.9: Outsourcing Industry

‘Leverage Fiji as a leading outsourcing hub in the Pacific’

Introduction

The outsourcing industry has diversified into Business Process Outsourcing (BPO), Knowledge Process Outsourcing (KPO), Information Technology Outsourcing, and Shared Service/Global Business Services. However, Fiji’s potential as an outsourcing industry hub in the Asia Pacific region has yet to be fully tapped into and contribute to diversifying the economic base.

Fiji is well placed to serve the growing demand for outsourcing services to nearshore markets due to the country’s geographic proximity, similar time zones, English speaking workforce, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure, educated workforce and familiarity of source markets such as Australia and New Zealand. In addition to serving nearshore destinations, Fiji possesses significant potential to offer services to the USA/UK and Europe markets. The goal is to create a conducive environment to market Fiji as the outsourcing destination of choice, attract multinational corporations to open global capability centres in Fiji and nurture the industry to become a contributor to economic growth.

Global and Regional Commitments

The outsourcing sector will relate to Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 8 which deals with decent work, and inclusive and sustainable economic growth. It also relates to SDG 9 which highlights the need to modernise infrastructure and industries in an environmentally conscious manner. The sector also contributes to poverty eradication in SDG 1.

Current Status

Fiji has several BPO, KPO, shared services centres, and global business centres providing services for well-known brands across the globe and are continuing to grow. The Business Process Outsourcing Council (BPOC), now rebranded as Outsource Fiji since 2022, plays a pivotal role in the development and promotion of Fiji as an outsourcing destination. In 2022, the outsourcing industry generated \$200 million in revenue. Notably, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Fiji’s BPO industry demonstrated resilience, attracting attention as a risk diversification location for global businesses, with some companies fully relocating their outsourcing operations to Fiji due to its uninterrupted services during the crisis.

As of 2022, the outsourcing industry employed 8,000 workers and the goal is to create employment for 25,000 Fijians by 2030. The sector has gained interest from Multinational Enterprises (MNEs) in the UK, in addition to its traditional source markets, Australia and New Zealand. The Southern Cross cable, ensuring fast and secure internet connectivity, and infrastructure developments such as the second fibre optic cable and major investments in business parks, position Fiji as a competitive player in the global outsourcing landscape.

The overarching national goal for Fiji’s outsourcing industry from 2024 to 2044 is to establish a robust and competitive sector driving economic growth and positioning Fiji as a premier destination for global outsourcing services. Emphasising modernisation and technological integration, Fiji aims to attract foreign investments by enhancing the quality and efficiency of outsourcing services, specialising in services such as debt recovery, back-office services, financial services, insurance claims processing, documentation, customer service, outbound sales, and telemarketing.

Challenges and Opportunities

One of the major challenges currently faced by the outsourcing industry is the existence of legislative gaps, particularly concerning data protection, cyber security, and intellectual property. It will be important to create new laws and strengthen existing ones including the Investment Act 2021 and Immigration Act 2003 to ensure a safe and supportive environment for

outsourcing. The industry also faces potential threats from fly-by-night operators, emphasising the importance of establishing laws to safeguard the operations of Fiji's outsourcing sector as a trusted and secure outsourcing hub.

Despite improvements, Fiji's overall infrastructure, including telecommunication, transportation, and energy, continues to face challenges. Addressing infrastructure gaps remains crucial to unlocking the full potential of Fiji's outsourcing sector. Bridging these infrastructure gaps can pave the way for accelerated industry growth.

Fiji's outsourcing industry must also navigate the evolving landscape of technology and digital innovation. Rapid advancements in technology, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), automation, and block chain are reshaping the outsourcing sector and creating both opportunities and challenges. Embracing digital transformation initiatives and investing in emerging technologies will be essential to remain competitive in the global outsourcing market. There is also a need to foster stronger collaboration between academia and industry in education and research to ensure greater alignment with the requirements of the outsourcing sector.

Fiji's outsourcing industry holds significant potential to contribute to the green growth agenda by embracing sustainable practices through private sector engagement. Companies can drive the adoption of environmentally friendly approaches such as energy efficiency and waste reduction, supported by partnerships with Government and Non-Governmental Organisations. Integrating green principles into outsourcing operations not only aligns with global sustainability goals but also enhances Fiji's appeal as a sustainable outsourcing destination and attracting environmentally conscious clients.

Goals, Policies and Strategies

Goal: Leverage Fiji as a leading outsourcing hub in the Pacific Region	
Policies	Strategies
Strengthen policy and regulatory framework towards supporting Outsourcing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen the existing Investment Act 2021 and the Immigration Act 2003 with focus on outsourcing.
Develop infrastructure and technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streamline incentives for infrastructure development to attract private investments in outsourcing facilities. Explore concessional loan facilities from financial institutions like Fiji Development Bank and the Reserve Bank of Fiji to expedite infrastructure development. Provide incentives to companies strengthening ICT infrastructure in both urban and rural areas. Explore decentralisation strategies to stimulate economic growth in regions beyond urban centres for outsourcing sector. Establish Special Economic Zones in strategic locations near Suva, Lautoka, and Nadi. Develop a focused incentive package to attract MNEs and enhance Fiji's competitiveness globally. Design and roll out new training on digital skills that can support the adoption of new technologies such as AI. Establish industry-centric training institutions. Create internships, apprenticeships, and vocational training programmes in the outsourcing industry to ensure adequate supply of skilled workforce.
Promote greater private investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and update tax policies regularly to align with industry trends and international standards. Provide incentives for companies engaging in research and development within the outsourcing industry.

Policies	Strategies
Promote market diversification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in international trade fairs and forums to showcase Fiji's capabilities in the outsourcing sector. Address lack of awareness of Fiji as a potential outsourcing destination. Create partnerships with industry associations and chambers of commerce to strengthen networking and business collaborations. Promote Fiji's environmental sustainability green growth agenda and enhance the country's attractiveness as a sustainable outsourcing destination. Maintain high-quality standards and certifications within the outsourcing industry (ISO certifications or industry-specific quality benchmarks).

Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
New outsourcing firms established in Fiji under BPOC member (number)	25	20	50
People employed in the Outsourcing Industry (number)	8,000	12,000	25,000
Annual average growth in revenue (%)	A\$350 million	25	35



5.10: Information and Communications Technology

'A resource-efficient, cost-effective and environmentally sustainable Information and Communication Technology sector fostering the digital economy'

Introduction

Digital transformation represents a critical pathway for modernising economies, enhancing government transparency, and improving the quality of life for citizens. For nations, particularly those developing or with unique geographical challenges like Fiji, embracing digital technology can yield substantial benefits across multiple dimensions. As part of Fiji's ambitious national development agenda, the nation is poised to undertake a transformative journey towards a Digital Economy, reshaping itself into a progressive, vibrant, and inclusive society.

In this regard, the Ministry of Trade, Cooperatives, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and Communications will adopt a National Digital Strategy which will prioritise the development of robust digital infrastructure, enhancing cybersecurity measures, and integrating digital learning. Through this strategy, Fiji aims to create a resilient and inclusive digital ecosystem. This strategy will further emphasise the importance of human capacity building, regulatory reforms, and the promotion of private sector engagement, ensuring that Fiji's digital future is both sustainable and progressive.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the crucial role of ICT in ensuring the continuity of economic activity and connectivity. The pandemic increased demand for ICT services, including online platforms for communication, e-commerce, e-wallets, and digital transformation initiatives that provide Government services to individuals. Recognising the significance of a robust ICT infrastructure, the Government has invested in improving connectivity and expanding access to digital services, further fostering the growth of the sector.

In 2022, the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector contributed 4.1% to Fiji's real GDP, reflecting a decline from the 4.2% recorded in 2013. Several factors have been attributed to this decrease, including changes in market dynamics, global economic trends, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and impacts of climate change.

The Government is also heavily involved in ICT sector development through its Digital Government Transformation Programme, it aims to bring digital services including government services closer to the people and enhance accessibility. These efforts in the Information and Communication Technology space will allow Fiji to leapfrog traditional progressive growth and surge into the Digital Economy with emerging technologies, ultimately fostering economic growth, increasing efficiency, and improving the quality of life by creating a more inclusive and digitally connected society.

Global and Regional Commitments

Fiji is committed to UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 9 and 17 which deal with increasing access to information and communication technology and strives to provide universal and affordable access to the internet.

The Budapest Convention on Cybercrime is an international treaty aimed at addressing cybercrime and enhancing cooperation among countries. The Parliament of the Republic of Fiji has endorsed Fiji's accession to the convention and Fiji has deposited its instrument of accession with the Secretary General of the Council of Europe. Fiji has also been an active participant in regional and international forums on cybersecurity, sharing best practices and exchanging information with other countries. Fiji is also part of several global and regional organisation in the ICT space such as International Telecommunications Union (ITU), Asia Pacific Telecommunity (APT), Pacific Island Telecommunications Association (PITA) and Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation (CTO).

The Digital Economy is a key chapter in the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), emphasising its role in driving regional growth, innovation, and connectivity across member nations. Fiji is participating in the IPEF negotiations on the special invite from the President of the United States of America which comprises 14 countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

Current Status

Government's commitment to digital transformation is reflected in its investment in the digitalFIJI program and the formation of the Digital Government Transformation Office (DGTO),

which aims to implement government digitalisation, enhance the overall ICT infrastructure and build and develop capacity in digital transformation in the government. Furthermore, initiatives such as the development of the National Digital Strategy, National E-commerce Strategy and National Cybersecurity Strategy, illustrates the government's commitment to improving services through effective and secure digital transformation. These projects seek to use digital technologies to spur innovation, improve service delivery, strengthen cybersecurity, and promote economic growth.

The private sector has a key role to play in the ICT sector. Vodafone Fiji and Digicel Fiji has been working on upgrading its network infrastructure to provide 5G services and aim to redefine the telecommunications environment by providing ultra-fast and reliable connectivity, paving the way for better digital experience and transformative technological advancements. Also, it is expected that the recently introduced Starlink satellite internet service will create opportunities in the future for high-speed internet connectivity, especially in rural and remote areas.

Government has amended the ICT incentive programmes to expressly target Business Process Outsourcing (BPO), Knowledge Process Outsourcing, Information Technology Outsourcing, and Shared Services or Global Business Services. Businesses need to register with the BPO Council of Fiji, known as Outsource Fiji.

The Southern Cross Cable Fibre is the focal point for regional activity as it provides world class international connectivity. The expansion of the fibre optic connection between Labasa and Savusavu is a component of Telecom Fiji's 5-year investment plan for fibre infrastructure. This initiative aims to enhance the national backbone communications network, making it more robust and adaptable to accommodate future demand and growth.

The ICT sector is undergoing significant transformation with the introduction of Google subsea cabling. This project aims to promote digital inclusion, high-speed fibre-optic network across the Pacific, and connect Fiji to other countries in the region and worldwide.

Under the digitalFIJI initiative, a whole-of-Government Data Exchange Platform (DXP) has also been implemented to allow Government ministries and agencies to share common data with each other. The DXP was established to allow agencies to have trusted and seamless access to data and provide efficient services to the public.

Challenges and Opportunities

In order to remain abreast and support technological advancements, it is imperative for the Government to regularly evaluate and align ICT sector policies and regulations. Outdated regulations can impede industry innovation and curtail growth. Furthermore, the reduction of barriers to entry into the sector is necessary to attract new participants.

Despite continuing investment in network infrastructure, access to reliable and high-speed internet remains an issue, particularly in rural and remote areas. Approximately 5% of the population is not connected due to remoteness and topography. The geographic location of many of these areas makes it costly and logistically challenging to build and maintain network infrastructure in these areas. Insufficient investment and outdated infrastructure also have an impact on the ICT sector as it reduces efficiency and competitiveness and discourages new businesses and investors. Lack of infrastructure and connectivity hinders economic growth, investment, employment, and equitable access.

The broadcasting industry needs to be continue upgrading in terms of technology, equipment and content development. This is crucial to provide information and address disinformation with effective outreach including in rural areas and outer islands which have limited access to internet connectivity. Lack of infrastructure and connectivity hinder economic growth, investment, employment, and equitable access to education.

There is opportunity for greater public and private sector investment in the sector which will bring macro level benefits in terms of better governance, higher economic growth, efficiency, and productivity that has the potential to uplift the social wellbeing of the people. Strengthening of policies related to ICT can have a significant positive impact on the development and growth of the sector. These policies will enable the adoption of new technologies and provide the supporting environment to attract investments. It will also provide clear guidelines and regulations to ensure accountability, transparency, protection against cybercrime, and a fair competitive market.

Goal, Policies and Strategies

Goal: A resource-efficient, cost-effective, and environmentally sustainable Information and Communication Technology sector	
Policies	Strategies
Strengthen ICT policy and regulatory framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop, adopt and implement a National Digital Strategy that underpins a comprehensive effort to leverage technology for socioeconomic enhancement and a digitally empowered future that aligns with its broader developmental goals. • Promote an adaptive regulatory framework that facilitates innovation, eliminates barriers to entry and establishes a favourable environment for the expansion of ICT industry and digital technologies. • Review, formulate and implement the regulatory and policy framework for the ICT and broadcasting sectors including the adoption of the multi-sector regulator model.
Develop Data Protection Framework and Cyber Security Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and enact data protection and privacy legislative and policy frameworks. • Foster collaboration with international bodies to stay updated on global best practices in data protection.
Strengthen cybersecurity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a National Cybersecurity Strategy.
Improve ICT and broadcasting infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate 5G Deployment and conduct an analysis of the infrastructure needed to properly harness 5G technology. • Ensure ICT sector's pricing, bandwidth, and adoption of 5G networks are in line with the international rate of ICT development. • Support the private sector on new investment plans. • Develop and implement a National Emergency Telecommunications Plan. • Promote infrastructure access and sharing among telecommunications companies. • Secure resilient submarine cable Infrastructure. • Identify and protect critical infrastructure and information infrastructure.
Improve digital inclusion and literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake activities to enhance digital literacy in school and community. • Provide supportive infrastructure in schools for digital inclusion. • Strengthen collaboration with civil society organisations and private sector to provide and improve access to ICT infrastructure and tools in schools and community.
Improve digital transformation of Government services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve accessibility and quality of existing online government services. • Expand the span of online government services to more areas to facilitate dealing with the government. • Expand the outreach of the Government and community accessibility to digital platforms.

Policies	Strategies
Strengthen data sharing within Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen integration and sharing of data among government ministries and agencies. Onboard more agencies as publishers and subscribers to the DXP to improve access to good, quality and trusted data. Promote adoption of digital systems for better data accuracy and quality. Develop national data governance and protection policy for ensuring responsible and secure gathering, storing and sharing of data and safeguarding individual privacy.
Promote Green technology in the ICT sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt green practices including reducing the use of paper, energy and green materials in the provision of ICT services and development of ICT infrastructure. Introduce appropriate measures and guidelines for the safe and environmentally friendly disposal of ICT related tools and equipment.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
National Digital Strategy	Drafting stage	Completed and Implemented	Implemented
National Cybersecurity Strategy	Drafting stage	Completed and Implemented	Implemented
Review of Telecommunications Act	NA	Completed	Implemented
Population access to 5G coverage (%)	Testing	20	50
Mobile network coverage (% of population)	95	95.5	96
New Government digital services (numbers)	NA	10	15
Public sector employees proficient in ICT skills (%)	NA	50	70
Government Data Exchange Platform subscriptions (number)	8	15	20
Outreach of digital literacy initiatives (number of people)	NA	100,000	250,000

5.11: Research and Development and Innovation

‘Promote research and development and innovation and adopt advanced technologies to accelerate economic growth and enhance wellbeing of the people’

Introduction

Research and development and innovation (RDI) is an important driver to catalyse economic growth, enhance competitiveness and improve wellbeing of the people. It provides the means to move up the value chain to produce higher value-added products and services. It also enables improvement in processes that can contribute to increase in output, productivity and efficiency, and reduction in cost. Currently, there is minimal investment in RDI in Fiji by the public and private sector. Most of the research is currently undertaken by the universities and the private sector. Moving forward, the Plan will place greater emphasis on RDI to accelerate economic growth and improve the social wellbeing of the people. There will also be a special focus on promoting the adoption and application of Industrial Revolution 4.0 (IR) technologies, in particular Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Global and Regional Commitments

UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 9.4 and 9.5 deal with the importance of scientific research and the need to upgrade technological capability, encourage innovation and substantially increase research and development personnel. SDG 9b specifically alludes to the importance of supporting domestic technology development, research and innovation and creating a conducive policy environment for industrial diversification and value addition to commodities. These SDG targets are very relevant to Fiji and there is increasing appreciation for the critical importance of RDI.

Current Status

There are several initiatives within the Government to promote RDI which reside at several ministries in particular the Ministry of Trade, Cooperatives, Small, Medium Enterprises and Communication, the Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways and the Ministry of Education. For instance, the Research and Innovation Scheme (RISE) which was launched by the Ministry of Trade in 2020 with an allocation of \$500,000 to modernise the economy and promote sustainable development. The programme is intended to encourage firms to undertake RDI to improve and develop new processes, products and services. The Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways received an allocation of about \$8.5 million over the past 5 years for RDI. It undertakes research in multiple areas such as on root crops, tree crops, development of seeds and planting materials, plant tissue culture and organic fertiliser. There is also donor driven RDI initiatives such as the NZ\$3 million RDI grant from the New Zealand government to improve waste and sanitation in informal settlements towards enhancing health and environment.

Challenges and Opportunities

Among the key challenges with respect to RDI in Fiji is the absence of an overarching governance and institutional mechanism to promote RDI in an effective manner. There is also no overarching national policy and strategy framework that sets out priority areas, deals with the financing mechanisms and infrastructure. The ecosystem for RDI needs to be strengthened. Closer collaboration between academia, research institutions, the Government and private sector will need to be nurtured and formalised to ensure optimal RDI outcomes. The capacity and capability to undertake RDI needs to be strengthened in terms of the quality and the number of personnel.

Financing is also an important factor that currently deters RDI. The Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises in particular do not have adequate resources to undertake RDI to improve their processes and to move up the value chain. Except for several small schemes by the Government, funding to support RDI is lacking. Although there is currently no official data on the Gross Expenditure on Research and Development and Innovation (GERD) and number of RDI workers in the labour force, which are key measurements to assess the level of RDI at the national level, it is expected to be low. The percentage of RDI expenditure by business is also not available to make a baseline assessment. The number of patents filed and number of products commercialised will also need to be tracked.

There are substantial unexploited gains that can be realised in terms of productivity, output,

income and wealth creation by undertaking RDI. Fiji can potentially increase its Gross Domestic Product (GDP), productivity and wealth by investing in appropriate RDI across all sectors. In addition, the adoption and application of IR4.0 technologies, in particular AI across sectors, will open new opportunities for growth, and position Fiji as a technology leader for the Pacific region. It will have the greatest impact in modernising, and increasing productivity, efficiency and competitiveness.

Goals, Policies and Strategies

Goals: Promote RDI and adopt advanced technologies to accelerate economic growth and enhance wellbeing of the people	
Policies	Strategies
Strengthen the policy and strategy framework for RDI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formulate a National Policy on Science, Technology and Innovation encompassing the ecosystem, priority areas, capability building, and funding modalities.
Strengthen the governance and institutional Structure for RDI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify an appropriate Ministry to lead and undertake the function of promoting and coordinating science and technology (S&T) and public sector RDI across sectors. Introduce a formal platform based on the Triple Helix Model to strengthen collaboration between academia, Government and industry. Introduce a promotive regulatory framework to support and nurture RDI including a regulatory sandbox environment to test new ideas and innovation. Improve the database on RDI activities in the public and private sectors.
Focus RDI in strategic areas consistent with national development priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify, adopt and apply appropriate advanced technologies and innovation in particular IR4.0 technologies including Artificial Intelligence across all economic sectors, conservation of natural resources, climate change management, infrastructure and public sector delivery. Develop a National RDI roadmap to accelerate adoption and application of technologies related to IR4.0 and AI encompassing institutional governance framework, and the necessary ecosystem.
Strengthen RDI capability and capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design a clear career path for Science and Technology personnel with attractive compensation packages. Attract RDI talent from abroad by providing easy entry, flexible work permits and possibility of permanent residence. Create centres of excellence on priority areas of RDI in local universities and equip them with appropriate RDI infrastructure. Establish a Science and Technology park with appropriate infrastructure facilities including laboratories and testing facilities, incubation centres for the use of universities, research institutions and private sector. Attract and incentivise renowned research universities and research institutions to establish regional research centres in Fiji. Establish knowledge and RDI alliances with global RDI hubs and renowned research universities and research institutions.

Policies	Strategies
Expand funding options for RDI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase public sector RDI funding for basic and market driven applied RDI in areas that are consistent with national priorities. • Expand RISE or create new schemes to act as an effective intermediary between academia/research institutions and industry/enterprises for market driven research. • Incentivise private sector funding of RDI through appropriate measures including tax exemptions. • Explore the possibility of establishing a match grant scheme to stimulate RDI in the private sector. • Explore alternative financing mechanisms including attracting foreign funding, venture capital, angel funding and crowdsourcing.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
GERD (% of GDP)	NA	0.2	0.5
Research and Development personnel in labour force (%)	NA	5	7
National Science and Technology and RDI Policy	NA	Completed	Implemented
Roadmap for IR4.0 Technology – AI	NA	Completed	Implemented
Patents filed (number)	NA	3	5



Pillar 2

People Empowerment



FOCUS
AREA
5

Uplifting Socioeconomic
Wellbeing



FOCUS
AREA
6

Developing Public
Infrastructure, Protecting
The Environment and
Addressing Climate Change



6.1: Poverty Alleviation and Social Protection

'Reduce poverty and enhance social protection'

Introduction

Poverty continues to be one of the key development challenges. The 2019-2020 Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) confirms that 24.1% of Fijians, or around 258,000 individuals in 45,724 households, live under the Basic Needs Poverty Line (BNPL) of \$41.91 per adult equivalent per week. In terms of multidimensional poverty, 3 out of 10 people are living on low incomes and lacking access to essential necessities. Multidimensional poverty rate in rural areas is 38%, higher than in urban areas at 23%.

While poverty alleviation will require sustained and inclusive economic growth, social protection will be a key element of national strategies to promote human development and to achieve a set of related objectives towards poverty alleviation.

Global and Regional Commitments

The Government's vision for poverty alleviation aligns with the commitment made under UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 1, targeting the eradication of poverty in all its forms by 2030. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development also prioritises social protection to achieve several SDGs. Most prominently, SDG 1.3 calls upon countries to implement nationally appropriate social protection systems for all, for reducing and preventing poverty.

Current Status

Government is committed to tackling poverty by prioritising economic growth, employment creation, investment in human capital and equitable resource distribution as key strategies towards reducing poverty. The primary goal is to reduce income disparities and foster sustainable livelihoods, enabling individuals and families to break free from the cycle of poverty.

Social protection strategies directly provide income or other support to low-income individuals and households. In the 2023-2024 National Budget, the Government announced vulnerability support through social protection programmes with a total funding of more than \$17 million. This included \$78 million allocated for the Social Pension Scheme, which will support approximately 26,200 people above the age of 65, and \$45.6 million allocated for the Family Assistance Scheme (FAS) which includes a \$50 food voucher programme. The Government is committed to collaborating with civil society organisations (CSOs) engaged in work towards supporting vulnerable individuals and households.

Challenges and Opportunities

The connection between inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction is crucial. Sustained economic growth can significantly contribute to poverty reduction by generating employment, increasing incomes, and improving access to basic services. It serves as the pathway out of poverty. While progress has been made in poverty reduction, it has been slow and it is clear that the target of 14% by 2030 will not be achieved if economic growth does not accelerate beyond 5-7%.

Furthermore, high unemployment rates present a major challenge to poverty alleviation in Fiji, especially among youths. Labour force participation rate is 64.1% while the unemployment rate is 7.4%. A significant challenge in pursuit of poverty alleviation is youth unemployment (age group 15-19) which was estimated to be 15.5% in urban areas and 35.9% in rural areas. Enhancing employment prospects and aligning skill development with market needs, can effectively address unemployment challenges and foster sustainable income growth for its population.

Social protection, while contributing to social development, also contributes to economic transformation, by increasing the purchasing capacities of the poorest households. There are substantial gaps in financing social protection and more resources are required for extending social protection coverage. Adequate financing of social protection systems is fundamental to achieve the SDGs, particularly SDG 1.3.

Poverty graduation programmes will play a crucial role in supporting vulnerable households to move out of poverty. While people do benefit from social safety net programmes, which typically include cash transfers, food aid and public services such as free water, such programmes lack effective exit strategies. The Welfare Graduation Programme combines support to address immediate needs of participants with longer term investments in life skills

and technical skills training, enterprise development, savings and planning to transition poor families into sustainable livelihoods. By addressing the social, economic and health needs of families simultaneously, the Welfare Graduation Programme can provide support to poor people as they climb the ladder of economic self-reliance into a sustainable future.

The low coverage of the pension system is one of the factors contributing to the high risk of poverty amongst elderly people. Fiji's pension system consists primarily of the Fiji National Provident Fund (FNPF), leaving many without adequate income security in old age. Private voluntary pension savings schemes are not well developed. Expanding social protection programmes is crucial to providing income security for vulnerable populations, including those outside the formal sector.

Goals, Policies and Strategies

Goal: Reduce poverty and enhance social protection	
Policies	Strategies
Alleviate poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop housing, national insurance and social security schemes under the Integrated National Poverty Eradication Programme (INPEP). • Support and implement income generating opportunities for the people in formal and informal sectors through INPEP. • Develop and complement supportive community infrastructure for sustainable poverty alleviation. • Strengthen CSO, faith-based organisation and Government partnership to deliver poverty alleviation programmes. • Expand financial inclusion through microfinance services, ensuring accessibility especially for women, vulnerable groups, persons with disability and marginalised groups, and provide parallel digital literacy campaigns. • Implement community-based initiatives, fostering skill sharing, mutual support, and collective efforts. • Review and adjust social welfare schemes and programmes to ensure it adequately addresses the needs of recipients. • Establish satellite markets to support local vendors and boost economic activity in Rural and Maritime Areas.
Empower vulnerable households through social protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support vulnerable and disadvantaged households through Family Assistance Scheme. • Expand food voucher programmes for pregnant mothers in Rural and Maritime areas. • Improve the delivery of the Bus Fare Concession Scheme. • Improve accessibility and reliability of transportation services, including bus card systems for welfare recipients. • Expand conditional cash transfer programmes. • Review social protection programmes including social welfare transfers (cash or food) particularly in terms of its modalities and make adjustments for inflation. • Review policy and programmes for the ageing population. • Strengthen Fijian families for social and human development. • Develop and implement comprehensive assistance programmes for households impacted by natural disasters.

Policies	Strategies
Monitor and evaluate the impact and progress of Government's Poverty Alleviation programmes (PAP) under the INPEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen data collection and sharing for poverty analysis. Foster partnerships and collaborations among Government agencies, CSOs, community-based organisations, faith-based organisations and other relevant entities engaged in poverty alleviation efforts. Conduct awareness on Government's poverty alleviation programmes. Review the Poverty Alleviation Eradication Strategy Framework 1999. Develop an INPEP Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.
Build a socially inclusive Fiji and empower Fijians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote greater integration and participation of vulnerable people in decision-making and community affairs. Support and enhance informal social protection systems to complement the Government social protection system.
Provide care for older persons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure a safe, caring, healthy and protective environment for residents living in institutions for older persons. Provide safer and inclusive service terrain on the care, protection, respect and rights of older persons. Ensure equitable distribution of social welfare assistance to vulnerable groups, including the elderly. Provide access to social welfare benefits for all senior citizens above 65 years of age.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
Incidence of Poverty (%)	24.1	20	18
Poverty Alleviation Projects – Housing (Hart Units)	800	100	200
Welfare Graduation Programme (number)	0	300	500
Senior citizens assistance (number)	54,200	55,000	56,000

6.2: Healthcare

‘Modernising Fiji’s healthcare system to reduce disease incidence and enhance service quality’

Introduction

The healthcare sector is fundamental to ensure the wellbeing of all Fijians and the economy. The COVID-19 pandemic placed significant pressure on Fiji’s healthcare services and the Government responded with innovative measures to meet the increased demand. Government’s objective for the healthcare sector is to modernise and improve the quality of Fiji’s health delivery system as a fundamental platform for reducing Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), while meeting the expectations of healthcare service users.

Global and Regional Commitments

Fiji is committed to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 3 which deals with ensuring healthy lives and promoting wellbeing for all age groups. It is also acknowledged that all other 16 SDGs are indirectly related and contribute to health and wellbeing.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) actively collaborates with the Ministry of Health and Medical Services in providing technical assistance, capacity building, and policy guidance. Recognising Fiji’s vulnerability to climate change, WHO supports the development of climate resilient healthcare facilities, ensuring they can withstand extreme weather events and continue to provide essential services. Additionally, WHO advocates for universal health coverage (UHC) in Fiji, emphasising equitable access to quality healthcare, including essential health services, financial protection and community engagement.

Current Status

The Ministry of Health Strategic Plan 2020-2025 provides a comprehensive policy framework and strategic direction for healthcare service. The National Wellness Strategic Plan 2024-2030 is intended as a high-level, long-term guiding document, and establishes a framework of action to improve wellness and wellbeing in Fiji. Among the key legislations governing the healthcare sector are the Public Health Act 1935, Public Hospital and Dispensaries Act 1955, Private Hospitals Acts 1979, Medical and Dental Practitioners Act 2010, Tobacco Control Act 2010 and Food Safety Act 2003.

Shifts in demographics, lifestyle choices, and consumption habits, coupled with the growing population and urbanisation are leading to a significant rise in NCDs in Fiji. NCDs account for over 70% of premature deaths over the past decade highlighting the urgent need for targeted healthcare interventions and policy responses. The majority of NCD related deaths were recorded in groups aged between 35 and 59 years during 2016 to 2021.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government reoriented its strategy and facilitated the use of public private partnerships as an alternative healthcare service delivery mechanism. To this extent, the Government introduced the General Practitioners Scheme, Dental Practitioners Scheme, and remodelled the Free Medicine Scheme. In addition, healthcare services were decentralised to sub-divisions and digital health was introduced. Fiji also implemented the Remodelling Health Services Provision (RHSP) Framework, which focused on enhancing normative service delivery and strengthening the capacity of healthcare systems. The Government’s healthcare expenditure as a percentage of Total Government Expenditure (TGE) averaged around 8.5% and has remained relatively constant since 2010 but increased to 10.5% of TGE since 2019. In the 2023-2024 financial year, Fiji’s healthcare expenditure was 3.4% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which is lower than the WHO standard of 5%.

Challenges and Opportunities

NCDs have become a major challenge for the healthcare sector. Cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes, and chronic respiratory diseases are the main contributors to deaths and are often linked to other health problems. There has been an increase in the number of admissions for cardiovascular diseases, from 35 per 1,000 admissions in 2013 to 63 per 1,000 in 2019. The mortality rate attributable to cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, or chronic respiratory disease ranges between 55.4% in 2017 to 53.2% in 2021. Mental health

is also an area where additional support is required. Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) is an important indicator of the overall societal health. The IMR in 2020 was 20 deaths per 1,000 live births, which is higher than the national target of lower than 8 deaths per 1,000 live births. Infant and child mortality rates have stagnated in the last two decades. Further, a key challenge for the healthcare sector is the increase in Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), rising by 33% between 2013 and 2017.

The challenge in the medium-term is to further strengthen primary and secondary healthcare through the augmentation of sub-divisional hospital delivery systems. Investments have been made in upgrading hospitals, health centres and nursing stations. However, expenditure on curative care across the primary and secondary healthcare levels remain a challenge as it absorbs most of the health budget.

