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***‘E da dravudravua e na dela ni noda  
vutuni-i-yau’***

Customary land and economic development:  
case studies from Fiji.

A thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirement of the degree of  
Doctor in Philosophy in Development Studies at  
Massey University  
Palmerston North  
Aotearoa

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**2020**



## **Abstract**

The purpose of this research is to determine how indigenous Fijian communities have been able to establish models of economic undertaking which allow successful business development while retaining control over their customary land and supporting community practices and values. External critics frequently emphasise that customary practices around land restrict economic development and undermine investments in the Pacific. There is also assertion that within the Pacific islands, culture and customary measures are mostly viewed as impediments of hopeful development. This research seeks to switch-over these claims by examining how customary land and measures facilitate successful business forms in Fiji.

Along with the overarching qualitative methodology - a novel combination of the Vanua Research Framework, Tali Magimagi Research Framework, and the Bula Vakavanua Research Framework - a critical appreciative enquiry approach was used. This led to the development of the *Uvi* (yam - *dioscorea alata*) Framework which brings together the *drauna* (leaves) representing the capturing of knowledge, *vavakada* (stake) indicating the support mechanisms for indigenous entrepreneurship on customary land, *uvi* (yam tuber) signifying the indicators for sustainable development of indigenous business on customary land, and taking into consideration the external factors and community where the indigenous business is located. Case studies on three successful indigenous Fijian businesses based on customary land were conducted in two geographical locations in Fiji, and methods included *talanoa*, active participant observation, and semi-structured interviews.

This study found that customary tenure and cultural values can support socially embedded economic development activities in the Pacific. It also reinstates the inherent value of customary land as an intergenerational resource aiding self-determined and inclusive development, including economic activities that provide holistic returns to communities as in socio-cultural contributions and community development initiatives. The businesses were able to be sustainable by devising mechanisms that balance daily business and community contributions. The study concludes that locally-driven development on customary land could be a model for alternative forms of economic development, thus, helping to reshape understanding of economies in Fiji and the wider Pacific.

## **Publications during candidature**

### **Conference/symposium abstracts**

Customary land and economic engagements in the Pacific: Locally owned business on customary land in the South Pacific: Key success factors. *Symposium on Effective Economic Development of Customary Land, University of the South Pacific, Fiji, 28<sup>th</sup> January 2020.*

Locally-owned business on customary land in the South Pacific: Key success factors. *The Pacific Update conference, University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji, 2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> July 2019.*

*“Na i kanakana nodra na tukaqu au bula kina”* (My ancestors’ land to feed from and to help me survive): Examples of sustainable and inclusive tourism on customary land in Fiji, Tourism and SDG’s Conference, Massey University, Albany Campus, 24<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> January 2019.

*Na i kanakana nodra na tukaqu au bula kina”* (My ancestors’ land to feed from and to help me survive) Customary land and economic development: case studies from Fiji. *International Development Conference (DevNet), University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand, 5-7 December 2018.*

Indigenous Fijian entrepreneurship on customary land in Fiji: Case Studies. Maori and Pasifika symposium, *Te Au Rangahau, Māori Business & Leadership Research Centre and Development Studies symposium, Massey University, Manawatu, New Zealand. February. 2018.*

E da dravudravua e na dela ni noda vutuniyau: We are poor while standing on riches: the case of Fiji. *Post-colonialism, Post capitalism international conference, Massey University, Albany, New Zealand, September 2017.*

### **Publications included in this thesis**

Vunibola, S., & Scheyvens, R. (2019). Revitalising rural development in the Pacific: An itaukei (indigenous Fijian) approach. *Development Bulletin 81*, 62-66.

Scheyvens, R., Banks, G., **Vunibola, S.**, Steven, H., & Meo-Sewabu, L. (2020). Business serves society: Successful locally-driven development on customary land in the South Pacific. *Geoforum* <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2020.03.012>

## **Acknowledgement**

At this point, I would like first to indicate my acknowledgement for the guidance of Abba Father, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, the almighty God of the Israelites, the King of Kings, and the only one who deserves all glory and credit for my everything. This thesis was finalised during the Easter weekend and resurrection day 2020, a good lesson on how the work of Grace by Jesus on the cross who is the lighthouse of my work and my family including this thesis.

*“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God- not by works, so that no one can boast”* (Ephesians 2:8-9).

This thesis will indicate that I am the sole author of this work. However, numerous individuals must be acknowledged for their unrelenting support and inspiration, which has made possible the completion of this thesis. All errors and flaws identified in this work are mine alone.

I would first like to extend my appreciation for the guidance provided by the Marsden funded project of Massey University, ‘The Land has eyes and teeth, and of course a heart as well’: Professor Regina Scheyvens, Professor Glenn Banks, and Dr Litea Meo-Sewabu who have supported me through the course of my study. I am fortunate and deeply honoured to have studied under your guidance and leadership. The depth and detailed nature of direction that you have provided have considerably developed my research and academic skills, and for this, I am forever indebted to you. A funded PhD scholarship from the project was indeed beyond my expectations, *vina’a va’alevu*.

Associate Professor Nick Rahiri Roskruge (supervisor), *vina’a va’alevu matua na veimaroro*, you are a true mentor for us, your heart of support never ends. I am heavily indebted from your backing and that will never be forgotten. Sir, this thesis is part of the dream that you have in me and my family. *Kia kaha* and *Nga mihi nui ki te whanau*. My thanks also to the whanau whanui of Tahuri Whenua the national Maori horticultural collective. You have provided inspiration and are a role model for indigenous food sovereignty amongst others and I appreciate all that you have given as support for my journey; *he kai kei aku ringaringa*, (I can grow food with my own hands) your motto resonates well. Fiona Bardell, thank you for your time and effort to set up this thesis, *Nga mihi nui*.

I also extend my gratitude to the Momo na Tui Sabeto *e na vanua e Erenavula, Na i tikotiko e Waikatakata*, Na I talatala Ilimeleki Susu and family, Tifajek Mudpool and Hotspring staffs. Waqa Raoba and your small family, I am indebted with your support *auvu* during my field

research. Livs (Mr Livai Tora) of Natalau village, Sabeto and the Aviva Farms family and staffs, auvu Tevita Ratu and the Nawai settlement family. Turaga na Tui Vaturova, taue'i Wacawaca at Nayarabale village, Iliesa Vakaruru family and the Nayarabale Youth Farm members, *vina'a va'alevu mutou na we'aku*. Heniua Restaurant, Tagaqe, Baravi, Nadroga, even though not included as a case study for this thesis, *dreu vina'a va'alevu* for allowing the opportunity to learn from your business. To everybody, *vina'a va'alevu dina* for granting me access to your communities and treating me as one of your own. As I told you all, it is always an honour to be your voice in showcasing Indigenous Fijian entrepreneurship and I am hugely grateful with your stories. Peni Qalo and your family, *vina'a va'alevu* for your support, thank you for your hospitality and foresight.

My action research project, Saroni, Dogotuki, Macuata *na vuvale va'aito'ato'a Nubunilagi 'ei na vuvale e Valenibu'a*. Mitieli Beranadoi Davelevu your continuing-relentless support and strategic plans were amazing and spot on. Savenaca Matana Musuqawa, Paula Drewaru Vunibola and the boys your support at the initiation phase was a huge task of transforming mindsets in showing that we as indigenous Fijians can also be successful using our resources. Sereima Vunibola, your sacrifice to fund and strategise most part of this project especially our women's group development is outstanding. Netani Naivalu Davelevu your sacrifice to resign from your government job and manage the project back home is astonishing, now we can all realise the fruit of your sacrifice. Litiana Tubuiboso Davelevu we are waiting for your part in all these, I have great dreams for you. This project gave me the passion, motivation and drive to complete the PhD as I can see what the thesis is about (customary land, communities-economic development, sustainable development, resilient communities) in real life. *Mutou va'akaka sara*. My aunt Merelea Tibaleta (her words on page 265), *vina'a na levu na bula yaga*, she passed on a week before my doctorate exam, I am happy that you saw unity in our beloved community – this is for you as well. My heart is in tears Eroti Musuqawa *tua'aku sa avoro na yaloku nio sa gole e na vaacegu*, my first cousin whom my action research is about passed away a day before my exam, you will always remind me with this thesis.

Additionally, I would like to thank my relatives and friends in Aotearoa (New Zealand) and Australia. Rusiate Tawalo and family, Waicoba, Nadroga-Catherine, Australia, your motivation and frequent advice to venture into the new path was inescapable. Nana and Tata, Khalid Sheik, Valavia Sheik *ei mutou na yakiti*, accepting my family in early 2016 'fresh from the boat'

still touches our heart. Nukuciri Nakokoti and Monalisi Po’oi Nakokoti, *‘auvu va’adomobula na nomiau yalo si’a*, our family away from home and that will continue to be. Kaiwai Family, Kelvin Grove, Palmerston North, *vina’avaalevu Vuniivilevu, Nau’u, Vatureova* (Tevita and Setaita Kaiwai) *ei mutou na yakiti, na meku wainisucu dina, vina’a na yalo si’a va’atama*. Talatala Luisa Taufa, Timoci Bilitavu and family and our Palmerston North & Whanganui Wesleyan Church family, thank you for your acceptance and support. The Malamalama Moni Aoga Amata EFKS Palmerston North, *vina’a va’alevu* for accepting our girls, Palmerston North Fijian Community *Vinaka saka na veiciqomi kei na veikauwaitaki*. Tau Peni Vulimailodoni and Theresa Vulimailodoni and family, thank you for your kindness.

To my brothers in arms: Aminiasi Kolibasoga (Naisomua, Tailevu), Mesulame Tora (Dratabu, Nadi), Ilisoni Vuetinabouono Leweniqila (Nabouono, Macuata), Atama Vurebe (Navolau 1, Ra), Dr Api Movono (Buca, Cakaudrove), you all are family to us. Thank you for allowing me to discuss my study findings and progress with you and let us keep the hope of reinvigorating community development in our yavutu and indigenous Fijian economies. *Datou veilomani ka toso vata*. I have big dreams for all of us.

To the people of Dogotu’i, the yavusa Vitina, and Matakali Nubunilagi, and the people of Karaimasi, Salevu’oso, Druadrua, Namu’a na kaka. In my time away, I always long to return and to make my vanua proud. Let this thesis be my contribution to the vanua for the many years away from home.

To my in-laws, the Eparama Tevita family. My mother-in-law Ana Maria Tevita, *ei mutou na yakiti*, thank you for your prayers and support for Ima and me. Our daughters and family are grateful to you for your help. Lastly, to my family at the “Kirici Farm”, *vina’a va’alevu, yawa na yalovata ni gu na yalo*, for your unrelenting support, motivation and dreams; this thesis is a culmination of our family’s effort and the values and lessons taught and learned at home.

## **Dedication**

To my dad, Iliesa Davelevu and my grandfather Solomone Mariselo Turaga, my heart still yearns for your presence as you both left us. You both have set excellent examples and have shown us the true reasons for our existence which is to share the grace of God by doing good to everybody and the vanua. You both paved the ways of assisting our people and my only hope that you both are here today to see how this research has impacted the lives of our veiwe'ani, our people and the vanua. *Sobo isa na yalo si'a va'atama au sa maka viro niu na kai va'ila.*

To my dear grandmother, Emali Yalati thank you for the nourishments and care when I was brought up by you and kuku (to'ato'a Nawi, matakali Nawi, Rogorogonidromu na Tui Vuna) when I was 3 months old. It taught me the value of land, living from the land, culture, kinship, livelihood and wellbeing, and true happiness. Now I come to understand the meaning of Jeremaih 1:15 'Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you; Before you were born, I sanctified you.' That knowledge and experience prepared me for my PhD undertaking in regard to customary land and development. *Na nomuru veisusu au diva me se tu na gauna meu na lesuva viro vaadua.*

To my mother, Arieta Vulakome Davelevu you are the rock of our family and you handled many challenges of your siblings alone, it was a great challenge to you. Your indefatigable struggle in carrying me, my siblings and our family this far: I am indebted for everything you have provided to us, your children and grandchildren. As we have always discussed, the outcome of this research is all our efforts in reinstating the beliefs of our dad: *mutou kai dau nanumi ira mai na'oro ei na veiwe'ani ei na ena lotu e mutou sa vuli va'a si'a.*

To my precious daughters, Eliezer Tubuiboso Davelevu Vunibola and Ana-Maria Davelevu Vunibola, I hope in the future you will understand my absence and the sacrifices you both gave to be in a totally new world, your common question -*"Dad are you still in your office?"*. What a lovely feeling to bring my overworked self to the comfort of your smiles and care daily. To my loving and dedicated wife, Sereima Sogia Simpson Vunibola, I will never reach this far without your support and care. I made that decision to leave the comfort of Vitia with excitement and aspirations, but never knew I put you and the kids in huge challenges and sacrifices. All my achievements are the result of your labour, endurance, sacrifice, toils and

seamless love for our family. *Vina'a na loloma dina ei na vosota na i la'ola'o dredre datou ma so'ota voli mai. I am super proud of you tinai LizAna.*

Lastly, to all luvei Vitia, luveni vanua this thesis is also dedicated to you all. At least if I can inspire that we all have roles to help our veiwe'ani e na noda veidela ni yavu to put their resources, values, culture, kinship into use and carry out sustainable forms of economic development and create self-sustaining communities. Our effort now determines our future as indigenous peoples of our beloved nation, Fiji. We need to determine our future and now is the time. *Me da yadra saka ka vakayagataka na noda I vurevure me da na taqomaka kina na ka e bibi vei keda vaka-kawa tamata tabu saka yani. Mo ni kalougata saka ka qaqa e na noda sasaga.*

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## Glossary

### B

*Bati* – traditional warriors who protect the village, chief and people, they also fight for the protection of the vanua interests.

*Bula Taucoko* – better wellbeing, quality of life.

*Bulubulu* – a ceremony of forgiveness, “burying” resentments. Usually a whale’s tooth is given as a request for forgiveness.

*Bure* – traditional Fijian thatched house serving a special function in villages such as, meeting place, men’s house or women’s house.

### D

*Duavata* – to be united.

*Dravudravua* – the state of being poor, or in poverty.

### I

*iKanakana* – meaning to feed from, it is a name given to the piece of land used to grow food gardens.

*iSevu* – traditional presentation of the first fruit of the land to the church and the chiefs.

*isevusevu* – (entry protocol) Presentation of yaqona root in a ceremony of introduction or greeting by a visitor. It is an acceptable behaviour to present the isevusevu and seek entry to a Fijian village or home.

*iTaukei* – indigenous Fijian people: natives of Fiji Islands.

*iTatau* – (departure protocol) presentation of yaqona root by a group in a ceremony to inform of their departure.

*iTeitei* – food gardens or farms.

*iTokatoka* – extended family within a clan, (mataqali). The itokatoka is literally a family and all members are intimately related by birth and marriage.

*iYau* – traditional artefacts used in ceremonies like mats, tapa cloths, and tabua.

### K

*Koro* – village.

### L

*Lagi* – sky and heaven.

*Lewenivanua* – ordinary people or population of a village.

*Lotu* – religion.

## M

*Magiti* – food (Syn. *Kakana*).

*Masi* – tapa Large printed bark cloth used in presentation ceremonies. The print design varies across Fiji. Vatulele island in western Fiji, Islands of the Lau group and Cakaudrove province in Northern division are known for making tapa. There are four kinds, *gativaka Viti*, *gativaka Toga*, *kumi* and *isuluvaka Viti*. The Tongan type used freely hand printed designs, mostly with a tan colour, and often has writing relevant to the occasion. The Fijian type has more formal geometric design using stencils and often, darker in colour.

*Marama* – woman, lady.

*Magimagi* – a strong line made of coconut sinnet used by indigenous Fijians as a rope to tie things.

*Matanitu* – state, government or a nation.

*Matanivanua* – traditional role as an orator who speaks on behalf of the *vanua* or a chief.

*Mataqali* – clan, more inclusive than the extended family.

## O

*Oga* – sociocultural obligations and responsibilities, or social burdens.

## S

*Sautu* – peace and prosperity in the land.

*Solesolevaki* – a social, cultural capital where people work together for a common good without being paid.

*Solevu* – a traditional ceremony (Syn. *Soqo*).

## T

*Tabu* - forbidden, prohibited.

*Tabua* – whales tooth. Valuable artefact used in most Fijian ceremonies such as birth, marriages, death and seeking forgiveness between families, clan and tribes.

*Talanoa* – to yarn, chat or discuss. Usually done around kava bowl to discuss issues of importance to the family and village; *veitalanoa* when more than 2 people are involved.

*Tauvanua* – commoners or known as *lewenivanua*.

*Tui/ Turaga* – chief.

*Turaga* – reference to a male or a chief.

*Turaga ni Koro* - village Headman.

## U

*Uvi* – (*Dioscorea alata*) tropical yam, a chiefly status tuber-crop in Fiji and Pacific Islands.

## V

*Valavala vakavanua* – traditional or cultural protocols.

*Vanua* - refers to the universal whole and the interconnectedness of people to their land, environment, cultures and epistemology, history, chiefs, relationships, spirituality, beliefs, knowledge systems, values and God(s).

*Veirairai* – looking after one another.

*Veidokai* – respect.

*Veilomani* – the act of love and caring for each other.

*Veiwekani* – kinship, relative.

*Veivakarogotaki* – to inform or to hold discussion and consultation.

*Vola ni kawa bula* – a record of genealogy for indigenous Fijians who belong to a particular sub clan, clan, and tribe.

*Vula vakaviti* – Indigenous Fijian lunar calendar.

*Vuravura* – The earth.

*Vutuniyau* – to be rich.

*Vuvale* – family.

## Y

*Yalomatua* – to have wisdom or maturity.

Yaqona – (*Piper methysticum*) plant that is the basis of the traditional Fijian drink also known as kava.

*Yasana* - province with a geographical entity. There are 14 provinces in Fiji. Rotuma an independent island across the Northern part of Fiji is categorised as the 15th province for operational and administrative purposes only.

*Yavusa* - The largest kinship group within the Fijian social system. A combination of several clans forms the *yavusa*.

# Chapter 1 Introduction

Au be'a

*O au bea: au vaa'tulou e na noku dela ni yavu. O 'au e dua ga na ti'i ni gacagaca e ra sema e na vanua, sa tu ina noku i tavi lesu me tauco'o na i sema i na vanua (Here I am, I acknowledge my lineage and vanua with respect. I am part of the elements connected to the vanua, and have my place and roles to the cohesion of the whole).*

This phrase demands attention as I have the honour to share insights to those reading this thesis.

Miau bula si'a

*Na yacaku o Suliasi Vunibola Davelevu, au na awa 'ei Litiana Tubuiboso Musuqawa na marama ei Valenibu'a na noku yavu. Au volai va'a awabula e na to'ato'a o Nubunilagi, Matakali o Nubunilagi, na yavusa o Vitina na ti'ina o Dogotu'l, e na ena yasana o Macuata. Au sema vaadra, va'a awatamata e na loma ni vale ei Karaimasi, Salevu 'Oso, Druadrua, Turaga na Tui Namu'a na Kaka.*

*Na tamaku o iliesa Davelevu, na luvei Viliame Ratulu Gucake ei Litiana Tubuiboso Musuqawa. Na 'ena awa bula sa ra mai tawana na vanua o Nubunilagi e na ena 'oro ni awa e Saroni, Dogotu'l' Macuata. Eitou lewe va, o au matua, tarava o Mitieli Beranadoi Davelevu, Netani Naivalu Davelevu ei Litiana Tubuiboso Musuqawa Davelevu.*

*Na tinaku o Arieta Vulakome Davelevu. Mai na to'atoa o Nawj, na matakali o Nawj, e na yavusa o Naduru, Dogotu'l, Macuata. Iya na vanua au a susu ina niu se kai vula tolu ga vei dru'a na noku matua na I tubutubu nei tinaku, o Solomone Turagalevu ei Emali Yalati. Au sema vaadra e na matakali Vuni-vilevu e Na'u'u, mai Vatureova, Ca'audrove, na oro nei Emali Yalati.*

*Au va'aturaga be'a e na nodra vanua na na Tui Rabe e na, matakali Aisokula, yavusa Valelevu, 'oro o Lovonivonu, Ti'ina Ca'audrove, Taveuni, na vanua e volai va'a awabula ina na noku lewe ni vale, Sereima Sogia Simpson Vunibola. E na matakali Nautuutu, e na yavusa... ena 'oro o Qaranivai, Dogotu'l, macuata na vanua e ra mai susugi ca'e ina na noku lewe ni vale. Sa rua na I solisoli e na loma ni neru vuvale. Elizer Tubuiboso Davelevu*

*Vunibola, Ana Maria Davelevu Vunibola, sa oto ina o ira na we'amurua vaadra dina, sa nomuru itavi dina me muru sema ina ka ilia ira.*

## 1.1 My introduction

As an indigenous Fijian researcher, it is culturally important to introduce myself using my dialect as I have done here. I acknowledge the *vanua* and my ancestors who have enabled me to be here today. In translation, I first start with my patrilineal lineage, then matrilineal lineage and family heritage. I also acknowledge my children's genealogy.

My name is Suliasi Vunibola Davelevu, I am from the village of Saroni-Vitina, Dogotuki district, and Macuata province in the Vola ni Kawa Bula (Fijian genealogy record). My parents are Iliesa Davelevu and Arieta Vulakome Davelevu. I am the eldest of four siblings including Mitieli Beranadoi Davelevu, Netani Naivalu Davelevu ei Litiana Tubuiboso Musuqawa Davelevu. My father is the son of Viliame Ratulu Gucake, from Qaraimasi clan, Salevukoso village, Namuka, Macuata. His wife, my grandmother was Litiana Tubuiboso Musuqawa from the Nubunilagi clan, Vitina, Dogotuki, Macuata. My mother is the daughter of the late Solomone Turagalevu, Nawi clan, Naduru, Dogotuki, Macuata. My grandmother, Emali Yalati is from the Vuni-ivilevu clan, Na'u'u, Vaturova, Cakaudrove.

My introduction also acknowledged my wife Sereima Sogia Simpson Vunibola from the Aisokula-Valelevu clan, Lovonivonu, Taveuni, Cakaudrove. The Nautuutu clan, Qaranivai village, Dogotuki, Macuata, is where she was nurtured and brought up. My children (Eliezer Tubuiboso Davelevu Vunibola and Ana Maria Davelevu Vunibola) are linked to this same genealogy and bloodlines, and it is imperative for them to know their blood ties in this modern world. *O au be'a*, or who I am has been mentioned, hence I can share about this research and the purpose of this thesis.

My life before my studies in New Zealand was based on the notion of *bula e na dela ni vanua* (living on the land) which dictated life from my childhood to adulthood in Fiji. Doing this study has enlightened me to a question I have tried to answer all my life. I was *yakiti susu* (a tradition of being given to be nurtured by another relation) when I was only three months old. My maternal grandparents brought me up and I was thus fortunate to be taught the traditions of living off the land without the need for money. Land utilisation and understanding interconnectedness of the resources and elements are central to daily living and the land was the crux of being *uma tamata* (related people), *veiwekani* (relationships) and *i tovo* (culture).

The *vanua* (land) was a one stop shop for medicines, food, building materials, fresh water, leisure activities and the like. This upbringing assisted me to look after my family when my father passed away in 2007. I was working as a primary school teacher but returned to our customary land and used the knowledge I attained from my elders and engaged in semi-commercial farming. It supported my mother at home, my two brothers and sister to get high school and tertiary education, and now all have decent employment: these were indeed very expensive ventures. Coming to New Zealand was an opportunity to further my personal studies. Now as a PhD student I am working on this project based on customary land and economic engagements in the Pacific, a passion and undertaking so close to who I am. In 2016 my first year post graduate studies at Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand was privately funded through selling of crops planted on my customary land in Fiji. Ultimately, this thesis has enabled me to put my lived experience of using customary land for meaningful development, together with the framing of customary land as the basis of livelihoods, and to add to the debate of whether customary land is viewed as a barrier or enabler of economic development.

## 1.2 Background

The phrase '*e da dravudravua e na dela ni noda vutuniyau*' (we are poor while standing on riches) is an indigenous Fijian idiom or metaphor which refers to customary land. The idiom is used to motivate people to utilise their land and establish meaningful forms of economic engagements. It points to customary land as the source of nourishment, richness and meaningful life. This thesis is thus looking at customary land as a critical component for economic development in the Pacific.

Land is central to Pacific Island people's lives. In terms of development and 'progress', land is seen as a commodity or asset which can be attached with certain price tags depending on location and market prices (Curry & Koczberski, 2013). Foreign interests are often focused on the Pacific due to the economic potential of the tourism, fisheries and mineral industries or the region's abundant natural resources. From a Pacific Islander's perspective, however, land is more than just an asset due to the priceless connections and layers of relationships which are developed because of the land (Diaz & Kauanui, 2001; Hau'ofa, 1994). There is a saying often heard during the *reguregu* (funerals) in Fijian settings in reference to the dead being

buried on their lands, *'na soko ni vaasu'a dre'a, da sa mai tu e na bati ni bulubulu dina ni da lolosi io sa mai dua na ti'i ni dre'a sa mai vaakaukauwata'i ina noda veiwe'ani'* (this is an occasion where we give back to our land, standing near this graveyard, indeed we grieve but our relationships to each other and relationship to the land is strengthened). In other words, a member of the family is lost but there is a gain to the world in that there is a new ancestor, adding another component to the land. This is just one example of many practices which witness people's association with, and pride in, their land. Accordingly, words commonly translated as 'land' such as *vanua* in Fiji, *fonua* in Tonga, *enua* in the Cook Islands, *whenua* in New Zealand (Tu'itahi, 2007) embrace land and people and their connections. These terms are all-encompassing and include cultural, intellectual, social and spiritual elements, along with people's values, beliefs, traditions and history, all interlinked with the natural and supernatural worlds (Nabobo-Baba, 2006; Tuwere, 2002). The land provides sustenance even when agriculture and animal husbandry are not practiced, that is why land is valued and respected and this is fundamental to any consideration of its economic potential. As Small & Sheehan (2005) stated, customary title is incomparable to western conceptions of the property value of land, and for indigenous people, land alienation is like selling your own family.

Land from the perspective of an indigenous Fijian also has power and influence that always needs to be considered. These powers can be both the positive attributes and support to certain activities done on the land or the negative aspects for not respecting the land. Throughout the Pacific, through cultural ceremonies and processes that honour the ancestors and physical and spiritual dimensions within the land, its people uphold the values of the land. Departing from these values is believed to have negative consequences: stories abound of new developments on customary land that are understood to have failed because they did not progress in a culturally appropriate way. Accordingly, the Rotuman expression 'the land has eyes and teeth' (Hereniko, 2013), speaks to the belief that *vanua* is a living being that watches (with its eyes) and manifests physically through illness, accident and even death (it has teeth). This phrase was heard, for example, when the Momi Bay tourism resort in Fiji collapsed, leaving half-built bungalows and metre-high grass obstructing the \$20 million golf course (Scheyvens & Russell, 2010). This points to people's profound understanding of the

power of the land and its 'mana,' which demands respect (Huffer & Qalo, 2004; Tuwere, 2002).

For a long time, Pacific people had various types of economic engagements and used their land as a base to operate. Indigenous individuals and groups around the Pacific have been able to carry out a wide range of economic development, for example, small rural farmers based on customary land in Papua New Guinea control most of the supply chain of fresh crops into towns and cities (Anderson, 2006); there are models of native land and forest reserves in Sovi basin in Fiji which generate livelihoods for land owners (Keppel et al., 2012); and family-owned beach *fales* in Samoa provide a sustainable tourism initiative where control and benefits are secured locally (Scheyvens, 2006). A critical review of the literature has identified that despite the multiple constraints faced by businesses in small Pacific Island economies (Fairbairn, 2006; Leokana, 2014; Purcell & Scheyvens, 2015; Saffu, 2003) there is a particular promise in communal land as a basis for both family-owned businesses and cooperatives.

Indigenous enterprise practices in the Pacific are hugely influenced by their cultural values (Best & Love, 2010; Harmsworth, 2005; Knox, 2005). Making a profit is seen as the primary aim of doing business in a Western sense, but profit is not always the goal for many indigenous businesses with economic well-being regarded as a means to fulfilling broader spiritual, cultural, social and environmental notions of well-being (Harmsworth, 2005). This thesis focuses on the interface of relationships between business and the upholding of sociocultural norms and responsibilities. In Fiji, culture is often blamed for the failure of indigenous businesses, along with other factors such as lack of support services and technical knowledge (Reddy, 1991). For an indigenous Fijian business to be successful in terms of business longevity and service to a broader community in a village, the tensions, negotiations and personal sacrifices must not be underestimated. Ties to the land shape the nature of, and power within, the different relationships through which such economic engagements are developed and flourish, but the factors that influence such relationships are little understood. Specifically, this study hopes to uncover these diverse relationships and the complex negotiations required to illuminate what makes for success for indigenous enterprises based on customary land.

### 1.3 Rationale

This study is part of a team-based Marsden project with the Institute of Development Studies, Massey University, New Zealand (2017–2020). The project is titled ‘The land has eyes and teeth: customary landowners’ entanglements with economic systems in the Pacific’ (appendix 1). It comprises of five researchers, three leading reputable researchers, two who are based at Massey University and one at the University of the South Pacific, Fiji. The project involved two associate researchers who are PhD. students as well as four experts from institutions in Australia, New Zealand and Fiji as the advisory board members. Studies were carried out in some of the Pacific island counties including Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Fiji. The main Marsden project explores how Pacific communities have been able to establish distinctive models of engagement that allow them to pursue economic development while retaining control over customary land and upholding community processes and values. This thesis sits within this project by looking at the model of economic engagements based on customary land in Fiji, challenging the proposition that customary land is a barrier to economic development. The title of this study: ‘*E da dravudravua e na dela ni noda vutuniyau*’ is an indigenous Fijian saying concerning land which means ‘we are poor while standing on riches’.

Customary land and practices in the Pacific are often seen by external commentators to restrict economic progress and development. Most of these commentators are backed by potent interest groups who have interests in extractive development such as logging, mining, and oil palm industries (B. Anderson & McFarlane, 2011; International Trade Strategies Global, 2006). The Australian Centre for Independent Studies was supported by several banks and mining companies in producing several reports articulating the need to convert customary land tenures to individualisation of land ownership. One report was done in 2004 by Helen Hughes and made a claim: ‘...that customary land is the primary reason for deprivation in rural Pacific communities’... (Anderson, 2006, p.89).

Others blame culture for lack of development: ‘...within the Pacific Islands, there is little sign that culture, in whatever form, is seen as a resource but much more than it is seen as a brake on hopeful structures of development’ (Curry & Koczberski, 2012: p.122). Land can exist on its own, but to Pacific communities, people and culture cannot exist without their land.

Criticism of customary land has led to published responses by Pacific-based researchers such as; 'Privatising land in the Pacific- a defence of customary tenures' (Fingleton, 2005), 'In defence of Melanesian customary land' (Anderson & Lee, 2010). These publications documented the productivity, social value, livelihood possibilities and richness of customary owned land. This research study is also a voice against the underestimation of customary owned land by discussing successful family and cooperative businesses located on customary land in Fiji.

## 1.4 Aim

The aim of this thesis is to determine how indigenous Fijian communities have been able to establish distinctive models of economic engagement which allow them to pursue successful business development while retaining control over their customary land and upholding community processes and values.

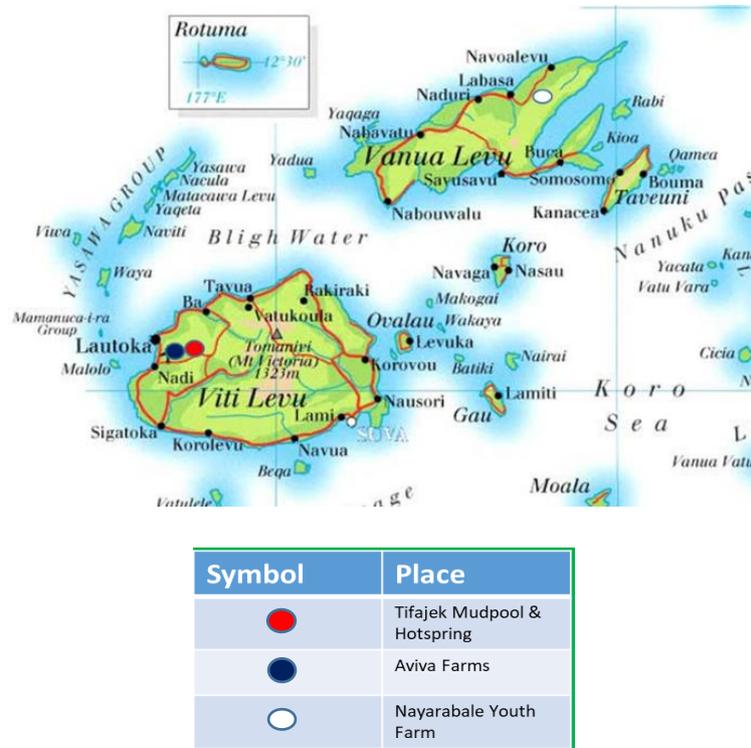
### 1.4.1 Objectives

1. To discuss the relationships that have developed at the interface of business, culture, land, family, and society through case studies of three successful indigenous Fijian businesses.
2. To explain the practices by which these successful, socially-embedded family and cooperative businesses are structured, planned and operated.
3. To show how the practices can contribute to a new way of theorising Pacific economies.

