

# Strategic Evaluation of New Zealand's Fiji Programme, 2019-2023

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Final Report

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# Executive Summary

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New Zealand is a key development partner for Fiji, with the relationship growing stronger through expanding links between peoples and institutions, the growth of economic and trade flows and common interests in the region. The last decade has witnessed the expansion of government-to-government links, which have seen cooperation flourish across a range of sectors including peace and security, climate change and disaster resilience, labour mobility, agriculture, economic reform and advocacy on Pacific issues.

From mid-2019 to mid-2024 the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) delivered its Fiji Programme through a [Four Year Plan](#) (4YP) which outlined New Zealand's overall engagement with Fiji. The 4YP encompassed all aspects of New Zealand's support for Fiji, including bilateral relations, development assistance, and foreign policy and trade initiatives. The 4YP plan was implemented across two MFAT funding triennia—July 2018 to June 2021 and July 2021 to June 2024—with a total expenditure of over NZD 300 million. In October 2021, the 4YP was refreshed to reflect evolving priorities, and the partnership was further strengthened through the signing of the [New Zealand - Fiji Statement of Partnership 2022-2025](#) (the Duavata Partnership) in March 2022.

This strategic evaluation of the Fiji Programme was commissioned to assess the achievements, coherence, and strategic direction of the Fiji Programme over the 4YP period. The evaluation considered 61 activities, including bilateral partnerships with the Fiji government, regional and multilateral programmes, civil society, and private sector partners. The evaluation identifies key learnings from the past four years and provides recommendations for improving New Zealand's future engagement with Fiji.

## Overall conclusions

The strategic evaluation of New Zealand's Fiji Programme (2019–2023) affirms a strong, adaptive partnership that effectively responded to Fiji's needs, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. New Zealand consistently demonstrated its commitment to shared values, inclusive development, and sustainable impact, closely aligning its efforts with Fiji's national priorities. A key objective of the 4YP—to reset and deepen the bilateral relationship—was successfully achieved, reflecting a stronger and more mature partnership between Fiji and New Zealand.

New Zealand's support for Fiji's COVID-19 response was particularly notable for its agility and effectiveness, exemplifying development cooperation in action. Despite smaller financial contributions compared to some other donors, New Zealand significantly boosted its impact through strong local partnerships in Fiji.

The Fiji Programme's strength lies in its relationship-driven approach, allowing New Zealand to take calculated risks and innovate with local partners. This flexibility, particularly evident during Fiji's COVID-19 response, enabled success across areas such as social well-being, climate change, and economic resilience, with a strong focus on local ownership and capacity building.

New Zealand employed a range of modalities – budget support, technical assistance, project interventions, and civil society partnerships – allowing quick adaptation to Fiji's evolving needs, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, when rapid disbursement of budget support and targeted assistance to vulnerable groups were crucial. However, the evaluation recommends future support should better align these modalities with strategic goals to ensure maximum impact.

A notable feature of the Fiji Programme is the collaboration between multiple New Zealand government agencies working towards the 4YP strategic goals. MFAT successfully leveraged expertise from multiple government agencies, including those focused on public health, policing, climate change, and economic reform. Coordination between agencies can be improved to ensure all contributions are strategically aligned and managed.

There has been progress in addressing gender equality, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI). While gender-responsive activities have increased, further investment in capacity-building of MFAT staff and integration of GEDSI across all 4YP strategic goals is needed.

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted several long-term initiatives. New Zealand's upcoming Fiji Country Plan offers an opportunity to recalibrate these initiatives, especially in economic diversification and climate resilience, essential for Fiji's post-COVID-19 recovery and growth.

Challenges remain, including the need for consistent donor coordination, stronger alignment between regional and bilateral programmes, and improved monitoring systems. Several building blocks are already in place to support programme improvements; for example, established relationships, a strong foundation of local ownership, and significant advances towards achieving the 4YP strategic goals. These provide a solid platform for future growth of MFAT's Fiji Programme.

Overall, the evaluation confirms that New Zealand's Fiji Programme has made meaningful contributions to Fiji's parliamentary and democratic governance norms, economic resilience, social well-being, climate adaptation and disaster resilience. Refining programmatic approaches, enhancing regional-bilateral alignment, and further integrating GEDSI will ensure New Zealand's support remains flexible, impactful, and can be scaled effectively to meet Fiji's evolving development needs.

## Summary of key findings

### Coherence and relevance

Alignment of MFAT's engagement with New Zealand strategic objectives and Fiji's priorities for national development.

Overall, **New Zealand's support has been well integrated into Fiji's key areas of need, aligning closely with national development priorities and fostering local leadership and ownership.** New Zealand's approach to development cooperation was particularly responsive to Fiji's needs during and after the COVID-19 global pandemic.

A strong partnership approach is evident across many sectors, with the **Fiji Government leading or co-leading on numerous initiatives.** One of the standout features of the Fiji Programme is how closely New Zealand's bilateral activities align with and support the priorities of the Fiji Government. In contrast, regional and multi-country activities tend to align more closely with broader needs common across the Pacific.

Strategic changes to the 4YP during implementation included scaling back investments in agriculture, fisheries, and dairy initiatives due to their low impact and high risk, and shift in Fiji Government priorities. Additionally, strategic priorities within the 4YP were updated to reflect Fiji's request during the 2021 High-Level Consultations to more directly target climate change as its own strategic pillar.

Alignment with New Zealand's International Cooperation for Effective Sustainable Development (ICESD) policy and international development principles

The implementation of the 4YP aligned closely with the [ICESD policy](#), particularly in its emphasis on deeper collaboration with Pacific partner countries and leveraging New Zealand's public sector resources and expertise. Progress has been made in advancing sustainable development through integrating trade, environment, diplomatic, security cooperation, and foreign policy settings. Progress has been made on greater New Zealand domestic policy coherence, and working for global solutions for accelerating action to address climate change and its impacts.

In terms of effectiveness and inclusion, **MFAT's engagement in Fiji has been values-driven, highly partnership-focused, and demonstrably adaptive**. New Zealand's support for Fiji's COVID-19 response and work with civil society has showcased a focus on inclusion. There are demonstrated sustainable benefits, and evidence of strategies and approaches with potential for sustained development.

### Donor coherence and coordination

During the 4YP period, donor coordination achieved **notable successes**, though challenges remain, particularly in aligning financial management and reporting processes across donors. There is a **growing commitment by the Fiji Government and development partners to formalise mechanisms** and harmonise processes.

## Achievement of 4YP strategic goals

### New Zealand's support for Fiji's COVID-19 response

The COVID-19 outbreak in Fiji that began in April 2021 had a profound impact on the country, severely affecting its healthcare system and economy. **New Zealand's support for Fiji's COVID-19 response was rapid, well-received and fit-for-purpose, meeting Fiji's immediate needs**. MFAT's approach involved testing and adapting in real time to the unprecedented constraints faced by Fiji. By **leveraging existing relationships**, and working effectively with Fiji Government, civil society, private entities, professional bodies, regional mechanisms and New Zealand government agencies, MFAT ensured its support **maximised reach to vulnerable communities in Fiji**. MFAT's **tolerance for risk and agile decision-making** enabled timely and appropriate support for Fiji's COVID-19 response.

### Contributions of New Zealand engagement to 4YP goals

#### Goal 1: A broader, deeper and resilient relationship/partnership between New Zealand and Fiji

During the 4YP period, **New Zealand's primary foreign policy objective to normalise and deepen its relationship with Fiji has largely been achieved**. New Zealand's support for Fiji's COVID-19 response was seen as appropriate and highly valued, reinforcing trust between the two countries.

Fiji highly values New Zealand's sustained support, particularly during challenging periods. However, the evaluation heard examples of where New Zealand's domestic policies have, on occasion, been a source of frustration in the relationship.

Numerous high-level exchanges over the 4YP period have helped to strengthen the diplomatic, trade and development cooperation relationship between Fiji and New Zealand, fostering mutual understanding and facilitating progress on shared priorities within the framework of the 4YP.

Engagement with Fiji's civil society has largely focused on programme implementation and disaster recovery efforts, rather than supporting civil society to champion and promote shared norms and values. Furthermore, the relationship with the private sector was described as more 'tactical' than 'strategic'.

## Goal 2: Economic growth is inclusive, resilient and sustainable

New Zealand's support for Fiji's economy during the 4YP was dominated by COVID-19. New Zealand's support for Fiji's vaccination rollout contributed to Fiji's high rates of vaccination, which was key to the Fiji Government's decision to reopen its borders to international tourists, resulting in a resurgence in tourism earnings.

New Zealand joined the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank, in a multi-donor **policy reform-based budget support** initiative to assist the Fiji Government in driving sustainable, private sector-led economic growth. The initiative achieved notable reforms, despite challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, including improvements in budget transparency, the introduction of Gender-Responsive Budgeting, and reforms in state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and private-public partnerships (PPPs). This initiative demonstrated value for New Zealand by leveraging larger international investments.

Under the policy reform-based budget support initiative, New Zealand's contributions focused on creating an enabling environment for private sector development. In addition, New Zealand supported small and medium sized enterprise (SME) development, which was particularly crucial during the COVID-19 pandemic. New Zealand contributed to diversified exports and improving agricultural value chains, specifically in horticulture.

Fiji's efforts to diversify its economy have been stymied over the 4YP period, with volatile gross domestic product (GDP) and fluctuating tourism earnings. Cautious optimism towards the latter part of the 4YP period was tempered by a continuing narrow base to the economy, rising net migration and high public debt.

New Zealand has been promoting the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER) Plus among Pacific countries, with discussion with Fiji currently underway.

## Goal 3: A stable and secure Fiji

**Cooperation and linkages between Fiji and New Zealand security institutions have been strengthened during the 4YP period, with the notable establishment of the bilateral Fiji Police Partnership Programme (FPPP).** The setting up of this bilateral policing programme represents a turning point in the Fiji-New Zealand relationship, and it is a sizeable investment. This has been a positive development, despite the early challenges around deploying advisers during the COVID-19 pandemic, and coordination issues between New Zealand Police (NZP) and the UNDP programme of work supported by MFAT.

New Zealand support also contributed to high-profile needs in areas of mutual regional and global interest, including transnational crime, and Women, Peace and Security.

New Zealand's contribution plays a small role in supporting Fiji's efforts to tackle domestic and transnational crime, as there are broader factors and influences that limit the extent to which New Zealand can impact significant change.

## Goal 4: An equal, inclusive, well-educated and healthy Fiji

**New Zealand support over the 4YP period made tangible contributions to Fiji's human development needs and supported groups that risked being marginalised.**

**The capacity of both government and non-government institutions was strengthened leading to improvements in a number of areas,** including gender responsive budgeting; health infrastructure and services, including counselling services; housing policy and opportunities for housing and long-term

social protection for poor and marginalised communities; efforts to address gender-based violence; sustainable employment opportunities for women; and in education and skills development.

**Activities that used transdisciplinary approaches have been most successful** where they have involved communities in regular and ongoing consultations, in research, and in approaches that integrate gender and social inclusion (GESI), climate change and environmental awareness.

**COVID-19 demonstrated the value and benefits of working with local civil society organisations (CSOs), leveraging their ability to reach vulnerable and marginalised communities.** For many of the CSOs, funding during this challenging time was key to being able to maintain and extend their services, however there has been limited sustainability of this support following COVID-19.

**New Zealand's efforts to address social well-being and inclusion through programmatic packages of support that connect policy reform with grassroots initiatives is commendable and has the potential to achieve stronger impact.** The evaluation found that there could be stronger joining up of New Zealand support for greater impact through improved communication and coordination.

### **Goal 5: A climate resilient Fiji**

**New Zealand's support to address climate change and disaster response in Fiji has been largely successful during the 4YP period,** with several key achievements in building government capacity, strengthening disaster response mechanisms, and laying the groundwork for long-term climate resilience.

New Zealand's support for disaster response in Fiji has yielded immediate and visible successes. The focus of New Zealand's assistance has been on building the capacity of the Fiji government and CSOs to prepare for, respond to, and recover from natural disasters. This support has improved disaster management capabilities across Fiji.

One of the less progressed areas of New Zealand's support is the integration of climate resilience across the other 4YP strategic goals. While there are notable examples, such as upgrading of health centres to be more resilient to climate-related damage, more can be done to embed climate considerations into all relevant areas of New Zealand's support to Fiji.

### **Delivering on gender and inclusion priorities**

While many MFAT activities focus on addressing gender equality and women's empowerment, and some on child and youth wellbeing, there is limited targeting of persons with disabilities or people of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC).

**MFAT's focus on gender and social inclusion, while intentional can be better described as aspirational.** The intentional aspects include clear action plans and targets, however evidence from the assessment of effectiveness of delivery on those GEDSI action plans, targets, and mainstreaming across the 4YP period shows that implementation is yet to realise those intentions. New Zealand has supported a large number of GESI aware activities where inequalities are recognised but not robustly addressed; and collectively, New Zealand has supported an almost equal number of gender responsive and gender transformative activities.

Analysis of expenditure shows variation across financial years in meeting MFAT's expenditure targets for the gender policy markers of significant (60%) and principal (4%).



Despite having a current Gender Action Plan, the application of GESI requirements across all MFAT's Fiji Programme (that is, bilateral, regional, multi-country, partnerships) is inconsistent.

**It was encouraging to see that many Fiji government and civil society partners integrate gender and social inclusion into their project and activities without any specific requirements or guidance from MFAT.** MFAT could capitalise on the experiences of these partners in developing GESI tools or incorporating GESI tools and guidance for MFAT activities.

## Effectiveness and efficiency of Aotearoa New Zealand's approaches to achieve desired strategic objectives

### Modalities

**MFAT uses multiple bilateral, thematic, regional and multi-country funding sources and modalities to resource individual activities with many partners to achieve the 4YP outcomes.** The greatest proportion of 4YP expenditure was in general budget support for Fiji's COVID-19 response. MFAT's budget support to the Fiji Government (for policy reforms and for flexible climate finance support) was at similar levels to its funding to New Zealand government agencies and institutions.

**Budget support** was considered the most efficient modality for supporting the Fiji Government's COVID-19 response and the provision of flexible climate financing, however, there are mixed views on its contribution to 4YP priorities, with some reservations expressed about the efficiency, transparency and visibility of contributions to 4YP priorities. Overall, **this modality demonstrates and is consistent with a mature and reciprocal partnership between the Fiji and New Zealand Governments.**

**Support delivered through New Zealand government agencies and institutions** generally works well from MFAT's perspective, with the New Zealand government agencies leading engagement and holding the relationship with the respective Fiji government agency. Through this modality, MFAT gains access to technical advice, knowledge and relationships, while Fiji government agencies gain access to peer learning, exchanges, advice, specialist advisory support and relationships. **While considered effective, this modality limits NZHC involvement in discussions with the Fiji Government around the relevance, quality and overall effectiveness of support being delivered through New Zealand institutions.** This modality would benefit from improved coordination and communication across New Zealand government agencies, and between New Zealand government agencies and MFAT, both in Wellington and in Suva.

**Grant funding arrangements (GFAs) with Fiji government ministries or agencies have proven highly effective in fostering ownership and aligning activities with national objectives,** however, challenges arise when relying on Fiji's internal systems for disbursing donor funds to the respective ministries. Third-party agencies capable of handling the administrative workload are sometimes seen as a preferable option. Stakeholders noted that capacity constraints are not limited to the Fiji Government; MFAT could also benefit from strengthening its capacity to engage on relevant technical issues when directly engaging with ministries.

**Grant support through local CSOs came to the fore during COVID-19** and is a modality that could be strengthened to the benefit of the overall 4YP. **Multi-year grant support to Fiji CSOs** either direct through multi-year grants or through Wellington managed grants (under the Negotiated Partnership, Manaaki Fund, Humanitarian Emergency Fund administered by New Zealand NGOs) **are becoming a significant aspect of New Zealand funding to Fiji.** This support is greatly valued by local CSO partners. At the same time it is recognised that the Partnership modality with New Zealand NGOs is based on the assumption there is capacity within New Zealand NGOs to deliver capacity development support to local partners. This assumption is not universally holding true for Fiji CSO partners.

**There are various approaches to capacity building across the 4YP programmes**, with secondments and long-term advisory support viewed as particularly effective and realising sustainable results and are preferred by the majority of MFAT's Fiji partners.

**Support delivered through multilateral agencies such as United Nations organisations, international financing institutions, banks and intergovernmental organisations such as the World Bank and the ADB provided a range of services and benefits.** Working through multilateral agencies, while mostly beneficial to MFAT also means accepting systems and processes which may sometimes limit flexibility, responsiveness and stall progress; incurs project management fees and may limit direct engagement and oversight of activities.

**Regional programme support delivered through delegated cooperation agreements** between MFAT and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) **have faced challenges**, with suggestions parallel programmes could be more efficient. This would require careful coordination to ensure that implementation, monitoring, and reporting are streamlined and do not place an excessive burden on implementing partners.

**There seems to be a strong case for more bilateral support, by translating relevant and effective regional activities into deeper country level investments.** Evidence shows that activities are most likely to be successful where NZHC staff are managing and/or engaged in implementation. These activities tend to have more ownership by both MFAT and the Fiji counterparts, and are likely to be more directly relevant and connected to Fiji needs.

#### Policy coherence and collaboration across New Zealand government agencies to deliver on 4YP outcomes

The evaluation finds that **inter-agency collaboration has been largely effective in advancing the Fiji 4YP, with clear examples of strategic alignment, capacity building, and measurable outcomes.** However, **some challenges remain, particularly in maintaining consistent communication and alignment across agencies** where organisational objectives diverge or where coordination between Wellington-based and Fiji-based teams is inconsistent.

#### Delivering sustainable benefits

New Zealand's development cooperation with Fiji has delivered sustainable benefits across various sectors by aligning with good development practices, fostering local ownership, and strengthening institutions, though capacity constraints remain a challenge to achieving lasting impact.

In the pursuit of sustainability and long-term impact, several key strategies have emerged from New Zealand's development cooperation with Fiji. Central to this effort has been the **Fiji Government's ownership and engagement**, which has fostered alignment with national priorities and ensured local relevance. A critical challenge has been **overcoming capacity constraints**, and targeted efforts have been made to strengthen institutions and systems to deliver lasting benefits. **Community-based approaches** have empowered local groups, enhancing grassroots participation and fostering ownership at all levels. **Localisation has further supported sustainable impact** by ensuring interventions are tailored to Fiji's unique context and are driven by local actors. Additionally, **systems strengthening and long-term support** have been fundamental in creating an enabling environment for ongoing development, ensuring that the benefits of assistance endure well beyond the period of direct intervention.

## Summary of lessons

The evaluation identified the following lessons related to resource use, scaling, and flexibility:

### Maximising resource use

- ② **Visibility and relevance:** Maintaining relevance requires strategic visibility, particularly in spaces where New Zealand's support is unique or indispensable, to enhance recognition and foster deeper engagement with local partners.
- ② **Reflection and review:** Regular and structured opportunities for reflection and review are crucial for continuous improvement and adaptation, allowing for course corrections and re-prioritisation based on real-time feedback.
- ② **Localised partnerships:** Investing in local organisations and building their capacity ensures that interventions can continue with minimal disruption during crises, enhancing the sustainability and effectiveness of resource use.
- ② **Balancing resource burden:** A variety of delivery models, such as resource supplementation within Fiji government ministries or outsourcing, are key to managing increased administrative demands without detracting from the strategic focus and overall impact of New Zealand support. When selecting delivery modalities, it is crucial to consider when, where, and how to transfer these administrative burdens to partners, while also identifying opportunities to build their capacity.
- ② **Monitoring and reporting systems:** A well-integrated monitoring, evaluation, research and learning system can improve the use of resources by identifying underperforming areas earlier, allowing for better allocation of resources and course correction.

### Scaling investments for maximum impact

- ② **Larger, strategic programmes versus smaller, direct intervention-type projects:** Using a programmatic approach with systemic influence can enable broader, more sustainable impacts, if effectively utilised.
- ② **Leveraging regional and multi-country programmes:** Scaling requires tapping into regional and multi-donor platforms to leverage resources to amplify impact.
- ② **Strategic partnerships with Fiji Government:** Formalising programme and activity governance structures can promote accountability and support scaling.

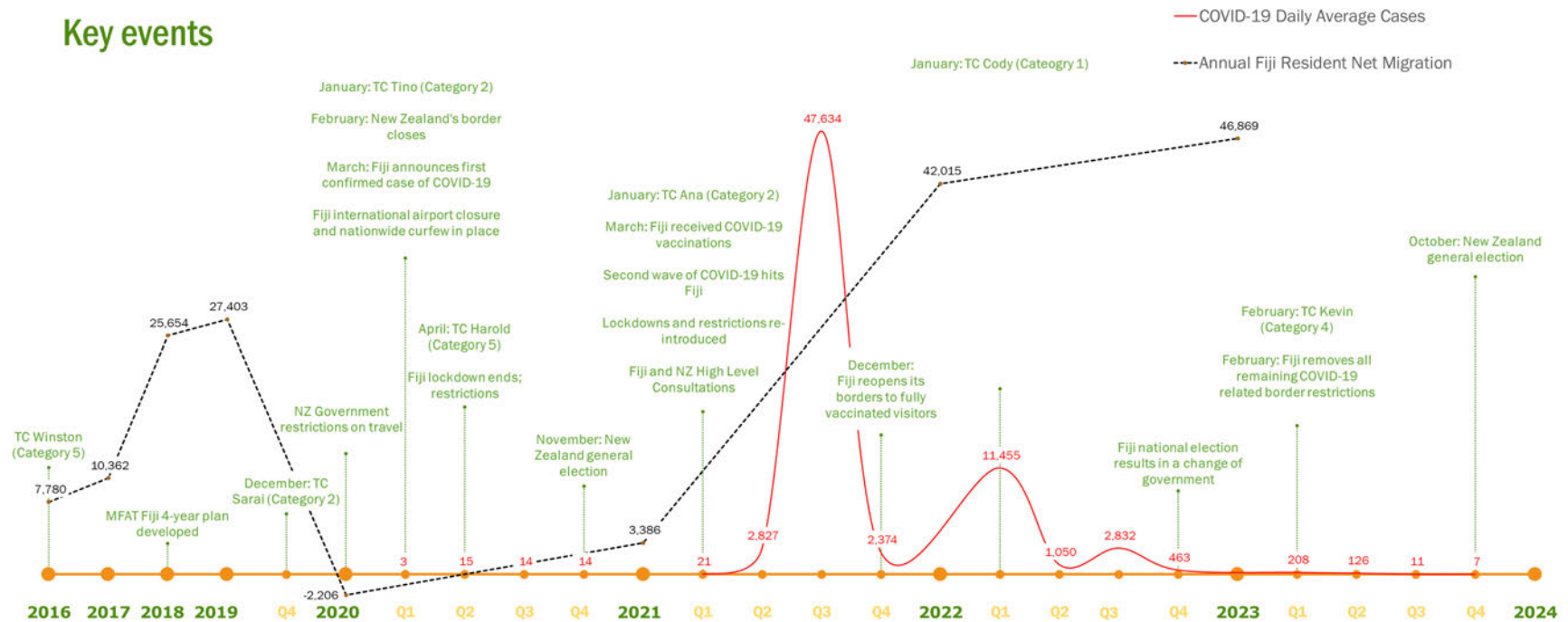
### Flexibility and adaptation to changing contexts

- ② **Adapting to COVID-19 and other crises:** Agile decision-making, calculated risk-taking and funding mechanisms and contracts with built-in flexibility, allow for quick pivots in response to crises, supporting continuity in service delivery during emergencies.
- ② **Strengthening relationships in dynamic contexts:** Strong, continuous stakeholder engagement and rapport-building are critical in dynamic political environments to sustain programmes momentum.
- ② **Use of local knowledge for adaptation:** Embedding local knowledge into programme designs enhances adaptability and ensures that activities remain relevant and effective in the face of changing contexts.
- ② **Regular monitoring and rapid feedback:** Real-time feedback loops with local partners allow for quicker, more effective adjustments to programmes, ensuring that projects stay on track despite challenges.

## Recommendations

<b>Recommendation 1:</b>	<b>MFAT's Fiji Programme to embed a programmatic approach in the design and implementation of new and, where possible, existing activities.</b>
<b>Recommendation 2:</b>	<b>MFAT to strengthen the process for selecting the modality for its activities.</b>
<b>Recommendation 3:</b>	<b>MFAT's Fiji Programme and CSO partners to co-develop a CSO engagement strategy to improve engagement with local CSOs.</b>
<b>Recommendation 4:</b>	<b>MFAT to strengthen efforts to address gender and social inclusion by:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. including gender and/or inclusion outcomes in all new (or updated) activities in the Fiji Programme.</li> <li>b. prioritising the completion and roll-out of the MFAT gender capability support programme which is currently being developed in-house.</li> <li>c. updating and developing guidance notes and programming tools to assist the integration of GEDSI into all aspects of activities, from design through to monitoring, evaluation and reporting.</li> <li>d. creating a knowledge hub which draws on the experiences of partners and provides a platform for sharing and learning about approaches to GEDSI.</li> <li>e. expanding the current pool of GEDSI technical expertise available to support activities, in collaboration with development partners working in the region and at country level, for example, DFAT, ADB, the UN, regional organisations such as the SPC and PIFS, and international, regional and national NGOs.</li> <li>f. improving processes for tracking expenditure on GEDSI, particularly in large activities.</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendation 5:</b>	<b>MFAT to strengthen the 4YP MERL structures and processes by:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. introducing a 4YP MERL system that includes: (i) a framework with mid-level outcomes, bridging the gap between the 4YP strategic goals and activities; and (ii) expanding the annual reflection session.</li> <li>b. resourcing monitoring and learning activities, tracking MERL expenditure and implementing recommendations from reviews and evaluations.</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendation 6:</b>	<b>MFAT to enhance coherence and coordination within MFAT, and between MFAT and other New Zealand government agencies, by:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. leveraging a 4YP MERL system (see Recommendation 5) to facilitate the collection of data and insights from New Zealand government agencies, collectively assess the impact of New Zealand's efforts in Fiji, and foster synergies to improve the overall coherence of New Zealand's Fiji Programme.</li> <li>b. ensuring all relevant New Zealand government agencies are fully briefed on the new Fiji Country Plan, and their role in delivering on the strategic goals.</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendation 7:</b>	<b>MFAT to further enhance coordination with other development partners and Fiji Government, by:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. advocating for the establishment of a formal donor coordination platform that meets regularly with the Fiji Government.</li> <li>b. prioritising joint sectoral planning with development partners for initiatives under the new Fiji Country Plan.</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendation 8:</b>	<b>MFAT to better leverage regional support in bilateral activities, by:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. enabling knowledge-sharing opportunities where success stories, best practices, and innovations from regional projects can be disseminated and adapted to Fiji's context, and vice versa.</li> <li>b. using participation in regional and international forums to support Fiji on issues of mutual interest under the 4YP.</li> <li>c. ensuring regional activity governance mechanisms and reporting processes identify where regional activities with successful outcomes can be scaled up within Fiji.</li> </ul>

## Key events





# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Fiji Programme Four Year Plan and Duavata Partnership

### 1.1.1 New Zealand government settings

New Zealand is a key development partner for Fiji, with the relationship growing stronger through expanding links between peoples and institutions, the growth of economic and trade flows<sup>1</sup> and common interests in the region. The last decade has witnessed the expansion of government-to-government links, which have seen cooperation flourish across a range of sectors including peace and security, climate change and disaster resilience, labour mobility, agriculture and fisheries, economic reform and advocacy on Pacific issues.

MFAT's Fiji Programme was delivered under a [Four Year Plan \(4YP\)](#), which operationalised MFAT's long-term strategy with Fiji over the period 2019-2023. The Fiji 4YP covered the total envelope of New Zealand's engagement with Fiji to achieve development outcomes: bilateral relationships, development assistance and foreign policy and trade. The 4YP was implemented across two funding triennia, July 2018 to June 2021 and July 2021 to June 2024, with expenditure across the two triennia reaching just over NZD300 million. The Fiji 4YP was refreshed in October 2021. The partnership was reaffirmed in the [New Zealand - Fiji Statement of Partnership 2022-2025](#) (the Duavata Partnership) signed in March 2022.

The agreed priorities between Fiji and New Zealand as set out in the original 4YP, the refreshed 4YP and the Duavata Partnership are fully outlined in Appendix A. Table 1 below shows the common themes across these three documents. Appendix B contains the logic diagram and key progress indicators for the five strategic goals for the 4YP refreshed in 2021.

**Table 1 4YP and Duavata Partnership summary**

4YP Priorities (2019)	4YP Goals (2021 refresh)	Duavata Partnership: Priority areas for cooperation
Priority 1: Partnership, Democracy, and Values – Democracy and good governance are embedded in Fiji in alignment with shared values.	Goal One: Partnership – A broader, deeper and resilient relationship	Partnership, democracy and Values
Priority 3: Economic Resilience – Fiji's economy grows sustainably, inclusively, and resiliently.	Goal Two: Economic Resilience – Economic growth is inclusive, resilient and sustainable	Economic Resilience
Priority 4: Security – Fiji has robust national security institutions contributing to regional stability.	Goal Three: Security – A stable and secure Fiji	Security

<sup>1</sup> New Zealand was the fourth most common destination for Fiji exports (2021). Fiji is the only Pacific Island country to rank in New Zealand's top 20 trading partners with two-way bilateral trade reaching NZD1.36 billion in 2023. <https://www.fbcnews.com.fj/news/fijis-trade-with-new-zealand-reaches-1-36b/>



4YP Priorities (2019)	4YP Goals (2021 refresh)	Duavata Partnership: Priority areas for cooperation
Priority 2: Social Wellbeing – Fiji's communities are strong, resilient, and inclusive, giving citizens the opportunity to achieve their full potential.	Goal Four: Social Well-being – Fiji people are healthy, prosperous and have equal opportunity	Social Well-being
Cross-Cutting Issues: Disaster Risk Reduction; Climate Change; gender equality; and human rights.	Goal Five: Climate Change – Fiji is prepared and climate resilient	Climate change and Disaster Resilience

Foreign policy objectives under the 2019 version of the 4YP focused on normalising the relationship between New Zealand and Fiji. The refreshed 2021 4YP shifts this focus toward deepening the bilateral relationship, reflecting a more mature partnership.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on New Zealand's development cooperation with Fiji throughout much of the 4YP. The significant economic and social challenges Fiji faced during this time informed the strategic direction and approach to the 4YP refresh. In the previous 4YP, health support was limited to initiatives such as rheumatic heart disease (RHD) prevention and treatment, and the Medical Treatment Scheme (MTS). However, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly elevated health as a priority within the 4YP.

Agriculture, fisheries, and dairy initiatives were scaled back due to their low impact and high risk<sup>2,3</sup>, and shift in Fiji Government priorities. To address potential gaps, New Zealand collaborated closely with the European Union, which was increasing its involvement in agriculture during this period.

Strategic priorities within the 4YP were also updated to reflect Fiji's request during the 2021 High-Level Consultations to more directly target climate change as its own strategic pillar.

### 1.1.2 Fiji government plans and frameworks

Key Fiji government policies, plans and frameworks relevant to the 4YP strategic goals are summarised below (Table 2). These plans and frameworks often align with global frameworks like the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), climate action commitments under the Paris Agreement and Fiji's obligations following ratification of international human rights instruments.

**Table 2 Key Fiji Government policies, plans and frameworks**

Policy	Description
Fiji's 5-Year and 20-Year National Development Plan (2017-2021/2036)	This overarching plan is divided into a 5-year plan (short-term) and a 20-year plan (long-term), focusing on inclusive socio-economic development, sustainable management of natural resources, and improved service delivery. Key pillars include good governance, economic development, climate resilience, and building human capital.
Fiji Climate Change Act (2021)	This act codifies Fiji's commitments under the Paris Agreement, incorporating legally binding targets to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050 and adaptation measures for communities vulnerable to climate impacts.

<sup>2</sup> MFAT Management Response to Fiji Dairy Industry Development Initiative Mid-Term Review Report.