In the wake of COVID-19, Fiji's healthcare system has faced an exodus of medical professionals, leading to staff shortages and impeding effective service delivery. Efforts to improve service delivery will also need to focus on reducing patient waiting time, enhancing hospital services, increasing the number of hospital beds and improving ambulance services. There is also a need for more equitable geographic distribution of doctors, particularly in Rural and Maritime Areas.

Inadequate upgrading and maintenance of healthcare infrastructure pose a significant challenge. Although Fiji's healthcare infrastructure improvement plan focuses on enhancing facility standards, it is constrained by adverse weather conditions, lack of proper planning and manpower shortages. While outsourcing public healthcare services has become increasingly common as a strategy to reduce the strain of outdated biomedical machines, there is a need to address service level gaps and enhance accountability. In addition, there is a need to strengthen the resilience of the healthcare system to deal with shocks and unexpected events such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Goal, Policies and Strategies

Goal: Modernising Fiji's healthcare system to reduce disease incidence and enhance service quality	
Policies	Strategies
Establish Fiji-wide programmes to control the rate of premature deaths due to NCDs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase percentage of targeted population screened for NCD related risks, particularly for cardiovascular disease and cancer. • Strengthen public awareness on the risks of NCDs and the adoption of preventive healthcare measures. • Review the Strategic Plan for the Prevention and Control of NCDs, including its implementation progress and roll out the Plan over the medium to long-term.
Provide high quality and comprehensive life cycle healthcare including maternal, infant, child and adolescent health family planning and sexual education, and parenting programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide family planning and reproductive health information and resources. • Provide pregnant women including teenagers and mothers, and newborns with timely, safe, appropriate and effective healthcare services before, during, and after childbirth. • Provide access to quality preventive and curative paediatric and nutritional services. • Expand public healthcare and clinical services to appropriately address the needs of adolescents, youth and elderly.
Strengthen mental health services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop specialised mental health training programmes for healthcare professionals. • Integrate mental health services into primary healthcare to ensure that mental health is a part of routine health checks. • Establish dedicated mental health helplines to provide immediate support and guidance.

Policies	Strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote community-based support groups to facilitate peer support and de-stigmatisation of mental health issues. Collaborate with schools and workplaces to implement mental health education and early intervention programmes.
Improve healthcare literacy and public healthcare awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop online portals and mobile apps offering access to healthcare information and resources. Integrate comprehensive healthcare education into school curriculum at all levels. Utilise local influencers and leaders to disseminate healthcare information and encourage community participation. Tailor healthcare messages to cater to different demographic groups, considering cultural, linguistic, and literacy factors. Organise community workshops and seminars focusing on key health issues and preventive practices.
Foster research and development in healthcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with universities, international health organisations, and private sector entities to conduct joint research projects. Provide grants and funding for innovative healthcare research and development projects. Set-up centres focused on healthcare innovation to encourage start-ups and researchers to develop new health technologies and solutions. Encourage the sharing of health data among researchers and institutions to facilitate large scale studies and data-driven innovations.
Provide access to clinical healthcare services to all Fijians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase access to quality, safe and patient-focused clinical services. Facilitate decentralisation of clinical services to sub-divisional hospital. Deploy mobile clinics equipped with essential medical supplies and staff to provide regular services in remote areas. Utilise information and communications technologies and digitalise patient records for remote diagnosis, treatment, and patient consultation, reducing the need for physical travel. Equip residents with basic healthcare training to serve their communities effectively. Enhance transportation infrastructure and services to facilitate easier access to healthcare facilities for the rural population. Improve collaboration with local NGOs and community groups to extend healthcare outreach and education in rural areas.
Expand primary healthcare, with an emphasis on providing a continuum of care and improved service quality and safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve healthcare service delivery experience for patients through continued strengthening of primary healthcare and improved continuum of care. Monitor and improve cleanliness, infection control, and quality and safety standards in Government health facilities. Establish a Customer Feedback Centre.

Policies	Strategies
Enhance the effectiveness of healthcare management and delivery system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish Government, private sector, community and development partner synergistic and cooperative framework to enhance delivery. • Improve multi-sectoral approach to risk management and resilience for communicable diseases, health emergencies, climate change and natural disasters. • Improve case detection and coordinated response to reduce communicable disease morbidity and mortality. • Formulate policy, planning and budgeting based on sound evidence, considerations of efficiency and cost effectiveness. • Strengthen results-based monitoring and evaluation, supported by population surveys and applied research as a driver for improved organisational decision-making and behaviour change. • Review and develop new health legislation and policies that will facilitate delivery of safe and quality healthcare at all levels. • Improve health financing, equity and efficiency. • Recruit, train and retain a qualified, motivated health workforce that is caring, customer-focused, and responsive to population health needs.
Modernise and maintain health delivery systems and infrastructure to meet increased demands for quality health services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a health infrastructure database and ensure that all Ministry of Health and Medical Services infrastructure is built and maintained to meet operational, and population needs in compliance with all relevant health service standards. • Ensure that all health facilities have the minimum required functional biomedical equipment for the level of the facility. • Reform Supply Chain Management and ensure high quality medicinal products are rationally used and readily accessible to all residents. • Review current outsourcing policy to improve its efficacy and effectiveness. • Provide an enabling environment in the development of sustainable health infrastructure that reinforces gender equality, disability and social inclusion. • Retrofit health facilities to improve energy and water efficiency. • Enhance the capacity of emergency services, including ambulance fleets and emergency department facilities, to handle increasing demand. • Ensure that health facilities are equipped and prepared to maintain operations during natural disasters, accounting for Fiji's unique geographical challenges. • Focus on eco-friendly and sustainable designs in new and upgraded healthcare facility constructions to promote environmental sustainability. • Strengthen the resilience of the healthcare system to unforeseen events such as natural disasters and pandemics.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
Maternal mortality ratio per 100,000 live births	38	20	20
Infant mortality rate per 1,000 live births	18	10	10
Under 5 mortality rate per 1,000 live births	28	15	15
Ratio of skilled healthcare workers per 10,000 population	45	Doctor – 10 Nurse – 40	Doctor – 12 Nurse – 45
Health expenditure per capita (\$m)	548.3	358.4	448



6.3: Education and Training

‘Nurturing innovative, lifelong learners and enriching lives through quality education delivery for all’

Introduction

Education and training play a pivotal role in shaping the future of the nation by cultivating a skilled workforce and fostering a knowledge-based society. Access to education is a fundamental human right and a cornerstone for upholding other human rights.

The Government has implemented various initiatives to enhance education provision in terms of improving inclusivity, accessibility and affordability. The initiatives include education grants to Government funded schools, free textbooks to all primary and secondary schools, support for transportation costs such as bus fare and free boats for students from maritime areas, boarding grants, menstrual hygiene management, higher education institution grant and provision for tertiary student loans and scholarship. Furthermore, capital grant is allocated for school improvement projects fostering an environment conducive for effective learning. These measures underscore the Government’s commitment to fostering an inclusive and supportive educational landscape for all students.

Institutionally, the education sector is governed by a broad set of legislations and frameworks, including the Education Act 1966, Examinations Act 1978, Fiji Museum Act 1929, Fiji Teachers Registration Act 2008, Library Deposit Act 1971, Substance Abuse Advisory Council Act 1998, Higher Education Act 2008, Tertiary Scholarship and Loans Act 2014, National Curriculum Framework and the National Qualifications Framework. These legislations enable the Ministry of Education to ensure that policies, programmes and practices align with national goals and priorities.

Global and Regional Commitments

UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 aims to ensure inclusive and equitable high-quality education while promoting lifelong learning opportunities. The latest global commitment to education financing was achieved during the November 2021 Global Education Meeting (GEM) in the form of the Paris Declaration: A Global Call for Investing in The Futures of Education. These commitments aim to allocate at least 4-6% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and or at least 15-20% of total public expenditure on education and invest in key priorities for recovery and accelerated progress towards SDG 4. Fiji’s commitment is further evidenced by its participation in the Global Partnership for Education since June 2023, contributing to the collective effort to address the global learning crisis.

At the regional level, Fiji has ratified the Asia-Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in higher education known as the Tokyo Convention in 2020. This international agreement ensures the fair treatment of students and academics concerning their qualifications. In line with this commitment, Fiji launched the National Information Centre (NIC), serving as a centralised hub for higher education information in Fiji. Fiji’s regional commitments extend to the Pacific Regional Education Framework (PacREF) which aligns to the national education policy with areas of quality and relevance, learning pathways, student outcomes and wellbeing and teaching profession.

Current Status

Within the education system, there are 873 Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) centres, 738 primary schools and 176 secondary schools. All schools receive tuition fee grants from the Government as part of its free education strategy. The ownership and management of the schools in Fiji is a partnership between the community and the Government. Majority of the schools are managed by faith-based organisations and communities. The Government manages 2 primary schools and 11 secondary schools. This model provides an opportunity for collaboration between the Government and civil society in the provision and delivery of education.

Based on enrolment statistics, there are approximately 19,000 students in ECCE, 154,744 students in primary schools and 73,505 students in secondary schools. The net enrolment figures for primary education have been approximately 100% and 80% for secondary schools from 2013-2022. The 2024-2033 Fiji National Education Policy Framework outlines the 10 year broad plan for transforming the education sector aligned to the objectives of the SDGs, focusing on improving education accessibility, equitable education, quality education and education management.

The Higher Education Commission Fiji regulates the establishment and operations of higher education institutions in Fiji. There are currently 43 registered higher education institutions, 3 universities, 2 university colleges and 38 Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) institutions. The Fiji Qualifications Council is the custodian of the Fiji National Qualifications Framework (FNQF) mandated to develop, implement, and maintain the criteria and processes for the accreditation and registration of qualifications. The FNQF provides different learning pathways and promotes learner mobility by clarifying how qualifications relate to each other within the national system. The Government has introduced the grants and scholarship scheme, where a total of 2,200 grants and 8,720 scholarship and study loans have been allocated for 2024.

Challenges and Opportunities

Quality education is one of the major concerns, and therefore, education reforms and introducing new initiatives to raise quality is imperative. The National Education Summit held in September 2023, highlighted the need to reform and introduce new initiatives and interventions to restructure and reform the education sector. In this context, there is a need to review existing legislations and policies governing the education sector from early childhood education to tertiary level. This requires strengthening coordination and collaboration between Government agencies, development partners, industries and other key stakeholders.

Currently there is a shortage of teachers in a number of fields and this has posed significant pressure on the delivery of education, with the teacher to student ratio of 1:50 for primary and 1:40 for secondary schools. It is recognised that there is a need to increase the supply of teachers to reduce this ratio. Additionally, there is a need to improve the quality of school infrastructure including renovations, facility maintenance and building more classrooms.

School dropouts at all levels of education is also a concern, particularly at higher secondary levels and in rural areas. Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (LANA) results over the last 5 years indicate that a majority of the students are achieving at the lower basic level and fewer at the advanced and proficient levels. This necessitates a review of the quality assurance and assessment policies and framework.

The 2023 Voluntary National Review (VNR) report revealed that there are limited educational opportunities for persons with disabilities. The attendance rate for persons with disabilities aged 6-14 was approximately 70% while attendance rate for persons without disability for the same age group was 90%. There is also an increase in social issues such as drugs and substance abuse, gender-based violence, mental health, teenage pregnancy and pornography.

The outcomes of the Fiji National Education Summit, 2023 Denarau Declaration, captures the vision and intention to create a robust and adaptable educational system. Continuous changing needs of society and the labour market require that the education system respond in a timely manner through the alignment of curriculum, training and delivery modalities. In addition, it is necessary to ensure that the allocation of tertiary loans and scholarships are continuously realigned to meet the changing needs of the labour market.

Goal, Policies and Strategies

Goal: Nurturing innovative, lifelong learners and enriching lives through quality education delivery for all	
Policies	Strategies
Provide access to high quality education and relevant education programmes at all levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the Education Act 1966, Examination Act 1978, Teachers Registration Board Act 2008, Higher Education Act 2008, Tertiary Scholarships and Loans Service Act 2014, Substance Abuse Advisory Council Act 1998 and policies pertaining to quality education. Develop and implement a volatile Substance Abuse Regulation. Develop a Drug Testing Policy for secondary schools in consultation with relevant stakeholders. Review the National Curriculum Framework (NCF).

Policies	Strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen family life education and moral values education within the school curriculum. Integrate indigenous values, cultures, traditional knowledge, beliefs and skills across relevant curriculum. Develop and implement a Language Instruction Policy that is in line with language development stages and supports vernaculars. Implement compulsory learning of vernacular at primary level and ensure training for teachers in a vernacular language. Determine the foreign language to be included in the curriculum. Integrate Disaster Risk Reduction within the curriculum. Integrate Preschool and kindergarten education programmes into ECCE. Address school dropout by considering re-entry pathways. Strengthen MATUA and TVET programmes. Review automatic progression through Primary to Year 12. Improve LANA achievement rates. Strengthen partnership and collaboration with all teacher training institutions to deliver relevant training programmes.
An inclusive examination and assessment practice and process which exceeds the highest standard of reliability, relevancy and validity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review assessment for learning (Formative Assessment policies and frameworks). Review scaling of examination marks system. Review LANA and its administration. Implement Pacific Island Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (PILNA) at Years 3, 5 and 7 to improve proficiency levels. Review the National Examination procedures and policies. Establish an autonomous body for curriculum development and assessment.
Nurture an inspired, empowered and productive teaching workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revise teacher recruitment procedures, professional development programmes and training needs. Develop Teacher Competency Framework and Leadership competency Framework. Improve teacher to student ratio. Review remuneration for teachers.

Policies	Strategies
Ensure equal access to quality universal ECCE, primary and secondary education in an inclusive, equitable, safe, resilient and healthy environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement policies and legislations that support ECCE. • Strengthen investment in quality ECCE including pre-school education. • Develop and implement a Master Infrastructure Plan for schools including fit-for-purpose infrastructure to deal with shocks. • Strengthen technology integration to enhance access to quality education and facilitate distance learning opportunities. • Ensure equitable access to education for all children and youth, including those from marginalised and remote communities. • Strengthen gender equitable delivery of TVET to learners with disabilities in urban, rural and maritime locations by mainstream training providers. • Review and strengthen special and inclusive education programmes to provide equal education opportunities to students with special needs and disabilities. • Strengthen partnership with local communities, higher education institutions and relevant stakeholders. • Strengthen counselling support services in all schools. • Enforce implementation of the School Health Policy 2024-2029. • Strengthen the Ministry of Education Substance Abuse Advisory Council and professional counselling. • Promote a multi-sector approach to education service delivery inclusive of Child Protection, WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene), Diet and Physical activity, and mental health.
Revitalise TVET and life-long learning to enhance employability and entrepreneurship, sustainable socioeconomic growth, equity and resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen legislative framework and the National TVET Policy. • Enhance the effectiveness of TVET programmes to meet the evolving and future needs of the workforce including through incubator and innovative programmes. • Strengthen collaboration between the public and private sectors in the delivery of TVET. • Support schools to offer vocational programmes as a pathway embedded in the school system. • Develop a specialised curriculum for inclusive education. • Introduce culture-focused courses in traditional arts and crafts. • Strengthen apprenticeship scheme. • Integrate TVET by incorporating environmental sustainability principles. • Review the National Qualifications relevant to industry needs.

Policies	Strategies
Ensure that the education system is effectively governed, coordinated, planned and financed, supported by increased public investment and innovative financing mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish an oversight and advisory committee to strengthen compliance. Reintroduce the differential resource index formula for the Free Education Grant and Boarding Per Capita Grant. Reintroduce Boarding and Building Grant for school infrastructure development including staff quarters.
Enhance student experience and strengthen research performance at higher education institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and strengthen higher education programmes to improve learning and teaching quality and educational experience. Set-up the Fiji National Research Council to promote research initiatives. Expand research intensity and productivity through publications produced by research active staff and higher degree research completions. Review and expedite registration and review of higher education institutions and programmes.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
Net enrolment rate for ECCE (%)	100	100	100
Net enrolment rate for primary education (%)	100	100	100
Net enrolment rate for secondary education (%)	80	86	100
LANA rate for primary Year 5 (%)	Literacy: 83 Numeracy: 93	90	100
LANA rate for primary Year 7 (%)	Literacy: 47 Numeracy: 52	90	100
Retention rate for primary schools [Cohort of Year 1 – Year 8] (%)	96	96	100
Retention rate for secondary schools [Cohort of Year 9 – Year 12] (%)	82	86	90
Teacher to student ratio (Primary)	1:50	1:45	1:40
Teacher to student ratio (Secondary)	1:40	1:35	1:30
Publication output per research active staff (FTE) - annual	NA	1	2

6.4: Housing

‘Providing an effective system that ensures accessible and adequate housing’

Introduction

The housing sector contribution towards Fiji’s gross domestic product increased from 4.2% in 2011 to 5.6% in 2018. The goal is to progressively reduce informal settlements while increasing the supply of housing options and raising the percentage of first-time homeowners. Given Fiji’s vulnerability to natural disasters, climate resilient housing is essential to withstand and recover from such events. The Government also recognises the importance of sustainable and eco-friendly housing solutions and the use of renewable energy sources. While the right to adequate housing does not require the Government to build housing for the entire population, it is however obligated to take reasonable measures within its available resources to achieve the progressive realisation of the right of every person to accessible and adequate housing.

Global and Regional Commitments

Fiji is committed to several international agreements and conventions related to housing. Among them are the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), specifically Goal 11 related to making human settlements inclusive, safe and resilient, and ensuring access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services as well as upgrading slums. Under the Pacific Urban (PUA) Agenda (2015), Fiji has a commitment to provide adequate housing, improve access to housing and land, and settlement upgrading. In the Pacific Urban Forum 5 (2019), Fiji re-emphasised its commitments made under the UN SDGs and PUA Agenda. Fiji is also a signatory to the New Urban Agenda: UN Quito Declaration on Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements for All (2016).

Current Status

The Government aims to raise the first-time house ownership rate while reducing the number of informal settlements over the next 10 years. The International Finance Corporation (IFC) Public Private Partnership Project (PPP) will gradually fulfil the Government’s objective of providing options of affordable and high-quality housing. The PPP Project will broaden the housing market in which more ordinary families may afford to purchase a home, hold a strata title or rent homes at low prices. Six sites have been earmarked in Davuilevu, Nepani, Wainibuku and Raiwaqa in the Central Division and Tavakubu, Lautoka and Tavua in the Western Division. A total area of 266 acres will be developed as the first pilot project to supply about 3,000 housing units that will be climate resilient and green, and category 5 cyclone compliant structures.

The Ministry of Housing (MoH) is currently reviewing the 2011 National Housing Policy with the aim of increasing public and private housing supply, modernising housing sector regulations and increasing access to housing including options to rent and buy. The MoH is also implementing its Informal Settlement Upgrade and Formalisation Programme (ISUP) which is targeted towards those living in informal settlements, with the aim of offering a longterm land tenure of 99-year leases for fully serviced and subdivided lots within selected areas. The MoH currently has 48 Development Leases for ISUP, 44 of which are on iTaukei Land and 4 on State Land. The demand for new houses in Fiji has increased particularly in periurban corridors between Nadi-Lautoka and Lami-Suva-Nausori corridors for Viti Levu, and the nearby peri-urban areas of Labasa and Savusavu in Vanua Levu. It is estimated that there will be an annual demand of 1,600 new dwellings over the next 30 years.

To support poor households, the Government provides operational and capital grant assistance to social housing partners and statutory bodies. Among them are rental subsidies to the Public Rental Board (PRB) for public rental housing; Housing Assistance Relief Trust (HART) which provides immediate and temporary housing assistance for vulnerable families and the Model Town Charitable Trust (MTCT), also known as Koro-i-Pita which received a grant to carry out civil works and construct low-cost cyclone resistant housing for families in Lautoka.

Challenges and Opportunities

Approximately 25% of the urban population are living in over 250 informal settlements around the country. Currently, the lack of access to affordable housing is contributing to the growth of informal settlements. Middle-income households are also shifting to these informal settlements near Suva besides the low-middle income households due to the lack of availability of zoned and serviced land for residential development and high construction costs. Private developers focus on the high-income segment and housing with higher and safe returns. The Housing Authority estimates that even the cheapest housing on the market is unaffordable to 65% of the urban population.

Fiji is highly vulnerable to climate change and high frequency of natural hazards, such as cyclones and flooding, and there is a lack of energy-efficient and climate resilient housing. The damage to the housing and public buildings by Cyclone Winston in 2016 increased the urgency to adopt climate resilient technologies in construction.

Government alone will not be able to adequately achieve the vision of providing improved access to decent housing for all in the next 10 years. There is a need for private sector participation through both small and large scale housing developments and PPP arrangements to complement Government efforts to meet demand as well as bring in expertise, new typologies like strata units, and innovative construction technology.

Housing provision is impeded by shortage of available zoned and serviced land for housing development. Currently, land is mostly developed through informal means. Most of the previous informal land development occurred following the release of land by iTaukei landowning units to developers, or to settlers directly. Moving forward, a proactive and innovative approach must be taken by national and local bodies to work with customary landowners in peri-urban areas to open up secure parcels of land for urban housing. Legislation is also required to introduce residential strata title, allowing a block of apartments, for example, to be divided and held by multiple owners.

The private rental market provides a much-needed source of housing supply for those who cannot afford to buy a house or just simply choose to rent their accommodation. Roughly 25% of urban residents rent their accommodation. However, the rental market is currently poorly regulated leading to many issues, challenges and unresolved disputes between tenants and landlords.

Two thirds of rural housing is in registered iTaukei villages. The quality of most rural houses is poor and are vulnerable to natural disasters and the effects of climate change. Historically, building standards and the National Building Code have not applied to registered villages, and compliance and enforcement in rural areas has been inconsistent. The cost of compliance with the Building Code and access to appropriate materials, technical advice, permitting and inspection services pose challenges to those living in remote Rural and Maritime areas.

Fiji has an established social and public housing sector, which provides vital housing support to those most in need. However, the demand for social housing outstrips supply and social housing providers struggle to fund and finance the construction of additional stock.

Goal, Policies and Strategies

Goal: Providing an effective system that ensures accessible and adequate housing	
Policies	Strategies
Provide access to decent and safe housing options to all especially low-income learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore options for housing units under strata titles and • increase access to home insurance for low-income households. • Continue with targeted grants for low to middle income first homeowners. • Upscale private sector engagement in building affordable housing. • Support the development of the social housing sector via operational and capital grants. • Streamline and fast track the process for approval for housing development.

Policies	Strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address the issue of expiry of land leases. • Explore rent to own schemes under the PRB. • Facilitate infrastructure connectivity such as water, electricity and access roads to land lots designated for housing development. • Prepare land lots under the iTaukei Land Trust Board land-use plan for iTaukei equity ownership in companies responsible for housing development. • Establish subsidy for iTaukei first homeowner opportunities. • Implement tax breaks for iTaukei development companies to invest in housing developments. • Promote, and provide information and education, on residential building standards and house retrofitting. • Improve the regulation and operations of the rental market. • Strengthen Government-NGO partnership and collaboration in the provision of housing.
Upgrade informal settlements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and upgrade informal settlements with the provision of basic services. • Undertake sub-division and facilitate the provision of leases to eligible informal settlers after the provision of basic services. • Develop and support housing programmes to reduce the existence of informal settlements and support those who are unable to access adequate and affordable housing. • Facilitate the relocation of informal settlers, where appropriate.
Implement effective and sustainable land-use planning for housing development and promote green building practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement effective land-use planning and zoning regulations. • Ensure appropriate and adequate allocation of land for housing development with adequate land for residential purposes proactively allocated, with compatibility to infrastructure and amenities. • Promote green house building practices that reduce the environmental impact of housing while improving its resilience. • Support relocation best practices including the facilitation of housing options for all affected communities in the rural and urban areas.
Develop resilient rural housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the construction of safe and resilient rural housing. • Promote and provide information and education on safe and compliant construction housing methods and processes. • Implement widespread retrofitting programmes to improve the resilience of existing housing stock.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
Grants for first-time homeowners (number of households)	NA	750	1,250
Informal settlements upgraded (number)	3	4	6
Informal settlements relocated (number)	0	2	3
Area of land acquired for new housing development projects (acres)	NA	150	300
Land, infrastructure and housing development projects supplying affordable and social housing (number)	NA	3	7



6.5: Urban Development

‘Resilient and Environmentally Sustainable Urban Centres’

Introduction

Urban development plays a crucial role in shaping the sustainable growth of a nation. With approximately 58% of the population residing in urban areas, Fiji experiences a dynamic urban landscape that continues to evolve amidst rapid urbanisation trends and outward migration from the rural areas. Suva and Nadi among other burgeoning urban centres epitomise Fiji's urban narrative witnessing exponential growth in residential, commercial, and public facilities while being the hub of the economy.

Fiji's approach to urban development is to be inclusive, focusing on spurring economic activity, enhancing liveability, harmonising urbanisation with environmental sustainability, and increasing resilience to the impacts of climate change and natural disasters. The priority is to foster well-planned towns and cities, ensuring access to affordable decent housing, enhancing the delivery of essential services, such as education and healthcare as well as improving connectivity. This is while preserving Fiji's cultural identity and heritage. The aim of urban development in Fiji is to create prosperity and enhance the standard of living of the people encapsulating the essence of sustainable, inclusive and resilient growth.

Global and Regional Commitment

Fiji is committed to its obligations under the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities; Make Cities and Human Settlements Inclusive, Safe, Resilient and Sustainable, 11.1 Housing & basic services, 11.2 Public transport systems, 11.6 Urban air quality & waste management, 11.7 urban green & public spaces and 11.a Urban planning are relevant in the context of urban development. Fiji is also committed to the New Urban Agenda that serves as an accelerator of the SDGs by providing a comprehensive framework to guide and track urbanisation around the globe.

The Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) Fiji Country Planning Framework 2019-2023 strategic outcome 2 recognises strengthening investment and creating an enabling environment for resilient, low carbon city and town development. It also sets out GGGI's interventions that will support Government by providing capacity building and technical assistance support to local governments and other key stakeholders in urban planning and green city development.

Current Status

Over the last two decades, the urban population has grown by 1.5% on average annually. This is due to both natural population growth in urban areas, and migration from rural zones as more and more people move to towns and cities. As Fiji's population and economy continues to grow, some municipalities are urbanising more quickly than others. There are 13 municipalities which are governed by municipal councils. All municipal councils have approved town planning schemes, as required under the Town Planning Act 1946. Some of these schemes are now in need of revision. Town planning schemes are the principal planning document used by the councils to guide long-term growth and planning.

The Government is committed to addressing urbanisation concerns through integrated planning, strengthening urban governance, balancing rural and urban development and by having a systematic approach to guide urban transformation. One of the key commitments of the Government is to improve infrastructure in urban areas. This includes investments in transportation networks, water supply, sanitation systems, and electricity distribution to ensure that urban centres can support the needs of their growing population. At the core of Fiji's urban development strategy is the Urban Policy Action Plan (UPAP), which serves as a high-level delivery framework, setting forth the vision and objectives for national urban development.

The Government has been collaborating with international partners, non-governmental organisations, and local communities to implement urban development projects. Among these projects are the private-public partnership project that will provide affordable and climate resilient homes for more than 3,000 low and middle-income families; formalisation of informal settlements; the Viria Water Project that will assist 360,000 Fijians living in the Suva-Nausori corridor to have access to adequate supply of clean and safe drinking water and various strategic reviews of the development options in terms of ports and municipality

councils. In addition, the Strategic Master Plan for Viti Levu and a Concept Masterplan for Fiji's most urbanised regions: Greater Suva and the Nadi-Lautoka Corridor aims to develop a comprehensive 50-year plan with 5-year targeted outcomes, harmonising infrastructure investment and land use sustainable urban development.

Challenges and Opportunities

Fiji's urban centres experience constant migration from rural areas, leading to overcrowding and strain on resources and infrastructure. Limited housing options, inadequate transportation, and pressure on essential services like water and sanitation systems are common issues in Lami-Suva-Nausori corridor and Nadi-Lautoka area. Currently, households living in informal settlements in high-risk peri-urban areas mostly lack basic services and infrastructure. Administration of these settlements by municipal councils is challenging. In addition, 26% of the urban population live under the poverty line which is causing social segregation and exclusion.

Environmental degradation and climate change vulnerability is a concern in urban development. Fiji is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including rising sea levels and extreme weather events. Additionally, Fiji is faced with ageing infrastructure including in urban centres such as transportation, buildings and utilities. These infrastructure facilities are unable to meet the growing demand from increasing population and economic activities in the urban centres.

Moreover, the inadequate number of urban planners and weak urban governance and management is constraining effective urban and city planning and development. Fiji also needs to address archaic town planning approaches and laws and regulations which are not consistent with current development needs, thus hindering urban development.

Goal, Policies and Strategies

Goal: A resilient and environmentally sustainable urban centres	
Policies	Strategies
Enhance service delivery framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and put in place appropriate legislative and policy frameworks for the creation and management of townships and growth centres. Improve Department of Town and Country Planning (DTCP) processes. Increase private sector participation in facilitating development and investment in the peri-urban and urban areas to address housing, transportation, and provision of essential utilities and services by enhancing partnership with landowners and investors.
Create an environment that fosters effective and efficient resource management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue the identification and extension of certain town boundaries. Promote and incentivise development in peri-urban areas. Develop and legislate land-use planning for decentralising outside city centres. Review institutional arrangements for landowners, businesses and investors.

Policies	Strategies
Implement vulnerability assessments, and climate change and natural hazards impact projections in infrastructure and urban planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake climate change modelling and develop hazard maps for all urban centres. • Incorporate climate change adaptation and disaster risk management into town planning schemes. • Incorporate features to strengthen resilience to disasters in infrastructure designs. • Strengthen coastal boundaries of urban centres. • Develop disaster risk reduction and disaster management response plans for all urban centres encompassing early warning systems, inter-agency coordination and disaster response capacity of key agencies. • Build partnerships between the community, private sector and municipal councils to collectively address climate change and disaster risk management challenges in urban centres. • Improve knowledge and understanding at all levels of municipal governance of the hazard maps relevant to their respective jurisdictions. • Establish a National Platform for Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management where stakeholders can interact and coordinate resources.
Strengthen urban management and administration of town planning at municipal level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Urban Policy Action Plan to determine achievements and areas for future work to undertake institutional changes to improve management. • Consider the proposed Master Plan for Viti Levu. • Update all town planning schemes to ensure they reflect the current state on the ground to provide a better basis to develop long-term spatial plans. • Incorporate green spaces and public recreational facilities in urban and town planning. • Develop spatial plans with associated 20-year miniature models for all urban centres with the participation of all stakeholders within the municipality. • Develop a programme to strengthen the capacity of all municipal councils to effectively administer town planning responsibilities including stronger enforcement and adherence to the town planning schemes and spatial plans. • Update town planning schemes of small towns including adopting technology and urban management practices based on best practices. • Develop functional linkages between small towns and surrounding rural areas which will be part of the long-term development plan for the division.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
Review of legislative and policy frameworks related to urban development (%)	5	Review of Urban Policy Action and Masterplan for towns and cities 50% completed	Review of Urban Policy Action and Masterplan for towns and cities 100% completed
Land-use planning for multiple centres (%)	5	50	100
Climate Change Modelling for urban centres (number of municipalities)	0	3	5
Local Urban Planners (number)	6	3	10



6.6: Rural and Outer Island Development

‘Promote the sustainable growth and resilience of rural and outer island communities’

Introduction

Rural and Outer Island (ROI) development is one of the key priorities of Government given the need to develop infrastructure, and coherent long-term development strategies to bridge the inequality gap between rural and urban areas. A total of 94% of Fiji's land area constitutes ROI. The rural economy is endowed with a rich resource base and is a significant contributor to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) through the agriculture, fisheries, forestry and sugar sectors. The Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) 2020 estimates a total of 386,632 people (44.7%) reside in rural areas with 39.8% in the Western Division, 26.2% in the Central Division, 25.4% in the Northern Division and 8.5% in the Eastern Division. Government has provided substantial funding for ROI development. The responsibility for development of ROI cuts across various ministries with the key role undertaken by the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management.