## 1.5 Study sites

Three case studies were undertaken in two geographical areas in Fiji, the Ba province and the Cakaudrove province (see Figure 1). For the province of Ba, two indigenous Fijian businesses were studied, the Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring and Aviva Farm. Both the businesses are in Sabeto, Nadi which is about 2km from the Queen's Highway. Traditionally the family belongs to the *tokatoka* (extended family) Viribale, the chiefly *mataqali* (sub-clan) of Lumuni, the Conua clan of Sabeto in Nadi district. Aviva Farms is in Natalau Village, the chiefly *vanua* of Erenavula, Sabeto clan in Nadi district. Both of these are family-based businesses on the main island of Viti Levu. Nayarabale Youth Farm is on the island of Vanua levu, at Nayarabale village

and is, loosely, an example of a cooperative business. Nayarabale village belongs to the Wacawaca clan in the district of Vaturova. The details of the case studies are covered in Chapter 7.



Source: [http://www.fijiembassy.be/index.php?page\\_in=fiji\\_facts](http://www.fijiembassy.be/index.php?page_in=fiji_facts)

Figure 1: Map of Fiji showing case study sites

## 1.6 Methodological framing and research overview

The research methodology is briefly discussed here, with details to come in Chapter 6. The Vanua Research Framework (Nabobo-Baba, 2008) and qualitative research provide the overarching research methodology for this study. Three interconnected research threads pull it together: *bula vakavanua*, *tali magimagi* and *talanoa* based on the Vanua Research Framework. *Bula vakavanua* (Nainoca, 2011) is linked to active participant observation where the researcher is immersed in the *bula vakavanua* (indigenous Fijian way of life) and actively engages with the activities of the locals to build the trust needed for in-depth inquiries. *Tali magimagi* (Meo-Sewabu, 2015) involves the researcher in the weaving of both insider and outsider perspectives, knowledge, and insights of the research. *Talanoa* (Nabobo-Baba, 2008;

Vaioleti, 2016), which is a form of dialogue and conversation rather than interviews, is a knowledge seeking and sharing activity which is culturally bounded and respected.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with officials from certain institutions who worked with issues on customary land. This method was applicable when the discussion was conducted within the precinct of their offices and during official hours. In other cases, *talanoa* was also a culturally appropriate way of discussing and re-discussing of issues regarding the study, usually conducted informally over food or while kava was served. This is the most common approach taken in Fiji. In total, there were 34 participants in this study, comprising 24 informants from the three case studies and 10 from supporting bodies like government departments and NGOs.

## 1.7 Contribution to indigenous Fijian epistemology and interests

This thesis privileges the indigenous Fijian voice in discussing customary land, culture, relationship, and economic development. Presented in this thesis are the indigenous knowledge systems, experiences and stories of people from selected case studies concerning economic development in contemporary societies. It demonstrates the ability to amalgamate the concepts of *bula vakavanua* (indigenous Fijian way of life) and economic development. This research highlights that customary land, the indigenous Fijian culture, traditions and ethos are still valid and can be the building blocks for inclusive and locally driven economic development and wellbeing. It is vital as indigenous peoples to continue to acknowledge how we facilitate change within our way of life, to carry out inclusive development and at the same time maintain control of our indigenous interests, our customary land, culture and way of being.

## 1.8 Thesis framework

Chapter 1 justifies this research and introduces the aims, objectives, and research locations. The background of the study is given alongside that of the researcher and the motivation to contribute to indigenous Fijian epistemology in the academic world. The chapter also provides a synopsis of the methodological framework to show the evidence that will illuminate customary land supporting economic development in the Pacific using indigenous Fijian case studies.

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 focus on reviewing the literature including the definitions, values, nature and success factors for cooperative and family businesses. A focus of the literature is also on 'social embeddedness thinking and entrepreneurship,' including sustainable and inclusive development, diverse economies, the hybrid economy, and doughnut economics. Understanding of social capital in the Pacific context is also reviewed here. Chapter 4 discusses Pacific businesses, including the definitions and specifics of indigenous entrepreneurship, and the research gap around 'indigenous Fijian entrepreneurship'. Examples of place-based indigenous economies linked to cooperative and family business models in the Pacific context are introduced.

In Chapter 5, the land and development of Fiji are examined in chronological order from pre-European contact, British colonial history, cession, independence, and post-independence, to the present political and policy context around customary land. These historical undertakings also show the engagements of indigenous people with affairs relating to their customary land.

Chapter 6 introduces the qualitative methodology linked to the overarching Vanua Research Framework behind this research. It also discusses the culturally affiliated *bula vakavanua*, *tali magimagi*, *talanoa*, and active research-participation research methods. The *Uvi* metaphor is introduced to show how these cultural elements of the research are woven together. Chapter 6 also positions the researcher firstly as an insider, being from the culture, and secondly as an outsider through the role of researcher.

Chapter 7 starts to present the findings of the thesis. Through three case studies, a focus is provided on the stories shared by the entrepreneurs on their journey of establishing and sustaining successful businesses on their customary land in Fiji. This chapter provides an original indigenous Fijian voice shared through the direct quotes of various entrepreneurs and founders.

Chapters 8 and 9 analyse the case studies with emphasis on '*solesolevaki*.' *Solesolevaki* is a uniquely Fijian practice where people work cooperatively for the common good without pay. It is based on both cultural and social capital for indigenous Fijians and is part of the *bula vakavanua* (way of life of indigenous Fijians) practiced by their ancestors. Throughout the

three case studies, *solesolevaki* was a crucial element practiced by the people during the establishment phase of the businesses and it was seen to be crucial to their ongoing success.

Chapter 9 continues the discussion on the social embeddedness of the firms through the various businesses that contribute to community wellbeing and cohesion. It also discusses the involvement of intermediary organisations like NGOs and government departments, the businesses' efforts to maintain environmental sustainability, the crucial influence of informal business networks, and lastly, the capacity of the enterprises to be self-controlled and committed to their visions and foundational values.

Chapter 10, the conclusion, draws on both the literature and findings of the research to respond to the research question posed in chapter one i.e. *to determine how indigenous Fijian communities have been able to establish distinctive models of economic engagement allowing them to pursue successful business development while retaining control over their customary land and upholding community processes and values*. This chapter provides insights into how the research fills a knowledge gap, and an emergent model is presented to theorise indigenous Fijian entrepreneurship and economic development in the Pacific.

## 1.9 Summary

This thesis represents a journey taken in a very indigenous context where a culturally aligned methodology is applied to ascertain how indigenous Fijian communities have been able to carry out economic engagements that ensure successful business development on customary land while supporting community processes and values. Most chapters foreground the voices of indigenous Fijian entrepreneurs from the case studies. I hope you, the reader, will be able to gain insights into the challenging realities of these individuals and see how they have developed business models that can be successful in both worlds involving their roots and the modern economy in Fiji.

In addition to this thesis being accessed by the academic world, it will provide insights for the general public, budding indigenous Fijian entrepreneurs, and indigenous entrepreneurs elsewhere.

# Chapter 2 Cooperative and family businesses

*Ubui vaa'wa ni tabua tio mada ga na noda veiwe'ani ei na ca'aca'avata*

Our relationship and cooperativeness shall be like the strand of the whales' tooth (Tabua or whale's tooth is an important indigenous Fijian artefact, and its strand is plaited from coconut sinnet. This idiom denotes the strength that comes when people are united to work together.)

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter will define cooperatives and family businesses, followed by a discussion of the underpinning values and principles that drive them. The dual nature of cooperative and family businesses is discussed, noting that the members of such businesses need to be looked after while running the firms. Lastly, some of the challenges faced by these business models are discussed.

Cooperatives and family business models have been identified in societies globally with adaptations and variations evident in different contexts and cultures. Both models are well-known in the Pacific region, where they are often located on customary land. The specifics of these businesses in the Pacific will be the focus of the latter part of this chapter, showing how cooperatives and family businesses form an important part of the economic development landscape in the Pacific. From Chapter 7 onwards, the thesis will examine two family businesses and one cooperative business in Fiji as its case studies.

## 2.2 Definitions of cooperative and family businesses

Cooperative businesses and family businesses are distinct business models practiced globally. Both reflect the origins and motives behind their establishment. The existence of both models in the contemporary business environment reflects resiliency and sustainability, which is why people still engage and adopt them in varying contexts. Both models will now be defined, followed by discussions of their values, motivations and success factors.

### 2.2.1 Defining cooperatives

Definitions of cooperatives vary. There are, however, common areas of agreement. For example, cooperatives are business ventures which are owned and run by, and for, their members. The members are themselves the customers, employees, or residents who have a say in determining the business directions and a share in the profits. Three related definitions are considered here.

The International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) defines a cooperative as:

*...an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically-controlled enterprise (ICA, 1995, p. 1).*

Meanwhile, a recent document from the Eastern Finland University (Puusa, Kirsi, & Antti, 2016) introduced a definition that reflects cooperatives fulfilling their dual business and member community roles:

*A co-operative is a business enterprise and a social group of members and as such has both a business and a member community role...the member is both a patron (customer/supplier) and an owner (shareholder) (Puusa et al., 2016, p. 23).*

Another broadly acknowledged definition was adopted in 1987 by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Their succinct definition is:

*A cooperative is a user-owned, user-controlled business that distributes benefits based on use (Zeuli, Cropp & Schaars, 2004, p. 1).*

These definitions complement each other. Where the ICA's definition is more descriptive of how a cooperative operates, the definition by the Eastern Finland University focuses on the dual roles of cooperatives (Chapter 2, section 2.4.1), and the one used by the USDA reflects the three primary cooperative principles of user-ownership, user-control and relational distribution of benefits.

Pacific Island development should be conceived from the perspective of holistic development. When Prakash (2003) analysed the ICA definition of a cooperative, he suggested it embodied the qualities of providing better development, culturally, economically, intellectually, and

spiritually. Therefore, the ICA definition is perhaps the most suitable to define cooperativism in the Pacific and for understanding business on customary land in this study. Thus, it can be considered that economic enterprises, whether cooperatives or otherwise, will only be of value for Pacific communities if they improve the quality of life of all members, and they reflect and enhance sociocultural relationships.

### **2.2.2 Defining family business**

The definition of a family business is also contested. Extensive work on a definition has come from two business fields; the work conducted by Zahra and Sharma (2004) overviewing family business studies and that of Colli (2003) overviewing business history. Sharma (2004) emphasised the importance of understanding the frameworks underpinning the family system theories and organisational theories as well as the critical issue of getting an inclusive definition to build the body of knowledge of family business in social science. Colli's (2003) definition of family business focuses on the family members' concepts of business ownership, control, and management. These include; owning the business property, make daily strategic decisions, and the succession motive influencing the firm. Other scholars have tried to integrate different perspectives to get definitions in terms of; percentage of control, the degree of family involvement, the level power to execute individual decisions within the business, contrasting business size, profitability, efficiency, endurance and equity (Sharma & Nordqvist, 2013; Sharma & Salvato, 2013; Sharma, Salvato, & Reay, 2013). Getting to a standard definition that fits all agendas appears complicated.

A definition for family business typical among European authors and often used in literature is that: a business can only be regarded as a family business when; a family member takes the CEO position, at least two generations of family control the business and a minimum of five percentage voting stock held by the family or related trust (Colli, Howorth, & Rose, 2013). Another family business definition using the lenses of two complementary approaches adds some clarity. These are structure-based and intention-based approaches, where structure considers the family involvement in ownership and management, and intention-based looks to the values, achievements and vision preferences of the family business (Litz, 1995). The definition derived from merging these two approaches is:

A business firm may be considered a family business to the extent that its ownership and management are concentrated within a family unit, and to the extent its members strive to achieve, maintain, and/or increase intra-organizational family-based relatedness. (Litz, 1995: p77).

This definition is quite useful in the sense of maintaining the power of decision making and the values and vision of the family in the running of the business.

The work by Chua, Chrisman & Sharma (1999) is appropriate as they defined the concept by its behaviour rather than just describing the components of family ownership and management. Defining the behaviour can capture the essence of why a family business is different from others as well as capturing intentions and operational behaviours of the dominant coalition who are the powerful actors in the family institution (Chua, Chrisman, & Sharma, 1999).

The family business is a business governed and/or managed with the intention to shape and pursue the vision of the business held by a dominant coalition controlled by members of the same family or a small number of families in a manner that is potentially sustainable across generations of the family or families. (Chua et al., 1999: p 25).

This definition embodies a substantial move away from the traditional definition of calculating the percentage of the degree of management and control of the family to focusing more on the holistic daily behaviour that enables the shaping of the firm and the pursuit of their vision (Chua et al., 1999). This definition can be used in any cultural context and thus can be adopted to define indigenous family businesses in the Pacific. As a family in the Pacific may include extended family members, and it is a norm to involve the dominant coalition in terms of elders and members of the family in the business, this can contribute to the sustainability of the business across generations.

### 2.3 Values driving business

The cooperative and family business models are value-driven institutions wherein the founders share some common values and beliefs, which also dictate the operating principles or business governing rules that direct the general operations and business undertakings. Family and cooperative businesses are now discussed separately, followed by a combined discussion that reflects on the values that inform both business types.

### 2.3.1 Values driving cooperatives

According to ICA (1995), cooperatives are founded on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, equality, equity, and solidarity. Prakash (2003) explains the significance of these values within the cooperatives. *Self-help* refers to an individual's control of personal and professional development and education while working closely with others so that these skills collectively enable growth for their cooperative. *Self-responsibility* denotes a member's responsibility for their cooperative in terms of promoting the cooperative and securing its independence. *Equality* means that all members are equal despite their different socioeconomic statuses. *Equity* indicates how members are considered equitably in the sharing of rewards, dividends, capital reserves, and reduction of charges. Lastly, *solidarity* implies the fair treatment of all members and closely associated non-members and also indicates the cooperative's accountability for the collective interests of its members (Prakash, 2003).

Nilsson (1996), Spear (2000), and Michelsen (1994) all stress the importance of values in a cooperative. Nilsson (1996) and Spear (2000) state that the values which are the nucleus of the organisation need to reflect how members come to a set of common underlying ideas that operationalise their cooperative institution to address their everyday needs and interest. These human values are closely correlated to the culture and the sub-cultures of the community it serves and are based upon the norms intrinsic to the members who make it different from other types of organisations. Michelsen (1994) further supports this concept by expressing that cooperatives are easily differentiated from the two systems of the state and the market, whose actions may be influenced by political power and capital. Spear (2000) highlights how cooperatives may enjoy a comparative advantage vis-à-vis profit-driven businesses by building on shared social values. They can attract customers with an ethical and environmental consciousness, attract staff due to its professional development and continuing education strengths, and they can strengthen inter-organisational relationships and enhance social capital (Michelsen, 1994; Nilsson, 1996; Spear, 2000).

Closely associated with the values identified, is the question of how cooperatives set up guiding tenets by which they practice their values. Nilsson (1996) stated that a cooperative organisation has its values centred on its members. The principles become special features

that build the relationship between the organisation and its members. The seven principles of cooperatives, as stated by ICA (1995) are shown in Table 1 and will be discussed further.

Michelsen (1994) stated that cooperative values and principles are intertwined as an entirety and should not be judged independently. Based on these values and principles, a distinct and straightforward collectively owned set of rules is derived and applied by the members as guidelines for running the cooperatives. It implies that the principles will both govern the organisation and reduce the transaction cost of members. He also noted that cooperative principles represent the cooperative ideology in two distinct dimensions; the business and the social elements. They, therefore, influence a cooperative's capacity to adapt to a wide array of businesses and social contexts.

Zeuli et al. (2004) specified that cooperatives should respect the three-basic value-driven principles of user-ownership, user-control, and proportional distribution of profits. The other four principles, as shown in Table 1, may or may not be appropriate, depending on the context in which the business is running. Similarly, Oczkowski, Branka & Kay (2013) support the idea of reducing the number of principles to ensure the cooperative sector remains relevant. On the other hand, Novkovic (2006) is in full support of all cooperative principles, saying that the best cooperative can base its management strategy on these principles and use them as a comparative advantage. Novkovic (2006) also defended cooperatives based on these principles as being fundamentally different from investor-owned businesses, which are introducing corporate social responsibility into their business routine. Thus, the values and principles are a source of strength as they dictate how the cooperative movement meets the changing challenges of a contemporary world (Novkovic, 2006; Oczkowski, Branka, & Kay, 2013). These values and principles support holistic development by giving members the confidence to progress economically and socially through shared efforts.

**Table 1: Principles of cooperative businesses**

<b>Voluntary and Open Membership</b>	Cooperatives are voluntary organisations; open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political, or religious discrimination.
<b>Democratic Member Control</b>	Cooperatives are democratic organisations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. Men and women serving as elected representatives are accountable to the members. In cooperatives, members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote).
<b>Member Economic Participation</b>	Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the cooperative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all the following purposes: developing their cooperative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative, and supporting other activities approved by the membership.
<b>Autonomy and Independence</b>	Cooperatives are autonomous and self-help organisations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organisations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their cooperative autonomy.
<b>Education, Training and Information</b>	Cooperatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their cooperatives. They inform the general public - particularly young people and opinion leaders - about the nature and benefits of cooperation.
<b>Cooperation among Cooperatives</b>	Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.
<b>Concern for Community</b>	Cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members.

Source: ICA (1995: p1).

### 2.3.2 Values driving family businesses

Family values are a critical component of any family-owned business (Ward, 2011). These values derive from shared core beliefs that become part of the entrepreneurial value systems which underpin the business' decision making and strategies. Value-based questions can be asked to determine whether there is a 'business first belief' or a 'family first belief' (Ward, 2011). In general, 'business first belief' regards the business as a protected establishment that must be sustained at all costs. 'Family first belief' respects the family as the foundation of all 'joy,' and the business is the medium to fuel this joy and make life easier for the family. The business can be seen as a glue-like structure that gives a family cohesion. The business can also be perceived as a threat to the family and individual leadership (Ward, 2011; 2016). These fundamental aspects describe how the family perceives their businesses which in turn impacts the business pathway and direction.

Some studies suggest that family firms can accomplish better results than others due to the business' shared identity and history, which are strongly linked to time-tested core values and a code of behaviour underscoring their success (Denison, Lief, & Ward, 2004; Dyer, 1988; Vallejo, 2008). Shared core values not only lay a platform conducive to the business operation but also provide a sense of direction and encourage enthusiasm.

An empirical study was conducted by Vallejo (2008), which involved the use of a theoretical framework to find out the difference between the culture of family firms and non-family firms. Use of a semasiological lens allowed the derivation of a value-based model that described a group of values that assisted the sustainability of family-owned businesses through different family generations. This model includes four value-based practices and affirmed that family firms have unique organisational cultures due to the sturdier level of loyalism. The practices include: first; involvement and identification which render robust commitment to their business; second, the vibrant working environment boosts participation and cohesion between individuals rendering harmony; thirdly, a greater sense of sustainability through reinvestment of profits

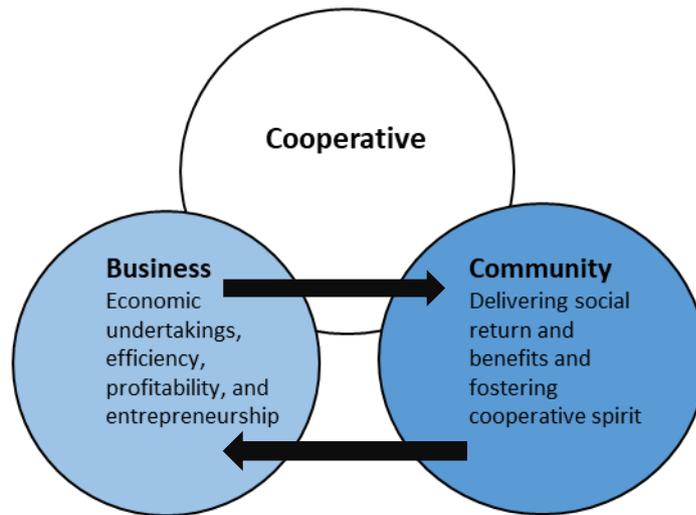
protecting the reputation of the family; and lastly, the transformational leadership qualities in the business lead to a higher degree of trust among members (Denison et al., 2004; Vallejo-Martos, 2011; Vallejo-Martos, 2016; Vallejo, 2008, 2009, 2011). These are essential values and practices that contribute to a successful family business with the business administration imperatives.

## 2.4 The dual nature of cooperative and family business

A unique characteristic for both the cooperative and the family business is their duality.

### 2.4.1 Dual nature of cooperatives

The dual nature of cooperatives (Figure 2) is a widely discussed phenomenon, but it is argued to provide the unique foundation of cooperative identity. This dual aspect is described by Mazzarol, Limnios & Reboud (2011) as a unique business model by having an economic undertaking with social influence and social results. Neck, Brush, & Allen (2009) similarly describe cooperatives as having a social vocation with economic returns. The dual nature becomes a stronghold and a factor that leads to their sustainability in society when they are integrated and balanced. Puusa et al. (2016) explain the practicability of these dual roles in terms of a cooperative's business component and member community role. The business component involves the organisation's ability to aim for efficiency and profitability, which at the same time differentiates between making a profit and maximising profit. In other words, a cooperative needs to deliver benefits to its members together with the capacity to produce profit and to cover operating costs so that it can sustain its services (Puusa, Kirsi, & Antti, 2016; Bonus, 1986; Mazzarol, Limnios, & Reboud, 2011; Neck, Brush, & Allen, 2009). The business and community components are discussed in the following sections.



**Figure 2: The dual nature of cooperatives**

#### 2.4.1.1 The business component

Cooperatives commonly provide a mechanism of economic engagement as a business and provide business support to members. A cooperative deals directly with the market in marketing, selling, purchasing, and negotiating while at the same time providing supportive services to its members. For instance, economies of scale can be attained through a cooperative, meaning more benefits for members. Importantly, the members achieve what Bonus (1986) and Spear (2000) describe as a safe practice where cooperative members remain independent actors of the market and away from the influence of investor-owned firms. It provides an independent locus of cooperative operation to execute its role and constitutes a comparative advantage.

Cooperative institutions have often been discussed as resilient business organisations. Historically, cooperatives survived the First and Second World Wars through their ability to use both the business and social components to navigate through hardships and continue to serve their members (ICA, 1995). With cooperatives in developing nations, the overlapping multi-dimensionality of membership, network, collective skills, innovation, and government support were seen to be critical factors for resiliency (Borda-Rodriguez et al., 2016). Birchall & Ketilson (2009) provide examples of cooperatives' resilience; the 1860s emergency food aid

and cooperative credit bank which endured the agricultural depression in Germany, and formation of numerous cooperatives during the great depression in the USA. In the 2008 recession in Canada and the USA, new generation cooperatives stabilised farmers' income and revitalised local economies due to their membership benefits and shareholding capacities to assist its members (Birchall & Ketilson, 2009).

There is strong evidence that cooperatives are successful business models that can safeguard the social aspects of the people and communities while acting as a driver of communal developments. They are particularly important in creating employment opportunities in communities. For example, in Germany, there are more than 8,000 cooperatives and around 20 million members (Birchall & Ketilson, 2009; Deller, Hoyt, Hueth & Sundaram-Stukel, 2009). Spain has over 18,000 worker cooperatives employing more than 300,000 people (Birchall & Ketilson, 2009; Roelants, Dovgan, Eum & Terrasi, 2012). In Brazil, the agricultural-worker managed cooperative Cantante-Harmonia, employs 4,300 families (Birchall & Ketilson, 2009). The women's cooperative in California, Women's Action to Gain Economic Security (WAGES), campaigns to raise the earnings of low-income women through education on cooperative business, assisting in the establishment of new cooperatives (Deller, Hoyt, Hueth & Sundaram-Stukel, 2009). In the USA, there are nearly 30,000 cooperatives that pay US \$25 billion in wages (Birchall et al., 2009). Additionally, Canada's Arctic Cooperatives Limited controls the economy of rural Inuit communities and provided around \$22 million (Canadian) in wages in 2008 (Birchall & Ketilson, 2009).

The engagement of cooperatives in the mainstream economy has several positive impacts on members and the community. Apart from having a loud voice in the market, cooperatives assist people in getting fair deals with good returns for their produce. It provides a mechanism as in social economic benefits at the broader market space and gives power to the cooperative to participate in and influence market forces (Levi & Davis, 2008). Novkovic (2008), Milford (2012) and Sexton (1990) illustrate the case of cooperatives having a competitive yardstick effect on markets with fewer buyers. For instance, in the Pacific copra sector, cooperatives that own most of the coconut farms on customary land can work together and have a stronger bargaining power to push for better prices for their produce. Figure 3 shows the contribution of cooperatives to business operations.



Source:: Bonus, 1986; Spears, 2000; Kirsten, 1993; Puusa et al., 2016; Birchall et al., 2009.

**Figure 3: Business benefits of cooperatives.**

#### 2.4.1.2 The community component

The other important component of cooperatives is their cooperative spirit within member communities (Puusa et al., 2016). Cooperatives are regarded as group ventures which use their strong cooperative spirit based on the principles of self-management, self-support, and self-governance, with all undertakings guided by trust and teamwork. The propelling power for cooperative success lies in solidarity and combined efforts, effective utilisation of members' resources, sense of ownership, and influential control (Spear, 2000; Hind, 1997). These are factors that make cooperatives distinct from other business models. The service they provide aims to satisfy members' needs and provide community benefits.

The social effects of cooperatives have been significant. Majee & Hoyt (2011), while using Woolcock & Deepa's (2000) social capital and poverty transition framework, demonstrated the capacity of cooperatives to contribute to the upward mobility of groups (not individuals). Cooperatives can utilise combined resources and simultaneously reinforce and bridge social capital to foster local control of place-based business ventures (Curry, 1999). The Timor-Leste coffee cooperative is known as *Cooperativa Café Timor* (Majee & Hoyt, 2011) is an excellent example of this. It had 22,000 farmer families, 300 full-time staff, around 3,500 seasonal

workers, and \$12 million worth of exports in 2008. The cooperative improved the quality of lives of members and opened health clinics (clinic café Timor), which currently provide services to members and the general population. As this example shows, cooperatives have demonstrated their capacity to work as a vehicle for development, enabling the marginalised to have a voice, helping to mobilise community resources, and allowing local participation in the economic mainstream. Another way in which cooperatives can contribute to community development is by targeting the poor and marginalised. Zaimova, Zheliazkov & Gaidardjieva (2012) elaborated that agricultural cooperatives in Bulgaria have been an effective method of carrying out bottom-up rural projects to improve social well-being and support.

Another definition of cooperative highlights the importance of a self-help value:

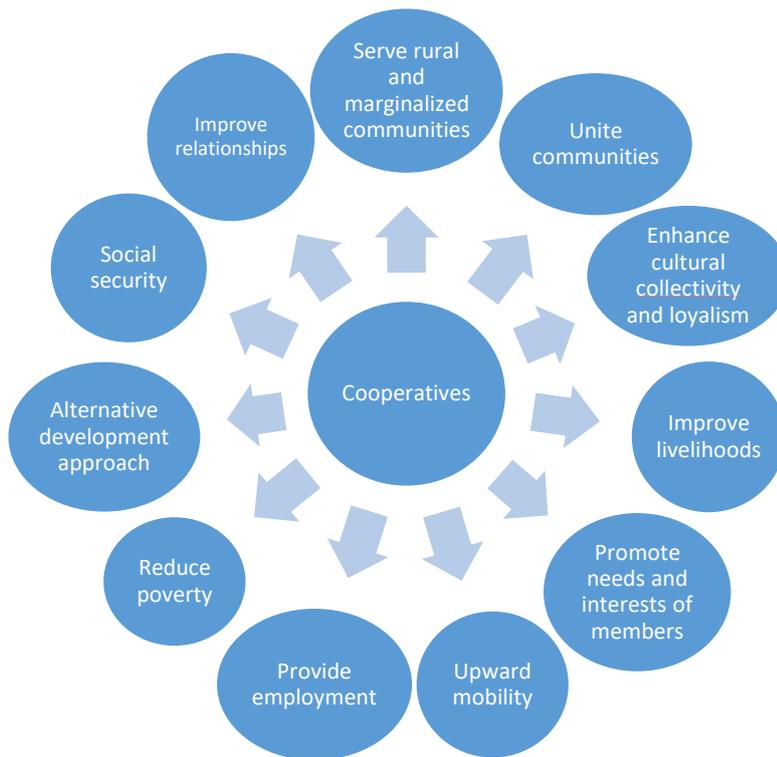
It is misleading to say that cooperatives have members. It is more correct to say that members have their cooperatives. Cooperatives do not help the poor but, by working together, by pooling their resources, by submitting themselves to group discipline and by accepting to combine self-interest and group solidarity, the poor can solve some of their problems by way of organized self-help and mutual aid better than alone. (Birchall, 2003, p. 13).

A cooperative is functional when member communities are united in trying to achieve a common need by submitting to group activities. Thus, cooperatives with substantial social capital in terms of relationships with other individuals, groups and institutions within the community can contribute to reducing poverty.

Figure 4 shows the contribution of cooperatives to community development.

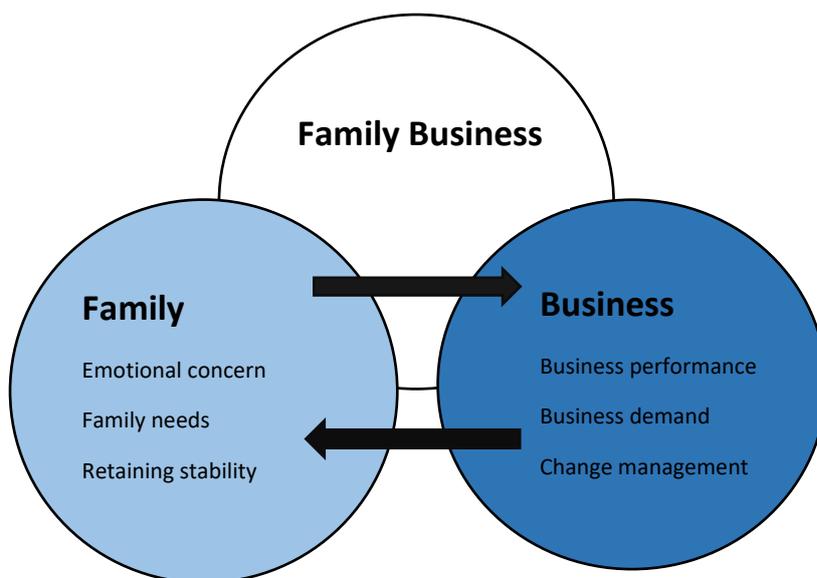
#### **2.4.2 Dual nature of family business**

The family business has two crucial components: the family and the business (Figure 5). These two separate social institutions, the family and the business, are distinct with respect to values, norms and principles. Often conflicts arise when the two systems are unable to merge or, as the result of a controversial matrix, are overlapping since they serve different functions in society (Kepner, 1983; Lansberg, 1983; Ward, 2016).



Source: Puusa et al., 2016; Spear, 2000; Hind, 1997; Nilson, 2001.

**Figure 4: Community development benefits of cooperatives**



Adapted from: Carlock & Ward, 2001.

**Figure 5: Dual system of a family business with differing goals**

Swartz (1989) and Lansberg (1983) were early researchers in this field who analysed the family and business using the 'dual system approach' and characterised their dissimilarity and misconnections in four separate ways: the family system is emotional compared to a rational business approach; the family is based on a conducive environment to nurture and protect family members whereas the business is primarily for profit maximisation and market-oriented; the family is a hub of relationships, loyalty, and reciprocity whereas the business regards people as a means to economic attainment and growth; and lastly the family is comfortable in their environment which they have adapted to, while the business needs to flow with change and opportunities to grow and diversify for growth and advancement (Kepner, 1983; Lansberg, 1983; Pieper & Klein, 2007; Swartz, 1989; Tagiuri & Davis, 1996).

The concept of dual systems initially received much resistance, which led to the development of more theories over time. A helpful conceptualisation in terms of this research is the whole system approach which involves the balanced view of looking at the family and the business as equal and essential foundations for progress. Humans are considered as critical actors and drivers in both institutions, and conflicts are prone to occur in the space of family business operations because the family and the business serve different purposes in their community with different underlying ideologies (Kepner, 1983; Lansberg, 1983; Ward, 2001). Conflict can emerge as to whether the business is there to make the family's lives better or to just focus on business growth, resiliency and intergenerational succession (Kepner, 1983; Lansberg, 1983; Swartz, 1989; Ward, 2011). Family businesses face a number of risks, including nepotism regarding decisions as to who gets what role or who benefits from what resources in the family business (Dyer, 2006; James, 1999; Tagiuri & Davis, 1996). There can also be disagreement between family members over remuneration and rewards (Cadbury, 2000; Hausman, 2005; Hu & Schaufeli, 2011). Another factor contributing to conflict is the rivalry that can occur between siblings (de Vries, 1993; Friedman, 1991; Handler, 1991).