<sup>3</sup> 4YP Reflection Report 2020/21

Policy	Description
Fiji National Climate Change Policy 2018-2030	Includes a gender responsive, evidence-based, and human-rights based approach.
Fiji's Green Growth Framework (2014; revisions during 2018-2024)	Initially launched in 2014, this framework promotes sustainable development by focusing on resource efficiency, low-carbon development, and disaster resilience. It emphasises environmental sustainability as a critical part of Fiji's socio-economic development.
Fiji National Adaptation Plan (NAP) (2018)	This is Fiji's roadmap for strengthening resilience against climate change impacts. It integrates climate risks into national development planning across sectors, particularly agriculture, water, and coastal management.
Fiji's COVID-19 Recovery Framework (2020)	This framework was developed in response to the economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. It prioritises job creation, economic recovery, strengthening public health systems, and supporting affected sectors like tourism and agriculture.
Fiji National Health Policy 2021–2030	This policy focuses on improving the overall health and well-being of its population through accessible, equitable, and quality healthcare services. It emphasises primary healthcare, with a strong focus on preventative care, maternal and child health, and addressing non-communicable diseases. It aims to strengthen the healthcare system's capacity, improve health infrastructure, and enhance workforce development to deliver better health outcomes. The policy also prioritises addressing social determinants of health, promoting healthy lifestyles, and ensuring sustainable health financing and governance.
Fiji Low Emission Development Strategy 2018-2050	Fiji's Low Emission Development Strategy outlines a pathway to decarbonising the economy while fostering economic growth and job creation. It identifies sector-specific strategies for reducing emissions across energy, agriculture, forestry, and transport sectors by 2050.
Fiji National Gender Policy (2014; Updates and Implementation 2018-2024)	Aiming for gender equality and women's empowerment, this policy tackles gender-based violence, women's participation in decision-making, and economic empowerment. Updates have occurred to align with evolving global gender goals.
Fiji Agriculture Sector Policy Agenda (2019)	This policy focuses on modernising Fiji's agriculture sector, improving food security, and promoting sustainable practices. It aligns with Fiji's climate goals, targeting resilient agricultural systems and promoting agribusiness.
Fiji Digital Government Transformation Policy (2021)	Aimed at modernising Fiji's public sector through the digitisation of services. It enhances transparency, efficiency, and accessibility of government services.
Employment and Relations (Amendment) Bill 2023	Provides a comprehensive framework for employment relations in Fiji, fair treatment and protection for all workers, including provisions for maternity leave, non-discrimination, and workplace safety. Recent amendments included leave entitlements and adjustments to family care and paternity leave.
Ministry for the Economy's (MoE) Gender Equity and Social Inclusion Policy 2021-2024	Recognises that effective gender equity and social inclusion mainstreaming requires a serious whole-of-ministry commitment to understanding and addressing factors in all operational policies, budgets and service delivery decisions – and that this is not adjunct to the MoE core business. An integral part of policy implementation is the Gender Transformative Institutional Capacity Development Initiative supported by the New Zealand government.
Fiji National Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) 2023-2028	Outlines a comprehensive approach to eliminating violence against women and girls (EVAWG).
Policy for Gender in Agriculture in Fiji (2022-2027)	Aims to institutionalise a gender mainstreaming strategy. It seeks to achieve better food and nutrition security, sustainable livelihoods, climate and disaster resilience, and successful commercial agriculture for both women and men in Fiji.

### 1.1.3 4YP Funding

New Zealand's development cooperation with Fiji plays a crucial role in the broader landscape of official development assistance (ODA) received by Fiji. New Zealand has consistently contributed a significant share of ODA to Fiji, though its percentage share has varied over the years (Table 3).<sup>4</sup>

**Table 3 Total ODA flows to Fiji, 2018 to 2021**

	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total ODA flows (spend) to Fiji from official agencies/ donors (NZD)	\$220,268,082	\$174,038,572	\$590,668,927	\$718,135,834
New Zealand's % of total ODA flows to Fiji	8.27%	8.96%	2.91%	11.22%
New Zealand's % of grant funding portion of total ODA flows to Fiji	11.01%	10.53%	10.36%	23.34%

Source: 2023 Pacific Aid Map database, Lowy Institute

The 4YP was implemented across two funding triennia, July 2018 to June 2021 and July 2021 to June 2024, with expenditure across the two triennia reaching just over NZD300 million (Table 4). Expenditure increased rapidly in financial year (FY) 2020/21 as a result of New Zealand support for Fiji's COVID-19 response.

**Table 4 New Zealand ODA flows to Fiji, FYs 2018/19 to 2023/24**

2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Total (NZD)
\$17,046,137	\$35,311,152	\$63,837,260	\$74,136,598	\$44,849,911	\$67,461,197	\$302,642,254

Source: MFAT

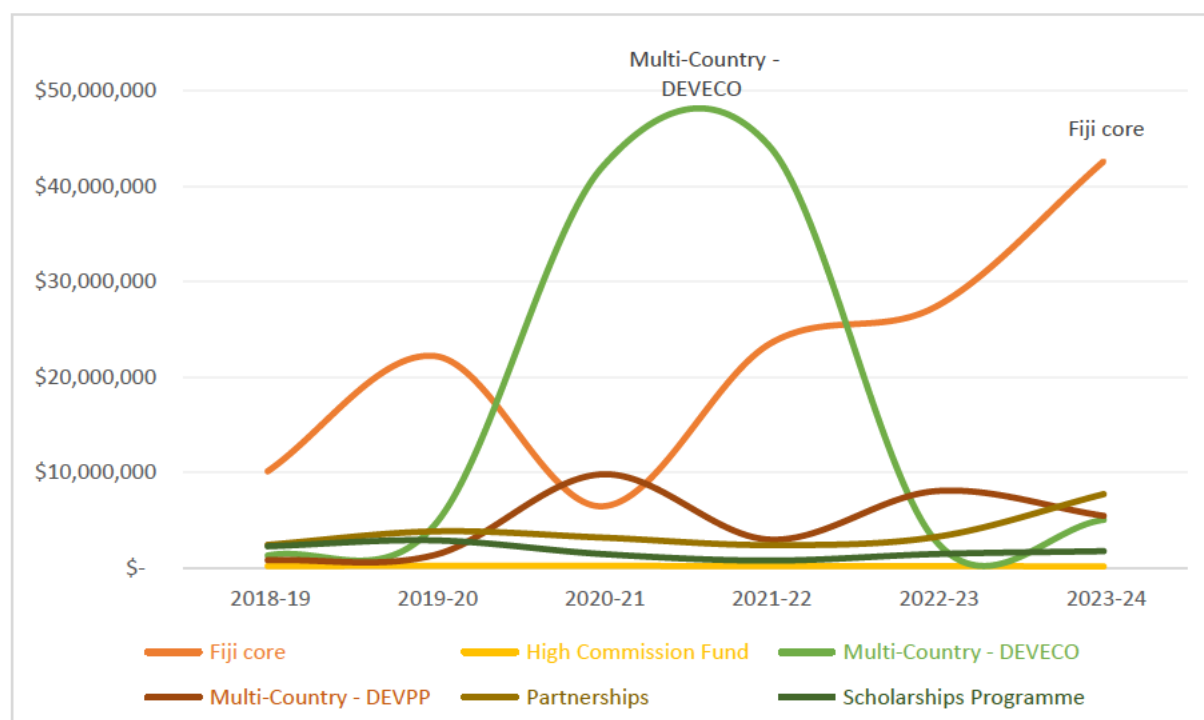
New Zealand's ODA to Fiji is made up of:

- › Bilateral programme funding (or Fiji Core), managed by MFAT's Pacific Melanesia & Micronesia Division (PACMM) in MFAT;
- › Multi-country programme funding managed by either MFAT's Development Economy and Prosperity Division (DEVECO) or Development People and Planet Division (DEVPP);
- › Partnerships programme and humanitarian assistance funding;
- › Scholarship programme funding; and,
- › The High Commission Fund.

Overall, the Fiji Core programme allocation increased significantly over the 4YP period (Figure 1), despite a decrease in expenditure during FY 2020/21, during which time MFAT's support for Fiji's COVID-19 response was primarily funded through regional and multi-country programmes managed by DEVECO and DEVPP.

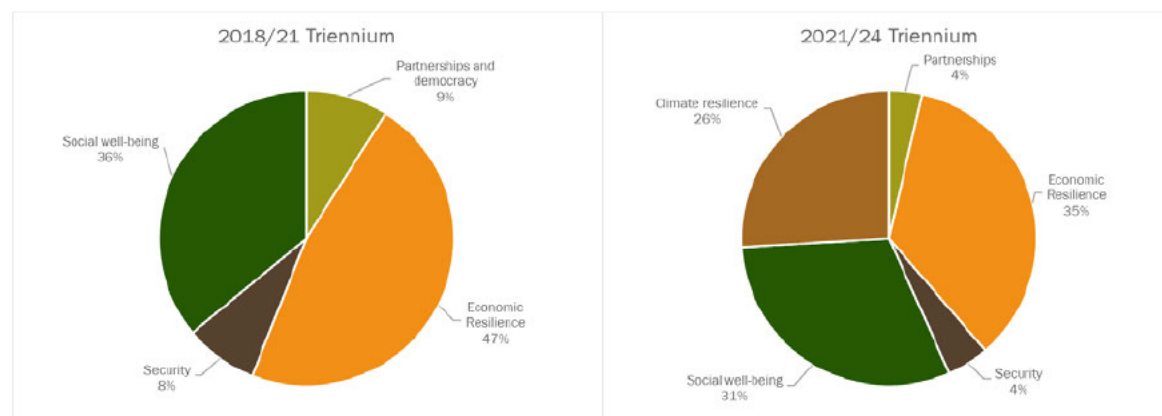
<sup>4</sup> Larger contributors include Australia and multilateral agencies like the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank.

**Figure 1** New Zealand ODA flows to Fiji by programme allocation, FYs 2018/19 to 2023/24



Fiji core expenditure in the triennium 2021/22-2023/24 (~NZD92.8 million) was over double that in the earlier triennium 2018/19-2020/21 (~NZD38.7 million). The increased Fiji core allocation under the 2021 4YP refresh facilitated a transition from smaller, direct intervention-type projects to larger, more strategic programmes, which have the potential to drive system-wide reform in Fiji.

**Figure 2** 2018/21 and 2021/24 triennia all ODA expenditure by strategic goal



Source: 2021 4YP Annual Reflection Report

Source: MFAT supplied expenditure data

## 1.2 Context

### 1.2.1 COVID-19 global pandemic

Fiji's response to the COVID-19 global pandemic was marked by early successes, significant challenges during the Delta variant outbreak, and a strong focus on vaccination as the primary tool for



managing the crisis. The country's recovery efforts continue, with a focus on economic revitalisation, public health resilience, and preparedness for future pandemics.

Fiji first reported a case of COVID-19 on 19 March 2020. The government swiftly imposed stringent measures, including border closures, lockdowns, curfews, and the establishment of containment zones to curb the virus's spread. **Early on, Fiji's quick action and strict quarantine protocols helped to keep case numbers low.**

Despite initial success in managing the pandemic, the **emergence of the Delta variant in Fiji on 2 April 2021 led to a rapid increase in cases**, overwhelming the healthcare system. The Delta variant spread primarily in the capital, Suva, and other urban areas in Viti Levu. The Fiji Government implemented localised lockdowns and curfews but struggled to contain the outbreak. Hospitals reached capacity, and there was a significant increase in COVID-related deaths.

In response to the Delta variant outbreak, Fiji **accelerated its vaccination campaign**. The government prioritised securing vaccine supplies through various channels, including the COVAX initiative, donations from countries like New Zealand, and direct procurement of vaccines. The campaign faced several challenges, including vaccine hesitancy, logistical issues in reaching remote communities, and misinformation. To address these issues, the government, in collaboration with CSOs and international partners, launched public education campaigns to increase awareness about the benefits of vaccination. The vaccination campaign achieved widespread coverage. By 6 October 2022, Fiji's Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS) was reporting that 100% of its estimated targeted adult population had received one dose of a COVID-19 vaccination and 95.4% had received two doses.<sup>5</sup>

### 1.2.2 Economy

Fiji is a small open economy, remotely located, with high dependency on imports and tourism, and vulnerable to climate change and developments in the global economy.

Over the 4YP period, successive Fiji governments have focused on promoting economic growth through tourism, infrastructure development, and international partnerships, while committing to economic diversification and fiscal stability.

The **COVID-19 global pandemic severely affected Fiji's economy**, resulting in a significant contraction in gross domestic product (GDP), particularly due to the downturn in tourism. Unemployment rose sharply, as did Fiji's debt-to-GDP ratio. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Government revenues fell by almost 50%, with economic contractions of 17.0% in 2020 and 4.9% in 2021. Government services were reduced, and economic measures were revised in response to the crisis, including budget cuts and emergency revisions to economic targets and allocations.

To manage the crisis, the Fiji Government borrowed heavily, leading to net deficits of over FJD1 billion during the pandemic years. International support programmes played a critical role in helping Fiji manage the economic fallout from COVID-19, providing budget assistance and measures to sustain essential services.

Post-pandemic, Fiji has experienced **a strong economic recovery** due to increased government spending and a strong recovery in tourism<sup>6</sup>, with GDP growth rebounding in 2022, and surpassing

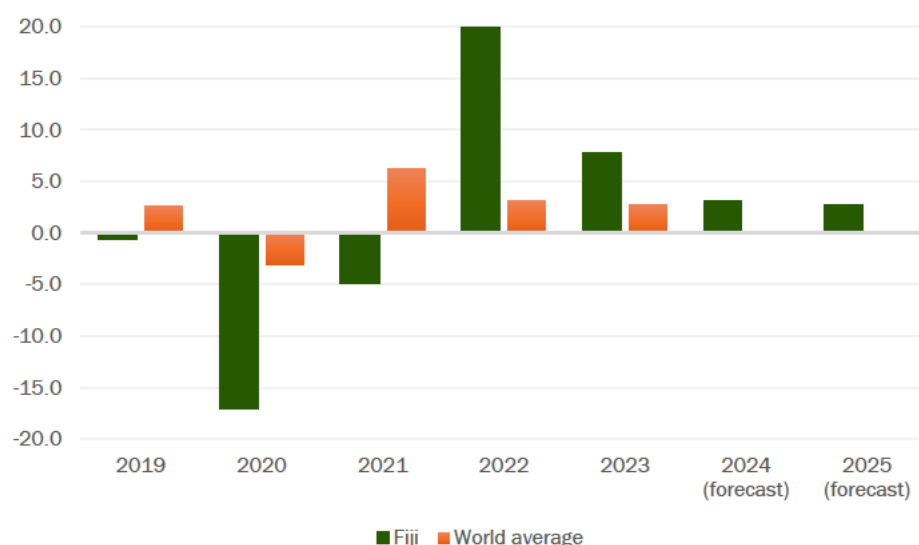
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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.health.gov.fj/06-10-2022/>

<sup>6</sup> Asian Development Bank, 2023. Asian Development Outlook, September 2023.  
<https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/908126/pacific-ado-september-2023.pdf>

pre-pandemic levels in 2023 (Figure 3). This recovery was faster than expected and outpaced other tourism-dependent economies.

**Figure 3 Annual percentage GDP growth rate, 2019 - 2025**



Source: Asian Development Outlook (ADO) July 2024: Steady Growth, Slowing Inflation

Current growth in Fiji's economy continues to be driven by the tourism and related sectors.<sup>7</sup> However, the country remains vulnerable due to its narrow economic base, heavy reliance on tourism, and high public debt. The increase in external debt over recent years is attributed to the concessional financing accessed by Government during and post COVID-19 periods. Managing this debt while addressing economic recovery will continue to be a major challenge for the Fiji Government. As at May 2024, a total of FJD 1.0 billion or 28.5% of external debt is highly concessional. However, the appreciation of the US dollar against the Fiji dollar has led to the increase in the value of external debt given that 81.9% of the external debt portfolio is denominated in the US dollar.

**Table 5 Total Government Debt (FJD Million)**

Particulars	July-20	July-21	July-22	July-23	July-24(f)
Domestic Debt	4,976.5	5,241.2	5,767.4	6,170.5	6,593.2
External Debt	1,709.5	2,422.5	3,364.1	3,577.0	3,682.9
<b>Total Debt</b>	<b>6,686.0</b>	<b>7,663.7</b>	<b>9,131.5</b>	<b>9,747.5</b>	<b>10,276.1</b>
<b>Debt (As a % of GDP)</b>	<b>62.7</b>	<b>84.2</b>	<b>90.6</b>	<b>82.0</b>	<b>78.0</b>
Domestic Debt to Total Debt (%)	74.4	68.4	63.2	63.3	64.2
External Debt to Total Debt (%)	25.6	31.6	36.8	36.7	35.8
<b>Nominal GDP</b>	<b>10,660.70</b>	<b>9,098.80</b>	<b>10,082.40</b>	<b>11,880.00</b>	<b>13,170.20</b>

Source: Ministry of Finance, Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics (June 2024). Economic and fiscal update supplement to the 2024-2 Budget Address.

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Finance, Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics, June 2024. Economic and fiscal update supplement to the 2024-2025 Budget Address. [https://www.parliament.gov.fj/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/2024-2025-Budget-Supplement\\_28.06.24-Final-1.pdf](https://www.parliament.gov.fj/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/2024-2025-Budget-Supplement_28.06.24-Final-1.pdf)



Fiji's heavy reliance on tourism makes it susceptible to **external shocks**, including **natural disasters and global economic downturns**. While the government has implemented monetary and fiscal measures to build resilience, it continues to face challenges, particularly regarding its high debt levels. Although strong growth projections suggest potential easing of fiscal pressures, questions remain about the sustainability of this growth given the narrow revenue base.

For 2024, growth has been revised down slightly to 2.8%, largely due to underperformance in resource-based sectors (excluding mining) and a slowdown in domestic consumption, driven by population decline linked to migration. Despite this, tourism demand remains buoyant and is expected to continue growing throughout the year. Beyond 2024, growth is projected to return to pre-pandemic trends of around 3% in the medium term.

Long-term economic stability in Fiji requires continued efforts towards diversification, resilience building, and strategic international partnerships. Ongoing work to integrate climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction into economic planning is vital given the country's susceptibility to tropical cyclones and other natural disasters.

There is a notable contradiction between the reliance on tourism<sup>8</sup> and the push for economic diversification. While diversification remains a stated priority, the economy's continued dependence on tourism suggests that substantial progress in this area has yet to be achieved.

### 1.2.3 Political

Over the past two decades, national and local government elections in Fiji have been marked by significant political and constitutional changes. Following the 2006 military coup, democratic processes were suspended, and elections were not held until 2014 under a new constitution.

The 2014 and 2018 national elections, overseen by the Fiji Electoral Commission and international observers, saw the restoration of parliamentary democracy. Both elections were characterised by a competitive environment but also allegations of electoral irregularities. Similarly, for the 2022 national elections. This included the 2020 amendments to the Electoral Registration of Voters Act, which increased the power of the election supervisor, permitting them to obtain documents on any citizens for any reason sparking criticism from the Fiji Law Society and political party leaders. Another amendment required people registering to vote to use their full name as specified in their birth certificate. This potentially disenfranchised thousands of women who are registered to vote using their married names and not their birth certificate names, and who would be required to re-register to vote under their birth certificate name or amend their birth certificate. Seven women, supported by the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) and the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC) filed a constitutional challenge against the amendments on the grounds of sex, gender and marital discrimination. The issue was not resolved prior to the 2022 election. It is still unclear how many women voters were affected. Post election this issue has still not been resolved in the Courts.

Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka was elected as Prime Minister and head of Coalition (People's Alliance Party, the Social Democratic Liberal Party (SODELPA) and the National Federation Party (NFP) Government in December 2022 by a slim 1 seat majority, officially ending Frank Bainimarama's 16-year tenure as Prime Minister. The new government has been in place for almost 24 months. Over that period, governance challenges continue with the coalition government surviving a threat of

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<sup>8</sup> Fiji's strong post-pandemic recovery has been supported by increased government spending and the resurgence of tourism. However, visitor arrivals are expected to decelerate in 2024 and 2025 due to capacity constraints, particularly a shortage of hotel rooms, and the effects of migration. Asian Development Bank, 2024. Asian Development Outlook, April 2024. <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/957856/asian-development-outlook-april-2024.pdf>

withdrawal by SODELPA in March 2024, and the deregistration in July 2024 of the former governing party, Fiji First, which has opened up debate about the amendment to the 2013 Constitution or its complete replacement. Nevertheless, the new government has been positive for parliamentary democracy with debates delivering quite thorough scrutiny of government policies, and laws, and issues of concern to citizens.<sup>9</sup> There is a re-emergence of free media with the removal of the media decree with the media now free to present its news and analysis in a critical fashion. Academics and citizens alike are also free to engage in political analysis and commentary. The University of the South Pacific is once again receiving some funding from its host, the Fiji government, and the Vice-Chancellor has had his freedom of movement restored.

Local government elections have not been held since 2005, with councils instead administered by appointed Special Administrators. This has impacted local governance and community representation. The government announced plans to reinstate and hold municipal elections in 2023, however, no date has been set, and considerable logistical and policy changes remain.

### **1.2.3.1 Women's political representation**

The December 2022 election saw a steep decrease in women representatives, with the number of women in the Fiji Parliament dropping from ten out of 51 members of parliament (MPs) (19.6%) to six out of 55 (10.9%). With the subsequent resignation of a female parliamentarian, women's representation has dropped to less than 10%. Four of the five current female MPs hold senior roles; two are Ministers and two are Assistant Ministers (one of whom also serves as the Deputy Speaker of the House). The number of women contesting the 2022 election (55) was slightly lower than in 2018, despite a significant rise in the number of men candidates (from 178 to 288). This suggests growing disengagement among aspiring women politicians.<sup>10</sup>

### **1.2.3.2 Governance**

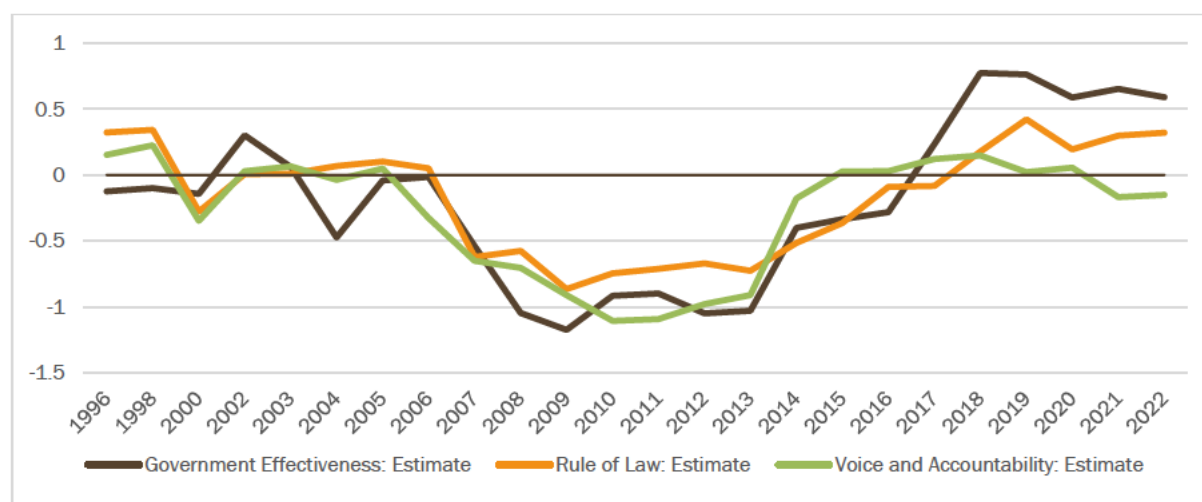
Across the three Worldwide Governance Indicators included in the 4YP indicators—government effectiveness, rule of law, and voice and accountability—Fiji's governance has shown a cyclical pattern of decline during periods of political instability, followed by gradual recovery during phases of democratic reforms (Figure 4).

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<sup>9</sup> Sen, S., 14 March 2024. *The Rabuka government: A first-third assessment*. Devpolicy Blog, Development Policy Centre, Australian National University. <https://devpolicy.org/the-rabuka-government-a-first-third-assessment-20240314/>

<sup>10</sup> Kant, R. and Baker, K., 3 March 2023. A new Era of Democracy for Fiji – but where are the women? The Interpreter, The Lowy Institute. <https://www.loyyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/new-era-democracy-fiji-where-are-women>

**Figure 4 Governance Indicators**



Source: Worldwide Governance Indicators

Despite progress between 2014 and 2022 gaps remained, particularly in fostering open civic participation, ensuring a fully independent judiciary, and improving the efficiency and transparency of public institutions. Fiji Government reforms since 2022 will likely see an increase in governance indicators in the near future.

**Table 6 Governance indicators summary**

Government Effectiveness	Rule of Law	Voice and Accountability
<p>Government effectiveness measures the quality of public services, civil service independence from political pressures, and the credibility of government policies. Over the past three decades, Fiji's performance on this indicator has fluctuated significantly, correlating with political events such as military coups, democratic transitions, and subsequent governance reforms. There was a significant dip following the 2006 coup, but gradual improvements were observed following the 2014 elections. However, challenges related to bureaucratic efficiency, policy implementation, and public trust in government services persisted. Recent data suggests incremental improvements in service delivery, though gaps remain in administrative capacity and policy coherence.</p>	<p>This indicator assesses the extent to which laws are followed, property rights are protected, and the judiciary is independent and effective. Fiji has experienced periods of decline in rule of law, particularly following coups in 2000 and 2006, when the judiciary's independence was questioned, and rule by decree weakened legal protections. However, post-2013, with the return to democracy and the 2013 Constitution, there have been efforts to restore legal norms and judicial independence, though concerns about executive influence and the slow pace of legal reforms have lingered. While there have been improvements in legal frameworks, consistent application and enforcement of laws remain areas for development.</p>	<p>This indicator captures citizens' ability to participate in government, freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media. Fiji's scores on this indicator have historically been low, particularly in the aftermath of the military coups, which curtailed political freedoms, restricted media, and limited public participation. The abrogation of the constitution in 2009 and media censorship laws further constrained civic space. Since the return to civilian rule in 2014, there has been a gradual re-establishment of democratic processes, but freedom of expression, media independence, and political participation remained heavily constrained. There is a re-emergence of free media with the removal of the media decree in March 2023. A judicial revamp is underway restoring faith in the legal and judicial system.</p>

### 1.2.4 Social

Fiji faces an escalating housing crisis, alongside a cost of living crisis, with a growing number of informal settlements in urban and peri-urban areas, increasing environmental and social risks. Around 23% of urban populations live in these high-risk areas<sup>11</sup>, contributing to poverty and

<sup>11</sup> MFAT, 2024 Fiji Social Housing Sector Investment: Single Stage Business Case.

vulnerability, with housing resilience a significant concern. Young solo mothers in informal settlements are among the poorest, facing limited economic opportunities and social stigma.<sup>12</sup>

About 24% of Fijians live in poverty, with multidimensional poverty rates higher in rural areas (38%) than in urban areas (23%).<sup>13</sup> Fiji's social protection system is designed to support its most vulnerable populations through a range of programmes, particularly targeting poverty, vulnerability, and inequality. The system is overseen by the Ministry of Women, Children, and Social Protection, and has received increased budget allocations in recent years. For the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the government allocated FJD 200.2 million to these programmes, a significant increase from previous years. Key components of Fiji's social protection include the Social Pension Scheme, the Poverty Benefit Scheme, the Family Assistance Program, the Disability Allowance, the Rural Pregnant Mothers' Food Voucher scheme, and the Bus Fare Scheme Program. The Fiji Government is also working towards making the social protection system more adaptive to shocks, including natural disasters and economic downturns, given the vulnerability of the country to climate-related risks. This is reflected in Fiji's [Adaptive Social Protection Strategy](#) which integrates disaster risk management into the social protection framework. While Fiji's social protection system is one of the most advanced in the Pacific, it only covers 10% of the poorest families. Expanding coverage is a priority, particularly for those in informal settlements and vulnerable groups.<sup>14</sup>

There are significant issues in health service delivery, with staff shortages exacerbated by post-COVID burn out and international recruitment.<sup>15</sup> Fiji also faces high rates of non-communicable diseases and RHD, with limited resources to meet healthcare needs. Access to education is similarly hampered by economic inequalities and staff shortages exacerbated by international recruitment.<sup>16</sup>

A country's infant mortality rate is often regarded as a barometer, or proxy indicator, for overall societal health. Fiji's under-five mortality rate has fluctuated over recent years. In 2019, the rate was 25.3 deaths per 1,000 live births, while by 2023, it had increased to 28.1 per 1,000 live births. This gradual rise during the 4YP period signals potential challenges in healthcare delivery, nutrition, and overall public health in Fiji. The United Nations (UN) Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation reports the leading causes of infant mortality in Fiji as pre-maturity, meningitis/encephalitis and birth asphyxia/trauma.<sup>17</sup>

#### 1.2.4.1 Migration

Since 2022, there has been a significant increase in migration out of Fiji as international borders reopened after COVID-19. Before 2018, the net migration loss of Fiji residents averaged around 10,000 annually. However, in both 2018 and 2019, this number exceeded 25,000, and following a pause due to the pandemic, it surged to over 40,000 in both 2022 and 2023. This rising out migration corresponds with significant increases in personal remittances (Figure 5). A record high of FJD1.25b remittances were received in 2023, with continued growth expected.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Empowering Young Mothers 2023. Activity Completion Report.

<sup>13</sup> Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 2019. Household income and expenditure survey 2019: Final report. Fiji Bureau of Statistics

<sup>14</sup> World Bank reports on Fiji's social protection system.

<sup>15</sup> Radio New Zealand, 21 April 2023. Exodus of health workers in Fiji. RNZ <https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/488395/exodus-of-of-health-workers-in-fiji>

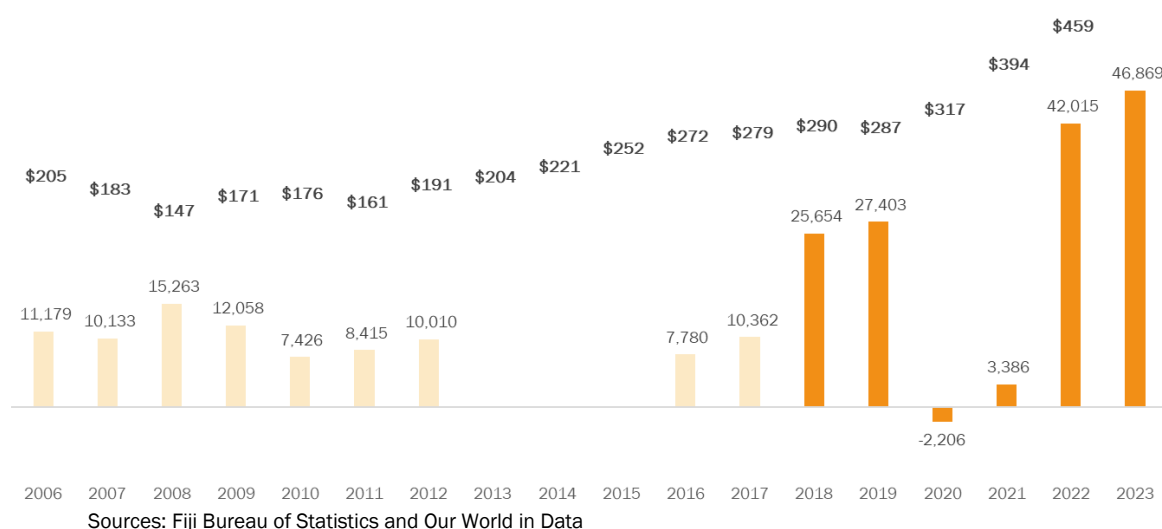
<sup>16</sup> <https://www.fijitimes.com.fj/teachers-mass-migration-kumar-exodus-of-workers-places-heavy-burden-on-school-leaders/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://childmortality.org/causes-of-death/data>

<sup>18</sup> Chand, S., 2024. Westpac Wave – Quarterly update on Fiji economy [Westpac Wave - Quarterly update on Fiji economy | Westpac IQ](#)

This rising migration trend has increasingly strained the capacity of government, non-government, and commercial sectors, particularly in the latter part of the 4YP implementation, and continues to impact Fiji today. Discussions with the Ministry of Finance and National Planning also highlight concerns regarding the shrinking tax revenue base due to this out migration surge.