Regional and International Commitments

Fiji's rural development policies and strategies are aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 1 ending poverty, SDG 2 achieving zero hunger, SDG 6 ensuring clean water and sanitation and SDG 11 developing sustainable communities. SDG 10 relates to reducing inequalities and promotes inclusiveness. Fiji is also committed to the 2050 Strategy for Blue Pacific Continent which emphasises the need for a well connected region, laying out the strategy for an inclusive pathway of connecting rural and outer island communities with safe, reliable, affordable, and culturally sensitive transport services and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure.

Current Status

The Integrated Rural Development Framework (IRDF) serves as a pathway to socioeconomic development opportunities in ROIs and will be reviewed. The National Rural Development Policy (NRDP) which is being formulated will focus on graduating rural households out of poverty and addresses issues of access to safe drinking water, sanitation, electricity and transport infrastructure, lack of secure employment, education and training opportunities and impacts of disaster and climate change.

Between 2017 and 2022, a total of 59 rural road community access projects were completed by Fiji Roads Authority (FRA) across the 4 divisions. In the 2023-2024 financial year, a sum of \$18.3 million was allocated for the rural roads programme. Government also re-established the Public Works Department to improve rural roads conditions that will include community access roads, footpaths, and footbridges (CARFF). To ensure connectivity and accessibility to the outer islands, the Shipping Franchise Scheme subsidises the operational costs of 10 uneconomical routes. It is supported by the Seafaring Entrepreneurs Assistance (SEA) Subsidy programme which is offered to communities located in maritime islands and the isolated coastal areas of Viti Levu and Vanua Levu.

The rural housing programme offers affordable housing assistance with priority given to first-home owners, retrofitting homes for natural disasters and for purchase and cartage of housing materials. The Rural Water Programme aims to provide safe and clean drinking water to the rural communities. Approximately 58% of the rural population have access to safe and adequate drinking water. The Government through the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources provides access to groundwater and boreholes for rural farmers and households.

The Government is fully committed to ensuring the continuation of rural electrification projects. Recently, Fiji's Rural Electrification Fund was established to have a more informed comprehensive financial model to attract development partners to aid renewable sources of energy in the rural communities. For the period 2012-2022, a sum of \$187.4 million was utilised for rural electrification projects. To support income generating opportunities across the ROIs, among others, the Government allocated \$1 million to fund 14 small business

developments in Vanua Levu. In addition, 79 Tax Free Region licences were issued to ROIs from 2010 to 2022 to promote economic opportunities.

Internet connectivity has been improved in the ROIs. In addition, disaster risk reduction measures including the development of hazard and risk maps, community-based disaster risk management training, community based Early Warning Systems, and Multi-Purpose Evacuation Centres are being implemented.

Challenges and Opportunities

There is a lack of infrastructural development including water, sanitation, roads, drainage, telecommunication and electricity and this has led to an increased migration to urban areas. Access to safe and adequate levels of water remains the most important issue in most rural and outer island areas. The lack of rural access roads in the interior of Viti Levu and Vanua Levu and outer islands has made it difficult for communities to access public and financial services and to markets. It is also challenging for farmers to access fertile and arable land that are suitable for large scale commercial agriculture. Most of the rural areas fall within the 'black-spot areas' unable to access telecommunications and data networks and this hinders access to quality education and training opportunities, police services and access to financial services and markets as well as disaster risk management. While the National Infrastructure Investment Plan ascertains the pipeline of infrastructure projects over the next 5 to 10 years, enhancing the provision of climate resilient infrastructure in rural areas remains an important element of inclusive development.

While schools are available in most ROI communities, the quality of information and data accessibility through libraries, internet services, teachers and other educational resources are limited. This compromises the delivery of quality education in ROI communities. In addition, ROI communities travel long distances to access public services. There is a need to decentralise public services particularly healthcare, education, transports, social protection, births, deaths and marriages registry, Legal Aid Services as well iTaukei Trust Fund.

Land, air and shipping services in ROI's are not consistent and reliable. The poor quality of shipping vessels, high freight and transportation cost affect mobility of people and access to markets and development of ROI. Outer island air transportation also remains unaffordable for many low-and middle-income outer island communities.

Enterprise development and market inaccessibility is another constraint faced by the ROI communities. Lack of business training and financial literacy for rural populace impedes resource owner's ability to commercially utilise their natural resources. The lack of outer island communication and transport further hinders the communities' access to large markets and to attract investment opportunities to the islands. ROI agriculture opportunities and development have not been fully realised. Current models of subsistence agriculture without a price support mechanism, coupled with poor market access and concentrated buyer power in the domestic markets, have not delivered meaningful improvements in the standard of living in rural and iTaukei communities. There is also poor understanding of commercial farming and business practices in the ROI communities. Consequently, vast rural areas are underdeveloped and have yet to attain their full economic potential.

In addition, ROI communities are vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change and natural disasters. There is a need for better adaptation projects and responses for ROI communities especially along rivers and coastal areas including seawalls and well equipped evacuation centres. In the Western Division, the infestation of the Asian Subterranean Termite (AST) is creating problems for rural houses and natural resources in the districts of Ba, Lautoka and Nadi. It could also affect the tourism industry in terms of potential damages to buildings and hotels. The eradication and control of these termites pose significant challenges and require considerable financial resources. It is crucial to address this issue promptly and effectively to mitigate further damage.

Currently ROI development projects are ad hoc and not well coordinated. The Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management will enhance coordination by establishing Memorandum of Understandings across agencies.

Goal, Policies and Strategies

Goal: Promote the sustainable growth and resilience of ROI communities	
Policies	Strategies
Expand access and equitable provision of rural infrastructure – roads, jetties, bridges seawalls, riverbanks, drainage, electrification, water supply, transportation, and communication infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review existing policies, incentives and processes governing the provision of public services to ROI areas. • Support the planning and construction of more rural roads, jetties, improvement of rural transportation and shipping services, airports and flight services and communication and digital services in the rural areas. • Deliver comprehensive rural roads, bridges, seawalls, riverbanks, and drainage and waterways and drainage upgrade and maintenance programme to a minimum. • Create a more competitive market for hardware supply to address high costs and ensure quality building materials. • Build partnerships between Government agencies, civil society organisations, development partners, faith-based groups, public enterprises and statutory bodies to support rural infrastructure development and Information and Communication Technology. • Ensure protection of rural maritime coastal areas from inundation due to sea level rise. • Scale-up investment on rural water ecological purification system (EPS) and water desalination system to improve water supply in the rural remote and outer island areas. • Promote rainwater harvesting as part of the Rural Housing Assistance Programme. • Conduct feasibility studies on the development of small grid systems and solar systems in ROIs. • Review and ensure effective implementation of the Universal Service Policy that will improve access to affordable, reliable, and modern communication services. • Ensure all schools and health stations are connected to the internet. • Support the formulation of a Waste Management Plan in all rural communities. • Support the strengthening of rural housing resilience through the implementation of a retrofitting programme for existing houses. • Continue to develop the existing grid electricity supply in Viti Levu, Vanua Levu, Ovalau and Taveuni. • Develop small grid systems or solar home systems for islands, where practical. • Continue to implement major programmes under Water Authority of Fiji and other agencies including the rural water programmes and distribution of water tanks and free water for low-income households.

Policies	Strategies
Strengthen the coordination and improvement of rural development priorities through the Integrated Rural Development Framework (IRDF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify key rural development priorities within each division, based on the divisional development planning process. • Facilitate and advocate key rural development priorities for vulnerable groups. • Develop and maintain a database of key statistics, information and knowledge relating to ROI development. • Establish and update periodically a National Rural Development GIS Database for all rural development projects. • Formulate a National Rural Development Policy to support the effective implementation of the IRDF and harmonise all rural development efforts. • Promote and support the importance of Risk Informed Development in rural areas. • Develop a blueprint for a resilient rural community. • Establish partnerships between Government agencies, statutory bodies and partners to improve delivery of services to support rural development. • Strengthen the coordinating role of Divisional Commissioners within their division and other Ministries and agencies through the IRDF.
Ensure sustainable rural development and strengthen conservation and management of resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce a scheme that inject funds directly to community-based cooperatives and companies for building priority rural infrastructure projects and stimulate local economies. • Encourage the utilisation of agricultural land under traditional ownership tenure using SMART agriculture approach and AI drones. • Conduct feasibility studies on the potential locations for eco and marine tourism, historic and cultural tourism, and adventure and sports tourism in the rural areas. • Promote the establishment of Business Development Growth Centres in strategic rural locations to provide training and awareness on business development, value-adding and financial management and as a centre for decentralised public services. • Establish more TVET training centres in the rural areas based on the needs and potential for value-adding activities. • Conduct feasibility studies for more special economic zone areas with necessary tax incentives and duty exemptions to attract investors. • Encourage the establishment of a more cooperative business model to complement the existing traditional Solesolevaki effort towards community development. • Ensure availability of more collection centres or community hubs to reduce travel cost and time to market. • Coordinate with key line ministries and other agencies to assess and accelerate sustainable opportunities for livelihood and business development in ROI communities.

Policies	Strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen access to business development services, financial services, financial literacy and digital literacy training. Improve awareness and adoption of sustainable resource management practices, protect, and preserve traditional farming and fishing skills and knowledge to support resilient livelihood development. Strengthen the role of resource owners through the development of heritage places for tourism purposes.
Improve access to information and evidence to support rural economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen the monitoring of rural poverty and uplift the economic welfare of rural poor and under-privileged. Strengthen analysis, coordination and communication of research and development initiatives in rural based commercial agriculture, fisheries, forestry and tourism activities. Coordinate with land use agencies on mapping of land utilisation plans in rural areas, with emphasis on opportunities to strengthen land utilisation for investment. Improve accessibility to market information platforms to strengthen ROI value chains. Collaborate with relevant stakeholders to strengthen and develop inclusive value chains that benefit the rural communities.
Adopt risk informed development to ensure sustainability of development programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen and incorporate disaster risk management in resource management planning to ensure a strong foundation for the development of rural livelihoods. Strengthen the development of appropriate tools and financial instruments to support the effective management of risks to rural incomes.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
New rural housing projects (number)	NA	270	450
Rural housing retrofitting projects (number)	NA	120	200
Rural population with electricity access (%)	86.7	90	93
Solar home systems installed (units)	15,000	2,000	2,000
New hydropower schemes (number)	5	1	1
Access to clean and safe water in adequate quantities (% of Rural Population)	58	63	67
Kilometres of new sealed roads in rural areas	1,200	300	200
Farm access roads constructed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways (number)	30	120	180
New jetties constructed (number)	47	6	11
Seawalls/riverbanks constructed (number)	NA	20	30
Seawalls/riverbanks maintenance/upgrade (number)	NA	20	30

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
Rural access roads available to iTaukei villages and plantations in rural areas (% increase)	NA	15	30



6.7: Population, Employment and Labour Market

‘Decent and sustainable employment for all’

Introduction

Fiji's population stood at 884,887 during the last population census in 2017 and is estimated to reach 900,886 in 2025. Fiji has been faced with a growing labour exodus, following the pandemic years. The issue of skill shortages is prevalent across all sectors of the country, and it is on the rise, largely due to outward migration of workers. The Government pursues decent employment standards through the promotion of employment opportunities, enforcing a healthy and safe working environment, fair employment conditions, good faith employment relations and productive workplaces, as detailed in the Ministry of Employment, Productivity, and Industrial Relations (MEPIR) Strategic Plan. The legislations governing the labour market include the Employment Relations Act 2007 (ERA) and subsidiary legislations, Health and Safety Act Work Act 1996 (HASAWA) and the National Employment Centre Act 2009 (NEC).

Global and Regional Commitments

Fiji is committed towards achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG 8, Decent Work and Economic Growth, aims to promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all. The Government is focused on improving labour rights, reducing unemployment rates, and enhancing access to financial services and entrepreneurship opportunities.

Labour law compliance, along with keeping up with other regulations, helps build a sustainable, long-lasting conducive environment. Compliance with international labour conventions such as International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions and, conformance to bilateral agreements such as the existing Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) Scheme and Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) Work Programme between the Governments of Fiji and Australia and New Zealand are important to Fiji.

Current Status

A total of 884,887 persons were enumerated in the 2017 Population and Housing Census, of which 555,499 were iTaukeis, 289,237 were Indo-Fijians and 40,151 were other races. Fiji's total population increased by 47,616 or 5.7% between the 2017 and 2007 Population and Housing Censuses. The average annual population growth is 0.6%, due to low birth rates and out migration. The 2017 Population and Housing Census found that the median age of population is 27.5 years and means that half of Fiji's population is below the age of 27.5 years. 69 per cent of Fiji's population is below the age of 40 and men make up 50.7% of the population while women make up 49.3%. While the proportion of males was higher below the age of 59 years, the female population was higher in the age groups above 60, indicating greater female longevity. 55.9% of Fiji's population reside in urban areas, an increase from 50.7% in 2007.

The urban population stood at 494,252, an increase of 69,406 (16.3%) from 2007. This is attributed to extension of town boundaries and also due to movement of people from rural to urban areas. 44.1% of Fiji's population reside in rural areas, down from 49.3% in 2007. Rural population stood at 390,635, a decline of 21,790 (5.3%) from 2007. The Fiji Bureau of Statistics (FBOS) projects population to reach 900,869 by 2025.

Unemployment rate dropped by 4.5%, the lowest recorded in 20 years. This is lower than the 5.5% unemployment rate estimated from the 2015-2016 Employment and Unemployment Survey. Current unemployment rate stands at 4.3%. The Labour Force Participation Rate (labour force/ population aged over 15 years) is 57.1% and 62.7% of the population aged 15 years and older were reported to having bank account. This represents a total of 392,148 individuals. Lastly, 13.7% of population aged three and above reported at least one functioning challenge (disability). The international benchmark is 15%. The Government's broad national goal for 2023 to 2027 is to achieve decent work and sustainable employment for all by promoting decent work opportunities, ensuring safe and healthy workplaces, enhancing productivity and encouraging good faith employment relations.

The Fiji National Productivity Master Plan (NPP 2021–2036) provides clear directions on the national productivity strategic priorities for a sustainable Fiji. This comprehensive Plan sets out

productivity milestones and directions to raise national productivity. The Plan is aligned with the global move towards the 4th Industrial Revolution which is driven by digitisation. This Plan also emphasises innovation to realise potential from labour and resources and a sustainable wage rate linked to productivity. Furthermore, the review of the national minimum wage rate is to be finalised in 2024.

Challenges and Opportunities

Despite, Fiji's population being young with 10.4% of the population under five years of age and 16.7% are in the youth age group of 15-24 during 2017 Population and Housing Census, there has since been a significant increase in migration due to Fiji citizens obtaining employment overseas. In addition, the continued low birth rate poses a major development challenge for Fiji in the future. A growing concern is the increase in rural to urban drift with urban population growth bound to put significant pressures on current urban public infrastructure and other social concerns (water and wastewater, traffic congestion, crime, health, education) in existing urban centres. In future, concerted efforts will be needed in decentralising development by shifting public services to rural areas to curb the high rate of rural to urban internal migration. Sound urban planning is needed to shift commercial and residential development and ease population concentration out from these heavily populated areas. Projects such as the Suva port relocation and the development of associated ancillary services at the designated new port site at Navua can act as a catalyst to internal migration out from heavily populated urban areas.

In other countries, migration away from cities and urban areas is not a new phenomenon as many people no longer see the appeal and attractiveness of living in urban cities and towns following social distancing restrictions during COVID-19. As a highly vulnerable island country, decentralising development or moving commerce and business and ports out of the current heavily populated urban areas, is also away of reducing or mitigating the probability of a high crisis impact on a densely populated areas during a future pandemic.

The demand for skilled labour has increased enormously during the last decade. At the same time, there is clearly a mismatch between the demand and supply of skills. In addition, outward migration has created skill shortages in several areas. Between January 2018 and August 2023, around 80,000 Fijian residents have migrated.

In 2023, 2,226 workers from Fiji mobilised to Australia under the PALM Scheme of which 992 short-term and 1,234 long-term. In addition, a total of 1,050 workers were mobilised to New Zealand under the RSE work programme. Though the PALM scheme was designed for the unemployed Fijians, active workers from Fiji's labour force have taken up job opportunities through the scheme. Whilst the temporary seasonal worker programmes bring in remittances to the country, there is currently little or no re-integration support provided for seasonal workers returning to Fiji. As such, these workers are unable to transfer and utilise the workplace skills learned abroad.

In addition, Fiji's immigration laws impede business's ability to acquire skilled workers swiftly. The visa processing timelines and procedural requirements are a big challenge and unfriendly for businesses.

In the medium-term, there is an opportunity for development of a National Human Resource Plan which lays out a national strategic plan for the development of Fiji's human resources and sustainable capacity building. The plan can serve as a basis for human resource planning, including, addressing issues related to employment, education, health, gender, poverty, youth and problems of social exclusion and vulnerable groups.

Improving labour market standards to meet accredited international best practices is an immediate challenge but it also presents opportunities. This includes ratifying international conventions and reviewing existing labour laws to be compliant with international commitments such as amendments to certain sections of the Employment Relations Act 2007.

Goal, Policies and Strategies

Goal: A decent work and sustainable employment for all	
Policies	Strategies
Review and modernise employment relations framework to international standards and best practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ratify appropriate international and regional conventions and domesticate into relevant laws. • Formulate, implement and periodically review national labour policies.
Promote and improve workplace rights and responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinforce awareness on rights and responsibilities at the workplace for better compliance and ensure employment standards. • Improve compliance on good faith employment practice at workplaces to improve employment relations.
Strengthen workplace compliance performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake proactive Occupational and Health Safety advisory, inspections and compliance services. • Conduct timely processing of Workers Compensation cases. • Address gender-based discrimination and violence in the workplace.
Improve the quality of labour market services to contribute to decent and productive employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review relevant Acts, regulations and policies to improve employment quality. • Revive the National Wages Council. • Undertake a review of the 10 sectoral minimum Wages Regulations (WRs).
Improve the quality of facilitating employment opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the employment of NEC registered clients. • Promote the recognition of skills, merits and abilities to include persons with disabilities and women and their contributions to the workplace and labour market. • Increase the outreach of NEC services to Rural and Maritime Areas. • Implement new programmes to create job opportunities such as the Jobs for Nature programme. • Foster a culture of lifelong learning within the labour force. • Facilitate career expo opportunities for new graduates. • Promote participation of secondary school students as part of a flexible labour force.
Strengthen participation in Labour Mobility Programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a National Policy and Strategy Framework on Labour Mobility. • Implement robust mechanisms to ensure that only unemployed and unskilled workers are recruited on labour mobility programmes. • Create awareness on labour mobility programmes to rural and maritime communities. • Undertake regular studies to ascertain the socioeconomic impacts of Fiji's participation in labour mobility programmes.
Strengthen National Productivity Movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the National Productivity Master Plan (NPMP). • Align competency and industrial skills development with local labour market demand.

Policies	Strategies
Strengthen planning and research capability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allocate resources for better research and planning. Conduct annual labour market surveys.
Reduce the national unemployment rate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support labour market programmes for job creation. Implement re-integration support programmes for seasonal workers returning to Fiji. Conduct specific programmes to address youth unemployment.
Address skill gap shortage and enhance labour force participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review immigration laws to allow more overseas workers. Provide additional scholarships in the areas of skill shortage. Incentivise universities and training institutions to re-align their programmes and enrolment to fill the skills gap. Realign the award of scholarships and study grants in line with skills gap. Introduce a programme to re-employ retired skilled people to fill the skills gap. Encourage engagement of interns by the civil service and private sector. Review and strengthen maternity and paternity leave policy to retain women in the workforce. Incentivise access to affordable childcare at workplace. Address gender biases in recruitment and compensation practises. Undertake a study/survey to understand the motivation for outward migration and what could be done to retain and attract back talent. Establish a Talent Return programme in partnership with the private sector to bring back talent in the areas where there is a skill shortage. Establish a Talent Enrichment programme in partnership with the private sector to attract foreign talent and labour in specific areas required by industry.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
Unemployment Rate (%)	4.3	4	3.8
Review of National Minimum Wage Rate	2022	2024 and 2026	2028
Review of the 5 year National Human Resource Plan	2015	2024	2029
Workplace injuries annually (% reduction)	517	2-3	4-5
Participation in labour mobility programmes through NEC annually (% increase)	3,276	10	10
People connected to jobs through NEC annually (% increase)	500	10	10

6.8: Protection of Children, Youth and Persons with Disabilities

'A safe and conducive environment for children, youth and persons with disabilities'

Introduction

The protection of children, youth and persons with disabilities is critical in ensuring Fiji's sustainable future development, given the significance of multi-faceted issues that are currently affecting them which will require a more coordinated response across the whole-of-Government. Civil society organisations (CSOs), faith-based organisations and the private sector also play an important role in these areas. In Fiji, a person is considered a 'youth' if they are between the ages of 15 to 35 years while a child is defined as any person under 18 years of age. Fiji has made significant progress in the protection of its children, youths and persons with disabilities, and this is particularly evident in the manner in which the Government has introduced various social protection measures such as the Care and Protection Allowance which has benefited over 11,275 children.

Global and Regional Obligations

Fiji is committed to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically goal 16 relating to protecting children from abuse, exploitation and violence; SDG 10 which strives to reduce inequality by empowering social and political inclusion of all, including persons with disabilities as well as the broad spectrum of SDGs relating to youth development including ensuring zero hunger, quality education, decent work and climate action. Fiji is also committed to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Person with Disabilities, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These obligations are aligned to Fiji's national policies and priorities on the protection and rights of children, youths, and people with disabilities.

Current Status

Children

The National Coordinating Committee on the Rights of Children (NCCC) is the national level coordination mechanism under the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Protection (MWCSP). The Inter-Agency Committee on all forms of Child Abuse, Neglect and Abandonment is a sub-committee of NCCC and outlines the procedures for responding to child protection cases and the responsibilities of the implementing partners. Fifteen out of the forty-two social protection schemes administered by the Government focus on children. The social protection schemes deal with education, health, economic and livelihoods.

The 2023 National Education Summit encapsulates the goal and vision to establish a strong and flexible educational system that develops resilient and capable Fijians. Child abuse cases increased from 838 children in 2018 to 1,968 children in 2022. The Child Services Unit of the MWCSP collaborates with the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) to provide psychosocial support to the impacted population during natural disasters. Additionally, the MWCSP, with the support of UNICEF reviewed the Juveniles Act 1973 and Adoption Act 2020 in 2012 to ensure compliance to the UNCRC. The Adoption Act was passed in 2020 while the 2 bills derived from the Juveniles Act 1973, that is the Child Justice Bill and Childcare and Protection Bill are in the process of being finalised.

Youth

The Government, through the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MYS), facilitates and promotes the full development of young people's potential through the provision of strategic supportive networks and initiatives for character development, entrepreneurship activities, sports and community based civic initiatives. The Fiji National Youth Policy, 2023-2027 provides the strategic framework for youth development encompassing key areas including health and wellbeing, skills and employment, protection and justice, environment and climate change, participation and empowerment, inclusion and non-discrimination and enabling environment. The other policies relating to youth development are the National Youth Policy, National Sports, Recreation and Physical Activity Policy, National Anti-Doping Policy, National Non-Formal Education Policy and Fiji Youth Declaration 2019. In addition, the Youth in Agriculture policy, 2022-2027 aims to empower young people for active participation across all aspects of the agri-food system. The Fiji Red Cross Youth Development also contributes to youth development.

Persons with Disabilities

Fiji was among the Pacific Island nations that pioneered in tackling disability-related concerns and achieving the rights of individuals with disabilities, prior to being signatory to the United Nations Conventions of the Rights of Person with Disabilities. In order to serve as a coordinating body for all organisations involved in the care and support of people with disabilities, the Government of Fiji backed the establishment of the National Council for People with Disabilities. The National Disability Policy is pending clearance and endorsement from the National Councils for Persons with Disabilities prior to further submission to MWCSF. This reinforces the government's intent to ensure existing services in the health, education, sports and accessible housing sectors are adequately supported in order to better address the needs of children, women and men with disabilities.

Challenges and Opportunities

Children

Less than 25% of children between the age of 3 and 4 attend Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) and this constrains the identification of development delay or disability with a child at an early age. There is also an increase in obesity and malnutrition trends. The provision of comprehensive prenatal and neonatal services is also a challenge. There has been a rise in children living on the streets and engaging in drug sales in villages, schools, and other public places. The increasing cases of teenage pregnancy is also a concern. Cyberbullying is also on the rise with more children having access to the internet on a regular basis. Mental health issues are affecting younger populations disproportionately in Fiji. According to Lifeline Fiji, 110 Fijian lives are lost to suicide annually. Violence against children also remains an issue particularly in hotspots which are mostly in towns and cities where there is high population density and residents of different backgrounds.

Youth

There are 548,630 Fijians under the age of 34, which is more than 50% of the total population. There is a need to review legislations and policies to be inclusive of and empower youth so that the nation can enjoy this demographic dividend from the large young population. Currently, empowerment of youth in the nation's development is lacking. A holistic approach must be taken to address youth involvement in illicit drugs, criminal activities and rape in collaboration with CSOs and faith-based organizations. Currently, national unemployment stands at 4.3% while youth unemployment is expected to be higher. While the Pacific-Australia Labour Mobility scheme has offered employment opportunities, there is a need to evaluate the social impact of this programme. There is also a need to address their lack of formal and informal education and skills to increase their employability as well as improve their access to entrepreneurial training and credit to participate in income generating opportunities. There is a lack of data for effective planning of youth programmes.

Persons with Disabilities

Among the barriers confronting people with disabilities are insufficient and expensive assistive devices; a lack of support services; a lack of community-based inclusive development approaches; and lack of disabled-friendly government services and public infrastructure including in education, transport and housing. Women and girls with disabilities are three times more likely to be subject to gender-based violence. The gender inequalities faced by people with disabilities remains a barrier to full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities. The absence of disabilities rights in mainstream policies including those related to gender and climate change, results in disability being a low policy priority across the board. In addition, people with disabilities and their families have to deal with prejudice, discrimination, and rejection on a daily basis due to a lack of awareness and understanding in the larger community.

Goal, Policies and Strategies

Goal 1: Provide a conducive learning environment that fosters positive physical, social, emotional, cognitive and language development of all children in Fiji

Policies	Strategies
Review legislations related to protection of children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Align child protection legislations to international conventions such as the UNCRC. Establish a proactive cross sectoral development approach in line with commitment to the UNCRC. Develop a central archive for child abuse and child related violence data.
Strengthen safety, care and protection of children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase early identification and intervention for children with development delays, disability, congenital impairments or other needs. Empower families to provide proper care and protection for children through the Child Protection Allowances. Strengthen social support mechanisms for communities. Strengthen frontline collaboration among Maternal and Child Health Services, social protection workers, schools, early childhood education and CSOs.
Prevent child abuse and child neglect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalise and approve the 2021 Volatile Substance Abuse Bill. Develop a parent/carer and community education strategy to build parent/carers awareness and capability. Monitor and support all vulnerable parents/carers in relation to their mental health, community connection and wellbeing. Provide parenting programmes to enable families to improve child safety and family functioning so that children do not need to be placed in the care of others. Strengthen minimum standards for residential care for children who have experienced abuse and neglect. Encourage a national multi-pronged and cross-sectoral inclusive approach on the prevention of abuse against children. Enhance the delivery and reach of family planning and sexual health education service. Restrict websites that contain vulgar and explicit content. Develop intervention strategies to keep children safe at home.
Strengthen child healthcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage children to have a balanced diet and take part in extracurricular activities. Increase the availability of children' playgrounds especially in disadvantaged areas.

Policies	Strategies
Provide equal access to education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all children have equal access to education including those with special needs and disabilities. • Encourage children to engage services of career counsellors in schools to enable children to make informed decisions. • Provide capacity building for teachers to identify forms of abuse and strengthen effective communication with children.
Goal 2: Youths are valued, safe, included, and given the freedom to realise their full potential and actively participate in and contribute to the development of the country	
Policies	Strategies
Promote education and training of youths to secure decent employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen participation of youth in youth organisations and provide adequate and sustainable support and resources. • Ensure an inclusive environment for youth with disabilities including in formal and informal education. • Develop and implement programmes for employment, self-employment and wealth creation. • Develop services and mechanisms that foster employability of youth through cross sector cooperation. • Ensure alignment between education curriculum and employment market and develop skills in climate change and disaster risks. • Provide youth scholarships for higher education and strengthen the practical skills through careers guidance. • Open a range of pathways to enter the workforce, strengthen links to the youth diaspora, develop legal literacy and access to justice. • Develop community-based options for youth in conflict with the law. • Strengthen partnerships with NGOs on climate related activities.
Empower youth participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and strengthen policy and legal framework for youth in consultation with youth. • Inculcate positive mindset and traits and promote voluntarism. • Strengthen youth data and improve coordination of youth budget. • Ensure access to social protection and safety nets for youths in need, including housing. • Conduct evidence based assessment of youth programmes and improve cross sectoral coordination. • Assign youth champions. • Establish Divisional Youth Climate Action Advisory Committee. • Develop the National Youth Development Index.

Policies	Strategies
Develop a youth friendly health service and promote physical wellness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct more advocacy on the importance of mental health and support services available to youths. • Strengthen awareness programmes on sexual and reproductive health. • Establish more adolescent and youth friendly health services including in Rural and Maritime Areas. • Ensure the development of and access to youth friendly drug and alcohol rehabilitation programmes. • Strengthen physical education and wellness programmes in and outside schools and universities and develop sporting facilities. • Develop traditional wellness sports programmes. • Foster good nutritional or eating habits. • Enhance female youth sports participation at national and international level.
Goal 3: Promote, protect, and ensure the full and equal access and attainment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all person with disabilities	
Policies	Strategies
Review and strengthen the involvement of persons with disabilities in policy decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review policies and legislations related to people with disabilities. • Increase investment in institutions with persons with disabilities. • Strengthen technical capacity development in policy development and project and risk management. • Develop and update appropriate legislation. • Promote intersectionality to ensure that people with disabilities including in rural and remote areas benefit from better services and rights. • Assess national, divisional, provisional, district and community programmes delivered by Government and development partners.
Empower participation of persons with disabilities to gain employment opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote and advocate for accessibility in all aspects. • Encourage and assist individuals gain employment opportunities through training programmes. • Develop incentives to encourage employers to recruit persons with disabilities. • Promote capacity and accountability for disability inclusive budgeting in Government. • Establish disability resource hubs that decentralise services, preposition assistive devices and help provide people with disabilities with skills relevant to industry.