## 2.5 Pacific island cooperatives and family businesses

While the previous points on the nature and values of family and cooperative businesses provide helpful background to a study of successful indigenous businesses on customary land in Fiji, the reality is that context plays a crucial role in the performance of any business. A

business is a critical element of communities, and in return, a business needs to adapt to the community it serves in terms of its culture, its people, and importantly to assist in what it takes to build communities. In other words, a business needs to find its place in the location it serves and become socially embedded to grow and progress. This is particularly the case in the Pacific. Thus, this section looks at the cooperatives and family business models in the Pacific and provides some insights into how these businesses can function to their full potential in Pacific island countries.

### 2.5.1 Pacific Island cooperatives

The people of the Pacific Island states have a long history of indigenous exchange and inter-island trading and voyaging occurring well before early contact with foreign traders. Numerous Europeans later sailed into the Pacific and had opportunities to trade with locals. At some places, they built trading relationships, which later became commercial bases and port towns. Many locals were simply bystanders in the alien trading system (Hau'ofa, 1994). The indigenous people had their trading system, but this was overlooked, while many resources went into the new model of trade (Lewis, 1994).

Over time some indigenous people were trained to do business within the new system, leading to the formation of village trading groups that were cooperative in their structure. These cooperatives were a mechanism that linked the islanders and the traders, who were mainly Europeans, and aided the distribution of European goods and profit. Maude (1949), Couper (1968), and Rutherford (1981) highlighted how British Pacific business development focused on the acculturation of the indigenous people into group business initiatives referred to as proto-cooperatives. Proto-cooperatives originated in many of the islands as a result of indigenous people's combined effort to circumvent significant trading companies that held economic power in the Pacific. Some of the examples of the proto-cooperatives were producer, consumer, and marketing cooperatives which bought fresh produce from the people who, in turn, shopped in the trade stores and the cooperative exported or sold the product to an outer market. This includes the *Au* in the Cook Island in the 1890s, *Malo* of Samoa in 1904, *Tonga ma Tonga Kautaha* of Tonga in 1909, *Viti Kabani* (company) and *Apolosi* movement of Fiji in 1914, *Tangitang Mronrons* of Gilbert and Ellice Islands in 1909 and the *Paliau Maloat* and *Yali* movement in PNG in 1907.

The primary aims of these initiatives were to: take part in the modern economy, take control of their produce, make development work for indigenous communities, bargain for better prices, and displace village-based foreign traders (Couper, 1968; Kaima, 1994; Otto, 1992). The initiatives were able to carry out significant community development alongside the commercialisation of products, and they created trade stores to regulate the rural economy and gain better returns for local communities. The development of the rural economy via cooperatives widely impacted communities as it opened doors to people working together using customary resources (Couper, 1968). When cooperatives worked well, they allowed local people to take ownership of development and contributed to social security.

However, competition from Europeans who controlled the import and export channels eventually undermined many of these group ventures. Indigenous cooperatives also faced trading dilemmas such as market constraints, settling credit transactions, handling the complexities of bookkeeping, meeting social obligations, and commercial, religious, and political resistance. In many situations, indigenous cooperatives traded at a loss and were taken over by foreigners. In trying to resuscitate the cooperative movement in Fiji, the following speech was made by the Great Council of Chiefs' financial adviser in 1948, quoting directly from a document of the *Viti Kabani*:

Until recently you have been content to live a life of a producer without the means of marketing your produce. You have been largely content and bartered your produce for store goods and cash and watch others prosper on the result of your labour. (Couper, 1968, p. 8)

Despite the challenges faced by Pacific Island cooperatives, people still use collective effort for self-help in community development and maintenance of societal solidarity.

There are several examples of cooperatives in existence around the Pacific, a few of which will be highlighted in the following sections.

### **2.5.2 Examples of Pacific island cooperative experiences**

Papua New Guinea (PNG) has a cooperative movement that has been widely discussed (Mugambwa, 2005; Murray-Prior, Sengere & Batt, 2009; Sengere, Susuke & Allen, 2008). It was established in 1947 when the Australian Colonial Administration instituted a cooperative

subdivision within the Department of District Services and Native Affairs. The reasons were to motivate socioeconomic development among Papua New Guineans as well as diverting the attention of would-be political agitators into an appropriate channel. The cooperative sector took on a variety of roles, from consumer cooperatives to marketing of local produce, concentrating on locally produced crops: coffee, cocoa and copra. It, in turn, brought positive impacts to the locals. By 1958 there were 316 cooperatives registered; by 1968 there were 109,175 members (Mugambwa , 2005). Not all these cooperatives were as effective as desired, however. Thus in 1970 the government invested in improving business and management training by establishing the Laloki Cooperative College with the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme. Unfortunately, this was short-lived as the cooperative movement had already started to show signs of failure (Mugambwa, 2005).

In August 1971, an inquiry committee was established to critically analyse the failure and future of cooperatives in PNG. The committee made recommendations based on the belief that cooperatives could benefit the locals and needed to be continued in the future. They recommended the re-organisation of the cooperative administrative division, restructuring cooperative education, encouraging people to join cooperatives, better support services, and the need to identify economically viable cooperatives before full operation. Unfortunately, many efforts to revive the cooperative movement were not entirely successful.

In 2000 the government decided to invest in the sector by establishing a Cooperative Society Unit, which highlighted its importance in the development of the local people. This was:

To encourage effective meaningful participation of ordinary people in the rural communities and villages in the national development process to perpetuate economic prosperity, enhance progress on communal welfare and to restore dignity to individuals through the Cooperative Society Movement...Cooperative societies do not only create a conducive environment to do business in the spirit of competition but also stimulate economic activities in the rural areas and which programmes will be geared towards the effective participation of rural people in business activities in the villages. (Mugambwa, 2005, p. 8)

Recently in PNG, a study by Garnevskaja, Harold, and Kingi (2014) reported that the government through the Ministry of Trade and Industry focused on the promotion of agriculture-based cooperatives in the area of palm oil, coffee, tea and rubber. The study also stated that the

government relied on cooperatives to raise farm production and earnings, improve employment opportunities, promote self-reliance, and for communal and national development. Moreover, the PNG cooperative is a member of the ICA and is structured in a four-tier system, including primary (local), secondary (provincial) and tertiary (involving both primary and secondary) cooperatives which allow vertical and horizontal integration of institutions (Garnevska et al., 2014). It directly benefited the rural communities in doing business through the pooling of local resources, regulating the rural economy, and getting better returns for their produce.

An NGO in Samoa, Matuaileoo Environment Trust Incorporated (METI), worked with many communities in rural areas of Samoa to engage them in economic development. An initiative was established in 2003 to manufacture virgin coconut oil and soaps from coconuts sold by village-based cooperatives (Cahn, 2008). At first, people were earning much more than the national minimum wage and received better deals for their family and community produce with a market provided by METI. The business melded well with the social networks of people, and the rural families had an increased income, which in turn supported the rural economy. However, this initiative faced numerous challenges such as the difficulty of balancing business with family and sociocultural obligations, difficulty in recruiting cooperative members, inability of landowners without coconut to join the cooperative, the economic emphasis giving little social or cultural motivation to participate, tension between *fa'asamoa* culture and the cooperative model, non-attendance of members during cooperative-related work, and lastly, most elders who were not involved in the physical work received the same amount of money since they were landowners. The cooperative venture was not so effective as intended due to the varied tensions it faced, but the villagers were able to improve their livelihoods from the sale of coconuts. However, there was significant indication that the cultural aspects, *fa'asamoa*, blended well with micro-entrepreneurial activity as access to natural (coconuts) and human (villagers) capital was guaranteed by the customary land system (Cahn, 2008).

In Fiji, the cooperative movement was traced back to the passage of the Cooperative Societies Act 1974 (Singh, 1999). It seemed that the early development of the cooperative was appropriate to the requirements of Fiji as the indigenous communalistic structures were seen to be entirely compatible with the philosophy of the cooperative movement. The report by

Singh (1999) stated that the following indigenous Fijian society features would make it amendable to supporting cooperatives: homogeneity, communal ownership, mutual help, sharing and caring ideals, subsistence culture, and the difficulty outside traders would have in penetrating villages to set up shops. The agriculture and producer marketing cooperatives include the following: cocoa, ginger, copra, dairy, *yaqona* (kava), sugar, marine produce, and forestry (Singh, 1999).

A study was conducted by Pathak and Kumar in 2008, trying to find out the critical factors of successful cooperatives in Fiji (Pathak & Kumar, 2008). This study was conducted mainly with credit unions, cooperative stores, industrial cooperatives, and savings and loan cooperatives within the Suva area. These cooperatives brought economic development to marginalised communities, such as the *Raiwaqa* housing area. Here they provided employment and livelihood support and were, therefore, able to solve some social concerns within the community through working together and pooling local resources. The study proposed the following factors that need close attention while running cooperatives in Fiji: the people forming cooperatives should have an in-depth knowledge of cooperative concepts; translating cooperative concepts and principles into the vernacular; *kerekere* system (kin borrowing without paying) and social obligations affecting business transactions; intensive cooperative training series to be conducted and continuously monitored; cooperative board members to be elected before registration and undergo intensive training on the cooperative principles; better management skills, and operating process; the advisor of the board must have a sound business and cooperative background; cooperatives should be initiated by the people and not government or NGOs, but their support services and promotion is much needed; inter and intra-cooperative and agency networking; and lastly, cooperatives must be free from any political affiliation (Pathak & Kumar, 2008; Singh, 1999).

### **2.5.3 Customary structures as the basis for cooperative ventures**

We can also learn about the potential for cooperative initiatives in the Pacific even if they don't fit strictly with international definitions of a cooperative, through examining how traditional communal structures have been the basis of local economic development efforts. Indigenous Fijians have been engaging in economic development from the colonial period through to the present. Contemporary tribal and community-based businesses usually belong

to the land-owning units (either *tokatoka* – extended family, *mataqali* – sub clan or *yavusa* – tribe). Most of these businesses do not follow the details of cooperatives as set by the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), but are socially and culturally embedded forms of cooperatives in Fiji. This is where indigenous Fijians pool resources, putting emphasis and effort into entrepreneurial engagements, and continue to learn within the process of running the business. Their businesses vary in size and types; for example, landowners in the Yasawa Island used their customary land to build a tribal and community-based tourism initiative depending largely on social capital for the building process and families taking turns as the workforce. Later, they assisted with community development initiatives that benefit the members of the tribe (Gibson, 2012b; Pratt, Gibson, & Movono, 2013).

A tribal farming concept at Sawaieke, Gau Island, Lomaiviti district which has been operational for over five years involves the use of customary land belonging to a few land-owning units. Through the members' collective effort, the farms contributed to communal development initiatives. The youth groups were engaged in farming taro and kava as a business and an allocated market was provided with the assistance of the government. This venture benefitted every household in the village, mostly by building modern houses for villagers and sourcing capital to start up small businesses, such as trade stores and transport businesses involving fiberglass boats and vehicles. More farms are being developed for their future investments (Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development Fiji, 2019). Recently, the landowners of Nakelo in Vuda village, Lautoka, bought back the four-star Treasure Island resort which is on their traditional land on Elevuka Island. This was the result of an agreement not to distribute their lease money for 13 years and to make capital investments with the long-term goal to buy back their traditional land and run their own business. The sub-clan of Nakelo is the first group of landowners to own a four-star resort in Fiji. All members will benefit from the new business branch of land owning units (Vula, 2019).

This section has shown that contemporary cooperatives belonging to land-owning units based on their customary land in the Pacific can effectively engage with the modern economy and contribute to community interests. While some could be described as only loosely fitting the international definition of cooperatives, they are certainly socio-culturally embedded, where collective development and wellbeing become paramount.

In the broader Pacific, a wide range of factors has come into play, which sometimes compromised the performance of cooperatives, as discussed in the next section.

#### **2.5.4 Challenges to cooperatives in the Pacific**

Based on the history of cooperatives in the Pacific, there is no easy way for a cooperative business to be successful in the region. It is assumed that cooperatives are a suitable model for indigenous people's engagement with economic development, but there are many factors that can become hurdles to achieving success. It must be clearly stated at the initiation stage what the responsibilities of members are, and that their success will require sacrifices and input from members. The cooperative business will need proactive and vibrant members who have common interests and goals.

As noted earlier, cooperatives have two arms, the business and the community, and there needs to be a balance in how they operate. Importantly, the business end needs to be in full operation, which comes with a whole range of factors, as summarised in Figure 2. They need to navigate through the challenges presented in Table 2. Once they can create a surplus, a portion can be used to carry out community development projects and keep the business afloat. Most stories of Pacific cooperatives have a similar output, which is focused on carrying out a community or village-based project. Therefore, the cooperative needs to first create a profit before community development projects are executed. Community development can be achieved through profits gained by an increased level of production from the cooperative.

Moreover, the issue of collective decision making versus having a manager or entrepreneur is always a point of conflict. A cooperative will need to negotiate between having a business expert or entrepreneur to guide the business and the collective decision-making process for general operations.

There have been many challenges to cooperative success in the Pacific, and the pivotal ones are outlined in Table 2.

**Table 2: Challenges faced by Pacific Island cooperatives**

Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>General Management</b></li><li>• Mismanagement of funds.</li><li>• Cooperative board members need to be elected before registration and undergo intensive cooperative training.</li><li>• Incompetence of managers and entrepreneurs.</li><li>• Unequitable dividends.</li><li>• Ambitious promises – failure to deliver.</li><li>• Inter and intra-cooperative connection and networking.</li><li>• Free riders, members join in for benefits and not for teamwork and motivations.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Business operation</b></li><li>• The incompetence of cooperative and support officers to give advice.</li><li>• Illiteracy, lack of intensive cooperative training series and monitoring and lack of training facilities.</li><li>• Balance between having a manager or entrepreneur for expert advice and collective decision making.</li><li>• The tension between the customary systems and the cooperative business model.</li><li>• Difficulty to balance the business and sociocultural obligations and family.</li><li>• Absence of a feasibility study of cooperative groups at the initiation phase.</li><li>• Translating cooperative concepts and principles to the vernacular to be understood by all.</li><li>• Lack of cooperative awareness and consultations.</li><li>• Conflict in the use of customary resources.</li><li>• Unclear, irrational policies and operating regulations.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Other factors</b></li><li>• Cooperatives to be initiated by the people and not NGOs or government.</li><li>• Political influence.</li><li>• Politics, state, and business resistance.</li><li>• Difficulty in recruiting cooperative members.</li><li>• Cooperative managers also own private businesses in direct competition.</li><li>• Expatriate companies provide better prices for produce and cost for goods at trade stores, making members unfaithful to their cooperative.</li></ul>

Sources: Couper, 1968; Rutherford, 1981; Singh, 1999; Mugambwa, 2005; Murray-Prior, Sengere & Batt, 2009; Garnevaska, Joseph & Kingi, 2014; Sengere, Susuke & Allen, 2008; Cahn, 2008; Pathak & Kumar, 2008

### 2.5.5 Pacific Island family businesses

Pacific Island family businesses are crucial to the survival of local economies as they are the centre of trade and business dealings in rural areas. The businesses varied in type and size from trade stores to agrarian activities. There is considerable research from the 1980s which laid the foundation for Pacific small business development, including family businesses. Hailey's work (Hailey, 1985, 1986, 1987) has been widely cited in this field. He noted the types

of assistance these businesses required in terms of management advice, business training, and feasibility studies to render the financial, technical, and market support for small businesses in the Pacific island countries.

Other related research looks at success factors and obstacles to small businesses in the Pacific, most of which are in fact family firms. Some of these success factors include: individual capacity (skills, character, and attitude), a conducive business environment (government and traditional support), strategically oriented management, having sound evaluation measures, ability to manage risk and awareness of regulatory requirements. Some studies found barriers to business success: not having adequate education and business experience, social inhibitions, complexities brought in by merging traditional and western ideologies, lack of start-up capital and security or collateral (Fairbairn, 1988, 2006; Reddy, 2007; Schaper, 2002; Singh, Pathak, & Naz, 2010; Yusuf, 1995). These factors need to be adhered to by small business owners for better business operations in the Pacific.

The discussion of business is often a sensitive issue as the indigenous culture of Pacific island people is perceived to be a barrier to economic development. As noted by both Gibson (2012) and Rao (2004), the culture of the Pacific Island people is based on collectivity and a communal way of living which is directly in contrast with the individualism required in the western business philosophy. Furthermore, success in the Pacific customary context requires the use of profit in cultural obligations and community development programmes whereas the western focus is on profit maximisation, investment and growth.

However, studies conducted by Saffu (2003) and Cahn (2008) challenged these views noting that the Pacific way of life, such as *fa'a samoa*, if blended well with the western ideologies of doing business, can bring success. Other works were able to showcase the merging of traditional and business ways of doing things (Farrelly, 2009; Morrison, 2008), for example finding that it was possible to weave indigenous culture (*va'avanua* in Fiji) into business to make a workable hybrid business system that incorporated community values. Others have shown too that indigenous entrepreneurship can still function within communal systems of ownership and without the creation of tradeable property rights especially when dealing with customary land (Cahn, 2008; Farrelly, 2009; Gibson, 2012; Morrison, 2008; Rao, 2004; Saffu, 2003).

### 2.5.6 Family business experience in the Pacific

The beach *fale* experience in Samoa is a good example of family involvement in low scale tourism businesses based on their customary land. In these businesses, the tourists stay in traditional Samoan houses (*fale*) with raised walls near white sandy beaches. These budget holiday venues attract tourists who desire inexpensive but unique experiences by experiencing the Samoan lifestyle and culture. The beach-*fales* are usually in the village territory, and tourists can witness the village life, food, and culture first hand (Haughey, 2007; Scheyvens, 2005, 2006; Woods, 2006). This system can benefit the families and villages as well as having specific protocols and policies to protect Samoan culture and norms. Beach *fale* success is reliant on approval by the *matai* (chiefs); the supporting role of the family and faith, the materials to build the *fale* (Samoan house) being affordable for families to purchase or sourced directly from the environment, and minimal start-up capital for establishment. Unlike other tourist and holiday destinations in the Pacific, for instance, Fiji, where many foreign-owned luxurious hotels dominate the nicest beaches, Samoan families have found a way of retaining ownership and control over tourism in their villages which supports both family and community development (Scheyvens, 2005, 2006).

These beach *fale* family businesses have a range of positive impacts. The money paid by the tourists goes straight to the hands of the family without any intermediary entity managing it. The business creates ripples of benefits to the community such as: hiring of local people to do carpentry works and traditional activities, reducing urban migration as there are opportunities right at their doorstep, reviving the local economy through tourists using local bus services and shopping from the village stores, sales of handicrafts, fruits and vegetables, contributions to the collection plate when they attend church services, and restoring pride for their village and environment and raising the social status of families and relatives engaged in the business (Haughey, 2007; Scheyvens, 2005, 2006; Woods, 2006). Thus, beach *fale* tourism is an excellent form of a family business as it is socially embedded, locally controlled, encourages local participation, and economic benefits are locally retained.

Another empirical study on Pacific family business ventures was conducted in Fiji. It involved data from the National Development Centre for Micro Enterprise Development, which looks after small scale and family businesses in Fiji (Amosa & Pandaram, 2010). It found that family

businesses in Fiji had several positive effects, such as providing services to rural areas, contributing to a sustainable economy, creating employment, and as crucial players in the supply chain of larger companies. Provision of quality services and networks to customers brings in a new dimension in terms of relationships in comparison to larger corporate companies where the customers never know who the owners are. The family firms also are better at showing concern for employees' overall wellbeing. An example of this is the family-owned restaurant, Heniua, at Baravi, Sigatoka, which has been operating for five years. It survived the direct competition from other highly rated resorts in the Coral Coast tourist destination in Fiji, by serving indigenous Fijian meals. The family managed to employ disadvantaged youths from the community and also contributed to customary obligations like traditional ceremonies and church activities in their village (Tikomailepanoni, 2016).

Meredith (1989) purposefully published an article to oppose the allegation by commentators that the communal ownership of customary land by indigenous Fijians is an obstruction to economic and social development, and therefore privatisation and creation of transferrable property rights is needed to boost development. In the 1980s, logging of native trees was conducted by either multinational companies or local timber businesses with limited inclusion of native landowners in the business operations (Meredith, 1989). The government later developed pine plantations on customary land, which were to be logged by the same companies. A revolution happened, and landowners were encouraged to establish their own companies for their respective families (extended family is the Fijian concept of family) of landowners. The money gained from the initial logging topped with some capital investments for machinery encouraged many indigenous and landowners' companies to be established. Some companies developed from the parent logging company such as logging teams, trucking units, loading companies, chipping companies, canteen units, and mechanical workshops. These companies were locally controlled and owned and managed to contribute to community development, housing, employment, preservation, and surveying of traditional, ceremonial and ecological areas of importance, transportation, and building roads to remote villages. (Farrelly, 2011; Knapman, 1976; Larson & Zalanga, 2004; Meredith, 1989). A critical example is provided that native landowners in Fiji can also be competitive in business, given the right support. Learning from this, the same motive to establish other agrarian forms of

business supply chains or value-adding and to find a niche in the modern market using the collective family effort is inevitable.

Another study examined Tongan family businesses both in Tonga and New Zealand (S. M. Prescott, 2009). It found that these businesses had raised the social status of the families, and business sustainability and succession planning where the aim is to maintain the reputations of families as well as simulating the Tongan inheritance practice. The following factors were seen as enablers to business progress for Tongan family businesses; social embeddedness, having external directors and advisors, providing on the job training for siblings, spending wisely, having formal training and experience, good human resource management, contract accountants' services, avoid withdrawing of money at early business stage, enhance customer services and networking, and forming strong networks with community groups (Fisi'iahi, 2006; Prescott & Hooper, 2015; Prescott, 2009). As in many cases of Pacific island family businesses, the owners were also multi-tasking depending on the size of the business but being honest in asking for the necessary support from family members can improve the effectiveness of such businesses.

Various external organisations, including donors and NGOs, and individuals, can really help to create a supportive environment for family businesses in the Pacific. For example, two Samoan family business who are exporting virgin coconut oil and dried bananas reported that their coconut plantations and banana farm were not fully utilised until the assistance of the European Union fund through Women in Business Development, which helped in value-adding of products and finding a sustainable market niche (Tafuna'i, 2007). Similarly, two Tongan family businesses on the main island have capitalised on innovation and networking to get a market for their products (Nath, 2015, March 2). One uses the connection of families offshore to export their yams planted by family members on their customary land; using postharvest technology and adhering to biosecurity protocols makes this possible. The other uses the connections to an NGO that have assisted in the building of a biofuel harvester for their piggery. The primary basis of income was the sale of the high demand pork meat to local markets and biofuel for cooking, lighting, and storage of meats (Cretney & Tafuna'i, 2004; Nath, 2015, March 2; Rasigatale, 2016, June 26; Tafuna'i, 2007). The combination of an innovation mindset, proper financial and market support, adapting to challenges, networking, and perseverance, are the factors that boost these family businesses.

Overall, there are several common factors challenging family businesses in the Pacific, and others that are known to contribute to their success. Some contributors to efficient family firms include: innovation and diversification, customer acclimatisation, networking to develop strong relationships with other entrepreneurs, knowledge of the business environment, good organisational structure and business culture, and having the capacity to absorb shock and prepare for risks (Bartol, Martin, Tein, & Mathews, 1995). Meanwhile, common challenges (summarised in Table 3) are: insufficient establishment capital, lack of financial capabilities, insufficient infrastructural and business support systems, restrictive policies of local town councils, government regulations, inadequate information and knowledge around the small-medium enterprise sector and heavy reliance on financial institutions (Amosa & Pandaram, 2010; Naidu & Chand, 2011, 2012; Prasad & Singh, 2013; Singh et al., 2010; Singh & Prasad, 2014).

Table 3: Common challenges faced by Pacific family businesses

<b>Challenges</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>General Management</b></li> <li>• Heavy reliance on financial institution</li> <li>• Bookkeeping and accountants' services</li> <li>• Complexities brought in by merging traditional and western ideologies</li> <li>• Better customer services</li> <li>• Sustainable business and marketing concept</li> <li>• <b>Business operation</b></li> <li>• Insufficient establishment capital, lack of financial capabilities and collateral</li> <li>• Inadequate information and knowledge around the small-medium enterprise sector</li> <li>• Unnecessary spending, withdrawing of money at early business stage</li> <li>• not having adequate education and business experience,</li> <li>• <b>Other factors</b></li> <li>• Insufficient infrastructural support systems</li> <li>• Restrictive policies of local town councils and government</li> <li>• Government regulations</li> <li>• Social inhibitions</li> <li>• Market and technical support</li> <li>• Lack of expert and business advice</li> <li>• Lack of networking</li> <li>• Researching and feasibility studies</li> </ul>

*Source: Amosa & Pandaram, 2010; Naidu & Chand, 2011, 2012; Prasad & Singh, 2013; Singh et al., 2010; G. Singh & Prasad, 2014.*

## 2.6 Reflection

Both cooperatives and family businesses are very important contributors to economic development around the world. As noted, they have dual roles which can lead to some tensions and constraints with respect to their operations. However, the social and community-focused nature of these enterprises can also contribute to more holistic development outcomes for those involved. Certainly, in the Pacific it has been shown that cooperatives and family businesses can enhance family and community wellbeing as well as benefitting the wider economy. Their rootedness in culture and society can also help to enable their success.

A fundamental backdrop to this discussion is understanding how the success of cooperative and family businesses has traditionally been measured. Historically, mainstream business undertakings consider the financial gain in terms of turnover, profit maximisation, growth or return on investment, or the number of business employees as the most applicable criteria to measure success (Barkham, Gudgin, Hart, & Hanvey, 1996; Brüderl & Preisendörfer, 1998). A study conducted in Western-Australia (Walker & Brown, 2004) involved 290 small businesses, mostly family-owned, where the owners or managers were surveyed to rate the financial and lifestyle indicators of business success. The study found a dramatic preference for the businesses to opt for lifestyle criteria as a measure of business success. The findings directly challenge whether the financial criterion is still a valid and an inclusive indicator for success. Furthermore, other studies have found that family businesses uses non-financial indicators to define success (Reijonen & Komppula, 2007; Simpson, Tuck, & Bellamy, 2004; Sturges, 1999). These indicators were based on standards encapsulated in the following phrases; 'lifestyle businesses' (Owen, Carsky, & Dolan, 1992), 'lifestyle entrepreneurship' (Marcketti, Niehm, & Fuloria, 2006), or 'psychic rewards' (Beaver, 2002). Non-financial goals can be complementary to financial goals:

Contrary to popular belief, and a great deal of economic theory, money and the pursuit of a personal financial fortune are not as significant as the desire for personal involvement, responsibility and the independent quality and style of life which many small business owner-managers strive to achieve. Consequently, the attainment of these objectives becomes one of the principal criteria for success, as defined by the entrepreneur/owner-manager (Jennings and Beaver, 1997: p63).

Others have noted that having better quality of life and relationships is superior to financial gain, as is self-determination—being a decision-maker rather than decision-taker (Beaver, 2002; Jennings & Beaver, 1997; Marcketti et al., 2006; Owen et al., 1992; Reijonen & Komppula, 2007; Walker & Brown, 2004).

Thus, when considering the success and contributions of cooperatives and family business models in the Pacific, we need to reflect on their social embeddedness and what this means to them. Chapter 3, to follow, will therefore elaborate on alternative economic framings of development, including literature on social embeddedness, social capital and indigenous entrepreneurship. This will provide a good basis for the case studies later in the thesis which explore family and cooperative businesses on customary land in Fiji.

# Chapter 3 Social embeddedness, entrepreneurship and place-based economic development in the Pacific

*Au butuka tu*. Literally translates as 'I am standing (on) my ground'. It also means the support of the land, its people and traditional systems that supported you to be who you are. For this thesis these sociocultural systems play a critical role in economic development in the Pacific.

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at the notion of social embeddedness from different viewpoints. It also explores some of the philosophical thinking affiliated with the socially embedded economy, including sustainable development, diverse economies, hybrid economies, and doughnut economics. The chapter will then discuss the related terms of the entrepreneur, indigenous entrepreneurship, and an entrepreneurship ecosystem considering the social dimensions of economic development. Throughout, examples from the Pacific are drawn upon to show the relevance of place-based, socially-embedded development.

The social characteristics of running a business are critical to any entrepreneurial venture. It is crucial to consider how various economic activities are related to the broader interconnection of norms and social surroundings, and how economic undertakings are established in the web of social institutions. A business that is embedded in the social environment can produce meaningful forms of economic development. In fact, the economy, the entrepreneur and entrepreneurship are part of the fabric of society, and it is possible to balance economic behaviours and the social life of people.

## 3.2 Social embeddedness notion: Polanyi, Granovetter, and Lin

The notion behind social embeddedness initiated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Karl Paul Polanyi. He was a Hungarian-American social philosopher, economic historian, economic anthropologist, historical sociologist, and political economist who studied the existence of the economy within the social world (Humphreys, 1969; Stanfield, 1986). From an anthropological perspective, the study focused on how the self-regulating market economy affects society, the environment, and relationships. Polanyi's famous book *The Great Transformation*

(Polanyi, 1944) was written before the end of World War Two and delivered a detailed discussion of the decline of classical liberal thoughts and the fall of laissez-faire capitalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Two key concepts from this book were the transition into the industrial revolution and the double movement. Polanyi argued that the internal contradictions of capitalism created the momentum of the industrial revolution with its massive forces pulling people off the land into factories with wages. The double movement refers to the struggles people faced and the realisation of the need for social welfare and protection within the market society as the revolution started attaching monetary price tags to everything (Polanyi, 1944).

The 'Great Transformation' was the title of the book, and the meaning has a strong connection to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It referred to the transferral of society from a traditional to a market-orientated one. The traditional society operated within three principles: householding, reciprocity, and redistribution (Humphreys, 1969; Polanyi, 1944, 1957). A market society has the following features: the market is central to production and distribution, the creation of three fictitious commodities in the land, labour and money, money and price become central, and market shapes the mind and ways of thinking. The core components of this move were discussed by Polanyi including the balance in power systems between competing states, the international gold standard signified in money and material wealth, the notion of self-regulating market and the establishment of the liberal state as the fourth institution (Polanyi, 1944; Polanyi, Arensberg, & Pearson, 1957; Stanfield, 1986). The ability to keep all these institutions depends on the laws that govern the self-regulating market or market society.

The creation of fictitious commodities accompanied by the force of laws that govern market society had significantly impacted human society. It was able to transform man to labour and convert nature and environment to land, and created a system whereby the economy was the only determinant of life (Polanyi, 1944; Polanyi et al., 1957). Nevertheless, Polanyi was against all these and stated that human could not be separated from nature, as man and nature are intricately related, and the relationship experiences passed down from the ancestors provided the very source of life which enabled man to colonise the world. He further stated:

Traditionally, land and labor are not separated; labor forms part of life, land remains part of nature, life and nature form an articulate whole. Land is thus tied up with the organisations of kinship, neighborhood, craft, and creed-with tribe and temple, village, gild, and church...The economic function is but one of many vital functions of land. It invests man's life with stability; it is the site of his habitation; it is a condition of his physical safety; it is the landscape and the seasons. We might as well imagine his being born without hands and feet as carrying on his life without land. And yet to separate land from man and organise society in such a way as to satisfy the requirements of a real-estate market was a vital part of the utopian concept of a market economy. (Polanyi, 1944: p. 178).

It means that man and nature formed a very sustainable relationship, and the land was just a component of life. The market economy had a very different view that disregards man's social interactions, norms, and values with the land. It destroyed the core of what supported life in society, and the market was the gatekeeper for accessing land according to the purchasing power of individuals.

The economy is inseparable from society and is interwoven within social relationships and became part of the fabric of society. It was supported by Polanyi, who argued for a realistic, social, and cultural approach to economics, which accentuated the way economies are embedded within society and culture (Polanyi, 1944). This perspective stood in direct contrast to mainstream economics but was popular in anthropology, economic history, economic sociology, and political science. Three essential questions of the relationship between the market and society examined by Polanyi include social actions in relation to the free market and where it was found before modern times, the occurrence of reciprocity, redistribution and exchange outside the modern world and lastly, the question of parallel connections between economic behaviour and social arrangements and institutions. In trying to answer such questions Polanyi and other academics studied prehistoric societies such as Babylonia, Pre-Columbian America, and ancient Mesopotamia and found that the market economy in these societies did not depend exclusively on the law of supply and demand and its relationship to price fluctuations (Humphreys, 1969; Özveren, 2007; Polanyi, 1944). There were also crucial roles played by the social actors and social institutions and the development of social and cultural arrangements working in perpetuity with the economic system within the whole of human society.

