

Gender Assessment

FP306: Forest Landscape Restoration for Climate Benefits and Resilience (Fiji FLR)

The Republic of Fiji | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations-FAO | B.45/02/Add.07

12 June 2026



List of Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
BPA	Beijing Platform for Action
CEDAW	UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
DoW	Department of Women
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FBOS	Fiji Bureau of Statistics
FDB	Fiji Development Bank
FLR	Forest Landscape Restoration
FWCC	Fiji Women's Crisis Centre
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GMAGs	Gender Mainstreaming Action Groups
HCV	High Conservation Value
ILO	International Labor Organization
MECC	Ministry of Environment and Climate Change
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSMEs	Micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises
MWCPA	Ministry of Women, Children, and Poverty Alleviation
PPA	Pacific Platform for Action on Gender Equality
SEAH	Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment
SPC	The Pacific Community
TOR	Terms of Reference
VAW	Violence Against Women
WB	World Bank
WPA	Women's Plan of Action

I. Introduction

This gender assessment has been prepared to support the Fiji Forest Landscape Restoration for Climate Benefits and Resilience Project (Fiji FLR). This Project is expected to directly increase climate resilience of 196,877 most vulnerable people in Viti Levu and Vanua Levu islands (~21 of Fiji population) and indirectly benefit 149,715 people (~16% of the population). This report supports the mainstreaming of gender and social inclusion considerations in project processes, governance, management, budgeting, and other activities to reach this goal by optimizing the achievement of Project objectives through increased participation of women and effort to assure the equitable distribution of project benefits.

The Gender Assessment has been prepared with reference to development reports and key policy documents key guiding documents including:

- *Global Climate Fund Gender Policy (2019)*
- *“From Innovative Mandate to Meaningful Implementation: Ensuring Gender-Responsive Global Climate Fund (GCF) Projects and Programs” (2015)*
- *FAO Country, gender, assessment of agriculture and the rural sector in Fiji (2019)*
- *FAO Policy Brief, “Understanding women’s participation in forestry in Fiji” (2015)*
- *GEF Pacific Ridge to Reef Programme Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit (2021)*

The Gender Assessment comprises four parts:

- I. Gender baseline, primarily a compilation of key gender data related to Fiji as the project context, supported by qualitative description of key baseline issues facing women in Fiji in Annex 1;
- II. Gender analysis, summarizing some key issues relevant to the project impacts and opportunities for reaching, engaging, and sharing project benefits with women. This analysis serves as the evidence base for activities prioritized and targets selected in the Gender Action Plan;
- III. GCF matrix on risks of project impacting sexual exploitation and harassment (SEAH) and a:
- IV. Gender Action Plan, outlining a list of activities designed to improve gender equality and women’s economic empowerment through the project lifecycle.

This report takes a twin track approach to gender mainstreaming in two respects. It aims to assist project planning to both:

- a) Increase positive impacts (“do good”) and decrease potential harms (“do no harm”) of the Fiji Forest Landscape Restoration for Climate Benefits and Resilience Project.
- b) Provide gender mainstreaming (integrate gender considerations at all program stages and levels) and targeted activities for women (offer dedicated and direct activities to support disadvantaged individual and social groups to participate on an equal basis with others).

During the project design phase, the AE engaged an extensive range of civil society organizations, national experts, customary authorities and government institutions to understand the needs and vulnerabilities of communities in the target areas, including the gender and inclusion dimensions relevant to land use planning, livelihoods, and forest-based value chains. Inputs were received from, among others, women’s

rights organizations and gender-focused actors, as well as key government and customary institutions relevant to land access and consent processes. These consultations informed the project's emphasis on inclusive CLMP processes, equitable participation arrangements, and safeguards-aligned engagement throughout implementation. In addition, two gender-focused focus group discussions (23–24 May 2024) were held with government officers, the FAO national team and representatives of women's rights organizations. These discussions highlighted barriers to women's participation in decision-making and technical forestry/agroforestry roles, the importance of embedding SEAH risk awareness and safe reporting pathways in community engagement and training, and the need to support women's MSMEs/cooperatives and equitable benefit access. These considerations are reflected in the Gender Action Plan (Section 4 and Table 3), the SEAH monitoring provisions (Annex 3 and related footnotes), and the project's stakeholder engagement arrangements and GRM design.

2. Gender Baseline

The gender baseline sets out key data to describe the gender context in which the Project will operate, including statistics from national and international sources¹, and brief descriptions of gender domains with supporting data that highlights gender differences in power and resources. This data is relevant because it reveals needs and differences that manifest as barriers and opportunities to gender equal and equitable sharing of Project benefits. Since it supports the identification and design of project components to respond to different vulnerabilities, this baseline description is also important for community acceptance and participation in the Project, which is key to its effectiveness and sustainability.

Table 1 presents an overview of key baseline data on gender in Fiji, highlighting differences in the position of women and men, sourced from World Bank. Gendered data is neither complete, regularly updated or reliable as different agencies and organizations often report different figures for the same gender indicators. This reflects of the lack of quality gender data in Pacific countries, which is being addressed by the Pacific Gender Statistics Coordination Group, an initiative of UN Women ‘Women Count’ and SPC (UN Women 2020). data

Table 1. Snapshot of Recent Gender Data on Fiji

Data point / variable	Female	Male	Year /Ref
Population of Fiji	49.86	50.14	2024
Proportion of women subjected to physical and/or sexual violence in the last 12 months (% of ever partnered women ages 15-49)	23		2018
Literacy rate (% ages 15-24)	99.1	96.1	2021
School enrollment (tertiary (% gross)	59.9	41.4	2019
Adolescent fertility rate (births per 1,000 women 15-19)	26.8		2021
Maternal Mortality Rate (per 100,000 live births)	38		2020
Adolescent fertility rate (births per 1000 women aged 15-19)	26.8		2011
Labour force participation rate (% over 15 yrs old)	38.6	76.8	2022
Employment in agriculture	18.8	33.8	2022
Share of youth not education, employment or training	29.6	10.8	2016

¹ Data sources include PacificData.org, ILO, UN Women, ADB, WB gender data portal, UNICEF, Fiji Parliament Gender Data Hub, Fiji Ministry of Agriculture, Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre, TokSave Pacific Gender Forum; StatisticTimes.Com; and University of Fiji Centre for Gender Research.

Firms with women in ownership	49.1		2009
Proportion of seats held by women in Parliament	19.6		2022
Proportion of women in Ministerial level positions	5.26		2022
% of women (age 15-49) in vulnerable employment	28		2022

2.1 Gendered Demographics in Fiji

The 2024 population of Fiji comprises 473,000 males and 470,000 females, or 50.14% males, compared to 49.86% of females in the population. Most of the population is under 30 (see figure 1), which reflects the trend of youth-heavy populations in other Pacific countries. Contemporary Fiji has more population living in urban areas along the coastal areas of main islands.