Policies	Strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen family support for persons with disabilities during the duration of their training programmes. Develop a specialised workforce to scale up disability support services at all levels. Promote capacity building for organisations of persons with disabilities (OPD).
Ensure human rights and fundamental freedoms for all persons with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote and advocate for accessibility in all aspects especially public infrastructure. Establish and strengthen partnerships with relevant stakeholders. Strengthen gathering and sharing of OPD data and information systems. Ensure that persons with disabilities be given equal opportunity to participate in the full range of educational, social, political, employment and cultural activities. Improve and strengthen access to education at pre-school, primary, secondary and tertiary education for students with disabilities. Ensure opportunities for education, including technical-vocational training, and participation in the development of legislation, policies that affect them. Establish more special needs schools particularly in Rural and Maritime Areas.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
Children (aged 3 and 4 years) attending ECCE (%)	21.5	30	40
Youth engagement in vocational training programmes number)	NA	15	20
Overweight and obesity among youths (% reduction)	NA	30	50
Economic cost of violence on children (% of GDP)	4.2	4	3.8

6.9: Culture and Heritage

‘Promote and protect Fiji’s culture and heritage for sustainable development’

Introduction

Fiji’s cultural richness is derived from its diverse ethnicity, encompassing Melanesians, Polynesians, Micronesians and various other groups. While the majority comprises indigenous Fijians (iTaukei and Rotuman), other ancestries including Indians, Chinese, and Europeans, Part Europeans, and other Pacific Islanders contribute to the nation’s cultural mix of population. The distinctions between ethnic groups in Fiji is apparent in their diverse cultural traditions, customs and religion. Fiji’s rich cultural heritage, ranging from languages, food, festivals, rituals, arts and traditions holds intrinsic value for both present and future generations. The acknowledgement and acceptance of cultural diversity contributes to the nation’s cohesion. Uplifting the socioeconomic wellbeing of the people through culture and heritage remains as a key commitment of the Government. It provides support for heritage site management, artistic promotion, creative industries, artefacts preservation, archaeological documentation, and language safeguarding.

Global and Regional Commitments

Fiji is committed to UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4, where specifically target 4.7 calls for education to promote a culture of peace and non-violence, appreciation for cultural diversity and culture’s contribution to sustainable development. In addition, to safeguard the intangible Cultural Heritage Convention, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) World Heritage Committee supports Fiji with funding for capacity building, training, seminars and workshops. Fiji’s State Party Periodic Report will be submitted to UNESCO World Heritage Committee in December 2024 on the implementation status of the Convention in Fiji.

Current Status

The Fiji Museum, the National Trust of Fiji, Fiji Arts Council, Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Multi-Ethnic Affairs & Sugar Industry are the flagship agencies for cultural and heritage development. The Department of Culture, Heritage and Arts is responsible for developing cultural policies, fostering cultural education, increasing awareness of, and encouraging participation in traditional customs and multiculturalism, including support for creativity. The Ministry of iTaukei Affairs maintains the database of the iTaukei Culture, Language & Arts through the Cultural Mapping Programme. It also promotes the preservation of culture and language through weekly radio programmes, Lialiaci quarterly publications, and creating community and organisational awareness.

The Ministry of iTaukei Affairs completed cultural mapping in the province of Ba consisting of 21 districts and 106 villages, as well as in the village of Ucunivanua, Verata, Tailevu. This resulted in the revival of some intangible cultural heritage in the province of Ba and brought people to work together (solesolevaki) to discuss and confirm their heritage. The Cultural Mapping Programme also noted that numerous traditional knowledge and expression of culture were at risk of becoming extinct as the older generations pass on. In addition, iTaukei Festivals, and cultural identities such as vosavanua, meke, cakacakaniliga, sulusulu, buiniga, serevanua and ukutaki ni vatunulua are being promoted and safeguarded. The Ministry of iTaukei Affairs is also undertaking a review of the Fijian Monolingual Dictionary. The review of the Monolingual Fijian Dictionary includes researching and formalising coined words. From 2019-2022, about 1,700 words were researched.

Government also commemorates Fijian history with the Girit Day, and the Ratu Sukuna Day, embracing the rich cultural heritage of the indigenous Fijians and Indentured Labourers in Fiji. The Government has made provision for a public holiday to celebrate the contribution of the various ethnic communities in the development and progress of Fiji and its people to foster unity, social cohesion and mutual respect. Additionally, Fiji’s Multi-Ethnic Framework which sets out strategic objectives and programmes will foster inclusivity and harmony among Fiji’s diverse ethnic communities. Furthermore, from 2015 to 2021, the Ministry of Education through the Government granted a sum of \$100,000 to musicians, singers, artists, and communities to support their cultural entrepreneurship endeavours.

Challenges and Opportunities

While culture, heritage and creative industries hold potential to further diversify and add value to Fiji's tourism product base and branding, it faces several challenges. As Fiji strives for modernisation and economic development, the need to balance it with the preservation of cultural identity becomes increasingly important.

There is a need to review several legislations and strengthen institutional capacity. Outdated legislations pose a challenge, among them are the iTaukei Lands Act, 1905 and the Fisheries Act 1941 that empowers the iTaukei Land & Fisheries commission to adjudicate on the disputes regarding land ownership and fishing rights and, chiefly positions. There is also a need to review other relevant iTaukei Affairs legislation. The proper maintenance of records of iTaukei heritage including the Vola ni Kawa Bula (VKB) is also crucial and needs to be digitalised. In the medium term, there is a need to strengthen the capability and capacity of the National Trust of Fiji and the Fiji Museum in natural and cultural heritage site conservation and conducting archaeological impact assessment.

The increased employment of iTaukei people in the tourism industry has significantly impacted traditional practices and belief systems. It has led to a decline in indigenous knowledge, diminished appreciation for cultural heritage, and a loss of skills essential for survival in the natural environment. Involvement in traditional activities such as weaving, craft making, dancing, carving, farming, and fishing has also reduced. Further, the increased commercialization of traditional practices in the tourism industry has diminished the value and 'mana' of traditional iTaukei practices. There is therefore a need to reinforce the preservation of cultural heritage and traditions while promoting the tourism industry.

Furthermore, climate change and natural disasters pose a threat to heritage sites and properties. The prolonged exposure to constant climate change and natural disasters erodes the significance of these sites' existence. Indigenous people and local communities need to play a more active role in the development of traditionally practised strategies to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change and preserve and protect traditional heritage sites.

Goals, Policies and Strategies

Goal: Promote and Protect Fiji's culture and heritage for sustainable development	
Policies	Strategies
Promote, protect and enhance cultural practices, heritage and traditional knowledge for sustainable development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review iTaukei Affairs Act 1944, Fiji Museum Act 1929, National Trust of Fiji Act 1970, Preservation of Objects of Archaeological Paleontological Interest Act 1940 and other relevant Acts and policies. Strengthen the financial and human capacity of the National Trust of Fiji and Fiji Museum, Fiji Art Gallery in natural and cultural heritage site conservation. Map cultural, heritage and artistic infrastructure and spaces in Fiji and formulate master plans for future development. Implement the Fiji National Cultural Policy 2023-2024. Strengthen village by laws. Develop the Fiji Culture Statistic Framework by 2025. Develop Fiji Cultural Industries Framework by 2025. Conduct Archaeological Impact Assessments by 2026. Finalise Traditional Knowledge and Expressions of culture (TKEC) as a law of Fiji by 2026.

Policies	Strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement Fiji's Multi-ethnic Framework. Strengthen partnership with multi-ethnic organisations and community groups to promote, protect and enhance cultural practices. Develop local branded products and crafts through the use of local resources. Finalise National Arts Centre for Fiji. Establish a Cultural Tourism Framework. Facilitate Fiji's representation at regional and international cultural festivals and expos. Strengthen participation of resource owners, women and the indigenous community in culture and heritage. Develop and maintain cultural sites, heritage spaces and associated infrastructure. Establish partnerships and links with professional cultural heritage institutions locally and overseas to support technical training on heritage management and preservation. Build community partnership through advocacy and awareness programmes. Integrate culture, arts and heritage in the formal education curricular at all levels through a Fiji Cultural and Education Strategy.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
Natural Heritage sites for the ecotourism developed in partnership with private sector (number)	0	1	2
National Museum with state of art facilities (number)	1	1	1
Digitalization of Vola ni Kawa Bula (VKB)	11,790	14,000	20,000
iTaukei villages benefiting from cultural Mapping of Traditional Knowledge (%)	5	50	100
Heritage sites included in the World Heritage Listing (number)	1	1	2
Research words– Fijian Monolingual Dictionary (words)	418	450	750
Multi-ethnic communities benefiting from implementation of the Fiji Multi-Ethnic Framework (%)	15	60	100

6.10: Sports Development

‘Developing talent and achieving sporting excellence’

Introduction

Sports development plays a crucial role in the overall growth and wellbeing of a nation. Fiji has made significant strides in promoting sports and nurturing talents. Sports development besides fostering athletic talent promotes unity, national pride, and social cohesion among the citizens. Additionally, it contributes to economic growth through tourism, boosting local businesses, and creating employment opportunities.

Rugby, soccer, cricket, volleyball and netball are among the most popular sports in the country. The National Sports, Recreation, and Physical Activity Policy provides a contemporary, clear and manageable framework to guide and enhance the delivery of sports and physical activity at all levels of participation through a coordinated partnership approach by Government, State-Owned Entities, regional and international sporting agencies and civil society. The Policy provides an all-inclusive approach to sports development that integrates regular physical activity to build an active, healthy society and a socially inclusive nation.

Global and Regional Commitments

Fiji is committed to the UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 which identifies the health benefit of sports. Sports also contributes to improving educational outcomes in SDG 4, gender equality in SDG 5 and promoting peaceful and inclusive societies in SDG 6. The KAZAN Action Plan marks the commitment to link sports policy development to the UN SDGs and provides support to an overarching sports policy framework and the priority areas for international and national stakeholder cooperation.

Current Status

Rugby is regarded as the national sport of Fiji, and the country has a strong tradition in the sport. Fiji has consistently been one of the top performers in international rugby sevens, having won multiple World Rugby Sevens Series titles and Olympic medals. Fiji's national rugby union team, known as the Flying Fijians, has also been successful in international competitions, regularly competing in the Rugby World Cup and the Pacific Nations Cup. Fiji has been focusing on grassroot and youth rugby development programmes to identify and nurture talent from a young age. Other key sports include soccer, netball, athletics, golf and cricket.

Remittance from sportsmen and sportswomen working abroad has become an essential source of funding for sports development in Fiji and contributed to foreign exchange earnings. Remittance has enabled the improvement of training facilities, provision of equipment and resources, and the establishment of scholarship programmes. This financial support has enabled promising athletes to receive proper training and compete at higher levels.

Sports tourism has also been a growing sector in Fiji, with rugby being a major attraction for tourists. The Fiji Rugby Union has been hosting various international rugby events, including the Fiji International Rugby Sevens tournament, which attracts teams from all over the world. In 2023, contribution from sports tourism was \$67.1 million, creating employment opportunities for 21,000 individuals equivalent to 520 full-time jobs.

Fiji has invested in sports infrastructure to support rugby and other sports tourism activities. The HFC National Stadium in Suva, the capital city, has been renovated to host international rugby matches and other sporting events. Government has also provided financial support for the construction and improvement of sports facilities throughout the country. Under the Youth Grants programmes, 54 youth and sports teams and individuals received support, including help in sports through the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MYS) sports unit. Through the Sports Group Donation programme, 29 Fiji sports and youth clubs across the territory receive vital sports equipment such as physical training cones, rugby balls, netballs, soccer balls, volleyball nets and water bottles with racks, kicking tees, ball pumps, whistles and badminton kits.

The MYS, through the Fiji National Sports Commission (FNCS), promotes the social integration of Fijians of all physical abilities into national sporting occupations, in line with the Government's commitment to individuals living with disabilities. The organisation of individuals with disabilities annually obtains a grant for the development and promotion of sports

occupations for people with disabilities, such as the Fiji Society of the Deaf and the Western Council of Special Educators. Efforts were also made to promote gender equality in sports and to support athletes from underrepresented communities. Initiatives like para-sports and adaptive sports are also being developed to provide opportunities for athletes with disabilities.

Challenges and Opportunities

While sports development in Fiji has seen progress, there are several challenges that need to be addressed. One significant challenge is the limited resources and funding to smaller and minority sporting bodies which impacts the development of related sports infrastructure, training programmes, and athlete support systems. Lack of sports infrastructure and facilities particularly in peri-urban and rural areas also limit youth participation in sports.

Fiji schools make extensive use of sports resources to deliver physical education programmes. However, many young people still lack basic information on how physical education and diet can improve their health and learning abilities. There is a current inability to provide quality physical education in both the formal and non-formal education sectors.

Gender inequality in sports and society remains a concern. Exploring how gender hierarchies affect each phase of development is critical for tackling gender inequities. These inequities vary from how young people perceive sports, to how sports groups have rules and structures that perpetuate rather than eliminate gender inequality. Key stakeholders will need to consider developing a gender mainstreaming plan to address these gaps.

There is also a shortage of medical staff for sports in Fiji. With the increasing popularity of sports and the rise in sports-related injuries, it is essential to have sufficient trained medical professionals to provide immediate care and support to athletes. This shortage puts the health and wellbeing of athletes at risk and hampers the development of sports in the country. There is also a critical shortage of high-performance sports personnel including qualified coaches and professionals.

Goal, Policies and Strategies

Goal: Developing talent and achieving sporting excellence	
Policies	Strategies
Develop a productive and healthy nation through a systematic and coordinated sports development programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Align strategically legislation, policy, and practices to deliver cohesive youth and sports services. Collaborate and promote partnerships with ministries, educational institutions, non-governmental organisations, community organisations, businesses, and other stakeholders, for the development of youth and sports. Promote a healthy nation by providing mass sports recreational opportunities and implement targeted campaigns. Maximise access to sports, recreational and physical education in every educational institution for all Fijians. Formulate sports policy for persons with a disability and promote gender equality. Undertake a national survey of physical activity in Fiji looking at active participation and participation landscapes. Increase collective understanding and approach across sporting codes on ending discrimination and violence against women and children and gender equality in sports.
Developing a Sporting Nation to build the capability of sports and the people involved in National Sports Talent Identification and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a National Sports Talent Identification System Increase the number of National Sports administrators, technical officials, coaches and sports medical doctors and physiotherapists and sports medical services with internationally accepted qualifications.

Policies	Strategies
Promote sports as a mechanism to achieve economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise the potential to host international sporting events in Fiji. • Promote effective communication, and social and recreation mass mobilisation. • Promote sports tourism by improving capability and capacity to bid and host major sports events supported by event roster detailing. • Promote traditional sporting events. • Develop more medical facilities for sports science and sports medicine.
Promote an enabling environment to develop elite athletes and improve citizens' access to sporting facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase opportunities to build a sustainable future through sports. • Maximise resource utilisation. • Ensure that all MYS resources are effectively managed to increase the impact of services and facilities. • Upgrade existing sporting facilities in towns and communities. • Develop a Sports House that serves as an administrative support centre guided by principles of good governance for identified national sporting organisations. • Implement a Sports Volunteers unit to encourage volunteerism work in sports. • Strengthen Fiji National Sports Commission and National Sporting Organisation's role in promoting sports development. • Implement a sports Information centre to improve access to sports information and knowledge. • Review processes and identify needs with respect to donation of sports equipment.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
People trained in sports administration (number)	150	200	250
Sports leaders and administrators per province to run community sports structures (number)	0	5	10
Children participating in Kids Community Sport (number)	10,000	15,000	20,000
Female sport competition at secondary level (%)	0	30	50
International sports events hosted (number)	8	15 Super Rugby and NRL matches; Pacific Games in 2031	20 Super rugby and NRL matches

6.11: iTaukei Participation in Development

‘Strengthen iTaukei Involvement through inclusive development’

Introduction

The iTaukei people and community have an important role in the long-term management of a large portion of lands, ecosystems, and biodiversity in Fiji. iTaukei peoples’ overall systems are based on sustainable livelihoods and the notion of community well-being. Poverty rates among iTaukei people are most likely to be significantly higher, when compared to the overall population because of limited opportunities to maximise benefits from the utilisation of their lands and resources. For the iTaukei people to achieve economic empowerment, partnerships based on a framework of mutual benefit, livelihoods, and intellectual property, must be established within their communities and organisations. The participation of the iTaukei community in the resources sector is also discussed in this National Development Plan’s resource-based chapters.

Global and Regional Commitments

The rights of iTaukei or indigenous communities are encapsulated under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples adopted by the UN General Assembly on 13 September 2007. Fiji is also committed to the UN International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032). Fiji has also contributed to the work of the UN Human Rights Office (UN HRO) which carries out a range of country-specific and regional activities to advance the rights of indigenous peoples.

Current Status

The Ministry of iTaukei Affairs, Culture, Heritage & Arts (MTACHA) oversees the creation, execution, monitoring, and evaluation of Government initiatives aimed at promoting good governance and the well-being of the iTaukei people. Some of the responsibilities entail resolving disputes over land, fishing grounds, chiefly and traditional headship titles, and protecting and maintaining language and culture through advocacy activities. Over the years, the Government has acknowledged the importance of including iTaukei people in decision-making. Currently, the MTACHA is drafting the Ministry’s Strategic Development Plan, which will give a vision for iTaukei Affairs until 2030 and outline an overall strategy of a transformed iTaukei community. The intention is to expand the concept of solesolevaki: a whole-of-society approach and making it the joint responsibility of the Vanua, the Church (Lotu), and the Government (Matanitu).

The Great Council of Chiefs (GCC) was re-established through the passing of iTaukei (Amendment) Act of 2023 in Parliament. Cabinet has also approved the GCC Regulations of 2024 which ensures that the objectives of Bose Levu Vakaturaga are met after its re-establishment and elaborates the functions of the Council. The MTACHA aims to conduct a thorough review and streamline current key legislations pertaining to indigenous welfare, encompassing significant statutes. This initiative reflects a commitment to enhance regulatory frameworks for the benefit of all stakeholders. The MTACHA in collaboration with iTaukei Trust Fund Board (TFFB) has developed the iVolavosa application, available on Google Store. This will help address the growing concern about the reduction of native language speakers.

Challenges and Opportunities

Over the years, the failure of iTaukei to engage in businesses has been a subject of discussion in Parliament and other relevant agencies. The challenges faced by indigenous business owners can be summarised into two categories. The first, are challenges brought by a general lack of financial literacy, training, experience, and knowledge in business and management. The second, concerns the inconsistency between traditional and Western forms of entrepreneurship as well as business culture and ideals. The iTaukei community’s way of life is based on the concept of collectivism. The way of life of Western societies and other ethnicities in Fiji are based on individualism. The iTaukei concept of collectivism tends to negatively impact their efforts in entrepreneurial business activities, as there is a tendency to

meet their cultural obligations first. Giving credit (dinau) and neglecting to ensure a generation of sustained income is another challenge.

Natural resources are typically difficult to market, particularly in the Micro, Small, Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) sector. As a result, the iTaukei communities take the easier option of renting out their resources. Many iTaukei people also face lack of access to basic and climate resilient infrastructure and affordable housing and access to clean water and sanitation services in rural and maritime regions. Other factors include the challenges of access to start-up capital, a lack of practical skills and experience, slow approval by Government authorities, road access, inability to secure stable markets for agriculture, forestry, and fisheries products, and lack of understanding of relevant laws. Both iTaukei men and women are bearing a heavy burden because of the substantial social disruption brought about by the growing number of iTaukei people engaged in the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility Scheme.

To empower iTaukei communities in development, the Government intends to implement six key initiatives: (i) institutional review of the iTaukei Institutions; (ii) joint approach to development by the iTaukei Institutions; (iii) natural resource development; (iv.) indigenous participation in business; (v.) unlocking and preservation of the cultural and heritage sector; and (vi.) Socioeconomic wellbeing of Indigenous people.

Institutional Review

There are several key institutions in the country that specifically serve the development interest of the indigenous Fijians; namely: iTaukei Affairs Board (TAB), the iTaukei Lands & Fisheries Commission (TLFC), the iTaukei Land Trust Board (TLTB), the iTaukei Trust Fund Board (TTFB), the Centre for Appropriate Technology and Development (CATD), and by extension the Fijian Holdings PTE Ltd (FHL). These institutions are complemented by the GCC, Provincial Councils, Tikina Councils and Village Councils. There is a need to review the organisational structures, policies, systems, and processes of these institutions. The aims are to ensure good governance, add value to natural resources, promote iTaukei participation in development and improve accountability and transparency in iTaukei institutions. The re-establishment of the GCC and approval of GCC regulations 2024 are vital, as the Council will hold the Government accountable for actions affecting indigenous Fijians. The Bose Vanua will also hold members of GCC accountable to its people and their respective Vanua.

Joint Approach to Development by the iTaukei Institutions

iTaukei Institutions are working together to strengthen the solesolevaki development framework. This framework envisions a traditional system of promoting cultural wealth through collaborative efforts. Each iTaukei Institution will play a role in application of this framework in the rural sector. An inclusive strategy encouraging resource owners to realise these potentials will benefit the country. In addition to economic development, it will aid in economic diversification, equitable wealth distribution, and national stability. The solesolevaki structure is divided into four key phases.

Phase 1: Landowners. Landowners will engage with TLTB, TTFB, and TAB to create their trust and investment vehicle. The Investment Company will lease the prospective resources, encouraging landowners to take the lead in developing the prospective resources. This phase also includes providing grant funding for idea creation and the preparation of feasibility studies.

Phase 2: Investment Phase - Investment Policy Statement Change. FHL will invest (redeemable stock) in potential firms if they match the investment conditions. In March 2023, the Resource Owner's forum proposed the establishment of a resource owner's bank/fund for equity investment in which FHL may invest. Merchant Finance provides debt financing, as well as syndication with other commercial banks. Guarantee arrangement is planned with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) or International Finance Corporation (IFC) in MSMEs loan portfolios. Technical Assistance support will be required in this stage.

Phase 3: Backoffice Service Provider (One-Stop Shop): This phase involves ownership of Back Office services that will include but not limited to training and support in accounting, consulting, compliance checks. TTFB will provide essential training and hand-holding support to potential iTaukei businesses, while the Centre for Appropriate Technology and Development (CATD) will be improved and expanded as training centres.

Phase 4: Monitoring and Evaluation phase: This step will help identify lessons learnt from monitoring and evaluation and to make informed decisions on how to improve from the Executive Forum and report to the line minister.

Natural Resource Development

Natural resources are typically difficult to market, particularly in the MSMEs sector. As a result, the easier option for iTaukei is to rent out the use of their resources. The aforementioned solesolevaki framework attempts to solve this challenge, through various funding mechanisms including direct support and credit guarantee. To develop iTaukei natural resources, it is critical to provide the necessary supportive infrastructure, such as power, water, and roads. There are bigger challenges affecting other industries that impact on the livelihoods of iTaukei communities which must be addressed and are not under the purview of the iTaukei Institutions. These include mining, agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and tourism, which are covered under other Chapters in this Plan.

Indigenous Participation in Business

There will be trade-off between village life and community living (social obligations) with economic reasons often taking precedence over social ones. Because of these trade-offs, many iTaukei firms (some of which were provincial investments) have failed throughout the years, with few having succeeded. To solve this, practical skills training in financial literacy and numeracy for iTaukei investors will need to be increased. It is essential to also strengthen the accessibility of iTaukei communities to loan facilities in rural and marine islands to facilitate their investments in natural resources.

Unlocking the Potential of the Culture and Heritage Sector (iTAB mandate)

Heritage and culture play a significant part in advancing Fiji's sustainable development. The legislative framework for Traditional Knowledge and Expression of Culture (TK&EC) aims to preserve the wealth of indigenous knowledge and cultural expressions. The MTACHA has completed the National Cultural Policy and the Cultural Tourism Policy. Through the GCC, the Council will be a beacon of hope for all people who have made or will make Fiji their home. Government also intends to preserve the core values of respect (veidokai), loyalty to one another (veivakaliuci) and honour (veivakarokorokotaki) of the iTaukei people.

Another avenue for iTaukei's growth opportunity is heritage tourism. This category of tourism involves travelling to experience places, artefacts, and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. The National Trust of Fiji is currently working to set up the National Art Centre. Levuka is Fiji's sole World Heritage Site but is under risk of being delisted due to a lack of maintenance and effort in rebuilding colonial structures. In 2007, Cabinet approved the use of the Old St Stephens landmark, a historic landmark, as the National Art Gallery. The future development of museum tourism as heritage tourism requires government funding support and incentives. It is imperative to allocate the necessary resources to improve museum infrastructure, administration and to diversify this segment of the tourist industry.

Socioeconomic wellbeing of iTaukei people

The iTaukei people and community must maintain their way of life, particularly culture and traditional norms and practices that should be passed down the generations. It is important that iTaukei utilise their land and have the willingness to learn continuously to improve their standard of living and reduce their heavy reliance on government grants and programmes. It is important to note that development partners are increasingly supporting village communities to create employment opportunities such as the Job for Nature funded by the World Bank. Of major concern to the iTaukei is the growth of NCD related deaths. The revival of indigenous traditional sports in urban, peri-urban, rural, and outer islands is one way to help counteract the alarming increase in incidences of NCD amongst the iTaukei people, while also preserving the games for the next generation. Violence against women, children, and the elderly including drug use and youth crimes are amongst the key challenges facing the iTaukei community.

Goals, Policies, Strategies

Goal: Strengthen iTaukei Involvement through Inclusive development	
Policies	Strategies
Enhance skills and capabilities of iTaukei workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage collaboration between the Government and iTaukei institutions to design curriculums and training programmes to meet the demands of the employment market.

Policies	Strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch a campaign to raise awareness in provinces and villages on the consequences of iTaukei brain drain. Reinstate iTaukei Affairs scholarship under the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs.
Promote more iTaukei to be engaged in business and commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement targeted incentives for indigenous businesses including tax breaks, subsidies, and other financial support. Direct commercial banks through RBF that certain percentage of lending to be allocated to resource and MSMEs sectors which iTaukei MSMEs can access. Enhance the TLTB Wealth Fund to assist with expiring lease buy back. Encourage more indigenous entrepreneurship by providing support for start-ups and small businesses. Conduct skills training on financial literacy and resilience, business development and governance for the iTaukei . Review land laws to allow resource owners to leverage land leases as equity into commercial ventures with foreign and local investors. Encourage more natural resources owners to set up businesses and eco-tourism initiatives. Establish climate resilient infrastructure to support iTaukei investments in rural areas. Encourage the formation of village, tikina and provincial cooperative business model. Review iTLTB to strengthen service efficiency and to align resource capabilities to drive the iTaukei empowerment agenda.
Review the roles of respective iTaukei institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a new vision and related policy for the development of iTaukei people. Encourage capacity building in all areas that aid in iTaukei development (economic, social and environment). Strengthen the capacity of Forum Executive Members, Village Council, Tikina Council, Provincial Councils subcommittees, Turaga ni Koro and Mata ni Tikina to ensure community involvement related to economic empowerment, financial inclusion, and social protection. Review all major iTaukei Institutions and other arms of the institution. Enact new legislations, amend related and existing laws, and put in place organisational structure, policies, systems and processes, and human resources to ensure good governance, promote indigenous people participation. Review of iTaukei Trust Fund Board (TTFB) to allow reinvestment of income for future growth opportunities.

Policies	Strategies
Promote cultural and heritage Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enact new legislations, amend existing laws, and establish regulations and operational guidelines for cultural and heritage tourism to create an enabling environment that will ensure transparent and clear administrative mechanisms. Establish more iTaukei businesses in the culture and heritage sector.
Strengthen the Solesolevaki Framework as a development framework for the iTaukei people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish more solesolevaki framework within all iTaukei institutions and provincial councils. Assist the iTaukei people develop their resources through access to market opportunities.
Improve the overall wellbeing of the iTaukei people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce wellness programmes and include traditional indigenous games to help combat NCD among indigenous people. Establish counselling services to address mental health related problems. Establish building standards for Rural and Maritime Islands. Build resilient communities through disaster risk management on the impacts of climate change in iTaukei communities. Improve waste management and pollution within iTaukei communities. Establish a sovereign wealth fund. Establish dynamic leadership programs for all traditional leaders under the guidance of the Great Council of Chiefs (GCC).

Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
Solesolevaki Framework (number)	0	1	3
Resource owners owning business (% increase)	5	20	30
Resource owners benefiting from financial inclusion and literary training (% increase)	5	20	40
New iTaukei Businesses exporting (number)	10	15	30
iTaukei villages and people benefitting from the Traditional Knowledge and Expression of Culture Act (%)	5	60	100
Increase of Rural access roads available to iTaukei villages and plantations in rural areas (%)	5	15	30

6.12: Women in Economic Development

‘Empowering women to increase their contribution to the economy and community’

Introduction

Women empowerment and gender equality play key roles in driving economic progress. Ensuring women have equal opportunities and rights is especially crucial in Fiji where cultural norms and traditional beliefs act as barriers to women being able to participate in economic development. Empowering women in economic development involves several aspects, such as providing access to education, opportunities for skill development, and financial resources for operating small businesses. Importantly, promoting gender equality not only improves the well-being and economic status of women but also provides broader societal benefits.

Based on the 2019 Annual Employment Survey, women’s composition in the total paid employment has increased from 36.8% in 2018 to 37.2% in 2019. It is also notable to observe an increase in women employment across all sectors except for agriculture, forestry & fisheries, arts, entertainment & recreational, and activities of territorial organisations and bodies.

Global and Regional Commitments

UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), Target 5.1 recognises the significant potential for women and girls to contribute to the sustainable development agenda and therefore seeks to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. It emphasises equal rights of women and girls to economic resources, access to education, and participation in politics to ensure a more just, harmonious, inclusive and equitable society. It acknowledges that women’s empowerment is essential for achieving all other SDG goals.

Fiji is a signatory to several international treaties governing gender equality, and rights of women and children. Among them is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) which requires the country to take measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all areas of life. Additionally, Fiji is also a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which emphasises the importance of ensuring the rights and wellbeing of children, regardless of their gender.

Current Status

The Ministry of Women, Children and Social Protection is dedicated to empowering women and promoting inclusivity in socioeconomic development. On average, the Ministry allocated \$3.4 million per year towards women in economic development over the past 14 years. The National Action Plan for Women’s Economic Empowerment 2024-2029 will address three interrelated dimensions that shape women’s agency and empowerment: aspirations and capabilities; the environment that surrounds them which may impose limits and conditions; and the power relations and norms through which they negotiate their path.

The Women Entrepreneurs Business Council (WEBC) and the Young Entrepreneurs Council (YEC) serve as advocates and providers of technical assistance for women and young entrepreneurs. In 2020, WEBC assumed the role of the implementing partner for the United States-funded Academy of Women Entrepreneurs (AWE) programme. This initiative focuses on delivering training and mentoring to micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) led or owned by women in the early stages of business development.

The Government has also focused on improving access to education and training for women, recognising the importance of equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in the workforce. This has resulted in a notable increase in the number of women entering traditionally male-dominated industries such as construction, engineering, and technology. Moreover, efforts have been made to address the gender wage gap and ensure that women receive equal pay for equal work. The number of female graduates has increased largely attributed to the success of Government scholarship programmes targeting women. According to the Fiji country gender assessment, 54% of the women have received National Topper Scholarships awards and 51% female students qualified for Tertiary Education Loan Scheme (TELS).

The Fiji Development Bank has become the first bank in the Pacific to join the ADB Women Entrepreneurs Finance Code (WE Code). This Code helps women in business by getting support from governments and banks, gathering helpful information, and making the business

environment better for women. The goal is to boost women-led businesses in Fiji, investments, and innovations to women-owned or led MSMEs. In addition to this, FDB has expanded its FDB Loan for Women Entrepreneurs facility by incorporating parametric insurance in collaboration with Tower Insurance.