**Figure 5 Fiji residents net departures and personal remittances (USD million)**



### 1.2.4.2 Gender equality, disability and social inclusion

**The Fiji Government has a strong commitment to achieving gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) in Fiji society.** This is indicated through ratification of numerous laws, policies, conventions and regional and national frameworks. At the national level, the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji provides for non-discrimination on the basis of gender and objectives related to gender equity; women's empowerment and social inclusion are emphasised in Fiji's 5 year and 20 year National Development Plan (NDP)<sup>19</sup>, in national policies on gender, disability and youth, and through legislation, such as the Domestic Violence Decree of 2009. The government is also strongly committed to achieving GEDSI in legislative and programmatic actions to build climate resilience and reduce the risk of disasters. Together these legislative and policy actions provide a strong enabling environment for GEDSI in Fiji.

**CSOs and women's organisations in particular have driven significant gains in GEDSI in recent decades** and they continue to fight for change, Government has begun to independently solicit their expertise for gender-responsive technical assistance. For instance, the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) was engaged by the Ministry of Women, Children, and Poverty Alleviation to provide technical advisory support for the Cabinet-endorsed *Gender Transformative Institutional Capacity Development* (ICD) Initiative. A change in government in 2022, has seen increased openness to include the views of civil society and community based organisations in national development decision making processes such as the national budget process.

**Despite these gains, women and girls, persons living with disability and marginalised groups in particular those living in remote and rural areas, continue to face inequalities.** Deep-rooted socio-cultural norms create and reinforce inequalities, and women and girls are subject to high levels of violence and abuse, including during shocks and disasters. Rates of intimate partner violence are

<sup>19</sup> Ministry for Economy, 2017. 5-year national development plan: Transforming Fiji.



disturbingly high in Fiji, and well above the global average.<sup>20</sup> Concerningly, these rates are estimated to be as much as 10 times higher for women experiencing multiple and intersecting forms of inequality, such as women with a disability and LGBTIQ+ communities in Fiji.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, the slow pace of development and delivery of services to rural and remote areas is a constant cause of hardship to people living in these areas.

**Women's active participation in Fiji's economy is critical for future sustainable development and prosperity, as well as a human right in its own regard.** Despite graduating to upper-middle-income country status in 2012, a quarter of Fiji's citizens live below the poverty line and gender disparities affect all aspect of the lives of Fijian women.<sup>22</sup> Women dominate the informal sector where income and conditions are generally poor, contributing to a gender pay gap which sees Fijian women earn on average only 40 cents for every dollar earned by a man.<sup>23</sup>

**These economic inequalities are deeply interwoven with women and girl's opportunities to participate in civil and public life.** The number of seats held by women in Fiji's Parliament decreased to under 10% at the 2022 election. Men also vastly outnumber women in political representation at village and local government levels. Gender also intersects with factors such as youth, remote location and disability to compound barriers to women's leadership.

**Supporting women's leadership and addressing the gender inequalities that underpin poverty reduction and sustainable development are particularly important in the context of COVID-19, which intensified unequal gender relations and the risks for women and girls.**<sup>24</sup> In Fiji, calls to the National Domestic Violence Helpline increased by over 600% during the 2020 lockdowns.<sup>25</sup> With girls disproportionately withdrawn from schooling, and women disproportionately removed from the labour force, the World Economic Forum estimates that gender equality has been set back by a generation compared to pre-COVID-19 trends in the Pacific region.<sup>26</sup>

### 1.2.5 Climate change

The Fiji Government has an ambitious climate change agenda aimed at achieving carbon neutrality by 2050 while building resilience to climate emergencies. Key policies are integrated into the 5- and 20-Year NDPs, covering climate mitigation, adaptation, disaster risk management, and resilience.

The Fiji government has been a prominent global advocate for climate action, notably as the first small island state to preside over the UN Climate Change Conference (COP23) in 2017, and continuing to lead initiatives for climate resilience, ocean preservation, and financing for vulnerable nations in international and regional forums such as the UN and the Pacific Islands Forum.

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<sup>20</sup> Sardinha, L., et. al., 2022. Global, Regional, and National Prevalence Estimates of Physical or Sexual, or Both, Intimate Partner Violence against Women in 2018. *The Lancet* 399 (10327).

<sup>21</sup> United Nations Population Fund, n.d. Five Things You Didn't Know about Disability and Sexual Violence. <http://unfpa.org/news/five-things-you-didnt-know-about-disability-and-sexual-violence>.

<sup>22</sup> Pacific United Nations, 2022. Fiji. United Nations in the Pacific: Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu & Vanuatu. <https://pacific.un.org/en/about/fiji>

<sup>23</sup> Fiji Women's Rights Movement, n.d. Giving women a fair go! How gender equality is faring in Fiji? Suva, Fiji: Fiji Women's Rights Movement. p3.

<sup>24</sup> UN Women, 2020. "The Shadow Pandemic: Violence against Women during COVID-19." United Nations.

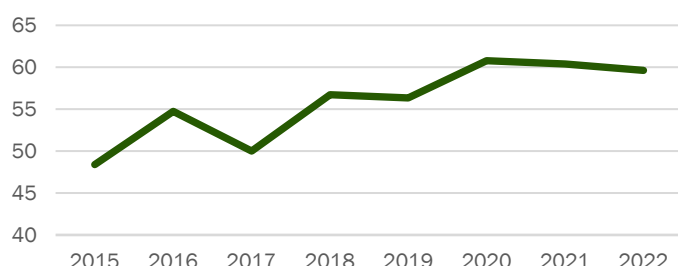
<sup>25</sup> Pacific Women, 2021. Thematic brief: Gender and COVID-19 in the Pacific. [https://pacificwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/ThematicBrief\\_COVID19gender\\_Pacific\\_March2021.pdf](https://pacificwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/ThematicBrief_COVID19gender_Pacific_March2021.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> World Economic Forum, 3 March 2021. Pandemic Pushes Back Gender Parity by a Generation, Report Finds. <https://www.weforum.org/press/2021/03/pandemic-pushes-back-gender-parity-by-a-generation-report-finds/>



Fiji has committed to increasing its electricity production from renewable sources, aiming for 100% renewable energy by 2030. Over the past decade, the country has made significant strides, with around 60% of its electricity now generated from renewable sources (Figure 6), primarily hydroelectric, solar, and wind energy.

**Figure 6** Fiji's share of electricity production from renewables (%)



Source: Ember (2024); Energy Institute - Statistical Review of World Energy (2024) via Our World In Data

The 2021 Climate Change Act provides the legal framework to meet these objectives and fulfil international commitments. Fiji has developed a robust suite of policy instruments, including the National Climate Change Policy 2018-2030, the National Adaptation Plan 2018-2022, the Low Emission Development Strategy (2018-2050), and the National Ocean Policy 2020-2030. These policies guide climate action across multiple sectors, with a focus on reducing greenhouse gases, carbon sequestration, and securing sustainable climate finance. The National Climate Change Policy includes a gender responsive, evidence-based, and human-rights based approach. The Climate Finance Strategy (2022-2029) outlines investment priorities for transitioning to a low-carbon economy, although actual spending remains only a fraction of the estimated FJD 3.29 billion (EUR 1.4 billion) needed annually. Fiji's fiscal constraints, exacerbated by high public debt and the COVID-19 pandemic, require external grants and concessional loans to close the climate finance gap.

Implementation of the Act relies on a whole-of-government approach, coordination across ministries, and partnerships with the private sector. Institutional mechanisms, such as the National Climate Change Coordination Committee and the Fiji Taskforce on Climate Relocation, support cross-sector collaboration. The Act also mandates biannual reporting from government ministries on progress toward climate goals and requires the development of an online platform to enhance transparency and access to climate data.

Despite significant progress on climate change mitigation and adaptation, Fiji faces capacity challenges in both public and private sectors due to limited human resources and frequent staff turnover. These constraints hinder the effective planning, funding, and monitoring of climate actions. Development partners are providing support to strengthen Fiji's systems for monitoring, reporting, and verification in line with the Paris Agreement's Enhanced Transparency Framework.

To ensure smooth implementation, the Fiji Government has prepared a Climate Change Act Strategic Implementation Roadmap (2022-2024), which outlines the steps required to activate all provisions of the Act. The roadmap emphasises collaboration with key stakeholders and aims to improve the coordination of external funding and technical assistance.

Fiji's ND-GAIN (Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative) index scores from 2015 to 2021 reflect the country's vulnerability to climate change and its readiness to improve resilience. The ND-GAIN index measures two key factors: a country's exposure, sensitivity, and capacity to adapt to climate risks (vulnerability) and its readiness to implement adaptation actions. Over this period, Fiji consistently

faced significant climate-related challenges, particularly in terms of sea-level rise, cyclones, and impacts on key sectors like agriculture and infrastructure. However, Fiji's readiness scores have shown steady improvement, driven by government policies aimed at bolstering disaster preparedness, enhancing infrastructure resilience, and fostering international cooperation on climate action. The overall trend from 2015 to 2021 indicates that while Fiji remains vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, it has made strides in its adaptation efforts, positioning itself as a leader among Pacific island nations in addressing climate risks.

## 2 Methodology

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### 2.1 Evaluation purpose

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the achievements, coherence, and strategic direction of the Fiji Programme over the period 2019-2023<sup>27</sup>. It considers the integrated effect of New Zealand's foreign policy and development cooperation in Fiji. The evaluation covers the Fiji 4YP that was refreshed in October 2021 and assesses what worked well in the programme and what areas could be strengthened. The evaluation findings will identify lessons for ongoing 4YP planning and management, inform MFAT's engagement with Fiji, and document New Zealand's contribution to share with partners, stakeholders, and the public.

### 2.2 Objectives and evaluation questions

The four objectives of this evaluation, and related evaluation questions, are:

#### **Objective 1 (coherence/relevance): Assess the alignment of MFAT's engagement in Fiji 2019-2023**

1.1 To what extent did New Zealand's approach to development cooperation in Fiji maximise strategic policy alignment, relevance and responsiveness for:

- › New Zealand's strategic objectives (as articulated in the 4YP as well as strategic policy frameworks<sup>28</sup>, including the Duavata Relationship Statement of Partnership March 2022);
- › Fiji's priorities for national development (as articulated in Fiji's 20 Year National Development Plan);
- › New Zealand's International Cooperation for Effective Sustainable Development (ICESD) Policy and global development principles; and
- › Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation and the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (particularly donor coherence).

#### **Objective 2 (effectiveness/impact): Assess the achievement of strategic priorities**

2.1 To what extent has New Zealand's engagement over 2019-2023 effectively contributed to 4YP goals, including through building on previous support to maximise positive impact:

- › A broader, deeper and resilient relationship/partnership between New Zealand and Fiji;

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<sup>27</sup> The terms of reference mentions 2023 as the end point within scope - where it makes sense the evaluation team has considered information up to end June 2024.

<sup>28</sup> Pacific Reset and Pacific Reset to Resilience

- › An inclusive, resilient and sustainable Fiji economy;
- › A stable and secure Fiji;
- › An equal, inclusive, well-educated and healthy Fiji;
- › A climate resilient Fiji

In particular:

- 2.2 To what extent did New Zealand's support for Fiji's COVID-19 response deliver intended objectives?
- 2.3 To what extent has MFAT's Fiji engagement over the 2019-2023 effectively delivered on gender and inclusion priorities, including mainstreaming where relevant?
- 2.4 To what extent has New Zealand's support to address climate change, including disaster response and climate security, been successful?

**Objective 3 (efficiency/effectiveness): Assess the effectiveness and efficiency of Aotearoa New Zealand's approaches and ways of working to achieve desired strategic objectives**

3.1 To what extent has MFAT's Fiji engagement over the period effectively:

- › Utilised the most effective and efficient modalities (such as budget support, technical assistance, project type interventions etc.) to achieve desired objectives?
- › Successfully collaborated with other New Zealand government agencies to deliver 4YP outcomes (including through regional initiatives)?

**Objective 4 (future sustainability and improvements): Offer insights into the sustainability of current and future support**

- 4.1 To what extent has New Zealand's support delivered sustainable benefits?
- 4.2 What learnings can be identified to maximise achievement of the Four-Year Plan? Including:
  - › Use of resources for greatest effect;
  - › Ability to scale investments to best realise and maximise New Zealand's impact; and
  - › Ability to adapt to changes in context and manage activities with flexibility.

## 2.3 Evaluation scope

### 2.3.1 Activities in scope

MFAT Development Capability & Insights Division (DCI) team and Fiji Programme team selected 61 activities to be included in this evaluation. These activities cover bilateral partnerships with the Fiji government; regional agencies; multilateral organisations, including development banks; civil society, and the relationships which underpin these partnerships. The largest portion of expenditure from the activities in scope falls under the economic pillar (due to COVID-19 related budget support), while nearly half of the activities in scope relate to the social well-being pillar. Collectively, these activities represent 82% of total expenditure across the two triennia (Table 7).

**Table 7 Summary of activities in scope**

Strategic Goal	Number of activities in scope	Expenditure (NZD) FY 2018/19 - 2023/24	
1: Partnership	8	\$	11,490,434
2: Economic Resilience	11	\$	110,791,623
3: Security	1	\$	11,924,557
4: Social Well-being	29	\$	67,814,531
5: Climate Change and Disaster Resilience	12	\$	45,626,245
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>247,647,390</b>

### 2.3.2 Out of scope

The evaluation excluded new activities initiated in FY 2023/24 and more recent events that did not have a significant impact during the 2019-2023 period. Aspects of New Zealand's engagement with Fiji that fall outside the scope of this strategic evaluation include:

- › New Zealand's defence cooperation, though reflections on its relevance to the 4YP outcomes are included where applicable.
- › Fiji's participation in the Regional Employers Scheme (RSE)<sup>29</sup>.
- › Activities conducted by New Zealand Ministry of Primary Industries, New Zealand Customs, and regional policing activities such as the New Zealand Transnational Crime Unit and Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police, were not selected by MFAT for inclusion in the activity list
- › The impact of the scholarship programme, as assessed through tracer studies, is not included in this evaluation. Consideration has been given to the reach of the scholarship programme.

## 2.4 Approach

The evaluation used a theory-based methodology to assess the progress of the 4YP. The short- and medium-term outcomes outlined in the 4YP logic diagram formed the basis for considering New Zealand's contributions to Fiji's development goals. Climate change, gender equality, and social inclusion were integrated throughout the evaluation process, including the document review, interviews with stakeholders and data analysis.

The evaluation process was structured into four phases (Appendix D outlines full particulars of the methodology used for this evaluation). During phase one, initial planning and scoping meetings were held, both in Wellington and Suva, to establish the scope, approach, and potential challenges.

Phase two involved a thorough document review of over 490 documents received from MFAT, and around 30 documents, quantitative data and grey literature (such as working papers, policy briefs, organisational reports, newsletters and speeches) sourced by the evaluation team. The document review mapped evidence of achievements against the 4YP outcomes, including priorities related to climate change, gender equality, disability inclusion and social inclusion. It examined the coherence and alignment of New Zealand's development and foreign policy support with the 4YP's strategic

<sup>29</sup> Fiji formalised their engagement with the Recognised Seasonal Employer scheme in 2016.

goals and outcomes. The document review also identified the modalities used during implementation, provided an overview of contextual factors influencing the 4YP's execution, and highlighted key learnings. Additionally, it helped shape the lines of enquiry and identified further information sources for the data collection phase of the evaluation.

Phase three focused on data collection and analysis. The evaluation team undertook consultations in Fiji from 9 to 26 July 2024, and online consultations throughout August and September. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with 99 stakeholders across 39 organisations in Fiji (Suva and Lautoka) and New Zealand, including government officials, civil society, and development partners (Appendix F contains a summary stakeholder list).

NVivo software was used for coding interview responses and managing the data, and analytical frameworks were employed to ensure rigorous analysis of the findings. The evaluation team presented emerging findings to the Evaluation Steering Group on 12 September 2024. Final data analysis was then conducted against key evaluation questions and emerging themes. In phase four, this evaluation report was drafted in line with MFAT standards, and incorporates feedback from the Evaluation Steering Group.

## 2.5 Limitations and mitigation strategies

The evaluation faced limitations affecting the comprehensive assessment of New Zealand's support to Fiji under the 4YP. These limitations and the mitigation strategies used to ensure a credible, well-rounded assessment are described in Appendix D and summarised here.

Key challenges included limited stakeholder availability, uneven documentation of contributions, and high-level indicators not always suitable for measuring specific progress. The unavailability of some private sector stakeholders, and unfamiliarity of some stakeholders with past activities, was mitigated through detailed document reviews and consultations with former staff where available. Where documentation gaps existed, particularly for measuring contributions, the evaluation team triangulated data from various sources to provide a balanced analysis. The focus on larger, more impactful activities allowed for deeper insights, although smaller initiatives may have been underrepresented. Additionally, delays in receiving key MFAT documents posed a risk of gaps in understanding, which were mitigated by incorporating new information on a case-by-case basis. The quality of the available documentation was inconsistent, but interviews and consultations helped fill in critical details. The evaluation team received multiple versions of activity spreadsheets from MFAT, covering different timeframes and activities. To ensure consistency, the team compiled two spreadsheets—one related to the activities in scope and another covering all activities over the two triennia (July 2018 – June 2021 and July 2021 – June 2024). As a result, some figures in this report may differ slightly from those reported internally in MFAT.

Despite these limitations, the evaluation was able to draw credible conclusions, supported by the use of multiple data sources and stakeholder feedback.

# 3 Findings

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This section opens with reflections on the arrangements to deliver the 4YP outcomes, and then presents key findings for each of the evaluation questions. It concludes with insights on sustainability.



## 3.1 Arrangements for delivering the 4YP outcomes

### 3.1.1 Ways of working

MFAT is widely recognised for its flexibility and quick responses to emerging situations during the 4YP period, consistently demonstrating a readiness to take calculated risks. Stakeholders provided examples of MFAT being the first donor to respond or support an initiative, which then encouraged other donors to follow suit, allowing for broader participation.

Over the 4YP period, MFAT has prioritised building strong relationships, adopting a relationship-driven approach that brings both advantages and challenges. Stakeholders reflected that staff at Post, notably local staff, have showcased strong technical capacity, specialist knowledge, and notable relationship-building skills.

Throughout the 4YP, MFAT has consistently embodied its organisational values. The principles of *Kotahitanga*—drawing strength from diversity, *Courage*—doing the right thing, and *Manaakitanga*—honouring and respecting others, have been evident in its actions and partnerships.

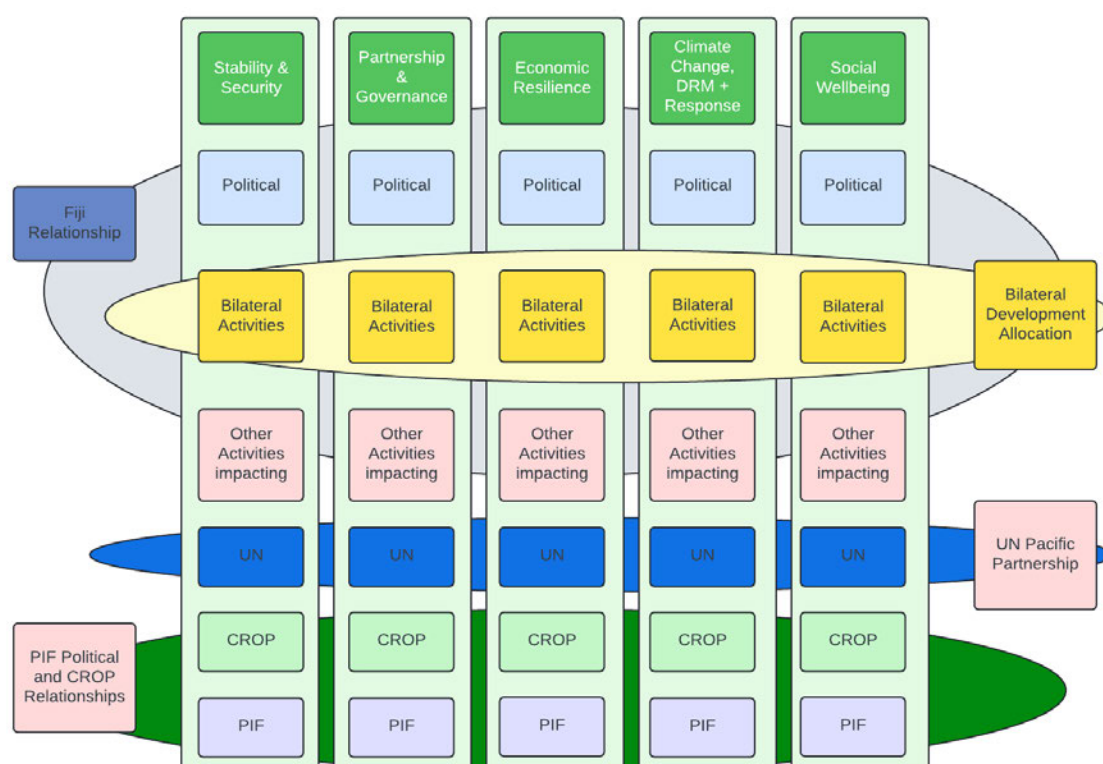
The evaluation also highlights that New Zealand’s well-calibrated risk tolerance has fostered innovation and a willingness to try new things. This approach is widely acknowledged, and deeply appreciated by stakeholders, in some instances setting New Zealand apart from other development partners.

### 3.1.2 Pillar approach

During the 4YP period, the staff structure and profile at the New Zealand High Commission (NZHC) in Suva increased. In 2020, two additional seconded positions were established, bringing the total number of MFAT seconded staff to eight. Furthermore, in 2022, three locally-engaged technical specialists were recruited.

At the start of the 4YP period, staff responsibilities at the NZHC were divided between development (bilateral, regional) and foreign policy teams. However, in early 2022, a pillar approach was introduced (Figure 7) realigning staff responsibilities to reflect the five strategic goals under the 4YP. Under this new structure, staff were given a combination of development and foreign policy responsibilities, with each pillar led by a seconded staff member.

**Figure 7 Pillar approach**



The pillar approach has proven highly effective in enhancing internal coordination at the NZHC. However, there is still a need for stronger connections between bilateral and multi-country/regional efforts managed in Wellington and the NZHC, as well as with other New Zealand government agencies. Opportunities to improve cross-pillar linkages are discussed throughout this findings section.

New Zealand government agencies could benefit from a deeper understanding of the full scope of MFAT's Fiji Programme. Greater awareness of how other New Zealand institutions are supporting Fiji through the 4YP could enhance partnerships across agencies, including with MFAT in Wellington and at Post, and with Fiji government agencies. This knowledge could ultimately improve the quality of activities and coordination efforts, both regionally and bilaterally, leading to stronger partnerships and improved donor coordination.

### 3.1.3 Monitoring and reporting on 4YP outcomes

One area identified for improvement is the clarity of outcomes and indicators, which often sit at too high a level, making it difficult to directly link MFAT's support to its strategic goals. There is a missing 'middle' layer between activities and strategic objectives, which limits the visibility of progress. Additionally, activity level Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Learning (MERL) frameworks have been noted as particularly weak in the areas of learning and knowledge sharing. It is not uncommon for these frameworks to be incomplete or overlooked in activity reporting, resulting in limited evidence of outcomes being documented or shared with stakeholders. Implementing an annual reflection could be a beneficial starting point to enhance the sharing of insights and outcomes, fostering a stronger culture of knowledge exchange and continuous improvement.

Developing a 4YP MERL framework, and utilising the information it generates, could help build an evidence base for outcomes achieved and improve visibility through communications. Strengthened

MERL processes could also help capture connections across strategic goals (which already exist but are not always effectively tracked), reducing the risk of siloed approaches.

While MFAT staff, particularly those at the NZHC, are responsible for monitoring outcomes under the 4YP, they are currently under-resourced to carry out these tasks effectively. Resourcing of MERL functions are not necessarily being implemented as originally approved. For example, the MERL, coordination and capacity building support unit set out in the Business Case for the Marama Ni Viti was not established. A phased approach to resourcing MERL is recommended: a high level of investment at the beginning of the 4YP to embed MERL processes and practices, with a gradual reduction of support as staff become more accustomed to managing these processes independently and they become an integral part of MFAT's ways of working.

## 3.2 Coherence and relevance

### 3.2.1 Alignment of MFAT's engagement with New Zealand strategic objectives and Fiji's priorities for national development.

Overall, **New Zealand's support has been well integrated into Fiji's key areas of need, aligning closely with national development priorities and fostering local leadership and ownership.** New Zealand's approach to development cooperation was particularly responsive to Fiji's needs during and after the COVID-19 global pandemic.

A strong partnership approach is evident across many sectors, with the Fiji Government leading or co-leading on numerous initiatives. This ensures that local priorities are met while also building capacity. One of the standout features of the Fiji Programme is how New Zealand's bilateral activities align with and support the priorities of the Fiji Government. In contrast, regional and multi-country activities tend to align more closely with broader, recognised needs across the Pacific (as outlined in MFAT's Pacific Regional 4YP). This means that, although these activities often meet recognised needs within the Pacific, it is not always evident if those needs align with Fiji's most pressing priorities. For example, a suite of predetermined training and advisory support may be available for Fiji stakeholders (and other stakeholders in the region) on an 'opt-in' basis, rather than a programme of training and support being tailored to address the specific priorities identified by Fiji stakeholders.

It is not only MFAT's engagement that is important for alignment with New Zealand's strategic objectives and Fiji's priorities—New Zealand's other government agencies also play a crucial role, as many hold direct relationships with their counterparts in the Fiji Government. Coordination across these various agencies is complex, as managing their interests in Fiji's development requires ongoing collaboration and concerted effort. Coordination is essential for MFAT to be informed by what these agencies are learning about Fiji's priorities and how they are responding to them, thereby ensuring the activities are well aligned with Fiji's priorities and contribute to delivering on MFAT's 4YP strategic goals.

The evaluation notes that funding limitations constrain New Zealand's ability to support high priority areas, such as infrastructure investment critical to economic resilience. Strategic changes to the 4YP during implementation included scaling back investments in agriculture, fisheries, and dairy initiatives due to their low impact and high risk<sup>30,31</sup>, and shift in Fiji Government priorities. As well as updating

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<sup>30</sup> MFAT Management Response to Fiji Dairy Industry Development Initiative Mid-Term Review Report.

<sup>31</sup> 4YP Reflection Report 2020/21

strategic priorities within the 4YP to reflect Fiji's request during the 2021 High-Level Consultations to more directly target climate change as its own strategic goal.

### 3.2.2 Alignment with New Zealand's ICESD policy and international development principles

The implementation of the 4YP aligned closely with the [ICESD policy](#), particularly in its emphasis on deeper collaboration with Pacific partner countries and leveraging New Zealand's public sector resources and expertise.

Although these are on-going processes, progress has been made in advancing sustainable development through integrating trade, environment, diplomatic, security cooperation, and foreign policy settings. There has also been progress on greater domestic policy coherence, as well as working for global solutions for accelerating action to address climate change and its impacts.

The ICESD policy affirms New Zealand's international development principles of effectiveness, inclusion, resilience and sustainability. Table 8 illustrates how New Zealand's four international development principles align with the strategic evaluation objectives and provides a brief commentary on the strengths of 4YP implementation in relation to each principle. More detailed findings, including areas for improvement, are presented in the relevant sections of the report.

In terms of effectiveness and inclusion, MFAT's engagement in Fiji has been values-driven, highly partnership-focused, and demonstrably adaptive. New Zealand's support for Fiji's COVID-19 response and work with civil society has showcased a focus on inclusion. There are demonstrated sustainable benefits, and evidence of strategies and approaches to increase the likelihood of sustained development.

**Table 8 New Zealand international development principles**

New Zealand's international development principles	Strengths
<b>Effective:</b> Effective development is values driven, partnership focused, adaptive, outcomes-focused, and evidence-based. (Assessed under evaluation objectives 1, 2 and 3)	<b>Values-driven, highly partnership-focused, and demonstrably adaptive.</b> See section <i>Contributions of New Zealand engagement to 4YP goals</i> for detailed assessment of effectiveness.
<b>Inclusive:</b> Inclusive development addresses exclusions and inequality created across all dimensions of social identity, while promoting human rights, and equitable participation in the benefits of development. (Assessed under evaluation objective 2)	<b>4YP support, particularly New Zealand's support for Fiji's COVID-19 response and work with civil society, showcases a focus on inclusion.</b> See section <i>Delivery on gender and inclusion priorities</i> for detailed assessment of gender equality and inclusion.
<b>Resilient:</b> Resilient development strengthens the environment, economy, and societies to withstand shocks and manage crises while protecting future well-being. (Assessed under evaluation objective 2)	<b>Many of New Zealand initiatives emphasise resilience and inclusive development, ensuring vulnerable groups and local capacities are strengthened.</b> See sections <i>Contributions of New Zealand engagement to 4YP goals</i> , <i>Sustainability</i> and, <i>Learnings</i> for reflections related to resilience.
<b>Sustained:</b> Sustained development enables lasting progress and is locally owned to uphold results in the long term. (Assessed under evaluation objectives 2 and 4)	<b>Demonstrated sustainable benefits, and evidence of strategies and approaches to increase the likelihood of sustained development.</b> See section <i>Delivering sustainable benefits</i> for detailed assessment of sustainability.

### 3.2.3 Donor coherence and coordination

Donor coordination during the 4YP period has seen successes. Examples include: with the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) in the Marama Ni Viti, Market Development Facility (MDF) and Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access Plus (PHAMA Plus) activities; partnerships with the ADB and Canada to support gender responsive budgeting; DFAT and the Government of Japan contribute alongside MFAT to the UNDP Fiji Parliamentary Support programme; and, DFAT and other donors worked closely with MFAT in supporting Fiji's COVID-19 response.

However, challenges persist, particularly in aligning financial management and reporting processes such as in the case of DFAT/MFAT delegated cooperation agreements. Maintaining coherence and alignment across donor contributions in an increasingly crowded donor landscape is also challenging and time-consuming.

The evolving nature of donor coordination highlights the need for more formalised mechanisms to enhance strategic cooperation. Throughout much of the 4YP, inconsistencies in coordination practices between donors and the Fiji Government were evident. For example, in the GESI and social protection areas, despite multiple donor meetings—such as those organised by UN Women and the ADB—there is no evidence of a clear overarching coordination mechanism at either the operational or strategic level. Similarly, this gap exists in areas such as climate change and potentially health, where enhanced collaboration could reduce the reporting burden on Fiji and better leverage existing structures and processes.

The responsibility for effective donor coordination rests largely with the Fiji Government, which is considering reinstating the Budget and Aid Coordinating Committee to improve management. Recent increases in diplomatic presence have added to the complexity of coordination, increasing the resource demands on both Fiji and its development partners. This underscores the need for MFAT to proactively support the establishment of formalised coordination processes to ensure that New Zealand's contributions remain strategically aligned with the broader donor community. While an increased focus on donor coordination would place additional demands on NZHC staff time, it would leverage a positive trend: the growing commitment to formalise coordination mechanisms and harmonise processes, particularly between New Zealand and other partners.

## 3.3 Achievement of 4YP strategic goals

### 3.3.1 New Zealand's support for Fiji's COVID-19 response

The COVID-19 outbreak in Fiji which began in April 2021 had a profound impact on the country, severely affecting its healthcare system and economy. New Zealand provided vital support across several areas: healthcare, vaccines, essential equipment, and economic relief for communities in need. **New Zealand's support for Fiji's COVID-19 response was rapid, well-received and fit-for-purpose, meeting Fiji's immediate needs.** MFAT's approach involved testing and adapting in real time to the unprecedented constraints faced by Fiji. By **leveraging existing relationships**, and working effectively with Fiji Government, civil society, private entities, professional bodies, regional mechanisms and New Zealand government agencies, MFAT ensured its support **maximised reach to vulnerable communities in Fiji**. MFAT's **tolerance for risk and agile decision-making** enabled timely and appropriate support for Fiji's COVID-19 response.