Social relationships also bound the economy and society as a whole. Through the division of labour people specialised in specific skills to produce goods and services, and these were intergenerationally passed on from ancestors and knowledge keepers (Polanyi, 1944; Polanyi et al., 1957). Transactions were carried out through the maintenance of social relationships between these social actors who are producers and providers of service. Polanyi also added that most societies outside the capitalist western world practiced three guiding principles; householding, reciprocity and redistribution, which were later disrupted by imperial capitalism. Imposing capitalism in the form of trade, formal markets and policies in the modern economy disrupted the primary strands of society, and according to Polanyi (Isaac, 2005; Polanyi et al., 1957), they were the culprit. Polanyi's book, '*The Great Transformation*,' became a model for historical sociology which contains theories that eventually became the foundation for social embeddedness of economies and economic democracy movement.

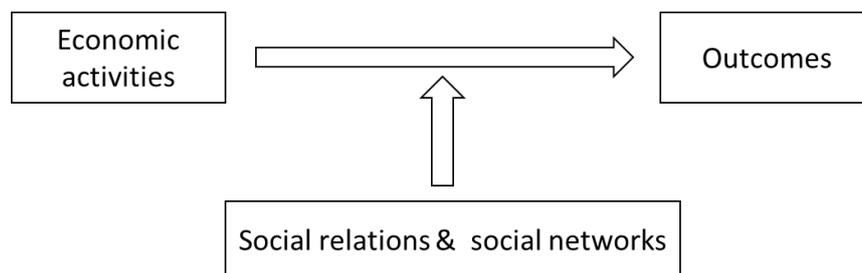
The idea of embeddedness of economies proposed by Polanyi became part of the social embeddedness in social theory. Mark Granovetter, an American sociologist, used the same social embeddedness concept and stated that it was not only an integral component of ancient economies but also of the modern (Granovetter, 2005). A vital question that Granovetter emphasised was, 'What would economic life and behaviour be like if people do not have social relationships?'. This question was enlightened with a few critical points. Once one starts to look at economic life in terms of social relationships, one will get a different picture of the economy as the economy happens through social relationships (Granovetter, 1985, 2005). In other words, people carry out a lot of economic activities through social relations, and economic actions cannot happen without at least two people.

Granovetter also expounded on the two different views of the economy analysed by economists. The first view was the under-socialised approach, which is typical of classical and modern economists, where people pursue their self-interest and engage in activities to maximise this interest and are not influenced by social relationships. The second approach is the sociological view, or the over-socialised perspective. It states that economic actions are determined by external factors like social class, religion, or gender. People's activities in the economy are completely regulated by norms and values acquired as a result of socialisation (Granovetter, 1985, 2005, 2018). Within the idea of embeddedness of economies, there are three crucial principles:

- (1) economic action is a form of social action;
- (2) economic action is socially situated or embedded; and
- (3) economic institutions are social constructions. (Granovetter, 2018: p. XIX).

Thus, Granovetter’s embeddedness argument has emerged as a potential theory for joining economic and sociological approaches (Figure 3).

Nan Lin further developed the embeddedness of economies concept of Polanyi and Granovetter. Lin specialises in the field of sociology, and most of his research is around social networks and social capital (Lin, Cook, & Burt, 2017). Most of the research on this embeddedness concept had been conducted within economic academies, commercial, and business settings and asserted that social relationships and networks of the economy are restricted only within the context of economy and business. Lin strongly argued that social networks provide the necessary environment conducive to facilitate and promote economic activities. The history of how social relationships and networks facilitated trade in Europe, the Middle-East, Africa, and Asia using ethnic and family ties was illustrated. For instance, the Jewish Maghribi traders and the Chinese Guanxi traders in the 11<sup>th</sup> century used already established networks based on cultural heritage and social relations (Lin, 2002, 2008, 2017). In the context of this study, prior relationships through kinship and blood-ties, and the relationship to customary land are used to promote indigenous businesses. Figure 3 shows the theoretical model of embeddedness.



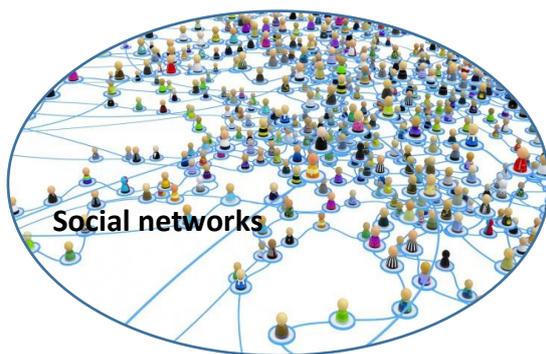
Source: (Granovetter, 1985, 2005, 2018).

**Figure 3: Interaction between economic activities and social relations and networks**

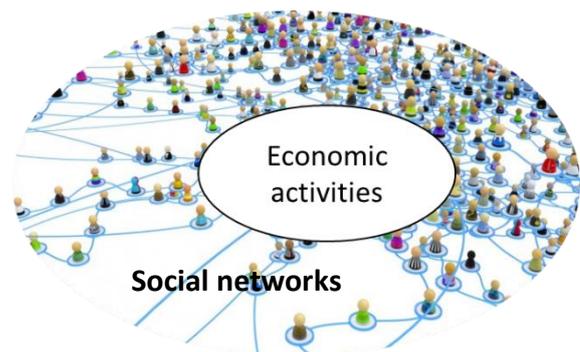
It leads to a vital proposition suggested by Lin (2017) on the conceptualisation of embeddedness of economies. He states that socially embedded economies do make sense and still exist today, and there is strong evidence that such embedded social networks can be constructed and sustained beyond ethnicity, family, and location to dictate economic activities as in Figure 4 (Lin, 2017; Trinity College Dublin, 2015). It also means that social relations and social networks are the framing context for economic activities rather than economic activities being the only framing context (Figure 4). Social networks build social institutions and social structures like ethnic groups, family groups, and religious groups. Social actors identify activities within these social institutions and networks to facilitate economic roles and activities (AusAid, 2008; Lin, 2002, 2008, 2017).

Economic activity as the framing context.

Social networks as the framing context



**Economic activity**



Source: Lin, 2008: p.20.

**Figure 4: Differentiating between economic activity and social networks as framing contexts.**

### 3.3 Thinking that aligns to the social embeddedness concept

This section provides some thoughts that are similar to the social embeddedness concept. Instead of looking at the economy with just the capitalist perspective of profit maximisation and growth, the focus is also on non-monetary initiatives that people are engaged in within their social contexts. This includes sustainable and inclusive development, diverse economy, hybrid economy, and then doughnut economics.

### **3.3.1 Sustainable development and inclusive development**

Social embeddedness shifts the viewpoint from the economy to the inclusion of social actors, social networks, and relationships to facilitate economic activities. This aligns closely with the notion of inclusive development, which is the guiding tenet of the global agenda for sustainable development 2030. The Sustainable Development Goals state that humanity is facing a real challenge to sustainable development with increasing poverty, rising inequality, the disparity of opportunities, wealth, and power (United Nations, 2015). The agenda also makes a vital pledge which is the foundation of the plan:

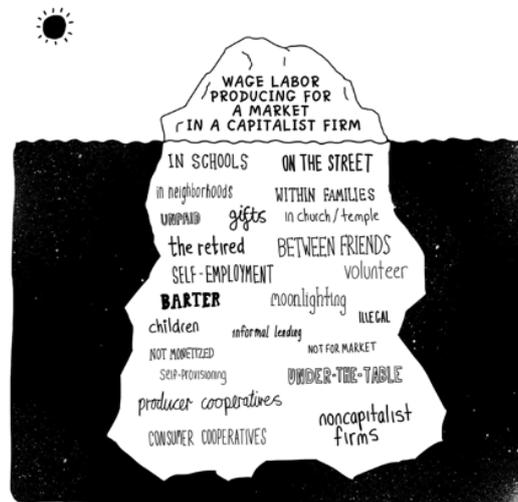
As we embark on this great collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind. Recognizing that the dignity of the human person is fundamental (United Nations, 2015: p.3).

On the same note, Lawson (2010) stated that uneven economic development discourses could be blamed for the sustainable development challenges humanity is encountering. Deep poverty and social exclusion were seen as the result of the flat earth view, which promoted unequal development and greed. Thence, inclusive development begins from an embedded conceptualisation of economic development, which is informed by an ethical concern for people and care, not just economic growth (Lawson, 2010: p.359). The Sustainable Development Goals report (United Nations, 2015) also refers to the notion of inclusive development in the sense that people need to participate in decision making, contribute to create opportunities, and share in and retain the benefits of development.

### **3.3.2 Diverse economies**

Inclusive development thinking also recognises the diverse activities that are usually excluded or suppressed by capitalist discourses. A way to represent this is the iceberg diagram which is a model of diverse economy framework (Gibson-Graham, Cameron, & Healy, 2013), with a small portion of the 'usually regarded as the economy' activities floating above the surface as in wage labour, market exchange of commodities and capitalist enterprises, capitalist enterprises and mainstream market. Below that are the diverse arrangements of economic activities that people engage with anchoring what is seen above (Figure 5). This approach is similar to the Pacific version of a floating coconut in trying to understand women's and men's roles in economies in Melanesia (McKinnon, Carnegie, Gibson, & Rowland, 2016). Some of

these submerged activities are related to the household and voluntary sectors, the informal sector, indigenous based economies, kin-based exchange, and the social economy. These important submerged activities are regarded by Gibson-Graham et al. (2017: p3) as the ‘construction of an alternative common sense of the economy, one that is growing in influence worldwide.’ These activities should be appreciated as varied economic practices being practiced by people throughout the world to make a living, as illustrated in Figure 5. The embeddedness thinking of the economy facilitates the notions of inclusive and diverse economies that are acquainted with an ethical concern and care for people and not solely financial and economic growth.



Source: Gibson-Graham, Cameron, & Healy, 2013: p.13.

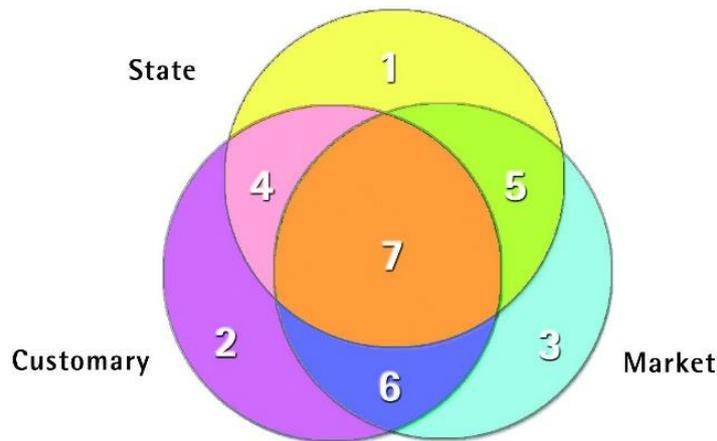
**Figure 5: The ice-berg frameworks describing diverse economies**

### 3.3.3 Hybrid economy

The hybrid economy is an indispensable component of the social embeddedness of economies, as well as recognising diverse economies. Most of the activities involve the engagement of people of different contexts in alternative livelihood approaches while engaging in different forms of economies. The hybrid economy is related to the work on ‘economic hybridity in rural Wenzhou, on the southeast coast of China’ (Yang, 2000) who defines the hybrid economy, the work of Gibson-Graham’s (2013) diverse economy;

This article (hybrid economy) takes up J.K. Gibson-Graham's call for a theoretical move away from a model of monolithic global capitalism and notions of one-way "penetration" of capitalism. The notion of "economic hybridity" (derived from Bakhtin's writing on linguistic hybridity) is proposed as an alternative to the Marxist concept of "articulation of modes of production" to account for the coming together of economic logics and practices from different epochs and cultural histories (Yang, 2000: p. 477).

This notion was also used to study the Aboriginal economy in rural Australia with a hybrid economy conceptual framework (Figure 6) (Altman, 2009). It is a model that captures the cultural, socially embedded and kin-based economy of individuals, households, and communities. The mainstream model has the two dominant figures of the state and market or public and private sectors, whereas the hybrid economy has the customary sector overlapped into both mainstream sectors. This hybrid economy framework emphasises people's multi-sectoral production and non-production engagements, a focus on the multiple opportunities (represented in sections 2, 4, 6 and 7 in Figure 6) for individual productive intervention, independence, and opportunity (Altman, 2007). A family can engage in hunting, selling traditional artworks, receiving state welfare, and waged employment all at the same time (Altman, 2007, 2009). It shows the engagement of people in diverse-livelihoods economic activities within all sectors of local economies.

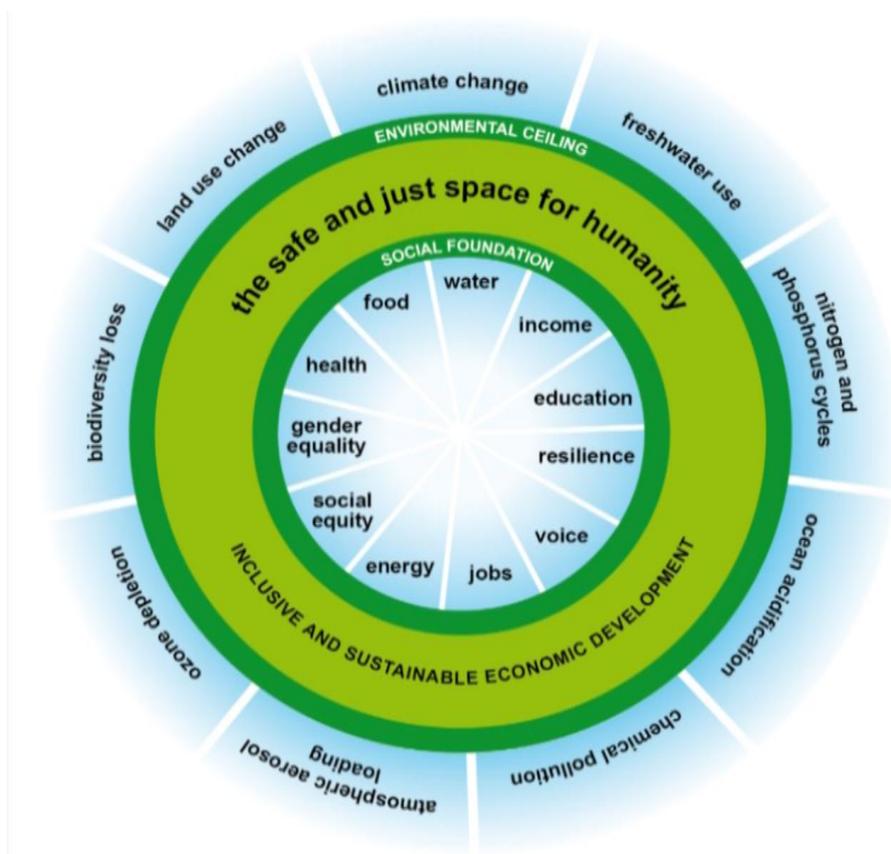


Source: Altman (2009: p. 322).

**Figure 6: The Hybrid economy model of local Aboriginal community in Australia.**

### 3.3.4 Doughnut economics

Doughnut economics (Figure 7) was developed as a framework to describe sustainable development as well as social embeddedness ideologies. It was developed by Kate Raworth with the idea that the economy is not floating on a white background but deeply embedded into the social sphere and the environment (Raworth, 2012, 2017). The doughnut idea has four fundamental premises; money is not the only thing that fuels the flow of economy, diverse unpaid work is embedded within the economy, people create many values with activities that are not monetised, and only a few households are benefitting from the mainstream economy with wealth accumulation which is converted to power over the economy. The mainstream also focuses its operation on utility, efficiency, growth, financial dominance, and power.



Source: Raworth, 2012: p. 4.

**Figure 7: Doughnut economics model**

The idea that formed the background of doughnut economics is the replacement of money and growth with human wellbeing as the backbone of the economy. There are two sides of the doughnut economy; the wellbeing of individuals requires the availability of resources such as food, water, health, education, housing, and energy to facilitate human rights for individuals. The second is the ability of the life-supporting system of mother earth to continue to support the wellbeing of humankind, as illustrated in Figure 7. Development and economics should be focused on the need to get everybody within the social foundation ring and inclusive wellbeing for everybody and must be below the environmental ceiling (Raworth, 2012, 2017). This model informs a different version and perspective of progress, which is not through the ever-rising global economic growth but a balance between using the resources to meet human rights and the protection of the life support systems.

Now that socially-embedded and socially-oriented forms of economic development have been discussed, showing that there is wide support in the literature for the idea that business can serve society, the following section moves on to discuss key terms to do with entrepreneurs, indigenous entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial ecosystems.

### 3.4 Entrepreneurship and the entrepreneurship ecosystem

This section explains key terms in entrepreneurship applied throughout the thesis. This includes: (i) entrepreneur; (ii) entrepreneurship; and (iii) entrepreneurship ecosystem.

#### 3.4.1 An entrepreneur

'Entrepreneur' is a French word and refining the perfect definition of an entrepreneur (in English) has been a continuous process. Richard Cantillon, a French writer, first documented it in 1769 (Casson, Basu, Wadeson, & Yeung, 2006; Neal, 1990; Perelman, 2000). Cantillon defined entrepreneurs as people who are willing to take advantage of unrealised opportunities with the eagerness to purchase and sell at different prices, with the outcome attaining a profit in the process (Blaug, 2000; Nagarajan, 2011). The definition by Cantillon in 1769 influenced the works of Frank Knight (Knight, 1921, cited in Casson et al., 2006) and Francois Quesnay, who included commercial farmers as entrepreneurs (Hebert & Link, 2009; Nagarajan, 2011). Another French writer, Jean-Babtiste Say adopted the same definition by placing the entrepreneur amid the production and distribution process and labelling them as the 'superintendent and an administrator' (Hebert & Link, 2009: p.19). Later, an Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter merged the works of Marx, Weber, and Waras as well as Austrian scholars Menger, von Weiser, and von Bohm-bawerk (Blaug, 2000). Schumpeter defines an entrepreneur as the perfect innovator, who earns revenue from efficacious inventions, and the definition rejected the notion of risk-taking characteristics (Casson et al., 2006; Hebert & Link, 2009).

Ernesto Sirolli, a renowned consultant in economic development and a pioneer in community-based economic development, provided a prevalent definition: an entrepreneur is somebody who has the courage to do something different, visualise beyond the horizon, and initiate creative things for a better future. He strongly objected to the categorisation of

an entrepreneur as a business-person only (Sirolli, 2011, October 21). He clearly describes that for economic engagement initiatives three parties need to work collectively: the creator of the product, marketing person and financial management expert, and it would be unfair to label only one of these the entrepreneur (Aper, 2001; Mika, 2015; Sirolli, 2011, October 21). Sirolli's view of an entrepreneur also enculturates other forms like ethnic-migrant entrepreneurs (Baycan-Levent & Nijkamp, 2009), social entrepreneurs (Smith & Woodworth, 2012), indigenous entrepreneurs (Austin & Garnett, 2018) and Maori entrepreneurs (Mika, 2015).

For the purpose of this thesis, an entrepreneur is defined as a person who has the initiative to engage in entrepreneurial activity. The person acknowledges the initiative contributes to economic pursuance using the available resources and pays attention to the idea of context and place and the community.

### **3.4.2 Entrepreneurship**

The theory of entrepreneurship is founded on five distinct areas, economic theory, social conditions, entrepreneurship innovation, entrepreneurship theory, psychological theory and achievement motivation theory. The economic theory is based on the idea that economic incentives provide a favourable environment for motivating entrepreneurial activities. Some of these incentives include taxation policies, industrial policy, source of finance and raw materials, availability of infrastructure, marketing, and investment opportunities, and access to information and technology (Brewer, 1992; Casson et al., 2006; Cuevas, 1994). Specific social conditions like values, beliefs, and customs can provide an enabling environment for entrepreneurship. This is a significant component of the sociological theory, and entrepreneurial activity plays a significant role in society (Cherukara & Manalel, 2011; Kruja, 2013). The third is the entrepreneurship innovation theory whereby, entrepreneurship is defined as innovation activities, disregarding the organising and risk-taking abilities of the entrepreneur. Joseph Schumpeter led the entrepreneurship theory which stated that the entrepreneurship activity leads to the introduction of a new product, invention of a new production method, discovery of a new market, invention of a new supply of raw materials, and creating a new organisation within an industry (Blaug, 2000; Hebert & Link, 2009). The psychological theory focuses on the availability of gifted members of the community who

possess certain psychological qualities: the specific personality traits of an achiever, the ability to visualise future endeavours, and the characteristics to succeed in entrepreneurial competition (Hebert & Link, 2009; Nagarajan, 2011). The last theory is achievement motivation and focuses on achievement, affiliation attributes, and power. This theory describes entrepreneurship as the process whereby an entrepreneur creatively engages in a new and better way of operation, and a person who can make better decisions under uncertainties. Higher achievement-oriented people are likely to become entrepreneurs and are not easily influenced by money or external incentives (Bird, 2019).

For this thesis, entrepreneurship refers to entrepreneurial undertakings, where the economic output is not entirely the primary aim. The sociocultural context is an important feature integrated into the business venture as it contributes to the sustainability of the business, where entrepreneurship contributes to collective wellbeing.

### **3.4.3 Indigenous entrepreneurship**

Indigenous entrepreneurship has gradually become a common concept in the literature; this resonates with the worldwide recognition of indigenous peoples, rights and development (Blaser, Feit, & McRae, 2004; Gray, 2002; Thornberry, 2013). A universally agreed definition of indigenous peoples cannot be found, but indigenous people share these standard features: (i) self-identification and recognised to be a member of a particular group; (ii) on-going historical connection with communities that precede colonial settlement; (iii) associated with the use of and connection to ancestral land and natural resources; (iv) distinct customary, economic, social and political institutions; (v) unique language and culture; (vi) belonging to non-dominant societal groups; and (vii) resolving to maintain their distinctiveness (World Bank, 2010).

Indigenous entrepreneurship has related definitions but varies according to context. A general definition of indigenous entrepreneurship as a research field was documented by Hindle and Moroz (2010), stating that it is a pursuit of economic opportunity or tapping into a new business venture to execute communally tolerable and culturally feasible creation of wealth. Foley (2000), with the viewpoint of Australian indigenous entrepreneurship, stated a similar definition but recognised pursuit of self-determination as being important. The work

by Hindle and Lansdowne (2005) provided a globally relevant paradigm of indigenous entrepreneurship:

We define Indigenous entrepreneurship as the creation, management and development of new ventures by Indigenous people for the benefit of Indigenous people. The organizations thus created can pertain to either the private, public or non-profit sectors. The desired and achieved benefits of venturing can range from the narrow view of economic profit for a single individual to the broad view of multiple, social and economic advantages for entire communities. Outcomes and entitlements derived from Indigenous entrepreneurship may extend to enterprise partners and stakeholders who may be non-Indigenous (Hindle & Lansdowne, 2005: p. 132).

Common to these definitions is the use of indigenous entrepreneurship as a development tool for indigenous people to participate in their national economies and share the benefits of economic development.

The works by Henderson (2018) and Jack & Anderson (1999) concentrated on some essential characteristics of indigenous entrepreneurship. The critical contribution of culture in the management of the business was noted, along with the accountability process to multiple stakeholders other than the shareholders. Emphasis was on the significance of the dual skills of managers and employees, their technical and cultural skills, to be effective in the business. There is robust community emphasis, collective decision-making is crucial, and inclusive communal wellbeing is always at the centre of business development. The indigenous spiritual connection to their customary and ancestral land necessitates sustainable development practices and environmental sustainability.

A number of authors have concluded that Indigenous entrepreneurship involves maintaining a balance in economic growth and social goals, and ensuring the local retention of benefits rather than delivered to the so-called “far-flung faceless” shareholders (Henderson, 2018; Jack & Anderson, 1999; Peredo, Robert, Galbraith, Honing, & Dana, 2004).

To give an example, Durie (2003) suggested that a Maori-centred business promotes indigenous self-determination in four ways: (i) self-sufficiency and autonomy; (ii) Maori language and cultural reinvigoration; (iii) access and security of *Maori te ao* (the Maori world); and (iv) alleviating social disparities. Mika (2015) supported this by stating that Maori

entrepreneurship is a process where a Maori person executes a business venture within a Maori worldview to create products, processes or markets for economic, social and cultural purposes benefitting their *whanau* (family), *hapu* (sub-tribe), *iwi* (tribe) or the wider community. These descriptions are closely linked with the idea of 'Kaupapa Maori entrepreneurship' where the business activity is underpinned by the moral economy and social objectives of improving the wellbeing of the whole community (Garth, 2007). A notable example is the success story of *Ngai Tahu* (cover the largest area in Aotearoa but are not the largest iwi in terms of population), that established a range of successful businesses, such as the iconic Whale Watch tourist enterprise in Kaikoura, to mitigate the socio-economic challenges of its people through education support and increasing employment opportunities (Charlotte, 2007).

The section that follows focuses on research on indigenous Fijian forms of entrepreneurship.

#### **3.4.4 Indigenous Fijian (*itaukei*) entrepreneurship**

The study of indigenous Fijian businesses has been critiqued by researchers, for example, Vaughn (1995) and Dana (2007). They note a lack of attention to indigenous Fijian entrepreneurship since colonial times. For instance, from the mid-1890s to 1914, the banana industry became the second highest export earner (after sugar) for Fiji due to many indigenous Fijians farming this crop all over the country and for export to New Zealand. Nicole (2018) in his book 'Disturbing histories: resistance in early colonial Fiji' deliberated on the unspoken success of indigenous Fijian in business:

Nawai (refer to Apolosi Nawai) first announced his scheme for the establishment of a Fijian company in 1912...Under his scheme, Fijians would pool their capital together (land, people and finance), cut out the European middleman, control their own enterprise and reinvest the profit in a company (Viti Kabani)...The early 1900s saw a steady increase in the performance of the industry, culminating in a veritable boom in 1913 and 1914. In his address to the Legislative Council in 1915, Governor Sweet-Escott singled out the record banana export in 1914 for special praise. He made no mention, however, of the probable cause of this upsurge: the success of the Viti Kabani (Nicole, 2018: p.86).

Early indigenous Fijian entrepreneurship saw the rise of business ventures cooperatively pooling resources: customary land, the people doing the work, and the reinvestment of

finance to export bananas. Their success contributed to village development projects like building modern houses and schools in Fijian villages.

Contemporary researchers point out that research on entrepreneurship in Fiji has not been impartial. Leo-Paul Dana (2007) stated that many studies of economic participation and enterprises in Fiji have been executed by Fijian Indians scholars and expatriates. There is still a need to get insider perspectives from the indigenous Fijians viewpoint (Dana, 2007). Narendra Reddy (1991) saw the indigenous Fijian culture as a concern in that the culture is about reciprocity, communalism, sharing of resources, and attainment of social aims and thus incompatible with commercial practices and entrepreneurial character (Reddy, 1991). Roger Vaughan (1995) also compared the entrepreneurial capabilities of indigenous Fijians and Indians in Fiji. He saw the Fijians as having a stereotypically laidback life, the owners of vast tracts of land, immersed in their culture and traditions, whereas the Indians are an industrious and pragmatic group of people, the shopkeepers, the lawyers, and doctors (Vaughan, 1995).

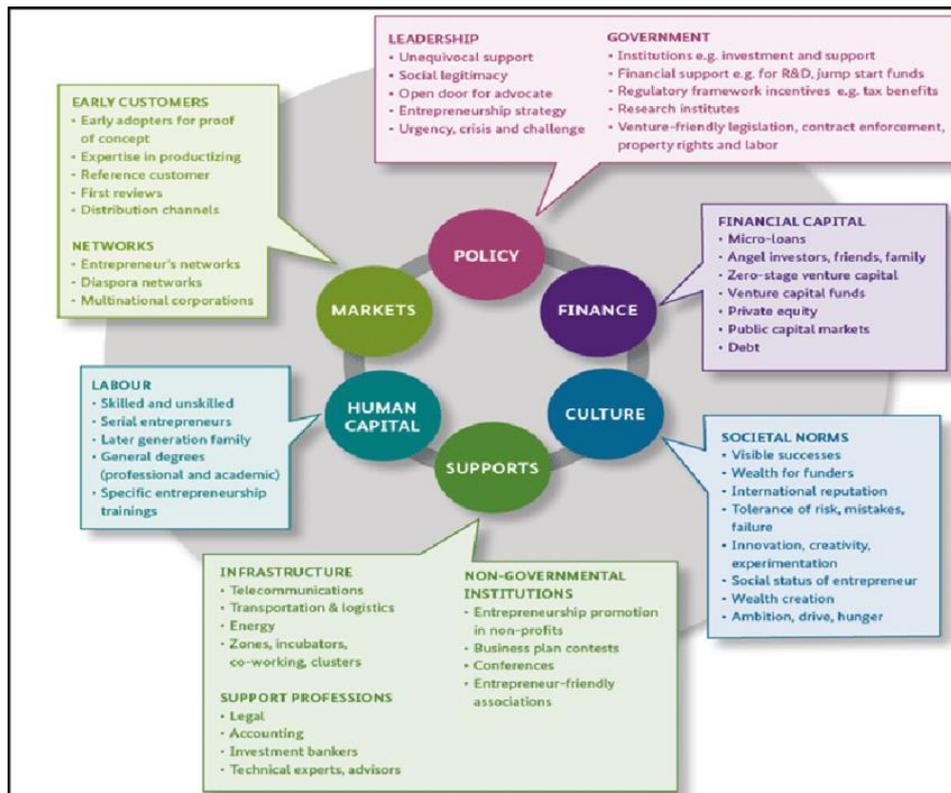
The dismissal of indigenous Fijian entrepreneurship as such leads to the need for conducting this research to provide a voice for indigenous Fijians operating their businesses successfully on their customary land as detailed in the case studies. The next section considers what sort of context is conducive to the development of entrepreneurship within a country or locality.

### **3.4.5 Entrepreneurship ecosystem**

Entrepreneurship is a vehicle for development used globally. The belief is that better development is attained through enhancing entrepreneurial development. Nonetheless, most countries struggle with entrepreneurship due to what Daniel Isenberg, founder of the Babson Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Project, stated as the lack of an 'entrepreneurship ecosystem', as in Figure 8 (Isenberg, 2011). Countries invest resources and focus tirelessly on narrow interventions, focusing on a selected element and not a systematic change. Isenberg refers to what the President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, said, "entrepreneurship is the sure way of development" seeing the catapult of Rwanda's economy after the 1990s genocide (Isenberg, 2010). The latest business ranking by the World Bank saw the remarkable ascension of Rwanda's economy from 143<sup>rd</sup> to 67<sup>th</sup> on their list. He also provided other examples of outstanding entrepreneurship intervention leading to successful national economies of Chile, Taiwan, and Israel (Fraiberg, 2017; Isenberg, 2010, 2011). It is due to the building of a

supportive and holistic entrepreneurship environment rather than a narrow view of building businesses or entrepreneurship incubators.

The concept of entrepreneurship ecosystems concerns the creation of conducive conditions for self-sustaining and self-generating entrepreneurship. The entrepreneurship ecosystem strategy involves developing the contextual elements where entrepreneurship takes place. A failure in entrepreneurship programs is the spoon-feeding attitude of telling entrepreneurs what to do and locating opportunities with direct funding on focus areas instead of allowing space and resources that support exploration, disappointments, reorganising and refining, which enriches entrepreneurship (Isenberg, 2010; Nadgrodkiewicz, 2014). The challenging entrepreneurial environment promotes resourcefulness as in the Icelandic proverb 'Icelandic entrepreneurship is built upon a legacy of fishing when the fish are there, not when the weather is good' (Isenberg, 2011: p.9). Later, Isenberg and Onyemah (2016) refer to the government's paternalistic support as: 'government is indeed critical in many ways, but in creating the framework conditions—there is an immense difference between building a highway system and telling people where to drive' (Isenberg, 2011: p.4). The nucleus of the entrepreneurship ecosystem is understanding the interplay and complex relationships of the factors within a given society. A wrong interpretation is to directly lift a successful entrepreneurship program from a country to implement it in a very different context (Isenberg, 2016; Sheriff, 2015). For entrepreneurship to be self-sufficient, encouraging policy, market, capital, human skill, culture, and support are critical, as shown in Figure 8 (Isenberg & Onyemah, 2016).



Source: Isenberg, 2011.

**Figure 8: The domains of entrepreneurship ecosystem**

There are eight success factors for building the entrepreneurship ecosystem. First, avoid imitating the Silicon Valley system as it evolved with different complex factors. Second, instead understand and shape the entrepreneurship ecosystem to the local conditions and needs. The third element is the role of the private sector right from the start. Fourth, always over-celebrate success, advertising any success stories. Fifth, there will be a shift in business dimensions and change which need to be tackled head on, while allowing mistakes to occur for entrepreneurs to learn organically with available support mechanisms is a sixth element. Avoiding the idea of clustering the selected few businesses (seventh) and, lastly, reforming the legal, bureaucratic, and regulatory frameworks to support various kinds of entrepreneurship to thrive in society (Isenberg, 2010, 2011, 2016; Isenberg & Onyemah, 2016; Nadgrodkiewicz, 2014).