Challenges and Opportunities

The unequal distribution of unpaid care work creates a significant burden on women, impacting their ability to fully participate in the workforce and pursue their own career aspirations. The lack of recognition and value placed on unpaid care work further perpetuates gender inequalities, as it is often overlooked and undervalued in society. To address these issues, it is crucial to challenge and transform the prevailing gender norms and expectations surrounding unpaid care work, promoting a more equitable distribution of responsibilities between men and women.

Sexual harassment in the workplace affects, on average, 20% of working Fijian women. According to the survey by the Fiji Women Crisis Centre in 2022, there were 21 cases of rape, 5 attempted rape, 5 sexual offences, 16 adult survivor, 19 sexual harassment and 396 other sexual related reported cases.

The absence of suitable daycare facilities and easily obtainable childcare alternatives is a significant obstacle for women who aspire to pursue their career objectives while also being available for their children. It is imperative to establish support mechanisms that empower women to effectively manage the demands of both their professional and personal lives. There is also a need for social care services and a workforce trained to care for the ageing population. Care for ageing persons in a family often becomes the responsibility of a female member of the family and thus affects women participation in employment and economic activities. There is a need to promote community-based programmes and social care workforce to meet the demand for aged care.

Most MSMEs operate in the informal sector and about one half are owned by women. Gender disparities persist in the ownership of MSMEs, with only 19% of registered MSMEs listing women as owners. This figure estimates over 5,500 registered women MSMEs, in addition to the 18,742 self-employed women and 4,650 women working in handicrafts. Recognising and supporting this variety of economic activities is crucial for promoting women's empowerment and fostering sustainable economic development.

The under-representation of girls and young women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education hinders their access to opportunities in these critical fields. In 2020, the representation of women in engineering courses was 12% at the two major universities in Fiji. Additionally, women in information technology (IT) courses was less than 25% of the total enrolment at these universities.

Goal, Policies and Strategies

Goal: Empowering women to increase their contribution to the economy and community	
Policies	Strategies
Encourage greater participation of women in formal and informal sector employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve women's access to income generating activities including handicrafts and farm produce in both rural and urban settlements. • Create awareness to promote women's equal access to public and private services. • Create policies to incentivise affordable and quality childcare and aged care. • Promote women's subsistence farming and fishing in rural communities. • Explore the possibilities of dedicated social security through voluntary contribution in FNFP.

Policies	Strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce local and international training programmes to offer women avenues for skill enhancement. • Decentralise training programmes specifically for women in rural communities in leadership, upskilling programmes in weaving, sewing, knitting, embroidery and traditional handicrafts, and digital technology. • Increase level of awareness particularly in rural communities with respect to government initiatives, grants and assistance for women empowerment including in collaboration with faith-based organisations. • Implement recognition and award classification for women in small business. • Establish a physical location or online platform to streamline the process to improve access to women to start-up to register a business. • Strengthen Open Merit Based Recruitment Selection across all sectors.
Reduce violence against women and children by implementing coordinated referral networks and responsive policing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote awareness within communities to strengthen and improve policies in response to violence against women and children. • Promote counselling related to gender-based violence including Technology Facilitated Gender Based Violence (TFGBV) in schools and tertiary institutions. • Develop and implement curriculum to prevent violence and promote gender equality in schools.
Enhance the presence of women in various tiers of governance and civil society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase opportunities for women to participate in leadership training, mentoring, and coaching programmes. • Promote constitutional, legislative and policy reforms to support Fijian women's rights. • Improve women's leadership and decision-making in the public sector, corporate boards, and community-based organisations including in rural & maritime areas. • Encourage women to increase their participation in STEM. • Increase awareness and educational programmes to address discriminatory social norms and behaviour.
Strengthen existing policies and legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise Women's Plan of Action, National Gender Policy, and Gender Transformative Institutional Capacity Development Initiative (ICD) to include gender responsive approaches across public & private sectors and address Technology Facilitated Gender Based Violence (TFGBV). • Strengthen the Gender Budget Template (Gender Responsive Budgeting).

Policies	Strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and revise teacher education and training programmes. Write National Action Plan for Women's Economic Empowerment 2024 to 2029.
Enhancing access to healthcare facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve access to reproductive healthcare throughout the women's lifecycle. Improve access of mental and stress care.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
Women participation in Parliament (%)	10	20	30
Women participation in Board directorship in public and private sector (%)	Non-commercial – 27 Commercial – 19	35	50
Women participation in district advisory councils and villages (number)	NA	10	20
Female adults with bank accounts (%)	78	80	85
Women participation in labour force (%)	33.7	50	60
Women ownership of registered MSMEs (%)	19	30	50
Female students enrolled in tertiary STEM courses (%)	25	30	50





7.1: Transport

'An Integrated, eco-friendly, safe, accessible and efficient transportation system'

Introduction

Fiji's geographically dispersed population necessitates a comprehensive transport network including land, maritime, and air transportation. Fiji's major land transport assets including roads, bridges and jetties are estimated to be valued at \$11 billion. Over the last 5 financial years since 2018, the Government has allocated more than \$1.7 billion for land transport infrastructure. Despite substantial investments in infrastructure there are persistent challenges including ageing infrastructure and lack of access and inadequate infrastructure, particularly in rural areas. Over the medium-term from 2024-2026, the Government seeks to achieve an integrated eco-friendly transportation system that is efficient, sustainable, accessible, and safe. Over the longer term, a coordinated national approach is needed to reduce emissions from the transport sector, decrease dependence on fossil fuels, encourage the use of public transportation, improve efficiency of transport services to maritime and outer islands and encourage private sector participation.

Global and Regional Commitments

Fiji is committed to the UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), Target 11.2 related to providing access to safe, affordable, accessible, and sustainable transport system for all, improving road safety, notably expanding public transport with special attention to the needs of people in vulnerable situations, women, children, and persons with disabilities.

As a member state of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), Fiji is obliged to comply with all ICAO standards for ensuring safety and security. The national airline, Fiji Airways is also a member of the International Air Transport Association (IATA). In line with Fiji's membership in the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), the international shipping industry must comply with the highest shipping standards for ensuring maritime security, safety, and sustainable maritime transport. Additionally, following Fiji's commitment to the Paris Agreement, recognising that the transport sector accounts for a significant proportion of fuel consumption and emissions, the Fiji Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) sets out an emission reduction target for maritime transport of 40% by the year 2030 and to achieve full decarbonisation by 2050.

Current Status

Transport contributed 0.7% to Fiji's GDP in 2021. Fiji has expanded its land and maritime transport infrastructure considerably, encompassing 7,659,868 kilometres of roads, 1,389 bridges and crossings, and 48 jetties. Domestic air transportation is limited to areas that have airports and airstrips. Currently there are 23 operational airports, including Nadi and Nausori Airport which offer international connectivity. Fiji has relatively better international air connectivity compared to its Pacific neighbours and serves as a transit hub for the South Pacific.

Domestic maritime connectivity is primarily through privately owned inter-island ferries and small vessels. The movement of cargo and passengers between islands in close proximity is mainly by smaller vessels. Shipping routes to outer islands that are not commercially viable are subsidised by Government through the Shipping Services Subsidy and presently supports the operation of passenger and cargo services along 10 uneconomical routes by 5 private operators. Suva and Lautoka Ports serve as international ports of entry for vessels. The Government also offers incentives for the construction, renovation and refurbishment of sea going vessels. The Maritime Safety Authority of Fiji (MSAF) registered a total of 5,036 vessels in 2022, comprising passenger and cargo carrying vessels, fishing vessels, tourism vessels and pleasure crafts.

There has been a 51% increase in vehicle registration from 98,000 vehicles in 2010 to nearly 148,000 till mid-2024 with 74% privately owned and 10% are public service vehicles. Over a ten-year period from 2013 – 2022, the number of annual fatalities has averaged around 53. Three major causes of road fatalities are speeding, dangerous driving and fault of pedestrians. The Government offers incentives for the development of electric vehicle charging infrastructure. Fiji has imposed restrictions on all imported vehicles, requiring compatibility with Euro 4 standards noting the environmental benefits, efficiency and savings associated with moving to cleaner fuels. To complement requirements for Euro 4 standard vehicles in the country, the

Government also gazetted requirements for all imported fuels to meet Euro 4 standards for unleaded fuel and Euro 5 for diesel.

Challenges and Opportunities

Land Transport

Maintaining existing transport infrastructure and assets is a persistent challenge. The lack of maintenance has resulted in the gradual deterioration of assets. In addition, road infrastructure faces capacity constraints leading to increased congestion and longer travel time particularly in major urban and peri-urban areas such as Suva, Lautoka, Nadi and Labasa. Road safety and increasing incidence of accidents and fatalities is also a concern. Public transportation which is primarily buses, taxis and minibuses which is an affordable means of travel however are not elderly and physically disabled friendly. The land transport regulations were amended in 2015 to include specific requirements for disability-friendly features in public services, however, enforcement has been lacking. Existing legislation and policies for maritime and air transport also needs to be strengthened to include requirements for ensuring disability access.

There is also a need to further upgrade and improve the maintenance of rural roads although over the last 10 years the Government had apportioned over \$377 million under Rural Roads Programme. In recognition of the need to further improve rural and maritime transport infrastructure, the Public Works Department has been re-established to also focus on the regulatory and policy management for roads infrastructure including ports, jetties, bridges and walkways.

Transport sector is also vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. In the aftermath of Category 5 Tropical Cyclone Winston in 2016, the transport sector suffered total loss and damage of approximately \$129 million. New investments in the transport sector must be designed and constructed to withstand the impacts of climate change. Fiji's Climate Vulnerability Assessment estimates climate financing needs of \$4.3 billion over the next 10 years to build a climate resilience transport sector and this will require public and private investments, grants, and highly concessional loans besides strengthening institutional capacities.

Maritime Transport

Ferry services to maritime islands often face disruption in service schedules, and many are aged vessels which affect safety and comfort. Regular review of the Shipping Services Subsidy should be undertaken to ensure its sustainability in the longer term. Government will also need to continue to provide incentives to private operators to encourage the purchase of newer, modern, and efficient vessels to replace the aged vessels. Unlicensed vessel operators and unregistered vessels, generally small vessels pose safety risk for the public. Additionally, safety at sea is compromised due to the lack of maintenance and replacement of navigational aids. The lack of opportunity for private sector involvement in the provision of navigational aids and the construction of lighthouses exacerbates the issue.

The transition to decarbonizing Fiji's maritime sector has been slow due to high capital cost, absence of sufficient fiscal incentives and associated infrastructure. Most new vessels which are brought in are second-hand vessels and are not fuel efficient. While retrofitting presents an alternative, there are no incentives to encourage retrofitting of vessels. Limited shipyard and docking capacity also deter vessel improvements. There is also a need to develop and retain skilled local capacity for retrofitting and shipbuilding. The presence of derelict vessels within Fiji's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) has been a longstanding concern as it is a hazard to navigation. A comprehensive approach involving the whole of government is necessary to ensure these vessels are appropriately scuttled.

Air Transport

Considerable progress has been made in terms of positioning Fiji as the hub of the South Pacific for global connectivity. The execution of bilateral Air Service Agreements (ASA) has facilitated the swift growth of Fiji's international air connectivity. With direct flights to the United States of America, Australia and New Zealand as well as key connection hubs like Singapore, Hong Kong, Vancouver and Japan, Fiji enjoys accessible entry points to these countries.

Major investments have been focused on facilities that service international flights like the Nadi International Airport. Smaller airport facilities like the Nausori Airport and outer island

airports do not present a viable business case and are therefore operated and maintained for the socioeconomic benefits resulting from air connectivity. There is however a significant opportunity to expand the reach and socioeconomic benefits of tourism to outer islands. To harness this potential, a stronger focus is needed on the development of key aviation infrastructure such as airstrips, runways, and navigational aids. Connectivity with the rest of the world can be improved to emerging markets for direct destination access by Fiji's national airline. New routes also offer the opportunity to reduce travel times.

Goals, Policies, Strategies

Goal: An integrated, eco-friendly, safe, accessible and efficient transportation system	
Policies	Strategies
Ensure adequate maintenance of infrastructure assets	<p><u>Land Transport</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review current model of contracting for road maintenance to achieve cost savings for construction, maintenance and upgrading of existing infrastructure. <p><u>Maritime Transport</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider relocation where necessary or separation of vessel handling operations by vessel type. Continue investment in outer island jetties and bridges programmes. Undertake timely maintenance and replacement of all Aids to Navigation (ATONs) such as lighthouses, mooring buoys and beacons. Maintain and rehabilitate existing Ports and wharves. <p><u>Air Transport</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrade and maintain rural airstrips and airport runways and associated infrastructure. Upscale education and training to ensure adequate skilled resources for maintaining infrastructure. <p><u>Overarching or Intermodal Strategies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen investment in preventive and routine maintenance. Explore options for enhancing climate resilience in existing infrastructure such as replacing low level crossings with bridges and road realignment.
Improve access to safe, efficient, affordable, and environmentally sustainable transportation services and infrastructure	<p><u>Land Transport</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide incentives to encourage replacement of aged vehicles and vessel fleet. Promote the use of public transport and investment in convenient, safe, and connected walking and cycling infrastructure. Assess the effectiveness of Fiji Decade of Action for Road Safety (2011-2020) National Action Plan and consider the need to put in place a Road Safety Strategy and Plan of Action. Reconvene the National Road Safety Council to coordinate national efforts to address road safety. Strengthen enforcement to curb drunk driving and speeding. Review fees and levies to discourage poor driver behaviour. Establish a Transport Master Plan for Fiji.

Policies	Strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake an assessment of Fiji's current transport infrastructure and public transport fleet with the aim of improving access for persons with disabilities. Review policies and introduce initiatives to encourage gender balance in the transport sector. Empower the Land Transport Authority through a comprehensive digitization strategy that leverages technologies and data-driven solutions to enhance operational efficiency, improve service delivery, foster sustainable transportation practices, and elevate the overall mobility experience. <p>Maritime Transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reconvene the National IMO Member State Audit Scheme (IMSAS) Committee. Consider the implementation of virtual Aids to Navigation (ATONS). Convene the National Oil Spill Committee to develop and implement comprehensive strategies for prevention, response and mitigating the impacts of oil spills within Fiji's jurisdiction. Establish a Glofouling National Taskforce to minimise the spread of invasive species through the shipping industry. Develop a Marine Insurance Policy to provide financial protection against losses or damages to vessels, cargo, and related liabilities during maritime activities in Fiji waters. Establish the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) Regional Presence Office (RPO) in Fiji. Implement the Long-Range Identification and Tracking (LRIT) in Fiji. Undertake the removal of Derelict Vessels in Fiji. Support development of competent maritime infrastructure and workforce to realise the aspiration of Fiji as the Regional Maritime Hub. Develop and implement a policy on maximum age of ships and other pre-requisites to guide the purchase and importation of new ships to service Fiji's maritime zones. <p>Air Transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake assessment of Fiji's air access infrastructure, current routes, and pricing, with the aim of providing access and improving affordability. Negotiate bilateral open skies agreements in strategic markets. <p>Overarching or Intermodal Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a computerised trauma database. Maintain appropriate levels of safety through the enforcement of regulations and standards, improvements in safety infrastructure and awareness and education programme.

Policies	Strategies
Reduce reliance on imported fossil fuels and gradually decarbonise the transport sector	<p>Land Transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accelerate investments in electric vehicle charging infrastructure through public and development partner finance. Develop Battery Recycling Programme. Support the Electric Bus Pilot Project on selected routes for demonstration of proof of concept. Develop a Vehicle Recycling/Disposal Programme. Review current standards around vehicle safety and emissions with the aim of transitioning towards sustainable mobility. Develop a Vehicle Scrappage Policy. <p>Maritime Transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-fleet Government vessels to be energy efficient. Monitor the Government Shipping Franchise Scheme (GSFS) 15-year contract agreements and ensure the transition to energy efficiency. <p>Air Transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider re-fleeting domestic aircrafts with more efficient aircrafts. Purchase fuel-efficient aircrafts. <p>Overarching or Intermodal Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate the removal of fossil fuel subsidies. Develop a national Decarbonisation Strategy for Fiji. Undertake national awareness and public education programmes on sustainable transport and fuel-efficient vehicles. Explore viable options for the introduction of hydrogen fuel and biofuel.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
International Roughness Index (IRI) Extend (km)	12	9	8
New jetties (number)	21	6	11
New airstrips (number)	17	2	6
Final energy consumption by the transport sector (% reduction)	NA	1	1
Retrofitting of existing Government vessels to be energy efficient vessels (numbers)	0	6	6
Electric vehicles within Government fleet (number)	0	30	30
Electric vehicle charging infrastructure (number)	0	3	3
Travel time during peak hours for busy corridors (% reduction)	NA	10	10
Fatalities on roads (number)	72	54	36

7.2: Energy and Electricity

‘A resilient, resource-efficient, cost-effective, accessible, reliable, and environmentally sustainable energy sector’

Introduction

Fiji's journey towards a sustainable and resilient energy future is inspired by a strong commitment to meet the immediate development needs of the people while serving the broader environmental and economic objectives of the country. The Energy Fiji Limited (EFL) holds the sole mandate for the planning, generation, transmission, distribution, and sale of electricity in the country. Previously known as the Fiji Electricity Authority, EFL was originally established in 1966 under the provisions of the Electricity Act 1966 and is currently independently regulated by the Fijian Competition and Consumer Commission (FCCC). The Department of Energy (DOE) is the Government's arm for policy, technical and implementation support on access to electricity.

Global and Regional Obligations

Fiji is committed to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG7, which relates to universal access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy.

Current Status

Currently, around 98% of the population have access to electricity. Tariff rates in Fiji are one of the lowest in the region at \$0.34cents per unit. For households with a combined income of less than \$30,000 per annum, tariff rate is \$0.1634 cents per unit for the first 100 units consumed as a result of Government subsidy. In 2022, there were 55,798 beneficiaries of the subsidy scheme.

In 2022, EFL produced more than half of its energy from renewables, 55.3% from hydro power, 0.01% from wind power and 6.59% from Independent Power Producers (IPPs). EFL has a mission to meet 90% of energy requirements through renewable energy sources by 2025. Its ability to achieve this will depend on the successful execution of a number of projects in the medium term.

In 2022, EFL reviewed its 10-year Power Development Plan (PDP) which provides a roadmap for the development of key infrastructure to meet the forecast electricity demand. It is estimated that a total capital investment of around \$4.2 billion will be required for the development of these key infrastructure over the next 10 years. Following the Paris Agreement in 2015, Fiji developed a National Climate Change Policy, a Low Emissions Development Strategy and a National Energy Policy, outlining the national target and goals towards a sustainable energy future. In 2021, Fiji reaffirmed its target of reducing emissions in the energy sector by 30% in 2030 and achieving net zero emissions by 2050. Currently, the Government is also spearheading the review of the National Building Code which mandates that all new buildings achieve a 30% energy reduction target and proposes various techniques for achieving this through building design.

To address the electricity needs of the population that is not connected to the EFL grid and isolated in rural and outer islands, the Government launched the Fiji Rural Electrification Fund (FREF). With the successful implementation of Phase 1 and Phase 2 in 8 sites across Fiji, plans for the development of Phase 3 are already in place through a partnership with the US Trade and Development Agency for the facilitation of feasibility assessments in 75 sites. Similarly, the Government through DOE, runs the Grid Extension Programme which aims to support the connection of households to the central electricity grid. This programme has benefited close to 13,000 customers between 2014 and 2022. The Government has also reached geographically dispersed communities through the Solar Home Systems programme benefitting nearly 10,000 households.

Challenges and Opportunities

Despite the progress in renewable energy generation, Fiji's energy sector is still highly reliant on imported fossil fuels for electricity generation and the transport sector, making it susceptible to global price fluctuations and compromising its energy security. There is a need for the

Government, private sector and broader development community to accelerate investments into renewable energy projects. Power rationing is still a practice in certain areas of the country with instances of regular power supply disruptions. The effective delivery of certain services is also affected by the disruption in power supply. The affordability of solar home systems by average households remains a challenge. Certain villages have EFL power lines running within their vicinity and yet, do not have adequate access to electricity. An estimated 28% of the population do not have access to clean cooking. However, this will be addressed through the Government's Rocket Wood Stove initiative.

Private investment in renewable energy remains low. In 2022, there were only 3 major IPP's contributing 73,471 units to EFL's overall generation capacity through biomass generation. One of the key constraints to private sector involvement in the energy sector has been the lack of a conducive regulation and framework.

Fiji's energy sector faces the threat of an ageing energy infrastructure, and this is exacerbated by the impacts of climate change and natural disasters. Aged infrastructure also makes it difficult to integrate new, sustainable energy technologies into Fiji's electricity grid. The energy sector also faces a shortage of skilled workers. In 2022, EFL lost 54 technical employees to skilled labour migration necessitating EPL to explore prudent succession plans to sustain its workforce.

Goals, Policies and Strategies

Goal: A resilient, resource-efficient, cost-effective, accessible, reliable, and environmentally sustainable energy sector	
Policies	Strategies
Improve access to affordable, reliable, modern and sustainable energy services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure consistent and affordable power supply in all urban centres from renewable energy sources and facilitating Independent Power Producers. • Review regulations, subsidies and tariffs for off-grid areas through Fijian Consumer and Competition Commission. • Formulate an Electrification Master Plan to map out locations for achieving 100% electrification, by either new grid connections or standalone solutions (single supply or mini- grids) using renewable energy.
Increase private sector participation in the energy sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a supportive regulatory framework that encourages Public-Private Partnerships. • Review Electricity Act 2017 to ensure a conducive energy sector that fosters private sector participation. • Review IPP prices and provide necessary incentives. • Explore the potential demand for a premium green energy tariff.
Increase the proportion of renewable energy in Fiji's energy composition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance fiscal and financial incentives for renewable energy power generation and the use of renewable energy technology in end-use sectors such as transport, building and manufacturing. • Develop renewable energy standards. • Support the implementation of priorities outlined in the National Energy Policy (2023-2030) for scaling up renewable electricity production.
Upgrade electricity infrastructure network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess existing electricity infrastructure, identify weaknesses, inefficiencies, and areas for improvement for target upgrades. • Develop a detailed investment pipeline, priority projects and required funding.

Policies	Strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake planning for upgrade of grid infrastructure for smart grid and EV charging stations. Construct new transmission lines to improve system reliability and provide redundancy. Develop infrastructure standards for off grid systems.
Enhance energy efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand coverage of existing minimum performance standards to the majority of imported electrical products and equipment. Provide incentives for compliance with energy efficiency requirements in the National Building Code.
Boost training and retention of skilled energy sector human resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the reintroduction and increase of apprenticeship schemes. Establish a training centre for renewable energy through existing higher education institutions. Provide more scholarships for energy related courses.
Improve resilience of energy infrastructure to the impacts of climate change and natural disasters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake the audit of energy infrastructure to assess vulnerability and exposure of infrastructure to climate risks. Expand off-grid and distributed systems (solar home systems) for rural and maritime areas. Develop and implement- insurance protection for critical infrastructure. Access and mobilise public and private green and climate finance to implement climate change resilience in the energy sector including underground transmission lines. Install additional circuits for transmission and distribution networks to keep N-1 conditions. Install additional transformers for substations to keep N-1 conditions. Strengthen the protection and resilience of current and future energy infrastructure from the potential impacts of disasters and climate change. Promote sustainable renewable energy. Promote peak savings and tariffs at peak and non-peak hours.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
Population having access to electricity (%)	98	99	100
Customers connected to the central electricity grid (number)	214,628	Increased	Increased
Population without access to clean cooking % reduction)	28	25	23
Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) signed annually (number)	NA	3	5

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
Renewable energy share in electricity generation (%)	60	90	100
Implementation of the Fiji Rural Electrification Fund	1	Complete Phase 2	Begin Phase 3
Solar home systems installed (units)	15,000	17,000	19,000
New Hydro-Power schemes (number)	5	1	2
Review of the National Building Code to ensure a 30% energy reduction target in all new buildings	NA	Completed	Completed
Electrical products and equipment under Minimum Energy Performance Standards Labelling (MEPSL) (number)	NA	15	30



7.3: Water and Wastewater

‘Ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation’

Introduction

The water sector plays an important role in sustainable development, contributing to poverty reduction, food security, economic growth and the wellbeing of Fijians. Harnessing sustainable supply of water and ensuring access to adequate wastewater services requires concerted effort by the Government, private sector and the people. Approximately 82% of the population, that is 98% of the urban population and 58% of the rural population, have access to water supply with some form of treatment together and 28% of the overall population have access to the central sewerage system. However, the quality of access to water and wastewater services needs to be enhanced, particularly in the rural areas and to address intermittent water supply in many areas across the country. The challenge lies in ensuring that all Fijians have safe, affordable, sustainable and consistent water and wastewater services while conserving Fiji's biodiversity.

Global and Regional Commitments

The UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 relates to water and sanitation. It aims to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. Water and sanitation are also linked to several other SDGs and are recognised as critical to people and the planet. Significant progress has been made for Target 6.2 on access to sanitation and hygiene and Target 6.a on the level of international cooperation on water and sanitation. However, more progress is required to achieve Targets 6.4, 6.6, and 6.b, which are related to water use efficiency, water-related ecosystems and participatory water and sanitation respectively. The 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent also draws attention to inadequate access to safe drinking water and sanitation.

Current Status

There is a broad legislative framework that sets out the water sector policies. The Rivers and Streams Act 1880 and Irrigation Act 1973 focus on protecting, conserving and utilising water resources while the Environment Management Act 2005 ensures that the development and operations of water sector infrastructure are carried out in an environmentally sustainable manner. Additionally, the Water Authority of Fiji (WAF) Act 2007 requires WAF to perform functions such as harvesting, treating, and distribution of water. The Rural Water and Sanitation Policy provides guidance for the development of water and sewerage projects in the rural areas. Additionally, the National Liquid Trade Waste Policy guides the provision of efficient and effective management systems for liquid trade waste discharged from industrial and commercial entities.

The Department of Water and Sewerage (DWS) is currently developing a number of policies related to the water sector, including the National Water Resource Management and Sanitation Policy, Water and Sewerage Services Bill and the Fiji Integrated Water Resources Management Plan. These policies aim to provide a broader unified approach for the management of water resources and provision of water and wastewater services.

WAF has made major capital investment in the maintenance of water sources and catchments, upgrading of water treatment plants and wastewater treatment plants, upgrading distribution systems, water carting to intermittent water supply areas, rural water projects, and solving non-revenue water issues. Other agencies related to the implementation of water projects include the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources and the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management.

WAF also operates 11 wastewater treatment plants across the country with other decentralised wastewater treatment plants operated by the private sector. Although there is high demand for sewerage connection for urban, peri-urban and parts of the rural areas, the current wastewater treatment plants are operating beyond their design capacity. Most of the wastewater treatment plants do not meet the environment compliance levels. The National Infrastructure Investment Plan allocates a minimum of \$0.8 billion for the next five years for water and wastewater infrastructure renewal and climate resilience of its assets.

Challenges and Opportunities

Expanding access to water and wastewater services to all Fijians requires progressive institutional reforms on existing governance and planning of water and wastewater services. While existing policies are intended to effectively coordinate water sector activities around the country, there lies an opportunity for Government to improve data sharing and public private partnership to allow synergy in project planning and implementation given Fiji's vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters.

Evidently, the demand for water is merely driven by an increase in population but also the establishment of industries such as those in tourism and manufacturing industries which heavily rely on water supply, thus placing pressure on water sources and water catchments. Given the aged infrastructures and vulnerability of assets to climate change and natural disasters, water woes around the country continue to be a major issue for Fiji with pressing concerns on the maintenance and upgrade of aged infrastructure and high levels of water leakages leading to non-revenue water (NRW) level of 48%. The acquisition of essential NRW equipment and performance-based contracts currently being established will assist in identifying leakages and undertake maintenance when required.

A major challenge identified nationwide is the lack of access to adequate levels of water supply in the rural and outer islands. Given the geographical locations, rural communities are often hindered by limited fresh water sources coupled with the high cost of infrastructure including to design, build and operate water projects. Existing rural water projects also have issues relating to the quality and quantity of water distributed to the rural communities.

The water sector has been heavily dependent on Government financing over the years, part of which is attributed to WAF's inability to achieve full corporatisation since its establishment. To achieve financial viability for WAF, institutional governance restructures such as a viable tariff structure and trade waste charges need to be undertaken. There is also a need for the Government to explore new financial and contract modalities such as the Private Public Partnership model for new projects as well as improve existing water and wastewater infrastructure to be climate resilient.

Goal, Policies and Strategies

Goal: Ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation	
Policies	Strategies
Strengthen water sector planning and sustainable water resource management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalise and implement National Water Resource Management and Sanitation Policy. • Finalise and implement Integrated Water Resource Management Plan. • Finalise and implement the Water and Sewerage Services Bill. • Strengthen coordination roles, responsibilities, management and data sharing among various stakeholders, including WAF, DWS and the Department of Waterways. • Corporatise WAF. • Review WAF tariff structure. • Impose Trade Waste Charges. • Implement National Groundwater Resources Development and Management Policy. • Review the Rural Water and Sanitation Policy. • Formulate Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Master Plan.

Policies	Strategies
Expand access to ensure equity in the provision of water and sanitation services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review existing policies, regulations, standards, incentives, legislation and processes governing the provision of water and wastewater services. Amend Public Health Act 1935 and National Building Codes to cater for installation of a basic rainwater harvesting system and be made compulsory for car wash businesses. Finalise wastewater master plans and allow for flexibility of connection where appropriate. Implement existing major programmes under WAF and other agencies including rural water programmes and the distribution of water tanks and free water programmes for low-income households. Promote NRW programmes. Implement full automation of reservoir level monitoring, pump controls, and valve controls. Promote Ecological Purification System in communities and other low cost and user- friendly treatment technologies in communities. Acquire and manage desalination plants dedicated to supply water to islands where there is no viable source of freshwater. Rationalise environmental legislations surrounding sewage discharge standards to balance affordability in compliance with short-term and long-term environmental and health effects with concentration on trade waste monitoring. Implement necessary strategies to migrate from the use of individual septic tanks to standardised treatment systems. Construct regional centralised sewerage plants with larger treatment capacities and efficient technologies. Conduct Feasibility study for the establishment of a waste management authority. Strengthen institutional framework and enhance capacity in supplying basic sanitation facilities.
Ensure long-term sustainability in the provision of freshwater resources and catchment security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and develop new sustainable water sources. Develop water catchment management plans to ensure the protection of Fiji's sustainable freshwater resources. Implement adaptation measures to protect freshwater aquifers from saltwater intrusion. Conduct community awareness programmes on the efficient management and conservation of water resources. Collaborate with research institutions to develop renewable energy mechanics for water treatment plants and desalination technologies. Implement Water Sector Strategy 2050. Implement National Infrastructure Investment Plan.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
Access to clean and safe water in adequate quantities (% of total population)	83	86	88
Access to clean and safe water in adequate quantities (% of urban population)	99	100	100
Access to clean and safe water in adequate quantities (% of rural population)	58	63	67
Access to central sewerage system (% of total population)	28	29	30
Access to central sewerage system (% of urban population)	28	29	30



7.4: Solid Waste Management

'A sustainable waste management system for a healthy and clean environment'

Introduction

Fiji is dealing with significant challenges related to waste management, contributed by increasing economic activity, changing consumption activity, and urbanisation. Only 0.2% of waste was recycled in 2021. In urban areas, rapid urbanisation has been accompanied by a growing number of informal settlements, which have inadequate sanitation services and poor waste management practices.

