



Advancing Women's Land and Resource Rights

Possibilities for Gender Equity in Land and Forest Tenure in REDD+ Programming

Fiji



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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	5
NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR WOMEN’S RIGHTS	5
NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR WOMEN'S LAND TENURE AND FOREST MANAGEMENT RIGHTS.....	7
Overview of Land and Forest Tenure	7
Individualized Land	8
Common/Collective Land (Including Indigenous Community/Collective Land/Resources)	8
Community Membership.....	11
Governance of Common Resources	12
SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SITUATION ANALYSIS	13
Women and employment.....	13
Violence	14
Women and Poverty	15
Intra-Household Decision Making on Income	15
Division of Labor	16
Women in Governance and Decision Making.....	17
Typology of Participation	18
Access to Information	19
Linkages to Ethnicity	19
Food Security	19
Vulnerability to Natural Hazards	19
CLIMATE CHANGE PROGRAMMING AND GENDER INCLUSION	20

Component 1: Strengthening Enabling Conditions for Emission Reductions (~USD 1.648 million) 20
 Potential gender issues in Component 1.20

Component 2: Promoting Integrated Landscape Management (~ USD 36.681 million)..... 23
 Potential social and gender issues in Component 2.24

Component 3: Program Management and Emissions Monitoring (USD 4.117 million)..... 25
 Potential social and gender issues in Component 3.25

EXISTING ORGANIZATIONS WORKING WITH WOMEN..... 26

ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GENDER INCLUSION 27

Broaden the Definition of Beneficiaries So That Women are Included 27

Allocate a Portion of the Benefit Pool to a Women’s Fund at the Local Level..... 27

Invest in Supporting Women's Participation in all Levels of Consultation and Decision Making 28

REFERENCES 30

Introduction

Fiji has an estimated population of 880,000 spread across 322 islands and 522 smaller islets. The majority of the population lives on the two main islands: Viti Levu, which hosts both the capital city of Suva and the tourist hub of Nadi, and Vanua Levu. The country has two main population groups: iTaukei (57%) and Indo-Fijian (37%) (UN Women Asia and Pacific, 2018). The iTaukei have customary rights to land.

The ERP will directly affect 97% of Fiji's population. The composition of the population varies between the three larger islands; however, given that 90% of the land in the ERP falls within iTaukei lands, the main target group will consist of iTaukei communities. There are also tenant farmers on iTaukei land who have lease titles on such lands that allow full rights like ownership while the lease is in force (ERPD, pp. 31-32).

National Legal Framework for Women's Rights



Photo by [Prem Kurumpanai](#)

The Constitution is the supreme law of Fiji.¹ Law making, interpretation, and application must be consistent with the Constitution and the values of democracy, equality, and freedom.² In its Bill of Rights, the Constitution also provides for freedom from discrimination, meaning equal protection, treatment, and benefit of the law, as well as full enjoyment of rights. It also

¹ Fiji. Const. ch. 2, § 1.

² *Id.*, ch. 3, § 1, 2.

precludes direct or indirect discrimination on the grounds of sex or gender (among others) *unless it can be shown that discriminatory treatment is not unfair under the circumstances.*³ However, on matters that pertain specifically to the potential unequal treatment of women, the Constitution has a claw back clause, providing that a law is not inconsistent with the Constitution if it relates to marriage and devolution of property on death, or on the communal ownership of customary (iTaukei, Rotuman, and Banaban) lands.⁴

The Ministry of Women, Children, and Poverty Alleviation in Fiji, as part of the Department of Women, includes addressing gender inequality and empowering women in its responsibilities. Its current National Strategic Plan (2018-2022) includes goals to increase women's representation at all levels of government and civil society (mostly through training and coaching), to eliminate violence against women, and to review laws and policies to ensure that they are gender responsive, including laws that govern family law (Ministry of Women, Children, and Poverty Alleviation, 2018). Its projected budget for 2020 is 139,000,000 Fijian dollars.

Funding has been made available to support some gender mainstreaming work in various ministries; however, technical capacity for gender responsive analysis, planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation is lacking (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations [FAO], 2019). In addition, the Department of Women is reportedly marginalized in government hierarchy (Asian Development Bank, 2016).

³ *Id.*, ch. 26, §1, 2, 3, 7.

⁴ *Id.*, ch. 26, § 8, art. d & g.

National Legal Framework for Women's Land Tenure and Forest Management Rights



Photo by [Nicolas Weldingh](#)

Overview of Land and Forest Tenure

The Constitution recognizes three types of land tenure: customary land⁵ that cannot be alienated; state (or Crown) land; and freehold land.⁶ The Constitution also recognizes tenancies on customary, state, and freehold lands; it is via these tenancies that Indo-Fijians⁷ have rights to land.⁸

A small portion of forested land in Fiji (4.3%) is state land, and 5.8% of forest is private freehold land. Some forests are protected as conservation areas. The overwhelming majority of land that is covered by the ERP is iTaukei land, which are customary lands recognized and codified in formal law. These lands are governed by the iTaukei Lands Act of 1905, as well as the iTaukei Land Trust Act (Cap 134). Both of these legal instruments are silent on matters of gender.