New Zealand's support for Fiji's COVID-19 response was effectively delivered within its intended framework of four objectives: contain, prevent, manage, protect (Box 1). While not necessarily sequential, this framework enabled MFAT to assess and target a range of effective and needed



support. The framework was instrumental in decision-making, communications, and guiding New Zealand's overall response.

### Box 1 Objectives for New Zealand's support for Fiji's COVID-19 response

**CONTAIN:** Support the Fiji Government's public health measures to manage widespread transmission, and support the health system to respond and treat COVID-19 patients.

**PREVENT:** Support Fiji to roll out the National Development Vaccination Plan.

**MANAGE:** Support the Fiji Government to continue to sustain basic services through the crisis with a focus on the 4YP priorities and existing partnerships.

**PROTECT:** Support civil society partners and community groups to provide an inclusive response to local communities.

#### Contain

By delivering essential medical supplies, testing kits, and bolstering healthcare infrastructure, New Zealand enabled Fiji to respond swiftly and effectively to COVID-19 outbreaks, reducing the risk of widespread transmission. Initial support focused on providing essential supplies to families and individuals that were being quarantined or isolated during the delta wave. As the situation escalated, New Zealand's support ensured that lifesaving machines and equipment, such as 120 Fisher & Paykel Airvo high-flow oxygen machines and 50 pulse oximeters, were readily available to support health response activities and reduce morbidity and mortality.

In addition, New Zealand funded the employment of 190 Fiji graduate nurses to provide surge capacity in isolation facilities, and supported MHMS in scaling up their response to the pandemic. The supply of biomedical equipment, personal protective equipment (PPE), including 23 tonnes of PPE, and emergency funding to help Fijian agencies distribute food ration kits and sanitation supplies to frontline workers and vulnerable communities. This rapid response saved lives and assisted those in need of urgent medical care.

**New Zealand was a trusted partner to MHMS<sup>32</sup> during this time.** New Zealand and Australian counterparts collaborated closely with MHMS to share perspectives on their domestic COVID-19 responses, to suggest ways to supplement Fiji's efforts and to coordinate delivery of essential medical supplies, medical personnel and other lifesaving support. This approach was greatly appreciated by MHMS, with stakeholders noting without the extensive support from New Zealand, and all the other donor partners, Fiji's response would likely have collapsed.

#### Prevent

Prevention efforts were supported through the timely provision of vaccines and public health resources to support **Fiji's National Development Vaccination Plan**. New Zealand's All-of-Government COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy commitment to support equitable access to vaccines for the Pacific at the earliest opportunity<sup>33</sup> saw New Zealand play a significant role in securing and distributing 100,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine in August 2021, as well as providing NZD2 million in funding to assist Fiji quickly ramp up its immunisation efforts.

<sup>32</sup> This was a crucial relationship as MHMS was gazetted as lead for the Fiji Government response, and not the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) which already had emergency coordination mechanisms in place with New Zealand and other donors.

<sup>33</sup> New Zealand Government, 2020. COVID-19 vaccine strategy. <https://www.covid19.govt.nz/assets/Proactive-Releases/proactive-release-2020-june/PAPER-COVID-19-Vaccine-Strategy.pdf>

This support was well-received and contributed in part to Fiji's high COVID-19 vaccination coverage; by 6 October 2022, MHMS was reporting that 100% of its estimated targeted adult population had received one dose of a COVID-19 vaccination and 95.4% had received two doses.<sup>34</sup>

In addition to vaccine supplies, New Zealand provided communication support to translate public immunisation information into Fijian and Hindi, ensuring that the information reached most communities. Public health resources were also enhanced with the delivery of an additional polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing machine and testing supplies, which expanded Fiji's testing capacity.

Vaccine support also served as an enabler for other 4YP components to progress, with vaccine access being fundamental to Fiji's recovery. Fiji government officials noted New Zealand's early vaccine support was crucial in facilitating the reopening of borders and accelerating an economic rebound more quickly than anticipated.

## **Manage**

New Zealand's financial and technical support helped Fiji manage the ongoing impacts of the pandemic. Support to the Fiji government was substantial, meaningful and flexible, which allowed the then Ministry of Economy to address immediate economic impacts and plan for longer-term recovery. Current Ministry of Finance and National Planning staff emphasised to the evaluation that during the COVID-19 outbreak, the Fiji Government was not in a position to focus on delivering traditional donor projects, instead, they needed social support, and New Zealand was there at the time to assist with cash disbursements. New Zealand provided NZD 83million in direct budget assistance, which was used for social protection measures, including the Formal Sector Employment Support (FSES) (also supported by the World Bank) and the Unemployment Assistance for the Informal Sector (cash assistance paid through mobile phone wallets) for those not covered under the FSES.

Fiji Government reporting notes that the New Zealand Government's budget support greatly assisted in the implementation of unemployment support for the formal and informal sector and various COVID-19 response measures.<sup>35</sup>

The Business Link Pacific (BLP) and the Business Assistance Fiji relationships and partnerships were critical in supporting vulnerable businesses. BLP administered small grants to assist SMEs to adapt to the new business environment, and a concessional loan programme to facilitate post-COVID business recovery.

PPE support, privacy screens for isolation facilities and emergency response vehicles, were crucial in maintaining public order and the safety of frontline workers. One example was PPE support to the Fiji Police Force. A representative from the Fiji Police Force noted that without the PPE from New Zealand officers would have worked, but at a significant risk. PPE was vital for maintaining a workforce, ensuring public order, and safeguarding the public and police officers.

## **Protect**

Protection of vulnerable populations was a core focus of New Zealand's support. In addition to contributions to the Fiji Government's social protection schemes, New Zealand collaborated with CSOs to ensure funding reached remote and underserved areas. This support focused on helping to alleviate poverty and provide essential services to those most at risk, including people with

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<sup>34</sup> <https://www.health.gov.fj/06-10-2022/>

<sup>35</sup> Ministry of Economy (undated). NZ budget support: Fiji's Economic Recovery and COVID-19 response: High-Level Report.

disabilities, families in informal settlements, and new mothers. The targeted assistance protected Fiji's most vulnerable, both from the health impacts of the virus and the socioeconomic pressures brought on by the pandemic.

*The vulnerable - they already had issues before COVID-19 came. Most were non-essential workers so were laid off or on reduced hours. Without MFAT support the vulnerable communities would have been in a worse state....they can't grow their own food in informal settlements.*

CSO partner

New Zealand leveraged existing relationships with CSOs, and directly approached new civil society partners, to provide NZD 5million in funding for CSOs, which provided food relief, PPE, and support packs for over 50,000 people from economically disadvantaged and at-risk households:

- › **Food relief, PPE and other support packs** (the Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprises & Development (FRIEND) - Nadi and Lautoka; Sai Prema Foundation - frontline workers; Pacific Disability Forum - people with disabilities in containment areas; Frank Hilton - households including those with children with disabilities, mother and infant kits to new mothers in CWM; Live and Learn Environmental Education - families in 8 informal settlements across Suva, Lami and Nausori; International Needs Fiji (Solo Mums project) - families
- › **Counselling and support to people in quarantine and isolation** (Empower Pacific) and an Emergency Information Centre (Pacific Disability Forum).
- › Front line staff members (Empower Pacific).

**New Zealand's targeted support through CSOs complemented its national level support to government social assistance, to reach the most vulnerable.** Stakeholders provided examples of New Zealand support enabling collaboration between CSOs and the Fiji Government, for example, Empower Pacific providing counselling services at government run quarantine facilities, and FRIEND procuring and distributing medical supplies on behalf of the MHMS.

**Internal processes designed to simplify and fast-track decision-making on requests from CSOs resulted in timely and effective delivery of New Zealand support.**

*MFAT was the first funding we received. It opened up the doors for other donors to come in. From using the MFAT funding we were able to present lessons for other donors. We were able to use the COVID-19 experience with New Zealand to strengthen our own mechanism in house to manage other donors who came on board later.*

CSO partner

### 3.3.2 Contributions of New Zealand engagement to 4YP goals

#### 3.3.2.1 Goal 1: A broader, deeper and resilient relationship/partnership between New Zealand and Fiji

The relationship between Fiji and New Zealand from 2006 to 2014 was marked by diplomatic tensions following Fiji's 2006 military coup, leading to sanctions and strained relations.<sup>36</sup> However, ties began to improve after elections in 2014, and the gradual rebuilding of development and regional security cooperation. During the 4YP period, New Zealand's primary foreign policy objective was to

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<sup>36</sup> Green, M., 2014. New Zealand and Fiji: Breaking the Bond.

normalise and deepen its relationship with Fiji. This objective has largely been achieved, as the partnership between New Zealand and Fiji has strengthened considerably in recent years. New Zealand's support for Fiji's COVID-19 response was seen as appropriate and highly valued, reinforcing trust between the two countries.

Fiji highly values New Zealand's sustained support for its constitutional institutions, particularly during challenging periods. New Zealand Electoral Commission (NZEC) support for capability building and operations was instrumental to Fiji running a free and fair election process in 2022. New Zealand provided 11 election observers, including four current and former New Zealand MPs. Other regional programmes provide support for strengthening the public service, parliament, audit functions, local government, judicial strengthening and anti-corruption initiatives, all making varying contributions to improved democratic institution building.

However, the evaluation heard examples of where New Zealand's immigration policy settings and/or visa processing arrangements have, on occasion, been a source of frustration in the relationship. Fiji has joined other Pacific Island countries in calls for a more flexible visa regime, including proposals for visa waivers. Recent progress includes the New Zealand government announcement that the requirement for a transit visa for Fijian nationals travelling through New Zealand is being removed.<sup>37</sup>

Although only one high-level consultation took place during the 4YP period, which was fewer than anticipated, there were numerous high-level exchanges, including ministerial and prime ministerial visits in both directions.<sup>38</sup> These visits helped to strengthen the diplomatic, trade and development

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<sup>37</sup> New Zealand Immigration, n.d. Removal of transit visa requirement for Fiji nationals. <https://www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/media-centre/news-notifications/removal-of-transit-visa-requirement-for-fiji-nationals>

<sup>38</sup> In November 2018, New Zealand MPs and officials visited Fiji as part of the Multilateral Observer Group for the 2018 Fiji General Election. In February 2019, Rt. Hon. Winston Peters, then New Zealand's Minister of Foreign Affairs, led a government delegation to Fiji, including Hon. Aupito William Sio and Hon. Carmel Sepuloni, as well as a cross-party delegation of MPs. That same month, eight Fijian female MPs visited the New Zealand Parliament on a parliamentary strengthening tour. In March 2019, His Excellency Jioji Konrote, the President of Fiji, attended the Christchurch Remembrance Service in New Zealand, and Hon. Premila Kumar visited for the first anniversary of the opening of the Fiji Consulate General and Trade Commission in Auckland. Rt. Hon. Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, Speaker of the Fiji Parliament, also visited. In May 2019, New Zealand Ministers attended meetings in Fiji, including Hon. Shane Jones at the Asian Development Bank Annual Meeting, Hon. Fletcher Tabuteau at the Pacific Islands Forum Economic Ministers' Meeting, Hon. Ron Mark at the South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting, Hon. Aupito William Sio at the Climate Action Pacific Partnership, and Rt. Hon. Winston Peters at the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' Meeting with the UN Secretary-General. That same month, Fijian Minister Hon. Dr. Ifereimi Waqainabete visited New Zealand to address the Friends of Fiji Health fundraising dinner. In February 2020, Rt. Hon. Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister of New Zealand, visited Fiji, focusing on economic cooperation, climate change, and regional security. In March 2022, Hon. Nanaia Mahuta, Minister of Foreign Affairs, met with Prime Minister Hon. Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama and attended a roundtable with Fijian women leaders, visited development projects, and participated in an event at the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. In August 2022, Hon. Louisa Wall, New Zealand's Ambassador for Gender Equality in the Pacific, visited Fiji, and in October, a Fiji parliamentary delegation led by Hon. Ruveni Nadalo, Deputy Speaker, visited New Zealand. In March 2023, Hon. Nanaia Mahuta visited Fiji to engage with senior members of the new Government and acknowledge the new Vunivalu of Bau, fostering significant cultural ties between Māori and Fijian indigenous communities. In June 2023, Hon. Sitiveni Rabuka, Prime Minister of Fiji, visited New Zealand for the first time in an official capacity in two decades and met with Rt. Hon. Chris Hipkins, New Zealand's Prime Minister, to discuss bilateral cooperation on climate change, regional security, and economic resilience. Inwards visits in 2023 included Hon. Biman Prasad, Fiji's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Hon. Manoa Kamikamica, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Trade, and Hon. Agni Deo Singh, Minister responsible for Fijian Recognised Seasonal Employer scheme workers. In September 2023, Hon. Nanaia Mahuta attended the Pacific Islands Forum Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Suva and visited Adi Cakobau School. In December 2023, Rt. Hon. Winston Peters, now New Zealand's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, met with Hon. Sitiveni Rabuka and other officials to discuss health, education, and community livelihood initiatives. In June 2024, Rt. Hon. Christopher Luxon, New Zealand Prime Minister, visited Fiji as part of his first official trip to the Pacific region. He held discussions with Hon. Sitiveni Rabuka and His Excellency Ratu Wiliame Katonivere, President of Fiji, to strengthen trade and economic cooperation, while addressing issues related to climate change and regional security.

cooperation relationship between Fiji and New Zealand, fostering mutual understanding and facilitating progress on shared priorities within the framework of the 4YP.

Engagement with civil society has predominantly focused on programme implementation and recovery efforts, such as responses to COVID-19 and cyclones, rather than supporting civil society to champion and promote shared norms and values. Furthermore, the relationship with the private sector was described as more 'tactical' than 'strategic'.

The evaluation revealed that there is low awareness, across relevant stakeholders, of New Zealand's foreign policy and development objectives in Fiji. Many interviewees external to MFAT expressed uncertainty about what New Zealand's foreign policy objectives are and how these translate into specific programming.

**MFAT plays an important role in the gender sector in Fiji, with longstanding and valued relationships with most partners, underpinned by trust.** Consultations with partners identified that MFAT's support has been highly valued and that MFAT's open and flexible approach makes them a preferred partner in areas such as ending violence against women and girls (EVAWG), gender mainstreaming within government and building women's voice and leadership. Stakeholders identified a need to build on MFAT's work to date by convening greater engagement between partners to assess shifts in the strategic context, share implementation approaches and experiences, network and learn about complementary programmes, and contribute to the overall cohesiveness and strength of the gender sector.

While New Zealand has built a strong relationship with Fiji, stakeholders noted a lack of visibility regarding New Zealand's specific support and activities in Fiji. Strengthening communication and visibility could further consolidate the partnership and enhance mutual understanding.

Although strategic goal one is the least financially resourced under the 4YP, the evaluation found it to be resource intensive, especially for staff in Suva, due to the need to manage numerous small requests. While the ability to respond to these requests has provided value, it is timely to consider whether this approach is sustainable in the long term. Shifting to a more programmatic focus may be a more efficient way to yield relationship benefits moving forward. MFAT documentation outlines examples of where New Zealand's programmatic approach, in areas such as housing, gender equality, and climate change, is simultaneously providing funding across Fiji Government, civil society, and communities. However, there is potential for New Zealand to be more intentional in using these approaches to build broader, deeper, and more resilient relationships with various stakeholders in Fiji. By doing so, New Zealand could enhance the impact of its support and foster more sustainable partnerships with stakeholders.

### **3.3.2.2 Goal 2: Economic growth is inclusive, resilient and sustainable**

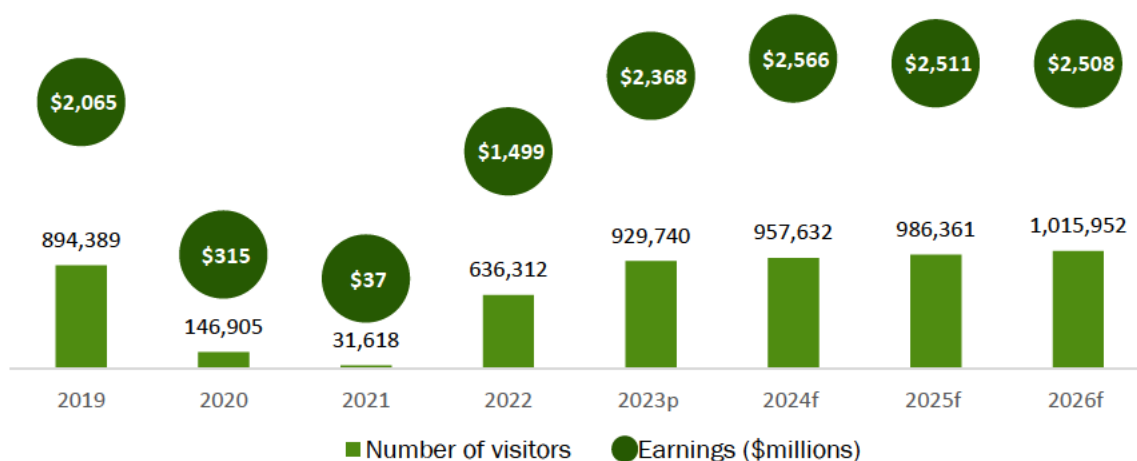
#### **Economic contraction and recovery during COVID-19**

New Zealand's support for Fiji's economy under the 4YP was significantly shaped by the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. A key component of this support involved providing COVID-19 budget assistance, which targeted unemployment schemes for both the formal and informal sectors (see COVID-19 section 3.3.1 for more details).



A significant contribution New Zealand made to economic recovery in Fiji was through the provision of vaccines during the COVID-19 pandemic. Fiji's high rates of vaccination, particularly among its tourism workforce, was key to the Fiji Government's decision to reopen its borders to international tourists, which then saw a resurgence in visitors and tourism earnings higher than pre-COVID-19 (Figure 8).

**Figure 8 Number of visitors and tourism earnings (FJD millions)**



p provisional

f forecast

Source: Ministry of Finance, Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics (June 2024). Economic and fiscal update supplement to the 2024-2025 Budget Address.

### Policy reform-based budget support

New Zealand joined the ADB and the World Bank in a multi-donor **policy reform-based budget support** initiative to assist the Fiji Government in driving sustainable, private sector-led economic growth. Under this initiative, New Zealand contributed NZD 15 million directly to the Fiji Government (NZD 2.5 million in 2019, NZD 2.5 million in 2020, and NZD 10 million in 2023). In addition, approximately NZD 350,000 was disbursed to the ADB to finance technical advisory requests from the Fijian Government, supporting the broader reform programme.

The programme focused on facilitating the implementation of Fiji's National Development Plan through three key policy areas: (i) fiscal management, particularly public financial management; (ii) the business and investment climate; and (iii) policy, legal, and institutional framework for state-owned enterprises and public-private partnerships (PPPs). The reform programme achieved notable reforms despite challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>39,40</sup> Key achievements included improvements in budget transparency, with the piloting of strategic planning frameworks. In the FY2021 budget, Fiji introduced Gender-Responsive Budgeting, which integrated gender perspectives into fiscal policies. Reforms in SOEs and PPPs included the establishment of policies for privatisation,

<sup>39</sup> Asian Development Bank. 2023. Validation Report. Fiji: Sustained Private Sector-Led Growth Reform Program (Subprograms 1, 2 and 3). <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/Evaluation%20Document/943186/files/pvr-3667.pdf>

<sup>40</sup> Ministry of Finance, Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics, June 2024. Economic and fiscal update supplement to the 2024-2025 Budget Address. [https://www.parliament.gov.fj/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/2024-2025-Budget-Supplement\\_28.06.24-Final-1.pdf](https://www.parliament.gov.fj/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/2024-2025-Budget-Supplement_28.06.24-Final-1.pdf)

fiscal risk assessments, and government guarantees for public enterprises, although some PPP initiatives were delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the business sector, financial institutions' lending to the private sector saw an increase, supported by the approval of the *Personal Property Securities Act*, which facilitated better access to credit. Fiji's ease of doing business score improved, even though it fell short of meeting the 2021 target due to the pandemic's impact. Gender equality initiatives were also integrated into the programme, with a focus on supporting women-led small businesses and incorporating gender considerations into the pandemic recovery efforts. Gender-Responsive Budgeting expanded across various ministries, furthering efforts to address gender disparities in economic opportunities.

The **policy reform-based budget support initiative** demonstrated value for New Zealand by leveraging larger international investments, with New Zealand's contribution amounting to less than 0.3% of the total funding package.

Fiji's government expressed strong satisfaction with New Zealand's approach, especially in terms of flexibility and timely assistance. Although some delays occurred with payments, the overall commitment and support were appreciated by the Fiji Government.

### **Private sector support**

Under the policy reform-based budget support initiative, New Zealand's contributions focused on creating an enabling environment for private sector development. Specific measures included reforms to enhance access to credit, improve the business climate, and foster private sector investment, all of which contributed to Fiji's broader economic recovery goals.

In addition, New Zealand's supported SME development through the multi-country BLP activity and in-country with Business Assistance Fiji. This support has been a crucial lifeline for Fiji's SMEs, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, with adaptation grants to businesses to diversify and continue operating. 1,357 SMEs received around NZD 2.8 million worth of business advisory subsidies over 2019 to 2023. Over that same period, 305 SMEs received grants totalling around NZD 1.8 million. 37 SMEs had loans approved to a combined value of NZD 238,000. An estimated 1,034 jobs were created over this period, with half of those estimated as being filled by women.<sup>41</sup>

### **Agricultural exports and market access**

New Zealand's involvement in the PHAMA Plus programme helped diversify exports and improve agricultural value chains, specifically in horticulture. This included initiatives for processed ginger and turmeric.

### **Challenges in Fiji's economic diversification**

Fiji's efforts to diversify its economy have been stymied over the 4YP period, with volatile GDP and fluctuating tourism earnings.

Cautious optimism towards the latter part of the 4YP period was tempered by a continuing narrow base to the economy, rising net migration and high public debt. In particular, Fiji's debt levels remain a challenge, with close to 80% of GDP tied up in public debt, as a result of Fiji Government borrowing to fund its COVID-19 response efforts. While progress has been made in agricultural and fisheries exports, broader trade reforms and economic diversification during the 4YP period have been slower.

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<sup>41</sup> BLP data provided via MFAT.

New Zealand has been promoting the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER) Plus<sup>42</sup> among Pacific countries, including Fiji. Fiji previously participated in negotiations on the PACER Plus but abstained from signing the agreement, stating in August 2024 it did not provide enough flexibilities and benefits to offset potential risks and costs.<sup>43</sup> Discussions are on-going with a trilateral Australia-Fiji-New Zealand Trade Ministers meeting in September 2024 discussing PACER Plus.<sup>44</sup>

### 3.3.2.3 Goal 3: A stable and secure Fiji

#### s6(a)

Stakeholders reflected that historical ties between Fiji and New Zealand security institutions remain a cornerstone of the relationship, despite the strained relationship at the time of the 2006 coup, and the years following. When not engaging at a political level, the respective police forces continued close cooperation on transnational operational matters and maintained open communication through regional mechanisms such as the Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police and the Pacific Transnational Crime Coordination Centre. Historical ties between Fiji and New Zealand security institutions, and regional security mechanisms, have proven instrumental in maintaining functional, operational cooperation during challenging periods in the bilateral relationship.

Cooperation and linkages between Fiji and New Zealand security institutions have been strengthened during the 4YP period, with the notable establishment of the bilateral Fiji Police Partnership Programme (FPPP) delivered by NZP. The setting up of this bilateral policing programme represents a turning point in the Fiji-New Zealand relationship, and it is a sizeable investment. This has been a positive development, notwithstanding the early challenges around deploying advisers during the COVID-19 pandemic, and coordination issues between NZP and the UNDP programme of work supported by MFAT.

New Zealand contributions to Fiji security institutions during the 4YP include:

- › The FPPP has been supporting the **Fiji Police Academy's mobile training team** to enhance the training and professional development of police officers across Fiji. Notably, this includes the implementation of a revamped training format for the Constable Qualifying Course, which is mandatory for cadets who have completed the Basic Recruits Course and on-the-job training. The new format adopts a more hands-on approach to learning and, crucially, has been delivered across the four Divisions, enabling far more officers to complete the training than if they had to travel to Suva, as was previously required. This approach has enabled the Fiji Police Academy to clear the backlog of officers for the Constable Qualifying Course, which was nearing 800 cadets. The backlog, which pre-dated but was worsened by COVID-19, has now been addressed.

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<sup>42</sup> PACER Plus is a regional free trade agreement aimed at enhancing economic integration between Pacific Island countries and Australia, New Zealand, and other Pacific economies by promoting trade, investment, and sustainable development. It seeks to support the economic growth of Pacific nations while providing improved market access and development assistance. See <https://pacerplus.org/> for information on PACER Plus.

<sup>43</sup> The Fiji Times. 29 September 2024. Fiji explores deal for Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations Plus negotiation. <https://www.fijitimes.com.fj/fiji-explores-deal-pacific-agreement-on-closer-economic-relations-plus-negotiation-2/>

<sup>44</sup> New Zealand Government, September 2024. Joint statement - Trilateral Australia-Fiji-New Zealand Trade Ministers meeting. <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2024-09/Joint%20statement%20-%20Trilateral%20Australia%20%E2%80%93%20Fiji%20%E2%80%93%20New%20Zealand%20Trade%20Ministers%20meeting.pdf>

- › **Support for the Fiji Detector Dog Unit and the Fiji Police Dog Unit** has been valued and, unlike some other aspects of assistance, provides a highly visible contribution to the work. NZP have collaborated with both, culminating in the opening of a new kennel facility in Nasese, Suva. As part of the FPPP, Fiji Police dog handlers have also benefited from training opportunities at the New Zealand Police Dog Training Centre.
- › New Zealand's Institute of Environmental Science and Research is working closely with the Fiji Police Force's Forensic Laboratory staff to upgrade laboratory equipment, and conduct training on specimen and drug analysis, with a focus on strengthening the chain of evidence. The practical, peer-to-peer nature of the training (which pivoted to online during COVID-19 pandemic) is highly valued, particularly in a context where specialised local training options are not available.
- › Operational support and equipment (PPE) during COVID-19 outbreaks (see COVID-19 section further above).

New Zealand is also contributing to high-profile needs in areas of mutual regional and global interest:

- › **Transnational crime:** through joint operations, intelligence sharing, and capacity-building initiatives (such as the FPPP), New Zealand works with Fiji's law enforcement and border security agencies to address issues such as human trafficking, drug smuggling, and cybercrime, which impact both countries and the broader Pacific region.
- › New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) support for capacity development and training of defence personnel, maritime security and disaster and humanitarian response coordination.<sup>45</sup>
- › Policy support for **Women, Peace and Security** through the New Zealand Ministry of Defence secondment to Fiji's Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration.

The evaluation heard that despite a focus on gender equality in policing, particularly through the Women's Advisory Network<sup>46</sup>, the Fiji military appeared to be more progressive in addressing gender issues, driven by Fiji's desire to meet the international targets for the representation of uniformed women in UN peacekeeping missions.<sup>47</sup>

Consultations with Fiji Police Force confirmed that from an organisational perspective, aspects of the FPPP support have been organisationally impactful (for example, the rollout of the Constable Qualifying Course), and that there is a solid relationship underpinning the FPPP. Elements of the FPPP are more accurately described as transactional<sup>48</sup> or operationally-focussed, rather than addressing the deeper, long-term, organisational changes required to achieve the transformational shifts envisioned in the 4YP, including in efforts to embed gender equality across all aspects of policing. New Zealand's contribution plays a small role in supporting Fiji's efforts to tackle domestic and transnational crime, as there are broader factors and influences that limit the extent to which New Zealand can impact significant change.

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<sup>45</sup> Statement of Intent on Defence Cooperation between the Republic of Fiji and New Zealand, 2022 – 2025.

<sup>46</sup> The Fiji Police Force Women's Advisory Network was established in November 2003 as part of the broader Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police Women's Advisory Network. The network was created to address gender-related issues within the Fiji Police Force, promote best practices for supporting women in policing, and advocate for gender equality. It operates at both the national and divisional levels, encouraging greater leadership opportunities for women officers.

<sup>47</sup> Refer to the [UN's Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy, 2018-2028](#)

<sup>48</sup> A transactional approach refers to a project focussed on delivering specific tasks, meeting deadlines, delivery predefined outputs and is driven by short-term achievements.

### 3.3.2.4 Goal 4: An equal, inclusive, well-educated and healthy Fiji

**New Zealand support over the 4YP period made tangible contributions to Fiji's human development needs and supported groups that risked being marginalised.** This included support for Fiji's COVID-19 response (noting COVID-19 budget support to Ministry of Finance is captured under strategic goal 2 expenditure). Analysis of expenditure shows that 40% of the Fiji Core expenditure over 2021/22 to 2023/24 triennium contributed to achieving this goal.

**The capacity of both government and non-government institutions was strengthened leading to improvements in a number of areas.** They include gender responsive budgeting; health infrastructure and services, including counselling services; housing policy and opportunities for affordable housing and long-term social protection for poor and marginalised communities; efforts to address gender-based violence; sustainable employment opportunities for women; and in education and skills development.

The Gender Transformative ICD Initiative supported by New Zealand is set up to integrate gender-responsive budgeting into the annual budgetary process at a whole-of government level. This includes developing sector-specific gender analyses to inform the design and implementation of gender-responsive programmes, creating gender disaggregated budgeting frameworks, and establishing Gender Focal Officers and Gender Mainstreaming Action Groups within Ministries and government agencies. Both the Ministry for Women, Children and Social Protection and the Ministry of Finance emphasised the strategic impact that the ICD initiative was having on progressing gender mainstreaming across the government resulting in the allocation of direct budget support to projects that addressed gender equality in several ministries, such as fisheries and agriculture.

New Zealand's funding for the FWCC has been critical in addressing gender-based violence, providing safe shelters, and offering counselling services to over 7,000 clients. Empower Pacific was also able to extend counselling services through New Zealand support.

#### Box 2 Counselling helpline supporting thousands of Fijians

Empower Pacific delivers psycho-social support via a toll-free counselling helpline and supports individuals through hospital based and community-based counselling. Established through New Zealand funding in mid-2021, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic impacting on delivery of face-to-face services, the helpline has now received over 8,103 calls for assistance. Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week the trained counsellors provide support, guidance and referral to other services for people facing difficult times, such as mental health issues, substance abuse, domestic violence, loneliness or financial distress. The confidentiality of the helpline has seen an increase in the number of men accessing Empower Pacific's services.

The Solo Mums project has empowered women by providing entrepreneurial training and skills, leading to sustainable employment opportunities.

Initiatives led by Rotary New Zealand, Habitat for Humanity New Zealand, the Model Towns Charitable Trust (MTCT) and Cure Kids New Zealand built capacity by working with local partners and relevant government, local government agencies and community organisations. These include the Water Authority of Fiji, the Ministry for Housing, the Ministry for Health, iTaukei Land Trust Board, provincial councils, village committees and CSOs. Working together the capacity of communities was improved to operate technology that ensures access to clean, treated water; enable access to safe and affordable housing; to construct and re-build disaster resilient housing and shelters; and to detect and treat children with RHD. It is important to note that many of these activities demonstrated strong local CSO partnerships in the delivery of capacity building support, for example, between FWCC and MTCT/Koroipita, Solo Mums partnering with FWCC; Save the Children partnering with Knowledge and



Action in Agriculture and Food Security; FWCC as part of the coordination mechanism for the EVAWG National Action Plan involving 11 CSOs as signatories; Live and Learn Environmental Education with Save the Children, Fiji Disabled Peoples Federation and CARE Australia.

### Box 3 Growth of Koroipita social housing community

Koroipita stands as one of New Zealand's longest-running development partnerships in Fiji, demonstrating a proven model for social housing and community resilience.

The Koroipita settlement provides low-cost and disaster-resilient homes for over 1,200 residents. Koroipita is a fully serviced subdivision, offering clean water supply, electricity, sewerage treatment, storm water drains and garbage collection, alongside community amenities such as a hall, kindergarten, sports courts, a small medical clinic, computer lab and library.