This research sees the development of an entrepreneurship ecosystem as essential for developing economies like the Pacific island nations, including Fiji. The various kinds of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial ventures in urban and rural localities will need specific policies, venture capital funds, market-driven undertakings, human and social capital

development, cultural understanding and innovations such as the appreciation of traditional systems and support mechanisms. Entrepreneurial ecosystems will also need to appreciate and value cultural systems such as *solesolevaki* (social capital), *solu* (donations from kin) and reciprocity that are part of indigenous Fijian society, if they are to create an environment that nurtures indigenous Fijian entrepreneurs. Developing an entrepreneurship ecosystem that supports indigenous entrepreneurs in the Pacific could be a way to support entrepreneurship as a vehicle for development and collective wellbeing.

### 3.5 A place-based indigenous economy

According to Curry and Koczberski (2013), there is an increase in research interest in the process of accommodation or hybridisation of indigenous arrangements of economics. This can be understood as the embedding of economic development in the social environment and ideologies of a place. In the case of Oceania, the understanding of the social embedding process of a place-based indigenous economy is significant in terms of building the capacity of people to take ownership of their development, unite in solving their problems and in standing together in healing their communities and rebuilding from the ground up (Choudry & Kapoor, 2010).

The idea of a place-based economy is based on social embeddedness literature (Curry, 2003). It contains similar ideologies to less Eurocentric economic forms in developing nations (Curry, 1999), culturally relevant dimensions of economies (Connell, 2007), diverse community economies (Gibson-Graham, 2005) and, diverse economies and performative practices (Gibson-Graham, 2008). This encourages rethinking development by looking at possible alternatives to help the place-based needs of people. The framing also involves the process of viewing development as an expanding market economy whereby, place-based practices like gift exchange are included in development discourses. Overall, the success of any development measures depends on the ability of local people to use place-based practices to enculturate and take ownership of the development activities.

A place-based economy portrays significant ideas of how development practices could be reformed to deliver approaches that sit better with the indigenous people and their

sociocultural understandings of development. This includes vital elements that should be included in the planning of development projects or business initiatives to overcome the challenges that often hinder the sustainability of development projects in specific indigenous settings (Scheyvens, Banks, Vunibola, Steven, & Meo-Sewabu, 2020). Curry and Koczberski (2013) highlight some critical recommendations to improve the social return and sustainability of development in the Pacific. For many Pacific peoples the end factor of engagement with capitalism is to support family and social obligations rather than profit, thus indigenous exchange, gifting and reciprocity enrich the quality of life and people's social status, while still ensuring sufficient operating surplus in the enterprise (Curry & Koczberski, 2013). This idea was well supported in a case study by Curry (2003) which suggested a strong correlation between the indigenous gift exchange and a sharp increase in the monthly production of palm oil in rural PNG. For instance, the smallholder farmers arranged for bride prices, and members of the extended family contributed to the harvest to pay it off. Trade stores lend money to individuals and groups for gift exchange and are repaid after the monthly wages or repaid with produce, a flexible, place-based practice. As noted by an agriculture extension officer, people are more motivated to harvest palm oil leading to the success of the industry (Curry, 2003). Thus, there is a necessity to facilitate the indigenous system of labour and cultural exchange as well as maintaining good relationships in order to execute economic alternatives that will be able to boost the quality of life in indigenous settings.

A successful business in this context needs to adhere to three crucial principles: the communities are working cooperatively to enhance community wellbeing and quality of life; they pool labour and capital for the common good, which strengthens identity; and taking part in indigenous exchange and meeting sociocultural obligations enforces identity, sense of community and quality of life (Curry & Koczberski, 2013).

A place-based indigenous economy recognises the interconnectedness and interdependency of community and the economy in a location. We can look to Andean communities to provide some insights into this (Peredo, 2001). The communities that were studied live on a so-called 'frontier' with a challenging environment, but this also provides multiple opportunities in terms of land and water-based resources and commodities for trade that support survival and communal development. The community performing entrepreneurially in a collective manner

in enterprises that are embedded and accepted in the social structure works very well to achieve local development goals in this situation (Peredo, 2001; Peredo & Chrisman, 2006; Peredo et al., 2004).

A mainstream economic perspective will divide the indigenous economy into a market and non-market economy. Alternatively, understanding of place-based economies and how indigenous groups can hybridise and include their institutional values and social networks leads to a more nuanced way of understanding indigenous enterprises. This is demonstrated in two related case studies, the business *va'avanua* indigenous entrepreneurship model in Fiji (Farrelly, 2009), and the Choiseul province small business developments in the Solomon Islands. Both studies found that the models were able to contribute to the development of the people as well as utilising cultural values, *vanua*, and *wantok* respectively, in a hybridised way within the business model. For instance, the Fijian concept of *ere'ere* (requesting money or assistance from relations) was adopted as one of the principles of the business. Money was not merely given away upon request, however, but based on a reciprocal agreement to be repaid to the project in *dalo* (taro) tops. The *dalo* tops are planted and harvested for the project, which will generate much more revenue (Farrelly, 2009).

Similarly, the Solomon Island concept of *kaon* (credit) enabled owners to uncover some stepping stones to keep the business progressing in regards to their ability to build strong relationships and closing the gap between the business and the people's cultural practices (Leokana, 2014). Both cases recognise social cohesion and social capital as essential assets to the business. The small business study from the Solomon Islands highlighted the critical component of using social relationships for business inputs and collection of seed capital to start a business, in the same way as the start-up capital in Curry's case study of trade stores in Wosera, PNG (Curry, 1999). Accordingly, *vanua* and *wantok* values are a necessary component of Pacific indigenous development and should not be considered as an impediment to poverty alleviation but a critical component for sustainable development.

The place-based economy also includes traditional enterprises with both the moral and the market economy as significant components. Two Tongan case studies, disentangling grassroots in the Tongan traditional enterprise (James, 2002) and Indigenous wealth and development (Horan, 2002) discovered the hybridisation process within Tongan indigenous communities. They show how people cooperate with relations to advance economically and

explain the connection between semi-subsistence and wage-earning households. This challenges the supposed divisions of rural economy versus urban economy and supports the use of traditional textiles like *koloa* (mats and tapa) as the currency of social relations (Addo, 2013). People are social actors who navigate through economic opportunities to suit their situations. For instance, higher wage earners in the urban areas might agree to pay for school fees for children of those living in the villages, and low wage earners households in the village reciprocate by providing them with foodstuffs like root crops, kava, vegetables, and fish. A study by Horan (2002) highlighted how the use of *koloa-kotoanga* (traditional exchange) and *mea'ofa* (love gifts) was able to maintain the *tu'a/eiki* (social hierarchies) as the *koloa* moved up the hierarchy and the *ngaue* (men's wealth usually cash, food, western goods) moved down during traditional ceremonies. This traditional wealth contributed much to the Tongan economy as women create valuable wealth and labour and enhancing their role to impact global wealth transfers that also entwine with cash remittances (Addo, 2013; Horan, 2002).

Another Pacific notion of a 'better kind of wealth' was initiated by a recent study in Vanuatu, which came up with 'Alternative Indicators for wellbeing for Melanesia', given in Table 4 (Vanuatu National Statistics Office, 2012). In 2009, Vanuatu topped the Happy Planet Index, which precipitated this study. Leaders wanted to challenge the so-called 'handcuffs of GDP' as the sole measure of wealth and wellbeing. The study was conducted by the collective work of Malvatumauri National Council of Chiefs, Vanuatu National Statistics Office, and Vanuatu Kalijarol Senta. The study suggested the need to include measures of people's fundamental sociocultural and emotional welfare (Aguiar, 2012). It also noted that GDP calculations failed to measure the happiness level and wellbeing or recognise thriving traditional economies in the Pacific islands. The Ni-Vanuatu new approach to development includes four major components: access to customary land; participation in ceremonies; clean air, food, water; and community vitality. All of these components are seen as place-based practices which create wealth and wellbeing. A significant example noted in the study is the case of Torba Province in Vanuatu, which has the lowest GDP per capita. The province is also the most restricted in terms of access to the market and modern facilities, but it had the highest subjective well-being by a large margin. The province also had the most exceptional levels of perceived equality, interactions within the community, access to resources, and trust in neighbours and traditional leaders (Aguiar, 2012; Vanuatu National Statistics Office, 2012).

Thus, the quality of life in this Pacific state is positively associated with strong, culturally-based social practices and effective traditional economies. Leaders of Vanuatu have come up with an appropriate, place-based measure of what holistic, socially-embedded development means to their people.

**Table 4: Ni-Vanuatu Wellbeing Survey**

Topics	Indicator	Value
<b>Subjective Well-being</b>		
	Mean present happiness	6.26 out of 10
	Mean expected happiness, +5 years	7.71 out of 10
	Proportion "thriving"	38 percent
	Proportion "suffering"	3 percent
	Stress-free population	27 percent
<b>Resource Access</b>		
	Proportion with access to customary lands	79 percent
	Certain of customary land boundaries	90 percent
	Feel accessible lands enough to meet basic needs	88 percent
	Full access to forest resources	64 percent
	Full access to marine resources	59 percent
<b>Cultural Practice</b>		
	First language learned indigenous	92 percent
	Overall traditional knowledge strong	51 percent
	Overall traditional wisdom strong	26 percent
	Households with all 10 common traditional production skills	41 percent
	Households with all 5 basic traditional production skills	61 percent
	Full access to traditional wealth	66 percent
	Ceremonially active	97 percent
<b>Community Vitality</b>		
	Regular attendance at community meetings	34 percent
	Rate of voluntarism	83 percent
	High level of trust in neighbors	30 percent
	Fully positive assessment of traditional leaders	66 percent
	Not afraid of violent attack	39 percent
	Very strong family perception	72 percent
	Sense of material equality in community	38 percent
	Never misses or reduces meals for lack of food	77 percent

Source: (Aguiar, 2012).

This section on the place-based indigenous economy has thus shown the definition of economy needs to include the place-specific needs and resources of people and social actors such as sociocultural institutions of the community, culture, traditions, and families. This enhances the social embeddedness of economies that will provide opportunities for the communities to actively engage in their national economies, which leads to meaningful development.

The next section highlights the literature on social capital focusing on the Pacific understanding of social capital and how it can support entrepreneurship.

### 3.5.1 Social capital

Social capital in the community context is in the interface of place, social institutions, and norms. Analysing social capital from the community perspective highlights the functional role of a public good (Kwon, Heflin, & Ruef, 2013). The communal character of social capital is referred to as its pervading capacities, where benefits are disseminated throughout a

community transforming lives and enhancing social structures. The spill-over of social capital is denoted as cohesive networks within a community, whereby information flows to other members who do not have a high intensity of social capital (Putman, 1995). The definition which relates social capital to indigenous entrepreneurship is given by Foley and O'Connor (2013):

It is primarily linked to networking and is the complex interaction of networks that channel and filter information regarding the indigenous entrepreneur's cultural identity...This controls the allocation of the meager resources available to indigenous entrepreneurs...(where) social network, a structural element of social capital, shapes behaviour one would expect a positive interaction with the normative aspects of social capital, the cultural values, norms and cognitive linkages. (Foley & O'Connor, 2013. p.278).

Their argument puts forward the double-pronged normative and cognitive concepts for indigenous entrepreneurs. Normative refers to the notions of a social network linking to historical and environmental events, and cognitive recognises benefits of actively participating in network-related undertakings (Foley & O'Connor, 2013; Lin, Cook, & Burt, 2001). Social capital for indigenous entrepreneurs provides two crucial avenues, it enhances cultural identities and values, and reaffirms networking which is globally known in the literature as a feature for entrepreneurial success.

A similar work by Rutten, Westlund, and Boekema (2010) covered the spatial dimension of social capital, looked at it as an explanation of people's relationships, and associated values. The relationships can be activated to achieve an outcome. Spatial dimension includes the structuralist view, which is the network structures in collective values, norms, and trust, and the interactionist standpoint focuses on group cohesion and social solidarity (Rutten, Westlund, & Boekema, 2010). In simple terms, social capital is the networking system that defines collective cohesion and the elements that make that cohesion work.

The social component of indigenous communities is made up of complex relational elements. Fryer-Smith (2002), referring to pre-contact traditional aboriginal or indigenous communities, stated that social networks were developed from cohesive and intricate kinship relationships, which is a critical resource. Nevertheless, many of these traditional complexes, cultural rituals, values, and cohesion were destroyed by settler colonisation and dispossession (Fryer-Smith, 2002). For entrepreneurship, social capital becomes a crucial resource that

adjunct with other available resources to a firm. A simple definition of social capital aligning with entrepreneurship is seen as a form of investment using social relations as the medium with anticipated benefits in the market. The same social capital helps in the survival of indigenous groups (Fryer-Smith, 2002; Lin et al., 2001).

This leads to the discussion of social capital in the context of the Pacific communities.

### 3.5.2 Pacific understanding of social capital

In defining a Pacific notion of social capital, Robinson and Williams (2001), aligned it to the Pacific peoples' concept of collectivity. Social capital, in this case, is the pooling of all resources that people are associated with for being affiliated to a group and providing cooperative assistance through a mutual trust for a common good. For Pacific island and Maori communities' concept of social capital, cultural capital becomes dominant in practice with the central concept of family and community. The relational network rooted in *whanau* (family) as the nucleus and the seamless interaction, networks, and resource sharing within the sub-systems of *hapu* (clan) and *iwi* (tribe). Values associated with *whan* (wider family), *whanaungatanga* (kinship), *kotahitanga* (unity), and reciprocity are critical to collective achievements (Robinson & Williams, 2001). Social capital in these contexts also reflects the crucial element of intellectual, relational, and local knowledge and transmission in pursuing collective actions for communities. The local knowledge system is crucial to the survival of Pacific island communities, organisations, and projects working in such communities that can benefit from this form of social capital (Manu & Walker, 2006). The social capital in the Polynesian culture of Samoa is the idea of *fa'asamoa* (Samoan way of life), which involves people sharing and exchanging resources within their network with the underpinning value of *tautua* (collective service to others) is strongly indicated. *Aiga* (relations) share land resources, food and money and attend *fa'alavelave* (traditional ceremonies) (Brent Vickers, 2018). Miranda Cahn (2008) supports this, stating that social capital is a component of *fa'asamoa* where cash economy is equally important with the cultural capital and where *fa'asamoa* merged well with economic activities leads to successful business ventures (Cahn, 2008). Trask (2001) also reflected on native Hawaiian's social capital, which is spurred by cultural awakening movements in response to historical loss, indigenous challenges, and marginalisation. This social capital is entrenched in Hawaiian values of *lokahi* (cooperation

and unity), *ohana* (sense of family and belonging), *malama aina*, *aloha aina* (the colossal connection to and care of the land) and the essence of *kokua* (self-help and reciprocity). It is reflected when native Hawaiians use their social capital and traditional networks to achieve a collective intention (Trask, 2001). It resonates with the Tongan idea of maintaining *feveitokai'aki* (cooperation, generosity, sharing, and consensus) (Fua, 2007; Ofanoa, Percival, Huggard, & Buetow, 2015) for people to achieve a collective goal. In small islands like Tuvalu in the Pacific with elevations less than two meters from sea level, the social capital founded on networks, culture, and family plays a considerable role in their sustainability and survival. Petzold and Ratter (2015) stated that social capital which encompasses cultural capitals like collective actions, reciprocity, relational networks, and trusting systems within kin is significant for building sustainable communities as well as elements for climate change mitigation.

The Melanesian state of Papua New Guinea has a version of social capital, which is closely reflected by the idea of *wanbel*. Troolin (2018) conducted an empirical study with the Sam people of Madang province, PNG, and identified four meanings of *wanbel* in *pari xosolox*, *pari beli*, *pari kujex*, and *udud kujex*. *Pari xosolox* refers to internal calmness for decision making, *pari beli* is the concept of having good intentions which can be connected to spirituality, *pari kujex*, and *udud kujex* are used when people are collectively unified in visions and purposes (*pari kujex*) so that they can achieve a common good (*udud kujex*) benefitting every members of the village (Troolin, 2018). The study by Manuda (2007) also put forward the idea of *wantokism* as a form of social capital in Papua New Guinea, consisting of the old ways of exercising *wanbel* in the Oro Province that enabled trust and cooperativeness within the people. *Wantokism*, in this study, refers to the social relations between individuals who belong to ethno-linguistic groups and cultures in Melanesia (Manuda, 2007). Social capital such as *wanbel* leads to a critical Papua New Guinean phrase, *gutpela sindun* meaning 'sitting down well' and better wellbeing and quality of life (Richardson, Hughes, McLennan, & Meo-Sewabu, 2019).

The maintenance of social capital has a significant influence on the undertakings of family and cooperative businesses to achieve competitive advantage and superior performance. Social capital is a crucial asset to the Pacific business as the family itself is the incubator for its creation and provides a nurturing environment conducive for social capital development.

Social capital theory is often used to examine families' contributions in organisations where social capital is viewed in two distinct dimensions; external and internal perspectives (Arregle, Hitt, Sirmon, & Very, 2007; Chrisman, Chua, & Sharma, 2005). The external perspective which is regarded as 'bridging social capital' refers to the external links either directly or indirectly related to an actor with other actors beyond the immediate group as in the contribution from the wider extended family and *veiwekani* (kinship). Internal perspective which is known as 'bonding social capital' enables the establishment of secure connections within the group and is characterised by an exceptional level of trust and internal bonding (Arregle et al., 2007; Chrisman et al., 2005; Hoffman, Hoelscher, & Sorenson, 2006; Lin et al., 2017; Sorenson, Goodpaster, Hedberg, & Yu, 2009; Zachary, 2011).

Research into the relationship of internal social capital as a component of the familiness factor with the family business execution (Adler & Kwon, 2002) gave insight into the impacts of social capital. For example, family ties provide a competitive advantage, stronger and harmonious connections between family members bring out open communication and mutual collaboration which maintain longevity, and healthy interaction between family members enhances financial performance and the achievement of family goals. Family members working in the same business feel obligated to maintain the network of connection based on kinship ties—relational dimension of internal social capital has a positive influence on financial undertakings and increases commitment to the growth of the family firm (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Dyer, 2006; Mani & Lakhal, 2015). Social capital is based on having and maintaining the congenial bonds and connections which are based on specific family values and understandings, the Pacific idea of family and traditional support systems is a good example.

The social capital in Pacific communities is mirrored in the ability of people to work in collective actions, which are supported by their values and traditions. It is also based on the concept of creating societies with trust, social collaboration, and shared vision as the cornerstone of economic success (Baldacchino, 2005). The following section is about *solesolevaki*, an indigenous Fijian form of social capital.

### 3.5.3 Solesolevaki

Asesela Ravuvu (1987) was a Fijian academic and political leader who documented collectivity and reciprocity within Fijian societies and alluded to communalism as a central attribute of indigenous Fijian ethos. Internal connections in the hierarchical communal structure linking *vuvale* (family) to *tokatoka* (extended family), *mataqali* (sub-clan) to *yavusa* (clan), which then linked to a larger *vanua* or *tikina* (tribe). Kinship relations are the bond for the sub-systems where norms like *solesolevaki* guide actions and conform unity. Nayacakalou (1975) and Seruvakula (2000) also stated that *solesolevaki* is a cultural capital where people contribute and cooperate in the daily activities required of the Fijians sub-systems and traditional roles. It is how traditional Fijian settings operated and it promotes peace and harmony (Nayacakalou, 1975; Ravuvu, 1987; Seruvakula, 2000). The intricate connections enable a higher prospect for cooperation and unity for a mutual purpose and identity as members, where respect, reciprocity, and generosity fuel their social capital (Coleman, 1988).

Movono and Becken (2018) alluded to a practical definition and the attributes of *solesolevaki* from an empirical study of a village on the coral coast, Fiji:

*Solesolevaki* mirrors social capital as a vehicle to promote development... *Solesolevaki* as social capital is appropriate because it allows contexts of indigenous society to be examined in localised terms. As a result, society and, in general, Fijian culture and values, promote the strengthening of internal bonds through continual social interaction based on the values of *solesolevaki*. The outcomes of these internal bonds are evidenced by the community's ability to come together...through their shared sense of responsibility and obligation to *vakaligaliga*, or "to contribute" to their *vanua* (village) and church. Participants noted that reciprocity and adherence to cultural etiquette were strong motivators for practicing *solesolevaki*... "the load is lighter when we work together and we are instinctively prompted to act and contribute, whatever the goal may be, because it's our culture". *Solesolevaki* is entrenched within cultural norms (Movono & Becken, 2018: p 151).

This definition highlights the vital function of internal relationships within the group, leading to collective actions, which later contribute to sociocultural obligations due to cultural decorum.

Other researchers used the term *solesolevaki* as social capital that contributed to needed development projects and wellbeing of local communities in Fiji. The study by Movono and Dahles (2017) mentioned *solesolevaki* as a vehicle for female empowerment in a Fijian village. It is where people share responsibilities contributing to sustainable economic development, and enhance psychological, social, and political empowerment (Movono & Dahles, 2017). Meo-Sewabu and Walsh-Taiapa (2012) and Meo-Sewabu (2016) outlined *solesolevaki* as a form of culturally embedded agency linked to communal cohesiveness, that is executed to enhance social change and collective wellbeing (Meo-Sewabu, 2016; Meo-Sewabu & Walsh-Tapiata, 2012). Ratuva (2010) stated that *solesolevaki* is also a form of social protection for indigenous Fijian communities, entailing the merging of the formal system (state, aid agencies, civil society) and the informal system (community, family, cultural systems, social networks, social safety net) for a more significant chance of sustainability (Ratuva, 2010). Specifically, it also involves clan members collectively gathering and using their resources, labour, and land for agriculture-related development, then sharing the benefits (Kingi, 2006), and as a vehicle for community-based natural resource management in Fiji (Clark, 1999). *Solesolevaki* was also implemented by agencies during the rehabilitation process in Fiji after tropical cyclone Winston in 2016 and was acknowledged for the success of the activities (Miyaji, Fujieda, Waqalevu, & Kobayashi, 2017).

For this research, I define *solesolevaki* as an indigenous Fijian cultural agency which involves the process of using the available resources for a common purpose and to benefit members. This involves natural resources (land, waterways, oceans, which are legally accessed through customary means or leased), social capital (*lewe ni vanua* or *veiwekani*—people who are related and belong to a particular place), systems (which work within the structure of the *vanua* as in land ownership, practices, ceremonies and also are bound by the constitution of Fiji) and values (the underpinning *vanua* ethos and way of being an indigenous Fijian as in, *I valavala vakavanua* – cultural protocols, *veirokovi/veidokai* – respect, *veilomani* – empathy, *vosota vakadede* – sacrificing or enduring hardship, *solu bula me baleti ira na wekamu* – sacrificing one's time, resource and even money for others, *duavata* – unity).

*Solesolevaki* is utilised by the case studies in this research, as indigenous Fijian businesses employ such systems and structures to transform communities and improve '*bula taucoko* or *bula sautu*' (wellbeing).

### 3.6 Summary

This chapter explained the concept of social embeddedness and its function in constructing a 'human face' for the capitalist model of economic development. It also reflected on related ideas regarding sustainable development, diverse economies, hybrid economies, and doughnut economics. It moved on to discuss entrepreneurs, indigenous entrepreneurship, and the entrepreneurship ecosystem from a socially embedded viewpoint. Later, place-based development was highlighted as a means of understanding the unique, hybridised forms of socially-embedded economic development often taking place in particular settings and offering a valuable lens to new ways of practising development. Examples from Fiji, the Solomon Islands and Tonga showed how Pacific people had come up with innovative economic models that are able to meet the place-based needs of people, drawing from their own rich resources and cultural systems. The last section of the chapter deliberated on social capital and the benefits of utilising it to benefit the business. It also focused on the example of *solesolevaki* as social capital to indigenous Fijian communities.

There has been a lack of balance in views of economic development in the Pacific in the past. By examining ideas like social embeddedness and place-based development, it has been possible to identify alternative economic models in the Pacific which are built upon local forms of entrepreneurship. Managing a business in indigenous settings in the Pacific can be a challenge due to its contextual features; it needs careful manoeuvring and a thorough understanding of various social institutions, sociocultural norms, environmental factors, and traditions. That is the reason for indigenising and localising economic development ventures for businesses running in an indigenous community. In doing so, sociocultural norms are integrated into the business ethos, enabling a form of development that sits better with the ordinary people. People running businesses in such settings participate in customary affairs and devise their forms of economic development that contribute to collective wellbeing and quality of life.

# Chapter 4 Land and Development in the Pacific

*Na lovo ni tuvua sa buta tu, me 'eli me wase mada* (The earth oven food is cooked, let us dig it up to be shared). An idiom specific to a piece of land where I come from which consists of multiple round hills which look like earth ovens. The idiom refers to the need for people to use the land and share the benefits with everyone.

## 4.1 Introduction

Land means different things to people, and the meaning of land determines their actions regarding its use. A property broker sees land as an asset and a commodity, which can be sold in the market using a land title document to transfer ownership once sold. The land becomes a commodity with a price tag attached to it, and only the people with money can have a chance of owning land. This scenario is so different from indigenous groups around the world, where people have equal access to land due to their genealogical connections and affiliations with an indigenous group. For indigenous groups across the Pacific land is seen as a place of sustenance, and people have very complex systems and connections with the land reflected in their social and cultural realms. This difference contributes to conflicting views between customary landowners in the Pacific and those promoting the need for economic development in these developing island nations. Countries like Fiji developed mechanisms like the iTaukei Land Trust Board (TLTB) to be at the interface where the road of development merges with the affairs of the customary landowners. At times, such a structure enhances and speeds up the work as dictated by development imperatives, but on the other hand, that access to land for economic development can displace others. Land arrangements for development become an area of conflict in the Pacific leading some to proclaim that customary land is a barrier to development (Hughes, 2004).

This chapter focuses on two things. First, it examines the value of customary land and its significance for Pacific peoples; this aligns to the whole thesis where customary land is a foundation for indigenous entrepreneurship. Lessons from the flexibility in customary land use are summarised. Second, the chapter examines customary land ownership in Fiji from pre-colonial times to the present, including the traditional land groupings, the protection of

customary land, land use rights, land engagements through the colonial indenture system, and lastly the impacts of the Land Use Decree 2010 in Fiji.

## 4.2 The value of customary Land

The land is more than a resource or commodity to be sold at the market-place. Li (2014) noted that it can be a taxable asset or an essential commodity or a place of work to produce food. 'Land is not like a mat. You cannot roll it up and take it away. It has a presence and location. It has an especially rich and diverse array of 'affordances', uses and values it affords to us, including the capacity to sustain human life' (Li, 2014: p. 589). Others look at land more as an assemblage of diverse components, including physical substances, technologies, discourses, and practices (Anderson & McFarlane, 2011; Blomley, 2003).

Customary land is central to this research as the basis of life and nourishment for indigenous peoples of the Pacific. Customary land is also a foundation from which indigenous people can create entrepreneurial undertakings. Many questions are raised primarily in development discourses centring on whether customary land can support development. Fingleton specifies that it is important to distinguish between the right to own customary land and the ability to use that land:

Much of the criticism is, in the author's view, misinformed, failing to understand the distinction between (customary) land tenure and land use. In many traditional societies, the tenure to their land is group-based, and individuals have rights to land as a result of their membership of a group, or some other relationship to it (e.g., marriage to a member). Land use, on the other hand, is largely in the hands of individuals - members of the group, their spouses, siblings, children or other close kin. So, between land tenure and land use there exists a balance between group and individual rights and obligations. It is a traditional balance, but one which can be shifted in the direction of strengthening the role of individual group members - without necessarily involving the extinction of their groups - as people adapt to the demands of modern living (Fingleton, 1998: p. 4).

### 4.2.1 The meaning of customary land to Pacific peoples

Pacific peoples' understanding of the land is immense, holistic, and composite making it prejudicial to look at land from just a narrow perspective. Tim Anderson (2006) and Swiderska (2020) said that customary land is where people attain food security, where culture is

reproduced and practiced, it enhances social connections, and it is where ecological management is practiced for sustainability. Spirituality encompasses the connections of people to the place and the same place where ancestors are protected, as, a baby is a spirit relating us to ancestors and the *whenua*, '*enua/fonua*/ land/placenta. Concomitantly, the birth of a baby is a spirit of love embracing the lives of the parents and the extended family' (Manu'atu, Kepa, Pepe, Taione, 2016: p.128). The land is represented as a placenta, a source of life and connecting generations to the holistic understanding of land for *whenua* (meaning land in Maori), '*enua* (for Cook Islands), *fonua* (for Tonga) and *vanua* (for indigenous Fijian) (Manu'atu et al., 2016). Liotta (2009) purports that the sense of belonging occurs between people and places with the idea of developing roots or umbilical cords, and if resettled in the case of refugees or migrants, the connection remains. This idea is evident in many Pacific communities including Fiji, where the placenta of babies is taken to their land to be buried and marked by totem trees (Saura, 2002). It is a sign of spiritual and deep connections for people and a sign for future generations to continue to live, connected, and thrive on the same land where their ancestors lived.

The indigenous Fijian worldview looks at land in a holistic manner, even in contemporary indigenous Fijian villages. It comprises the place which nourishes the past, present, and future generations; cultural practices are executed and strengthened by being on the land, and it encapsulates the social aspect of people and resources in harmony, and spiritual elements—the values, beliefs, and traditions of people (Nabobo-Baba, 2006; Tuwere, 2002). Reflecting on the work conducted by Li (2014) and the researcher's dialectal terms from Dogotuki district, Macuata Province, Vanua Levu island, Fiji, there is no exact word for land. The words denote more explicit properties. For instance, *dre'a* (soil), '*alaulau* or *sa'ea* (forest), *voavoa* (fallowed garden), *were* or *iteitei* (active garden), *veicoco* (grassy patch), *le'utu* (hilly inland terrain), *wai* or *wai levu* or *wai kisi* (water or creek or river), and so on. The only word that assembles all elements is *vanua*, as defined by Nabobo-Baba (2006) and Tuwere (2002). For indigenous Fijians, it is wrong to look at land as assemblage of what one can see on the land because one also must include spiritual, social elements, traditions, beliefs, cultural practices, mana, relationships, living beings and the *bula vakavanua* (the way of life of indigenous Fijian).

Pacific values uphold practices that reflect the process of respecting the physical, social, and spiritual features within the land. Deviation from appropriate values and ethos are deemed to have undesirable outcomes, and it can affect development opportunities on customary land. Thus the ancient Rotuman proverb 'the land has eyes and teeth' (Hereniko, 2013) speaks to the belief that *vanua* is a living being that watches and manifests physical effects. The same sentiments were heard when the Momi Bay tourism resort in Fiji came to a halt, which left half-built cottages and overgrown grass obstructing the \$20 million golf course (Scheyvens & Russell, 2010), pointing to the power and mana of *vanua* (Tuwere, 2002). Alternatively, respecting the values and ethos associated with customary practices and ownership of the land in Fiji and the Pacific it is said 'customary land has a spirit and a heart' (Samoan proverb by Fiu Elesara) (Scheyvens, Meo-Sewabu, & Vunibola, 2019), meaning customary land can support appropriate development initiatives. Such development ventures are more successful when they are socially embedded into the ways of the land and its people (Curry, 1999; Curry, Koczberski, & Connell, 2012; Porter, 2014).

#### **4.2.2 Adaptability and flexibility of customary land in the Pacific**

Indigenous people in the Pacific have experienced external pressures such as colonisation, modernisation as well as capitalism, earmarked by a shift from a subsistence livelihood towards a market-driven economy. This shift requires adaptability and flexibility of the customary land, land use, and customary systems to assist its communities or individuals in participating in economic development. As Curry, Koczberski, and Connell (2012) highlighted, the shift is from pre-capitalist to capitalist, and from traditional to modern. It also includes the dimensions of re-adaptation within the customary measures to accommodate traditional land tenure reform and the creation of socio-economic cohesion with outsiders but preserving indigenous forms of land tenure founded in relational identities. It is also guided by localised place-based protocols practiced within indigenous cultural framings and the inclusion of macro-level processes to re-create alternative modernities. The paradigms involved in such shifts are extrinsically or intrinsically motivated from the landowner's standpoint (Curry & Koczberski, 2013; Curry et al., 2012; Koczberski, Curry, & Anjen, 2012).

### 4.2.3 Examples of traditional land tenure in Melanesia

Land and natural resources for Indigenous people of the Pacific are owned collectively by the sub-clan or landowning units. This denotes that the people within the landowning unit need to practice the shared values of caring, sharing, compassion, looking after others, and reciprocity. In many instances, people look within their conventional system and social relationship to make decisions to accommodate changes for their community and even for outsiders.