⁵ This is sometimes referred to as “native” land or iTaukei land, where the iTaukei is the name of the dominant and most populous indigenous people of the Fijian Islands.

⁶ Fiji. Const. ch. 28, 29.

⁷ Indo-Fijians are Fijians of Indian descent, they are not members of the Indigenous People of Fiji.

⁸ Fiji. Const. ch. 28, 29.

Individualized Land

There is limited land that is classified as under private individual ownership in Fiji, and these lands are not covered in the ERP area. There are individualized rights to customary land within the customary tenure system, and these are described in the next section.

Common/Collective Land (Including Indigenous Community/Collective Land/Resources)

Eighty percent of the land mass in Fiji is classified as customary land (otherwise referred to as iTaukei). These lands include forests as well as lands that are used for agriculture; cultivated land is often dispersed throughout forested areas. The ERP accounting area is considered more than 90% iTaukei land.

In 1905 the customary land tenure system of the dominant Indigenous group, the iTaukei, was codified and became the governing land law of all of Fiji in the iTaukei Lands Act (1905). However, as explored below, the iTaukei Lands Act (“the Act”) did not codify customary tenure as it was in fact practiced, and instead codified a simplified and at times inaccurate interpretation of the customary tenure system creating legal gaps and ambiguities.

According to the Act, iTaukei lands are all lands that are not state lands nor subject to a state land grant, and iTaukei land owners are the *mataqali* having customary right to occupy and use any iTaukei lands.⁹

The Act recognizes customary tenure of the iTaukei, providing that iTaukei lands are held by the iTaukei people according to iTaukei customs of use and tradition. The lands may be cultivated, allotted, and dealt with by the iTaukei among themselves according to their customs subject only to the regulations made by the iTaukei Affairs Board.¹⁰ The iTaukei Affairs Board is established by the iTaukei Affairs Act (1944)¹¹ and consists of the Minister responsible for Indigenous affairs as Chairperson, four Cabinet Ministers, and four others appointed by the Minister.¹² It is a body corporate whose duties are to make regulations providing for the peace, order, welfare and good government of iTaukei.¹³

⁹ iTaukei Lands Act 1905. art. 2.

¹⁰ *Id.*, art. 3.

¹¹ iTaukei Affairs Act 1944. art 4(1).

¹² iTaukei Affairs (iTaukei Affairs Board) Regulations 1996. art 3.

¹³ iTaukei Affairs Act 1944. art. 6.

Under the formal law, much of the authority for land governance rests with the iTaukei Lands Commission (appointed by the Minister) which has the duty of ascertaining what lands in each province of Fiji are the rightful hereditary property of iTaukei owners.¹⁴ When the Commission decides ownership it records boundaries and the names of the “proprietary unit” owning the land.¹⁵ The Act does not define the term “proprietary unit,” although it does state the Commission can inquire into title of lands that are claimed by *mataqali* (a customary subdivision of a kin group claiming a common ancestor) or other customary subdivisions of the people.¹⁶ The Act does not provide any guidance on how those groups are defined or who is a member of those groups. The Act does, however, give the Commission the authority to allot land at its discretion to any dependents for their occupation and use,¹⁷ suggesting that the groups who are owners share a lineage. The Commission also has the authority to determine who is the head of the of the group (*mataqali* or other subgroup) with the customary right to occupy and use iTaukei lands.¹⁸

Thus, under the Act, iTaukei lands are “owned” by members of the *mataqali* or other customary subgroup, but authority to govern and manage iTaukei land is vested in the iTaukei Land Commission, with some rights held by the iTaukei Affairs Board, both of which are statutory bodies. **Deep dive analysis could explore more deeply how formal and customary tenure works in practice, in particular, where lies the legal and the customary authority of land decision making, management, and control; where women and men at community levels fit into these systems; and where the law and custom overlap and where they differ.**

Customary tenure in practice differs from the codified customary tenure that is formally in the Act. The Act was formulated based on a simplified, standardized model of communal ownership by a *mataqali* as landowning subgroups. However, under custom as it is practiced, for most of Fiji, the *mataqali* is but one subgroup in a complex lineage system and, unlike the provisions of the Act, the *mataqali* is not always the determinative group for rights to customary land (Tanner, 2007). Thus, the *mataqali* was formalized as the landowning group in the Act, but that is out of alignment with how the customary tenure systems work in practice.

Under customary tenure as practiced, land is categorized as one of three basic types: 1) at the center is land occupied by the village; 2) it is surrounded by garden areas; 3) the garden areas are surrounded by forest/grassland (Tanner, 2007). Regardless of formal ownership (e.g. by a

¹⁴ iTaukei Lands Act 1905. art. 4.

¹⁵ *Id.*, art. 9.

¹⁶ *Id.*, art. 6.

¹⁷ *Id.*, art. 18.