The 2023 global gender gap index for Fiji was 0.65, where 1 indicates no inequality and 0 indicates maximum inequality. Fiji's global gender gap index has fluctuated substantially in recent years but in general it increased through 2012 - 2023 (World Bank Data Atlas, 2024).²

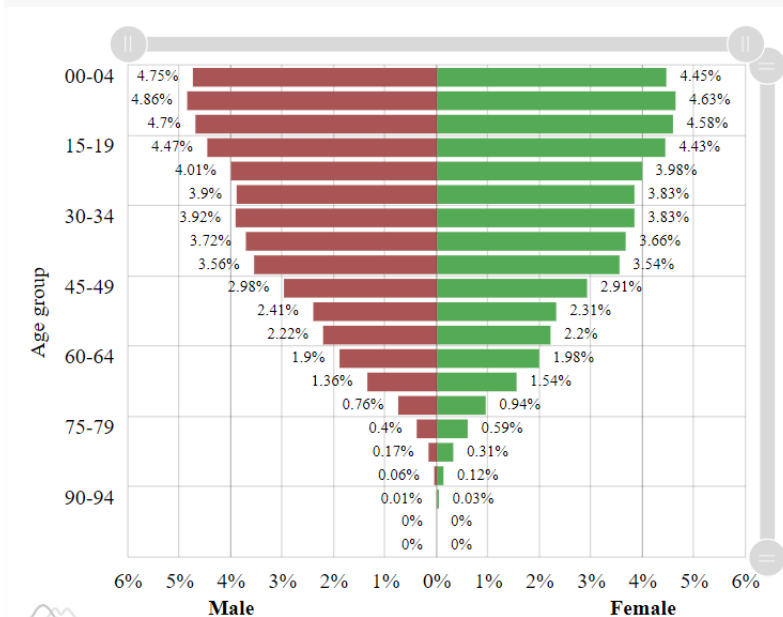
1.2 Gend, ethnicity and culture in Fiji

Fiji is a culturally diverse and multi-ethnic country. The population is primarily comprised of indigenous iTaukei and Indo-Fijian communities, alongside smaller communities of Pacific Islanders, Europeans and other ethnic groups. Social and cultural norms continue to shape gender roles within households and communities. While these norms differ across communities and are evolving over time, women often bear a greater share of caregiving and domestic responsibilities, while men are more frequently represented in leadership and decision-making roles. These dynamics can influence women's access to economic and leadership opportunities (PSDI, 2024).

There is a lack of literature on iTaukai and Indian women's relationships, and actual and potential collaborations for sustainable development through inter-ethnic cooperation. This situation is compounded by an undervaluing and general disinterest in the potentials for building gender solidarities through research and documentation (Fiji University, Centre for Gender Studies, 2024).

² Fiji comprises more than 300 islands in the Western Pacific, of which Viti Levu (10,389 square kilometers), Vanua Levu (5,587 square kilometers), and slightly more than 100 smaller islands are permanently inhabited. The estimated population exceeds 900,000,¹ with nearly 9 in 10 Fijians living on the two larger islands. Since 1960, Fiji's urban population has doubled, to account for nearly 60% of Fijians (World Bank n.d.a.). Among working-age Fijians (15 years and older), women slightly outnumber men in urban areas (51% to 49%) while in rural communities, men slightly outnumber women (52% to 48%) (FBOS 2018).

Figure 1. Population pyramid of Fiji, 2024



Source: <https://statisticstimes.com/demographics/country/fiji-demographics.php>

Fiji also has a history of diversity in gender identify and sexual orientation - *vaka sa lewa lewa* is an iTaukei term for a third gender category persons. Communities in Fiji exist in a complex context both national and customary as well as local and sub-groups' norms, beliefs, policies, and laws. These all interact to influence the experiences of gender as an experience and an expression. Gender is one of multiple social identities that can interact to create compounding effects of disadvantage and discrimination.

This report focused on women, and considers baseline data that can guide, address and support the Project with an intersectional perspective on how Fijian women of different ages, abilities, sexualities and ethnicities might access power and privilege to resources and adapt to climate change.

Christianity is an important faith and belief system for around 65 % of Fijians³³ which, in interaction with customary beliefs, holds sacred women as mothers and wives and men as breadwinners and decision makers. While this religious and cultural gender ideal may be at odds with realities, as Fijian women are in the workforce and sometimes also in positions of power, religious ideals continue to exert influence on expectations of how men and women should behave. For example, ideals of proper behaviour restrict women from participating in public meetings and dialogues, especially when they

³³ <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/fiji/>

are held far from the home but also local meetings to contribute to community-level decisions (FAO & SPC, 2019).

Cultural norms about gender intersect with norms about social status in Fijian communities. For example, women who are members of families with chiefly status, married to chiefs, hold leadership roles in women's groups, or, in rare cases, hold the position of chief in a village are more able to participate in public meetings due to their higher social status.

Another gendered aspect of culture is the norms of the collective over the individual. In other words, the value of community harmony is placed at a higher level of importance than the needs or rights of an individual (FAO & SPC, 2019). This not only perpetuates the gendered status quo; it can pit women's rights against patriarchal power and privilege.

In Fiji there is evidence of social change around gender roles, and more progressive gendered views are often found in professional classes and urban settings. Norms associated with masculinity are changing so that the "good husband," men in one study (World Bank 2012) noted, are shifting from husbands being "strict" teachers of moral standards to prioritizing spending time with family and listening to their wives. Aspects of gender are changing, but resistance has been found to feminist ideas which are often framed as external "Western" beliefs that do not fit with traditional and cultural norms about gender, social status, and the collective. Understanding gender as a dynamic construct is critical to addressing the influence of gender in the Project and the Ridge to Reef contexts more widely.

1.3 Laws, Policies, Regulations, and Institutional Framework to protect and promote gender equality.

In terms of governmental infrastructure, Fiji's **Ministry of Women, Children, and Social Protection (MWCSP)** exists to address issues related to gender equality, child welfare, and poverty reduction. Within MWCSP, there are three departments, one being the Department of Women (DOW) which is responsible for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.

Freedom from all forms of discrimination, including that based in gender, is legally protected by the **Bill of Rights of the 2013 Constitution of the Republic of Fiji**. This bill accords Fijians the right to freedom from discrimination and stipulates that "a person must not be unfairly discriminated against, directly or indirectly on grounds of his or her actual or supposed personal characteristics or circumstances, including race, culture, ethnic or social origin, color, place of origin, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, birth, primary language, economic or social or health status, disability, age, religion, conscience, marital status or pregnancy" [Section 26(3)].