Koroipita's impact extends beyond housing through comprehensive community development services that enhance socio-economic outcomes for low-income and vulnerable households. These include education, health and well-being programmes, environment management, on-site trades training, youth groups, and support for micro-enterprises. Notably, the settlement has consistently achieved a 100% school attendance rate, with nearly 800 children either currently in or having graduated from high school in the past six years.

Since 2010, New Zealand has supported the construction of nearly 170 homes in Koroipita. Over the next five years, this partnership will expand with the Fiji Government's contribution, enabling the construction of an additional 105 homes and benefiting 600 more people.

New Zealand support for health centre refurbishment, improving infrastructure in order to meet the high demand for health services in densely populated areas, has been singled out as a high impact activity with the approach recommended as a good direction to follow. For example, the upgraded Nausori Health Centre will provide improved health services to over 70,000 Fijians, offering a full range of primary and secondary medical care. Upgrades included new consultation rooms, a pharmacy, laboratory, and treatment facilities. Designed in partnership with MHMS, the improvements ensure resilience to future major events, including climate change and extreme weather. This is the sixth health centre completed through New Zealand's NZD 2.9 million funding, with four more planned by the end of 2024, and the model expected to be replicated by other donors across 40 additional centres.



Nausori Health Centre staff. Photo: NZHC.

Similarly, New Zealand's Medical Treatment Scheme (MTS) has worked well with the referral system proving to be responsive to critical treatment and care needs of patients who meet the criteria for support. Fiji prioritises children for MTS referrals. Over the period July 2017 to December 2022, 44 people (17 females, including 16 girls and 27 males, including 22 boys) received medical treatment in New Zealand under the overseas referral scheme. Stakeholders noted a drawback of the MTS is that the offshore referral funds can only be used for New Zealand based services.

**The provision of scholarships, support to the Fiji Higher Education Commission and support to Save the Children Fiji made important contributions to the Fiji Government's goal of "Quality Education for All."** This provided opportunities for tertiary education, strengthened regulatory frameworks for building quality education and training institutions aimed at filling gaps in the workforce, and

supported children from poor families and marginalised communities to get a quality basic education in safe and healthy spaces. New Zealand offers two scholarships—Manaaki and short-term scholarships. The Manaaki New Zealand Scholarships are long-term, full-tuition scholarships designed to develop the skills and knowledge of individuals from developing countries to promote economic sustainability and resilience. The short-term scholarships, on the other hand, are focused on specialised, time-limited training, often aligned with urgent sectoral needs. Stakeholders noted these scholarships are particularly valuable in areas like disaster management (for Manaaki) and maritime training (for short-term scholarships) since few or no other donors provide scholarships in these specific areas.

**Significantly, activities that used transdisciplinary approaches have been most successful** where they have involved communities in regular and ongoing consultations, in research, and in approaches that integrate gender and social inclusion (GESI), climate change and environmental awareness.

**COVID-19 demonstrated the value and benefits of working with local CSOs and their ability to reach vulnerable and marginalised communities.** For many of the CSOs, funding during this challenging time was key to being able to maintain and extend their services. The roundtable held with CSOs as part of the consultation process indicated that with funding no longer available post-COVID, outreach has been compromised for many CSOs, requiring them to seek other funding to maintain services. It is evident that there is a need for a more structured approach to working with and funding local CSOs on a more sustainable basis.

**New Zealand's efforts to address social well-being and inclusion through programmatic packages of support that connect policy reform with grassroots initiatives is commendable but has the potential to achieve stronger impact with improved communication and coordination.** Examples include:

- › Social Housing where the package included support for the Housing Policy Advisor role in the Ministry for Housing and Community Development, the provision of affordable social housing through support for the Model Towns Charitable Trust/Koroipita (MTCT) and support for the Revitalising Informal Settlements and their Environments (RISE) programme aimed at improving access to basic water and sanitation services in informal settlements; and,
- › GESI and gender mainstreaming through the Marama Ni Viti programme where support is targeted at improving gender responsive budgeting through building institutional capacity for gender mainstreaming, working closely with the Ministry of the Economy and the Ministry for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, support for the Fiji Country Gender Assessment executed through UN Women, support for the FWCC to better respond to gender based violence in line with the national EVAWG action plan, and supporting the Women's Fund Fiji in their efforts to improve the livelihoods of rural and marginalised women through grants for economic empowerment, while helping to strengthen the women's movement.

These two examples represent long-term, individual but interlinked projects aimed at achieving large-scale impacts on national development priorities. However, the evaluation found that there could be stronger joining up of New Zealand support in these and other areas, for greater impact through improved communication and coordination. While these packages of investments are positioned to be highly impactful, consultations with the Ministry for Housing, MTCT and RISE indicated that there was limited opportunity for sharing information and discussing potential contributions to housing policy reforms. Similarly, the individual partners in the Marama Ni Viti programme had limited awareness of the whole package of support and how the different parts were connected. Nor did they recall occasions where they were brought together to discuss how their individual activities were contributing to progressing gender equality more generally, in line with Fiji national government policy.

Figure 9 Manaaki New Zealand Scholarships

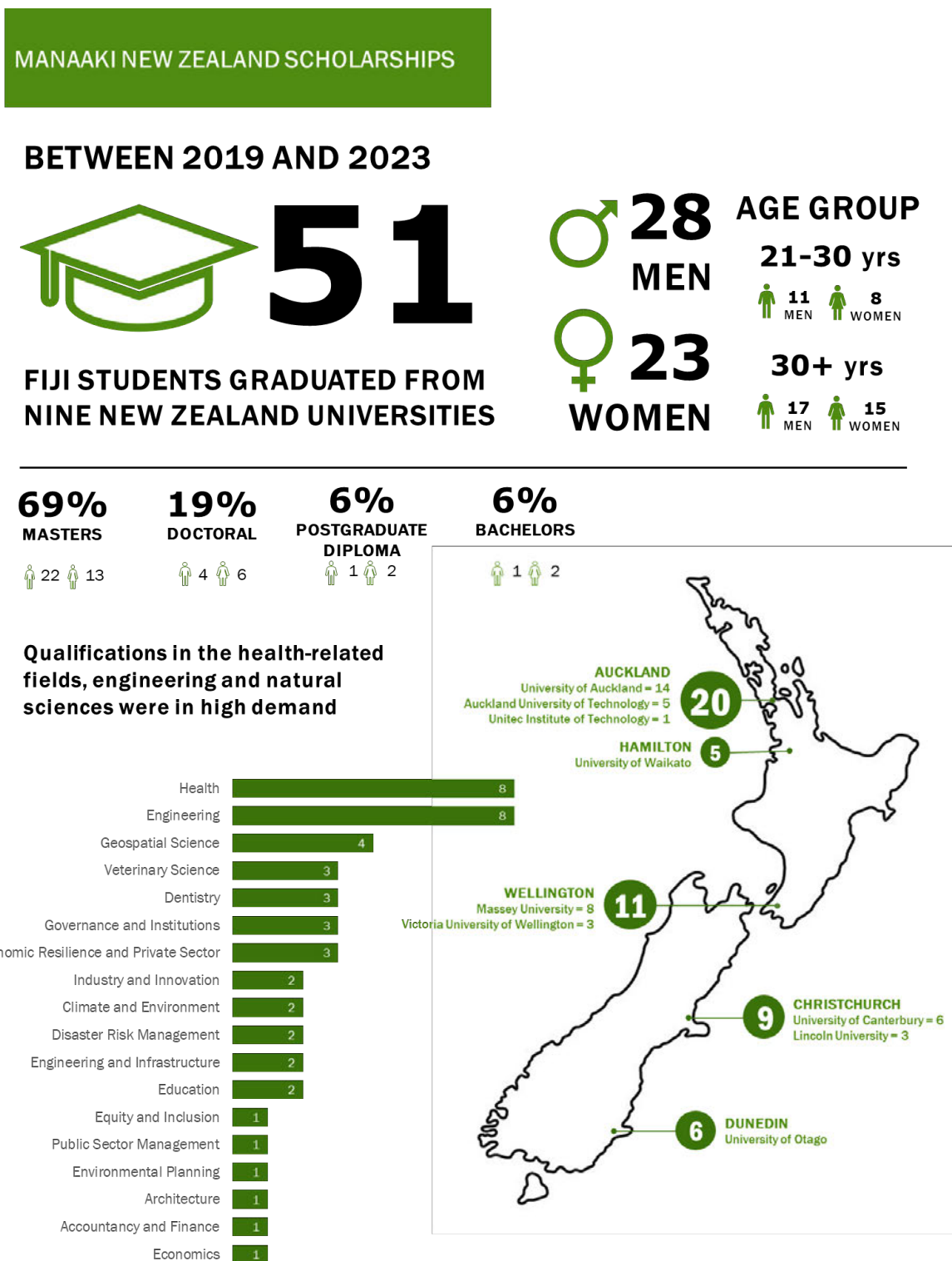
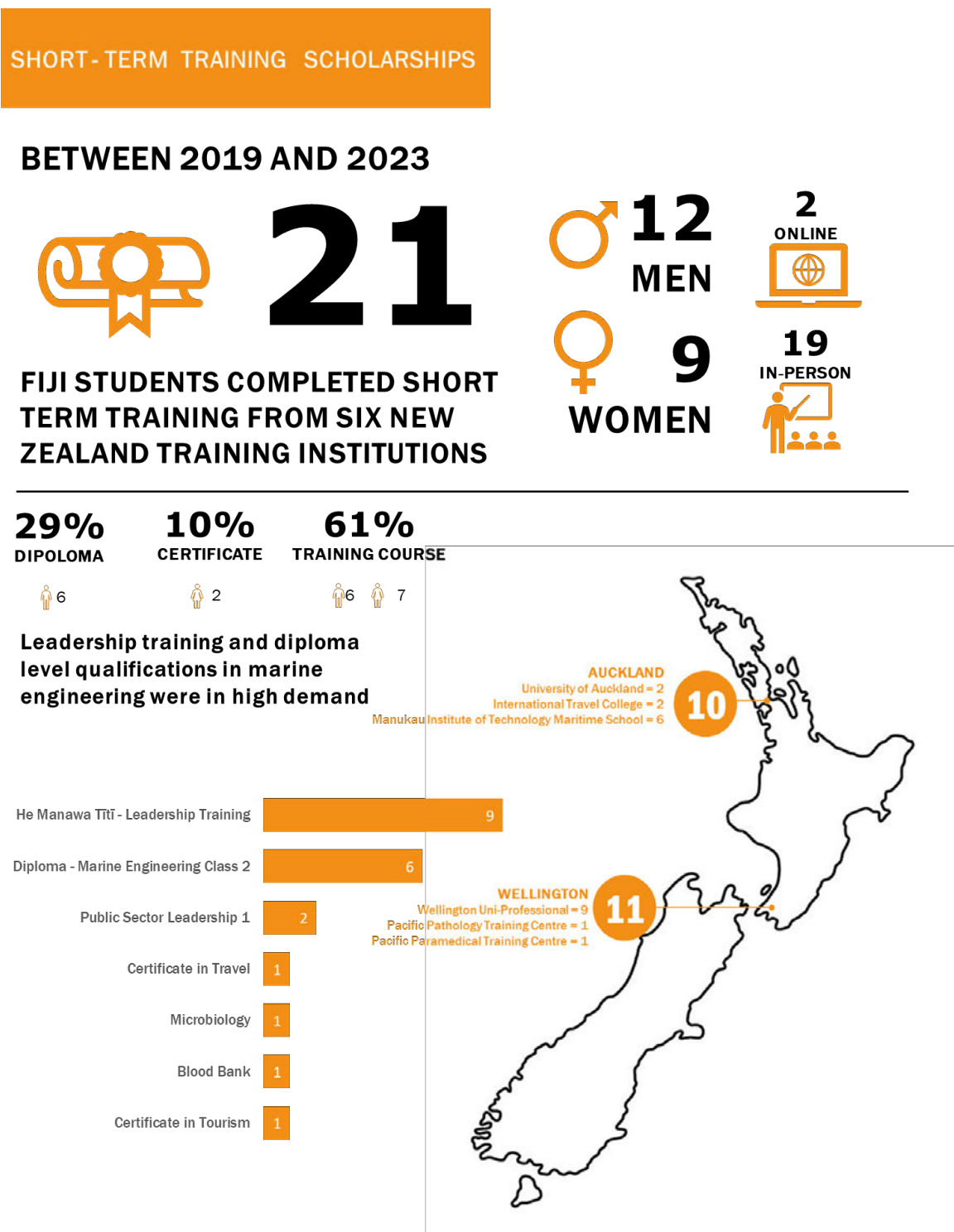


Figure 10 Short-Term Training Scholarships



### 3.3.2.5 Goal 5: A climate resilient Fiji

New Zealand's support to address climate change and disaster response in Fiji during the 4YP period has seen several key achievements in building government capacity, strengthening disaster response mechanisms, and laying the groundwork for long-term climate resilience. However, there remains room for growth, particularly in scaling up climate-related activities, integrating climate resilience across development sectors, and addressing delays in procurement processes.

New Zealand's support has been instrumental in increasing Fiji's preparedness and response capabilities, especially in disaster management. As the climate security programme matures, continued investment and a stronger focus on mainstreaming climate resilience will be crucial to ensuring sustained progress in addressing the complex challenges posed by climate change and natural disasters.

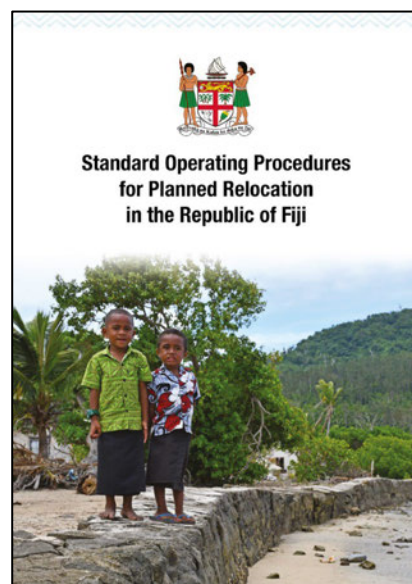
#### Climate Commitments and Security

Evidence suggests that New Zealand's climate support to Fiji, primarily through Fiji Government systems<sup>49</sup>, is beginning to yield positive results, though progress has been gradual. Largely through its multi-country programmes New Zealand's efforts have significantly helped the Fiji government better position itself to meet its Paris Agreement commitments. The support provided has contributed to laying the foundational building blocks necessary for future success.

New Zealand's use of third-party agencies to implement key activities and provide technical support has played a critical role in bolstering the capacity of the Fiji government, particularly within the Climate Change Division, which faces capacity constraints. This external support has been well-received by Fiji, ensuring progress in key areas.

#### Highlights:

- Through New Zealand's support, the Fiji Government has been able to innovate in addressing climate-related relocation challenges, by developing and implementing [Standard Operating Procedures \(SOP\) for planned relocation in Fiji](#). These SOPs are designed to operationalise the [Planned Relocation Guidelines](#)<sup>50</sup> providing a structured approach to managing internal displacement. The development process involved extensive consultations with governmental agencies, non-governmental and CSOs (including gender and LGBTQA+ representatives), academic institutions, the private sector, regional organisations, and international development partners. Accompanied by guidance such as [the Culture-Gender-Relocation Nexus in iTaukei Villages report](#), the SOPs highlight Fiji's proactive strategy in addressing climate-induced displacement – an issue of growing urgency for Pacific Island nations. The application of these SOPs in future relocation efforts will play a crucial role in fostering resilience



<sup>49</sup> This support includes FJD1.5 million Grant to the Climate Relocation Trust Fund, FJD2.5 million through the Sustainable and Resilient Recovery Fund, and FJD20 million in flexible climate finance to support Fiji to deliver on its own climate change priorities.

<sup>50</sup> The SOP provides structure and detail processes to ensure adherence to the principles for planned relocation as defined in the Planned Relocation Guidelines, and to the provisions under section 77 of the [Climate Change Act 2021](#) relating to the relocation of at-risk communities.



and ensuring sustainability in the face of climate change. Continued engagement from MFAT to ensure these SOPs are effectively implemented and achieving their intended impact is warranted.

- › Through support to the Pacific Nationally Determined Contribution Hub, New Zealand has supported the Fiji Government in formulating the National Adaptation Plan and the Nationally Determined Contribution Hub Investment Plan. These strategic plans are essential for guiding future climate investments and positioning Fiji to transition towards a low-emissions economy. New Zealand's recent provision of NZD20 million in climate finance will be critical in enabling Fiji to meet these ambitious goals.
- › The partnership with the Global Green Growth Initiative has further helped Fiji draft and update its National Energy Plan, which includes measures such as removing fossil fuel subsidies, introducing vehicle emissions standards, and establishing a framework for carbon budgeting. These initiatives aim to reduce emissions and promoting sustainable development within key sectors, such as energy and transportation.

Although progress on climate security efforts has been slower than anticipated, this is not a major impediment. Delays largely stem from Fiji's capacity to absorb and align external initiatives with its national priorities, as well as COVID-19 related disruptions. There have also been delays with internal MFAT processes. Despite these challenges, there has been a notable increase in momentum as the current 4YP period draws to a close, driven by regional and multi-country initiatives, with the bilateral climate programme gaining traction.

Looking ahead, while the timeline for achieving substantial results in climate security remains fluid, there is considerable potential to scale up New Zealand's climate-related support to Fiji. Continued collaboration and investment will be essential in sustaining progress and addressing the evolving climate challenges facing Fiji.

### **Challenges and Opportunities**

One of the key challenges in New Zealand's climate support to Fiji is the dependence on the Fiji Government's capacity to absorb and implement initiatives. As climate security is intrinsically linked to government progress and internal timelines, the realisation of tangible outcomes has been slightly delayed. However, this is not viewed as a significant concern, given the inherent complexity of climate initiatives, which often require extensive long-term planning, investment, and alignment with national priorities. Addressing these challenges will necessitate ongoing capacity building within Fiji institutions and the continued provision of external technical assistance to support the government's climate agenda.

Despite the delays, there are considerable opportunities for scaling up climate-related activities in Fiji. New Zealand's initial focus on establishing the foundational elements of climate resilience creates a solid platform for future growth, both in terms of financial support and the size of projects. A key opportunity lies in mainstreaming climate security across other development sectors, ensuring that climate-related risks are integrated into areas such as health, infrastructure, and economic development. This holistic approach will be essential for building long-term resilience and achieving sustainable development outcomes in Fiji.

### **Disaster Response**

New Zealand's support for disaster response in Fiji has yielded immediate and visible successes. The focus of New Zealand's assistance has been on building the capacity of the Fiji government and CSOs to prepare for, respond to, and recover from natural disasters. This support has improved disaster management capabilities across Fiji.

## Highlights:

- › New Zealand's funding of NZD5.255 million from 2022 to 2025 is greatly **enhancing the capacity of Fiji's NDMO**. This support includes technical assistance, upgrades to the tsunami early warning system, flood protection measures, and the construction of evacuation centres and warehouses. Embedding technical advisors within the NDMO has been a crucial step in ensuring effective implementation of disaster management policies.
- › New Zealand's **disaster preparedness assistance has led to substantial improvements in Fiji's emergency response capabilities**. For instance, during Tropical Cyclone Mal in 2023, Fiji's disaster preparedness was put to the test. The NDMO's clear communication and community preparedness helped minimise the impact of the cyclone. New Zealand's support for Fiji's preparedness plan and early warning system has assisted the NDMO to leverage other donor support, such as the installation of tsunami sirens funded by Japan thereby enhancing the country's readiness for natural disasters.
- › New Zealand's **assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic was highly successful**. The alignment and targeting of aid to the most vulnerable populations, particularly through CSO engagement, allowed New Zealand's disaster response to reach those most in need. This support, valued by both the Fiji Government and CSO partners increased both government capacity and community resilience.
- › **CSO engagement has been a cornerstone of New Zealand's disaster response strategy**. By working through local civil society, New Zealand has been able to reach vulnerable communities, particularly following cyclones like Tropical Cyclone Harold and Tropical Cyclone Yasa. This inclusive approach has ensured that disaster response efforts are more likely to be effective and equitable.
- › New Zealand has also **supported Fiji's NDMO personnel to contribute to regional disaster response efforts**. For example, following the eruption of the Tonga volcano, New Zealand connected Fiji with experts in New Zealand, including volcanologists, which enabled better tracking and response. New Zealand also contributed relief supplies and funded a vessel for Fiji to extend disaster response assistance to Tonga. New Zealand also supported the qualification renewal for Fiji's emergency team, enhancing their preparedness for regional deployment.
- › **New Zealand has directly benefited from Fiji's disaster response capabilities**. Following Tropical Cyclone Gabrielle in February 2023, 34 Fijian defence and emergency personnel were deployed to assist recovery efforts in New Zealand.



NZDF personnel assisting NDMO in delivering food and relief supplies following Tropical Cyclone Mal, 26 November 2023. Photo: NZHC.



Members of the Fiji Humanitarian Assistance Disaster Relief Task Force and New Zealand Defence Force engineers assisted in the clean-up at the Hindmarsh family's Hawke's Bay farm, in the aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Gabrielle, March 2023. Photo: NZDF

## Challenges and future directions

Some aspects of disaster preparedness, such as Community-Based Disaster Risk Management support, have encountered delays due to changes in government procurement processes. Addressing these bottlenecks will be important for maintaining momentum in disaster response activities.

While New Zealand has provided support for post-disaster recovery, particularly in response to multiple cyclones during the 2020-2021 period, this area has seen less sustained investment compared to preparedness and response efforts. Future programmes could place a greater emphasis on longer-term recovery, ensuring that communities are not only prepared for disasters but also able to rebuild effectively. Strengthening partnerships with NGOs between disasters can also help retain capacity for effective response.

## Integration of climate resilience across 4YP pillars

One of the less progressed areas of New Zealand's support is the integration of climate resilience across other the other 4YP pillars. While there are notable examples, such as upgrading of health centres to be more resilient to climate-related damage, stakeholders have indicated that more can be done to embed climate considerations into more areas of New Zealand's support to Fiji.

### 3.3.3 Delivering on gender equality, disability and inclusion priorities

As part of its thematic focus on equity, inclusion and human rights, MFAT emphasises attention to gender equality and women's empowerment, child and youth wellbeing, and support for people with disabilities and people of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC).

In assessing the delivery of gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) priorities, the evaluation found that the majority of activities focused on addressing gender equality and women's empowerment. There was limited targeting of persons with disabilities or people of diverse SOGIESC and instead the needs of these groups were considered as being addressed through general community-based approaches to improving livelihoods, education, health and well-being.

Child and youth wellbeing received more attention through activities such as the RHD project, the Solo Mums project empowering youth mothers, Save the Children, MTCT/Koroipita social housing project and through the provision of scholarships.

**MFAT's focus on gender equality and social inclusion while intentional, can be better described as aspirational.** The intentional aspects include clear action plans and targets, however evidence from the assessment of effectiveness of delivery on those GEDSI action plans, targets, and mainstreaming across the 4YP period shows that implementation is yet to realise those intentions.

The evaluation assessed attention to gender equality and social inclusion across 57 of the 61 activities in scope for the evaluation<sup>51</sup> against a continuum (Table 9) adapted from a model used by UNICEF in programme evaluations.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Four of the activities in scope for the evaluation either had insufficient information, or were too early in implementation, for the evaluation team to make an assessment.

<sup>52</sup> UNICEF, September 2019. UNICEF Guidance on Gender Integration in Evaluation. <https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/media/1221/file/UNICEF%20Guidance%20on%20Gender.pdf> p. 4.

**Table 9 GESI continuum - Ratings, Definitions and sample 4YP activities**

Rating	Definition	Examples of 4YP activity	% of 4YP activities in this category
GESI Unaware	Ignores gender perpetuating the status quo and thereby reinforcing inequalities.	Public Sector Strengthening, Fiji Measles Response, Direct Budget Support to Fiji Government, Regional Audit Support.	14%
GESI Aware/Sensitive	Acknowledges gender and social inclusion inequalities but does not robustly address them.	Fiji Election Support, Fiji Police Support Programme, RHD, and Disaster Risk Management in Fiji.	42%
GESI Responsive	Identifies and addresses the different needs of girls, boys, women and men and marginalised groups to promote equal outcomes.	Rotary, RISE, Parliamentary Support, The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) Relocation Trust Fund, Business Assistance Fiji, PHAMA Plus, Invasive Species for Climate Change Adaptation, Disaster Risk Finance, MTCT/Koroipita.	37%
GESI Transformative	Explicitly seeks to redress gender and social inclusion inequalities and empower disadvantaged populations.	Marama Ni Viti programme package – ICD/Gender Responsive Budgeting, Country Gender Assessment, support for EVAWG through FWCC, and empowering rural women entrepreneurial development and building the women's movement; supporting single mothers through the Solo Mums Project.	7%

This revealed that New Zealand has supported a large number of activities (42% of the in-scope activities) where inequalities are recognised but not robustly addressed (that is, GESI Aware). Collectively, New Zealand has supported an almost equal number of Gender Responsive and Gender Transformative activities, which include practical actions and activities demonstrating intent to identify and respond to different needs of men and women, in order with the objective of empowering women and vulnerable or disadvantaged groups, and changing gender inequalities by helping to address underlying issues. There is potential to move GESI Aware and GESI Responsive activities along the continuum with a more concerted effort and a targeted approach.

Examples of transformative actions include: GESI focused research leading to a report on Gender Mainstreaming in Offshore Fisheries in Tuna Longline Fisheries support. This report has now been used in the development of a regional training tool on Gender Equality and Human Rights in Tuna Fisheries; development of a GESI strategy for the Private Sector Development Business Link; updating the GESI Strategy for the regional PHAMA plus project; analysis of the role of women in Invasive Species management following Global Environment Facility (GEF) guidance as part of the Climate Change Adaptation Project; launching of the GESI strategy in 2022, implementation of GBV and finance training workshop with CSOs; and training on GESI for programme staff in the Disaster Risk Finance activity; targeted technical assistance and training support to the Ministry for Home Affairs; establishment of the Fiji Police Women's Advisory Network.

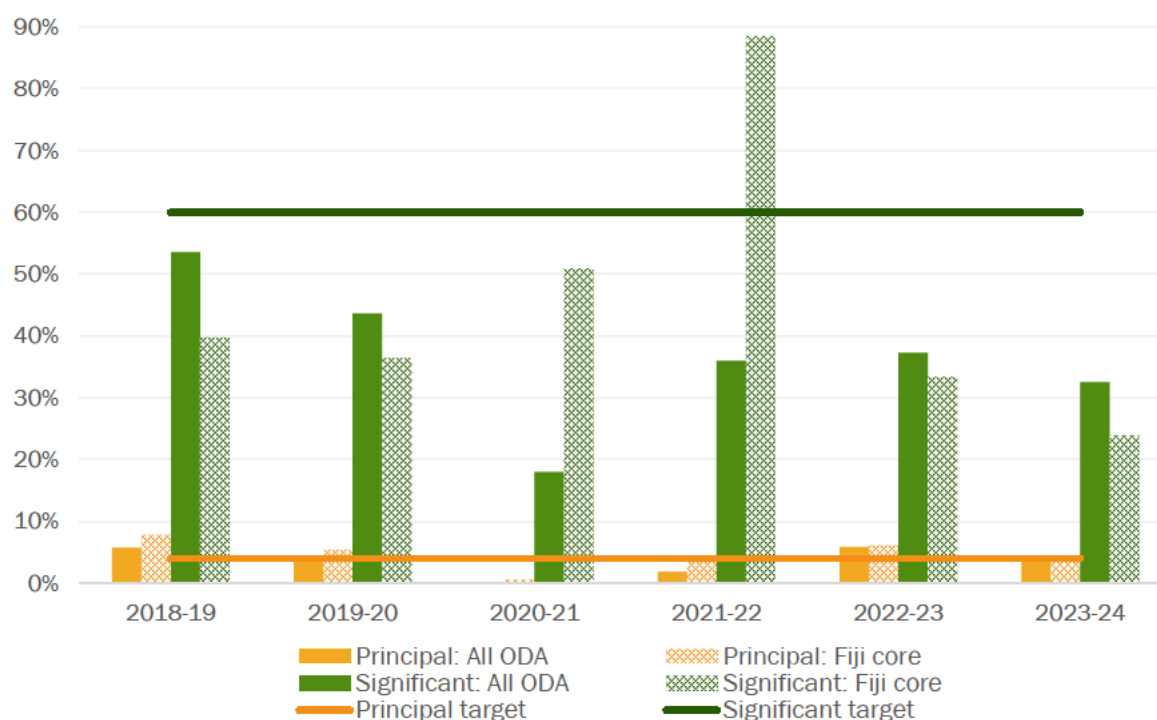
Examples of gender responsive actions which can progress gender aware activities to being more responsive and transformative are: the inclusion of GESI objectives and targets in programme design and activity MERL frameworks; the development and use of tools and guidance to conduct gender analysis; the existence, creation, support and use of gender networks in activities; GESI training and targeted technical assistance; requiring gender analysis as part of project design then monitoring it



through progress reporting and critical activity reviews, for example, mid-term reviews and end of project reviews and evaluations.

MFAT's Gender Action Plan contains targets for expenditure related to both the significant (60%) and principal (4%) policy markers for gender equality. Analysis of expenditure across FYs 2018/19 to 2023/24 using both the total ODA expenditure, as well as only the Fiji Core expenditure shows that there is quite a bit of variation in relation to meeting the expenditure targets for the significant policy marker (Figure 11).

**Figure 11 Percentage spend against gender equality policy markers, 2018-2024**



Despite having a current Gender Action Plan, MFAT generally does not tag or mandate GESI requirements to their support. This was confirmed in consultations with partners, including Fiji government and CSOs, and with MFAT staff.

Despite the above, it was encouraging to see that many partners are integrating GESI into their programme activities without any specific requirements and guidance or direction from MFAT. This includes in reporting which focuses on gender, disability and SOGIESEC. Examples include Live and Learn Environmental Education, Habitat for Humanity, RISE, GIZ, Rotary, PHAMA Plus, MTCT/Koroipita, NDMO, United Nations Development Programme support to Parliament. This is encouraging. MFAT could potentially capitalise on the efforts and experiences of partners in developing their own GESI tools or incorporating GESI tools and guidance from other partners into their work.

*...our work is gender aware, responsive and transformative but none of our GESI work is due to MFAT*

CSO partner

There are indications that MFAT's approach to GESI is becoming more strategic and intentional. The 2018 4YP evaluation recommended that MFAT should ensure that gender is mainstreamed across all



new activities and it should also consider funding activities that support women's economic empowerment as strategic priorities. The MFAT Gender Action Plan provides a solid framework for mainstreaming gender across all activities; and identifies social protection and women's economic empowerment as strategic priorities.

**Assessment of the delivery of GESI priorities, including gender mainstreaming over 2019-2023 shows that MFAT has stepped up delivery in these areas.** The Marama Ni Viti programme supporting critical institutional reform for gender responsive budgeting, improving evidence for policy reform through the country gender assessment and supporting civil society partners to address EVAWG and women's economic opportunities in remote and rural areas; together with initiatives such as the Solo Mum's project, PHAMA Plus and Business Assistance Fiji supporting women's entrepreneurial development, strongly demonstrate this commitment. Measuring the collective impact of these various activities will be critical to assessing the effectiveness of this approach. Furthermore, the focus on vulnerability under climate resilience and disaster risk reduction is helping to ensure GESI is addressed in these investments.

**Intent needs to be able to be measured and backed up by capacity** and the evidence indicates that this is an area that can be strengthened through prioritisation, a consistent, systemic approach and building internal capacity for gender mainstreaming. Intention is laid out in the current Gender Action Plan with gender capability building - a priority in the action plan - being key to strengthening intent and ensuring that inclusion is considered as a starting point for investments. This can be assisted by actively promoting gender mainstreaming across programme activities including monitoring, evaluation, reporting and learning; and rolling out of a gender capability programme to promote systematic integration of gender across all development cooperation.