¹⁸ *Id.*, art. 17.

mataqali under the Act) and formal demarcation and registration of lands in the name of the *mataqali*, customary leadership at village level manage all three customary land categories (except for leased or other commercial lands for which the formal Land Trust Board has authority). A village does not have a population drawn from a single *mataqali* (Tanner, 2007), yet the Act is formulated as if the boundaries of the village, the *mataqali* group, and the registered land are the same.

Under customary tenure, residents of a village who are also of the same *mataqali* have house sites together and share a common land between their homes, which is collectively maintained by *mataqali* members in that village (Tanner, 2007). In practice, the village may have members from different *mataqalis*.

Garden areas are allocated for exclusive control and management to an individual male (mostly) who is a member of the group with historical ties to the land. The “individualized” garden areas are dispersed through the forested areas and can include lands that are under cultivation as well as lands that are forested, grasslands, and land that is being fallowed. Individualized lands are managed by the men to whom the lands have been allocated and are used by his household (wife, unmarried children) (Tanner, 2007). Cultivation and harvesting work on garden areas is done by the household to whom the garden has been allocated as their own (Tanner, 2007).

Under customary tenure, men most often inherit garden areas. There may be limited inheritance of gardens by women such as by a widow or an adult daughter who has inherited her husband’s or father’s plot located in the vicinity of his village (Tanner, 2007). Some women acquire individual rights to land through marriage as a dowry (Tanner, 2007). Rural women typically farm land that belongs to their male relatives, and women’s land rights under customary tenure in Fiji are generally usufruct (Bolabola, 1986; Tanner, 2007).

Some natural resources are used communally by members of the *mataqali* as well as other people from the area surrounding the forest/grassland zones. From these common resources, people collect timber, non-timber forest products (NTFPs), and hunt animals (Tanner, 2007). However, there are certain wild economic plants within the communal areas that are owned by individuals (e.g., plants regularly harvested for raw materials to make mats) (Tanner, 2007).

In the ERP accounting areas, women and men use forests differently. Women are involved in collecting NTFPs such as herbal medicinal plants, ornamental plants, and forest food such as wild ferns. They are responsible for selling fruits, vegetables, and root crops. They also collect firewood. Men typically take on staple root crop, collect firewood, hunt wild pigs, bats, and pigeons, and farm sugar cane. Younger women are far more likely to have embraced cultivation

of high-value kava than older women (ERPD). Measures to conserve existing carbon stocks might restrict women's access to the forests for NTFP harvesting and grazing the livestock near the forests (GAP).

Women generally have a significant knowledge of the forests and forest resources, especially NTFPs that differs from that of men ((Ministry of Forestry, 2019; TEBTEBBA, 2019). Despite this, iTaukei women were not consulted during the cadastral surveys. Men from the same village continue to argue that their wives and younger women are not technical experts to participate in surveys (TEBTEBBA, 2019).

Women in the ERP accounting area are concerned about reducing availability of both NTFPs and of firewood in their areas. NTFP collection is arduous work and produces little income, but is nonetheless relied on by women (Ministry of Forestry, 2019). However, women's concerns and interests are not taken into account in forest decision making due to male-dominated forest management processes (Ministry of Forestry, 2019).

SESA analysis showed that women have a more realistic approach to how possible carbon financial benefits should be used. Women proposed that carbon payments would enhance the collective welfare of the village community, while men were more likely to look at individual payments. At the same time, consultations demonstrated that men agreed that REDD+ without the active participation of women would be less than effective (Ministry of Forestry, 2019).

Community Membership

Within the formal framework for land, members of the *mataqali* (customary landowning group) are registered in the *vola ni kawa bula* (aka VKB, or the iTaukei landowners register). Women and men should be registered in the VKB at birth, upon production of a birth certificate, and validation that the mother or father are not registered twice (Ministry for iTaukei Affairs, 2017). It is not clear in the laws, regulations, or procedures whether a woman's VKB registration changes when she marries and moves to her spouse's land. Given the administrative hurdles and the custom of patrilineal lineage, it is likely that women's VKB registration does not change with relocation at marriage. **This should be verified with local experts on the matter, as it has ramifications for women's opportunities to share in benefits from REDD+ activities.**

All iTaukei members have legal right to the ownership of customary land and also to receive royalties/benefits from owning land, but this is linked to their membership in a *mataqali* whose land is the basis for the royalty payment/benefit sharing.

According to the SESA and GAP, women have the legal right to royalty payments from their villages of birth. But there is no evidence available on whether this is happening in practice. This is also a matter that could be addressed in a deep dive inquiry in Fiji.

To be eligible as a beneficiary under the BSP, women must be considered “community members or smallholder farmers.” To be eligible as such they need to have legal rights to carbon, which is linked to land ownership and that itself is linked to the *mataqali*-based system that is defined in the Act. Because women move to their husband’s village on marriage, they are not (likely) members of the landowning *mataqali* in their husband’s village nor are they considered “owners” in that village. This means that women are at some risk of being excluded from project benefits linked to ownership.

Also, women's lack of power or authority to speak on land and resource matters in their households and communities—it is considered men's business—prevents them from addressing this challenge themselves.