Boyd (2013) illustrates how a rural community in Papua New Guinea, the Irakia Awa, was able to create an alternative version of local modernity based on their customary resources and system. This plan was set up by its influential leaders with the support of its members. Many of the Irakia Awa people were away in other localities due to the rural-urban drift migration (Boyd David, 2013; Ryan, Curry, Germis, Koczberski, & Koia, 2016). These families were visited for dialogue and consultation before the implementation of the proposed scheme. Reforms to the village-based livelihoods were conducted, enhancing indigenous values and relationships (McCormack & Barclay, 2013). The customary land system was flexible enough to accommodate land relocations enhancing more cash crop production and the alteration of the gardening system involving the abandonment of labour-intensive crops and the intensification of coffee plantations for the market. Some of the social changes included the banning of alcohol and smoking and the monitoring of vigilant finance savings. This vibrant community flourished on its effort to create a space which worked for its members and later most Irakians chose to return home and pursue a better life together (Boyd David, 2013; McCormack & Barclay, 2013).

Two other cases, accessing land in post-conflict Timor-Leste (Thu, 2012) and the Fijian case of *i solisoli* (land gifting) by Naisilisili (2012) are more aligned to the work of Boyd (2013) as they involve looking within the customary system of kinship and relationship to find answers to their challenge, in this case, land scarcity. Individuals who were displaced by the war in Timor Leste to reside in Mulia settlement developed better relationships with landowners to undertake share-cropping with them, which assisted their livelihood. The landowners provided land access and the seeds, the migrants provided the labour or even machinery, and both assisted in the monitoring and management. The harvested crop, rice, is divided equally

between them, and migrants' participation in the traditional moral economy like the harvest feasting for the spirit realm assist in social bonding. Similarly, the *i solisoli* case involved the gifting of land through *vanua* relationships strengthening kinship-relational ties (Movono, 2012; Nabobo-Baba, 2015; Rutz, 1987) even though this is a very costly venture as future generations need to have access to land for family and development. The people of *Cu'u* in Udu point, at the Udu peninsula guarded by high rising rocky cliffs and the sea. Rising population over time and the scarcity of arable land for commercial agriculture hampered economic development. Most of the land is covered with coconut palms, and due to the low cost of copra and the high risk and cost of running commercial fishing, the people continue to look within to their *vanua* relations for solutions to combat these challenges. The people have some traditional ties to the *vanua* of Seavaci, Vaturova in the province of *Cakaudrove*, who freely gave a 1,000-acre piece of land (named as *Balawaviri'i*) to the *veiwe'ani* (relations) of *Cu'u* to assist in their commercial ventures in 1985. This informal arrangement allowed the disadvantaged people of Udu to carry out commercial farming, focusing mainly on *yaqona* or kava (*Piper methysticum*) and taro (*Colocasia esculenta*). Combined with better leadership skills, the elders of different sub-clans came together with the professional advice of those already educated and, in the workforce, to derive a plan to carry out their farming. The gifted land is so far away in another district that it required the building of farm camps for groups to stay for a month at a time while another group looked after village affairs and families, rotating at the end of every month. It was a significant sacrifice to be away from the *vanua* and the family, but now the people of *Cu'u* are reaping the fruits of the *i-solisoli* with significant infrastructural development in the district and better livelihood. These exemplars show how customary land, indigenous knowledge systems, and practices can accommodate change and development (Nabobo-Baba, 2015; Naisilisili, 2012, 2014).

A socially constructed relationship is seen to be at the core of most informal land transactions in Melanesia. This involves a process whereby customary land and customs in the Pacific allow outsiders who are migrants to make relationships with landowners who allow them the usufructuary rights to their land. Curry, Koczberski, and Connell, (2012) propose that to the Pacific people land is beyond the notion of an economic asset and where the society is inscribed on the ground. Two similar case studies herein introduced highlight the significance of maintaining social relationships in paving an alternative livelihood for migrants and the

adaptability of customary land to facilitate change. Numbasa and Koczberski (2012) conducted a case study on migration and informal urban settlements and informal land transaction in Wewak, East Sepik province in Papua New Guinea, and Allen (2012) studied land identity conflicts involving Malaitan settlers on Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands (Allen, 2012; Numbasa & Koczberski, 2012). Both studies indicated that migrants were able to maintain access to customary land in various ways. Some attain rights through marriage to landowners, individual arrangements and friendship, traditional trading partners, paying rent through customary gift exchange or cash or labour and some were settled on the agreement to cooperate in commercial enterprises. Both case studies involved the informal settling of agreements between landowners and migrants, which worked well and was governed by a healthy social space of understanding. However, new generations on both sides lack this respect, which has led to the recommendation to organise a formal land transfer system based on the existing informal institutions on indigenous land tenure (Allen, 2012; Numbasa & Koczberski, 2012).

In response to such scenarios PNG and the Solomon Islands each developed a formal land-use system founded on customary law. These land-use models were directed to resolve the contradictory perspectives and understandings of land rights between customary landowners and migrants and for transparency and productivity. As documented by Koczberski, Curry and Anjen (2012) the Land Use Agreement (LUA) was initiated in PNG in the oil palm regions (Koczberski et al., 2012). This approach came as a result of support for customary institutions from renowned international bodies, as noted by Fingleton (2008:10–11):

there is now a general acceptance that adaptation, not replacement, of customary tenures is the way forward. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations endorses the adaptation approach to land tenure reform. Even the World Bank, for long a critic of customary tenures, has given ground, now recognising customary tenures as a viable basis for growth and development. At the Land in Africa Conference, held in London in November 2004, the adaptation approach was given strong support by all the governments and aid agencies that took part (Fingleton, 2008).

The LUA aims to include extensive negotiations between all parties to safeguard their rights, namely, usufruct rights of migrants and customary rights of landowners with their respective responsibilities. Similarly, Allen (2012) documented a case analysis on smallholder oil palm

production in the Solomon Islands which was modelled after the PNGs Land Usage Agreement (LUA) on small-scale village-based oil palm sectors. It is known as the Small Holder Land Use Approval system whereby the right is given to occupants to use and occupy the land blocks by the landowning unit, and this is usually signed off by the Paramount chief and the clan chief. The second part of this deal is between the private enterprises, in this case, Guadalcanal Plain Palm Oil Limited (GPPOL) and the smallholder whereby the company provided planting materials, fertiliser, implements, and support technicalities as well as buying fruits from the smallholders (Allen, 2012; Fraenkel, Allen, & Brock, 2010; Koczberski et al., 2012). This initiative allowed group ownership, encouraging individual entrepreneurial undertaking and a vast improvement in livelihoods and improved unity, stability, and peace in what was once a 'militancy hotspot' of Binu society (Fa'abasua, 2014). It is a very vital way of maintaining the balance between land rights and economical attainment and provides significant evidence of prolific economic productivity centring on customary land without the legal fraternity of formal land registration, land titling, land formalisation or privatisation. Importantly for success, both cases recommended that such land reform models should be derived from existing indigenous measures rather than the westernised simulations as indigenous approaches enhance the inalienability of customary land and provide excellent benefits for landowners (Fa'abasua, 2014).

### 4.3 Land and development in Fiji

This section discusses traditional land groupings, land, colonial rule and development as well as the legal frameworks that govern customary land in Fiji. It is notable that these frameworks bring with them some development challenges.

#### 4.3.1 Traditional land grouping in Fiji before colonisation

In contemporary indigenous Fijian settings, people belong to various formally registered denominations and sub-groups and even in villages and confederations. Researchers and ethnographers documented how indigenous Fijians had been living before cession and how they organised themselves in these sub-groups. Parke (2006) who had been living in Fiji in 1951 to work in the western district, had been collecting and recording information through stories, chants, and closely living with the people who provided insights into this history (Parke, 2006). It is a widespread mythical story that all indigenous Fijians are the descendants

of *Degei*, who discovered the Fiji Islands with his men on their double hull canoe called the *kaunitoni* (Luker, 2016). Alternatively, in another document, '*Degei's* Descendants: Spirits, Place, and People in Pre-Cession Fiji', Parke (2014) stated that there were stories shared in western Fiji that *Degei* and his men landed on the western coast in *Viseisei* in Vuda, *Lautoka* and took local women as wives on their inland adventure and also travelled to other parts of Fiji (France, 1966; Parke, 2014; Parke, 2006). This version implies that the islands of Fiji were already inhabited before the arrival of the people or even the *kalou vu* (spirit Godfather) *Degei*.

There are many stories and myths around the indigenous Fijian people and culture, but the commonality among them is the meticulous organisation of the society. The indigenous people organised themselves primarily through *solesolevaki* (cooperatively work together for a common good). It made it easier to achieve their ultimate aim of survival through a division of labour whereby the members of the sub-groups specialised in tasks, which assisted in maintaining livelihoods in the village settings. Some of the essential groups involve; *bati* (warriors), *gonedau* (sea navigators), *mataisau* (builders), *bete* (priest), and *turaga* (chiefs). These groups became *mataqali* (land owning units) registered during the colonial administration (Jolly, 1992). In pre-colonial times the central social division was the *vanua*, which contained more than one *yavusa* (collection of *mataqali*). A *mataqali* can quickly transfer their loyalty to a different *yavusa*, which can be a result of disagreement or leadership problems. Mostly, in tradition, the *yavusa* with a robust military alliance has many territories and members as people need protection during tribal wars and invasions. The people knew their land boundaries, which identified the area for food gathering and hunting marked by *tualeita* (mountain range) or *wai* (water ways), and there were stories that people were made slaves if they were caught out of their land boundary. Other dynamics which led to the formation of a *vanua* included; kinship relationships, geographical convenience or the mutual need to access both natural and human resources (France, 1966; Jolly, 1992; Luker, 2016; Parke, 2014; Parke, 2006; Ward, 1969). It ultimately meant that the strongest *yavusa* would have much territory, members, and alliances and, as a result, form a *vanua*, and their chief would become the paramount authority on the land. They also used their relationships of the *vanua* to trade or barter, which is the exchange of goods and ceremonies. The Fijians well understood their systems of polity or organisation of society, which dictates the position

of the different divisions, having respect for each other, as well as the degree of submission which each dependant owes to his principal (Williams & Calvert, 1860).

Traditional leadership was an essential factor in this communal way of living, which also determined the success of a *vanua* through the ability to navigate specific challenges. France (1966) and Luker (2016) both stated that leadership in parts of Fiji was not always inherited. Only some *vanua* followed the practice of hereditary leadership, which was registered by the colonial administration and is still followed in indigenous communities throughout Fiji. Leadership in pre-colonial times was based primarily on achievement in the sense of influence or through usurpation and intrusion. This meant that a strong warrior could achieve chiefly status by conquering a *vanua* through war. In another story, Parke (2014) referred to the document by Yongjia (2011); 'Stranger-Kingship or Sahlins in Southwest China' to describe the unusual characteristic of chieftainship in Fiji. It implied that traditionally Fijians had a fluid system with different dynamics of leadership in different locations around Fiji, but the most common factor was to lead the people in order to survive tribal rivalries and achieve high social status (France, 1966; Luker, 2016; Parke, 2014; Parke, 2006; Ward, 1969).

#### **4.3.2 Early contact with Europeans**

The early history of contact in Fiji is obscure, but it was recorded that Fiji had its first contact with Captain Cook's arrival in 1772, even though the Polynesian islanders of Tonga and others were trading and in contact with Fijians before this. In the 1600s, however, Abel Jaszoon Tasman recorded sighting Fiji (Williams & Calvert, 1860). Later, in 1804, when sandalwood was in abundance, attracting Europeans to Fiji. This was a new era for the Fijians as they were exposed to the ideas of a world with ways of life so different from what they were used to. People were introduced to the goods and lifestyles of the Europeans, trading with the foreigners with muskets, axes, and matches in return for food and, worse, trading in exchange for their customary land (Jolly, 1992). The *Tui Viti* (King of Fiji) at that time, Ratu Cakobau, was able to conquer all other chiefs in Fiji with his mighty army through the use of muskets supplied by his European counterparts. The Cakobau government was also established with his European ministers to govern the Fijians (Ravuvu, 1983).

Many of the ways of life of the Fijians were deemed inferior to those of the new settlers, including their food, clothes, religion, houses, and money (Seruvakula, 2000). This was the era

of the term *dravudravua*, a direct translation of greyish or brownish, to denote the term poverty as equating to the Fijians who have brownish complexion, living on the brown earth in their brownish, thatched houses. In 1873 money (the British pound) was formally recognised as the medium of exchange before Fiji was ceded to Great Britain in 1874.

The following section discusses the impacts of the Fijian administration conducted by the British in Fiji.

### **4.3.3 The Fijian Administration of the British Colony**

Under British rule, the traditional system could not easily prevail. The Fijian administration, headed by Governor Gordon from 1882, wanted a system of leadership, land ownership, and legislation to be registered under the colonial government to align with their colonial expectations and systems they wished to install (Jolly, 1992). The colonial government, therefore, adopted a standard form of indigenous Fijian administration throughout Fiji despite the various diverse systems in different locations, and failed to recognise through legislation certain practices prevailing in the pre-colonial era.

The general principles of the resulting officially-recognised systems of Fijian society, administration, land tenure and communal ownership may have been in general accord with the ideals of 'native usages and customs'. These officially recognised systems based on the need for unification and simplification, could not, however, take fully into account the fact that traditional systems were, in practice, subject to widespread and significant diversity (Parke, 2014: p 13). This was purportedly done to serve the purpose of colonial governance and to facilitate future development opportunities, and the arrival of other ethnic groups to Fiji.

A system of 'Indirect Rule' was established in the first year of British rule in Fiji, when the Fijian Administration was registered as a separate government department (Nayacakalou, 1975). Using the culture as a framework to govern, paid Fijian officials looked after the Fijian people in rural areas. The Fiji Islands were divided into twelve provinces (later into fourteen provinces) and an official native type, *Roko* was a government official. The provinces were subdivided into districts with a native official, *Buli* and in respective villages were the village headmen. The Fijian people were living in sub-units on their various customary land and territories; the Fijian Administration clustered many sub-units together to form huge villages.

The government department known as the Fijian Affairs Board (the current iTaukei Affairs Board) was established with five Fijian high chiefs as members of the Colonial Legislative Council and members of the Great Council of Chiefs. The Fijian Administration department controlled all operations within the 'Indirect Rule', affecting the way villagers are governed (Lasaqa, 1984; Nayacakalou, 1975; Norton, 2013).

Together with indirect rule, there was a policy in regard to *galala* movement where Fijians were restricted to their villages and farmed their customary land. *Galala* means freedom in this case. Freedom to do what they wanted was restricted, and there were sets of programmes in place monitored by the government officials (*Roko, Buli, Turaga ni koro*) in the villages. Not following such programs led to investigation by provincial police, and later they had to appear for trial in provincial courts with punishment decided by the Fijian administration (Lasaqa, 1984; Nayacakalou, 1975; Norton, 2013; Ravuvu, 1983).

While Fijians were controlled and monitored in their daily programs, they were allowed to practice their culture and traditions. Their traditional leader in the village was the chief who worked with the village headman, a colonial construct together with other eminent ranked officials like *Buli* for the district and *Roko* for the province. The *Roko* reports to the Fijian Affairs Board and then to the colonial legislative council (Ravuvu, 1983). *Solesolevaki*, where people work collaboratively together, was the daily mode of operation (Nayacakalou, 1975; Seruvakula, 2000).

A noteworthy aspect of this controlled environment was the idea of segregating Fijians from any exposure or meaningful participation in the economic development of the country such as commercial plantations. Indigenous Fijians were restricted to subsistence agriculture to provide for their families and ceremonies (Nayacakalou, 1975). Commercial farming was done by Europeans, Chinese farmers, and other settlers who were engaged in the commercialisation and trading of various crops as raw materials for the British Empire (Gillion, 1958). Indian labourers were brought to Fiji under the indenture system to work on the commercial sugarcane farm of the Colonial Sugar Refinery Company (Lal, 2013; Lal et al., 1979). Money was still foreign in the hands of Fijians who were obstructed from engaging with the modern economy.

#### 4.3.4 Indenture system

When examining land in Fiji, it is also vital to understand the other major ethnic group in Fiji who are descendants of Indian migrant labourers. The Indian population of Fiji is primarily the descendants of the indentured labourers who were brought to Fiji by the colonial administration to work on the farms. From the years 1879 to 1916, 42 ships made 87 voyages between Fiji and India, transporting about 60,537 Indian labourers (Lal, 2013; Lal et al., 1979b). At that time, there was much land taken up by mostly Europeans who had different crops on their plantations, including cotton, coffee, cocoa and sugarcane, which were mainly for export to Britain. The governor at that time, Sir Arthur Hamilton-Gordon, had a critical task declared by the colonial administration to supply these European farmers with a regular supply of labourers. Governor Gordon had already established his native policy, which did not permit using Fijians deserting their villages as serfs or planters. Even other Pacific islanders were not available, and India, which was a British colony was the best option as described by Ali:

The employer sought his labour at the lowest cost and desired from it the highest productivity. This desire to maximize profit was part not only of the planter ethos but also of the forces that created and sustained economic imperialism. The plantations of the British Empire satisfied some of its needs for raw material, and one of their essentials was a cheap and plentiful supply of labour which, if not available locally, had to be imported. The end of slavery resulted in a labour shortage. A former indentured labourer wrote: 'Negroes refused to be ensnared a second time so European glances were cast towards India as alternative sources'. (Ali, 1979: p1).

The labourers were used by the administration solely for the economic gain of the colony based on the customary native land taken by the European planters as well as that leased by the colonial administration aided by the Native Land Ordinance (NLO) decree (Gillion, 1958; Lal, 2013; Lal et al., 1979).

Different land blocks, mostly on the three main islands of *Viti Levu*, *Vanua Levu*, and *Taveuni* had been sub-divided for different cropping systems for European planters. Some of the lands had been bought before cession. Moynagh (1978) stated that the Native Land Claim Commission (NLC) investigated and retrieved some of the 85,000 acres of European-owned land claimed to have been bought mostly with arms and weapons before cession. An

Australian sugar company, Colonial Sugar Refinery (CSR) was established in Fiji in 1880 and had many trial mills around Fiji. From 1886 to 1926, the company was able to build four central sugar mills, which became successful in the drier parts of *Vanua Levu* and *Viti Levu* islands. CSR's leading supplier is the European farmers on free-hold land, and the demand for more sugarcane supply was high, leading to the negotiations between the CSR and the colonial administration to lease more land from the natives. The indentured labour ceased in the 1920s, and the labourers were given the choice of a free return voyage to India, but the majority stayed to work on the farms. In 1926 the CSR divided the plantations into land blocks of about 10 acres each for these Indian cane farmer settlements (Lal, 2013). CSR bought sugarcane from these blocks but also from Indians settling on leased native lands negotiated by the government to strengthen the economic sector based on sugar export. Both the company (CSR) and the farmers needed more security to their farm blocks which resulted in the establishment of the Native Land Trust Ordinance in 1940, Agriculture Landlord and Tenant Ordinance in 1966 and later amendments ensuring that the leases would be automatically renewed after expiry (Gillion, 1958; Moynagh, 1978). Tensions arose due to native owners who decided not to renew leases backed by the earlier Native Land Ordinance of 1875 which stated the natives have the power to decide on the lease renewal (Gillion, 1958; 1979; Lal, 2013; Lal et al., 1979; Moynagh, 1978; Munro, 2005).

CSR played an influential role in trying to get policies to surpass this act, focusing on the need to build on the economic development of the country. Conflict on this land security matter was intensive and included considerable debate and discussion. The CSR and the government made their stand on the Deed of Cession in Resolution B of schedule D of the 1905 Native Land Ordinance (assumed in 1915) which stated that the power is vested in the government to permanently control leased land negotiated from the Fijian for lease (Gillion, 1958; Moynagh, 1978). This move was met by more resistance from the native owners. In 1934 after the Governor's consultation with the colonial office in London, the natives were supported in their right to refuse lease renewals and that CSR and the (then) Fiji government's referral to the Native Land Ordinance policy was a misinterpretation. Later, from 1932 to 1934, more effort was made by the CSR and the government to get a solution to the land security issue as many sugarcane farm leases were about to expire. From 1936 to 1940, consultation intensified and using an influential chief and scholar Ratu Sukuna, who negotiated the passing

of Resolution XXX by the Great Council of Chiefs whereby all land not to be used by the Fijians be opened up for settlement and handed over to the government. This solution was championed by Ratu Sukuna who drew inspiration from the 1931 ordinance in Ghana on the transferring, management, and control of native land to the state (Dodd, 2012; Farran & Paterson, 2013; Konings, 1986; Paterson & Farran, 2013).

The following section focuses on the protection of customary land in the case of Fiji.

#### 4.3.5 Protection of customary land in Fiji

There have been numerous efforts by legal entities to institutionalise the protection, management, and ownership of customary land in Fiji. The Great Council of Chiefs, also known as *bose levu vakaturaga*, which includes prominent tribal (*vanua*) chiefs and leaders, was created in 1874. It was designed to work closely with the colonial government, which oversaw the governing of Fijians. Governor Gordon, under the British colonial administration, formulated a policy in 1875, which prohibited Fijians from selling land to non-Fijians (Chapelle, 1978; Farran & Paterson, 2013; Overton, 1993). Later in 1880, the Native Land Ordinance was established, which extended this policy to forbid the sale of customary land to any person other than the Crown (Farran & Paterson, 2013). The government created a department called the Native Land Commission (NLC) in 1880 to survey the customarily owned land with indigenous Fijian owners. The NLC had the following crucial roles; for the first time to survey and record the boundaries of land held by different landowning units, keep a record of surviving members of landowning units (*vola ni kawa bula*), and settle boundary disputes (Kamikamica, 1987). Their findings were recorded in the Register of Native Lands. It provoked many disputes within the community as people have different perceptions of boundaries, and this irreversible system impacted the future of customary land ownership in Fiji (Baleidrokadroka, 2003; France, 1966; Kamikamica, 1987; Paterson & Farran, 2013; Thomas, 1990).

Major conflicts occurred due to discrepancies between the state and the natives' view on land. Kamikamica (1987) and Baleidrokadroka (2003) noted that the *Native Land Act* (NLA) of 1880 clearly described these opposing notions of land:

...the western view, land right would be parcelled out ultimately among individuals who like the Europeans, would do with their land what they pleased...in the Fijian view, land is

derived from their ancestors in accordance with tradition and usage and it should remain in perpetual succession in the ownership of the traditional land owning units... (Baleidrokadroka, 2003: p 19).

These opposing views never merged, and in the 1930s, the colonial government diverted its attention to making land accessible for productive purposes as it was facing insecurities with the then important sugar industry.

As part of this, the Colonial Sugar Refinery Company (CSR) needed more land to produce sugarcane aiming to boost the infant colonial economy. The colonial government then used an influential Oxford-educated chief, Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna, to persuade the Great Council of Chiefs (GCC), the supreme chiefly body. Ratu Sukuna referred strongly to the biblical story of talents which entails that without the use of one's possession, one will lose all and the idea that an idle landowner neglects his duty to his state and one should lease the surplus to individuals who can fully utilise it (Norton, 2009). This influential speech was accepted by the GCC and became law in 1940:

...that in the opinion of this council, it is in the best interest of the native race that all land not required for maintenance of the Fijian owners be opened for settlement, that to further this end, a committee be appointed to enquire into and determine the amount of land needed for the proper development of the native owners, and that all land (including leases) not so required be handed over to government to lease on behalf of the Fijians. (Kamikamica, 1987: p 230).

The crux of this land reform was founded on the Great Council of Chief's support of the government's move to make more land available for development. This made it more accessible as the 'Indirect Rule' of the Fijian Administration demanded allegiance and respect from the Fijian people who were governed in the villages. Two essential impacts developed from the Great Council of Chiefs' acceptance: first, the grant of leases to sugarcane farmers who were mostly Indian, extinguishing native rights over this land with most land becoming freehold, and second, the Native Land Trust Board (NLTB) was established in 1940 as a trustee to protect the interests and the affairs of native Fijians in respect of their land while still participating in the national development agenda (Baleidrokadroka, 2003; Kamikamica, 1987; Sharma, 1999; Ward, 1969, 1997). It became the law as evident in the current *Native Land Trust Act* [Cap 134] (1985):

Section 4(1) The control of all native land shall be vested in the Board (NLTB now TLTB) and all such land shall be administered by the Board for the benefit of the Fijian owners.

The system introduced by the colonial administration was rigid and irreplaceable. *Mataqali* were formally recognised as the landowning group to be administered by the NLTB. The NLTB was the brainchild of Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna (Volavola, 1995b), who rallied the support of the Great Council of Chiefs and devised a solution to answer the land management question. It referred primarily to making the land productive by leasing for agriculture and development purposes, with landowners receiving a fair return for the utilisation of their land. (Baleidrokadroka, 2003; Parke, 2014; Parke, 2006; Paterson & Farran, 2013; Ward, 1969, 1997).

#### 4.3.6 Land use rights

The system put in place by Ratu Sukuna in the case administered by the iTaukei Land Trust Board (as previously introduced) has continued, roughly, until this day. The land-owning authority lies within the *Mataqali*, and the members have the right to use the land for support and maintenance for their family and for their customary and social obligations. Members utilise the land through farming both for subsistence and also for income, but there are agreed resource management principles that are widely discussed during *mataqali* meetings. This means that members of the *mataqali* have the right not only to use the land but also must adhere to the respective responsibilities so that their descendants can also benefit from the same resources. A collective right is for the direct use of the land to make plantations. Once the land is cleared and planted, the plot of land is referred to as *kanakana* (farming plot to feed on) for that particular person and is also passed down to descendants to utilise. In times of absence from the village, the *kanakana* is still theirs and is called *vakavoavao*, which still has tree crops like coconuts, breadfruit, and banana, awaiting their return. If relatives decide to use this land, then permission needs to be given by the family in which the *kanakana* belongs. The *kanakana* will be returned for the *mataqali* to decide for future use if there are no more descendants (Chapelle, 1978; Kamikamica, 1987; Overton, 1993; Paterson & Farran, 2013).

The other right is known as *yaga-raraba* (collective well-being), which is a land-use system to benefit all members of the *mataqali*. It is usually discussed during *mataqali* meetings, for

instance, forbidding land clearance and human activities around a water reservoir, conservation of trees near the river banks to avoid erosion, and the protection of *kau-dina* (hard-wood) during land clearing for building materials. The other land use is that related to *vanua tabu* (sacred land), which is usually around the *sau tabu* (graveyard) and the *koro-ni-valu* (historic defense settlements) and totems which the members need to preserve. *Mataqali* members also have economic rights of *mataqali* resources (Chapelle, 1978; Durutalo, 2003; Farran & Paterson, 2013; Overton, 1993; Paterson & Farran, 2013). It means that other activities apart from farming requiring the use of *mataqali* resources must benefit all the members. For instance, if logging and excavating rocks and minerals occur, the revenue should benefit all members by equal distribution among members or be kept in a trust account or used for an *oga* (social responsibility).

The right to transfer *mataqali* land and the right to extract *mataqali* resources manifest the flexibility of the *mataqali* land-use system. These undertakings which require the use of resources for individual users need to go through the proper channel of *veivakarogotaki* (consultation) through the traditional presentation of *tabua* (whales' tooth) or *yaqona* (kava) during the meeting. An example of this is the requesting of timber to build a house for a member or a relation not living within the *mataqali* boundary. Another typical example is the *isolisoli* (land gifting), wherein relations from outside the *mataqali* have the right to use and, in return, to take part in the *melo or oga* (sociocultural responsibilities). In regard to doing things on the land, *veivakarogotaki* (consultation) as a sign of respect is intended to build strong *veiwekani* (relationships) and propels a better land-use system and sustainable development through public discussions and agreements about land use.

#### **4.3.7 Concerns about development of Indigenous Fijians**

Liberal minded Governor Sir Philip Mitchell, who served from 1942–44, insisted that the Colonial office should implement an indigenous-governing framework. The system was to encourage the Fijian leaders to assist their people in the transition from subsistence to commercial farming and competition in the market economy (Norton, 2013). On the same note, Governor Sir Ronald Garvey, who served in Fiji from 1952–58, appealed to the Fijian Affairs Board and the Great Council of Chiefs with a stern warning of the emergency being faced over the use of family lands, which are the heritage of the Fijians. Garvey also realised

the intense political repercussions of the broadening gap between the economic and demographic advances of the Indians and the indigenous Fijian economic stagnation (Nayacakalou, 1975). The situations foreseen by Governors Mitchell and Garvey have become realities for indigenous Fijians in the current age.

Ratu Sukuna agreed with Governor Mitchell's proposal of an indigenous governing system, to include economic and political development of Fijians under the leadership of the Fijian Affairs Board. Governor Mitchell also believed that once implemented, it could take up to two generations for all racial differentiation to disappear in contexts like Fiji (Norton, 2013). Later, in 1960, nearly ten years before Fiji gained independence, the *galala* ban, which restricted the movement of Fijian villagers, was lifted. It was thought that there would be a massive migration of villagers from villages to their customary land where their ancestors used to live before the indirect rule. However, 86 years of being in the restricted set-up under the Indirect Rule and the communal system it had become the new norm of life. Most villagers remained in the villages, but a few moved to urban areas for wage employment (Nayacakalou, 1975; Ravuvu, 1983; Seruvakula, 2000).

This was when many Fijian villagers were introduced into the cash economy. At the same time the disparaging term *dravudravua* was commonly used, where the state of Fijian villages, food, clothes, houses, and way of life were negatively compared with that of the affluent lifestyle of urban centres. Governor Mitchell left Fiji, and Ratu Sukuna and the members of the Fijian Affairs Board heavily influenced the Fijian Administration. The villages were subject to stricter everyday regulations drawn up by the Fijian Affairs Board legal advisor, Henry Scott (Lasaqa, 1984; Nayacakalou, 1975). The proposal to help the economic and political evolution of Fijians to be competitive in modern Fiji in preparation for independence was not implemented. Fijian economic stagnation was evident, and the gap in economic advancement for Fijians in comparison to the Indians grew.

#### **4.3.8 Post-independence politics, indigenous development and land**

Fiji gained independence in 1970 and the country was governed by a Fijian dominated multiracial Alliance Party until the general election of 1987. The predicament of rural development was a concern for the government as Fijians continue to occupy villages in the rural areas while Indians and other groups dominated the urban and business centres. The

result of the election saw a coalition of the two leading Indian dominated parties, Fiji Labour Party and National Federation Party. The indigenous Fijian politicians detested the new government, and on May 14, 1987, Lieutenant Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka executed the country's first military coup. In his statement, Colonel Rabuka said that the indigenous Fijians had gained victory, and the coup was a way to protect their interests (Knapman, 1990; Veitayaki, 2019). He referred to the development of marginalised and disadvantaged group of Fijians in villages and the protection of their resources. Affirmative Action Policies were implemented afterwards under the 1990 Constitution to remedy indigenous peoples' development and the political quandary. In practice, however, it was mainly upper class and middle-class Fijians who lived in the urban areas that gained from the scheme (Ratuva, 2000; Ratuva & Lawson, 2016; Veitayaki, 2019). Fijians themselves started to realise the invisible line that classified them into the upper and lower class in terms of education, achievement, and where modern living is superior to traditional Fijian lifestyle.

In 1999 Fiji held another election and appointed its first Indian prime minister. Political instability in 2000 led to another takeover of government, by George Speight. Speight's statement about this resembled Colonel Rabuka's, that it was in the name of safeguarding the interests of the indigenous Fijians. The majority of Fijian villagers supported the 2000 coup including chiefs who were influenced by politicians for the improvement of rural development and protection and security of land and resources (Knapman, 1990). The interim government led by Laisenia Qarase took the country to the 2001 election and won another turn in government. They reintroduced the affirmative action Blueprint for Protection of Fijian and Rotuman Rights and Interests, again as a remedy to the economic disadvantage of rural settings. The scheme aimed at the development of rural areas focusing on agriculture and fisheries and the regulation of rural economies. It was a noble idea but lacked transparency (Ratuva & Lawson, 2016; Veitayaki, 2019).

This ended in 2006 as Commodore Bainimarama removed the government through a military clean-up campaign aimed to redirect the Fiji development path by alleviating corruption and mismanagement of the economy. One of the first efforts of the interim administration was to assist the 33 percent of people under the poverty line and the attempt to improve the economy in rural areas to stem the push of rural dwellers into towns and cities. In the name of alleviating corruption, saving rural development and rural economies, Bainimarama's Fiji

First Party won the election in 2014. Through its *Land Use Decree 2010* (see 4.3.10) and *Surfing Decree 2010*, political commentators had stated that the government had initiated a neo-land alienation strategy that could cause future challenges (Govan, Jupiter, & Comley, 2012; Sakai, 2016; Sloan & Chand, 2015; Veitayaki, 2019).

