



# Climate Resilient Islands Programme

## Case Study: Community Priority Values and Assets, Fiji

Climate Resilient Islands communities were asked to describe their most important values and assets, and their vulnerabilities and risks, to contribute to their Community Resilience Profiles. These ranged from material to natural, as well as spiritual or community focused. This case study provides an overview of the assets, values and concerns across the eight communities, to explore trends and commonalities between them.

### Assets

Many of the most prioritised assets were those closely related to communities' material livelihoods. Eight communities listed housing as a priority asset, with the same number listing their plantations or farms. Water – both natural sources and water tanks – was listed by seven communities, with livestock/animals noted by six.

These assets were often recorded due to both their importance to the community in providing the essentials of life – shelter, food and water – and also their vulnerability, usually to natural disasters, cyclones, severe rainfall and landslides. Roads, community halls, churches, schools, health facilities, houses and boats are particularly vulnerable because of the prohibitive cost of rebuilding or replacing these assets and because there is little in the way of alternatives for use when these assets are damaged or destroyed.

Similarly, human life was listed as the most common non-material value or asset. It was listed by four communities (though church, which is a material structure but one with a less explicitly material output than housing or roads, was listed by five). All communities that listed human life mentioned that there is “only one life”, it therefore being valuable and irreplaceable, with some noting that it is interconnected with all other factors, such as food security, healthcare, water and others.

### Environment and culture

Two common themes – which were not always listed formally as an asset or value but were often noted as being discussed by the community – were local ecosystems and customs/traditions, like community cooperation and solesolevaki (communal work).

Natural environments such as forests, mangroves, marine and river systems and more were mentioned as being highly valued by communities. This was most often for the resources they provide, but also the “importance of interconnected ecosystems” and the “importance of clean water for physical health”. Concern for the risks to these systems are seen throughout the communities:

*The natural environment is valued by the community, especially the mangrove system... Community members are concerned about the loss of mangroves due to cutting wood and possible other environmental factors.*

*The community values their river [...] but the river condition is affected by what happens upstream and soil erosion from logging and fertiliser run-off.*

*The community understands the importance of interconnected ecosystems... Marine resources are important but are threatened with changing climate.*

Similarly common were mentions of community cooperation and communal work – solesolevaki – as well as cultural and traditional knowledge and obligations, which some communities said was being lost:

*The community values its spiritual health highly, for community cooperation and resilience.*

*The community prioritises cultural knowledge, but this is being lost. Some knowledge is being passed on, but there are competing versions and interpretations of tradition, and this is destabilising kinship.*

*The traditional obligations are only held with high regard among the elders in the village.*

The interconnection between ecosystems, traditional culture and climate change was seen throughout many responses:

*Cultivation of rice is linked to ancestors. Changing climate is a threat to the type of rice grown, which affects not only income, but also connection to ancestors and tradition.*

*Loss of traditional knowledge and community spirit [...] means ability to cope with extreme weather events and shifts in seasons through community cooperation has lessened. Increased intensity of cyclones means more need for community cooperation.*



This emphasis on and priority of ecosystems and traditional, cooperative customs suggests nature-based solutions – which focus heavily on social benefit as well as environmental – may be able to have a considerable impact in these communities.

## Resilience planning

Understanding priorities of community values and assets informs the next phase of the CRI programme – establishing community resilience plans, which involves noting assets most at risk, especially from the impacts of climate change, community capacity for making changes and strategies for increasing resilience.



Climate Resilient Islands aims to strengthen community resilience and adaptive capacity to the impacts of climate change through nature-based solutions working with rural communities in Vanuatu, Fiji, PNG, Tonga, and Tuvalu. The project is a New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade initiative implemented by Live & Learn Environmental Education.