**It is evident that MFAT can work to more strongly and effectively improve the overall impact of its GEDSI investments in Fiji.** More effective targeting of programmes to reach marginalised groups who are often excluded means stronger programme outcomes. The implementation of MFAT's gender capability support programme (in line with MFAT's Gender Action Plan), which is being developed in-house, should support a shift to a more GEDSI transformative investment portfolio.

### 3.4 Effectiveness and efficiency of Aotearoa New Zealand's approaches to achieve desired strategic objectives

#### 3.4.1 Modalities

MFAT uses multiple bilateral, thematic, regional and multi-country funding sources and modalities to resource individual activities with many partners to achieve the 4YP outcomes. By far the greatest proportion of 4YP expenditure (for the activities in scope) was in general budget support for Fiji's COVID-19 response. Policy reform-based budget support, and flexible climate finance support, to the Fiji Government were at similar levels to funding through New Zealand government agencies and institutions (Table 10).

**Table 10 Modality expenditure (by activities in scope)**

Funding channel / modality for activities in scope	Expenditure (NZD) 2018-2024
COVID-19 support to Fiji Government: direct budget support to the then Ministry of Economy; payments to MHMS	\$108,757,873

Funding channel / modality for activities in scope	Expenditure (NZD) 2018-2024
Direct budget support to Fiji government: reform-linked budget support; flexible climate finance; trust fund contributions	\$40,187,042
New Zealand government agencies and other entities (Universities, research institutes, medical services)	\$31,248,514
International / inter-governmental organisations: technical/policy/advisory services, procurement, humanitarian assistance, construction	\$17,105,365
Procurement of goods, technical/policy/advisory services, grant management through third-party agencies or non-government organisations	\$15,867,216
Wellington managed grants (Negotiated Partnership, Manaaki Fund, Humanitarian Emergency Fund) through New Zealand NGOs to Fiji civil society organisations	\$12,630,666
Technical/policy/advisory services through individual advisers	\$7,564,909
Grant funding arrangement with Fiji government line ministry or regulatory body	\$7,394,623
Multi-year grants to Fiji civil society organisations	\$6,347,755

The effectiveness and efficiency of the different modalities used to achieve the 4YP outcomes was assessed using a rubric to score information gathered through the document review and stakeholder consultations. The rubric scores the modalities against 8 criteria: alignment with 4YP objectives; targeting and reach; sustainability; efficiency of resource utilisation; flexibility and adaptability; partnership and collaboration; accountability and transparency; and capacity building. General observations on modalities are outlined below.

**General and reform linked budget support** was considered the most efficient and effective modality for supporting the Fiji Government's COVID-19 response and the provision of flexible climate financing mainly due to the minimal transaction costs and the flexibility in terms of being able to address immediate needs of the Government. However, there are mixed views among Fiji stakeholders on its contribution to 4YP priorities, with some reservations expressed about the efficiency, transparency and visibility of contributions to 4YP priorities, in particular, the ability of this modality to systematically track GESI expenditure and outcomes in the Fiji Government budget. MFAT has a strong preference for reform and project linked budget support for the current Fiji Government's priorities as it potentially can address some of the perceived shortcomings while reflecting New Zealand's confidence in Fiji's public sector management and commitment to accountability, providing opportunity to engage with the government on spending priorities and policy settings, and fostering sustainability and resilience. Overall, **this modality demonstrates and is consistent with what reflects a mature and reciprocal partnership between the Fiji and New Zealand Governments.**

**Support delivered through New Zealand based institutions**, that is, through New Zealand government agencies, universities, medical services, et cetera, accounts for the bulk of expenditure outside of direct budget support. This modality generally works well from MFAT's perspective, with the New Zealand agencies leading engagement and holding the relationship with their respective Fiji government agency. MFAT in Wellington does not get overly involved in these partnerships other than receiving updates and reports. Through this modality, MFAT gains access to technical advice, knowledge and relationships, while Fiji government agencies gain access to peer learning, exchanges,

advice, specialist advisory support and relationships. **While considered effective, this modality limits NZHC involvement in discussions with the Fiji Government around the relevance, quality and overall effectiveness of support being delivered through New Zealand institutions.** This modality would benefit from improved coordination and communication across New Zealand government agencies, and between New Zealand government agencies and MFAT, both in Wellington and in Suva (particularly for those New Zealand government agencies which do not have a permanent presence in Fiji). See section 3.4.2 for more detailed analysis on policy coherence and collaboration between New Zealand government agencies.

#### Box 4 NZEC and FEO partnership - Building sustainable electoral capability

The partnership between the NZEC and the FEO, established in 2013, focuses on building and sustaining electoral capability. Initially centred on skills development, the programme now supports FEO to maintain its capabilities over the long-term, strengthening institutional resilience.

This partnership exemplifies good practice in capacity building through tailored support, knowledge exchange, sustained engagement, responsiveness to changing contexts, and collaboration.

Key features of this good practice include:

- › **Tailored support:** FEO identifies its needs, and NZEC provides specialised advisors, aligning with FEO's goals to deliver free and fair elections. This collaborative model ensures that the support is demand-driven and aligned with FEO's strategic goals.
- › **Sustainability focus:** Over time, the partnership shifted from teaching foundational skills, to providing quality assurance and advisory support, enabling FEO to independently manage its functions (for example, FEO's training unit, which once relied on external expertise, now develops its own training materials and operates independently).
- › **Knowledge exchange and peer learning:** The partnership emphasises knowledge sharing through peer exchanges. FEO staff have travelled to New Zealand to observe New Zealand elections, while NZEC staff provide in-country training in Fiji. This reciprocal learning extends to other Pacific countries as well, fostering a network of shared electoral expertise across the region. FEO is now positioned to share its expertise to support other Pacific elections offices, showcasing the success of capacity-building efforts within FEO.
- › **Flexibility and responsiveness:** The NZEC's adaptable approach, including transitioning to online support during COVID-19, has ensured continuous capacity building.
- › **Multi-donor coordination:** Collaboration with other donors, including UNDP and DFAT, maximises resources and avoids duplication of efforts, providing comprehensive electoral support.

**Support delivered through multilateral agencies such as UN agencies, international financing institutions, banks and intergovernmental organisations such as the World Bank and the ADB provided a range of services such as technical and policy advice, procurement and humanitarian assistance.** Evidence indicates that MFAT benefits from working through these agencies in several ways. They include: i) relatively minimal management, administration and transaction costs as in the grant contribution to UNICEF to provide technical and financial assistance for COVID-19 vaccine support; ii) access to technical assistance, capacity development and infrastructure that reflects international standards and best practices as in support to UNDP for the Fiji Parliamentary Support Project; iii) reduced reputational risk when working with a “non-aligned, neutral, arms-length independent third party” such as UNDP in the Fiji Parliamentary Support Project, which allows donors to support critical governance initiatives such as returning Fiji to parliamentary democracy without facing political risks and sensitivities directly; iv) increased policy impact working with the ADB, the Government of Australia in close coordination with the World Bank in support of Fiji's Public Financial Improvement Program; and v) strengthened partnerships with the Government of Fiji and key donors in supporting policy reforms.

Working through a third party, while mostly beneficial to MFAT, also means buying into systems and processes which may limit flexibility, responsiveness and stall progress; incurs project management fees and limits direct engagement and oversight of activities. Assessing the costs against the benefits is an important part of the modality decision-making process.

**Grant support through local CSOs came to the fore during COVID-19; and is a modality that could be strengthened to the benefit of the overall 4YP.** This modality helped MFAT to deliver support to vulnerable populations during the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring access to food and essential items. It facilitated strong partnerships with local CSOs, which valued New Zealand's accommodating and flexible approach. They included: FRIEND, WOWS Kids Fiji, Empower Pacific, Sai Prema, Pacific Disability Forum, Frank Hilton Organization, Live and Learn Environmental Education and International Needs Fiji. This was critical in supporting the Fiji Government deliver an effective and successful response operations to manage and control the COVID-19 outbreak. It is important to note that this modality was targeted and complemented the other modalities such as direct budget support for social protection and unemployment payments, and the support to CSOs was one-off and not sustainable. Post COVID-19 ongoing support to Fiji CSOs remains critical to achieving New Zealand's 4YP outcomes, as CSOs are major partners in realising the social well-being goal, disaster resilience objectives and reaching marginalised groups under the 4YP.

*"The pandemic demonstrated the importance of local civil society as an ongoing development partner, though many civil society organisations in Fiji...have faced significantly increased demand within a more uncertain funding environment. This needs to be considered in looking at new social well-being investments for the next triennium."*

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**Multi-year grant support to Fiji CSOs** either direct through multi-year grants or through Wellington managed grants (under the Negotiated Partnership, Manaaki Fund, Humanitarian Emergency Fund administered by New Zealand NGOs) **are becoming a significant aspect of New Zealand funding to Fiji.** Examples include: Habitat for Humanity, Live and Learn Environmental Education, FWCC, Cure Kids Fiji, RISE and Women's Fund Fiji. This support is greatly valued by local CSO partners who consistently described New Zealand as: accommodating; flexible; understanding of context; in for the long haul; open to piloting and innovation; strategic – putting funds into initiatives where no one else is providing support; enabling of enhanced partnerships including ability to attract support from other donors; facilitating connections with national development priorities; providing operation support where needed taking the burden of CSOs; enabling wider reach and service delivery through support for operational costs; and generally a partner of choice. The Partnership modality with New Zealand NGOs is based on the assumption there is capacity within New Zealand NGOs to deliver capacity development support to local partners. This assumption is not universally holding true for Fiji CSO partners.s9(2)(c)

In general, local CSOs felt that MFAT could do better at their overall engagement with Fiji-based CSO partners.



## Box 5 Good practice model: Grant Funding Arrangement with Cure Kids

Launched in 2014, the Fiji Islands RHD Control and Prevent Project is an ongoing initiative between MFAT, Cure Kids and MHMS. Led by Cure Kids NZ, the project aims to control acute rheumatic fever and RHD in Fiji through a national register-based secondary prevention programme, best practice clinical care guidelines, early case detection, health promotion, and primary prevention. Cure Kids Fiji and MHMS implement the project, with Cure Kids NZ the overall lead, and the Auckland District Health Board and Fiji GrASP<sup>53</sup> as technical advisory partners.

The project stands out as a model of a successful and sustainable partnership between a New Zealand non-government organisation (NGO), a Fiji NGO, a Fiji government ministry, New Zealand based medical agencies and local communities in meeting health needs, fostering local ownership and long-term impact. Key features include:

**Alignment of FYP and national development priorities:** The project supports Fiji's national development goals, including Sustainable Development Goal 3 and the MHMS Strategic Plan, focusing on health and well-being for all, particularly Fiji's youth, and Fiji's acute rheumatic fever and RHD policy. The project aligns with Goal 4 of the 4YP, emphasising equitable healthcare.

**Alignment of partners goals, objectives, capacities:** All partners involved have similar goals, objectives and complementary capacities ensuring that project management decisions are based on a shared vision, while recognising the value and contributions of each partner. This supports sound decision-making, helps to anticipate and address potential risks; and promotes innovation – important for success.

**Research-driven improvements:** Ongoing research, such as a pilot study of screening pregnant mothers for RHD and a feasibility study of screening first-degree relatives of people living with RHD, informs programme direction.

**Inclusive partnership approach:** Acknowledgement of the importance of status and respect in Fiji; having technical expertise working alongside contextual knowledge; strong focus on cooperation with the Government of Fiji; with all partner roles being embedded in the design and implement of activities.

**Community involvement:** Local commitment and ownership promoted through patient-led RHD CSOs. RHD CSO Heart Heroes support the MHMS activities to raise public awareness, support early detection, encourage and strengthen adherence to antibiotic prophylaxis and provide social support for people living with RHD, alongside MHMS officials.

**Capacity building:** The approach to capacity building was based on early epidemiological, clinical and operation research conducted by GrASP. It is broad and recognised the various types of expertise and capabilities needed to deliver and sustain outputs including tertiary, short-term attachments, training workshops, training of trainers, ongoing support and capacity building for the local CSO; and advisory and technical support working alongside local medical practitioners,

**Government contribution:** Core resources relevant to the continuation of the activities and output have begun to be transitioned to the Fiji Government.

**Grant funding arrangements (GFAs) with Fiji government ministries or agencies have proven highly effective in fostering ownership and aligning activities with national objectives.** This is largely due to the ministries' control over work planning and resource allocation, enabling targeted use of resources to drive change. However, challenges arise when relying on Fiji's internal systems for disbursing donor funds to the respective ministries. These delays can create difficulties for the ministries in ensuring accountability and transparency regarding the flow and utilisation of allocated funds.

While the GFAs establish clear conditions for accountability between the line ministries and MFAT, reporting can be hindered by the complexities of the Fiji government's financial reporting systems.

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<sup>53</sup> Fiji Group A Streptococcal Project (GrASP), 2014-2019



Nevertheless, these arrangements are strong in fostering partnership and collaboration, as MFAT and the ministries work closely to determine funding priorities.

Capacity building is a significant concern. Although GFAs often assume that ministries have sufficient capacity to execute donor-funded projects, many Fiji government stakeholders highlighted capacity constraints as a major risk to successful implementation. In some cases, GFAs may not be the most appropriate mechanism for certain ministries. Third-party agencies capable of handling the administrative workload are sometimes seen as a preferable option.

Stakeholders noted that capacity constraints are not limited to the Fiji Government; MFAT could also benefit from strengthening its capacity to engage on relevant technical issues when directly engaging with ministries. Furthermore, MFAT's internal processes, such as consultations, internal approvals, and sign-offs, often take considerable time, with delays being even longer when linked to approval processes for regional funding allocations.

**Regional programme support delivered through delegated cooperation agreements between MFAT and DFAT have faced challenges**, including legal and policy issues related to the agreements. Additionally, differences in funding cycles – annual for DFAT and triennial for MFAT – have made the rollover of unspent funds difficult. Due to the prolonged time required to resolve these challenges, it was suggested that parallel programmes could be more efficient. However, this approach would require careful coordination to ensure that implementation, monitoring, and reporting are streamlined and do not place an excessive burden on implementing partners.

**There are various approaches to capacity building across the activities in scope for this evaluation, with the approach used depending on the type of activity and/or the person managing the activity.** Examples of approaches include: technical assistance, scholarship, training attachments, training workshops, conference and meeting attendance, study tours and visits. Technical assistance is delivered through several types of arrangements, including secondments, long-term advisory support and fly-in-fly-out (FIFO) support. Secondments and long-term advisory support are viewed as particularly effective and realising sustainable results and are preferred by the majority of MFAT's Fiji partners such as Police, Ministry for Housing and Community Development and NDMO (long term advisory support), Ministry for Home Affairs (secondment), and Fisheries (FIFO). Within these arrangements there was a mix of capacity building and capacity substitution.

**There seems to be a strong case for more bilateral support, by translating relevant and effective regional activities into deeper country level investments.** Evidence shows that activities are most likely to be successful where NZHC staff are managing and/or engaged in implementation. These activities tend to have more ownership by both MFAT and Fiji counterparts, and are likely to be more directly relevant and connected to Fiji needs. Two examples of where a regional/multi-country activity has developed into a successful bilateral activity are: (i) Climate Mobility support to the Fiji Relocation Trust Fund resulted in a more targeted and in-depth approach to addressing the issue of relocation due to the impacts of climate change; and (ii) BLP implementation through an in-country partner in Business Assistance Fiji supporting for business development through Fiji/New Zealand business partnerships. There is merit in closely examining opportunities for support through regional programmes to be translated into deeper country/bilateral level investments. This raises issues of resourcing and NZHC capacity which will need to be taken into account when considering this approach.

In general, MFAT's use of multiple funding sources, modalities and engagement with a wide range of partners is supporting the successful delivery of 4YP outcomes. While the method for aid delivery is pre-determined in some cases, such as Wellington managed grants, MFAT's business case

development process seems robust when considering the various aspects of the activity investment. Each of the modalities come with benefits and drawbacks. MFAT may wish to consider strengthening these processes to more effectively address better alignment of institutional mandates and policies; accountability mechanisms; and improved local engagement in problem-solving and identifying ways to improve and sustain the delivery of public services.

### 3.4.2 Policy coherence and collaboration across New Zealand government agencies to deliver on 4YP outcomes

New Zealand government agencies delivering support in Fiji during the 4YP period include, among others, New Zealand's Institute of Environmental Science and Research, Local Government New Zealand/Taituarā, Ministry for the Environment, Ministry of Defence (non-ODA funded), Ministry of Health, Ministry of Primary Industries, New Zealand Customs Service, New Zealand Defence Force (non-ODA funded), New Zealand Electoral Commission, New Zealand Immigration, New Zealand Police, the Office of the Auditor-General, and the Public Service Commission.

With the exception of New Zealand Police and ESR support to Fiji Police, and NZEC support to the FEO, most activities are regional or multi-country in scope.

To assess how effective policy coherence and collaboration across New Zealand government agencies has been in delivering on the 4YP, the evaluation team considered six aspects of inter-agency cooperation, alignment, and impact (Table 11). The evaluation finds that **inter-agency collaboration has been largely effective in advancing the Fiji 4YP, with clear examples of strategic alignment, capacity building, and measurable outcomes.** However, **some challenges remain, particularly in maintaining consistent communication and alignment across agencies** where organisational objectives diverge or where coordination between Wellington-based and Fiji-based teams is inconsistent. Achieving policy coherence across the programme has been difficult when policy objectives are not clearly communicated or understood.

The evaluation heard of common resource challenges across New Zealand government agencies, combined with domestic priorities, leading to an emerging trend of diminishing capacity of some New Zealand government agencies to fully engage with MFAT's Fiji Programme.

**Table 11 Assessment of coherence and collaboration across New Zealand government agencies**

Criteria	Comment
<b>Strategic alignment and policy coherence:</b> The degree to which agencies' objectives align with the overarching goals of the 4YP, particularly in relation to Fiji's priorities.	New Zealand government agency contributions generally align well with the 4YP's goals of strengthening government institutions, economic resilience, security and social development in Fiji. Key Fiji Government partners have noted this alignment. There is generally alignment across New Zealand's agencies in their pursuit of shared objectives, like security and trade. However tensions can arise when agency-specific objectives conflict with the broader goals of New Zealand's foreign policy. Coordination is crucial as New Zealand government agencies hold the relationships with the respective Fiji government agencies, not MFAT. The evaluation notes a lack of awareness of New Zealand's foreign policy objectives among New Zealand government agency staff, particularly those implementing regional or multi-country activities, who are located outside Fiji. . While long-standing relationships have remained stable, domestic priorities can dominate interagency collaboration.
<b>Coordination and Communication:</b> The quality and frequency of communication between agencies, ensuring that all stakeholders are informed and aligned with one	Relationships across different New Zealand government agencies are managed by teams both in Wellington and Suva. MFAT staff in Wellington handle policy and programmatic interactions, while NZHC staff focus on programmatic, operational and logistics matters. Regular meetings between New Zealand government agencies located at the NZHC have helped strengthen communication. However, there are

Criteria	Comment
another, and that roles and responsibilities are clearly delineated.	instances where fragmented responsibilities and dispersed communication channels affect the flow of information.
<b>Joint Planning and implementation:</b> The extent to which agencies collaborate on planning and execution, including joint initiatives, shared resources, and cross-sector partnerships to achieve common objectives.	Strong collaboration across New Zealand government agencies was evident in emergency situations. Joint initiatives, such as the multi-agency response to sourcing and delivering COVID-19 vaccines for Fiji, showcase effective planning and coordination across multiple agencies, where each played a complementary role. There is also evidence of ad hoc coordination between New Zealand government agencies to deconflict and stream requests from Fiji government partners. However, the level of collaboration seen during emergency situations has not been as consistent for on-going initiatives.
<b>Capacity building and knowledge sharing:</b> The level of technical assistance, capacity building, and knowledge sharing with Fiji (and between agencies), especially in areas where one agency holds particular expertise relevant to the 4YP.	Capacity building efforts in some sectors have benefitted from peer-to-peer learning and technical support from New Zealand government agencies. While secondments and embedded advisory support have been highly valued, transformational change has been limited, particularly in "opt-in" programmes, such as Public Service Fale and some FIFO peer support, where Fiji's capacity to absorb support remains a challenge, or is not a priority for Fiji.
<b>Monitoring, Reporting, and Adaptability:</b> The effectiveness of systems for monitoring progress, sharing reports, and adapting programmes based on challenges or new opportunities. This includes the ability to provide feedback and make adjustments to ensure continuous improvement.	The reporting structures of activities implemented by New Zealand government agencies are generally focused on output delivery. Feedback loops are sometimes complex, particularly when information-sharing responsibilities are spread across different levels (from MFAT's regional team to the bilateral desk to NZHC staff). This places an additional burden on NZHC staff to stay informed. While MFAT has shown flexibility and ownership in coordinating with other New Zealand government agencies, monitoring progress against 4YP outcomes remains inconsistent, as this is MFAT's responsibility, and agencies report primarily on output delivery.
<b>Impact and Outcomes:</b> The measurable outcomes resulting from the collaboration, with a focus on how the joint efforts of multiple agencies have contributed to the success of the 4YP.	The impacts of collaborations with New Zealand government agencies are apparent in several sectors. For instance, the support for Fiji's electoral system has strengthened FEO's ability to conduct elections. Some areas, such as policing, are still too early in the process to demonstrate clear impacts, though positive, practical results, like addressing the backlog of Constable Qualifying Course training, and support for the forensics laboratory, are noted. The coordination of COVID-19 vaccine procurement and deployment showcased effective interagency collaboration, leading to tangible outcomes.

## 3.5 Insights into the sustainability of current and future support

### 3.5.1 Delivering sustainable benefits

In considering the delivery of sustainability benefits, the evaluation focuses on two aspects: (i) where there is evidence of lasting benefits; and (ii) strategies and approaches are aligned with good development practices that are likely to lead to sustainable benefits. The following examples are a small selection to illustrate these sustainable benefits:

Snapshot of sustainable benefits:

- › **FEO capacity and capability to deliver its mandate:** the NZEC and the FEO partnership is supporting FEO's capacity to manage voter registration, oversee elections, and ensure the transparency and accountability of electoral processes. As a result, Fiji was able to conduct its



2022 elections with significant improvements in electoral management. This success has been the culmination of support placed in the office over successive election periods.

- › **Small and micro enterprises providing employment:** Support for SMEs, particularly through the Business Assistance Fiji initiative and the BLP programme, has been a crucial lifeline during and post-pandemic. These programmes provided adaptation grants to help businesses diversify and sustain operations, directly supporting over 1,357 SMEs, including women-led enterprises. This created over 1,034 jobs, with half filled by women. The programme demonstrated sustainability through fostering entrepreneurship and resilience within the local economy. More recently with the Fiji government emphasis on the growth and success of SME sector there has been strong collaboration and support from the Ministry of Trade, Co-operatives, SMEs, and Communications with Business Assistance Fiji.
- › **RHD screening and treatment:** New Zealand's support for RHD screening and treatment under the Cure Kids partnership reflects sustainable health outcomes. By improving early detection and providing treatment, the initiative mitigates long-term health impacts for those affected by RHD. This model has been identified as good practice, demonstrating sustainable health system strengthening through targeted interventions that reduce disease prevalence and enhance long-term care.
- › **Affordable social housing for vulnerable and marginalised families:** the Koroipita social housing project, part of the housing support initiatives, provided affordable housing to vulnerable families, especially women and children living in informal settlements. The programme's emphasis on community development, social inclusion, and disaster resilience has led to sustainable outcomes by addressing critical housing needs while fostering a safer and more resilient living environment. There is emerging evidence of inter-generational economic, social and education changes for families. A key element contributing to the project's sustainability is its partnership with the Fiji Government, which funds capital expenditures.
- › **Export opportunities for fresh and processed products:** the PHAMA Plus programme focused on strengthening agricultural value chains, such as for processed ginger and turmeric. By improving market access and enhancing Fiji's capacity to meet export standards, the programme contributed to long-term economic resilience and diversification. These efforts are essential in creating sustainable income streams for rural farmers and contributing to Fiji's broader economic growth.

Key strategies for sustainability and examples of long-term impact:

- › **Fiji Government ownership and engagement:** Where government ownership is strong activities are likely to be more successful and sustainable. Activities with in-country presence and robust engagement with government agencies are more likely to be successful and sustainable. A sector-based approach, such as in housing, health, and social protection, aligns activities with longer-term outcomes and Fiji's Four-Year Plan (4YP) priorities. This approach also creates partnerships that serve as a platform for transferring ownership to the government. As noted in discussions with the Ministry of Finance, improving the use of Fiji government systems for Grant Funding Arrangement (GFA) funding is essential.
- › **Overcoming capacity constraints to deliver sustainable benefits:** Capacity constraints are common across most activities. Early identification of capacity constraints could allow for more structured interventions, promoting sustainability. In light of Fiji's significant labour/brain drain, reassessing investments/partnerships for strengthening skills development (for example, provision of scholarships, support to Fiji tertiary institutions and other skills-based training providers) would strengthen local capabilities. Connected to this, being able to anticipate or plan for systems strengthening efforts at the design stage may enhance success and sustainability of activities.

- › **Community-based approaches:** Programmes which employ community-led strategies, such as the Koroipita social housing project, have successfully built resilience at the local level by engaging communities directly in sustainable development. Other good examples are Rotary water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) programme; and the RHD programme. Some common aspects of these programmes is that community consultation is key – before, during and after interventions; communities are involved in all aspects of the programmes, including capacity building/skill building activities that enable communities take ownership of activities; multi-sectoral coordinating committees that connect activity with key government, state-owned and local government/provincial entities – connecting the activity with overall government development processes; gender responsiveness – to name a few.
- › **Localisation for sustainable impact:** New Zealand's shift toward a localised humanitarian approach, empowering Fiji CSOs, is crucial for sustainability, ensuring local entities are well-prepared and positioned for long-term development efforts.
- › **Systems strengthening and long-term support:** Not all activities will be self-sustaining and on-going financial support may be necessary. Some activities have proven effective for delivering development outcomes; however, financial sustainability remains a concern for entities which do not create their own income and/or receive consistent budgets allocations or capital expenditure funding from the Fiji Government.

### 3.5.2 Lessons

This section details lessons drawn from the document review and interviews, categorised under the key themes of resource use, scaling, and flexibility outlined in the evaluation questions. By applying these lessons, MFAT can ensure more effective use of resources, scalability of impacts, and greater flexibility in adapting to unforeseen challenges.

#### Lessons on maximising resource use:

##### *Visibility and relevance:*

The evaluation notes a nuanced tension regarding the visibility of New Zealand's contributions in Fiji. On one hand, MFAT does not seek to explicitly showcase its role, instead highlighting the achievements of the Fiji government, local partners, and others who are directly driving change and development outcomes with support from New Zealand. However, stakeholders expressed a need for more visibility, leading to a deeper understanding of New Zealand's support, particularly in contexts where New Zealand is the only or primary partner delivering support, or delivering interconnected support with a range of stakeholders.

- 🌀 **Lesson: Maintaining relevance requires strategic visibility, particularly in spaces where New Zealand's support is unique or indispensable, to enhance recognition and foster deeper engagement with local partners.**

##### *Reflection and review:*

Regular opportunities for reflection and review of progress have been emphasised as important in adapting and improving activities. This practice allows stakeholders to pivot when necessary, ensuring that activities remain aligned with evolving contexts.

- 🌀 **Lesson: Regular and structured opportunities for reflection and review are crucial for continuous improvement and adaptation, allowing for course corrections and re-prioritisation based on real-time feedback.**



### *Localised partnerships:*

Local partnerships were invaluable in delivering timely, targeted solutions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Fiji CSOs proved capable of mobilising resources quickly and delivering critical services on the ground. This underscores the importance of investing in local organisations that have both reach and local knowledge.

- 🕒 **Lesson: Investing in local organisations and building their capacity ensures that interventions can continue with minimal disruption during crises, enhancing the sustainability and effectiveness of resource use.**

### *Balancing resource burden:*

The evaluation highlights differing perspectives between New Zealand and Fiji on managing the administrative burdens of donor-funded projects, with each side preferring the other to assume more responsibility. Joint decision-making on the appropriate implementation model is essential.

- 🕒 **Lesson: A variety of delivery models, such as resource supplementation within Fiji government ministries or outsourcing, are key to managing increased administrative demands without detracting from the strategic focus and overall impact of New Zealand support. When selecting delivery modalities, it is crucial to consider when, where, and how to transfer these administrative burdens to partners, while also identifying opportunities to build their capacity.**

### *Monitoring and reporting systems:*

The need for a more robust MERL framework to facilitate real-time and transparent reporting is highlighted. This would enhance the overall effectiveness of resource use by ensuring lessons learned are continuously applied. While there are examples of successful monitoring embedding MERL consistently across all areas remains a challenge.

- 🕒 **Lesson: A well-integrated MERL system can improve the use of resources by identifying underperforming areas earlier, allowing for better allocation of resources and course correction.**

## **Lessons on scaling investments for maximum impact:**

### *Larger, strategic programmes versus smaller, direct intervention-type projects:*

Transitioning from smaller, direct interventions to larger, strategic programmes allows for a more systemic approach. The realignment of support towards climate resilience, social housing, economic recovery and gender equality covering larger thematic areas, was highlighted as an effective shift.

MFAT is using a programmatic approach to group together funding packages for activities in the same sector. To be effective under a programmatic approach the stakeholders implementing activities need to: be working toward common and agreed outcomes; reflect on progress towards outcomes; and make collective decisions about the best use of resources and ways to achieve the common outcomes through their own activities. This requires regular and robust coordination processes.

- 🕒 **Lesson: Using a programmatic approach with systemic influence can enable broader, more sustainable impacts, if effectively utilised.**

### *Leveraging regional and multi-country programmes:*

There is a need to capitalise on regional and multi-country initiatives to maximise the impact of investments. For example, collaborating with multilateral actors (IFC, ADB, and UN Habitat) and

aligning with Australia's programmes added value and increased scale in areas like housing and climate adaptation.

- 🌀 **Lesson: Scaling requires tapping into regional and multi-donor platforms to leverage resources to amplify impact.**

#### *Strategic partnerships with Government:*

Ongoing partnerships with Fiji government ministries helped scale investments in key sectors, but these partnerships were sometimes hindered by staffing changes and lack of capacity within ministries.

- 🌀 **Lesson: Formalising programme and activity governance structures can promote accountability and support scaling.**

#### **Lessons on flexibility and adaptation to changing contexts:**

##### *Adapting to COVID-19 and other crises:*

The pandemic highlighted the need for rapid, flexible reallocation of resources. For example, funding approaches were adjusted to cover urgent vaccine support and livelihood interventions for vulnerable groups. The pandemic emphasised the importance of flexible funding arrangements. For example, allowing the reallocation of funds and rapid decision-making for emergency needs was essential during the crisis.

Being flexible with contracts, and responsive to real-time feedback from the field, proved essential in managing activities during the pandemic. Flexibility allowed for quick programmes pivots when needed.

- 🌀 **Lesson: Agile decision-making, calculated risk-taking and funding mechanisms and contracts with built-in flexibility, allow for quick pivots in response to crises, supporting continuity in service delivery during emergencies.**

##### *Strengthening relationships in dynamic contexts:*

Frequent political changes, such as new leadership in Fiji's ministries, affected project delivery timelines and relationships. Ongoing rapport-building and proactive engagement were essential to mitigate these disruptions.

- 🌀 **Lesson: Strong, continuous stakeholder engagement and rapport-building are critical in dynamic political environments to sustain programmes momentum.**

##### *Use of local knowledge for adaptation:*

Local knowledge and ownership were key in adapting to disasters and the pandemic.

- 🌀 **Lesson: Embedding local knowledge into programme designs enhances adaptability and ensures that activities remain relevant and effective in the face of changing contexts.**

##### *Regular monitoring and rapid feedback:*

Regular feedback from partners on the ground allowed for better adjustment to activities. Rapid assessment tools helped identify when interventions were not progressing, enabling timely reallocation or change in tactics.