Thus, the customary tenure model that is recognized in the Act and is the basis for the ER-PD and the BSP creates challenges to achieving gender equity by disadvantaging women who marry-in to a village under patrilocal marriage practice. Even though women are legal members of the *mataqali* of their birth (and are thereby part of that landowning group), they are not considered landowners in the place where they live, work, farm, and use forests. This means that women who have married-in will be excluded from benefits that accrue for landowners (royalties as well as consultation and participation), will not be consulted for decisions made by landowners, and will be excluded from activities seeking to change behavior of landowners vis-à-vis forest use and management. It may also mean that women have lower incentives to participate in the program, which could impact achieving project goals.

Governance of Common Resources

In formal law, control of iTaukei land is vested in the iTaukei Land Trust Board for the benefit of iTaukei owners.¹⁹ The iTaukei Land Trust Board is composed of the Minister as chairperson, five

¹⁹ iTaukei Land Trust Act, 1940.

landowner representatives appointed by Minister, three members appointed by the iTaukei Affairs Board, and two other members appointed by the Minister.²⁰ The Land Trust Board is a body corporate.²¹ Subject to provisions of the Forest Act (among others), iTaukei land is considered by law to be held in trust and cannot be alienated except to the State, but may be leased or licensed with consent of the Board.²² Any payments derived from such dealings (e.g., rent) is distributed by the Board, with a 25% administration fee for itself and other obligations to the state taken first.²³ The distribution of such income is to all living members of the proprietary unit (the *mataqali*) in equal shares (proprietary unit must be registered in the VKB).²⁴

Social and Environmental Situation Analysis



Photo by [Savir](#)

Women and employment

Employment opportunities are very limited in rural Fiji. About a quarter of the rural population (24.7%) work in agriculture, fisheries, and forestry, of which there are officially nearly three

²⁰ iTaukei Lands Act, 1905. art. 3.

²¹ *Id.*

²² iTaukei Land Trust Act, 1940. art. 12.

²³ *Id.*, art. 14.

²⁴ iTaukei Land Trust (Lease and Licenses) Regulations, 1984. art. 11.

times more men than women (30.6% compared to 11.1%). Agriculture (including fisheries and forestry) is the primary industry of employment for men. Just over 13% of rural women in Fiji work in wholesale and retail trade (FAO, 2019). Women are increasingly engaged in self-employment, but make up only 20% of the registered micro and small businesses in Fiji (Ministry of National Planning, 2010, pp. 30-31).

Informal employment is high nationwide, with nearly half of the total population (48%) working in the informal economy in 2016 (FAO, 2019). It is important to note that over two thirds of all informal workers are in rural areas (67.8%). On average, rural women earn a quarter less than rural men and there is a significant urban-rural wage gap of 44.5%, which may result in greater overall vulnerability of the rural population to poverty (FAO, 2019). Informal businesses can be attractive to women because they provide flexible working arrangements and have lower entrance requirements. However, the unregulated nature of these businesses also poses risks to women's personal safety, job, and food security (Ministry of National Planning, 2010, pp. 30-31).

In Fiji markets, 75%–90% of vendors are women, and their earnings often make up a significant portion of household incomes in the informal sector. Despite this, women are often excluded from market governance and decision making (Gavidi et al., 2019). Many Fijian women sell prepared foods and baked goods, and run small shops.

Violence

Reported rates of violence against women and girls in Fiji are very high: 64% of women who have ever been in an intimate relationship have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a husband or intimate partner in their lifetime, and 24% were suffering physical or sexual partner violence at the time of the violence research (Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, 2013).

Fiji has one of the highest levels of domestic violence in the world. Studies show that up to 72% of women aged 18-64 years have experienced at least one or more form of physical, sexual, or emotional violence, by their husband or partner in their lifetime (Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, 2013). The most prevalent form of sexual violence is child sexual abuse with 16% of all women sexually abused when they were children under the age of 15 (Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, 2013; Live & Learn & CARE, 2016).

A shift to commercialization forest uses can lead to increase in alcoholism, over-use of kava, and domestic violence (TEBTEBBA, 2019).

Women and Poverty

Sex-disaggregated data on poverty in Fiji are not available. However, the Government of Fiji has indicated that there are several factors putting women at a higher risk of poverty, including labor market discrimination and non-payments of alimonies and child support by former spouses in cases of separation and divorce. The government has also reported that a majority of beneficiaries of the Family Assistance Scheme from the Social Welfare Department are women (Secretariat of the Pacific Community [SPC], 2015).

In a study on Fiji looking at the individual deprivation measure (an alternative to measuring poverty at household level), nearly half the men in the sample (48%) reported full control over personal decisions, compared to only 25% of women (International Women's Development Agency [IWDA], 2017). Women were more likely than men to report no control over personal decisions (5% compared to 1.4%). Young people, and young women in particular, perceived the least control over their personal decision making. While men were more likely than women to report full personal support from friends and family in times of trouble (50% compared to 45%), men were also more likely to report no personal support (6% of men compared to 3.6% of women). Women were more likely to report moderate amounts of personal support from friends and family in times of trouble (IWDA, 2017).