The waste management system requires reforms to address the potential negative impacts on environment, health, food sources and crucial sectors such as tourism and agriculture. The lack of proper waste management mechanisms could lead to improper disposal methods. There is a need to strengthen legislation focusing on sustainability and introduce penalties for breaches as well as adopt appropriate technology, implement incentives for proper waste management systems, create awareness, and improve collaboration among stakeholders.

Global and Regional Commitments

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1, 6, 12, 13, and 14 reiterate the need to ensure a clean and safe environment for the communities, which is not limited to the land environment but also the marine ecosystem as well as responsible consumption and production. The change in consumption and production patterns in Fiji has resulted in increasing volumes of both solid and liquid waste associated with pollution.

The 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent emphasises the vision for a resilient Pacific region, leading to free, healthy and productive lives. It also reflects on the damaging impacts of climate change and disasters together with the effect on the ocean and natural environment. Moreover, the Framework for Nature Conservation and Protected Areas also guides planning, prioritisation and implementation alongside the Cleaner Pacific 2025 which is the region's framework to address waste and pollution.

Current Status

The main Government agencies that oversee waste management are the Department of Environment under the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, and the Ministry of Local Government. Fiji's thirteen cities and towns rely on municipal councils for waste collection as mandated by the Local Government Act 1972. The Department of Environment is responsible among others, for licensing of landfill operators, recycling, and sorting of waste at source. The Department of Environment has been engaged in public awareness and advocacy efforts through various media platforms and community outreach programmes. In addition, the Local Government Review/Reforms Committee's recommendation for shared services between municipalities, is crucial for extending waste management services to rural communities.

The Department of Environment has established a Waste Pollution Control Unit which monitors related activities and is guided by the National Waste Management Strategy. A 7R Policy of Waste Management was also launched by the Department of Environment in 2022. The Permits and Compliance Enforcement Systems has been outlined in the Environment Management (Waste Disposal and Recycling) Regulations 2007. The Public Health Act 2018 further stipulates the expansion of garbage collection to rural communities and delegated areas.

Challenges and Opportunities

The inadequacy of infrastructure, rapid urbanisation, financing constraints and regulatory framework exacerbate the issues related to solid waste management. The challenge encountered in the management of solid waste in Fiji is related to a growing population and limited landfills. Aside from the Naboro Landfill, constructed in 2005, waste management infrastructure is grossly inadequate. The Naboro Landfill has managed over 1.29 million tonnes of waste but other municipalities use unsanitary and open dumpsites. These sites are dangerously situated near sensitive ecosystems and pose significant health and environmental risks.

Increasing waste production is a concern, as the current landfills and dumpsites will not be able to cater for the increase in waste produced. The dumpsites used by the Municipal Councils to dispose waste in the Western and Northern Divisions are not feasible and sustainable. The Western Division is home to a third of Fiji's population and receives majority of tourists is serviced by four open dumpsites. Another challenge faced by the Councils is illegal dumping.

The disposal of medical waste is another major concern as the improper disposal of medical waste exposes the environment and surrounding people to serious health threats. At present, medical waste is also disposed at the Naboro Landfill. Medical waste includes amputated body parts, syringes, medical gloves and personal protective equipment.

The lack of garbage collection fleet, inadequate landfills, transfer stations, sorting stations and increased informal settlements are factors affecting solid waste management. The lack of coordinated garbage services for the rural communities' results in improper disposal methods. However, legislative changes were implemented in 2018 mandating the 13 municipalities to extend waste management services to residents in the rural and maritime areas.

It is imperative to have a robust regulatory framework to enforce sorting of waste at source, establish recycle hubs and implement effective waste management strategies. Penalties for legislative breaches are essential deterrents to ensure compliance.

To enhance waste management mechanisms, it is vital to encourage private sector involvement and incentivise communities to engage in recycling projects. In this context, the Government aims to implement measures outlined in the national waste management policies and enforce environmental regulation effectively.

Goal, Policies and Strategies

Goal: A sustainable waste management system for a healthy and clean environment	
Policies	Strategies
Protect environment from degradation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance community advocacy and stakeholder engagement on environmental risks and challenges. Introduce recycling programmes in schools, tertiary institutes, private sector and informal settlements. Enhance monitoring and compliance capacity, and institutional machinery. Promote research and development on waste management. Introduce fiscal incentives to incentivise environment friendly solid waste disposal. Enhance public and private partnership investment opportunities with recycling companies for greener and more environmentally friendly technologies. Incentivise potential investors to invest in large-scale disposal technologies. Increase frequency and coverage of waste collection. Upgrade infrastructure facilities for health-care waste management and waste disposal sites. Implement projects that promote the circular economy approach. Promote community composting programmes. Promote waste separation at source.

Policies	Strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish landfill in the Western Division with waste sorting centres. Improve management of residuals. Recover resources from wastes, plastics, chemicals and pollutants. Establish incinerators at hospitals. Improve protection and monitoring of receiving environment. Mobilise resources for waste management and pollution control.
Strengthen regulations and policies surrounding waste management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formulate policies and procedures on waste management including biomedical waste. Review and implement institutional arrangements and infrastructure for waste management and pollution control across the country. Review and streamline waste management and pollution control legislative framework. Develop and implement national and local management plans for waste and pollution. Review and strengthen the enforcement of environmental policies, legislations and regulations relating to waste management and pollution control.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
Waste disposal through collection and disposal by municipal councils (tonnage)	182,053	250,000	350,000
Recycling plants (number)	0	1 (Western Division)	1 (Northern Division)
Landfills (number)	1	1 (Western Division)	1 (Northern Division)
Compliance with single-use plastic bag ban of less than 50 microns (%)	NA	100	NA

7.5: Environment and Climate Change

‘Establishing sustainable and integrated approach against climate change and ensuring long-term environment resilience’

Introduction

Fiji, a small island developing state, exemplifies the stark reality of the climate crisis, where countries with minimal contributions to global greenhouse gas emissions disproportionately face severe climate change impacts. Fiji's geographical location and topography make it susceptible to the effects of climate variability, particularly those influenced by the El Niño-Southern Oscillation, the South Pacific Convergence Zone, and south-easterly trade winds. Cyclones and floods during El Niño years, and droughts associated with La Niña phases, though part of Fiji's historical climatic pattern, are now further exacerbated by the broader impacts of global climate change. Fiji's strategic response to climate change is underpinned by a comprehensive suite of policies and legislations, reflecting its commitment to address the myriad challenges posed by climate change.

Fiji places high importance on safeguarding its pristine natural environment. The Government's approach to environmental management is to create wealth, and ensure an all-encompassing approach which involves everyone, adapts over time, and which is crucial in tackling poverty, improving standard of living, enhancing resilience and addressing various environmental challenges. The Environment Management Act (EMA) 2005 and its requisite Regulations, though comprehensive, there are growing concerns regarding their effective implementation, specifically in terms of enforcing and ensuring compliance.

Global and Regional Commitments

Fiji is committed to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as reflected by the alignment of its policies and strategies related to addressing climate change and protecting the environment particularly SDG 7 on affordable and clean energy, SDG 11 on sustainable cities and communities, SDG 13 on climate action, SDG 14 on life below water and SDG 15 life on land. Fiji is also committed to fulfilling its obligations under the United Nations Climate Change Conference. Additionally, Fiji is an active participant of other climate and environment related initiatives in the Pacific and for small island developing states such as the BOE Declaration for Regional Security, 2018 by the Pacific Islands Forum, the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific and the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

Current Status

Fiji's commitment to sustainability and resilience is outlined in its National Goals on Climate. These goals are primarily framed within the context of the overarching Climate Change Act (CCA) of 2021, which serves as the cornerstone of Fiji's climate change legislation, complemented by the National Climate Change Policy (NCCP) 2018-2030. The CCA establishes a legally binding framework to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change impacts. It specifies enforceable targets, deadlines, and mechanisms for monitoring and reporting, ensuring that Fiji's climate commitments are measurable and accountable. The NCCP complements the CCA by providing a detailed roadmap for achieving these targets and outlines strategies for renewable energy transition. Further, building on Fiji's strategic climate commitments are the Low Emission Development Strategy (LEDS), Fiji's National Adaptation Plan (NAP), and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

In 2016, Fiji faced significant climate change challenges, exemplified by the severe tropical cyclone Winston. The Fiji's Meteorological Services Office forecasts an increase in the frequency of extreme weather events. Fiji recorded its fourth warmest average mean air temperature in 2021, with the last decade being the warmest on record. Since 1959, the country has experienced a consistent rise in mean, maximum, and minimum air temperatures by 0.9°C, 1.0°C, and 0.9°C, respectively. Rainfall in 2021 was 126% of the long-term average, indicative of the significant year-to-year variability often associated with El Niño and La Niña events. Satellite data from 1992 to 2021 showed a sea-level rise of 3-4mm per year around Fiji. The 2023 National Inventory Report reveals a rising trend in national greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions across all sectors with the energy sector being the largest contributor, accounting for 52.7%.

In terms of climate finance strategies, the country successfully issued a sovereign green bond in October 2017, raising \$100 million for climate projects, and through the Environmental and Climate Adaptation Levy, raised over \$392 million between August 2017 and December 2019.

Challenges and Opportunities

Fiji faces a myriad of challenges in adapting to climate change and protecting the environment, yet also possesses considerable opportunities to enhance its resilience through strategic climate resilient and green infrastructure development and integrating natural systems into urban planning and development.

Finance poses the biggest challenge in implementing measures to strengthen climate resilience such as climate-proofing existing and new infrastructure, building sea walls, elevated roads and reinforced coastal defences, and upgrading drainage and water management systems. Transitioning to renewable energy sources also entails significant costs in developing solar, wind, and hydroelectric power capabilities. The nation also confronts a shortage of expertise in sustainable design, construction, and environmental management. This shortfall often leads to reliance on short-term international experts, which is costly and may result in less contextually appropriate solutions.

Addressing data and research gaps is crucial. Comprehensive data collection and in-depth research are essential for understanding the full scope of climate change impacts and the effectiveness of various adaptation and mitigation strategies. Fiji currently faces challenges in gathering sufficient high-quality data, particularly in forecasting long-term climate patterns and assessing local environmental impacts.

Increasing trend in national GHG emissions, especially from the energy sector, highlights the urgency for enhanced mitigation measures. Furthermore, Fiji's National Inventory System is not formally institutionalised. However, the adoption of the CCA, aims to formally establish governance structures and procedures for the measurement, reporting, and verification of emissions and emissions deductions, including sector-based data collection.

There is also the need for robust infrastructure planning, sustainable sectoral development and active community involvement in climate resilience initiatives to improve natural hazard vulnerability and integrate climate adaptation and mitigation into national development.

Strengthening Fiji's institutional frameworks and policy coordination for climate change action remains a challenge. CCA and NCCP mark significant strides, however the EMA 2005 requires updates to address the intensifying environmental challenges posed by rapid climate change and developmental pressures. The EMA needs revisions to strengthen biodiversity conservation, enforce more stringent habitat protection, and enhance sustainable resource management and pollution control. There is also a need to develop environmental indicators which are distinct from Fiji's context to assess the status of environmental protection and conservation.

Goal, Policies and Strategies

Goal: Establishing Sustainable and Integrated Approach Against Climate Change and Ensuring Long-Term Environment Resilience	
Policies	Strategies
Institutionalise and enhance accountability for climate risk management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Form a private sector advisory board to facilitate public-private partnerships and improve knowledge exchange between sectors. Review and optimise donor engagement and coordination arrangements to increase efficiency, complementarity, and leverage co-benefits. Involve local and sub-national government in the design and coordination of local resilience-building initiatives.

Policies	Strategies
Accelerate resilient development objectives through the use of national standards of compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the National Building Codes to increase alignment with mitigation and adaptation objectives and clarify and sensitise distinctions and legal requirements to suit rural, outer island, and urban contexts. Use Environmental Impact Assessment methods and procedures as well as safeguard policies for land-use planning. Introduce National Waste Management standards and regulations to reduce stressors on the environment. Use standards and codes of practice as required to accelerate the objectives set out within national and international policies and plans.
Improve national capacity for strategic foresight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out a multidisciplinary national risk foresight exercise to explore key national risks. Use risk scenarios and innovative foresight tools to inform and support national prioritisation process, policy development and climate finance.
Operationalise the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM) for Loss and Damage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake regional actions to ensure that international agreements and frameworks account for the impacts of climate change, disaster events, and internal and international displacement on culture, social cohesion, human rights, tradition, livelihoods and equality. Enable and formalise international investment in the minimisation of loss and damage through innovative financing instruments. Use international support to establish regional and nationally based funding mechanisms that support national planned relocation priorities.
Drive regional and global action to reduce stressors on the marine environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use national, regional, and international platforms to create and promote initiatives to reduce marine pollutants and plastics and enhance blue carbon sinks and reservoirs. Establish appropriate and standardised methods for blue carbon valuation. Invest in research to identify opportunities to advance the sustainability of the region's blue economies.
Integrate the consideration of climate change projections, articulation of risk reduction responsibilities, and formulation of resilience-building objectives across all sector plans and strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use integrated national risk scenarios, climate projections, and foresight tools to translate global and regional trends and risks into national and localised policy implications. Integrate climate risk considerations and risk mitigation responses into all sector plans. Improve collaboration between ministerial portfolios and sectors in recognition of interlinked dependencies and the need to coordinate planning and budgeting.

Policies	Strategies
Increase ecosystem protection, natural resource redundancy, and environmental resilience through nature-based solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement and formalise methods for assessing and quantifying co-benefits of adaptation and mitigation from environmental conservation, aligning impact assessment methods with climate adaptation, disaster risk, and greenhouse gas mitigation goals. Enhance marine and terrestrial ecosystem management through policy and regulatory measures, increase protection of key natural areas, and support informed environmental resource management.
Implement climate change adaptation solutions which are inclusive, equitable, and locally driven	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a demand-driven approach to adaptation, reducing reliance on government and empowering communities to proactively respond to risks. Ensure stakeholders adhere to a consistent set of social and environmental safeguards in designing, evaluating, and implementing adaptation investments. Design sustainable and resilient infrastructure and adaptation investments with the flexibility to accommodate changing risk parameters.
Integrate climate adaptation and disaster risk management priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and integrate disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation priorities, addressing both fast and slow onset hazard events and long-term climate impacts. Co-deliver planned relocation initiatives by DRR and CCA leads and strengthen integrated early warning systems for slow onset risk reduction. Define build back better strategies in line with climate and disaster risk priorities, and develop cost-effective, and sustainable risk finance.
Preserve and enhance Fiji's natural carbon sinks and carbon reservoirs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance environmental protection of natural carbon reservoirs and sinks through an inter-governmental approach, aligned with actions under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement. Revise land-use planning regulations and environmental policies in accordance with LEDS and NAP guidance. Protect and enhance forests, wetlands, and mangroves through afforestation, regeneration programmes, and protection incentives to achieve no net loss by 2030.
Improve data availability and analytical capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a secure and sustainable national data repository with improved connectivity through inter-government information sharing. Secure relevant national and international data sharing agreements to enhance data access while protecting national data sovereignty. Invest in data collection technology and human resources to bolster analytical capabilities for evidence-based decision-making. Upgrade and expand Fiji's network of meteorological and hydrological stations to enhance capacity to produce downscaled climate information.

Policies	Strategies
Invest strategically in human and technological capacity-building for climate-resilient development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance national curriculums and learning platforms to provide relevant disciplines and skills including at universities for a climate-ready workforce. Improve civil service knowledge management for better cross-sector communication and capacity development and align civil servants' job descriptions with climate resilience requirements. Foster inter-regional and bilateral knowledge exchanges and partnerships with academic and research institutions, and access research and development funds to advance climate resilience and innovation.
Increase the use and availability of domestically derived climate finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that climate finance is accessed and implemented at the local level. Enhance the role of the Fiji Development Bank in increasing domestic and regional access to finance climate adaptation and mitigation efforts.
Leverage internationally derived climate-finance for transformative outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a National Climate Finance Strategy and Framework and institutionalise governance, accounting, and transparency frameworks. Streamline Government coordination and prioritisation processes to scale up transformative initiatives and create a dedicated fund to support Fiji's planned relocation needs.
Improve and amend public financial management systems in response to changing public service delivery requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use Climate-responsive budgeting and coding systems to support the tracking of implementation effectiveness. Use robust public asset management systems and centralised registry databases to improve the maintenance and tracking of national assets. Develop robust and appropriate accounting requirements for private sector and non-government agencies to support the feasibility of multi-stakeholder implementation arrangements.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
Sustainable Financing for National Climate Risk Management (% increase)	NA	30	50
National Capacity for Strategic Foresight (%)	NA	100 Government sectors completed	Long-term risk scenarios outcomes embedded in 90% of national policies
Accountability for Climate Risk Management (%)	NA	Climate change focal points in 75% of Government sectors	30 local government-led resilience projects

7.6: National Disaster Risk Reduction

‘Building resilience through risk informed socioeconomic development’

Introduction

Fiji, among the Pacific Small Island Development States (PSIDS), stands out as one of the world's most vulnerable nations to the impacts of climate change and disasters. The increased frequency of extreme weather events, including cyclones, floods, and droughts, poses significant challenges to Fiji's infrastructure, economic development, and societal well-being. In light of these circumstances, the implementation of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) strategies is crucial for Fiji to enhance resilience and mitigate the adverse effects of climate change.

Fiji is presently engaged in a comprehensive review and update of its regulatory framework, aiming to bring about substantial changes in emergency management and disaster risk reduction. The endorsement of the National Disaster Risk Reduction Policy (NDRRP) in August 2019 marked a significant milestone, aligning Fiji with Target E of the Sendai Framework. Furthermore, the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) is spearheading the ongoing review of the National Disaster Management Act 1998 and National Disaster Plan 1995.

Global and Regional Commitments

Fiji is committed to the UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), Target 11.5 related to reducing the adverse effects of natural disasters. It is also committed to the BOE Declaration for Regional Security adopted in 2018 and the subsequent BOE Declaration Action Plan in 2019 by the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) leaders as well as the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific (FRDP). Fiji NDMO plays a pivotal role as the co-chair for the inaugural Pacific Regional Technical Working Group (TWG) on Risk Governance for Resilient Development within the Pacific Resilience Partnership (PRP). In addition, Fiji endorses the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent which exemplifies the commitment to supporting Disaster Risk Management (DRM) efforts in the South Pacific.

Current Status

Fiji employs several strategies to bolster DRR approaches, focusing on specific areas to enhance resilience and mitigate the impacts of disasters and climate change. These key initiatives include strengthening the resilience of infrastructure by incorporating risk assessment in the planning process and the review of building codes which includes addressing climate change and disaster challenges. There are also initiatives to enhance early warning systems where Fiji is developing a people-centred Multi-Hazard Early Warning System to further strengthen its capabilities. Empowering communities is central to Fiji's approach, involving the development of evacuation plans and the provision of emergency supplies. The creation of Community-Based Disaster Management (CBDRM) committees ensures widespread community involvement in disaster preparedness and response.

Disaster response capacity has been bolstered through the provision of equipment, training, and resources for emergency responders, including police, firefighters, and medical personnel. In addition, Fiji actively promotes ecosystem-based approaches to reduce the impact of extreme weather events including the restoration of mangroves, coral reefs, and coastal ecosystems, creating natural barriers to storm surges and flooding while supporting biodiversity and sustainable development. Fiji has conducted a comprehensive national disaster risk assessment, offering a baseline understanding of the country's risk profile to support informed decision-making.

Challenges and Opportunities

Fiji is highly vulnerable to natural disasters and extreme weather conditions. TC Winston in 2016 was an exceptionally powerful Category 5 cyclone causing extensive damage and devastation. It affected more than 540,000 people, constituting 60% of Fiji's total population and had an economic impact amounting to \$2 billion. The cost of disaster response and rehabilitation is very high. Ensuring adequate financial resources for DRR is a major challenge. To reduce Fiji's vulnerability to climate change, the country would need to invest an estimated \$9.3 billion (US\$4.5 billion) over the next 10 years in measures such as strengthening cities,

improving infrastructure, agriculture, and fisheries.

Capacity and capability are also a challenge. While the knowledge and experience of government officials at the national level in DRR is improving, there is a strong need to strengthen the capacity of officials at the sub-national and local level. The capacity and capability of other stakeholder particularly private contractors and operators who participate in flood control and rehabilitation measures also needs to be improved.

Early warning systems also need to be further strengthened due to limited monitoring capacity, insufficient tsunami tide gauge locations, and delays in disseminating warnings. Creating early warning systems and catastrophe management requires more open data and shared systems controlled by capable technology partners. Additionally, there is a need to boost broadband connectivity and fight false information when it comes to disasters. Fiji is in the process of tagging investments for climate change, and there is a need to extend this methodology to disaster risk reduction. An accurate assessment of current levels of pre-disaster investment will help identify underfunded sectors and develop a strategy for targeted interventions and funding.

International cooperation is crucial for small countries like Fiji to implement DRR measures. Fiji has received bilateral support and various forms of cooperation from regional and international organisations. However, DRR requires a large amount of funding, and international support in terms of funding has not been sufficient. For instance, the Green Climate Fund (GCF) is available for climate change adaptation, but it is not easily accessible due to the complex and time-consuming procedures.

Goal, Policies and Strategies

Goal: Building resilience through risk Informed socioeconomic development	
Policies	Strategies
Strengthen the integration of climate and disaster risk in development planning and coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review existing policies, plans and processes governing the development work on climate change and disaster risk reduction. Develop a joint action plan for DRR and climate change. Strengthen the coordination role of the Climate Change Office and the National Disaster Management Office. Promote the integration of disaster risk reduction and climate change risk management efforts to ensure a coherent and synergised approach.
Enhance investment for climate and disaster resilience building efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a Disaster Risk Financing Policy as a blueprint for disaster risk financing priorities and mechanisms. Scale up innovative financial solutions to deal with climate and disaster impacts such as parametric insurance, bonds and other risk transfer instruments. Strengthen financial preparedness for natural disasters. Establish contingency funds or reserves to be used in the immediate aftermath of a disaster and ensure that these are accessible and sufficient to cover initial response and recovery costs.
Strengthen multi-hazard early warning systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct thorough risk assessments to identify and understand various hazards, including cyclones, floods, tsunamis, earthquakes and other potential threats. Consider the vulnerability and exposure of communities and critical infrastructure. Prioritise a people centred approach ensuring that warnings are tailored to the needs of different communities, including vulnerable and marginalised groups.

Policies	Strategies
Strengthen multi-hazard early warning systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish efficient and reliable communication pathways for the timely dissemination of warnings to the public. Develop protocols for issuing warnings and ensure that information reaches all relevant authorities and communities effectively. Empower local communities to take an active role in early warning systems through the establishment of community-based monitoring and response mechanisms. Develop and implement evacuation plans and drills in collaboration with local communities.
Establish resilient multipurpose evacuation centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choose evacuation centre locations that are at a safe distance from potential hazards such as flood-prone areas, coastlines, or susceptible to landslides. Ensure accessibility for all community members, including persons with disability (PWD). Construct or retrofit buildings to meet high structural standards, making them resistant to the specific hazards faced by the region. Design evacuation centres to serve multiple purposes during non-disaster times, such as community centres, schools, or sports facilities. Preposition essential supplies in advance, including food, water, medical kits, blankets, and hygiene items. Implement security measures to ensure the safety and well-being of evacuees. Establish partnerships with businesses, NGOs, and government agencies to enhance support and resource availability. Coordinate evacuation centre plans with communities.
Mainstreaming disaster risk reduction planning and implementation at the local level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop disaster risk reduction plans for the four divisions. Review and incorporate disaster risk reduction strategies into sectoral plans. Develop a community-based disaster risk management policy.
Strengthen disaster risk informed decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a disaster risk information system. Develop and adhere to legal and ethical frameworks governing data privacy, security and sharing. Establish protocols for responsible and ethical use of data in disaster risk management at the community level. Leverage cutting edge technology including GIS remote sensing and data visualisation tools to enhance the systems capabilities.

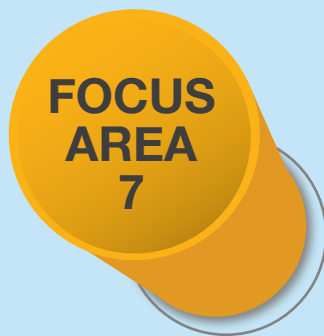
Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
Multi Hazard Early Warning System for Fiji (%)	NA	50	100
Joint National Action Plan for Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction (%)	NA	50	100
Multipurpose evacuation centres (number)	NA	4	4
DRR Divisional Plan developed (number)	NA	2	4
Disaster Risk Finance Policy (%)	NA	50	100

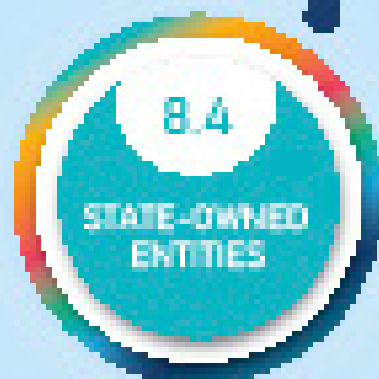
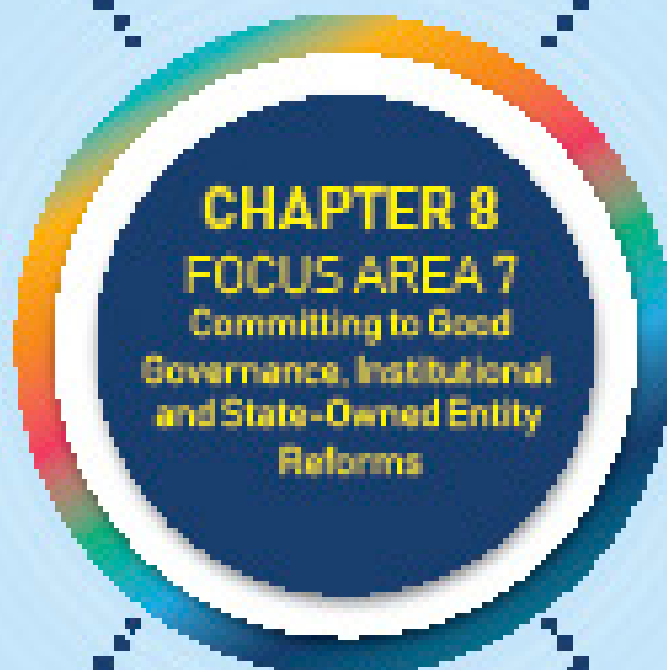


Pillar 3

Good Governance



Committing to Good
Governance, Institutional
and State-Owned Entity
Reforms



8.1: Rule of Law and Justice

‘Ensure the safety, security and wellbeing of Fiji and all Fijians’

Introduction

Adhering to good governance warrants a strong commitment to upholding rule of law and respect for independent institutional arrangements. In pursuing economic transformation, the manifestation of law and order is a necessary condition to facilitate interaction and economic activity. An efficient administration of the rule of law and an independent judiciary is critical in ensuring sustained social and economic progress. Through the provision of rule of law and justice, the government ensures an environment in which people are safe and secure, can be heard, decision making is fair, transparent and considers protection of fundamental human rights for all.

Global and Regional Commitments

The Government's objective is to continue improving the law-and-justice sector by providing a safe and secure environment, participative and responsive Government and access to efficient, high-quality justice, consistent with UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Government also aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. Fiji will also continue implementation of its National Security Strategy and support for UN Peacekeeping operations and it is anticipated that the findings of the National Security and Defence Review team will complement the work on Fiji's foreign policy pillars of sovereignty, security and prosperity.

To strengthen its cybercrime response efforts, Fiji has been collaborating closely with the UN, development partners, leading technology firms, and the Council of Europe. These partnerships aim to secure capacity building support, enabling Fiji to enhance its capabilities in dealing with cybercrime effectively.

Current Status

The Fiji Police Force (FPF) is responsible for maintaining law and order in Fiji by employing best practices in police work and using modern technologies and innovative strategies to prevent criminal activity. To improve its services, the FPF Force embarked on a five-year Reform and Restructure Programme in 2018 to increase staff establishment and construction of new police stations which saw the construction of three major police stations in Nadi, Lautoka and Nakasi. The First Hour Procedure requires the police to provide every suspect with legal aid assistance within the first hour of arrest and to inform all suspects of their constitutional rights.

The judiciary has made significant progress towards digital innovation through the transformation of its new e-filing and electronic case management system. The system will save time and reduce costs and ensure that the Judiciary is underpinned by a fair, just and efficient legal system. The construction of new courts in Nasinu and Ba also strengthens citizens' access to the legal system. The Legal Aid Commission (LAC) serves as a mechanism to improve access to justice for people who cannot afford private legal representation. However, the proportion of unsentenced detainees in the overall prison population has increased, indicating bottlenecks in bringing cases to court and a growing number of remand detainees awaiting judgement. The LAC has expanded its services in all Magistrates Court locations, throughout the country, with 18 offices in 2017 to 27 offices in 2023. Additionally, LAC received a total of 17,477 applications in 2022, compared to 13,725 in 2021; thus, increased by 21.4%. The Commission in 2023 is looking at 14,396 active cases.

Fiji also adheres to international best practices by following the United Nations Principles and Guidelines on Access to Legal Aid in Criminal Justice Systems, which provides legal aid as a foundational right for access to justice and should be accessible, sustainable, affordable, credible and accountable.

The Office of the Attorney-General plays a crucial role in upholding the rule of law and ensuring justice within Fiji's legal system. As the chief legal advisor to the Government, the Attorney-General is responsible for providing legal counsel on a wide range of issues, ensuring that the Government's actions are in accordance with the law. Additionally, the Office of the Attorney-General represents the State in legal matters and defends the interests of the public. This ensures that laws are enforced fairly and consistently, maintaining public trust in the legal system and protecting the rights and freedom of individuals. By promoting transparency, accountability, and adherence to legal standards, the Office of the Attorney-General is instrumental in safeguarding the principles of justice and the rule of law, particularly through the review and drafting of laws and the provision of advisory opinions. The re-establishment of the Fiji Law Reform Commission will ensure regular review of existing laws and recommend necessary reforms to ensure that the legal framework remains relevant, fair and effective, and aligned with constitutional and international legal standards. This involves identifying outdated or ineffective laws, addressing legal gaps, and proposing new laws that reflect societal values and needs. Legislative drafting involves translating policy decisions and legal principles into clear, precise and enforceable laws. The capacity of the Office of the Attorney-General's legislative drafting division will need to be strengthened to bolster its critical role in drafting of laws.

Challenges and Opportunities

The key focus of rule of law and justice is to ensure peace and stability with a focus on transforming capabilities and capacities within Government, to be able to mitigate and respond to evolving and emerging threats and ensuring compatibility with international standards. One of the challenges within this arena are the outdated laws and legislations which need to be amended or changed to address the changing economic, social and political situation. Immigration laws and regulations will be reviewed with an improved efficiency of service delivery and strengthened border enforcement and policy frameworks. Also, the Government has re-established the Fiji Law Reform Commission (FLRC) to review all the laws applicable and identify areas that need reforms and modernisation.

The judiciary includes a variety of different courts and tribunals such as the 4 levels of criminal and civil courts and tribunals. Some of the challenges are the amount of time taken to issue decisions and the use of paper-based court processes. The Fiji Court of Appeal remains a part time court, that is, it does not sit all year round despite an increasing backlog of cases. Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) options such as private arbitration and mediation, which could relieve pressure on the court system, have been poorly taken up by litigants and lawyers alike.