Table 2 provides an overview of national laws and policies in support of the rights enshrined in the 2013 National Constitution.

Table 2. Laws and Policies Relating to Gender Equality and Protection in Fiji

Law or Policy	Description
<i>5-Year and 20-Year National Development Plans (2017-2021 and 2017-2036)</i>	Outlines the role of women in development for the period 2017-2021 and 2017-2036. Focuses on women's economic empowerment, leadership and decision-making, and health. Includes focus on providing support to GBV survivors (Fiji MoE, 2017).
<i>Fiji National Gender Policy (2014)</i>	Guides all policy and efforts to promote gender equality across development sectors. Includes a requirement to improve the provision of services to GBV survivors (Fiji Ministry for Social Welfare, Women & Poverty Alleviation, 2014). This policy sets out more than 100 policy recommendations in 19 key areas.
<i>Women's Plan of Action (2010-2019)</i>	Offers a strategic framework to improve women's role in sustainable development across five key areas (Fiji Ministry for Social Welfare, Women & Poverty Alleviation, 2009).
<i>Domestic Violence Decree 2009</i>	Provides a definition of domestic violence, which applies to individuals in domestic or family relationships, that covers actual or threatened physical or sexual violence, property damage, harassment, persistent cruel behavior, or stalking. Focuses on providing protection for survivors of domestic violence and clarifying the role of police services. Institutes the use of Domestic Violence Restraining Orders (DVROs) (Republic of Fiji Islands, 2009b).
<i>Crimes Decree 2009</i>	Provides legal definitions and penalties for crimes in Fiji, which include sexual violence and rape as crimes against humanity. Other forms of GBV are not covered in the legal definitions (Republic of Fiji Islands, 2009a).
<i>Family Law Act 2003</i>	Establishes the Family Court, which focuses on issues of marriage, divorce, maintenance, and custody. Does not include provisions imposing penalties for violence within marriage but does institute protections for women and children (Republic of Fiji Islands, 2003). A 2012 amendment to the act requires the provisions to cover de facto partnerships (FVRM, 2017).
<i>Fiji Police Force "No Drop Policy" (1995)</i>	Requires all police officers and prosecutors to bring any filed case of domestic violence to court (FVRM, 2017).

Ref: Marstel-Day and WIHER 2021, 'Gender-Based Violence and REDD+ In Fiji: Tackling Resource Conflict and Addressing Gender-based Risk in the Environment Gender and Environment Analysis, USAID RISE Challenge Activity Grant #2020-Catalyst-GA001, p. 17

Other points relevant to the national enabling environment:

- In 2014, the Fiji Parliament adopted Standing Order 110(2) that requires the six Parliamentary Standing Committees to scrutinize all proposed legislation "to ensure that full consideration will be given to the principle of gender equality...with regard to the impact and benefit on both men and women equally".
- Gender Based Violence has been addressed in recent years with the National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against All Women and Girls, 2023-2028 which has five key strategies to comprehensively address violence: transformative public education and social norm change; strengthening of equal and respectful relationships; survivor-centered services for survivors of violence; coordinated legal protection for survivors of violence; and fostering a gender equal society.
- Fiji's Parliament has established a Gender Data Hub with links to Fijian and other sources of relevant gender data.
- The Gender Transformative Institutional Capacity Development Initiative was launched in 2021 to enhance gender mainstreaming and roll out gender-responsive budgeting across government, with Phase 1 including training and established Gender Mainstreaming Action Groups (GMAGs) in participating ministries/agencies (Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation 2022). Phase 2 is set to expand across all ministries.
- The government does not currently have legislation specifically related to gender equality or a

standalone policy on women's economic empowerment.⁴⁴ In 2023, MWCSP requested cabinet endorsement for the development of a National Action Plan on Women's Economic Empowerment (2023-2028).

- The 5 and 20-year National Development Plan, 2017-2036 prioritizes inclusive socioeconomic development and a strategic objective to increase gender equality.

International Frameworks

The National Development Plan's goals and strategies are closely aligned with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (the Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs]), including SDG 5, to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. The Government of Fiji has ratified or endorsed all major international and regional gender equality commitments including:

- **UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**- The Government ratified this Convention in 1995 and has submitted a total of five CEDAW periodic reports since ratification.
- The Government of Fiji ratified the **Beijing Platform for Action (BPA)** in 1995. In 2015, Fiji collaborated with other Pacific Island Countries (PIC) to produce a regional report, Beijing +20: Review of progress in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action in Pacific Island countries and territories. In 2019, the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation issued Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: +25 Fiji Progress Report.
- The Government of Fiji has endorsed the **Pacific Platform for Action on Gender Equality (PPA)**, including its most recent iteration, *Pacific Platform for Action on Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights, 2018-2030*.

The following fundamental international conventions have also been ratified by the government to promote equal rights for women in Fiji:

- Equal Remuneration (No. 100) (ratified in 2002).
- Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) (No. 111) (ratified in 2002).
- Violence and Harassment Convention (ratified in 2020).
- The Violence and Harassment Convention (No. 190)

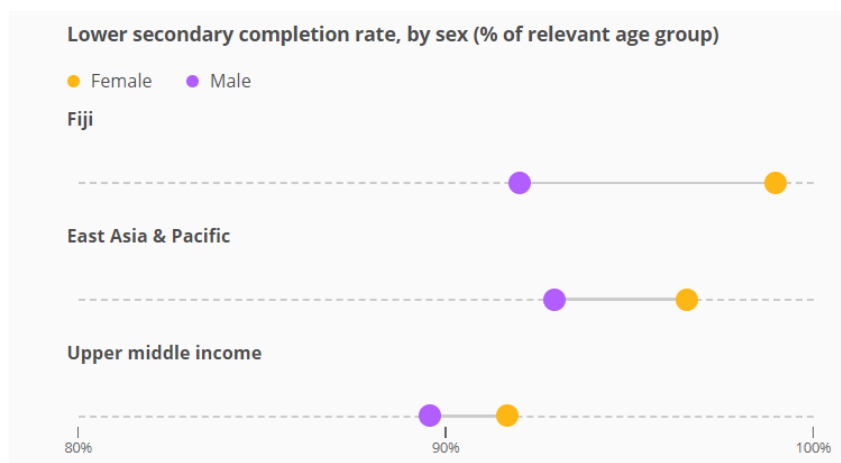
The Government of Fiji has not yet ratified the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention (No. 156). those of the PPA.