Over 30% of all women living in the proposed ERP accounting area are either living in poverty or are in danger of moving into poverty. This is not because of deforestation and degradation although they are drivers of rural poverty, but because of the lack of income-generating opportunities in most rural areas (TEBTEBBA, 2019).

Intra-Household Decision Making on Income

There is considerable variation among households decision-making practices in Fiji, which are the result of a complex interplay of factors including age, education, ethnicity, geographic location, and income level. In many families, men are considered the head of the household and decision making is largely based on traditional gender roles where men make most key decisions and women's decision making is limited to the care of children, domestic concerns, or for management of particular natural resources. However, in some families shared decision making is the norm.

In Fiji, women on family-owned sugar cane farms are often expected to provide unpaid labor in order to ensure the harvest, although they rarely control the income generated through their efforts (Carswell, 2003). One study found that rural women in Fiji demonstrated greater

competency than men at managing household finances and savings, and noted that further access to mobile banking services could benefit such women (Pacific Financial Inclusion Programme, 2009).

Division of Labor

Gendered divisions of labor are apparent in the agricultural sector. In crop production, women tend to carry out the ongoing, time-intensive work of garden maintenance and are involved in harvesting, processing, and marketing. Men tend to take on the more physically strenuous work of clearing gardens, burning, maintaining large root crops, and using machines to plough, cut brush, or harvest cane. In addition to agricultural work and other productive employment, women spend large amounts of time on reproductive work, taking the bulk of responsibility for childrearing, cooking, cleaning, and community work such as ceremonial events, church, and community meetings (FAO, 2019).

The impact of modernization, particularly the influence of the market economy, has been significant and has both challenged and complicated rural women's daily experiences. Women are often at the intersection of the individualistic focus of a market economy and their communal way of life, which largely depends on women's responsibility for maintaining traditions (Yabaki, 2006). Their families, *vanua* (culture, society), church, and school continue to be central institutions in their lives. Each of these institutions make large demands of the women's time and resources (Yabaki, 2006).

Primary responsibility for water collection in Fiji rests with women and children. In rural settlements, distance travelled to access water can take up to 90 minutes each day. Walking a longer distance to a water source takes time away from other productive activities, and potentially exposes an individual to increased risk of violence (IWDA, 2015).

Climate-smart crops introduced within Subcomponent "promotion of climate-smart agriculture and sustainable livelihoods" could add to the burden of women farmers if the proposed crops (such as vanilla) require extra time and resources that are less available to women than men. Also, if those crops require specialized or technical training, women may be excluded from those activities because of time burdens, lower education, and lack of participation in public events (World Bank, 2019).

Women in Governance and Decision Making

Men dominate in customary systems of governance, while women have limited decision-making roles. There are rare instances of women holding high status (Asian Development Bank, 2016). Because of customary views of power and authority, especially related to land and natural resources, rural women have little space and opportunity to be active decision makers in the socioeconomic and political affairs of the village (Yabaki, 2006).

The majority of people in Fiji feel that women are underrepresented in government and that changing this would be beneficial to the nation as a whole. People recognize that the qualifications and attributes of leadership are not unique to men, but are common to both men and women. Conservative viewpoints that favor male leadership are a small but significant minority in certain demographics; the strongest support for female leadership is found amongst women and young people (Dumaru & Pene, 2014).

In practice, women rarely hold leadership positions at national, provincial, or *tikina* level. The language in the iTaukei Village By-Laws regulations is either gender neutral or masculine. Sex-disaggregated data on village headship is not collected by the state. However, studies suggest that the village heads are predominantly male. Wives of chiefs can play key roles in the community, but numbers of women on village governance committees are generally low.

In terms of participation in governance by women in the community, women are usually excluded from formal decision-making processes concerning land in the largely male-dominated *mataqali* systems. Women are permitted to participate in most meetings, but their power and influence varies from place to place depending on factors such as 1) isolation of communities; 2) influence and “enforcement” of social norms; and/or 3) education levels and political connections of community members. In rural Fiji, it is common for women’s husbands or brothers to be the public voice for the family in community or village councils. Social norms tend to place the well-being of the community ahead of the rights of individuals.

Age is also a factor in decision making. In Fiji traditionally the older generation has a priority role and voice in decision-making processes. Women in communities are generally quiet in management and decision-making processes, especially those who are young and married into a village (World Bank, 2019; TEBTEBBA, 2019).

Even if women have influence in the family and households, and collectively have the capability of influencing decisions, their participation is informal and consequently less powerful. Women are generally asked individually for their consent when this is required to achieve a majority,

but in fact it excludes women in cases when there is no need for majority's consent (TEBTEBBA, 2019; World Bank, 2019).

Using the typology of participation, literature suggests that women participate “passively;” they are informed of decisions *ex-post facto*, or attend meetings and only listen to what is being decided, but do not speak up.

Typology of Participation

Form/level of participation	Characteristic Features
Nominal	Membership in the group
Passive	Being informed of decisions <i>ex post facto</i> ; or attending meetings and listening in on decision making without speaking up
Consultative	Being asked an opinion in specific matters without guarantee of influencing the decision
Activity-specific	Being asked to (or volunteering to) undertake specific tasks
Active	Expressing opinions, whether or not solicited, or taking initiatives of other sorts
Interactive	Having voice and influence in the group's decisions; holding positions as office bearers
Empowering	Agenda setting

The current BSP names beneficiaries as “communities/village settlements” and “smallholder farmers.” The criteria for each of these is based on confirmation of their legal rights, which will result in exclusion of some women (married-in, not members of the *mataqali* in question), and iTaukei men and women who have customary rights to use the lands but are not members of the *mataqali* and do not have a lease or license (which could be considered a legal right).

Access to Information

Women's access to information is mediated through males in the communities. Formal information dissemination sessions and discussions during village and *mataqali* meetings exclude women. Most local male leaders do not consider it important that women be directly exposed to information from external sources (Ministry of Forestry, 2019).

Women may be excluded from providing feedback into planning and management process and forest information system, and thus may not be involved in and benefit from project activities. Women also generally know more about NTFPs than men and a forest information system without their input would be incomplete (TEBTEBBA, 2019; World Bank, 2019).

Because women do not typically participate in local governance or receive information, they may be excluded from capacity building on forest laws, enforcement, and governance at community level (planned within Subcomponent 1.2. Strengthening forest governance and law enforcement) (World Bank, 2019).

Linkages to Ethnicity

Non-iTaukei women will have a different experience than iTaukei women because they are not considered members of the customary landowning group (which also relates to lower incomes levels, lower levels of education, lower status, and weaker knowledge). Non-iTaukei households typically use land that has been leased from a customary landowning group (Ministry of Forestry, 2019; TEBTEBBA, 2019).

Food Security

Changes and restrictions on access to forests can impact household food security, in particular because it will impact their livelihoods (collecting NTFPs provides a steady income that is then used for food purchases), and because household food security depends on women in the household. (TEBTEBBA, 2019).

Vulnerability to Natural Hazards

Women may be more vulnerable to natural hazards because they rely more on natural resources for their sustenance and livelihood (Ministry of Forestry, 2019).

Climate Change Programming and Gender Inclusion



Photo by [Max](#)

The ERP accounting area covers approximately 90% of Fiji's landmass. The ER-PD lists three key components for Fiji:

Component 1: Strengthening Enabling Conditions for Emission Reductions (~USD 1.648 million)

This component focuses on existing frameworks, rational resource allocation, and community-based monitoring systems aligned to local governance structures of the Ministry of Forestry, Ministry of Rural Development, and the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs. Implementation of the ERP will:

- Develop an Integrated National Land Use Planning (INLUP) to promote more sustainable long-term integrated landscape management
- Strengthen forest governance and law enforcement
- Improve forest information system

Potential gender issues in Component 1. Considering the legal, social, and gender context in Fiji, the below table shows gender equity issues and considerations for the outputs of Component 1.

Output (ER-PD Component 1)	Gender equity consideration
<p>20 Integrated District Land Use (IDLUP) and Management Plans (ILUMP) will be developed with support of 120 communities in an area of 510,319 ha over five years</p>	<p>Even though women are users of forests and land, use land and forest in different ways than men, and have gender-specific knowledge of forest and NTFPs, they may be directly excluded or functionally excluded in community consultations or engagement and participation activities related to developing IDLUP and ILUMP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directly excluded if the criteria for involvement is pinned to being a member of landowning group (<i>mataqali</i>) or being a smallholder farmer where that is assumed to be a male, or where household heads are invited to speak for their families (who are mostly male) • Functionally excluded if concrete steps are not taken to address the gender differentiation in ability, experience, and opportunity to participate in public meetings or decision making
<p>40 community Integrated Land Use Plans developed through participatory engagement such as Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation and others</p>	<p>Even if included, women's needs and interests in IDLUPs and ILUMPs might not be given equal weight to those of men during the community consultations or engagement because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women may be married-in and not considered a member of the <i>mataqali</i> in the place where they reside and use land • Women who have married-out might be considered <i>mataqali</i> in the place of her natal family, but may not be included in communications, information, and notice activities because she resides elsewhere and uses land of her husband family for her day-to-day subsistence

	<p>This could in turn impact the food security of the communities (since women's activities are typically responsible for cultivating food or earning income to be used for food).</p> <p>Women may have less access to information that would enable them to participate on an equal level with similarly-situated men.</p> <p>Participatory approaches do not outline specifically who it is that must participate. The Open Standards for Practice of Conservation is a good resource for participatory approach, but it is not clear on who should be participating. It is critical that women participate directly and meaningfully, and are given equal opportunity to influence decisions as similarly-situated men.</p> <p>Vocal participation of women in public settings could risk being a trigger for GBV (e.g., publicly expressing an opinion that differs from a male family member, or offending notions of masculinity by playing a non-traditional female role).</p>
<p>Awareness raising on legal and regulatory framework to reach over 5,000 people across 20 districts</p>	<p>Objective of legal and regulatory information and awareness raising does not clearly state whose awareness will be raised/will receive information, and if gender and social norms are followed, then women may be effectively excluded from these activities. Also, the activity does not require that gender-sensitive approaches are adopted, which could mean that any training that women do receive may not be as effective as it could be.</p>
<p>Capacity building on forest law enforcement and governance at</p>	<p>Training activity does not clearly state that women and men should be among those trained, and does not require gender-sensitive approaches to training to be adopted.</p>

community level through 15 semi-formal training	
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Component 2: Promoting Integrated Landscape Management (~ USD 36.681 million)

This is the core component of the ERP and aims to implement integrated land use plans at the district level; support reduces impact logging, advocates for sustainable management of forests in large tracts of forest, and adheres to the FFHCOP in more than 8,500 ha over five years. It also aims to support restoration of degraded lands through afforestation and reforestation and to promote Fiji Pine Ltd.-managed plantation forestry activities in 2,500 ha per year (1,219 ha above BAU) for five years and Fiji Hardwood Corp. Ltd.-managed plantation activities in 478 ha above BAU for three years (2020-2022).

At the same time, community-based afforestation and reforestation activities are proposed in support of the government initiative of one million tree a year where carbon enhancement planting is expected to cover an estimated 5,750 ha by the end of 2024.

Activities promoting agroforestry and alternative livelihoods to reduce pressure on forest resource/habitats will also be promoted. Agroforestry will focus on restoration of riparian zones estimated at 5,000 ha over five years and shade-grown agriculture is proposed for implementation in 5,000 ha over a five-year period. A total area of 36,400 ha is proposed to be set aside as protected area by 2024.

The overall impact of Component 2 is anticipated to result in:

- Avoiding deforestation in 9,500 ha
- Enhancing forest carbon stocks through afforestation and reforestation at community level in 11,750 ha
- Enhancing forest carbon stocks involving plantations in 7,532 ha
- Reducing forest degradation by implementing sustainable harvesting of native forests in 8,500 ha

Many of the ERP activities are applicable to all the 20 districts where ILUPs are developed such that large districts have habitats from intact to degraded forest. In such areas (e.g., Tavua, Bua, and other districts), more than one ERP activity may apply at different scales. Further, the large

number of communities/villages in each district makes allocation of multiple components of the ERP applicable in accordance to the ILUP.

Potential social and gender issues in Component 2. Considering the legal, social, and gender context of Fiji, the below table shows the gender equity issues and considerations for the outputs of Component 2.

Output (ER-PD Component 2)	Gender equity consideration
Avoiding deforestation in 9,500 ha through implementation of ILUPs	<p>Women and men's behavior change is needed to ensure deforestation activities are avoided.</p> <p>Deep understanding of women and men's incentives for current behavior is needed.</p> <p>Gendered division of labor and responsibilities suggests that the incentives to change behavior will also be different for women and men. I.e., women are responsible for providing food from forested areas and for using products from forest land or NTFPs for income to help with caretaking responsibilities, and also to play a role in cultural or other activities. Suitable alternatives will be needed for women to be able to continue to meet these responsibilities.</p>
Afforestation and reforestation at community level to enhance forest carbon stocks in 11,750 ha	<p>There are gender dimensions to whose use/reliance on afforested and reforested land will be impacted because women and men use forest land differently.</p> <p>Also, since women's activities in forests directly relate to household food security, suitable alternatives for cultivating food or making an income to purchase food, must be incorporated into any change of land and forest uses.</p>

Enhancing forest carbon stocks involving plantations in 7,532 ha	To the extent that benefits (e.g., royalty and lease payments) extend to landowners whose land is used for plantations, consideration of gender dimensions of benefit sharing is critical. If this were to simply follow the formalized definition of a landowner, then women may lose out (in different ways if they are married-in or married-out women).
Sustainable harvesting of native forests in 8,500 ha	<p>Women rely on NTFPs and these should be incorporated into the sustainable harvesting plan so that women's needs, knowledge, and preferences are meaningfully accounted for.</p> <p>Also, since women's activities in forests directly relate to household food security, suitable alternatives for cultivating food or making an income to purchase food, must be incorporated into any change of land and forest uses.</p>

Component 3: Program Management and Emissions Monitoring (USD 4.117 million)

This component will monitor implementation of the ERP activities and report on their performance. This component will also support dissemination of key learnings from ERP implementation. Key impacts of Component 3 include the implementation of the Gender Action Plan and implementation of the Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF).

Potential social and gender issues in Component 3. Gender-related issues for this component are covered in the Gender Action Plan and M&E plans.

Existing Organizations Working with Women



Photo by [Vijesh Datt](#)

Women have a strong network of associations across Fiji such as the **Soqosoqo Vakamarama**, with affiliated women's groups in all local Village Women's Associations. **The Women's Association** focuses on women's reproductive health, schooling for their children, and economic empowerment. More recently, it has been heavily involved as the Chair of the REDD+ Civil Society Organization. At the village level, the Women's Association forms a committee that is a subcommittee of the Village Development Committee. The Women's Committee is required to report to the wider village meeting which in most iTaukei villages are held twice a month. The village meeting is chaired by the Chief with the village headman, the Secretary. The village headman submits monthly reports to the Provincial Council Office, including issues raised by the Women's Committee at the village meeting (World Bank, 2019).