The FPF faces challenges of repeated accusations of Police violence. However, it is focusing on making improvements with assistance from international partners. For example, it has adopted a Use of Force Policy where any form of force through officer involvement, or that established from the community for torture, death, violence or trafficking relative to women and children has a compulsory reporting requirement.

Drug related cases have increased significantly. They were related to unlawful possession of illicit drugs, unlawful cultivation of illicit drugs, and unlawful transfer and supply of illicit drugs. The number of drug cases in schools has also seen an increase. Although the police have proactively taken measures to address the issue, there is a need to increase awareness and introduce a more comprehensive strategy to tackle the issue of illicit drugs.

The capacity of the judicial system and the Fiji Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Commission has grown but not at the required pace to handle the increasing number of court cases and human rights matters brought forward by the people. More efforts are needed to raise awareness among the people, especially in rural and maritime areas, about Fiji's laws. It is crucial to ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision making at all levels and improve the representation of different segments of society including people of all sex and age and persons with disabilities in national and local institutions such as the Legislature, public service, and judiciary.

Corruption is also one of the emerging challenges. There is inadequate focus on prioritising anti-corruption measures, lack of awareness, prevalence of weak institutions with minimal emphasis on anti-corruption and lack of commitment to enhance the autonomy of public institutions. In reducing corruption, it is imperative to strengthen institutions responsible for upholding the rule of law, justice and transparency. Strengthening the legal framework and ensuring its effective implementation is also vital, as they create deterrence against corrupt practices and establish a culture of accountability. There is a need to increase the role of the security industry to contribute to peace and stability besides protecting business, and for this purpose, there is a need to review the Security Industry Act 2010. Fiji's protective security framework which is currently being piloted with the Republic of Fiji Military Force and the FPF can also be used to safeguard institutions and this framework can be implemented across Government and private sector.

Goal, Policies and Strategies

Goal: Ensure the safety, security and wellbeing of Fiji and all Fijians	
Policies	Strategies
Strengthen regulatory and legal framework and collaboration within law-and-order agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the 2013 Constitution of the Republic of Fiji. • Promote rule of law at regional and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all. • Review all legislation on all law enforcement agencies to ensure transparency and efficiency. • Ensure separation and independence of the three arms of Government – the Legislature, Executive and the Judiciary. • Strengthening the capacity and expertise within the Office of the Attorney-General, including its legislative drafting division, the Law Reform Commission and the Fiji Intellectual Property Office. • Remove unfair discrimination and curtail arbitrary abuse of wide discretionary application of laws. • Insert safeguards against abuse of discretionary powers and remove provisions that prohibit judicial review of administrative discretionary powers bestowed to Ministers and public officers.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review all constitutional procedures and seek amendment to ensure independence of crucial institutions such as the judicial commissions, Fijian Elections Office, the Reserve Bank of Fiji and other fiduciary institutions. • Implement the Fiji Protective Security Framework to safeguard institutions. • Strengthen coordination among security and rehabilitation agencies. • Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements Allocate adequate human resource needs within institutions.

Policies	Strategies
Strengthen national security and improve regional and global collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the Republic of Fiji Military Forces Act 1949. • Strengthen Fiji's involvement in international peacekeeping and security. • Enhance regional and international cooperation to help strengthen relations with national security partners and allies. • Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation by building capacity at all levels, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime. • Safeguard national borders and Exclusive Economic Zones. • Strengthening maritime surveillance systems and patrols to eliminate illegal fishing and human trafficking. • Strengthen border controls to minimise entry of illegal drug through sea.
Invest in infrastructure and technology development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade court facilities and infrastructure and expand legal services to improve citizen's access to justice. • Continue digitisation of laws. • Review systems and processes to expedite the adjudication of cases in court. • Conduct regular court sittings in rural and outer islands.
Ensure a judicial system that is accessible, efficient, effective and transparent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure an independent and impartial judicial system. • Enhance court management and leadership. • Streamline and simplify court proceedings and processes. • Provide affordable and accessible court services. • Support and encourage Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms such as arbitration and mediation. • Recruit experienced and independent prosecutors, judges and magistrates to minimise backlog of cases. • Widen the recruitment of judges to countries such as Australia, New Zealand and UK to uprate the judicial benches. • Improve staff capacity for judiciary and corrections services.

Policies	Strategies
Strengthen equal and easy access to justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and expand access to legal aid services to rural and outer island communities. Increase awareness programmes by engaging schools, community leaders, and the public at large on law-and-order issues. Allocate adequate resources to remote, rural and maritime areas to enable Fijians to access legal services.
Ensure robust and effective Policing System to combat crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of Police Act 1965. Provide adequate funding for Police resourcing including adequate manpower, vehicles in both urban and rural areas. Increase police visibility and police patrolling. Strengthen community-based policing including awareness on illicit drugs. Foster professionalism, confidence in and accountability of the FPF, with an open and transparent Police Standards Authority within the FPF to discipline Police brutality, extra-judicial violence, and prevent corruption. Enhance intelligence driven crime prevention and investigation enforcement agencies. Collaborate with bilateral partners on transnational crime. Strengthen the capability and capacity of Police to tackle cybercrime and emerging transnational crime. Developing tactical and strategic approaches to combat the emergence of organised criminal networks, including illicit trade in strategic goods and adherence to UN Security Council Resolution 1540, is crucial. This involves implementing measures to address issues like drug trafficking and illegal arms trade effectively. Formulate and implement the Fiji Police Service Plan and Master Plan to improve infrastructure and use of technology to improve policing. Improve police response to gender-based crimes by establishing green room initiatives for gender-based violence in all policing districts. Strengthen collaboration with community and faith-based organisations on awareness and education towards fighting crime. Review the Security Industry Act 2010.
Strengthen Prevention and awareness of illicit drugs in Fiji	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish Drugs and Narcotics Bureau. Launch a national awareness campaign. Enhance enforcement and the legal framework to disrupt drug trade and hold those responsible to account. Collaborate with community and faith-based organisations to create awareness on drug abuse, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation. Enhance interagency cooperation, both domestically and internationally to effectively tackle drug trafficking networks.

Policies	Strategies
Strengthen Fiji Corrections Service to provide efficient and effective prison services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an efficient and cost-effective prisons services including rehabilitation to ensure systemic re-integration of deviants back into the society. • Improve infrastructure and design of prison facilities to be conducive to rehabilitation and security. • Develop incentives to reskill offenders to implement the process of social reintegration. • Modernise corrections facilities and train officers to meet the needs of post correction social reintegration of offenders. • Embed an Intelligence Framework for Fiji Correction Services. • Support and strengthen Fiji Corporation of Rehabilitative Enterprises.
Uphold the principles of human rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen National Human Rights Institutions and the protection of human rights. • Appoint a Responsibility to Protect (R2P) focal point. • Build trust and confidence in Fiji Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Commission as an independent institution. • Restore basic human rights to ensure that limitations of freedom are incident only to the extent that those limitations are reasonable and justifiable in a free and fair democratic society. • Undertake human rights and civil liberties education in all primary and secondary schools. • Promote the establishment of new Human Rights programmes at the local tertiary institutions. • Create awareness amongst the citizenry about the essence of freedom, democracy and human rights through public forums.
Reduce corruption and bribery in all forms while strengthening Fiji's anti-corruption effort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reaffirm Fiji's commitment in fulfilling the articles of the acceded United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC). • Leverage organisational performance of key anti-corruption agencies to maximise anti-corruption efforts. • Effectively contribute to good governance and affirming independence of core anti-corruption operations. • Implement new prospects of tackling corruption through diligent review of Fiji's legal framework and undertake necessary steps to enhance its applicability. • Foster greater collaboration and support to fight corruption including strengthening of inter-organisational and trans-border partnerships. • Develop credible public image of key anti-corruption agencies to bolster public support for all anti-corruption efforts.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
Overall Crime (% reduction)	NA	10	15
Police officer to population (ratio per 1,000 population)	NA	5	5
Detection rate (%)	NA	Above 70	Above 90
Successful Prosecution rate (%)	NA	90	90
Complaints Against Police (% reduction)	NA	20	50
Corruption Perception Index (PCI)	52	55	60
National Anti-Corruption Plan/Framework	NA	Developed	Implemented



8.2: State Administration and Parliament

‘Strengthen democracy through effective Parliament and State Institutions’

Introduction

The doctrine of separation of powers divides the institutions of government into three branches, namely the legislative, executive and judicial. This is clearly defined in the 2013 Constitution of the Republic of Fiji which lays out the role of the Parliament, the Executive and the judicial.

The Parliament makes and amends laws and the Executive puts laws into action. The Executive is made up of the President, Prime Minister and Ministers. The President is the Head of State and has the executive authority to act only on the advice of Cabinet or a Minister or of some other body or authority prescribed by the Constitution. The judiciary is the system of courts that interprets and applies laws. Judicial power and authority are exercised by the courts encompassing the Supreme Court, Court of Appeal, High Court, Magistrates Court, and other courts and tribunals that may be created by law. The courts are required to be independent of Parliament and the Executive.

Global and Regional Commitments

The Fijian Parliament has undertaken several initiatives to translate the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into national commitments based on national priorities. In 2019, the Fiji Group was established as an affiliate of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) which has been part of the larger Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) since 2004. The CWP is an initiative of the CPA to further the representation of women, enhance their participation and promote their issues in Commonwealth Parliaments. Gender mainstreaming has been part of the Parliamentary scrutiny process where MPs and committees are mandated through the Standing Orders to ensure that work includes gender-based analysis.

Current Status

The Parliament of Fiji has three fundamental functions, and they are, representation, legislative and oversight. The Parliament plays an important representative function in that it represents all the citizens through the elected representatives. It also passes laws that are important to improve welfare and enable society to work and prosper. Parliament provides oversight by holding the Government or the Executive to account.

The Standing Committees of Parliament are accessible to all and provides an opportunity for citizens to have their voice heard on important issues. The six standing committees are: Standing Committee on Economic Affairs; Standing Committee on Social Affairs; Standing Committee on Natural Resources; Standing Committee on Public Accounts; Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence; and Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights. The Public Account Committee (PAC) is established specifically to monitor how public money has been dealt with and accounted for. The PAC uses its powers to investigate issues and areas of concern raised in the Auditor-General's reports.

Standing Committees were able to continue their Parliamentary work amidst the second wave of the COVID-19 infections through virtual sittings and allowing citizens to present their submissions through live online hearings. The virtual hearings have been televised on the Walesi Parliament TV channel. The strengthening of Parliament's Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure and e- initiative has been complemented by investments in capacity-building for Members of Parliament and the secretariat staff. These initiatives have enabled the Parliament to operate unhindered.

There are also Select Committees which primarily focus on internal matters of Parliament. They are the Business Committee which determines the business to be considered by Parliament each sitting day; House Committee which considers the welfare and amenities for members; Privileges Committee which considers breaches of privilege that may be committed by any person; and Standing Orders Committee which reviews the Standing Orders and practices and procedures of Parliament.

The President is the Head of State, and the executive authority of the State is vested in the President. The President performs ceremonial functions and responsibilities as the Commander-in-Chief of Fiji Military Forces. His Excellency the President is also guided by the

Honours and Awards Act 1995 and other guidelines, which outline the roles and responsibilities of the College of Honour of which His Excellency is the Chancellor. As Chancellor of the Order of Fiji, the President awards deserving citizens and non-citizens in recognition of their services to Fiji and humanity at large. This is also related to the need to meet the Government's priority on service delivery and in cultivating a culture of appreciation in line with civil service reforms where effort and hard work are recognised and rewarded.

Challenges and Opportunities

State administration faces bureaucratic processes, lengthy procedures, and excessive paperwork in delivering public services. Streamlining administrative processes and reducing red tape is essential to strengthen the conduct and delivery of public services.

Corruption within state institutions can undermine public trust and hinders effective governance. Ensuring transparency, accountability, and addressing corruption is crucial. Holding Members of Parliament accountable for their actions and performance is critical. Trying to achieve diverse representation, among others in terms of gender, ethnicity, and marginalised groups remains a challenge. There is also a need to effectively prioritise and allocate limited financial resources to meet national objectives. Enhancing public service delivery to a level which can meet the expectations of the people is still a challenge given excessive legislative and regulatory processes, limited resources and lack of capacity and capability.

The Parliament has transformed to a great extent since Fiji's return to Parliamentary democracy in 2014. For the 2022 General Elections, the Electoral Commission approved the composition of Parliament of 55 seats, which was an increase of 4 seats from the 2018 General Elections. Continuous capacity building for Members of Parliament will be required for them to effectively represent the people and to contribute to Parliamentary systems and processes.

The Parliament engaged the United Nations Development Programme and the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) to mainstream the SDGs and conducting capacity building for Members of Parliament to strengthen their role of oversight of the Executive in the implementation of the SDGs.

The Office of the Auditor-General (OAG) serves public interest by providing Parliament with independent and impartial information regarding public sector accountability and performance. Strengthening the relationship between OAG, Parliament and Parliamentary committees will be key towards ensuring public sector accountability.

Additionally, promoting women representation in Parliament is essential to achieving greater gender balance. Further, leveraging technology, improving data management, and promoting greater citizen engagement can potentially improve the performance of State Administration and Parliament. Investment in training and skill development for state officials will be required to enhance their effectiveness, and empower local governments to make decisions for their communities for increased efficiency and effectiveness. Given the important role of Parliament in democratic governance, it is necessary to ensure that it responds to the changing needs of nation building and the people.

Goal, Policies and Strategies

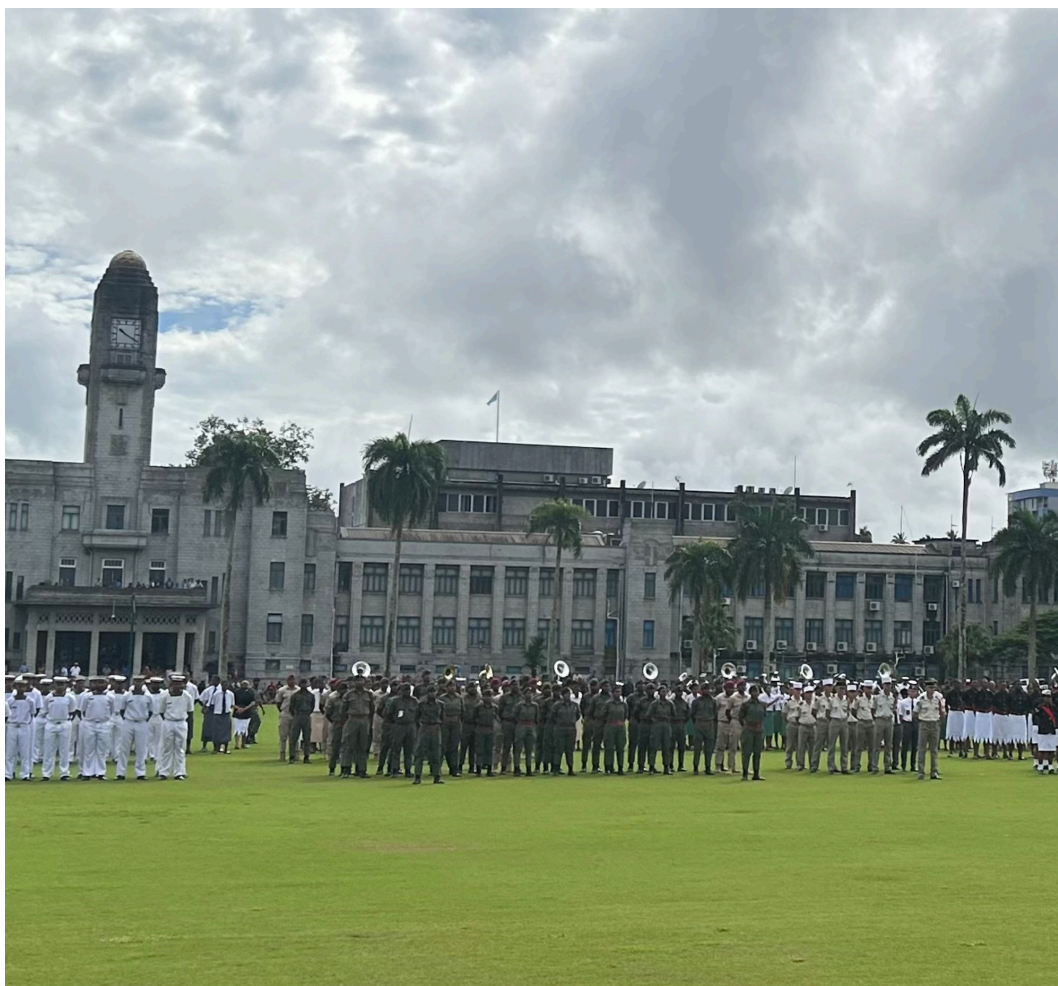
Goal: Strengthen democracy through effective Parliament and State Institutions	
Policies	Strategies
Strengthen Parliamentary processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure technology and infrastructure planning reflects the current and future needs of the Parliament, including secure access to digital information. Ensure the work of the Parliament is recorded, reported and accessible to the public. Support Parliament's engagement with the community and initiatives to help develop Parliamentary democracy using media, social media and collaborative relationships. Provide Members of Parliament with high quality support and resources.

Policies	Strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect the independence and integrity of Parliament. • Strengthen engagement with the people and enable them to participate in and contribute to Parliamentary democracy. • Develop the capabilities of the Parliament workforce. • Strengthen the Parliamentary committee system to increase accountability of executive agencies to Parliament. • Support a robust and effective Parliamentary and committee system, ensuring scrutiny of public programmes and policies through open and informed debates on issues of national interest. • Promote capacity building for Members of Parliament. • Re-establish the independent Parliamentary Counsel.
Strengthen core public sector agencies, systems and processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Audit Act 1969. • Strengthen the independence of the Office of the Auditor-General. • Review Statistics Act 1961. • Review subsidiary financial management regulations including procurement regulations, finance instructions and agency financial manuals. • Improve fiscal transparency in budget formulation, expenditure execution, procurement, monitoring and evaluation. • Strengthen internal audit and control in government agencies to ensure proper accountability. • Improve the appraisal and selection of capital projects to achieve socioeconomic outcomes with value for money. • Strengthen policy coordination across Government ministries and agencies through the Strategic Planning Office. • Implement monitoring and evaluation of National Development Plan 2025-2029 and Vision 2050.
Conduct free and fair elections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uphold the legal framework in delivering elections. • Review Electoral Act 2014, Electoral (Registration of Voters) Act 2012 and Political Parties Act 2013. • Improve efficiency in the delivery of elections in line with electoral best practices. • Foster greater stakeholder engagement and collaboration to increase voter participation. • Adopt innovative technological solutions to enhance the delivery of electoral services.

Policies	Strategies
Promote Constitutional and Ceremonial Roles of the President in economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate the President's Chancellor roles. Enhance the President's Ceremonial roles in the areas of foreign relations and upholding diplomacy. Encourage a wider spectrum of stakeholder consultation and collaboration to efficiently facilitate the President's social and economic obligations to the nation.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
Local government elections (number)	NA	Conducted	NA
2026 General Elections	Not Relevant	Conducted	NA



8.3: Civil Service Reforms

‘Develop a modern, high performing Civil Service that is responsive to Government priorities and efficient service delivery’

Introduction

The Civil Service is the largest employer with over 30,000 employees. It includes staff who serve in the ministries and government agencies and the wider public service, including the military, the police, teachers and health workers. Public Service is important for governance, delivery of public goods and services, policy making and implementation, management of public expenditure and institutional development.

The Government's salary and wage spending as a percentage of GDP between 1989 to fiscal year 2020-2021 ranged from 8% to 12%. For the fiscal year 2022-2023, salary and wage spending was 8.7% of GDP. The proportion of public sector wages and salaries to total public sector expenditure in Fiji has been relatively higher than other developed countries, which reflects the extensive role played by the state in national development.

Global and Regional Commitments

The civil service plays a key role in delivering Fiji's commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG 16 specifically calls for the building of effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels to design appropriate policies, operationalise strategies and deliver the whole range of SDGs and in particular those related to addressing poverty, hunger, education, gender equality, protection of children and the vulnerable, climate and infrastructure. Fiji is also a member of the International Civil Service Commission International, which promotes and maintains exemplary service to the United Nations common system.

Current Status

The Civil Service plays a pivotal role in terms of employment generation and provision of public goods and services. It adopts a people-centric approach and to improve the wellbeing of the people and drive national development.

The Government through the Ministry of Civil Service (MCS) will oversee the comprehensive reform programme. MCS collaborates closely with the Public Service Commission and adheres to guidelines set forth by the Civil Service Act. The Act covers Open Merit Recruitment and Selection, Discipline, Job Evaluation, Remuneration Setting, Performance Management: Evaluating and Training and Staff Development.

The Civil Service in the medium term will focus on building a dynamic, high performing, productive and citizen centric civil service. It will implement reforms to establish the civil service as a merit-based, efficient and responsible employer. Government will also focus on developing and facilitating innovative learning and development programmes to enhance the skills and capacity of civil servants, promoting and implementing systematic innovation and digitisation of processes and practices and improving good governance practices internally and with its stakeholders. It will implement best practice management policies that fully support the Permanent Secretary's devolved authority in the Constitution whilst maintaining consistency of policy across the civil service. It will also be more responsive to Government priorities and improve service delivery and provide high quality service to the public while strengthening public financial management and promoting greater transparency and accountability.

Challenges and Opportunities

The expenditure on an oversized civil service has an opportunity cost in terms of limiting resources which can be channelled for economic development and investing in critical sectors including health and other social programmes. On average, around 24-30% or \$0.7 billion - \$1.1 billion of annual expenditure is allocated to civil service salary and wages. As of April 2024, Fiji's public sector employed approximately 32,092 active civil servants. Therefore, there is a need to right size the public service to efficiently execute the role of the Government.

Another concern is the high rate of turnover in the public service. It has resulted in a shortage

of skilled workers within the public sector. Outward labour has left many Government departments severely understaffed. According to the Person to Post list analysis conducted for the whole of Government, approximately 15% of public sector positions remain vacant posing significant challenges to the effective functioning of Government institutions. The Reserve Bank of Fiji's job advertisements survey indicates consistent growth over several months, suggesting a robust demand for labour in the domestic market.

There is also the need to enhance public service delivery, streamline processes and expand online services including by quasi government agencies such as the Land Transport Authority and Fiji Revenue and Customs Service. In addition, currently, the delivery of most public services including the provision of social welfare benefits is centralised in Suva although the majority of recipients of these services are in the peri-urban and rural areas. Therefore, there is a need to decentralise more of the public services to improve outreach and improve ease of dealing with the Government.

Goal, Policies and Strategies

Goal: Develop a modern, high performing Civil Service that is responsive to Government priorities and efficient service delivery	
Policies	Strategies
Strengthen core Government systems and enhancing service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a dynamic, productive and citizen centric civil service. • Improve efficiency and effectiveness of public service. • Promote innovation in public service delivery. • Improve public service delivery including by the broader civil service agencies. • Decentralise essential public services particularly the provision of social welfare benefits. • Review Civil Service General orders with a view to improve working conditions. • Introduce measures to right size the public service.
Enhancing Civil Service performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review civil service remuneration and salary structure. • Develop an effective Performance Management System. • Review the Open Merit Recruitment System (OMRS). • Introduce incentives to attract and retain adequate numbers of qualified personnel to serve in difficult and risky work environments. • Rotate Government Officials in rural and outer islands (teachers, nurses, district officers and other government officials).
Address skill shortages in the Public Service and build capacity for whole of Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up Fiji Learning Institute for Public Service which will integrate capacity building for the broader civil service. • Develop leadership capabilities across civil service. • Incentivise continuous learning and development programmes through local and overseas training and scholarship programmes. • Strengthen and encourage more job attachments, apprentice and cadetship schemes in the public sector. • Develop and facilitate innovative learning and development programmes to enhance the skills and capacity of civil servants.

Policies	Strategies
Strengthen transparency and accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure prudent, accountable and transparent management of fiscal and human resources. • Reaffirm and strengthen accountability and transparency in the civil service. • Develop a robust and transparent decision-making process in appointments and promotions of civil servants. • Improve good governance practices internally and with stakeholders. • Improve coordination across the Civil Service to minimise bottlenecks and unnecessary bureaucracies. • Encourage collaboration between Unions and Civil Services to ensure harmony and goodwill on matters governing the welfare of workers in all sectors.
Ensuring modern systems for service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a whole of Government integrated Human Resource Management Information System. • Monitor staff establishment with the civil service through the establishment register. • Establish a fit for purpose staffing across individual Ministers. • Formulate an Online Civil Service Recruitment Portal. • Promote and implement systematic innovation and digitisation of processes and practices. • Review the current vehicle leasing arrangements. • Strengthen the role of the Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics to provide reliable, time and relevant statistics • Strengthen the capacity of the National Archives centre and support digital archiving to preserve Fiji's documentary heritage. • Strengthen Government's strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation capacity to support the implementation of the Fiji National Development Plan 2025-2029 and Vision 2050.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
Cost of maintaining total staff establishment (% of nominal GDP)	6	6	6
Civil servants (number)	25,400	25,000	25,000
Maintain a minimum vacancy within the service (%)	20	10	5

Chapter 8.4: State-Owned Entities

'High performing state-owned entities with enhanced accountability, transparency and governance and efficient services delivery'

Introduction

State-Owned Entities (SOEs) play a pivotal role in the Fijian economy given their vast asset base, contributions to GDP, employment generation and provision of public goods and services. The SOEs are guided by the Public Enterprises (PE) Act 2019 which consist of 13 entities as part of the Public Enterprises.

Government also recognises the importance of improving SOE performance. Some of these SOEs have a wide range of infrastructure to manage therefore the need to allow partnership with private sectors to be able to maximise existing resources to full potential and maximum service to the public. Government will prioritise stringent government control and rigid corporate culture and management style and at the same time focuses on policies to modernise processes, strengthen institutional capacity, and instil accountability and good governance.

Cross-cutting Priorities

The operations of the SOEs also have significant impact in accelerating the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SOEs, especially in developing countries, are not just expected to be financially profitable, but are also tasked to provide crucial public goods. The provision of clean water, electricity, and sanitation services in remote towns and villages, for example, might not be as financially profitable as they would be in big towns, but they are equally essential for both sets of populations.

In the Pacific, SOE portfolios share a similar outlook, including ports, airports, power and water utilities, communication service providers, shipping services, and postal services. Many SOEs are small and struggling and lack economies of scale and scope. Some examples of regional cooperation could be the development of a regional institute of directors to expand the pool of skilled Pacific Island SOE directors; sharing knowledge and experiences between similar SOEs in different countries such as airports and ports or water and power utilities; sharing sectoral data and benchmarking information; and sharing SOE monitoring practices, policies, and reporting templates.

Current Status

Government is committed to supporting improvements to legal, regulatory, and monitoring arrangements to strengthen SOEs overall performance. In the past 20 years, SOEs in Fiji have undergone significant reforms to improve efficiencies and service delivery, many of which were made possible with the assistance of Asian Development Bank (ADB) who has assisted tremendously in strengthening financial performance, governance, and compliance within SOEs.

Overall, SOE performance has been mixed. Total asset base of the SOE portfolio has grown significantly, from \$8.4 billion in 2019 to over \$9 billion in 2022 with entities in the infrastructure and transport sector (Airports Fiji Limited (AFL), Energy Fiji Limited (EFL), Fiji Ports Corporation Limited (FPCL) and Fiji Airways) having the largest asset base. Similar trends have been noted in consolidated SOE liabilities due to the increase in externally funded capital investments and borrowings during the pandemic. Government also received dividends from the SOEs. In 2022 a total of \$30.8 million in dividends from some SOE such as EFL (\$23.8 million), FPCL (\$5.5 million) and Amalgamated Telecom Holdings (\$1.5 million) were received.

The 2023 ADB Finding Balance reports on 19 active SOEs in which the government has major ownership. The contribution of the 19 SOEs to GDP stands at 3.7% over the 2010-2020 period, much lower than the estimated 16-20% gross fixed investment in the economy controlled by SOE. The average Return of Equity stands at 4% and Return of Asset at 2.1%. In general, increase in the growth in assets has not been matched by the performance. Government has embarked on partial divestment of shares in a number of SOEs to encourage private sector partnerships and improve efficiency and service delivery.

Challenges and Opportunities

Given that SOE has a significant asset base, the performance of the entities is crucial. Staggered performance in SOE slows economic growth and increases the costs of doing business for private companies that depend on their services. SOEs contribution to the country's economic growth could at times be slow, and the services provided are often high cost with low delivery standards and low productivity.

Additionally, the PE Act 2019 took years to review, however the Act only applies to only 13 SOEs, accounting for less than 20% of SOE assets controlled by the Government. The Act also contains gaps in specifying due dates for SOE account submissions to the responsible Minister and does not compel the tabling of these accounts in Parliament. Legal reforms could play an important role in further improving the effectiveness of the Act.

Certain SOEs in Fiji are a statutory monopoly (EFL and Water Authority of Fiji), their products are not subject to market competition and are not subject to market discipline. The lack of competition and frequent government bailouts during crises, lead to inefficient performance and poor public service delivery by some SOEs. This is also because SOEs have access to resources and degrees of protection that creates an uneven playing field and unfairly hinders competition.

The director selection process is critical to establishing effective boards. One of the greatest challenges in the SOE board nomination process is balancing the level of political involvement with the need to ensure that the board is commercially independent.

As the Government owns the SOE, it has a legitimate role in appointing directors. However, the selection of preferred candidates is best left to non-political agencies, such as the SOE ownership monitor, an independent selection committee, or a professional search firm reporting to the ownership monitor.

Partnerships with the private sector, through full or partial privatisation, supported by robust regulatory arrangements, are the most effective mechanisms for long-term improvement in state assets' productivity. Where full privatisation is not politically feasible nor the most suitable reform mechanism, partial privatisation (public listings, joint ventures, and public-private partnerships (PPPs)) can help to improve SOE performance. The most valuable contribution for the PPP is the efficiency gains expected in the services delivery as PPP allows large-scale government projects, such as roads, bridges, or hospitals, to be completed with private funding. These partnerships work well when private sector technology and innovation combine with public sector incentives to complete work on time and within budget.

Goal, Policies and Strategies

Goal: High Performing SOE with enhanced accountability, transparency and governance and efficient services delivery	
Policies	Strategies
Enhance the performance of SOEs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of SOEs through commercialisation. • Expand private sector involvement to improve the efficiency of service delivery across a range of sectors. • Incentivise innovation and technology adoption to boost productivity. • Improve quality, timely and reliable reporting of SOE performance. • Strengthen governance within SOEs to maximise efficiency and effectiveness. • Reduce government financial support on SOEs to operate as commercial businesses. • Undertake consultation with line ministries to explore the option of divestment or sale.

Policies	Strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage SOEs to utilise retained earnings to invest in their respective sectors in consultation with the Government. Develop a Corporate Governance Framework to further enforce the provisions outlined in the PE Act 2019 to safeguard and boost the interest of shareholders. Strengthen cooperation within other SOEs within the Pacific.
Strengthen PPP and SOE policies to support private sector development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Public Enterprises Act 2019 to ensure that it addresses the financial performance and service delivery. Formulate privatisation policy framework and implement privatisation programme for SOEs. Formulate PPP policy framework and develop and implement a programme for PPP projects. Increase private investment in SOEs. Encourage greater use of PPPs to improve SOEs efficiency and profitability.
Improve accountability, transparency and good governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the classification of the SOE. Identify next reform steps for each SOE. Appoint competent and autonomous management bodies to oversee SOEs day to day operations. Develop Monitoring Framework for SOEs. Strengthen SOE reporting through publishing of annual reports. Establish a committee for the development of a Corporate Governance Framework. Develop a Reform Pipeline which will identify Government departments, statutory bodies, reorganised entities and PE that will be prioritised to be reformed. Develop of a Guideline for Merit based Selection and appointment process for Board Directors. Ensure transparency and accountability mechanisms that encourage investor confidence.
Divest shares in government owned commercial entities to iTaukei investors and resource owners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Divest shares in EFL, Pacific Fishing Company (PAFCO) and AFL to iTaukei investors and resource owners.