- 🌀 **Lesson: Real-time feedback loops with local partners allow for quicker, more effective adjustments to programmes, ensuring that projects stay on track despite challenges.**

## 4 Recommendations

A summary of recommendations is provided below (Table 12). For detailed explanations of context and guidance for implementing these recommendations, see Appendix H.

**Table 12 Summary of Recommendations**

<b>Recommendation 1:</b>	<b>MFAT's Fiji Programme to embed a programmatic approach in the design and implementation of new and, where possible, existing activities.</b>
<b>Recommendation 2:</b>	<b>MFAT to strengthen the process for selecting the modality for its activities.</b>
<b>Recommendation 3:</b>	<b>MFAT's Fiji Programme and CSO partners to co-develop a CSO engagement strategy to improve engagement with local CSOs.</b>
<b>Recommendation 4:</b>	<b>MFAT to strengthen efforts to address gender and social inclusion by:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. including gender and/or inclusion outcomes in all new (or updated) activities in the Fiji Programme.</li> <li>b. prioritising the completion and roll-out of the MFAT gender capability support programme which is currently being developed in-house.</li> <li>c. updating and developing guidance notes and programming tools to assist the integration of GEDSI into all aspects of activities, from design through to monitoring, evaluation and reporting.</li> <li>d. creating a knowledge hub which draws on the experiences of partners and provides a platform for sharing and learning about approaches to GEDSI.</li> <li>e. expanding the current pool of GEDSI technical expertise available to support activities, in collaboration with development partners working in the region and at country level, for example, DFAT, ADB, the UN, regional organisations such as the SPC and PIFS, and international, regional and national NGOs.</li> <li>f. improving processes for tracking expenditure on GEDSI, particularly in large activities.</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendation 5:</b>	<b>MFAT to strengthen the 4YP MERL structures and processes by:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. introducing a 4YP MERL system that includes: (i) a framework with mid-level outcomes, bridging the gap between the 4YP strategic goals and activities; and (ii) expanding the annual reflection session.</li> <li>b. resourcing monitoring and learning activities, tracking MERL expenditure and implementing recommendations from reviews and evaluations.</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendation 6:</b>	<b>MFAT to enhance coherence and coordination within MFAT, and between MFAT and other New Zealand government agencies, by:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. leveraging a 4YP MERL system (see Recommendation 5) to facilitate the collection of data and insights from New Zealand government agencies, collectively assess the impact of New Zealand's efforts in Fiji, and foster synergies to improve the overall coherence of New Zealand's Fiji Programme.</li> <li>b. ensuring all relevant New Zealand government agencies are fully briefed on the new Fiji Country Plan, and their role in delivering on the strategic goals.</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendation 7:</b>	<b>MFAT to further enhance coordination with other development partners and Fiji Government, by:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. advocating for the establishment of a formal donor coordination platform that meets regularly with the Fiji Government.</li> <li>b. prioritising joint sectoral planning with development partners for initiatives under the new Fiji Country Plan.</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendation 8:</b>	<b>MFAT to better leverage regional support in bilateral activities, by:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. enabling knowledge-sharing opportunities where success stories, best practices, and innovations from regional projects can be disseminated and adapted to Fiji's context, and vice versa.</li> <li>b. using participation in regional and international forums to support Fiji on issues of mutual interest under the 4YP.</li> <li>c. ensuring regional activity governance mechanisms and reporting processes identify where regional activities with successful outcomes can be scaled up within Fiji.</li> </ul>

## 5 Conclusion

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The strategic evaluation of New Zealand's Fiji Programme (2019–2023) affirms a strong, adaptive partnership that effectively responded to Fiji's needs, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. New Zealand consistently demonstrated its commitment to shared values, inclusive development, and sustainable impact, closely aligning its efforts with Fiji's national priorities. A key objective of the 4YP—to reset and deepen the bilateral relationship—was successfully achieved, reflecting a stronger and more mature partnership between Fiji and New Zealand.

New Zealand's support for Fiji's COVID-19 response was particularly notable for its agility and effectiveness, exemplifying development cooperation in action. Despite smaller financial contributions compared to some other donors, New Zealand significantly boosted its impact through strong local partnerships in Fiji.

The Fiji Programme's strength lies in its relationship-driven approach, allowing New Zealand to take calculated risks and innovate with local partners. This flexibility, particularly evident during Fiji's COVID-19 response, enabled success across areas such as social well-being, climate change, and economic resilience, with a strong focus on local ownership and capacity building.

New Zealand employed a range of modalities – budget support, technical assistance, project interventions, and civil society partnerships – allowing quick adaptation to Fiji's evolving needs, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, when rapid disbursement of budget support and targeted assistance to vulnerable groups were crucial. However, the evaluation recommends future support should better align these modalities with strategic goals to ensure maximum impact.

A notable feature of the Fiji Programme is the collaboration between multiple New Zealand government agencies working towards the 4YP strategic goals. MFAT successfully leveraged expertise from multiple government agencies, including those focused on public health, policing, climate change, and economic reform. Coordination between agencies can be improved to ensure all contributions are strategically aligned and managed.

There has been progress in addressing gender equality, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI). While gender-responsive activities have increased, further investment in capacity-building of MFAT staff and integration of GEDSI across all 4YP strategic goals is needed.

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted several long-term initiatives. New Zealand's upcoming Fiji Country Plan offers an opportunity to recalibrate these initiatives, especially in economic diversification and climate resilience, essential for Fiji's post-COVID-19 recovery and growth.

Challenges remain, including the need for consistent donor coordination, stronger alignment between regional and bilateral programmes, and improved monitoring systems. Several building blocks are already in place to support programme improvements; for example, established relationships, a strong foundation of local ownership, and significant advances towards achieving the 4YP strategic goals. These provide a solid platform for future growth of MFAT's Fiji Programme.

Overall, the evaluation confirms that New Zealand's Fiji Programme has made meaningful contributions to Fiji's parliamentary and democratic governance norms, economic resilience, social well-being, climate adaptation and disaster resilience. Refining programmatic approaches, enhancing regional-bilateral alignment, and further integrating GEDSI will ensure New Zealand's support remains flexible, impactful, and can be scaled effectively to meet Fiji's evolving development needs.

# Appendix A: Four-Year Plan and Duavata Partnership comparison

**Table 13 4YP and Duavata Partnership full description**

4YP Priorities and outcomes (2019)	4YP Goals and outcomes (2021 refresh)	Duavata Partnership: Priority areas for cooperation
<p><b>Priority 1: Partnership, Democracy, and Values – Democracy and good governance are embedded in Fiji in alignment with shared values.</b></p> <p>MT01: New Zealand is normalised as a partner of choice for Fijian institutions.</p> <p>MT02: Fiji's democratic institutions are robust and capable.</p> <p>MT03: Civil society is vibrant and advocates for human rights, access to justice, and the rule of law.</p> <p>ST01: Political relationships are substantive, and strategic links are cemented between New Zealand and Fijian institutions.</p> <p>ST02: The capacity of Fiji's democratic and constitutional institutions is strengthened in alignment with shared values.</p> <p>ST03: Civil society groups are strengthened and advocate effectively.</p>	<p><b>Goal One: Partnership – A broader, deeper and resilient relationship</b></p> <p>MO 1.1: Fiji has well-governed democratic and civil institutions</p> <p>MO 1.2: Fiji and Aotearoa New Zealand have strong social, political, economic and institutional links</p> <p>STO 1.1: Constitutional institutions are robust and empowered to perform their mandate</p> <p>STO 1.2: Political and officials engagements deliver on agreed outcomes</p> <p>STO 1.3: Civil society organisations are strengthened and continue to advocate for shared norms and values</p> <p>STO 1.4: Government institutions have improved policy and delivery capability regular and meaningful dialogue and engagements</p>	<p><b>Partnership, democracy and Values</b></p> <p>Fostering the connections created between our peoples and institutions through avenues such as education, cultural, and sports exchanges;</p> <p>Pursuing greater understanding and coordination between New Zealand and Fiji on our respective foreign policy priorities;</p> <p>Fostering stronger partnerships by facilitating increased information-sharing and people exchanges between New Zealand and Fiji institutions;</p> <p>Enhancing accountability, transparency, and high quality delivery in public and democratic institutions through political, regulatory, and administrative reforms, including in the public service, and judicial, parliamentary, and electoral systems;</p> <p>Working together with other like-minded partners, and through regional and multilateral institutions, to protect our shared interests and promote coordination and collaboration in areas of commonality;</p> <p>Upholding and advocating for the protection of the fundamental rights and freedoms of all people, including vulnerable communities and minority groups.</p>
<p><b>Priority 3: Economic Resilience – Fiji's economy grows sustainably, inclusively, and resiliently.</b></p> <p>MT06: Communities are resilient to climate change and natural disasters.</p> <p>MT07: Key sectors of Fiji's economy are developed.</p> <p>MT08: Fiji's private sector grows sustainably and is closely integrated with New Zealand.</p> <p>ST08: Improved governance and management enhance the performance of Fiji's agriculture and fisheries sectors.</p> <p>ST09: Fiji signs PACER Plus and benefits from closer economic integration into the region.</p> <p>ST010: Public financial management decisions are based on sound policy</p>	<p><b>Goal Two: Economic Resilience – Economic growth is inclusive, resilient and sustainable</b></p> <p>MO 2.1: The private sector has grown and is more sustainable, diverse and inclusive, and has stronger bilateral, regional and global economic linkages and integration</p> <p>MO 2.2: Fiji has sustainable debt levels within national targets</p> <p>STO 2.1: Fiji is making progress to better govern, reform and revive its key industries</p> <p>STO 2.2: Fiji is implementing a sustainable debt management strategy and has improved Public Financial Management</p> <p>STO 2.3: Improved regulatory, trade and enabling environment for the private sector</p>	<p><b>Economic Resilience</b></p> <p>Building economic resilience and a sustainable, inclusive and broad-based economic recovery from the impacts of COVID-19 and climate change. This will be supported by an expanded development programme, and assistance with enabling reforms to catalyse private sector growth and stimulate bilateral trade, investment and tourism;</p> <p>Exploring opportunities for closer economic integration bilaterally and within the wider Pacific region and in multilateral fora;</p> <p>Growing the economic and development benefits from Fiji's participation in labour mobility, including the Recognised Seasonal Employer scheme;</p>

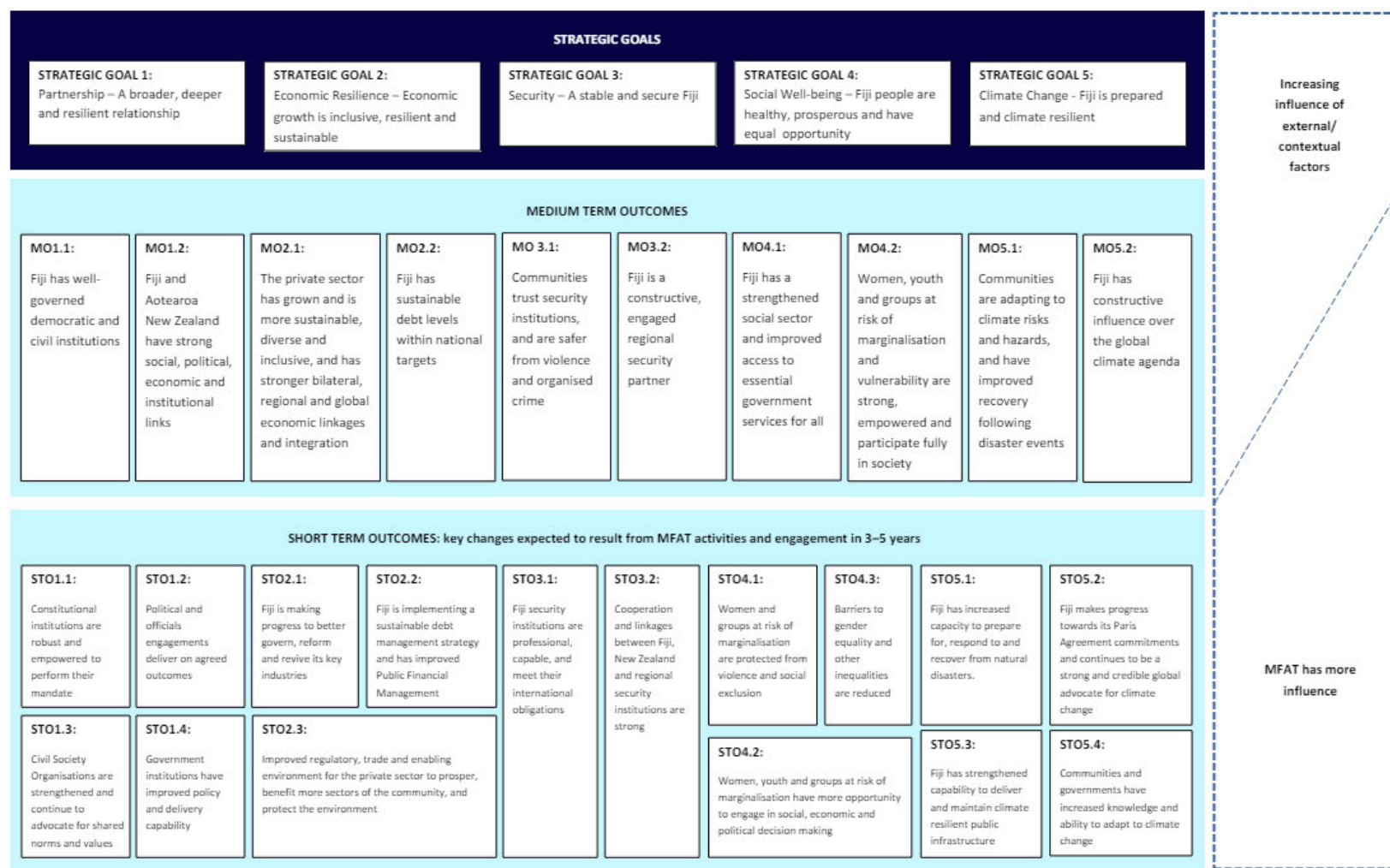


4YP Priorities and outcomes (2019)	4YP Goals and outcomes (2021 refresh)	Duavata Partnership: Priority areas for cooperation
advice, and Fiji's business environment is reformed.		Promoting sustainable management, inclusive, and resilient green growth, including negotiating trade agreements such as climate change, sustainability and gender.
<p><b>Priority 4: Security – Fiji has robust national security institutions contributing to regional stability.</b></p> <p>MT09: Fiji's Police provide safe communities and are partners on transnational challenges.</p> <p>MT010: Fiji's border controls deliver greater security to Fiji, New Zealand, and the region.</p> <p>MT011: RFMF is professional and contributes to domestic and international security.</p> <p>STO11: Fiji Police have improved capacity in community policing and are better equipped to address transnational security challenges.</p> <p>STO12: Cooperation between NZDF and RFMF enhances professionalism and results in the transfer of values.</p> <p>STO13: The capability of Fiji border management and surveillance agencies is strengthened.</p>	<p><b>Goal Three: Security – A stable and secure Fiji</b></p> <p>MO 3.1: Communities trust security institutions, and are safer from violence and organised crime</p> <p>MO 3.2: Fiji is a constructive, engaged regional security partner</p> <p>STO 3.1: Fiji security institutions are professional, capable, and meet their international obligations</p> <p>STO 3.2: Cooperation and linkages between Fiji, New Zealand and regional security institutions are strong</p>	<p><b>Security</b></p> <p>Supporting capacity and capability to uphold sovereign authority over our land and maritime territories, borders, and Exclusive Economic Zones, including co-operation to address the common challenges that trans-border security issues such as maritime security and transnational crime pose to our communities;</p> <p>Expanding practical bilateral and regional cooperation in defence, policing, border security, cyber security, and intelligence through deeper knowledge sharing and more regular exchanges, and shared training and operation;</p> <p>Strengthening the institutional capacity and capability of Fiji's governance bodies, judiciary, defence, and security forces so that the rule of law is consistently upheld;</p> <p>Facilitating open dialogue and information exchange on shared security challenges, pursuing our regional concept of security as outlined in the Boe Declaration*;</p> <p>Protecting biodiversity and ecosystems, including through effective customs and biosecurity measures;</p> <p>*This includes human security, humanitarian assistance, and environment security including climate change resilience.</p>
<p><b>Priority 2: Social Wellbeing – Fiji's communities are strong, resilient, and inclusive, giving citizens the opportunity to achieve their full potential.</b></p> <p>MT04: Women, youth, and vulnerable groups are empowered to advance their own development priorities.</p> <p>MT05: Fiji's human capital is strengthened with access to quality education and health services.</p> <p>STO4: Vulnerable groups are supported to meet basic needs and overcome key areas of disadvantage.</p> <p>STO5: Women and girls have increased voice in decision-making, both within economic opportunities and in broader society.</p>	<p><b>Goal Four: Social Well-being – Fiji people are healthy, prosperous and have equal opportunity</b></p> <p>MO 4.1: Fiji has a strengthened social sector and improved access to essential government services for all</p> <p>MO 4.2: Women, youth and groups at risk of marginalisation and vulnerability are strong, empowered and participate fully in society</p> <p>STO 4.1: Women and groups at risk of marginalisation are protected from violence and social exclusion</p> <p>STO 4.2: Women, youth and groups at risk of marginalisation have more opportunity to engage in social, economic and political decision making</p>	<p><b>Social Well-being</b></p> <p>Coordinating preparedness and response to pandemics, including improving access to COVID-19 medical support and infrastructure;</p> <p>Enhancing capacity to address the challenge of achieving gender equality, and eliminating violence against women and girls;</p> <p>Seeking opportunities to enhance access to higher quality education, health services, and resilient housing, particularly for vulnerable groups</p>

4YP Priorities and outcomes (2019)	4YP Goals and outcomes (2021 refresh)	Duavata Partnership: Priority areas for cooperation
<p>ST06: Fiji and New Zealand health sectors are strengthened through targeted New Zealand support.</p> <p>ST07: Fiji and New Zealand develop a strong partnership to build disaster response capacity and climate change resilience.</p>	<p>STO 4.3: Barriers to gender equality and other inequalities are reduced</p>	
<p><b>Cross-Cutting Issues</b> addressed throughout the framework include improved DRR (Disaster Risk Reduction) and Climate Change capacity, policy, management, and context; improved awareness, practice, decision-making, and conditions for gender equality; and human rights.</p>	<p><b>Goal Five: Climate Change – Fiji is prepared and climate resilient</b></p> <p>MO 5.1: Communities are adapting to climate risks and hazards, and have improved recovery following disaster events</p> <p>MO 5.2: Fiji has constructive influence over the global climate agenda</p> <p>STO 5.1: Fiji has increased capacity to prepare for, respond to and recover from natural disasters.</p> <p>STO 5.2: Fiji makes progress towards its Paris Agreement commitments and continues to be a strong and credible global advocate for climate change</p> <p>STO 5.3: Fiji has strengthened capability to deliver and maintain climate resilient public infrastructure</p> <p>STO 5.4: Communities and governments have increased knowledge and ability to adapt to climate change</p>	<p><b>Climate change and Disaster Resilience</b></p> <p>Working together as proactive partners through national, regional and international organisations to raise awareness of, and support collective action to combat, climate change;</p> <p>Pursuing ambitious efforts to implement our Nationally Determined Contributions in accordance with the Paris Agreement;</p> <p>Partnering to address climate change adaption, mitigation, and resilience to minimise adverse effects on the environment and people;</p> <p>Continuing to work together effectively to strengthen Fiji's resilience to natural or non-natural disasters and support efforts to address climate induced human mobility;</p> <p>Strengthening the institutional capacity of Fiji in the areas of disaster risk management (including preparedness, response, and risk reduction) and recovery from natural or non-natural disasters.</p>

# Appendix B: Four-Year Plan logic diagram and indicators

Figure 12 Logic diagram for Fiji Four-Year Plan



**Table 14 Fiji Four-Year Plan indicators**

Strategic Goal	Key progress indicator
Goal One: Partnership – A broader, deeper and resilient relationship	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Regular high level dialogue measured by high level consultations held annually (Y/N)</li> <li>2. Fiji citizen perceptions of government effectiveness (World Bank Governance Indicator)</li> </ol>
Goal Two: Economic Resilience – Economic growth is inclusive, resilient and sustainable	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Growth of the economy represented by the average annual GDP growth (%)</li> <li>2. Public financial management measured by the fiscal balance of central government (% of GDP)</li> <li>3. Fiji's economic diversification is measured by the structure of economic output including Agriculture, Industry and Services (% of GDP)</li> <li>4. Proportion of employed men and women represented by labour force participation (% sex)</li> </ol>
Goal Three: Security – A stable and secure Fiji	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Number of people receiving training or capability-building support in peace and security</li> <li>2. Fiji citizen confidence in, and adherence to, the rules of society, measured by the World Bank 'rule of law' governance indicator</li> </ol>
Goal Four: Social Well-being – Fiji people are healthy, prosperous and have equal opportunity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The proportion of Fiji's population living below the national poverty lines measured by the poverty headcount ratio at national poverty lines (% of population)</li> <li>2. Women who have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner (% population)</li> <li>3. Overall child mortality rates (per 1,000 live births)</li> </ol>
Goal Five: Climate Change – Fiji is prepared and climate resilient	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fiji's level of exposure and vulnerability to extreme events, measured by the Global Climate Risk Index</li> <li>2. The impact of natural disasters over time measured by the direct economic loss attributed to natural disasters in Fiji (in current USD)</li> <li>3. Climate change mitigation progress measured by Fiji's annual CO2 emissions (metric tons per capita)</li> <li>4. Fiji's renewable electricity output (% of total electricity output)</li> </ol>

# Appendix C: Activities in scope

The figures listed for regional and multi-country activities in Table 15 refer to the Fiji component of the activity not the total activity spend.

**Table 15 Activities in scope, by Strategic Goal, Programme name, activity name and expenditure (FJD)**

Activites in scope	Expenditure FY 2018-19 to 2023/24
<b>Strategic Goal 1: Partnership</b>	<b>\$ 11,490,434</b>
<i>Fiji Core</i>	<i>\$ 9,547,856</i>
Fiji Elections Support	\$ 5,173,429
UNDP Fiji Parliament Support (Phase III)	\$ 2,331,000
UNDP Fiji Parliamentary Support Activity (Phase II)	\$ 1,500,000
Fiji/NZ Institutional Linkages	\$ 543,427
<i>Multi-Country - DEVECO</i>	<i>\$ 1,942,578</i>
Pacific Public Sector Strengthening	\$ 682,142
Regional Audit Support 2019-2024	\$ 605,087
Transparency International Indo-Pacific Programme	\$ 510,000
Pacific Parliamentary Strengthening Phase III	\$ 145,350
<b>Strategic Goal 2: Economic Resilience</b>	<b>\$ 110,791,623</b>
<i>Fiji Core</i>	<i>\$ 20,579,504</i>
Fiji Budget Support 2023	\$ 10,000,000
Fiji Budget Support Phase 1	\$ 5,352,444
Fiji Sustainable and Resilient Recovery	\$ 2,500,000
Fiji Agriculture Ministry Support (Animal Health)	\$ 1,952,970
Fiji Inshore Fisheries Support	\$ 600,540
Fisheries: Fiji Fisheries Capacity Development	\$ 173,551
<i>Multi-Country - DEVECO</i>	<i>\$ 89,454,126</i>
Fiji COVID-19 - Resilience Fund	\$ 83,000,000
Private Sector Development: Business Link Pacific	\$ 2,603,651
COVID-19 Pacific SME Finance Facility	\$ 2,108,475
PHAMA Plus Regional	\$ 1,742,000



Activites in scope	Expenditure FY 2018-19 to 2023/24
Partnerships	\$ 757,992
PF 9-543 Tuna longline fisheries in Fiji	\$ 757,992
<b>Strategic Goal 3: Security</b>	<b>\$ 11,924,557</b>
<i>Fiji Core</i>	<i>\$ 11,924,557</i>
Fiji Police Support	\$ 11,924,557
<b>Strategic Goal 4: Social Well-being</b>	<b>\$ 67,814,531</b>
<i>Fiji Core</i>	<i>\$ 39,606,945</i>
Fiji COVID-19 Support	\$ 20,382,859
Social Housing	\$ 4,837,848
Fiji Gender Action Programme: Marama ni Viti	\$ 3,833,914
Fiji RHD Prevention	\$ 3,129,379
Fiji Higher Education Commission Support	\$ 3,096,104
Fiji Women's Crisis Centre	\$ 2,513,841
Fiji - NZ Medical Treatment Scheme 2017-2022	\$ 1,712,999
Fiji Measles Response	\$ 100,000
<i>Multi-Country - DEVECO</i>	<i>\$ 145,050</i>
Strengthening Pacific Eye Care Systems (SPECS)	\$ 145,050
<i>Multi-Country - DEVPP</i>	<i>\$ 9,995,422</i>
COVID-19 Fiji vaccination support	\$ 2,923,559
COVID -19 Fiji vaccine plan	\$ 2,000,000
COVID -19 UNICEF Vaccine Bulk Procurement Contract	\$ 1,300,000
New Zealand Medical Treatment Scheme 2022 - 2027	\$ 1,288,693
NZ Medical Treatment Scheme 2017-2022 (Management)	\$ 694,996
COVID-19 Testing & Therapeutics	\$ 352,643
COVID-19: Strengthening Pacific Laboratories	\$ 349,354
COVID -19 UNICEF \$2m Vaccine Rollout gaps	\$ 332,000
Beyond COVID-19: Lab Strengthening	\$ 287,644
IEP: Build Teaching Capacity Inclusive Education	\$ 200,921
COVID-19: Continuity Support: SRHR Services	\$ 166,800

Activites in scope	Expenditure FY 2018-19 to 2023/24
COVID-19 Fiji AirVo Consumables	\$ 98,813
<i>Partnerships</i>	\$ 10,369,220
NP: Save the Children New Zealand (SCNZ) - Imp.	\$ 3,398,145
Fred Hollows Foundation Eye Care in the Pacific	\$ 1,942,500
MF2-02 Rural WASH Programme, Fiji	\$ 1,290,000
NP: Habitat for Humanity NZ (HFHNZ) Implementation	\$ 1,257,918
NP: TearFund New Zealand (TFNZ) Implementation	\$ 1,068,667
PF 12-630 Pacific Seeds for Life (PS4L)	\$ 971,563
PF 11-603 Empowering Young Mothers Fiji	\$ 440,428
<i>Scholarships Programme</i>	\$ 7,697,894
Fiji Scholarships	\$ 7,697,894
<b>Strategic Goal 5: Climate Change and Disaster Resilience</b>	<b>\$ 45,626,245</b>
<i>Fiji Core</i>	<i>\$ 32,312,119</i>
Fiji-Aotearoa NZ Country Flexible Finance	\$ 20,000,000
Disaster Risk Management in Fiji	\$ 4,298,519
Fiji Climate Action Programme	\$ 4,284,096
Tropical Cyclone Recovery	\$ 3,729,504
<i>Multi-Country - DEVPP</i>	<i>\$ 10,984,159</i>
CCP - Climate Mobility	\$ 3,106,512
CCP - Disaster Risk Finance	\$ 2,759,001
CCP - Fiji Relocation Trust Fund	\$ 2,334,599
CCP - Low Emission, Climate Resilient Planning	\$ 1,304,548
CCP - Invasive Species Management	\$ 1,003,500
CCP - Mainstreaming Climate Change in Governance	\$ 476,000
<i>Partnerships</i>	<i>\$ 2,329,967</i>
PF 9-551 Habitat Training for DRR in Fiji	\$ 1,309,612
PF 9-545 Enhancing Community Resilience in Fiji	\$ 1,020,355
<b>Total expenditure: July 2018-June 2024</b>	<b>\$ 247,647,390</b>

# Appendix D: Methodology

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The full evaluation methodology is contained in the Evaluation Plan, submitted separately to MFAT. This annex provides an overview of the approach and phases of the evaluation.

The evaluation used a theory-based methodology to assess progress towards the 4YP strategic outcomes. The short- and medium-term outcomes in the 4YP logic diagram (Appendix B) formed the basis for making judgements about New Zealand's development and foreign policy contributions to Fiji's development aspirations.

The evaluation design acknowledges that the implementing context for the 4YP was vastly different to what was imagined at the time it was developed in 2018. The emergence of the global COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on the programming of New Zealand support to Fiji under the 4YP. This context was taken into account when assessing achievements under the 4YP. In line with the terms of reference, the summative focus of the strategic evaluation looked at achievements and impacts of New Zealand's support across all five 4YP strategic goals, with particular attention to support for Fiji's COVID-19 response, delivering on gender priorities and addressing climate change, including disaster response and climate security.

Consideration of climate change, and gender equality and social inclusion was integrated throughout the evaluation stages, including the document review which identified strengths and gaps in the mainstreaming of climate, gender and inclusion considerations, and in particular progress towards gender equality and social inclusion at the activity level. Climate, gender equality and social inclusion questions were included in the interview guides for all stakeholders.

The evaluation was conducted in four phases:

## **Phase one: briefing, planning and scoping**

The evaluation inception meeting was held in Wellington/online on 22 April 2024, between the evaluation team and MFAT staff (DCI MERL team, PACMM and NZHC) to confirm the scope of the evaluation, stakeholder engagement, evaluation logistics and potential risks.

Three evaluation team members held in-person scoping and planning consultations with NZHC staff in Suva over 7-9 May 2024. The scoping and planning consultations included introductory sessions and briefings with the New Zealand High Commissioner to Fiji, MFAT staff and other relevant staff at Post (New Zealand Police Senior Liaison Officer, Trade Commissioner) to familiarise them with the strategic evaluation scope and approach. A small number of interviews were also conducted with former NZHC staff.

Small group sessions on each of the 5 strategic goals were held to discuss:

- › what New Zealand's contributions have been under the five strategic goals of the 4-Year plan, and how the various activities and other interactions (including policy engagement) interact.
- › the key stakeholder groups/individuals under each of the strategic goals, and how extensive stakeholder consultation should be.
- › challenges or limitations the evaluation team should be aware of in undertaking the evaluation.

## **Phase two: document review**

MFAT identified 61 activities for inclusion in the assessment of achievement towards outcomes (Appendix C list the 61 activities by programme and spend). Around 490 documents were received from MFAT covering MFAT policy and strategy, 4YP Reflection Reports, relevant formal messages and activity level documents (Designs/Business Cases, partner reporting, notes from key activity meetings, Activity Monitoring/Completion Assessments, reviews and evaluations).

The evaluation team separately reviewed around 30 documents covering Fiji Government policy, plans and annual reports, and development partner reporting.

The evaluation team also sourced quantitative data from Fiji Government reports, World Bank websites and ADB websites. Links to the specific source websites and reports for quantitative data are included in the body of this evaluation report.

A comprehensive document review was conducted, which mapped evidence of achievements against the 4YP outcomes, including priorities related to climate change, gender equality and social inclusion. It examined the coherence and alignment of New Zealand's development and foreign policy support with the 4YP's strategic goals and outcomes. The document review also identified the modalities used during implementation, provided an overview of contextual factors influencing the 4YP's execution, and highlighted key learnings. Additionally, it helped shape the lines of enquiry and identified further information sources for the data collection phase of the evaluation.

Due to the timing of the document sharing from MFAT, the document review, originally planned to be completed prior to consultations, was on-going throughout the strategic evaluation.

## **Phase three: data collection and analysis**

### ***Data collection***

Following the document review, the evaluation team collected, analysed and triangulated data through semi-structured individual and groups discussions with identified stakeholders in Fiji and New Zealand. Interview guides steered the semi-structured individual and group discussions, which were conversational in nature. The guides acted as prompts to ensure major topics are explored and were adjusted throughout the process to pick up new trails of data.

The stakeholders for the evaluation were public sector officials from the governments of Fiji and New Zealand, civil society and private sector in Fiji, multilateral and regional organisations, and development partners. Interview guides were used to gather insights from key stakeholders in individual and group settings.

The evaluation team undertook consultations in Fiji from 9 to 26 July 2024, and online consultations throughout August and September. See Appendix F for full details of stakeholders consulted for this evaluation.