#### 4.3.9 The present customary land leasing system

At present customary land can only be leased out or licensed after an intense consultation and analysis period. The most recent coup in Fiji in 2006 led by Voreqe Bainimarama was based around a commitment to creating a diverse and inclusive multi-ethnic Fiji. This led to the abrogation of the system that categorises the Fiji citizens based on ethnicity, which means the term 'Fijians' now refers to all Fiji citizens and the '*itaukei*' replaces native or indigenous Fijians. Therefore, the Native Land Trust Board (NLTB) became iTaukei Land Trust Board (TLTB).

There are specific conditions to be observed and rectified to enable the fair treatment of landowners and to avoid future ambiguities and conflicts. It is clearly revealed in the Native Land Trust Act [Cap 134], (1985) which conveys that the proposed leased land is not currently occupied or will not be required for use by the landowners:

Section 9. Conditions to be observed prior to land being dealt with by way of lease or license: No native land shall be dealt with by way of lease or license under the provision of this Act unless the board is satisfied that the land proposed to be made the subject of such lease or license is not being beneficially occupied by the Fijian owners, and is not likely during the currency of such lease or license to be required by the Fijian owners for their use, maintenance or support.

It is further supported by the TLTB statement for the protection of landowners' rights (TLTB<sup>1</sup>) that the board, while acting on behalf of the landowners, must make decisions that will contribute to the best interest and benefits of the *mataqali* (Paterson & Farran, 2013). The

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.tltb.com.fj/itaukei-landowners/>

TLTB should have a good relationship with the *mataqali* and carry out extensive consultations and work collaboratively for the nation's development.

The TLTB has the duty of administering and controlling indigenous Fijian land on behalf of the *mataqali*. This should facilitate the promotion of sustainable resource utilisation to render their continued accessibility for *mataqali* members and provide support as stated in the TLTB's environment charter (Kamikamica, 1987; Volavola, 1995). The charter has a crucial role in enabling and promoting sustainable development in Fiji with three critical aspects. First, improved management of all agricultural land resources, forestry, water catchments, minerals, and ensuring appropriate and orderly development and enhancing the continued availability and efficiency of natural resources. Second, the conservation and preservation of the Fijian environment for its natural, cultural, educational, scientific, recreation, and tourism values. Lastly, the TLTB has a role in enforcing the establishment, awareness of, legislation, and monitoring of environmental policies (Kamikamica, 1987; Paterson & Farran, 2013; Rakai, 1995; Rakai & Williamson, 1995; Volavola, 1995). It is all founded on the need for a balance in what land is being utilised for now as well as providing resources to benefit future *mataqali* members and the development of the nation.

The model of land governance used in Fiji has assisted in both national development and the protection of customary land. The main strength of this system from a national development perspective is that investors go through a relatively straightforward process for customary land transactions. An essential question for this system, however, is based on how landowners' best interests are protected while facilitating these transactions. The Australian Overseas Aid Program carried out and compiled a study entitled '*Making Land Work*' (AusAid, 2008), which looked into the TLTB model and suggested some improvements to benefit the landowners during land deals and leasing. One concern is that the landowners have limited control over their land, and the board has the right through legislation to lease land without their authorisation. Another concern is that there is no independent body to oversee the board apart from the government itself, which leads to a conflict of interest (Paterson & Farran, 2013).

Moreover, income is circulated to individuals rather than land trusts for communal or village-based development. The so-called clean-up campaign initiated by the Bainimarama government also targeted the NLTB's rent distribution system to landowners. The system was

based on the ratio; 22.5% for three levels of chiefs (*Tui-supreme Vanua* chief, *Turaga ni Yavusa*-Clan Leader, *Turaga ni Mataqali*-Sub-clan leader) and 52.5% among ordinary members. Now everybody from chiefs to ordinary people has an equal share. There are examples of income distribution in Vanuatu and New Zealand, where communal development is the priority (AusAid, 2008). Another crucial concern was raised by Sharma (1999) comparing *mataqali* as landowners in Fiji and NLTB (now TLTB) as ‘toothless tigers’ and ‘big brother’ consecutively, in deciding on their land as the authority is entrusted in the NLTB. Sharma (1999) added that the decisions made by TLTB are supreme and unquestionable, with not even a *locus standi* to sue the statutory body with landowners as the aggrieved (AusAid, 2008; Paterson & Farran, 2013; Sharma, 1999).

Overall, TLTB is instrumentally bound for national development in Fiji, but there is still more work needed to reinforce the rights of indigenous Fijians as landowners in terms of the protection of rights, involvement in decision making, or to review the legislation to suit their best interests.

#### **4.3.10 The Land Use Decree 2010**

The TLTB is an independent institution responsible for the leasing of customary land (*mataqali* land) in Fiji. From 2010 there has been a significant change to the native land tenure and administration in Fiji, which has led to the formation of another leasing regime in which the government, in particular the Prime Minister, has complete control. The interim government, led by Frank Bainimarama as Prime Minister, came up with 11 pillars which became the backbone of the so-called People’s Charter. The 6<sup>th</sup> pillar ‘making more land available for productive purposes’ was the building block for the establishment of a new unit known as Land Use Unit (LUU) under the Ministry of Lands. The LUU now works as a new lease regime to lease customary land after the passing of the *Land Use Decree* in July 2010 in parliament and is a direct competitor of the TLTB (Dodd, 2012; Ramesh, 2010; Sakai, 2016).

The process is linear under pillar six of the People’s Charter making it easier for land to be available while still being state or customary land. The first step is known as a designation, which refers to the land being marked out and checked by the Ministry of Lands and Mineral resources ensuring it is ‘free from all encumbrances’ or utterly free from any existing licenses, lease or any formal agreement. The next phase includes the written consent of 60% of the

customary landowners who are at least 18 years of age and permanently residing in Fiji. Once this written consent is received from the Minister responsible, it is then referred to the Prime Minister for approval. After the Prime Minister's declarations and approval, the land is entered into a land register known as the Land Use Bank or widely known as the Land Bank. Land entered into the Land Bank can be leased for up to 99 years, and any effort to revoke its designation can only be executed after five years from when it was first made (Dodd, 2012; Ramesh, 2010; Ratuva & Lawson, 2016; Sakai, 2014, 2016).

The Land Use Decree, which is now driving the system implemented by the LUU decree, is a new and contradictory document when viewed through the lens and the perspective of the landowners in terms of how they are protected. The main objective of the decree is 'to utilise designated native land in a manner that is in the best interest of native landowners' which implies that the LUU is somehow similar to that of TLTB as an entity that looks after the leasing of native lands at the same time the best interest of the landowners is the central element. Section S(3)(a) and (b) encompasses the Land Use Decree's main objectives:

- (b) providing longer tenure of leases for a sustainable and progressive development of the agricultural and commercial sector; and
- (c) providing that all land available are leased with the purpose of providing a livelihood for all parties concerned. (Government of Fiji: p. 805).

These objectives align with the state's prerogative and paradigm of ensuring long term leases and advantages for economic and national development and the sense of providing livelihoods for all parties while abating those of the landowners, the indigenous Fijian (Dodd, 2012; Sakai, 2014, 2016).

The Land Use Decree in the long term can be seen as a new form of land alienation for indigenous Fijians (Chambers, 2015; Dodd, 2012; Govan et al., 2012; Sakai, 2014, 2016). At first, the maximum duration of the lease is up to 99 years in the Land Use Bank system, and landowners are not included in wide consultation and discussions. Section 15 of the decree assures that the native does not have any right to take any official or the LUU to court as the Chief Registrar will immediately be required to provide a court withdraw order. In other words, the Land Use Decree does not give indigenous Fijians a voice in court as they are barred by the decree from going to court. It does not align with the TLTB where the landowners have

every right to advise, and proper consultation, as well as the right to take their trustee (TLTB) to court at any time for matters of transparency (Dodd, 2012; Sakai, 2014, 2016). It is a new form of land alienation where legal channels are followed by the interest faction who view land as an asset for development, and having easy access to it is vital for national development. Indigenous Fijians view land as more than an asset, with meanings deeply rooted in their identity, culture, and beings and who they are as *tamata ni vanua* (people of the land) where their community is inscribed on the ground.

Chambers (2015) raises similar concerns that the 99-year term of the lease is a *de facto* alienation of land from indigenous Fijian landowners for five generations. The *Land Use Decree 2010* was encapsulated and concealed in the Fiji First Party's manifesto 2014 (led by party leader Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama), placing more focus on leasehold tenure for access to indigenous Fijians' land. For many decades indigenous Fijians leased out land to investors and others to develop, and such land is governed by *iTaukei* Land Trust Act, but unfortunately, in many cases this led to the socioeconomic marginalisation of indigenous Fijians. Investors and companies gained huge profits from such arrangements rather than a focus on land use and assistance services for indigenous Fijians to use and develop their land (Chambers, 2015). Chambers also forecasts that this land-use policy is destined to be disruptive and, in the long run, could be a factor of social and political instability in Fiji.

Govan, Jupiter, and Comley (2012) also voiced their concern over the *Land Use Decree 2010* in Fiji as it governs the Land Use Bank, an alternative of *iTaukei* Land Trust Board. The report stated the *Land Use Decree* has a few loopholes including less consultation process before amending the decree, no processes within the decree are contestable in the court of law, direct competition and practices with *iTaukei* Land Trust Board, and the risk that the decree could lead to effective alienation of native land (Govan et al., 2012). Sloan and Chand (2015) also stated that the directives of a similar decree, the '*Surfing Area Decree 2010*' which opens all shorelines for water sports, could lead to similar consequences (Sloan & Chand, 2015). The decree favours resorts, hotels, investors, and tourism-related activities but forbids activities like fishing, generating conflicts of interest for the different stakeholders, developers and the customary landowners' needs for sustenance (Govan et al., 2012). Both the Land Use Decree 2010 and Surfing Area Decree 2010 were aimed at incentivising investors and business people

to establish commercial ventures in Fiji, and less on land use, sustenance, entrepreneurial assistance and wellbeing for native Fijians.

#### 4.4 Summary

This chapter discussed the importance of customary land to development in the Pacific, with a focus on Fiji. Customary land has been a source of debate for many years in terms of economic development in the Pacific. The chapter also deliberated on alternative means that indigenous people in the Pacific adopt to allow other people to use customary land through reciprocity and traditional measures. The land in Fiji was discussed in detail, including historical happenings and encounters of customary land through to the present system and government. The issues of customary land and the under-development of rural settings were factors leading to the political instability of Fiji, which has had seven elections and four coups in its history (Ratuva & Lawson, 2016). The indigenous Fijian rural populace was the largest group of people in Fiji in support of the two coups of 1987 and the 2000. They followed nationalist politicians who sought protection of indigenous Fijian interests including prevention of customary land alienation and the provision of meaningful development in the marginalised communities of rural Fiji (Ratuva & Lawson, 2016; Sakai, 2016; Veitayaki, 2019). The way forward is unclear, but there is strong indication for the need to provide support for rural development and this study is a form of contribution to economic development on customary land in rural Fiji.

Financial institutions do not recognise customary land as collateral for financial assistance, but development imperatives kept the pressure on governments in countries like Fiji to free up land for investment, and policies like the *Land Use Decree 2010* were made to speed up the process. This thesis explores whether, and how it is possible to get good entrepreneurial activities on customary land without having to lease it to outsiders. It hopes to highlight meaningful indigenous entrepreneurial development in rural Fiji on customary land.

Chapter 5 will explain the methodology behind this research, including how the case studies were selected.

## Chapter 5 Methodology

*Mo vinaka sara vaka na mataisau ka kila na nomu I tavi ki na vanua* (to be competent like a craftsman and know your traditional roles to your land and people). *Mataisau* is the clan responsible for building structures and craftsmanship in indigenous Fijian villages, skilful in methods of building canoes, houses, territory protection, handicrafts with the knowledge passed on by their ancestors.

### 5.1 Introduction

In order to answer the research question, the crafting of an appropriate methodology is integral. This chapter introduces the methods utilised during this study. Both the qualitative research paradigm and culturally appropriate methods are used to gather the data necessary to achieve the aim of this research. Qualitative as an overarching paradigm, the culturally aligned Vanua Research Framework (Nabobo-Baba, 2008) is the basis of all cultural elements applied here.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the qualitative paradigm and the philosophies behind the research methods and process. The Vanua Research Framework is then discussed in the context of this study. For instance, the role of *talimagimagi* in cultural discernment and merging of indigenous and other knowledge (Meo-Sewabu, 2015), the process of *bula vakavanua* (Nainoca, 2011) in implementing ethnography and participant observation, and *talanoa* (Halapua, 2000; Nabobo-Baba, 2006; Vaioleti, 2016) as a means of connecting and creating meaning through conversation and relationships. Finally, this chapter will also introduce and discuss a culturally relevant metaphor (the *Uvi* metaphor) encompassing all the methodologies herein to study indigenous entrepreneurship operating on their customary land in the Pacific island nations.

### 5.2 Qualitative research

Qualitative research can be linked back to two essential publications from 1968 and 1978. A publication in 1968 on *'The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative research'* (Glaser, Strauss, & Strutzel, 1968) focused on qualitative research as inductively analysing a social phenomenon, and the document became a practical guide to understanding qualitative

research. *'Towards a Methodology of Naturalistic Inquiry'* (Guba, 1978) classified a study as 'naturalistic' if it was done in a real-world situation and not a laboratory where the researcher does not take control or manipulate the issues, contexts, and situations under study. The document *'Qualitative Research for Education'* (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) indicated that in the 1920s to 1930s Chicago sociologists highlighted that the contemporary definition of qualitative research is holistic as it merges social context and biography. It also stated a crucial role of qualitative research:

...the importance of seeing the world from the perspective of those who were seldom listened to—the criminal, the vagrant, the immigrant—was emphasized. While not using the phrase, they knew they were “giving voice” to points of view of people marginalized in the society (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007: p9).

This critical role of qualitative research in giving a voice to the marginalised is highly relevant to this study on indigenous Pacific models and notions of running a successful business on customary land. This study will be a voice highlighting successful indigenous entrepreneurship models in Pacific nations, as the widely agreed narrative of establishing successful businesses in the Pacific is to follow the western entrepreneurship model.

Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people live. The interpretation of living experiences, how they construct their world, meanings attributed to their experiences as they continue to interact with the world, environment, and culture are essential elements (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Researchers developed questions that are directed towards understanding the social phenomenon, cultural context, living experiences, and worldviews of the people involved. Researchers such as anthropologists and sociologists are socially embedded into the locations under study to live with the people and collect information through observation, interviewing, analysing artefacts, and documents (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This mode of investigation aims to describe, interpret, and explain the social reality of the people involved. Living with the people for a period in the research location helps create more meaningful interactions and contributes to the legitimacy of data collected (Beuving & Vries, 2015).

Social interaction and building relationships with the people under study and their contexts are essential elements of qualitative research. Researchers going into these locations need to

establish robust relationships to understand the worldview of each community. This enables the exploration of meanings, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and the descriptions and analysis of their narratives (Berg & Lune, 2017). Getting meanings in qualitative research is also termed as understanding the human face of issues under study (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005). The willingness of the researcher to learn is vital for a smooth transition into the community under study. It will enhance social interaction; build relationships through trust, allowing the researcher to understand locals' perspectives.

Qualitative research will be used in this research to study indigenous entrepreneurship successfully operating on their customary land in the Pacific Nations. The chosen paradigm is suitable for this study, as indicated by Cameron (1963: p.1);

It would be nice if all of the data which sociologists require could be enumerated because then we could run them through IBM machines and draw charts as the economists do. However, not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted.

Apart from the effort of including a much-needed alternative to numeral calculations and measurement, qualitative methods have an appeal that is distinctive and captivating with a focus on naturalistic details and context (Padgett, 2017).

This research seeks to understand the practices that make an indigenous business successful on customary land. To execute this, in-depth case studies on these successful businesses were conducted. In business research, the involvement of qualitative methods broadens the toolkit and can add significant value to business researchers (Walle, 2015). From an indigenous perspective, qualitative research will be able to capture and become a voice for the subalterns and marginalised groups in terms of indigenous business interventions, notions and models of what works better in such settings (Merriam, 1998). Data was collected through culturally inclusive frameworks to present how the business owners successfully build relationships and negotiate challenges to achieve economic, sociocultural, and environmental sustainability.

### 5.2.1 Case studies

Using a culturally aligned framework, indigenous businesses operating on customary land are studied using case study analysis. It is qualitative and involves a multiple case study approach that explores indigenous entrepreneurship occurring in its natural context in more than one community (Stake, 1995). It also takes on Stake's definition of the social construction of reality case study based on the constructivist suppositions that direct the investigation of the social construction of reality and meaning. Social construction, social interactions, meaning creation, shared meanings all shapes behaviour, and it is in the best interests of the researcher to capture and represent how these processes are put into practice at the community level. Multiple case study is taken as an approach for this research with the assumption that this will increase understanding and assist in theorising indigenous entrepreneurship intervention, structures and negotiations through the comparison of patterns, themes and systems in all cases (Stake, 1995, 2005, 2006).

There are various definitions of the case study, and each is different according to context. One definition locates the case study as a case analysis in a real-life situation and involving contemporary contexts (Yin, 2015). Another definition states that a case study is not a methodology but just a choice of research locality and subjects restricted by time and place (Stake, 2005). This research takes on this overarching definition of 'case study':

Case study is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information for example, observation, interviews, audio-visual materials, document and reports.... (Creswell & Cheryl, 2018: p. 90).

By using this definition (Creswell & Cheryl, 2018), more cases are deliberately included to enhance the process, ultimately creating a much more productive, more profound, and more precise picture of what is being investigated from the viewpoint of many different cases samplings (Merriam, 1998). In the different case study locations in this research, a common factor includes indigenous entrepreneurs operating on customary land in Fiji, and these businesses are doing well from an agreed perspective.

The case study approach is also referred to as an in-depth methodical investigation of the real-life phenomenon. The environmental context of an individual, group, organisation, event, a problem, or anomaly is very significant to the study. Case studies do not involve random sampling to epitomise a larger population, and the researcher does not control or manipulate the environment and context of the study (Ridder, 2017). These cases are selected because of specific interests and alignment to the task of exploring successful indigenous businesses operating on customary land. What is essential, is the study of the real-life occurrence of the elements under study as well as focusing on how meanings are created when people interact with the contexts and how these interactions shape the views and experiences of people belonging to a specific place or community (Baxter & Jack, 2008). This is because society is created through the relationships of living and non-living things, the influence of environment on behaviour is so significant to how all these factors are ingrained into the fabric of society (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Ridder, 2017; Stake, 1995). What make all these processes operate in real life is an essential factor for the case studies executed in this study.

The accuracy of data collected in a qualitative research method, such as case studies, is so crucial to research. The idea of the accuracy of results is linked to the concept of reliability and validity of data. Reliability refers to the consistency of observation and replicability of results, and another researcher conducting the same study using the same methodology should also reach the same conclusion (Lewis, 2015). The term validity of data or result refers to the ability to make connections between the result and the reality of life under study. This can be achieved through the capacity of the research and the researcher to construct a capable depiction of reality through the strategic converging of multiple data sources (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Lewis, 2015; Stake, 1995, 2006). In combination, reliability and validity lead to the accuracy of the results and the integrity of the research output as well as the role of being an authentic voice for the community under study.

The reliability and validity of the result can also be achieved through amending biases within the research. The 'Case Study Practical Handbook' (Gagnon, 2010) discusses three types of bias that a researcher can face during a case study. The holistic illusion occurs when the researcher is too excited with the desired information and starts to ignore facts that do not fit. The second bias is the elite bias, which involves more attention to information shared by prominent community members and less weight given to less articulate informants. Lastly,

over-assimilation, which happens when the researcher accepts local informants' perceptions as the whole truth and disregards their own perspective and critical abilities (Gagnon, 2010).

There are four applicable ways of amending these biases (Gagnon, 2010). Firstly, using concrete descriptors, which is achieved through reporting of information shared by people word for word and narrative description of behaviour and direct observations. Secondly, safeguarding the raw data and making sure that other researchers can have access to confirm the precision of interpretations. The thirdly technique is to involve more than one researcher in the field to confirm data collected, which usually depends on time, budget, and availability of research assistants. Otherwise, single researchers need to eliminate bias, practice excellent analysis, and ensure individual characteristics do not skew the result. The last procedure, data triangulation, is important to reaffirm the legitimacy of data collected. This is achieved using several methodologies such as interviews, participant observation, and archives, revisiting key informants, having the interpretation of the data reviewed by peers to see if the same conclusion is reached, and having detailed case descriptions of the events within the community under study (Gagnon, 2010; Silverman, 2009). For the case of this research, it is more than the elimination of biases but the authentic role of an indigenous Fijian researcher voicing the issues and protecting the interests of indigenous communities under study, as well as looking at ways for them to benefit by the research.

This research sits within the Massey University Institute of Development Studies project, funded by the Royal Society of New Zealand Marsden Fund, "*The land has eyes and teeth*": *customary landowners' entanglements with economic systems in the Pacific*'. It involved collaboration between the university, funders, project staff, and advisory group. Initially, an intense search was conducted through online investigation, the advisory group, and personal connections were utilised to scope for successful indigenous businesses operating on customary land in Pacific nations. Conversations were conducted with representatives from these businesses to see the fit into the 'successes' criteria and framing of the project. After initial analysis, two researchers were employed in the field to conduct the initial interview (*talanoa*) with these businesses, one experienced and one student researcher as the assistant. The *talanoa* data were transcribed and analysed with the results presented to project members and then to the advisory group for reliability and validity. More information and ideas were gathered during seminar and conference presentations of these case studies and

consultation meetings, which led to the selection of three favourable businesses that fit into the success criteria for in-depth studies. The *talanoa* and interview data, project reports, and essential information are stored in the cloud in shared drop-boxes, which can be accessed by the project members.

### 5.2.2 Ethics, permission, consent, and confidentiality

Research ethics processes were conducted during the early stages of the research. Firstly, since this study is aligned to a Marsden funded project, the project, 'Land Has Eyes and Teeth' had approved research ethics as this was part of the bidding process and covered all aspects of the project including this study (appendices 3 and 4). Secondly, this study also commenced the ethics process and being peer-reviewed during Development Studies in-house ethics processes at Massey University. Important issues such as these were discussed; selection process of research participants, the confidentiality of information, safety, and protection of the researcher and participants, sharing, storage, and accessibility to information. This study was then granted a low-risk notification by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee.

During field-study, a copy of the ethics approval information sheet was presented to the iTaukei Affairs Board, Provincial Council, *Turaga ni Koro* (village headman), and the participants. Since this research was conducted in indigenous Fijian village settings the iTaukei Affairs Board is responsible for the safety and protection of all indigenous Fijian culture and villages, and work in collaboration with the various Provincial Council offices which work closely with the *Turaga ni Koro* who is the official representatives operating at the village level (appendices 2 and 5). Consent to conduct *talanoa* or interviews with participants was obtained beforehand as well as clarifying that participation was voluntary (appendix 7). The discussion was then conducted on the contents of the consent form, and participants who agreed to participate were asked to show consent through signing a copy. Issues of anonymity, confidentiality, photograph usage, audio recording, and giving a voice were also thoroughly discussed before every session.

The other concern was the familiarity of the researcher to the people, and the rights and privileges of participants were also clarified. In one of the villages, the researcher was known as a teacher and worked for the Ministry of Education but the new role of being a researcher

was introduced. The repetition of ethics discussions was to ensure that any situation of conflict of interest was dealt with to promote trust and cooperation with the people.

### 5.2.3 Phases of field study

This research study was conducted in three phases to gain a better vantage point for learning the complex involved in indigenous Fijian entrepreneurship on customary land in Fiji. Primary and secondary data were collected during fieldwork trips in various locations over the three phases. As provided in Table 5, phase 1 is the preliminary sampling and scoping of successful indigenous businesses on customary land in Fiji, and phase 2 involves in-depth and extended research on selected samples or cases and community engagements, and phase 3 involves revisiting of the communities involved in phase 2.

**Table 5: Phases of Research**

Phase	Date
1 Preliminary sampling & scoping	November, 2017
2 In-depth, extended research	September–November 2018
3 Revisiting communities	July 2019

#### 5.2.3.1 Phase 1

Phase 1 constituted the preliminary study conducted to scope for successful indigenous businesses and entrepreneurs after initial searching and making connections with stakeholders. The *iTaukei* Land Trust Board (TLTB) looks after customary land in Fiji, and has a section that provides support to indigenous Fijian businesses. This department, as well as other professional connections like the Ministry of Youth and Indigenous Business Council of Fiji, assisted in the initial search to locate successful indigenous businesses operating on customary land. These points of contact made it easier to contact the businesses directly. Phase 1 was conducted in November 2017, and the purpose was to test the significance of the research design and methods used in data collection. Traditional entry protocols (*i sevusevu*) were conducted during the visits to all indigenous Fijian village settings, involving

the presentation of *yaqona* (kava roots) to the chiefs and elders to seek permission to carry out *talanoa*. A representative from *iTaukei* Land Trust Board had been working with these businesses for quite some time and built the necessary relationships, which made things easier for the phase 1 visit. During the *talanoa* the researchers conducted a brief discussion on how a particular business is ranked and the probability that it can be revisited again. If this was the case, then the chiefs and business owners were informed accordingly. The data was then entered and ranked using the sustainability tool (Section 5.2.5.6), and after in-depth consultation with the project members, advisory groups, and conference presentations, the businesses to be involved for in-depth case studies were decided and were contacted for phase 2.

### 5.2.3.2 Phase 2

The field research was conducted after the analysis and prolonged discussions at conferences, symposiums and project meetings. The sustainability tool (Chapter 6, Section 5.2.5.6) was utilised to provide some basic ideas of what constitutes successful entrepreneurship on customary land, the experiences and perspectives of experts during discussions also enlighten the case selection process. The following businesses were selected for the field research in phase 2: Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring, Aviva Farms, and Nayarabale Youth Farm. The purpose of phase 2 was to carry out in-depth study and spend some time with the businesses while embedded in the *bula vakavanua* (Section 5.2.4.2), which is the way of life of the people who are directly and indirectly involved with the businesses. The researcher stayed at these locations for 3–4 weeks, as provided in Table 6.

**Table 6: Field Research (Phase 2) Details**

Case Study Number	Dates	Case Study
1	September 20–October 10, 2018	Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring
2	October 11–November 8, 2018	Aviva Farms
3	November 11–27, 2018	Nayarabale Youth Farms

For case studies 1 and 2 (Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring and Aviva Farms) *iTaukei* Land Trust Board (TLTB) provided the point of connection during phase 1 of the research. Phase 2 is fundamentally revisiting, and a re-entry cultural protocol of *isevusevu* with the presentation

of *kava* was conducted asking for the elders' (chief's) permission for entry as well as detailing the purpose of the visit. A detailed discussion was conducted after the traditional protocol before *kava* was mixed for both parties to drink together as a sign of collective agreement. For case study 3 (Nayarabale Youth Farm) the researcher was a former teacher in the province, and connections and relationships were already established. The researcher spent 3–4 weeks with the communities engaged in the daily *bula vakavanua* (way of life, see Section 5.2.4.2) of the locals. It allowing more interaction, learning, *talanoa* (discussions) as detailed in Sections 5.2.4.3 and 5.2.4.4.

Staying with the people at the case study locations develops and enhances relationship and trust, making access to key informants, participants, and important events easy. The researcher was involved in the daily activities of the people and also assisted in paying for expenses like food for the duration of the stay. Case study 1 (Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring) and case study 2 (Aviva Farms) are in the same area, and it was an excellent opportunity to explore the interconnectedness of the two businesses and their respective communities. Data analysis started in the field and their proximity made it easier to re-validate data through revisiting these neighbouring firms. Another significant opportunity was the *solesolevaki* ceremony (see details in Section 7.4), where all the businesses involved in this study were present for meetings and discussions. It was a good point of connection and to uncover the informal networks (see Section 7.5) between indigenous Fijian businesses. Case study 3 (Nayarabale Youth Farm) was an excellent opportunity to see economic development in a different context, being located in the rural-remote setting of Vanua Levu. An occasion was attended in another village (Seyavaci Village), which the researcher attended for three days accompanying the youth farm leader only to realise later that this was a farming development project funded by the Nayarabale Youth Farm in support of other village development.

A few challenges were encountered during the field research, including its duration and family attachments. Indeed, time is a resource to such an in-depth study especially when questions are directed on both the success factors and tensions faced by the firms. Research on the individual factors needed more time for all case studies. A challenge at the Nayarabale Youth Farm case study was the impartiality of the data collected. During my *isevusevu* (entry protocol), the chief allocated the researcher to the family of the youth leader, and he was present in nearly all my early *talanoa* (interviews). It required more effort, time, and

resources to reschedule *talanoa* (re-interviews) with critical participants, and most of these were conducted out of the village contexts to enable in-depth discussions without the presence of the youth leader, and to conduct in-depth discussions with the ordinary people.

### 5.2.3.3 Phase 3

As an indigenous Fijian researcher, the connections made to the communities under study is a lifetime relationship. This is based on the words usually heard from the gatekeepers during the researcher's first entry at the communities '*ko sa na dua vei keimami*' (you are one of us now). The revisiting is also included as one of the components of the Vanua Research Framework (VRF) (Section 5.2.4) executed within this study. The researcher was also having ongoing conversations with friends from the case study communities through the 'FaceBook' messaging platform. These friends played considerable roles in this study by frequent updating on any developments taking place in the firms, validating data, direct quotes used, stories, and maintaining the relationship. The communities were also updated on the researcher's revisiting schedules, which made it easier to meet and re-discuss the issues and objectives of the study. As a revisiting norm, the re-entry protocol of *isevusevu* was presented with gifts and presentation of food. The friends on 'FaceBook' messaging platform were presented with unique gifts due to their timely assistance and continuous communication. An *itatau* (exit protocol) was presented with an agreement to keep in contact for future learning and discussions.

### 5.2.3.4 Action research

The farming model from Nayarabale Youth Farm and the *solesolevaki* model (see Section 7.8) was implemented in another location, building on the success of the Narayabale example. This occurred in Saroni village (Dogotuki district, Macuata Province, Vanua Levu), which was struggling with *solesolevaki* and wellbeing of members. The author is connected to the people here through his paternal link, meaning he is also a landowner and part of the community. Some of the community members asked whether he had any ideas for revitalising customs and helping them to earn an income off their land, as earlier efforts to revitalise *solesolevaki* had failed. This led to a form of action research (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood & Maguire, 2003), whereby practical knowledge and skills from Nayarabale Youth Farm—in particular, the

four-week work structure—was replicated, enhanced and executed by people in Saroni village to enhance the wellbeing of individuals and the general community.

The researcher followed the VRF in order to get the approval and trust of the members. This was important as they were out of practice with *solesolevaki*, and their belief in *solesolevaki* was like a *dulumi* (a piece of dormant - buried wood or tree stump), a thing of the past. Proper channels were followed through formally informing the elders about the plan of action and seeking their approval and support. The following phases and processes were followed to provide the necessary environment for *solesolevaki* to regrow again. Youths were identified to pilot the program, and they were included in discussions along with the elders. The work structure was planned out and was followed (see Table 8), and *solesolevaki* was used to carry out the weekly activities. While it took some time for people to adopt *solesolevaki* within the work structure, currently this initiative is showing significant signs of success. After eight months of operation, the following was achieved: 1,000 kava plants planted in the field, 1,000 kava plants in germination nurseries, village food is provided from a community vegetable garden, and 2,000 cassava were planted. The *solesolevaki* group also initiated a commercial vegetable farm where the village women gained income from vegetable sales, and they helped women to build a community oven so they could make and sell bread to other villages. The women's group also started a small handicraft business from vegetable sales.

Saroni village also influenced two other small villages (Wainiura and Sarifaci villages, which belong to the same sub-clan, *tokatoka Nubunilagi*) who have now been working together for two months. Both of these villages have 500 kava plants and 1,000 cassava plants breeding in their nurseries, and they have started with their vegetable gardens. These villages are following the monthly work structure, *solesolevaki* is the main element for the activities, and people are witnessing unity reinstated.

The *solesolevaki* farming activities at Saroni are thriving now, engaging all members of the village. This adds status to this community and has a ripple effect on nearby communities who have also tried to replicate the same programs in different village settings.

This case of action research has been provided to add further weight to the value of *solesolevaki* as a mechanism for enabling effective, self-determined development by indigenous Fijians in Fiji.

#### 5.2.4 Vanua Research Framework

The qualitative paradigm will direct this study, and the Vanua Research Framework will enhance a cultural and context-specific framing. The Vanua Research Framework captures and appreciates the uniqueness of Pacific culture and relates to the poetic and linguistic reference of the Pacific as the ocean which joins us all, and the navigation of possibilities as noted by (Sanga and Reynolds, 2017: p. 203):

What counts is what research can do to celebrate, develop, and support the lives of Pacific peoples as both unique and connected wherever they are. Context defines appropriateness, relevance, the balance between distinctiveness and shared features. Taking stock of context respects the past while acknowledging a fluid world. Any piece of Pacific research can belong in the paradigm as well as to the more local community it serves; naming involves individuality and relationality. Imagining an appreciative space where we in the region can learn from each other is a strength. Neither total exclusivity nor the unadulterated universalism of so-called objectivity is reflective of much Pacific life.