Key Performance Indicators

Indicators	Baseline	3 Years (2025-2027)	5 Years (2025-2029)
Average Rate on Return on Assets (ROA) (%) – public enterprises	5.5	5	7
Rate on Return on Shareholder funds (%) – public enterprises	7	10	12
Shares sold to investors to modernise operations (number of Public Enterprises)	0	2	3
Women representation in SOE boards (%)	22	30	35
SOEs securing PPP investment (number)	0	1	2
Rate of Return on Equity (%) – public enterprises	NA	5	5
Divestment of shares in EFL, PAFCO and AFL to iTaukei investors and resource owners (%)	0	10	15





Introduction

The National Development Plan (NDP) is anchored on a results-oriented, transparent and accountable implementation, monitoring and evaluation (IME) framework. To facilitate execution and ensure that the NDP realises its objectives and development goals, a comprehensive IME mechanism will be established based on the whole of government approach and involving all other development stakeholders. It will also facilitate the assessment of progress and reporting of international commitments including under the UN Sustainable Development Goals and other conventions.

The IME mechanism will manage development outcomes by providing a clear and systematic framework to achieve better performance, minimise failures and introduce sufficient accountability. The IME process starts with accurately identifying desired development outputs and outcomes underpinning a policy that is enabled by a set of strategies, programmes and projects. It further involves regular gathering of data to assess progress towards the desired output and outcomes, reporting of the progress based on set timelines, and timely intervention to undertake corrective measures, where necessary.

The successful introduction and application of the mechanism will require a paradigm shift in work culture, change management, seamless coordination and collaboration among ministries, a commitment to shared responsibility at all levels of Government and willingness to conform by all relevant stakeholders. The IME mechanism will be part of the Planning Cycle.

The Planning Cycle



The IME framework will constitute several components:

- A. The monitoring process of the NDP policies, strategies and programmes;
- B. The setting up of an empowered Problem-Solving Team;
- C. The formulation of the NDP implementation book;
- D. The creation of a Ministry-level NDP implementation and monitoring team/division;
- E. The creation of a monitoring dashboard; and
- F. Public Reporting of Progress: Quarterly Public report and Annual Report Card.

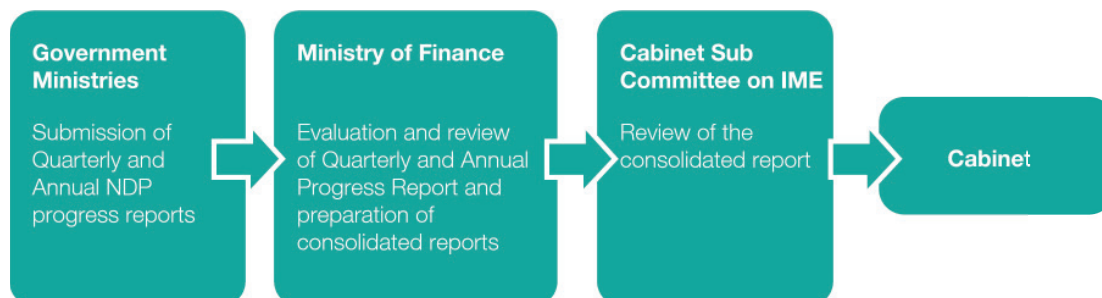
A. The Monitoring Process

All employment contracts of Permanent Secretaries will be aligned to the delivering policies and strategies outlined in the NDP. Each Ministry will develop their respective Strategic Plans, Annual Corporate Plans and articulate the Ministerial outputs to align with the NDP policies, strategies and outcome KPIs in the NDP.

In addition, Annual Reports, Audit Reports and Permanent Secretary Performance reports will be reviewed and evaluated periodically with a view to address challenges and to take corrective actions, as and when necessary.

A new monitoring process will be institutionalised to support efficient monitoring and evaluation.

Government Monitoring Process



Permanent Secretaries are required to submit quarterly and annual implementation progress reports, outlining the achievements and non-achievement of the NDP policies, strategies, programmes and KPIs including constraints faced and proposed solutions based on a standard template to the Ministry of Finance, Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics (MoF). The MoF will review and appraise and prepare a consolidated report on the implementation progress for the consideration of the Cabinet-Sub Committee on the IME. The Sub Committee will be chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister as chairperson, and its members will include the MoF and other relevant ministers and the Chairman of the Public Service Commission. The consolidated report with recommendations of the Sub Committee will be submitted to the Cabinet.

The annual National Budgets which will be based on the development priorities set out in the NDP will provide the financial resources to support the implementation. Review of legislations, regulations and processes as well as capacity building will be undertaken to facilitate and support the implementation of the NDP.

B. NDP Problem Solving Team

The NDP Problem Solving Team will be set up under the MoF. It will be lean and will constitute staff who have extensive implementation experience and mobilised from several Ministries for the duration of the Plan period. They will be empowered to work across Ministries and other implementation partners. The main objective of the Team is to address and solve implementation constraints and bottlenecks on the ground immediately which may be operational, administrative or otherwise to avoid delays or derailment in implementation of a particular programme or project. They can be called upon for assistance by the implementing Ministry at any time when there is an issue or bottleneck to be resolved.

C. NDP Implementation Book

The NDP Implementation Book (IB) will translate the policies and strategies in the NDP into programmes and projects for implementation by the respective Ministries and agencies of the NDP. The IB will provide the basis for monitoring and evaluation of the NDP policies, strategies, programmes and projects to ensure the implementation progress is in line with the set timelines and achieves the desired outputs and outcomes. The IB will be prepared by the respective implementing Ministries and signed off by the Permanent Secretary of Ministry. It will be endorsed by the NDP Secretariat at MoF. The contents of the IB template will include goal, policy, strategy, programme, project, actions, budget, outcome KPIs, operational KPIs with monthly, quarterly and yearly timelines and percent achievement, implementing ministry and risk assumptions. The submission for capital programmes and projects will follow the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) guidelines.

D. Ministry-level NDP implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Division

Each Ministry will set up a dedicated team or division to lead and coordinate the implementation, monitoring, evaluation and reporting of the NDP strategies, programmes and actions. This team/division will be responsible for implementing or coordinating the implementation of the NDP programmes and projects based on the IB of the Ministry.

This team will also undertake ex-post evaluation for selected projects which could be based on the value of the project or its criticality which is to be determined by the Ministry. Building capacity and capability of this team/division to implement and monitor programs and activities and do ex-post evaluation will be essential. For implementation and monitoring of programmes and projects on the ground, the ministries should work through the respective Divisional Commissioners, Provisional Administrators, District Advisory Councilors, and Turaga-ni-koros.

E. The NDP Monitoring Dashboard

The Monitoring Dashboard will be created by the MoF to monitor progress of the NDP policies, strategies, programmes and projects towards the achievement of desired development outcomes. The Dashboard will essentially reflect the contents of the IB. The dashboard will be digital and reporting by Ministries will be online based using the reporting template. The Dashboard will be able to analyse progress and performance of the NDP as well as create performance reports.

F. Public Reporting of Progress of NDP

Governed by the principle of transparency and accountability to all Fijians, there will be a Quarterly Publication of Performance of all the key policies and programmes of the NDP after presentation to the Cabinet. The report will be prepared and published by the MoF.

In addition, there will be a presentation of the NDP Annual Report Card which will report on the progress and performance of key policies and programmes. It will also include policy and strategic alignments and changes made during the period and that may be made during the next year. The report will be prepared and published by the MoF with inputs from the implementing ministries. The Annual Report card provides the avenue to make changes or alignments to policies, strategies, targets and programs as well as reprioritise in response to a change in circumstances due to unforeseen events as well as performance.

Conclusion

The NDP IME mechanism is intended to ensure that all policies, strategies, programmes and projects under the Plan are implemented effectively to achieve the desired development outcomes. It will provide the basis for greater transparency and accountability by the Government in bringing greater prosperity and uplifting the socioeconomic wellbeing of all Fijians. It also sets the stage for the whole of government approach in the formulation and implementation of the NDP.



Fiji Vision 2050: A Prosperous, Inclusive and Sustainable Nation

Introduction

Fiji Vision 2050 offers an opportunity to chart our own destiny - to determine what we want as a nation, how we see ourselves and where we want to be in 25 years. Without a vision, it will be business as usual, where inevitably most of our development efforts will be focused on responding to immediate needs and hoping that it will lead us somewhere better in the long run. The Vision is essential to shape our long-term development path to bring a better future for ourselves, our children, our grandchildren, and those who are yet to come through a generational change. The Vision becomes more important to stay focused and not lose sight of our development goals, amid increasing uncertainties in the global economy, unending geopolitical turbulence and other unpredictable shocks that will require short-term responses.

Fiji is a jewel of the Pacific with vast untapped potential. Its transformation journey towards 2050 will build upon its inherent strengths to break boundaries and reach new growth frontiers. Fiji's strength, among others, comes from its relatively small population of less than a million, which provides the ability to easily change and transform, to bring convergence in views and achieve consensus, and tackle and resolve national issues expeditiously. Fiji also has the potential to reap demographic dividend from its large young population (below 44 years), accounting for more than 50% of the population. Its strategic geographic location between the American continent and other countries in the Pacific, offers a natural advantage for Fiji to serve as a gateway and hub for investment, trade, finance and travel to the region. Its relatively better physical infrastructure, educational standard and medical services compared with its regional peers provides the head start to set in motion the process of transformation.

Fiji aspires to be a high income, inclusive and advanced nation bringing a better quality of life for all Fijians by 2050. This Vision reflects the aspiration of all Fijians - it is a convergence and commitment to a common zeal to transform Fiji by all Fijians coming from different ethnicities, gender, geographic location, physical and intellectual capability, and social and economic status. This Vision is a living document which will take on board dynamic global trends and technological advancements as it progresses, so that it remains relevant and achieves its aspiration. The Vision is deliberately presented at a high and broad level. It will be translated into action by policies, strategies, and programmes that will be presented in the short- and medium-term plans such as this National Development Plan that will dovetail the Vision.

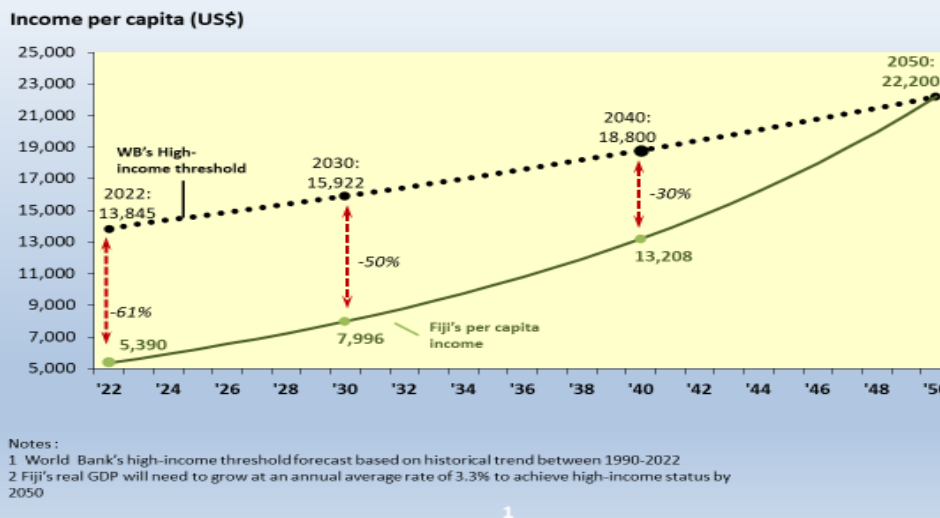
The fruition of this 25-year Vision for Fiji will squarely depend on the single-mindedness and commitment of all Fijians to work on the building blocks towards attaining the Vision. To make this journey, Fijians must dare to unlearn and relearn, abandon some traditional economic activities, pioneer into new areas, embrace new work processes, innovation and advanced technology, commit to governance and institutional reforms, and have zero tolerance for corruption. Most importantly, there must be a strong commitment to uphold democracy and maintain peace, security and stability.

Envisioning Fiji in 2050

A High-Income Economy that is Diversified, Vibrant, Resilient and Competitive

For Fiji to be a high income country by 2050, real GDP should grow at an average annual rate of 5-6% per annum between 2022 and 2050. GDP per capita would have quadrupled from US\$5,390 in 2022 to US\$22,200 in 2050 attaining the status of a high-income economy. This would be enabled by the progressive diversification of the economy, greater private sector investment, strengthening economic fundamentals, improving productivity and an increasingly vibrant export sector.

Fiji aspires to grow per capita income at 3.5% per annum on average to become a high-income nation by 2050



By 2050, Fiji will boast a more diversified, vibrant, resilient and competitive economy. While having a high value tourism sector, Fiji would have expanded its economic base into other high value-added services, niche high technology manufacturing activities and modern agriculture which are internationally competitive and export oriented. The services sector will be the main driver of growth followed by manufacturing and agriculture. Innovation and technology will strengthen economic growth and its sustainability. Fiji will emerge as a thriving trading nation in the region and beyond for its products and services. It will be part of the global supply chain and will have extensive global market outreach. Fiji will be a magnet for domestic and foreign investors supported by its irresistible investor-friendly ecosystem which will be ahead of the curve.

The private sector will be the main driver of economic growth complemented by higher levels of productivity. Fiji will have a strong Micro, Small, Medium Enterprises sector contributing at least 40% of GDP. Fiji will have several home-grown, high-growth multinational corporations (MNCs) and the owner of several leading global brands.

The Fiji economy will be one that is resilient, sustainable and has strong buffers to withstand shocks. It will be in a healthy fiscal position with a manageable level of debt, surplus balance of payments, strong savings, low inflation, stable exchange rate and strong external reserves.

Income disparities would have narrowed with all Fijians able to afford and enjoy a decent standard of living. While generating adequate well-paying employment opportunities for all Fijians, it will also attract back Fijians working abroad and foreign talent, changing the tide on outward migration.

Regional Leader in Innovation and Technology

Fiji would have emerged as a regional leader for innovation and advanced technology. It will be a high-tech nation having graduated from being an adopter of technology to being at the forefront of several cutting-edge innovation and technology particularly in areas related to climate change, disaster risk management, marine resource management and environmental conservation. Fiji would host several global centres of excellence attracting among the best researchers in the world in these areas.

All sectors of the economy and social aspects including financial, education, healthcare, housing, transport and public amenities would be reaping benefits of quality, efficiency and productivity improvements from the application of innovation and advanced technologies. While the economy would be benefiting from higher GDP growth, people's quality and way of life would have improved substantially.

A Dignified and Decent Quality of Life

By 2050, Fiji would have eliminated poverty in all its forms, that is, not only in terms of income but including having equal access to adequate social security, quality healthcare, housing, education, social services and digital connectivity. All Fijian households including in the rural and outer islands will have access to clean water, electricity, modern sanitation and broadband connectivity.

There will continue to be universal access to education from preschool to tertiary. Literacy rate will be close to 100%. Every Fijian who aspires and qualifies to go to an institution of higher learning will have the opportunity. Fiji will have an adequate number of well-equipped schools and reputable polytechnics, colleges and universities to meet demand. Fiji will have at least one university which will be in the league of the top 100 universities in the world. Fiji will be the education hub of the region attracting students from other Pacific countries and beyond. The proportion of the labour force with tertiary education would have reached at least 50%.

Fiji will have a substantially improved healthcare sector which is modern, high tech with highly trained medical personnel and specialists. The private sector will also play a key role in the provision of healthcare services. All Fijians irrespective of location will have access to quality healthcare facilities. This will be reflected, among others, in improvements in infant mortality rate, doctor to population ratio, life expectancy and incidence of NCDs which will be comparable to advanced country standards. While adequately meeting domestic demand for healthcare service, Fiji will have the capacity and capability to become a regional tertiary healthcare centre attracting patients from abroad.

Fiji would have strengthened its position in terms of food security and nutrition. Fiji will have a modern and high-tech agriculture sector which will be able to meet a major portion of its food and nutritional requirements. Fiji would have embarked on an efficient and large-scale commercial production of its basic food produce including livestock and fisheries, supported by measures to mitigate the impacts of climate change and severe weather conditions. Fiji will also have established sustainable and strong supply chain networks with external markets to complement its food requirements. It will have in place a sustainable food stockpile mechanism to ensure undisrupted food and nutrition sufficiency.

Fijians will have equitable access to quality, decent and climate-resilient housing both in the urban and rural areas. Adequate land would have been made available to expedite home construction through the participation of both public and private sectors to increase the supply of housing units with strata titles and other modalities. Increased availability of iTaukei land would complement land available for home construction. Informal settlements would have been upgraded with leases granted to those on Government and iTaukei land. There will be easier access to financing for home construction and purchase provided by both the Government and private sector. Following these initiatives home ownership would have increased to at least 80% in 2050.

Gender inequality and discrimination in all its forms would have been eliminated, supported by effective legislation and behavioural change. Women will have adequate space to make decisions at home and in society. Their decision on family planning, and sexual and reproductive health will be given priority. They will have improved access to quality lifecycle healthcare and other social support services. There will be zero tolerance for gender-based violence, and related laws, enforcement and the judicial system will be strengthened to adequately deter and severely punish violators expeditiously.

Women will enjoy equal access to education, employment and career advancement. They will be ensured equal opportunities in leadership and decision-making. Women labour force participation would have increased to 70%. Their representation in top management positions in the government and private sector, and in Parliament would at least be 30%.

In 2050, at least 70% of Fijians will be residing in urban areas. In tandem with this, new urban centres with modern and efficient infrastructure would have emerged. Fiji would also have developed several modern, vibrant, green, climate-resilient and smart cities including Suva, Nadi and Lautoka. These cities will be the growth poles of the nation, locating high value added and high-tech services and manufacturing activities supported by modern infrastructure and balanced with green spaces for recreation. At least one of the cities will be among the top 30 liveable cities in the world. These cities will be well-connected to satellite cities which will be developed to spur development in the rural areas.

The rural areas will be a continuum of the urban centres with good road networks and multiple transport modes. Rural Fijians will enjoy access to adequate clean water, electricity, sanitation and sewerage as well as digital infrastructure.

Modern and Efficient Infrastructure

In 2050, every Fijian household would have access to adequate clean and safe water following the development of several new dams, water treatment plants, reservoirs and rural water schemes. It will be coupled with comprehensive water conservation initiatives. The water infrastructure will be climate resilient resulting in minimal disruption in water supply.

Sanitation would also have improved significantly with at least 60% of the population having access to modern centralised sewerage systems including in the rural areas.

All households will have access to electricity including the rural and outer islands. The rural and outer islands will be electrified through renewable energy sources such as solar, mini hydro and wind systems. Fiji will also have the infrastructure to meet the energy demand of industry. At that time, all electricity generated will be climate resilient and from renewable energy sources including wind, solar, biomass, geothermal and tidal energy.

Fiji will have a well-developed and extensive transport network across regions within the country through the construction of good quality roads and highways, and the enhancement of maritime, air and rail services. This will include significant improvement to the inter-island sea transport network which is critical for Fijians residing in the maritime islands. These transport modes will be efficient, reliable, safe and affordable to all segments of society, and environment friendly. The time taken to travel between key destinations will have been reduced by at least half, contributing to higher productivity, stimulating economic activity and enhancing the quality of life of the people.

Fiji being most strategically located in the region would have established a wider network of air and maritime transport and logistics links. This would significantly expand Fiji's connectivity both directly as well as a transit point to most important destinations around the world. This would be enabled through the conclusion of bilateral air and maritime agreements between Fiji and the governments of other nations as well as the development of modern and high-tech seaports and airports, and the upgrading of existing ones to international standard. This would further spur the tourism sector, catalyse international trade, attract foreign investment and place Fiji prominently on the global map.

The whole of Fiji will be digitally connected to adequately serve the differing needs of individuals, education institutions, healthcare services, public service delivery, and support commerce and industry. Innovative ways will be deployed to connect rural and outer island communities. This will reduce the disparity in the quality of essential services between the urban and rural areas. Every Fijian will be able to enjoy high quality of education, healthcare services and government services irrespective of geographic location. All key government services including business registration, land-use registration, taxation, construction approvals, and all other dealings with the government would have gone on-line. Digital connectivity would also have created new high paying jobs, increased income particularly for the rural folk, and bolstered trade and investment.

Environmentally Astute

Fiji will be a signatory to all relevant international agreements and conventions related to environment and climate change. It will also take a leadership role in many of these agreements and conventions particularly those related to conservation of forest and marine resources as well as climate resilience.

Fiji will continue to have at least 80% of its land under forest cover. Its forest resources will be sustainably managed to ensure that the economic returns are balanced with conservation. Fiji's rich natural biodiversity including mangrove and coral reefs will be harnessed and protected. Its marine resources will be better managed to avoid overfishing and illegal intrusion into its marine areas. Fiji will remain committed to fully protect 30% and sustainably manage 100% of Fiji's waters under the Exclusive Economic Zones.

Fiji would have introduced a plan for sustainable consumption and production to achieve optimal use of all its natural resources, minimise wastage and reduce the impact to the environment. It would have achieved its international commitments to reduce greenhouse emissions by 30%. Its transport sector would have been transformed with the introduction of green technology including the major shift to Energy Efficient Vehicles and other low or zero

emission vehicles. A major portion of its energy will come from renewable energy sources.

The nation will have in place adequate disaster risk reduction measures to address climate change. Its preparedness for and capacity to detect, manage natural disasters, tropical cyclones and other extreme weather conditions would have substantially improved, thereby reducing loss to property and lives from such events. Appropriate strategies would have been implemented to strengthen climate resilience particularly in terms of economic activities, infrastructure, housing and healthcare services.

A Society built on High Moral and Ethical Values, Culture and Heritage

Fiji acknowledges that moral and ethics, and preservation of culture and heritage make up the social foundation and fabric of the nation. The nation will continue to place great importance on upholding moral, spiritual and ethical values to ensure holistic development. The family unit, education system, and religious and faith-based organisations will occupy an important position and play a key role in instilling moral and ethical values as well as discipline. Through this approach Fiji would have satisfactorily addressed the issue of crime, illegal drugs, domestic violence and belligerence.

Fiji will continue to be a melting pot of different cultures – that of the iTaukei, Indians, Chinese and European ancestry. Fiji's rich cultural diversity and heritage will have been accentuated. Fijian language, food, festivals, rituals, arts and tradition will continue to be preserved, promoted and passed on to the next generation of Fijians. Following Fiji's greater prominence globally and a thriving tourism industry, Fiji's culture and heritage will have received greater international presence and recognition.

Natural heritage sites will be protected and developed. Fiji would have increased the recognition and value of its natural heritage sites through the inclusion of several more of its natural heritage sites besides the Levuka Heritage sites, in the UNESCO World Heritage list and the UNESCO Biosphere Reserves. Cultural mapping of traditional knowledge and expressions to document ceremonies, dialects and heritage sites of all 14 provinces would have been completed.

Excellence in Sports

Sports is recognized as an important means to promote peace, harmony, tolerance and comradeship besides contributing to building a healthy society. Fiji will have developed modern and well-equipped community sports facilities including in the rural and peri-urban areas with the participation of the private sector and Non-Governmental Organisations. Sports development will be given greater importance starting from the primary school through to tertiary level. There will be a special programme to develop and nurture those who have potential to excel in sports towards producing world class sportsmen. Fiji will excel internationally in an array of sports similar to its global distinction in rugby. Fiji would also have emerged as an attractive destination for hosting international sports events and a hub for sports injury treatment and rehabilitation.

International Diplomacy and Stewardship

Fiji's international relations will be extensive, going beyond the region and traditional partners like Australia, New Zealand, India and China. It would have established strong diplomatic bilateral links with most countries in Asia, Middle East, Europe and North America, opening up fresh opportunities for trade, investment, government to government cooperation, people to people link and visa free travel.

It will continue to be a member of regional and multilateral institutions such as the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, the Pacific Community, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the World Trade Organisation and the United Nations organisations. Fiji's international stature and recognition would have improved substantially earning global respect and admiration due to its active participation and leadership role in regional and international multilateral institutions and forum, diligently delivering on its regional and international commitments and shaping global opinion on important issues. It will be a champion at the international stage among others for peace, democracy, gender equality, child protection, climate resilience, environmental conservation and issues relating to small island states. Fiji will also play host to the headquarters and regional offices of several regional, international and multilateral organisations.

Entrenched with a High Standard of Governance

Fiji will remain a democratic country and have in place an institutional framework that practises the highest standard of governance and rule of law. Its key institutions, the Executive, Judiciary and Legislature, will be built upon the principles of independence, engagement, accountability, integrity, transparency, stewardship and respect for human rights and freedom. There will be zero tolerance for corruption. Fiji will stand out as an exemplary example of a democracy for the region and the world. Fiji's democracy will be protected by all institutions of the state.

It will have a civil service that is lean and capable, and that is able to deliver its services in a cost-effective, efficient and impartial manner. Most of its services will be provided on the digital platform. It will have strong expertise in project planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. The civil service processes will be transparent, and information will be available for public scrutiny. The role of Government will be clearly demarcated where it will be responsible for the provision of basic infrastructure and amenities, healthcare, education and other social services as well as safety and national security. The Government would have rationalised its role in business and commercial activities. The position of State-Owned Entities would have been reviewed and streamlined. The Government would have embraced and actively implemented public-private partnership initiatives and embarked on a more aggressive process of privatisation of activities that can be more efficiently delivered by the private sector. It will be responsible for the creation of a conducive ecosystem for the private sector to flourish.

The police and armed forces would have been strengthened in terms of their capability and capacity to ensure a safe, secure and stable environment. They will be adequately equipped with the required legislation, expertise, resources and infrastructure to deal with the evolving landscape of domestic and transnational crimes and border security. Fiji will continue to have a strong presence in Peacekeeping missions around the world.

The Judiciary will be regarded with the highest level of integrity and confidence. Fiji will have a competent and efficient judiciary which provides independent and expeditious resolution to cases. The judicial process as a whole would have been reviewed, simplified and digitised to provide greater ease to people, businesses and investors.

The Parliament will remain as the beacon of Fiji's democracy. Fiji will have a modern and well-functioning Parliament following improvements in its legislative process, continuous enhancement in the competency of the Members of Parliament and staff, strengthening of its committees, and greater outreach and engagement with citizens. The Opposition will also have greater space to provide oversight and raise accountability. The Parliament will have wider consultations with relevant stakeholders and the citizens particularly in the formulation of new legislations affecting the people at large.

How Do We Get There?

The Vision will be translated into reality through a series of short-term and medium-term development plans similar to the NDP. These plans will set out the policies, strategies and programmes accompanied by short-term and medium term KPIs as a basis to assess the progress towards achieving the Vision. A robust monitoring and evaluation mechanism will help to track progress, ensure that programmes are meeting the intended outcomes, and make policy, strategy and programme corrections, if necessary.

Achieving the Vision that we have set out will crucially require:

1. **Guarantee of sustainable peace, political stability and security:** All efforts must be taken to ensure continued peace, stability and security in order to realise the Vision. Fiji has learnt from its past experience from political coups that it can have a devastating impact on the economy and livelihood of the people and set back the nation by many years. Building back the confidence of the international community and investors will be an enormous task. Fiji must practise the principles of a mature democracy that respects the rule of law, rights of citizens, uphold a democratically elected government while allowing space for dissent and opposing views. Voice of the people must be respected and there must be a peaceful transition to power whenever there is a change in Government following a democratic election process. There can be no tolerance for power grab of any form. Those elected must place the continued progress of the nation and the wellbeing of the people as the priority.
2. **Credible, inclusive and participatory approach:** The process towards achieving the Vision must be one that is credible, inclusive and participatory. This is important

to maintain and build a sense of ownership of the people to the Vision and ensure its ultimate success. It must draw support from the active engagement with all segments of society and their participation in decision-making. People must remain at the centre of all development efforts. It must demonstratively be a Plan for the People by the People. The Vision as it is implemented, must progressively bring tangible outcomes at each milestone where the people are able to experience a real upliftment in their income and standard of living and quality of life.

3. **National commitment and single mindedness:** The fruition of this Vision requires the unwavering support and commitment of the top leadership. The Vision must remain as a high development priority across the political divide. There must be single mindedness to drive the Vision irrespective of geopolitical risks, climate and economic shocks and other unexpected events as these are the new normal and cannot be allowed to derail the long-term Vision. While navigating through these short-term challenges, the eye must always be on the attainment of the Vision.
4. **Strong partnership:** The Government alone cannot drive this national Vision; it can only be done with strong partnership with the private sector, civil society and faith-based organisations. The Government, private sector and civil society have to play their respective roles. The Government will need to provide a supportive institutional and regulatory environment, basic infrastructure and amenities, and social services. The private sector will need to drive economic activities and partner the Government in providing several social services such as education, healthcare and infrastructure. The civil society and faith-based organisations will have to share responsibility in uplifting the social and economic wellbeing of the people, ensuring accountability and participation across a wide spectrum of areas in nation building.
5. **Resetting the economy:** In order to achieve the aspiration of becoming a high income and advanced country, the economy has to be reset on to a faster and sustainable growth trajectory. For Fiji to attain the status of a high-income country based on the per capita income threshold set by the World Bank, it will have to grow at an average rate of 3.3% over the next 25 years. This will require, among others, greater private sector participation in the economy, broadening the economic base, moving up the value chain in key economic sectors, expanding trade, increasing productivity, strengthening macroeconomic fundamentals and building economic resilience.
6. **Ensuring adequate supply of talent and skilled workforce:** The issue of shortage of labour and skills has to be addressed urgently through short- and medium- term measures both in key areas of the public sector, and the private sector.
7. **Strengthening institutions and governance:** Institutional and governance reforms must be undertaken to increase transparency, integrity and accountability. The 3 arms of Government must operate independently and efficiently to instil confidence in the nation. The civil service must strengthen its capacity and capability in terms of planning and implementation to drive the Vision. There has to be greater coordination and collaboration among Ministries, agencies, and all levels of government, and processes must be simplified and streamlined to improve effectiveness and efficiency in the delivery of government services and programmes. Data gathering and analytics must also be strengthened to support effective delivery and monitoring of Government programmes. All impediments to development must be removed, particularly eliminating bureaucracy and reducing the regulatory burden. Archaic and irrelevant legislation must be abolished and the regulatory framework must be simplified. The regulatory burden must be drastically reduced to promote private sector participation in the economy which is a key factor in the equation to achieve economic growth. In addition, international cooperation must be harnessed to complement national efforts towards achieving the Vision.

Conclusion

Vision 2050 sets in motion Fiji's aspiration to become a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable nation and deliver a better quality of life for all Fijians. It envisions a holistically transformed Fiji occupying a prominent position regionally and globally. It will enjoy sustained peace and political stability and will be governed by a mature democracy. Fiji will boast a more diversified and resilient economy where people will enjoy a secure and quality standard of living enabled by modern infrastructure across the nation and greater resilience to climate change. It will be admired for its well conserved biodiversity, flourishing rich culture and heritage, and recognised distinctly for its excellent governance and institutional structure. This Vision is a manifestation of all Fijians coming together with one mind and one voice to determine their own destiny.