The evaluation team liaised with MFAT in Wellington and Suva to facilitate introductions to relevant key stakeholders. The evaluation team drafted introductory emails for NZHC staff to finalise and send to stakeholders. Following these email introductions from NZHC, the evaluation team followed up to make the specific consultation arrangements with the relevant stakeholders.

The consultations focused on drawing out the expectations and assumptions regarding what New Zealand's support aimed to achieve in Fiji, and how various interventions interacted to support implementation under the 4YP strategic goals. They assessed the extent to which outcomes and impacts had been achieved, with particular attention to New Zealand's support for Fiji's COVID-19

response, gender and inclusion priorities, and climate change initiatives, including disaster response and climate security. The consultations also explored how New Zealand met the expectations of key stakeholders, evaluated the value of delivery modalities, and identified lessons to enhance relevance, effectiveness, sustainability, and gender and social inclusion in the future. Additionally, they captured the extent of collaboration among New Zealand government agencies to achieve the 4YP outcomes.

Data collection and validation during the consultations included semi-structured individual and group discussions, both online and in person, with stakeholders from the Fiji government, civil society, and the private sector in Suva and Lautoka. A roundtable was held with eight CSOs in Suva. Online and in-person meetings were conducted with New Zealand government agencies, MFAT officers in Wellington and Suva, and multilateral and bilateral development partners, as well as staff from relevant funded programmes and organisations.

### ***Data Analysis***

Data analysis was performed on an ongoing basis during data collection. The evaluation team recorded and tracked major observations and emerging themes, triangulating evidence to ensure rigor - emerging themes from the document review and interviews were tested in subsequent interviews.

NVivo software was used to code responses and manage the large quantities of documents and interview data. The evaluation team used a pattern spotting approach, which involved a process of identifying: (i) generalisations; (ii) exceptions; (iii) contradictions; (iv) surprises; and, (v) puzzles. This helped transparent and consistent analysis of coded data and simplified the process for making judgements against the evaluation questions, identifying emerging themes and gaps and drawing out findings and lessons.

The evaluation team conducted budget analyses of 4YP expenditure, categorising spending by pillar and assessing allocations against gender equality markers. An analysis of expenditure by modality for the activities in scope was also undertaken. This allowed for a detailed understanding of resource distribution under the 4YP.

Lessons were derived from a review of key documents and stakeholder consultations.

The analytical frameworks used in making evaluative judgements include:

- › Content analysis of document reviews and interview to assess achievements against and contributions to the short-term outcomes in the 4YP.
- › A rubric to make judgements about the use of modalities in achieving the desired outcomes.
- › A gender equality and social inclusion continuum to make judgements about the nature of gender equality and social inclusion support under the 4YP.

The evaluation team presented emerging findings to the Evaluation Steering Group on 12 September 2024 for the purpose of contesting and validating the emerging findings identified by our evaluation team. Final data analysis was then conducted against key evaluation questions and emerging themes.

The data analysis phase culminated in the draft evaluation report.

### **Phase four: Reporting**

This evaluation report has been produced in line with MFAT Evaluation Standards. MFAT's evaluation manager circulated the draft to the Evaluation Steering Group. The evaluation team incorporated the



feedback to produce this final report drawing out key findings, conclusions, insights, lessons and recommendations.

To support use of the findings and transparency, the evaluation report has been written in anticipation of it being widely circulated to all those who participated in the evaluation, and being published on the MFAT website.

## 5.1 Limitations and mitigation strategies

The evaluation faced limitations affecting the comprehensive assessment of New Zealand's support to Fiji under the 4YP. Below are the limitations and the mitigation strategies used to ensure a credible, well-rounded assessment.

**Stakeholder availability:** The evaluation team engaged with insightful representatives from the Fiji government and civil society, but some key private sector stakeholders were unavailable. Others did not respond or were unavailable, and some successors lacked knowledge of past activities. To mitigate this, the team conducted detailed document reviews, including grey literature, and contacted former staff, including several valuable contributions from former New Zealand High Commission staff.

**Understanding contribution:** Uneven documentation of New Zealand's contributions across 4YP activities made it difficult to assess the full programme contribution. The evaluation focused on activities with stronger evidence, and for areas with less clarity, the team triangulated data from multiple sources, including consultations and document reviews, to better understand the outcomes.

**Measurability of New Zealand contributions:** The 4YP's high-level outcomes and indicators are not ideal for tracking specific progress against its strategic goals, as they are designed to align with Fiji's broader development goals. While this alignment is important, the indicators are set at a high level and may not necessarily reflect the specific contributions that New Zealand support can reasonably be expected to make. Additionally, data is not available for all indicators, and where it is available, it has been included in the evaluation. To address these limitations, the evaluation team used qualitative data from consultations and deeper analysis where more specific indicators were available. Strengthening the MERL framework with more direct indicators is essential for future evaluations.

**Document review and consultation overlap:** Key MFAT documents relevant to the 4YP were not received until later in the evaluation process, potentially leading to gaps in understanding. The team followed up on a case-by-case basis, incorporating new information as it became available. It is recommended that MFAT conduct a more thorough internal scoping of available documents before future evaluations to avoid this issue.

**Scope of activities:** Due to the large number of activities within the 4YP portfolio, it was not possible to cover the details of all initiatives.

Given the large number of activities under the 4YP, the evaluation focused on the larger and more significant initiatives, as identified during the scoping consultations. This allowed for a deeper analysis of key activities, though the trade-off was that less time could be devoted to smaller projects. To ensure comprehensive coverage, the team supplemented the analysis of the larger activities with insights gained from broader thematic reviews and consultations.

**Regional activities:** Regional activity documentation was comprehensive but often could not be directly linked to Fiji-specific outcomes, limiting assessment of 4YP impacts. The evaluation focused on identifying Fiji-specific contributions through additional consultations with key stakeholders.

**Overall quality of documentation:** The quality of documentation provided was uneven, with some lacking detail on progress against 4YP goals, making it hard to assess achievements. To address this, the evaluation team relied more on stakeholder interviews and consultations, validating findings through multiple data sources. Despite working with imperfect and incomplete information, there was enough available to draw conclusions. The evaluation team received multiple versions of activity spreadsheets from MFAT, covering different timeframes and activities. To ensure consistency, the team compiled two spreadsheets—one related to the activities in scope and another covering all activities over the two triennia (July 2018 – June 2021 and July 2021 – June 2024). As a result, some figures in this report may differ slightly from those reported internally.

## 5.2 Evaluation with integrity

An information sheet was provided to all participants and outlined the purpose of the evaluation, and names of the team. Participants were told that their responses will remain confidential to the team and their source will not be identified in the report. Interview and group responses are used only for this evaluation and have been securely stored. Names of individuals interviewed have not been included in this evaluation report.

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# Appendix F: Stakeholders consulted

**Table 16** Summary of stakeholders consulted

Stakeholder group	Number interviewed
<b>Fiji government</b>	<b>27</b>
Fiji Parliament	3
Fiji Police Force	7
Fijian Elections Office	1
Ministry of Finance, Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics	5
Ministry of Health and Medical Services	1
Ministry of Waterways and Environment (Climate Change Division)	4
Ministry of Women, Children and Social Protection	4
National Disaster Management Office (NDMO)	2
<b>Private sector</b>	<b>1</b>
Business Assistance Fiji	1
<b>Civil society</b>	<b>30</b>
Cure Kids	2
Dialogue Fiji	1
Empower Pacific	4
Fiji Council of Social Services	1
Fiji Women's Crisis Centre	2
Fiji Women's Rights Movement	1
Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprise Development (FRIEND)	4
Frank Hilton Organization Fiji	1
Habitat for Humanity Fiji	2
Live and Learn Environmental Education	2
Model Town Charitable Trust / Koroipita	2
Rotary Pacific Water	1
RISE	1
Save the Children	1

Stakeholder group	Number interviewed
Solo Moms Project Fiji	2
Women's Fund Fiji	2
WOWS Kids Fiji	1
<b>New Zealand Government / Crown Research Institute</b>	<b>34</b>
Institute of Environmental Science and Research	1
New Zealand Defence Force	1
New Zealand Electoral Commission	1
New Zealand High Commission Suva, current staff	12
New Zealand High Commission Suva, former staff	5
New Zealand Ministry of Defence	1
New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade	8
New Zealand Police	4
New Zealand Trade & Enterprise	1
<b>Development partners</b>	<b>5</b>
Australian High Commission	3
GIZ	1
UNDP	1
<b>Implementing partners / technical advisers</b>	<b>2</b>
Technical adviser	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>

## Appendix G: Reform-linked budget support summaries

Table 17 summarises the reform-linked budget support received by the Fiji Government over the financial years 2018/19 to 2023/24. The evaluation notes the source document for this data only captured the NZD 4 million (FJD 5.58 million) payment in FY 2023/24. MFAT's contribution was NZD 15 million directly to the Fiji Government and ~NZD350,000 was to ADB to finance technical advisory requests from the Fiji government in support of the reform programme.

**Table 17 Reform-linked budget support to Fiji Government, FYs 2018/19 to 2023-2024**

	FY2018/19 Financing (\$Million)		FY2019/20 Financing (\$Million)		FY2020/21 Financing (\$Million)		FY2021/22 Financing (\$Million)		FY2022/23 Financing (\$Million)		FY2023/24 Financing (\$Million)	
Lender	FJD	Financing Type	FJD	Financing Type	FJD	Financing Type	FJD	Financing Type	FJD	Financing Type	FJD	Financing Type
ADB	\$ 31.40	Loan	\$ 142.30	Loan	\$ 424.50	Loan	\$ 331.60	Loan	\$ -		\$ 159.80	Concessional Loan
World Bank	\$ 31.40	Loan	\$ 144.50	Concessional Loan	\$ 274.30	Concessional Loan	\$ 221.10	Concessional Loan	\$ -		\$ 281.90	Concessional Loan
DFAT	\$ -		\$ 1.50	Grant	\$ 99.70	Grant	\$ 128.80	Grant	\$ 81.50	Grant	\$ 86.90	Grant
Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank	\$ 62.80		\$ 288.30		\$ 106.20	Loan	\$ 113.00	Loan	\$ -			
Japan International Cooperation Agency	\$ -		\$ -		\$ 187.40	Concessional Loan	\$ 176.80	Concessional Loan	\$ -			
MFAT	\$ -		\$ -		\$ -		\$ -		\$ -		\$ 5.58	Grant
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 125.60</b>		<b>\$ 576.60</b>		<b>\$1,092.10</b>		<b>\$ 971.30</b>		<b>\$ 81.50</b>		<b>\$ 534.18</b>	

Source: Ministry of Finance, Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics (June 2024). Economic and fiscal update supplement to the 2024-2025 Budget Address. [https://www.parliament.gov.fj/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/2024-2025-Budget-Supplement\\_28.06.24-Final-1.pdf](https://www.parliament.gov.fj/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/2024-2025-Budget-Supplement_28.06.24-Final-1.pdf)

# Appendix H: Detailed recommendations

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## Recommendation 1: MFAT's Fiji Programme to embed a programmatic approach in the design and implementation of new and, where possible, existing activities.

New Zealand's efforts to address social well-being and inclusivity through a programmatic package of support that connects policy reform with grassroots initiatives is effectively demonstrated through the MFAT/Ministry of Housing Partnership Arrangement and the Marama Ni Viti programme. Both are examples of activities that are potentially high impact, and with some improvements, offer the opportunity to be successfully replicated in other priority areas.

Descriptions of the programmatic approach emphasise a long-term, strategic arrangement of individual yet interlinked projects aimed at achieving large-scale impacts with the anticipated results being more than the sum of its parts.<sup>54</sup> Features of a programmatic approach include being country-owned and building on national priorities designed to support sustainable development, having a catalytic role and being able to leverage additional financing from other sources, having an open and transparent process of multi-stakeholder representation, from dialogue through to implementation, and being cost-effective and seeking to maximise benefits.

Essential components of a programme approach include:

- › **Shared outcomes** for partners to work towards: usually captured in a logic diagram, or similar, that includes programme goals, objectives, expected outcomes and outputs, et cetera;
- › **Sound governance mechanism:** including a governance level committee which acts as advisory body and facilitates high-level policy dialogue among programme stakeholders, and ensures coherence across all aspects of the programme;
- › **A lead agency**<sup>55</sup>: with the role of coordinating partners and inputs, facilitating donor collaboration and raising financial resources, monitoring and reporting on the progress of programme/project activities; overseeing required documentation of programme activities; and fostering knowledge management among the various parts of the programme and with other relevant activities, across the broader investment portfolio.

Both the MFAT/Ministry of Housing Partnership Arrangement and the Marama Ni Viti programme, feature some but not all of the above components of the programme approach (Table 18). It may be of benefit to MFAT to review and strengthen these activities with a view to improving their overall impact.

MFAT could also use the lessons learned from this evaluation to inform and embed a more comprehensive programme approach in planned new investments, particularly, in the area of climate resilience. Programmatic governance mechanisms can bring the added benefit of strengthening connections across 4YP strategic goals by bringing together stakeholders from different sectors, fostering inter-agency collaboration, and aligning initiatives towards shared development outcomes.

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<sup>54</sup> Pacific Community, Ridge to Reef <https://www.pacific-r2r.org/help/faq/what-programmatic-approach>

<sup>55</sup> Note the lead agency role could be undertaken by MFAT or by one of the implementing partners.



**Table 18 Programmatic approach comparison**

Ministry of Housing/MFAT Partnership	Programmatic Approach	Marama Ni Viti Programme
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Support Ministry of Housing to realise Fiji's ambition to improve the socio-economic for low-income earners in Fiji through improved access to quality, affordable housing</li> <li>*Support good governance between partners</li> <li>*Facilitate efficient management of resources for greater efficacy and impact.</li> <li>*Increased access to affordable high quality social housing for Fiji communities.</li> <li>*Increased provision and coordination of basic services to informal settlements in the greater Suva area</li> <li>* Increase strategy and planning capacity within the public sector for long-term development within the housing sector</li> </ul>	Goal (s) and Outcomes contributing to national priorities and designed to support sustainable development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Fijian women and girls in all their diversity increase their voice and realise their human rights through multi-sectoral transformative change</li> <li>*Women in all their diversity, community leaders and members, and service providers are accessing more effective GBV prevention and response services.</li> <li>*Government and policy makers increasingly develop and implement policies that promote the rights of women in all their diversity.</li> <li>*More diverse feminist and women's rights organisations and movements in Fiji deliver gender justice outcomes.</li> <li>*Women in all their diversity better respond to shocks and disasters, particularly in rural and remote areas.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Technical Assistance to the Ministry of Housing through Housing Planning and Policy Adviser (National Housing Policy Framework) who will also be tasked with facilitating a Fiji Housing Stakeholder coordination platform.</li> <li>*The RISE programme providing infrastructure for sustainable water and sanitation management systems into the housing and landscapes of 6 informal settlements in the greater Suva area.</li> <li>*MTCT providing subsidised, climate resilient housing and community support to the residents of Koroipita Village.</li> <li>*Institutional Strengthening support for two-way learning between Ministry of Housing and NZ Housing institutions.</li> <li>*National Housing Database to be established as a comprehensive and centralised system to collect, maintain, and analyse data related to the housing sector at a national level to inform targeted policy interventions.</li> </ul>	Interlinked projects working with multiple stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Grant support to the FWCC for shelters for survivors of GBV, in all their diversity, including in rural and remote areas.</li> <li>*Grant support to the FWRM to provide Technical Assistance to the Ministry for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation for the implementation of the Gender Transformative Institutional Capacity Development Initiative.</li> <li>*Grant support to UN Women for Technical Assistance to Ministry for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation for implementation of the Country Gender Assessment, restructuring Monitoring and Evaluation, and administering the female MP mentoring initiative.</li> <li>*Grant support to the Women's Fund Fiji to strengthen women's organisations, building the resilience of women in all their diversity, particularly in rural and remote areas.</li> <li>*Support to the Ministry for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation for implementation of the ICD initiative, monitoring and evaluation, the Country Gender Analysis; and organisational strengthening.</li> </ul>
<p>Project Steering Committee consisting of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry for Housing, Director of Housing, Ministry of Housing Head of Policy, MFAT First Secretary, Development Programme Coordinator, MOH Policy Adviser. (Meets quarterly).</p> <p>For the RISE Programme, Technical Advisory Group to provide advice to the Steering Committee including</p>	Governance mechanism	Programme management undertaken at two levels: i) whole of programme; and ii) individual partner level, with day-to-day management and monitoring of individual partnerships primarily conducted by a MERL coordination and capacity building support unit to be procured by MFAT. The MERL coordination and capacity building support unit would have responsibility to deliver whole of programme

Ministry of Housing/MFAT Partnership	Programmatic Approach	Marama Ni Viti Programme
<p>representatives from the partners in the overall programme (Meets quarterly)</p> <p>For MTCT, a Governance Group which meets 6 monthly and is overseen by the partners of the overall programme.</p> <p>Ministry of Housing participates in all parts of the governance mechanism.</p>		<p>coordination, monitoring, evaluation, research and learning, and capacity development activities. <u>To date, the MERL coordination and capacity building support unit has not been established.</u></p> <p>The business case outlines the processes for governance and coordination between programme partners; and coordination with DFAT and other donors; and plans for the development of a detailed communications strategy.</p>
	Results Framework	A detailed results framework is included in the business case for Marama Ni Viti.
<p>Draft dated November 2016 and in effect till 2029, outlines all aspects of partnership, including Purpose, Goals, Objectives, Outcomes, Partnership Principles, Scope, Oversight and Management, Funding, Roles, Responsibilities and Contributions, Communications, Duration and Nature, Notices and Signing.</p>	Partnership Agreement	

## Recommendation 2: MFAT to strengthen the process for selecting the modality for its activities.

In general, MFAT's business case development process seems robust when considering the various aspects of the activity investment, for example, economic, commercial, financial and management. However, the various modalities used to deliver 4YP outcomes while considered appropriate for the activities at the time, all presented areas for improvement. For example, improved tracking of GEDSI outcomes in direct budget support, stronger engagement with CSO partners both in New Zealand managed CSO grant support and direct grant support to local CSOs; joining up activities for improved policy impact of large programmatic investments such as in social housing; optimising regional programme inputs to achieve 4YP outcomes, including in close alignment with Government of Fiji priorities; and strengthening capacity building approaches for sustainability and improved public sector service delivery. Taking into account factors such as a modality's ability to track GEDSI outcomes, and/or empower local actors, and/or impact policy, and/or optimise regional programme inputs to achieve outcomes, and/or build public sector service delivery, could improve the process for identifying which modality is best suited for a particular activity.

The World Bank<sup>56</sup> suggests that defining the delivery of overseas development assistance purely according to the technical arrangements for governing disbursements and management of funds and policy conditions is insufficient for conceptualising and pursuing approaches that positively affect

<sup>56</sup> World Bank, 18 September 2023. What do discussions about aid modalities and institutional change have in common? World Bank Blogs. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/governance/what-do-discussions-about-aid-modalities-and-institutional-change-have-common>

**institutional change.** They propose shaping aid investment decisions for positive institutional change around the following considerations:

- identifying and seizing windows of opportunity by discerningly and effectively **supporting a country led imperative for change** (for example, Fiji Election Support).

- focusing **on reforms with tangible political payoffs** by supporting the delivery of goods and services that politicians can capitalise on in their campaigns.

- building on what exists** to implement legal mandates, working with the political grain by supporting the implementation of existing mandates in a way that builds on existing systems to do so (for example, supporting gender responsive budgeting and gender mainstreaming through support to the Fiji parliament sub-committee processes).

- moving beyond policy dialogue by focusing on making existing systems deliver**, albeit imperfectly, rather than creating better strategic frameworks for delivery (for example, upgrade of medical centres).

- facilitating problem-solving and local collective action solutions by bearing transaction costs, providing direct operational support and/or coaching** to facilitate a greater degree of local problem solving, and in doing so, bringing people together to solve collective action problems (for example, Rotary WASH, RISE, GIZ/Relocation Trust Fund).

- adapting and learning**, allowing implementing agencies adequate flexibility to regularly adjust programmes to accommodate new knowledge and changes in the local context (GIZ/Relocation Trust Fund).

Both of the good practice models featured in the section on modalities highlight key elements of the different modalities used that contributed to effective and successful delivery of support. To some extent they also exemplify the considerations suggested by World Bank above.

MFAT may wish to reconsider its decision-making process on modality use by broadening it to take into account among other considerations: (i) country ownership/leadership; (ii) impact on tangible government reforms; (iii) building and engaging local capacity to address problems and find solutions; (iv) using and improving existing systems and processes; and (v) flexibility and responsiveness to change and innovation.

### **Recommendation 3: MFAT's Fiji Programme and CSO partners to co-develop a CSO engagement strategy to improve engagement with local CSOs.**

Civil society includes the full range of formal and informal, non-governmental and not-for profit, organisations that publicly represent the interests, ideas and values of citizens and their members. CSOs encompass a diverse range of groups, such as: international non-governmental organisations, regional and national advocacy groups, service-delivery organisations, community-based organisations, youth-led coalitions, professional associations, faith-based groups and service-providers, indigenous groups, charitable organisations, research and academic institutions, and more.<sup>57</sup>

CSOs suggested areas for improved engagement between MFAT and civil society to increase transparency, mutual understanding, collaboration in the design and implementation of development initiatives, and to fully leverage the knowledge, skills, capacity and reach that CSOs have to reach

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<sup>57</sup> Global Financing Facility, 2017. Civil Society Engagement Strategy, July 2017.

vulnerable communities. Suggestions included: building CSO understanding of MFAT's overall engagement with Fiji through the 4YP and in doing so, better positioning the role and contributions of CSOs; facilitating government and CSO partnerships in line with the 4YP; providing guidance and support through programming guidance, tools and templates; responding to requests in a timelier manner; and generally building their capacity and autonomy as direct grant recipients.

It is therefore recommended that MFAT and CSO partners co-develop a CSO engagement strategy, which would, among other matters, assist in: (i) more clearly defining the purpose and intention of engaging with CSO partners; (ii) improving alignment of MFAT support with the values, goals and capacity of CSO partners; (iii) clarifying systems and processes for engagement to ensure that they are supportive, transparent, reciprocal and respectful; (iv) outlining roles and responsibilities, including of other partners such as government, donors and other CSOs; (v) understanding the limitations of CSOs and respecting their role as development watchdogs; and overall, (vi) recognising CSOs as a critical development partner.

Examples of organisations that have comprehensive civil society engagement strategies include: the World Bank Sponsored, Global Financing Facility<sup>58</sup>, the Asian Development Bank<sup>59</sup> and the United Nations Development Program<sup>60</sup>.

#### Recommendation 4: MFAT to strengthen efforts to address gender and social inclusion.

MFAT is well placed to build on current efforts to be more inclusive. As demonstrated by the achievements of Goal 4 of the 4YP, the majority of support contributed to making tangible contributions to Fiji's human development needs, supporting marginalised groups with a more targeted approach needed towards people with disabilities and of diverse SOGIESC. Most activities are either gender aware or gender responsive. MFAT has a current Gender Action Plan which sets expenditure targets and policy markers while providing clear guidance on the steps that need to be taken to strengthen GEDSI. There is strong evidence to confirm that many partners are successfully leading on integrating GEDSI into their activities, while more recently, MFAT's efforts to be transformative have become more strategic and intentional with both principal and significant investments increasing slightly over the 4YP period.

Guided by its current Gender Action Plan, MFAT should: (i) include gender and/or inclusion outcomes in all new (or updated) activities in the Fiji Programme; (ii) prioritise the completion and roll-out of the MFAT gender capability support programme which is currently being developed; (iii) update and develop guidance notes and programming tools to assist the integration of GEDSI into all aspects of activities, from design through to monitoring, evaluation and reporting; (iv) create a knowledge hub which draws on the experiences of partners and provides a platform for sharing and learning about approaches to GEDSI; (v) expand the current pool of GEDSI technical expertise available to support activities, in collaboration with development partners working in the region and at country level, for example, DFAT, ADB, the UN, regional organisations such as the SPC and PIFS, and international,

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<sup>58</sup> Global Financing Facility Civil Society Engagement Strategy. <https://www.csogffhub.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/GFF-CS-Engagement-Strategy.pdf>

<sup>59</sup> ADB has a deliberate and comprehensive approach to engaging with civil society organisations. Details can be found at: <https://www.adb.org/who-we-are/civilsociety>

<sup>60</sup> UNDP has extensive policy and programmatic guidance, including across various sectors at: <https://www.undp.org/publications/undp-and-civil-society-organizations-policy-engagement>



regional and national NGOs; and (vi) improve processes for tracking expenditure on GEDSI particularly in large investments such as in climate change, health, education and social protection.

These actions are key to strengthening intent and ensuring the systematic integration of gender equality, disability and social inclusion across the Fiji 4YP. While supporting Fiji in its commitment to leaving no one behind, this would also strengthen the impacts of New Zealand's development programming.

### Recommendation 5: MFAT to strengthen the 4YP MERL structures and processes.

The following are a suite of interconnected recommendations for how MFAT can significantly strengthen its MERL structures and processes for the next 4YP, thereby enhancing the effectiveness, adaptability, and sustainability of development cooperation with Fiji.

The current 4YP's high-level outcomes and indicators are designed to align with Fiji's broader development goals. While this alignment is important, the indicators are set at a high level and do not necessarily reflect the specific contributions that New Zealand support can reasonably be expected to make. **It is recommended that MFAT introduce a 4YP MERL system that includes: (i) a framework with mid-level outcomes, bridging the gap between high-level strategic goals and on-the-ground activities; and (ii) expanding the annual reflection session.**

The MERL framework would introduce a small number of mid-level (programmatic) outcomes and indicators that bridge the gap between activity-level outcomes/ outputs and the 4YP strategic goals. These indicators should reflect specific, measurable outcomes, allowing MFAT to better assess progress and demonstrate clearer linkages between activities and outcomes, improving the evidence base and tracking the contribution of specific activities to 4YP goals.

The annual reflection sessions would bring a stronger focus to shared learning, allowing for more adaptive and flexible programme management, ensuring that MFAT's support remains relevant and effective. The annual reflection session would bring together relevant MFAT and New Zealand government agency staff managing activities which contribute to the 4YP strategic goals.

In addition to the annual reflection session, MFAT could consider implementing or participating in existing 'Learning Forums' or 'Community of Practice' sessions involving external stakeholders, including Fiji government officials, civil society, and development partners.

**It is recommended MFAT resource MERL activities, track MERL expenditure (noting global good practice targets of 3-7% of budget for MERL activities<sup>61,62,63</sup>), and implementing recommendations from reviews and evaluations.** Currently, NZHC staff are expected to monitor outcomes but lack the necessary resources. Increased budget allocation and dedicated MERL personnel at both the NZHC and Wellington headquarters could assist staff members to focus on integrating MERL into programme design, supporting ongoing monitoring, and ensuring timely data collection and learning. MERL is a resource-intensive function that requires dedicated capacity to be effective. Allocating more resources will allow MFAT to effectively manage and monitor the programme's performance. There is a heavy reliance on qualitative and output-level reporting from activities and advisers to monitor

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<sup>61</sup> <https://undphealthimplementation.org/functional-areas/monitoring-and-evaluation/me-components-of-funding-request/global-fund-me-system-requirements-and-budgeting/>

<sup>62</sup> <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/dfat-design-monitoring-evaluation-learning-standards.docx>

<sup>63</sup> <https://grandmarkpublishers.com/journals/28270Amai%20P.%20Teddy.pdf>



progress toward outcomes. A significant shift in monitoring and reporting practices is required to adequately track progress toward strategic objectives.

**Improving MERL practices within activities and programmes will assist greatly with the introduction of a 4YP MERL system. Integrating MERL updates within activity and programme governance mechanisms** can directly inform policy discussions and strategic planning between high-level decision-makers in both MFAT and the Fiji Government. Ensuring that MERL findings feed into decision-making processes will enhance the programme's responsiveness and strategic direction, enabling more evidence-based planning and course corrections. It can also increase transparency, accountability and visibility of impacts from New Zealand support.

#### **Recommendation 6: MFAT to enhance coherence and coordination within MFAT, and between MFAT and other New Zealand government agencies, by:**

- › **Leveraging a 4YP MERL system (see Recommendation 5) to facilitate the collection of data from** New Zealand government agencies against the 4YP indicators, enabling MFAT and other agencies to assess the collective impact of New Zealand's efforts in Fiji. The annual reflection session would include participation from relevant Divisions within MFAT and from New Zealand government agencies to consider progress against the 4YP, and foster synergies to improve the overall coherence of the Fiji Programme.
- › **New Zealand government agencies involved in Fiji's development contributing data and insights to the 4YP MERL framework.** This will ensure a comprehensive, collective assessment of New Zealand's impact in Fiji. Furthermore, **all participating agencies should take part in an annual reflection session**, facilitated by MFAT, to review progress, share lessons learned, and align strategies for the upcoming year. This process will strengthen interagency collaboration and enhance the coherence and effectiveness of New Zealand's development efforts in Fiji.
- › **MFAT to establish a formal coordination mechanism to ensure that all New Zealand government agencies involved in Fiji's development are aligned with MFAT's strategic goals.** This process should begin with a presentation and overview of the next 4YP, ensuring that all agencies have a clear understanding of the strategic direction. Regular follow-up meetings should be held to review progress, address any gaps in coordination, and identify opportunities for collaborative efforts.

#### **Recommendation 7: MFAT to further enhance coordination with other development partners and Fiji Government by:**

- › advocating for the establishment of a formal donor coordination platform that meets regularly with the Fiji Government. This platform will help align development priorities, reduce overlap, and harmonise reporting requirements. A revitalised Budget and Aid Coordinating Committee or similar body could serve this function.
- › prioritising joint sectoral planning with development partners for initiatives under the new Fiji Country Plan. This coordination will ensure that all donor contributions to key sectors, such as climate change, policing, gender, and health, are aligned through joint programmatic planning, reducing duplication and improving efficiency.

# Abbreviations

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4YP	Four Year Plan
ADB	Asian Development Bank
BLP	Business Link Pacific
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DCI	Development Capability & Insights Division, MFAT
DEVECO	Development Economy and Prosperity Division, MFAT
DEVPP	Development Peoples and Planet Division, MFAT
DFAT	Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
EVAWG	Eliminating violence against women and girls
FEO	Fijian Elections Office
FIFO	Fly in, fly out
FJD	Fiji Dollars
FPPP	Fiji Police partnership Program
FRIEND	The Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprises & Development
FSES	Formal Sector Employment Support
FWCC	Fiji Women's Crisis Centre
FWRM	Fiji Women's Rights Movement
FY	Financial Year
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GESI	Gender equality and social inclusion
GEDSI	Gender equality, disability and social inclusion
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GFA	Grant Funding Arrangement
GIZ	The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GrASP	Fiji Group A Streptococcal Project
ICD	Gender Transformative Institutional Capacity Development
ICESD	International Cooperation for Effective Sustainable Development
LGBTIQA+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, asexual people, or people otherwise diverse in gender, sexual orientation and/or innate variations of sex characteristics
MDF	Market Development Facility

MERL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Learning
MFAT	New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade Manatū Aorere
MHMS	Fiji's Ministry of Health and Medical Services
MPs	Members of Parliament
MTCT	Model Towns Charitable Trust/Koroipita
MTO	Medium Term Outcome
MTS	New Zealand's Medical Treatment Scheme
NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NDMO	National Disaster Management Office
NDP	National Development Plan
ND-GAIN	Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative
NZDF	New Zealand Defence Force
NZEC	New Zealand Electoral Commission
NZHC	New Zealand High Commission in Suva
NZP	New Zealand Police
ODA	Official development assistance
PACER	Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations
PACMM	Pacific Melanesia & Micronesia Division, MFAT
PHAMA Plus	Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access Plus Program
PPE	Personal protective equipment
PPP	Public Private Partnership
RFMF	The Republic of Fiji Military Forces
RHD	Rheumatic heart disease
RISE	Revitalising Informal Settlements and their Environments
SMEs	Small and medium sized enterprise
SODELPA	The Social Democratic Liberal Party
SOGIESC	Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
STO	Short Term Outcome
UN	United Nations
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene