

Climate Resilient Islands Programme

Indigenous Knowledge Leadership Programme Fiji

As part of the Climate Resilient Islands programme, communities in Fiji have taken part in the Indigenous Knowledge Leadership Programme (IKLP), which provides an opportunity for communities to identify, revive and collectively strengthen traditional cultural practices.

The IKLP provides a way by which resilience concepts and practices can be localised. Indigenous knowledge is a means of strengthening ownership of and contextualising resilience actions. Typically, Indigenous knowledge includes traditional, nature-based solutions for restoring ecosystems and creating resilient agriculture.



The delivery of the IKLP involves workshops in communities where both youth and elders identify traditional knowledge and practices and create recommendations for how these can then be implemented by both groups in the communities. The workshops aim to initiate an ongoing process whereby knowledge and practices, such as creating healthy soils, mangrove restoration for flood management and the traditional practices of *sevu* and *solesolevaki*, are passed on and maintained.

From these workshops, government ministries have also been involved in implementing some recommendations, such as farming business training by the Ministry of Agriculture in Banikea and Kavula.

A rich knowledge of ecosystem restoration and agriculture

Communities in Fiji have a rich knowledge of maintaining and restoring ecosystems, including where to plant to help with erosion and times of the year appropriate to fish, which contributes to fish stock conservation, and a wide range of agricultural practices such as choosing appropriate crops, the use of natural fertilizers and traditional farming tools and techniques.

Previously, communities have used the method of *tabu*, or the closing of sections of rivers/water sources to allow stocks to replenish to prevent overfishing, choosing resilient crops such as *Moala Dalo* that can grow in any soil conditions and are proven to preserve for long periods, the use of organic matter as fertilizer and using traditional tools like *i dokos* to replace the use of spades and forks which minimizes soil disturbance.



These practices contribute to more resilient ecosystems, but they also contribute to the strengthening of local culture, which in turn maintains community cohesion. The communities have identified that these practices and knowledge are getting lost and that it is important for the elders to teach the youth of the communities these traditional practices to keep their culture alive for generations to come.

The IKLP aims to provide community cohesion by involving various groups within and outside the community. Local sub-groups, in particular members of the church, women's groups, youth groups and local government are encouraged to work together.

In the ongoing strengthening of these traditional pathways, communities will utilise the resources of traditional knowledge holders within communities and will also call on the expertise of knowledge holders from other communities and within government bodies.

Prioritised practices across Fijian communities

Communities across Fiji have identified various practices as vital for ecosystem restoration and sustainable agricultural practices contributing to climate resilience and have therefore prioritised them as strategic pathways in their resilience planning.

Three communities identified the importance of the practice of solesolevaki (working as a group) in restoring and rehabilitating the environment, 5 communities outlined the importance of passing down knowledge of traditional crops and the traditional techniques to cultivate and maintain these crops to promote food security, as well as the importance of sevu (offering of first catch or harvest to chief and/or church leader). Additionally, the promotion of traditional handcraft techniques, which use local natural resources, provides a possibility for improving and diversifying income streams.

Three communities identified the critical nature of sustainable land management in the areas of tree planting and other land rehabilitation activities such as investment in mangrove restoration, which can be used to minimize the impacts of flooding, help prevent erosion and create healthy soils for agriculture.



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, Tuvalu and Solomon Islands. The project is a New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade initiative implemented by Live & Learn Environmental Education.