⁴⁴ The **Women's Plan of Action** (WPA 2009–2018) reflected the government's commitment to fulfilling its obligations to the CEDAW and the PPA. The WPA encompassed five priority areas and proposes five interagency taskforces to oversee these areas but did not include cost estimates or budget allocations. The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework for the WPA called for annual progress reporting by MWCPA and other relevant ministries and departments, with a full-scale review to be conducted every 3 years. A review of available MWCPA annual reports contains no specific information on work on or achievements of the WPA. The WPA was updated with the NAP - as the National Action to Prevent Violence Against All Women and Girls 2023-2028.

1.5 Education and Gender in Fiji

School completion rates in Fiji are more than 100% at the primary level and 86% at the secondary level.

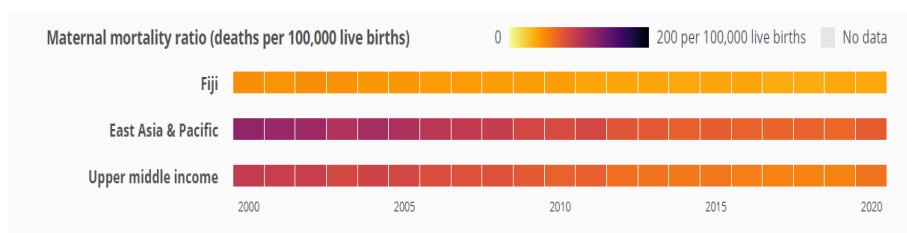
Gender parity is 0.93 at the primary level and 1.10 at the secondary level. In Fiji, 99% of girls and 92% of boys complete lower secondary school as of 2022 data. Data is not available for Fiji for Adult literacy rate, by sex (% of people ages 15 and above)⁵. At the university level, women often outnumber men as students and graduates, but gender gaps exist in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields (Government of Fiji, Ministry of Women, Children, and Poverty Alleviation 2023).



1.6 Health and Mortality in Fijian Women

In Fiji, 38 women die per 100,000 live births due to pregnancy-related causes. The maternal mortality ratio in Fiji has improved from 49 in 2000 to 38 in 2020. Maternal mortality in Fiji is lower than its regional average.

Maternal mortality ratio is the number of women who die from pregnancy-related causes while pregnant or within 42 days of pregnancy termination per 100,000 live births⁶.



1.7 Gender-based Violence (GBV) - (Violence Against Women – VAW)

72% of Fijian women report that they have experience one or more types of violence in their lifetime from husbands or intimate partners, with 800 cases of VAW reported in 2018 and 834 in 2019 ([Fiji Women's Crisis Centre statistics](#)). In Fiji, intimate partners are the most common perpetrators of VAW (ADB, 2015).

According to the Fiji Women's Crises Center⁷:

- 64% of women in Fiji have experienced physical or sexual violence from their partner in their lifetime. 25% of women are currently experiencing physical or sexual violence from intimate partner.
- 44% of women have experienced extreme physical violence (e.g., choking, burning, threatened use or actual use of a weapon).

⁵ Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). UIS, Stat Bulk Data Download Service. Accessed September 19, 2023. <https://apiportal.uis.unesco.org/bdds>.

⁶ Source: WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank Group, and UNDESA/Population Division. Trends in Maternal Mortality 2000 to 2020. Geneva, World Health Organization, 2023.

⁷ The FWCC undertook Fiji's only national-level study, *Somebody's Life, Everybody's Business* (2013), of GBV prevalence between 2010 and 2011 and have maintained a database for cases of GBV that they receive, including attempted suicide, since 1984 ([Fiji Women's Crisis Centre Statistics](#)).

- Women from rural areas and iTaukei women are more likely to suffer intimate partner violence.
- Around 33% of women and girls have experienced physical or sexual violence from someone other than a partner since age 15, most often male family members, teachers, and female family members.
- Control from partners is another common form of VAW with 69% of women indicating that their partner had used at least one method of control.
- Around 4 in 10 women are required to seek permission from their partner to seek health services, and just over half of women (57%) must always alert their husbands to their whereabouts.
- Levels of partners' control of women's mobility are even higher in rural areas.
- Communities can also sanction violence.

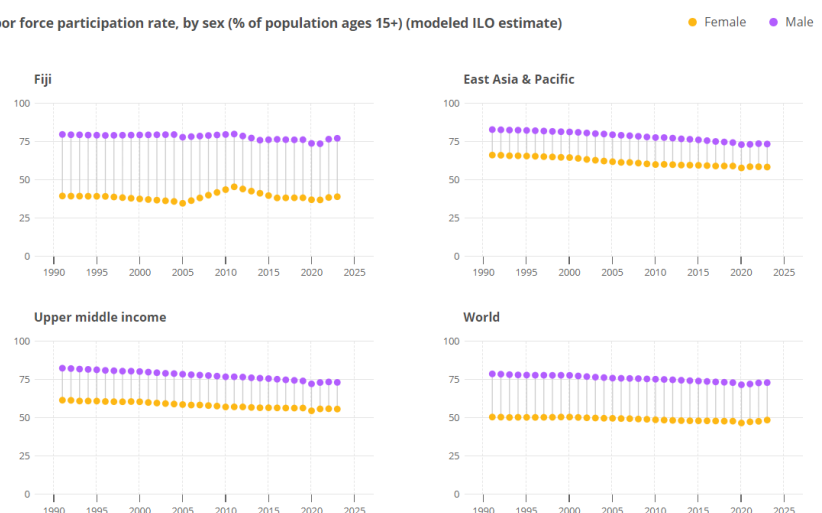
These figures are disturbingly high and entrenched in internalized normative beliefs. In 2013, 43% of women believed that their husbands are justified to use physical violence against their wives in at least one of seven given situations (FWCC, 2013). In a 2019 recent survey of employed men and women in three Fijian workplaces, low levels of acceptance of violence were found (Lockley & Hameed, 2019). This could indicate changes in the acceptability of violence, or it could be an outcome of the progressive, but outlier attitudes of people surveyed.

1.8 Gendered labor force participation in Fiji

Fiji has one of the most developed economies among Pacific Island countries and it serves as an economic hub in the region (WB & IFC 2022). In 2018, Fiji experienced its ninth consecutive year of economic growth, building on political stability and increased productivity (WB & IFC 2022). However, the economy contracted sharply in March 2020 when coronavirus disease (COVID-19) caused the government to close Fiji's international borders. The economic impact of the pandemic was compounded by the occurrence of three major tropical cyclones during April 2020–January 2021, highlighting the structural vulnerability of the Fijian economy to natural disasters and climate change. Women suffer disproportionate impacts of climate related disasters and ecosystem destruction, impacts that cascade when economic resources and capacities to cope and adapt are limited (UN WOMEN 2022).

Tourism is the key driver of the Fijian economy, and while it was only 18.6% of GDP in 2022, prior to the pandemic it accounted for nearly 40% GDP. Women comprise 42% of all direct tourism employees⁸, with a quarter of managerial and professional positions in the tourism sector are held by women () while is higher than the national average. Across all sectors combined, the labor force participation rate⁹ among females is 39.1% and

Labor force participation rate, by sex (% of population ages 15+) (modeled ILO estimate)



⁸ Tourism Fiji.

⁹ The labor force participation rate is the proportion of the population ages 15 and older that is economically active.

among males is 77.3% for 2023¹⁰. It also shows that female labor force participation has remained roughly the same since 1990 and compared with labor force participation in the upper-middle income group, the gap between men and women is higher in Fiji. As shown in Table 1, in 2019, 19% of Fijians aged 15–24 years were not in employment, education, or training with a gender gap of 19% (Government of Fiji, Ministry of Women, Children, and Poverty Alleviation 2023).

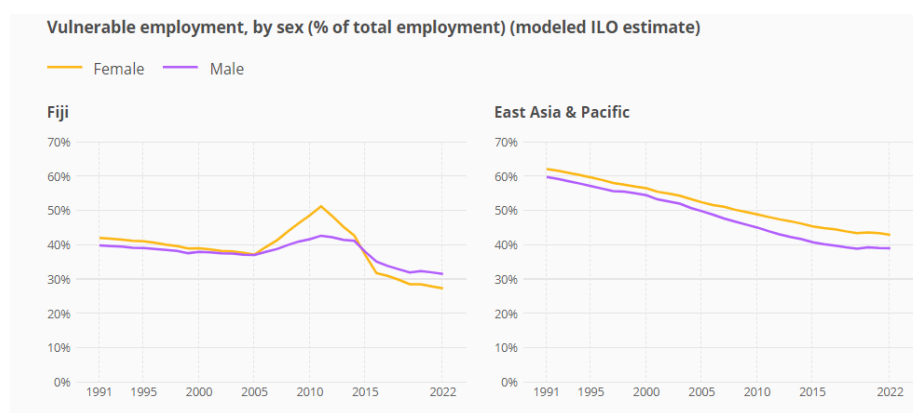
1.9 Agricultural sector employment

Although agriculture contributes only a small proportion to Fiji's GDP (World Bank n.d.c.), the sector, which includes fisheries and forestry, remains an essential source of income and food security for Fijians, particularly in rural areas. A quarter of Fiji's rural population (24.7 %) works in agriculture and fisheries, and within agricultural households, three-quarters (75%) of household members are engaged in agricultural value chains, including more than 60% of women household members (FAO & SPC 2019). Women have traditionally engaged in subsistence farming and fishing to meet household needs (see below); however, increasingly they are also producing for sale in local and city markets (FAO & SPC 2019). Women producers and other women who act as traders account for about 80% of vendors in Fiji's municipal markets (UN Women 2016)

Despite playing important roles in the agriculture sector, men are three times more likely than women to have formal employment (30.6 % compared to 11.1 % (FAO prefeasibility) and women's work more likely to be concentrated in processing and labor jobs at the bottom of the pay scale (Narsey 2007; Vuki 2013, FAO & SPC 2019). Women are also the majority of employees in agro-processing firms in Fiji (WB & IFC 2022), yet data suggests that women are undervalued in the sector in terms of income, recognition and career progression opportunities.

1.10 Vulnerable employment

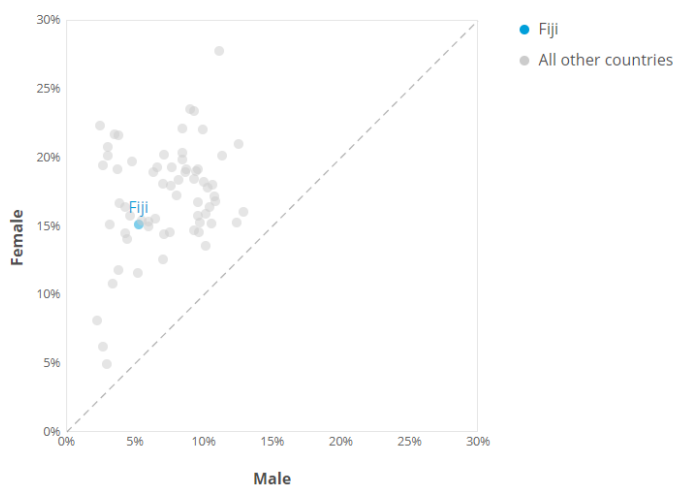
In 2022 Fijian women comprise 27.5% of people in vulnerable employment and for men it's 31.7% ([WB Gender Data Portal](#)). Though high, this rate is lower than average rates of vulnerable employment in East Asia & Pacific. Women workers in vulnerable employment are the least likely to have formal work arrangements, social protection, and safety nets to guard against economic shocks and so are more likely to fall into poverty (Bue, Tu Thi, Silva & Sen 2022).



1.11 Women's unpaid work - time use data.

¹⁰ The 2019-2020 Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) provides sex-disaggregated data at the national level and by age group for the labor force participation rate. The 2017 Population and Housing Census provides comprehensive data on the Fijian workforce. Sex-disaggregated data sets are available for (i) the population aged 15 and over and (ii) the labor force including employed, unemployed, people outside the labor force and the labor force participation rate. Labor force data are further disaggregated by location, including urban/rural, Division, province, and town.

Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex (% of 24 hour day)



In Fiji, women spend 2.9 times as much time on unpaid domestic and care work than men¹¹ as a proportion of time in a day. In 2016, women in Fiji spent 15.2% of their day and men spent 5.2% of their day on unpaid work. The average time women spend on household provision of services for own consumption. Domestic and care work includes food preparation, dishwashing, cleaning and upkeep of a dwelling, laundry, ironing, gardening, caring for pets, shopping, installation, servicing and repair of personal and household goods, childcare, and care of the sick, elderly or disabled household members, among others.

1.12 Women in Business

There are more than 24,000 micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in Fiji (Payne 2020); in 2018, they accounted for 97% of Fijian businesses, 36% of employment, and contributed 18% to GDP (Rokoua 2018). Half of Fijian MSMEs is owned by women, most of which are microenterprises that operate in the informal economy (Payne 2020); in 2018, only 19% of registered businesses were owned by women (ADB 2018). Women-owned MSMEs are diverse but tend to be concentrated in crowded, low-productivity sectors (Market Development Facility 2020). Many women prefer to operate their MSMEs in the informal economy (ADB 2018), a choice that facilitates their ability to work from home, generate income on an as-needed basis, and balance their domestic responsibilities and economic activities (ADB 2018).

MSME Fiji and other government agencies play a role in developing and implementing funding and technical support programs for MSMEs and entrepreneurship in Fiji¹². These government programs generally do not have explicit targets for women but often encourage participation by women, youth, and people with disabilities (PWD). However, there is limited sex-disaggregated data available regarding program applicants and recipients, and the government has not published data on program recipients categorized by sex, business type, size, location, etc. Non-government institutions, often supported by development partners, Fijian business organizations, and informal communities support women's entrepreneurship.

1.13 Women in leadership and decision-making

In Parliament: According to IPU, 9.6% of seats in national parliament were held by women in 2010 in Fiji¹³; and according to World Bank Data Portal it had risen by 2022 to 19%.¹⁴ This current rate is lower than the average rate in upper-middle income countries.

¹¹ Source: National statistical offices or national database and publications compiled by United Nations Statistics Division. The data were downloaded on December 3 from the Global SDG Indicators Database

¹² Some key programs include: • Young Entrepreneur Scheme (YES), • Northern Development Programme (NDP), • Integrated Human Resources Development Programme (IHRDPP), • Improve Your Business training for women members of SPBD, and • The FDB Small and Medium Enterprise Sustainability Package.

¹³ Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) (www.ipu.org).

¹⁴ <https://genderdata.worldbank.org/en/economies/fiji#:~:text=19.6%25%20of%20seats%20in%20national,Fiji%20has%20increased%20since%202010>.

On Boards: A 2021 study found that women's representation on SOE Boards in Fiji grew from 5% in 2015 to 21% in 2020 but declined to 12% in 2021, significantly below the NDP target (PSDI 2021). The most recent round of appointments to the boards of state-owned enterprises has seen an increase in the representation of women from 21% to 30% (Government of Fiji, Ministry of Public Enterprise n.d.).

In Middle and Senior Management: In 2016, 38.6% of those employed in senior and middle management roles were women. The female share of employment in senior and middle management for Fiji falls in the fourth quintile of all countries for which there are data (data compiled from the most recent data point available between 2010 and 2023¹⁵).

In the community: Social structures and cultural norms influence women's participation in decision making (Qanti, Peralta & Zeng 2022). Hierarchies of respect create norms whereby young will defer to older people, and women to men. Norms are not so binding that people can't speak and contribute positively to mixed social gatherings yet, it is also the case that women (and youth) tend to be quiet in decision-making processes and especially when the village is home by marriage and not birth (Lawless et al. 2019).

In the home: Women's power in the home varies and is largely contingent on the relative degree of control exerted by her husband over family affairs. In general, women have stronger influence in the home than in public domains and the capacity to influence decisions in an informal way (Lawless et al 2019).

Gendered power varies with context

Women tend to be prohibited from speaking in public but gendered norms intersect with social hierarchy and women in positions of leadership or of higher social status may be granted more access to public meetings. It is often more acceptable for women to be heard and contribute to meetings and decision making when they are post-menopausal or have social status by virtue of coming from an esteemed family or having chiefly status, such as being married to or related to the Village Chief (Marstel-Day and WI-HER 2021).

1.14 Land rights for men and women

Fijian women and men have equal rights to inherit assets from their parents and spouses¹⁶, and to own immovable property as female members of landowning units.¹⁷ iTaukei customary law and national law protects this right. The iTaukei Lands Act 1905 (last amended in 2013), which is the legal document governing land ownership under traditional iTaukei systems, includes a special provision to protect the rights of married women (Republic of Fiji Islands, 1905).

¹⁵ Source: International Labour Organization. "Labour Market-related SDG Indicators database (ILOSDG)" ILOSTAT. Accessed February 06, 2024. <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/>,

¹⁶ The 2004 Inheritance (Family Provisions) Act grants inheritance rights to sons and daughters and to male and female surviving spouses. The 1891 Married Women's Property Act grants equal rights to women and men to own immovable property and equal administrative authority over assets during marriage.

¹⁷ The recognition of customary land in Fiji has led to existing robust legal mechanism to facilitate the distribution of benefits from leasing or exploitation of land resources. The five types of benefit sharing models - iTaukei Land Trust Board, Land Bank, Charitable Trust, Private Trust Deeds and Company models with legal frameworks and operational in the country.

In iTaukei culture, women who are registered members of their clan (*mataqali*) share in the communal ownership of the clan's land. When they marry into another clan, they do not share rights their husband's clan's land and "are not able to participate in decisions about or benefit from land use or agreements in their husbands' *mataqali*." (Marstel-Day & WI-HER 2021, p.2)

Women do however they retain rights to their natal family's land. Though women are legally entitled to benefit from natal land, "cultural norms and beliefs about gender and social status tend to restrict women's abilities to participate in public life and decision-making about land" (Marstel-Day & WI-HER 2021, p1). Under the iTaukei Lands Act 1905 Act, any person who does not reside in their home community for a period of two or more years may be forcefully divested from the landowning unit. The Act however declares that this provision may not be applied to women who are married and residing with their husbands, or to youth residing with their legal guardians.

1.15 Gender Roles and Reliance on Natural Resources

Fijian women have limited participation in forest governance at national and community levels even though the habitats, flora, and fauna of forests play an important role in their daily life. Women rely on forest resources for traditional medicines, firewood, craft activities, herbs, and food for the subsistence of children and other household members. Pawpaw, banana, oranges, kavika (Malay apple), mango, ivi (Tahitian chestnut) and coconut can be found on the lower to mid slopes of forested areas (Ministry of Forestry 2019). Fuelwood is sourced from the fringes of the forest, and women and men will fish for prawns and eels in a rivers and creeks that flow out from the range. Produce from seasonal native and introduced fruit trees, as well as other natural resources, are used mainly for subsistence consumption, with extra being sold at local markets (Ministry of Forestry 2019).

Men and women in Fiji have distinct roles, skills, and knowledge in many domains, including in relation to forestry and agro-forestry and the forest is mapped along gender lines. Women tend to search for and collect resources on the peripheries, near villages, while men venture further inside for hunting forest dwelling species and harvesting resources especially construction timber (FAO & SPC 2019). Timber can be harvested from pine woodlots scattered around the periphery of villages, but men tend to prefer specific forest species for building and use in traditional carving activities. Pig hunting is a traditional activity that supplemented household food or was used in the gift economy and ceremonial functions. Though pig hunting activities are less common today, due to less time and more availability of commercial meat, it still practiced often by a small group of men who travel long distances into the forest.

Craft is another significant gendered activity and a source of cultural identity and female wealth (FAO & SPC 2019). Tapa cloth (*masi*), for example, is made from beating the bark of mulberry trees into tapa cloth and charcoal and natural dyes are used to create motifs and patterns. Tapa is used in ceremonial functions and exchanged as in a gift economy (Ministry of Forestry 2019). Men can hold traditional knowledge of tree species and their treatment to make specific carved items, a boat hull or warrior club for instance.

It is worthwhile to note that despite Fiji's youthful population, young people tend not to be as engaged in natural resource management and development work as older people. This is partly due to traditional hierarchies yet more to do with aspirational identities that do not involve working with trees, soil, and other natural resources and a desire to live in urban centers.

1.16 Disputes and Alternative dispute resolution mechanisms

Dispute resolution occurs primarily within the court system in Fiji. However, under the 1944 Magistrates Court Act, each magistrate's court has an obligation to mediate disputes and seek settlement out of court (Section 28). For workplace disputes, the 2007 Employment Relations Act (ERA) established a mediation unit to resolve disputes between employers and employees (Sections 167-173). A Mediation Services Unit is located in the Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations. The ERA also established the Employment Relations Tribunal under the Ministry of Justice. For disputes related to other issues, such as domestic, land and property, The traditional social structure in Fiji facilitates dispute resolution at local level through informal and traditional networks.

Consultation in the Fijian communities occur through "Talanoa" sessions where issues are discussed collectively involving youths, women and vulnerable members. The iTaukei Lands Trust Act requires that formal consensus from iTaukei landowners to be supported by signatures from at least 60% of clan members before the Chief is given the opportunity to act on collective motions.

3. Gender Analysis

This section of the Gender Assessment provides analysis of project gender dimensions and potential entry points for effective gender mainstreaming to maximize gendered aspects of the Project benefits and outcomes.

The objective of the GCF project proposal is to restore the productive capacity and ecosystem quality of Fiji's forest landscapes, improve climate resilience of local forest-dwelling communities and improve storage and sequestration of greenhouse gases (GHG). It will do so by addressing gaps in land use planning and creating the necessary regulatory frameworks to enable customary stewards of the land to implement Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) at scale, supported by innovative financial mechanisms.

Fiji's institutional, policy and cultural contexts offer a rich diversity of mechanisms that support the theory of change and project design outcomes in ways that provide a robust enabling environment for female citizens, supporting opportunities in the Project for gender empowerment.

Key Barriers

Gendered constraints that inform the Gender Action Plan include:

- Fiji's policy and regulatory frameworks are gender progressive, but in the context of the project outputs sensitivity is required to recognize the gendered contexts of communities where the policy and regulatory mechanisms will be relevant or have an impact.
- The number of women in leadership and decision making in public forums is low, especially unrepresented are married women living away from their natal home, younger women, those in their reproductive years, and those of lower social standing.
- The low number of women in technical fields specifically in carbon finance and agriculture, including organic seedling production, agroforestry, and silviculture.
- Limited economic opportunities for communities and especially for women, beyond selling excess commodities from subsistence activities.
- Women's lack of access to financial resources (capital, loans/credit, insurance and bank accounts).
- High levels of violence against women (VAW) or gender-based violence (GBV).
- Women's participation in the management of forests and forest resources is limited despite their skills, knowledge, and reliance on forestry.
- Fijian workplaces, including public nurseries, do not fully accommodate the needs of women as workers.
- Low understanding, limited resources, and lack of capacities for climate change adaptation and resilience among women and socially disadvantaged people.

Project strategies for gender-responsive programming

Gender and socially inclusive interventions are embedded in the Project design and plans for implementation. Adequate human and financial resources will be provided to ensure systemic approaches to integrate gender equality throughout the project cycle and in implementation of gender-responsive activities. Based on the baseline data and identified gender barriers, equitable access to, and distribution of the benefits of productive forestry restoration and healthy ecosystems requires the effort in the areas set out below, with gender responsive and culturally tailored strategies and actions.

Providing opportunities for improving incomes and economic empowerment

The Project intends to develop partnerships between private sector and community groups, including landowners, for improved land and forest management including reforestation and restoration of degraded lands, as well as for the protection of conservation and HCV areas across 20 target districts. Development of such partnerships has a distinctly commercial aspect, where the existing public and private nurseries will be upgraded and reinvigorated, and new nurseries will be developed. This creates both employment and business opportunities for Fijian women, potentially leading to greater economic empowerment and follow on effects to improve broader gender development indicators. Special provisions in the GAP could be made for understanding opportunities for women in seedling production, training of women in horticulture and supporting MSME business enterprises with opportunities to provide capital and wraparound support to female entrepreneurs to grow and scale businesses.

Despite supportive legal frameworks, the gender equality gap and gender discrimination lead to women's occupational segregation in the workplace and influences the types of jobs women can find, how much they are paid, and whether they are promoted. Another area of gendered intervention is to improve knowledge and capacity of public nurseries to develop women-friendly workplaces for staff and suppliers. There will be equality in the treatment and pay for women in project-supported or project-related activities, but there is also scope (at least on a pilot or test case basis) to enable women to own, lead, manage and operate enterprises based in the rural economy and with potential to expand, diversify and prosper beyond the scope and timeframe of the Project.

Training and Capacity Building

The Project has several training and capacity building activities targeting a range of parties including policy makers, legal experts and civil servants with responsibilities or intersection with climate finance, bankers, communities, as well as technicians or extension workers in forestry and agriculture/agroforestry. With this range of target groups, topics where gender issues could be mainstreamed, and gender and social related information included in training materials, vary from policy reviews and financial mechanisms to conservation values, land management, partnerships, climate-resilient seeds and planting techniques. Also, university or technical partners who may overlook gender aspects or misunderstand gendered dimensions of their work can be supported to enhance content and approaches through the Project. Well-designed learning content will bring to life why gender matters, by including practical examples and case studies. As the Project reviews policies, develops mechanisms and prepared guidelines for institutional and community level actors, gender awareness and improved impact can be nurtured by providing examples and images of women working in non-gender traditional roles, for example, and showcasing examples of successful female entrepreneurship, and professionalism more widely. These inserts to planned training approaches and material are important for normative transformation. Awareness of impact of imagery and use of local and accessible language will also ensure greater uptake of any Project material by women and demonstrate FAO, CGF and all partners' commitment, awareness and sensitivity. The Project will also ensure that contractors' TORs include Gender awareness aspects and that contractors are briefed on project gender activities and policies.