The **Fiji Women's Fund**, is a 10.5 million AUD fund that helps funding and capacity development support to women's groups, networks, and organizations in Fiji to expand and enhance their work on women's empowerment and gender equality.

The **WeRise Coalition** is made of three organizations that work on Women's Rights in Fiji with the goal to develop, demonstrate, and strengthen feminist coalitions and partnerships in order to grow and uphold inclusive governance, equality, diversity, justice, and women's human rights.

Analysis and Recommendations for Gender Inclusion

Broaden the Definition of Beneficiaries So That Women are Included

To address the potential exclusion of women from the conceptualization of landowners who will receive benefits under the BSP (see above), the definition of beneficiaries could not only be expanded to include both confirmation of legal rights, but also on a census of current residents and users of the REDD+ designated land. Done in this way, all those who currently reside on, rely on, and use the land will be given incentives to change behavior by opportunity to have an equitable share in the benefits. This would provide a basis for those who are not considered “legal landowners” under the current legal arrangements to legitimately apply for a REDD+ license and thus be incorporated into the beneficiary group.

A potential barrier to this recommendation is that it would depart from the benefit sharing mechanisms that were used as a model for the BSP (namely the iTaukei Lands Trust Board Lease; Ministry of Lands – Land Bank; and the Ministry of Lands Distribution of Mineral Royalties under the Fair Share Mineral Act 2018).

To counter this, it is recommended that an assessment of the effectiveness of these mechanisms in achieving gender equitable results is conducted. The assessment could identify when and where these mechanisms have been used and to what extent they have benefitted married-in women, and those who are not formally recognized as members of the *mataqali* on the land in question. The results of this assessment could help inform the guidelines for the recommended census and also could help make a case for the recommended changes to the BSP proposed above to other stakeholders.

Allocate a Portion of the Benefit Pool to a Women’s Fund at the Local Level

In addition to the beneficiaries already identified, the BSP could allocate a portion of the available monetary benefits to women’s funds, which could be established at the local level (via existing village women’s groups or church groups). The collective action of women can help foster a communal safety net and increase women’s confidence, and may also help shield against the potential household disruption (and risks of GBV), increases in alcohol abuse, and other social ills that can occur when cash is injected into male-headed households. The Women’s Fund could be supported in creating a formal structure, including by-laws for participation, and governance, and decision making on how funds are used. If needed, the

Women's Fund could be established in time for them to apply for a REDD+ license so that other rules and processes for REDD+ licensees would apply.

This would also require capacity and skills development support for the women's group at the onset, and periodically throughout the program, to help ensure good management and successful results. Aid from the Australian Government in the past was structured around a Women's Fund and lessons from that experience might be used to help inform this recommendation (Fiji Women's Fund, 2020).

Invest in Supporting Women's Participation in all Levels of Consultation and Decision Making

Women are significant users of land and forest resources in Fiji, and their needs and uses differ from those of men. Likewise, the incentives that women have to change their behavior differs from those of similarly-situated men because of the gendered division of labor, women's reproductive role, and women's cultural roles and responsibilities. Also, women's uses of land and forests have direct connection to household well-being, including food security.

Yet, women are often formally excluded from consultation on and decision making on land and resources. Even if women are informally consulted on decisions, the consultation is mediated through a male household member who has his own interests, is inconsistent, and is not guaranteed to ensure that women's perspectives and needs carry equal weight in deliberations. Also, women may be time-poor, and unable (or unwilling or uninterested) to attend meetings that appear to be about men's business or matters that are of no direct benefit to them.

To address this lack of meaningful influence that women have over decision making on land and resources relating to REDD+ programming, some possible program design recommendations are:

- For each community, run a knowledge, awareness, and behavioral change communications campaign targeting women and men. The focus could be the different and important contributions that women make to the household and the community (from land and forest use), to help raise the profile of women as important users of resources, and also to help show how when women and men benefit equally, whole communities benefit.

- Establish a quota of 50% representation of women in decision-making bodies, and 50% inclusion in executive bodies of those decision-making groups.
- Work with women and men on skills in decision making/consultative bodies and approaches for being a “good representative” of others.
- Provide women with training on public speaking, negotiation, and confidence building.
- Work with men directly on inclusive governance approaches.
- Ensure meetings are held at times, places, and for a duration that are accessible to women.
- Develop women's skills in public speaking, negotiations, and others matters that will enable them to participate.
- Educate women on the value and importance of their participation.
- Consider establishing a permanent seat for the village women’s committee representative on any consultative group (provided that such a seat has equal weight in decision-making processes, and is successful in representing the interests of other women).
- Ensure that any representation avoids “elite capture” by women who are connected to powerful men in the community, or those who are wealthier, educated, or have higher social standing.
- Create community governance by laws (or if they are governed by existing regulations those regulations) to accommodate these tactics for ensure meaningful participation.

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