Gender targeted activities for capacity and professional development include setting quotas for female participation in training programs, an ensuring meetings and workshops are arranged to maximize access and inclusion (see below). The Project also has the scope to provide learning and professional development for educated Fijian women to work alongside some Technical Advisors and in the facility. Through targeted internships and scholarships, the Project can give women a step up to help develop cadres of professionals in the emerging and fast-changing climate change arena.

Including and Engaging Women

The gender baseline data highlights that despite women's reliance on forestry-related products, they are under-represented in decision-making positions as men dominate decision-making about the management of forests and their resources. Women's role as caregivers and responsibility for domestic duties can prevent them from participating in public meetings and most women will not speak up in public forms and contributing to decision making.

These major barriers for integrating women's needs in community and multistakeholder meetings and consultations will be addressed in several ways that will be finessed in the inception phase of the project. This includes all meetings and consultations to be:

- Undertaken in locations, and at days and times convenient to women and where possible, when women are remunerated for lost work time or costs for attending.
- Carried out separate or exclusive briefings and/or consultations with women where needed, with the possibility of including their ideas and concerns in phased multi-stakeholder decision making processes.
- Diverse and marginal women and individuals identified and actively invited and supported to attend by providing tailored support.
- Venues to be accessible and safe spaces to hear the voices of women and CSOs representing women's needs and interests.

Including Women's Voice and Decision- Making Power

The enabling environment for mainstreaming gender equality is relatively strong in Fiji, with women in leadership positions, awareness of gender as a development and climate issue, and gender responsive policies, plans and frameworks at the national level. The Project will ensure that policies, tools, guidelines, and mechanisms (levy or other carbon finance mechanism) to be delivered will be reviewed and tested for how they impact women on the ground and modify them for gender fair implementation impacts.

In addition to holding meetings, training and consultations at times and places that accommodate women's time and mobility constraints (and separately for women where necessary), the Project can amplify women's voices through its institutional arrangements. The baseline notes the existence of Ministerial Gender Mainstreaming Action Groups under the National Action Plan, which may be utilized or replicated as needed. The GAP therefore includes an action to establish a Working Group (or Forum) that could include members and/or overlap with Ministerial Gender Mainstreaming Action groups but also include women in communities, gender champions and feminist advocates and gender specialists from government, university and CSOs.

To effectively engage women and have consistent gender perspectives through Project processes and outputs, there is a need to create/enable a link between women in target communities and high-level project activities, including the development or revision of legislation and guidelines, and development of financial tools. A Project Gender Working Group will serve as a reference and review point for the Project policy and knowledge products, any additional research, training material reviews or engagement opportunities and advisory needs. It will advocate for women in target communities and include their

needs and perspectives in community interfacing aspects of updated policies, plans and other decisions related to project outputs. With the Project gender specialist, this includes supporting women in target community to lead how they participate, and how much and why and how best to support women's monitoring, SEAH reporting and general feedback on the project, and leadership and decision-making.

Another entry point for raising women's profile in decision making is with Private Forestry Companies involved in Project activities. The companies supporting planting operations are important stakeholders who will be engaged, and have lessons to contribute, to bring greater benefit to women as they have experience with women who work in the nursery operation. Youths and able young men are often associated with planting gangs, plantation maintenance crew and other activities are equally important to be engaged in consultations to deliver gender and socially inclusive reviews and policy reform for sustainable forestry, agriculture and coastal management aspects of the Ridge to Reef project.

Traditional Knowledge

The project identifies the significant role of women in forestry and agriculture, and their forest-based knowledge, skills, and practices. Traditional knowledge and values of the forest will be identified, included, and possibly leveraged for the development of policy, frameworks, land use plans and other project outputs, where relevant. Project may consider opportunities to collaborate with University or NGOs and the Ministries of Forestry and Agriculture to promote recognition, and development of, women's traditional ecological knowledge, skills and practices. Case studies of women's roles or other information points to strengthen Project training materials and forums can also be linked to this topic, for relevant mainstreaming benefit and impact.

Violence against Women (VAW)

In the context of forestry and Ridge to Reef activities, special measures are needed to safeguard women from VAW / GBV because changes brought about by the project can create tensions between men and women which create risk for women. Shifts in power dynamics in relation of access to, use, control and the management of natural resources can create dangers for women. Men can feel threatened and become angry or violent when their wives, for example, become more outspoken in public discussions about resource distribution and use. Improvements in women's income can have impacts on family dynamics, providing women with more power which can tip the traditional structures and potentially leading to violence. Providing women opportunities to undertake monitoring and data collection related to ecosystems services monitoring can also expose them to the risk of violence. Violence harms women and maintains structures of patriarchal power and control, Gender and sexual harassment, abuse and violence can also trigger violence in communities.

The project will take these risks and realities into account, through monitoring system, gender responsive GRM and engaging women with sensitivity to their roles in the family and community (for example taking a 'family systems' approach).

This project will mitigate gendered risk by explicitly monitoring gendered conflict in target communities, and train project staff and contractors how to identify, address, appropriately flag, report, and respond to potential GBV-related disputes within the project by referring to existing reporting pathways and mechanisms. One approach to facing and highlighting the high prevalence of violence against women is to partner with a feminist orientated CSOs who has strong understanding of local communities and cultures for working with communities. Consideration of leading practice approaches for the Pacific – such as the family systems approach – will also be encouraged to gain the buy-in of traditional leadership and community members which prevents tensions escalating in the first place.

Grievance Redress

A robust grievance redress mechanism (GRM) is important for safeguarding women from intimidation, harassment and violence and also for any unexpected or undue impacts from project interventions. The project will take care to develop a GRM that is culturally tailored and gender responsive. It will protect the privacy and confidentiality of complainants. It will provide female liaison or field officers to handle cases involving women, as needed and ensure that reporting and follow up is compliant with the prevailing gender policies and gender-responsive local approaches.

Gendered data and lesson capture

The project will collect and analyze sector-specific sex-, age-, and disability-disaggregated data. Gender will be reported on in the midterm evaluation and terminal evaluation report, especially to convey how women's actions, decision and feedback increased their participation and in community-based forest enterprises for improved livelihoods. Furthermore, while preparing the CLMPs a detailed socioeconomic mapping and assessment will be executed including qualitative reporting on barriers faced by adolescents, elderly women, women with disabilities and economically vulnerable households, without collecting sensitive personal data or compromising confidentiality.

Gendered data capture throughout the project should feed into the Project knowledge management plan. Based on experiences from the Project implementation and the Gender Action Plan initiatives, there are numerous easy-wins or low hanging fruit opportunities for the Project to develop case studies and document lessons about social change and economic empowerment of women from Ridge to Reef in Fiji.