This study involves the gathering and navigation of indigenous experiences and worldviews in Oceania and for the possibility of theorising indigenous notions of entrepreneurship in the Pacific Nation's context.

The *Vanua* research framework is a widely accepted cultural research framework used in the Pacific. *Vanua* means land, including the *iqoliqoli* (traditional fishing grounds) in general, and can also refer to the tribe, which is the highest hierarchy of indigenous Fijian traditional classifications. From an all-inclusive dimension, *vanua* is defined as 'the universal whole inclusive of its territory, their waterways or fishing grounds, their environment, their land and spirituality, their history, their chief and related chiefs, their people and their relationships, their epistemology and culture' (Nabobo-Baba, 2006: p. 155). The *vanua* concept is central to the identity and the quintessence of being an indigenous Fijian, and the *vanua* research framing is the encapsulating framework that was applied during the implementation of this research. Vanua research framing, like Kaupapa Maori Research Methodology, is culturally sensitive and inclusive as Smith (2013: p. 300) stated:

Kaupapa Maori as research that is 'culturally safe'; that involves the 'mentorship' of elders; that is culturally relevant and appropriate while satisfying the rigour of research;

and that is undertaken by a Maori researcher, not a researcher who happens to be Maori...In the context of research, empowerment means that Maori people should regain control of investigations into Maori people's lives. Bishop also argues that Kaupapa Maori research is located within an alternative conception of the world from which solutions and cultural aspirations can be generated.

The *Vanua* Research Framework is a derivative of Kaupapa Maori Research Methodology (Nabobo-Baba, 2008), and both are strongly driven to acknowledge the indigenous worldviews by developing and encouraging relevant approaches in research that value their ways of being.

The *vanua* framework is rooted in the indigenous Fijian worldview represented in culture and values as well as its knowledge system and the role of the indigenous Fijian language as a means of knowledge transmission. This study will accommodate the principles of the *vanua* framework to achieve its aim. These principles include research to benefit indigenous Fijian needs, uplifting cultural protocol and processes, researcher fluency in the dialect, indigenous person as principal researcher, respect and reciprocity, locals as members of the research team for capacity building, relevant feedback to local people and lastly, permission to conduct research to be given by chief and elders (Nabobo-Baba, Naisilisili, Bogitini, Baba, & Lingam, 2012).

Positioning as a researcher in these indigenous settings can invite risk to the research process as simply being an indigenous Fijian does not necessarily guarantee a smooth interaction with locals if the researcher does not belong to their *vanua*. Through the lens of the *vanua* research framing carefully monitoring the research practice principles, philosophies and processes, and the knowledge that comes from being an indigenous Fijian (entry protocols, language, culture, and worldviews) will increase the level of trust, acceptance, and inclusion to conduct the study. The framework is a culturally appropriate knowledge-gathering activity infused with the values of reciprocity, *veidokai* (respect), *veivakarokorokotaki* (mutual respect), obligations towards the researched people's welfare, appropriate conduct expected of the knowledge seeker and *veivakabauti* (trustworthiness). These need to be reflected in all phases of the framework; *navunavuci* (conception), *na vakavakarau* (preparation and planning), *na i curucuru/i sevusevu* (entry protocol), *talanoa/veitalanoa* (multi-logue, dialogue. monologue, story collection), *na i tukutuku* (report, analysis writing), *na*

*vakavinavinaka* (gifting, reciprocity, thank you), *i tatau* (departure protocol), *vakarogotaki lesu* (reporting back, revisiting), *me vakilai me vurevure ni veisau se vei ka vou me kauta mai na sautu* (transformative process and change as a result of the research report) (Nabobo-Baba, 2008).

#### 5.2.4.1 Talimagimagi

*Magimagi* is a sinnet or rope made from coconut and a product achieved after the process of removal of strands from selected coconuts and into the earth oven, drying, and *talimagimagi* is the weaving together of strands. Due to the processes involved and the skills in weaving the different strands, it is used in traditional construction without the use of nails and modern binding elements. The *talimagimagi* metaphor will:

...permit the researcher to adopt an emic positioning that allows for the interface of knowledge systems, weaving together strands of the sinnet so that the resulting piece is more durable, as opposed to having just an emic (insider) or an etic (outsider) position. (Meo-Sewabu, 2015: p. 55)

Entering an area as an outsider can be sensitive, but having the insights and worldviews and knowledge of indigenous Fijian and interwoven with university ethics' protocols and academic knowledge will make for much stronger research, data gathering, and relationship building process. The *talimagimagi* framework will also lay the foundation in regard to the business owners' definitions and factors of business success by using these to map them out alongside the definitions in the literature. This framework also facilitates cultural discernment whereby a group of individuals can work together, ensuring proper cultural protocols and practices are followed throughout the research processes. This will involve the 'Land has Eyes and Teeth' project team, advisors, and supervisors who will assist in following proper channels and networks as well as communicating the necessary ethical procedures and behaviours in various settings (Meo-Sewabu, 2015).

#### 5.2.4.2 Bula vakavanua

*Bula vakavanua* is a well-known term in the indigenous Fijian worldview, and generally, it refers to the way of life in the indigenous Fijian settings and villages and is practiced in these selected cases. Just as *talimagimagi* is a crucial component of a doctoral study (Meo-Sewabu, 2015) *bula vakavanua* is also vital:

For translation *bula* means living (or life) and *vanua* means the *vanua* way or the *vanua* fashion, *bula vakavanua* therefore, translates as living in the *vanua* way or fashion. Secondly, I use the term *vakavanua* because of the presence of the word *vanua* which has three meanings (1. the land, 2. the people, 3. the combination of the physical, social, spiritual and cultural dimension)...this is the way of life that was put in place for our indigenous Fijian ancestors with its traditional systems...when we hear the term *bula vakavanua* the Fijian mind is immediately taken back to our own villages and not to the urban centres where there is a mixture of peoples of different races and cultures. (Nainoca, 2011: p. 8)

In the selected case studies, the research process will be immersed in the *bula vakavanua* of the people involved with the researcher engaging and participating in daily activities and ways of doing things. This will mean being involved and submerged in all dimensions of the term *vanua* surrounding their business, the interconnectedness of participant observation, *bula vakavanua* (indigenous way of life), *veiwekani* (relationship) and *talanoa* (dialogue) while living with the people (Nainoca, 2011).

For a better *bula vakavanua* process, the researcher lived and engaged in daily activities with the people. Research involving indigenous peoples should be something that can add value to what holds the community together, as was done by their ancestors. All avenues need to be considered and monitored so as not to disturb the *bula vakavanua* that contributes to the quality of life in the village setting. It is impossible to learn all aspects of the culture and to understand everything in the short period of the field study. In this case, a cultural discernment group (Meo-Sewabu, 2015) plays a vital role in assisting in the immersion of the researcher into the community.

Once settled in the community, the researcher was be affiliated to a *matavuvale* (family). In the Pacific nations, this can also refer to extended family, and everybody living in the village is closely related through blood ties. At all costs, this relationship and kinship are respected and valued as it is one of the integral components of how meanings and worldviews of locals are created. This can come down to the sense that *'na ka e noqu e nodatou'* (what is mine is ours) and it is a norm to go the next house and ask to use something from money or a kilo of sugar for breakfast through the process of *kerekere* (using kinship and relationship to loan or borrow something). Once the researcher entered the village or community through

gatekeepers who are usually chiefs and elders, traditional welcoming protocol is observed through *icurucuru* or *sevusevu* in indigenous settings. When this is done, the researcher is allocated a family to stay with for the duration of the research as is the norm for any *vulagi* (visitor) to any indigenous Fijian village setting.

A principal aim for the researcher is to go through the process of *bula vakavanua* and to convert from a *vulagi* (visitor) status to *itaukei* (local) status. The best way to do this is through the family that the researcher is affiliated with. The elders and members of the family know the traditional duties of being a host in a Fijian setting which is to look after the *vulagi* in the best possible way. The researcher has to make an effort to try to open up and mingle, and participate with the family in daily activities. For a male researcher, the best place to initiate this engagement is to accompany a male elder to get food from the garden, and for a female researcher to assist in activities around the kitchen. Engaging and participating in these daily activities creates stronger bonds with the family and a saying as this will be heard, “*sa mai totolo sara nona taukei*” (it does not take a long time for him/her to become a local). At this stage, the researcher is regarded as a family member and can even be given a local name, and by extension, all people in the village can call the researcher by name. The researcher’s relationships will automatically be connected to the locals’ due to the bond created with the family. The researcher is able to live through the *bula vakavanua* with the people and can use the connections to arrange for data gathering activities with the assistance of the family elders and members.

#### 5.2.4.3 Participant observation

Being submerged in the *bula vakavanua*, the researcher will also engage in the ethnographic methods of doing research. Ethnography means ‘writing culture.’ It involves the researchers entering the social world of the people to be researched and living the life they are living, carrying out observation and recording of the on-going social life of members, their social structures and providing descriptions of the social context and daily living of people and relationships in their world. The ultimate aim of ethnographic research is to get a profound understanding of how inhabitants in different cultures and sub-cultures make sense of their lived reality (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010).

The observation referred to will be participant observation, which is a component of ethnography under the overarching umbrella of qualitative research (Hesse-Biber & Leavy,

2010). Being a participant observer is only possible if the people under research are able to accept the researcher as one of their own, and given the appropriate attention and trust that nothing new will be brought in their community to weaken what people uphold and care about. Participant observation is defined as:

...the process of establishing rapport within a community and learning to act in such a way as to blend into the community so that its members will act naturally, then removing oneself from the setting or community to immerse oneself in the data to understand what is going on and be able to write about it. (Bernard, 2017: p. 272)

The researcher was not in the community for a prolonged time, as compared to anthropological researchers. That is why the culturally appropriate process of *bula vakavanua* was utilised to improve researchers' transition into the community. The researcher had, by this time, connected with the gatekeepers (chiefs) and the business owners during the preliminary case studies. During the *veiqaravi vakavanua* (traditional presentations, in this case entry and departure protocols) of the initial case studies, the business owners were asked for permission to conduct a detailed study after the analysis of these cases. In this traditional presentation, the purpose of the in-depth case study was revealed with the idea of learning with them. This is the basis of the trust-building exercise, and the rest depended on the relationship and trust building exercises while immersed in the *bula vakavanua*.

Place, space, time, status, and company are a few of the crucial factors to be considered in indigenous Fijian settings. Place refers to the venue to gather data or, in this, the appropriate venue to conduct a *talanoa* session. The aim is to create an environment that is conducive for people to feel free to raise ideas and views. The residence of the chief or an elder may not allow the free voicing of ideas from the ordinary people as the presence of people with higher status can hinder/impede the right to speak up across the space that divides them. Space, in this case, refers to the vacuum created that resembles respect. For instance, a younger person will not be able to gaze at an elder in a conversation as a sign of respect, but should still give full attention to what is discussed.

Another example can be seen in a *talanoa* session when kava is served; there will be a space left between those serving beside a *tanoa* (kava bowl) and the elders since an individual's sitting position is determined by traditional roles. Villagers are multi obligated with roles, and

even though indigenous Fijian village lifestyle is more laidback getting the appropriate time to conduct a *talanoa* is still essential and this will be understood once the researcher is familiar with the daily routine of locals. The time will also determine the approach to be taken—if the *talanoa* is conducted involving other genders, and if company is needed, and the appropriate time to implement it. It is crucial to understand that *talanoa* is like a *magimagi* (coconut strand), it is able to tie all things together in the community, and how knowledge is transmitted and can be formal or just a casual conversation. Helping people to carry out daily activities can provide an excellent opportunity to check on people's views which cannot be shared in the presence of others. For instance, status like *qalo mai* (people married to the village but belong to other places) have less power in terms of voicing concerns, but the appropriate place, venue and company will enhance the flow of ideas.

#### 5.2.4.4 Talanoa

*Talanoa* is like the *magimagi*, (sinnet from coconut strands), which can bind activities together and strengthen relationships. *Talanoa* is a familiar concept across the Pacific islands. The Tongan definition of *talanoa* combines the parts that make up the word, *tala* to inform, relate, or tell and *noa* as meanings (Vaioleti, 2016). Scholars from the East-West center in Hawai'i defined *talanoa* after facilitating the *talanoa* session in the Fiji coup in 2000 as an open dialogue where people feel free to speak from their hearts and a basis for building relationships to embrace other worldviews to live and work in collectivity (Halapua, 2000). During the *talanoa* process, the participants not only share the time, interest and information but also the emotions (Otsuka, 2005). For Pacific islanders away from home, *talanoa* is a mechanism to understand each other, strengthen relationships, a device for learning, and a means for language and cultural survival. These definitions denote cultural sensitivities and attachments and the knowledge of relationships and subjects under discussion.

The *vanua* research method defines the *talanoa* method in the Fijian context:

In indigenous researchers among indigenous Fijians, *talanoa* rather than interviews are used to request for knowledge the researcher is seeking. A *talanoa* or *veitalanoa* is an interview but more. *Talanoa* is an appropriate approach to Fijian research and it embodies Fijian protocol in the sharing of information. A *talanoa* does not happen in a void; in a Fijian community a *talanoa* or a request for *talanoa*, is a request given in a specific cultural context with concomitant expectations as may be articulated by the people concerned.

The local culture of the people in the research sample dictate to some degree, the conditions knowledge sought after by the researcher is obtained and used. *Talanoa* is guided by rules of relationship and kinship, shared ways of knowing and knowledge, and worldviews. (Nabobo, 2008: p. 149).

As an indigenous researcher in an indigenous Fijian context, relationships are essential, and these take time to achieve, and along with understanding the surrounding aspects of the locality, culture, and business in order to get valid and vital data for the research. It is possible given the right connections and behaviour such as cultural discernment to gain the trust of the locals that the researcher is there with good intentions and heart. *Talanoa* can be executed formally during a gathering either through request or an occasion, as well as a more detailed *talanoa* which can be done while engaging in activities with a target participant to rectify issues requiring more details as detailed in the guiding questions (Appendix 6). In certain circumstances upon request, mechanical recording devices will be used to capture the *talanoa*, but field notes will be used throughout the research. Mechanical devices can record real-time and exact conversations and actions; in contrast, field-notes can capture the reflections and thoughts of the researcher on the experience and making sense of data.

In the indigenous Fijian setting carrying out or arranging a *talanoa* session is part of the processes of the community. It is through *talanoa* processes people discuss important issues or solve problems, it's where stories are passed on to the future generations, culture and traditions are communicated through *talanoa*, the community survives through hardships and stood the test of time using *talanoa* as a fundamental tool of sharing and a locus of connection and belongingness. Nabobo-Baba et al. (2012) outlined the essential points and factors that researchers need to consider in facilitating *talanoa* in indigenous Fijian villages or settings. These include: appropriate ways to request knowledge, ways to ask questions without being abrasive, the appropriate protocols and procedures to seek knowledge, understanding who are the depositories of knowledge, who will speak to represent clans, and clan boundaries influence on the *talanoa* process. The *talanoa* structure can be affected by essential factors as in; participants ages, clan or sub-clan memberships and social status, gender and status of the knowledge seeker, the people who accompany to hear and validate a speaker, *yaqona* (kava) served or formally presented to request for the progress of *talanoa*,

the gifting and reciprocity process and lastly, the types of *talanoa* prompts or questions to take place (Nabobo-Baba et al., 2012).

### 5.2.5 Uvi metaphor

The 'metaphor' has defined roles in qualitative research studies. While the qualitative research paradigm involves a systematic execution of empirical inquiry into meanings, a metaphor can be the mechanism to reach these meanings. Meanings in qualitative research are integrative components of reality, and means that metaphors enable the necessary organisation to fit our understanding of things. At times metaphors do not deliver what they are intended for, or the validity tested over time, which is why having an in-depth and thorough understanding of the metaphor is so essential (Hesse-Bieber et al., 2010). In the case of this research, an *uvi* (yam) plant is the metaphor. This crop is unique in the indigenous Fijian society, both as a staple and a chiefly status crop, and the researcher was closely associated with all the activities around it. At an early age being taught its special cultivation techniques and developing deep connections with indigenous ecological knowledge getting things right from *werewere* (land preparation) to storage in a *lo-lo-lo* (store house). It is being utilised here as a metaphor to investigate indigenous Fijian business operations on customary owned land in the Pacific.

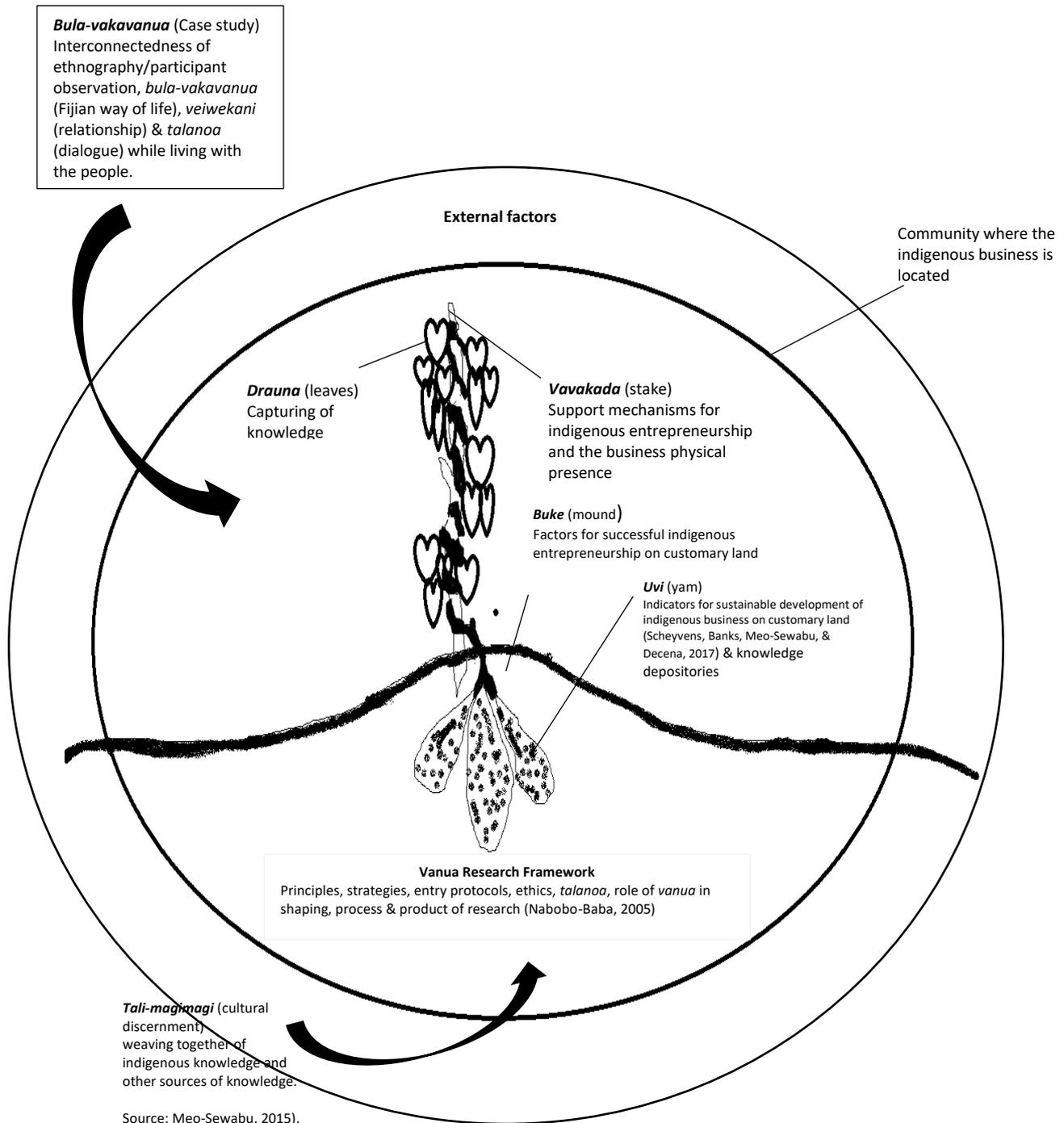
The Uvi framework can be used to study indigenous entrepreneurship on customary land in the Pacific. This framework is based on many Pacific related research works and Pacific researchers as well as works related to qualitative research paradigms. The base of the framework is the *vanua* research framework (Nabobo-Baba, 2006) which is an overarching universal whole that includes everything essential to indigenous people; from their physical and natural environment, their culture and social relationships and behaviour, spiritualities and the connections that hold everything together in a *vanua* way. In the framework, *vanua* is not only the land that the *uvi* (yam) is embedded or planted into but also integrated into the other components. Another important fact is that the indicator of success is resembled by the *uvi* and in the framework it is embedded into the *vanua* system and in order to dig and evaluate the indicator then the *vanua* system, protocols and standard of behaviour need to be observed and respected.

Two other works '*bula vakavanua*' (Nainoca, 2011) and '*tali magimagi*' (Meo-Sewabu, 2015) recognise the importance of *vanua* framework and are also components of this framework. *Bula vakavanua* will encourage the researcher to engage and live the *vanua* way of life, and one can use *tali magimagi* as cultural discernment deciding the appropriate way of doing things at the *vanua* level. In doing this, the researcher will gain the trust of the *tamata ni vanua* (people of the land), which may take time but it is needed in order to dig into the layer that separates a foreigner from them and allow the validity of data gathered. *Tali magimagi* also includes the weaving of university knowledge with that of indigenous knowledge. As an integral component of all these systems, *talanoa* is not only a data-gathering tool but more like a *magimagi* (coconut strand) that binds things together within a *vanua* setting. *Talanoa* is widely used in the Pacific for conversation, storytelling, sharing of experiences, problem-solving, discussion, cultural presentation, and the like. This is useful to this framework as a whole. *Vanua*, *bula vakavanua*, *tali magimagi* and *talanoa* are the systems that this framework is built upon.

#### 5.2.5.1 Traditional significance of 'uvi'

*Uvi* (*Dioscorea alata*) is generally known as tropical yam, a significant crop to the indigenous people of the Pacific. It is known by other names such as; *ufi* for Tonga, Niue and Samoa, *uhi* for Rapanui, Hawaii and Tuamotu, *u'i* for Rarotonga, *puauhi* for Marquesas islands, and *uhi* or *uwahi* for Maori in New Zealand. *Uvi* is an integral component of the indigenous Fijian world view as a; *magiti-turaga* (chiefly status crop) used in traditional ceremonies, gatherings and *sevu* (traditional presentation of first fruit of the land to both chiefs and church), *kakana ni yabaki* (annual crop) a source of food security due to its storage capabilities and resilience under certain climatic conditions and most importantly, a totem having a close link to the spiritual connections of indigenous Fijians and is there is evidence to its unique and preserved cultivating techniques. Those who have yam gardens are referred to as *tagane dina* (honoured man) as their crop will be of high regards during gatherings. Like the case of Maori lunar calendar, *maramataka* (Roskrige, 2007), the indigenous Fijian calendar or *vula vakaviti* is around the observations of activities and cultivation of *uvi*, and the formal indigenous Fijian name of yam is *yabaki* which is the same word in referral to the word 'year.' For instance; *Jiune, Jiulai vulai werewere* (June, July for clearing of the land), *Okosita vulai cukicuki* (August for digging and cultivation of the land), *Seviteba vulai vavakada* (September for

planting of stakes to support vines), *Veveveri vulai sevu* (February for offering of first fruits of the land), *Maji vulai kelikeli* (March for harvesting) (Lagi, 2015; Nainoca, 2011). The metaphor using a *uvi* plant is used to describe the mix-methodology of studying indigenous entrepreneurship on customary land in the Pacific, provided in Figure 9.



**Figure 9: Uvi metaphor**

#### 5.2.5.2 Drauna

*Drauna* means leaves, and in this metaphor represents the business outlook. The combinations of leaves on the vines provide an attractive outlook for the yam plant. Every business has some outlook or manifestation of business operations. It might be the infrastructure or properties owned by the businesses, or where businesses operate undertaking daily business activities. This is the first picture that the researcher will be exposed to. As does the cover of a book, it will give the first impression of the contents, which is why the researcher needs to be submerged within the people's world for quite some time to learn by flipping the pages of their story and correlate with the physical-business outlook. The other aspect of business outlook is the interpretation and perspectives of nearby communities about the business under study. This helps define the context of the study activity. It is a crucial component of this study as it will enhance the validity of the data collected from within the immediate case study community by aligning their stories to those of the communities the business serves.

#### 5.2.5.3 Vavakada

*Vavakada* refers to the stakes which are implanted near the yam plant, usually in September when sprouting is about to occur. The *vavakada* can be reeds or bamboo, and these stakes are chosen in terms of being durable to support the yam vines for 8–10 months. The *vavakada* denotes the support systems that enable the business to work at its best capacity. These support systems come into play when the business owners explore the world surrounding their business and devise mechanisms to draw on these already established structures to build the business. This is closely related to the *drauna* where knowledge is located and processed, but this phase dwells on the actual interweaving of knowledge into the business operating practices or principles.

The second connotation of the *vavakada* is that of being embedded into the soil. The *vavakada* needs not only to be durable but also to be deep-rooted into the soil to hold the load from the vines and leaves. This refers to the social embeddedness of indigenous businesses to the locality and culture of the people: that it is based on solid relationships, it builds relationships and cultural ties, customary tenure offers flexibility and adaptable qualities, and as enablers for commercial development (Curry et al., 2012).

#### 5.2.5.4 Buke

*Buke* is the word for the mound and is a vital element of *uvi* production. *Uvi* needs dry, good drainage and fertile soil to grow well, and mounds are prepared and raised from the soil level to provide the necessary drainage and the bed for the tubers to grow in. In this study, *buke* represents those success factors that allowed the indigenous business to prosper while operating on customary land in the Pacific. This, therefore, refers to the internal and external factors influencing the business.

The *buke* also represents the layer that separates the researcher from the locals as it is the main structure or incubator that holds together the yam from seed to becoming a fully-grown tuber. While engaging in the *bula vakavanua* of the research community and participating in various trust-building activities, the people over time can reach a state referred to as *veiciqomi vakataucoko* (full acceptance as one of their own). This will provide the opportunity to dig into the mound and learn from what they *vakamareqeta* (value or cherish and of great importance) as part of who they are and their business.

This is important to the study as the definition of success of indigenous businesses based on customary land in the Pacific may be different from the mainstream definitions of business success. Many of these businesses operating in communities across the Pacific have been able to establish distinctive models of economic engagement that allows them to pursue successful business development while retaining control over their customary land and upholding community processes and values. The *buke* is the representation of that hub of the interface and the negotiations, tensions, relationships developed involving the business, land, family, and society, which will be identified through the case studies. The crux of this is the ability of the business to develop this tremendous effort of maintaining the balance for the business and socio-economic goals depending on how the business is structured, planned and operated.

#### 5.2.5.5 Uvi

When entering an *uvi* garden, the first thing that will strike one's sight is the layers of leaves growing on the vines, and in many cases, the canopy will cover the whole *vavakada* (stake) structure. This does not guarantee that the *lewena* (tubers) are of the right size and ready for the table; that requires getting the hands dirty to get through that layer of *buke* (mound) to

unveil the reality of the *uvi*. In this study, the *uvi* represent two related aspects; the depositories of knowledge systems and as indicators for measuring sustainable development of indigenous business on customary land in the Pacific.

The experiences of business operation within their respective cultures and maintaining the necessary balance and relationships is a result of sound knowledge deposited within each one. The knowledge system depository is the product of the years of experience of business and sociocultural interfaces, tensions, and negotiations. The knowledge depository becomes a foundation that promises that customary land and systems can be the base for indigenous entrepreneurship. This represents the knowledge and practicalities that the researcher is willing to dig into, and must be done with all appropriate consent, care with the value of *veinanumi* (empathy).

#### 5.2.5.6 Measuring sustainable development

The other aspect of the *uvi* is the indicator for measuring the sustainable development of indigenous businesses on customary land in the Pacific. When seeking to measure the success or effectiveness of indigenous businesses on customary land, it is vital to use tools that accommodate the unique approaches and sociocultural goals of these businesses; using only financial measures of success fails to capture the value of these businesses. Entrepreneurial success in the Pacific is likely to be associated with the ability to meet traditional obligations and to maintain close ties with extended family, *wantoks*, and clans (including utilising their support) (Scheyvens, Banks, Meo-Sewabu, & Decena, 2017).

Conventional economic theories have extensively informed global development policies. These approaches are mainly directed by economic models focussed on attaining economic gain and growth, which is still broadly acknowledged as the mainstream concept of development and progress. For the logical analysis of indigenous entrepreneurship in the Pacific, the following is adopted for this study:

When seeking to measure success or effectiveness of indigenous businesses on customary land, it is therefore vital to use tools which accommodate the unique approaches and sociocultural goals of these businesses; using only financial measures of success fails to capture the value of these businesses. Entrepreneurial success in the Pacific, as shown above, is likely to be associated with the ability to meet traditional obligations and to maintain close ties with extended family, *wantoks* and clans (including utilising their

support)...We have thus developed a tool...This tool is particularly inspired by Paul James' model of 'circles of sustainability', which he applied to urban settings...His circle has four domains (economics, ecology, politics and culture) whereas ours has three (sociocultural, economic, environmental). Fundamentally, both James' and our model operate on the premise that it is useful to provide a visual representation of the extent to which various dimensions of sustainability have been achieved in a particular context. (Scheyvens et al, 2017: p. 778).

Financial gain alone is not a complete standard by which to measure success for indigenous entrepreneurship in the Pacific. The quality of life at the village level needs to be taken into consideration, sociocultural obligations and connections to their natural environment are also essential components as provided in a sample in Table 7 with the representation of individual sectors in Figure 10 as the business sustainability chart. This becomes a benchmark for gauging the success of businesses on customary land by answering and grading individual sectors within the significant components of economic, sociocultural, and environmental factors.

This tool was useful in the preliminary case studies and indicated the three successful businesses for in-depth study by the researcher.

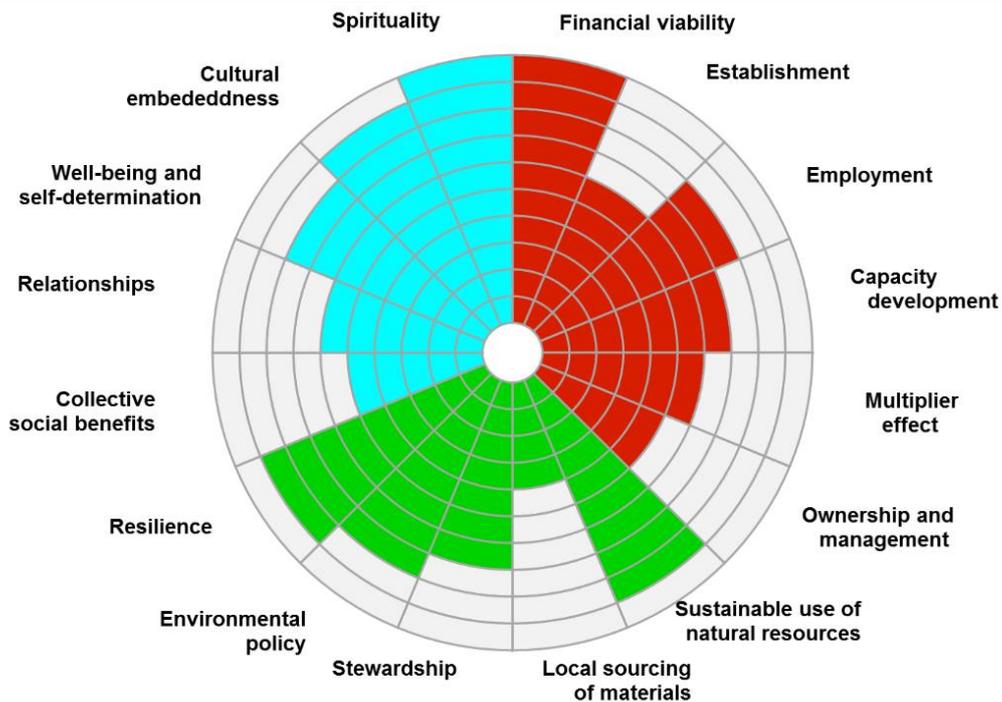
**Table 7: Indicators of sustainability in Pacific Island businesses on customary land**

Economic indicators	
1. Establishment	Years of operation
2. Ownership and management	Percentage of indigenous owners and managers Extent to which decisions are made by indigenous owners
3. Employment	Local jobs created Salary and training Level of staff retention (linked to job satisfaction)
4. Capacity development	Training received by the owners and the employees
5. Profit	Self-reported business performance
6. Multiplier effects	Linkages with local enterprises which benefit from the business

Socio-cultural indicators	
7. Collective social benefits	Commitment of the business to contribute to social or cultural groups, events, etc.
8. Relationships	Relationships are based on the values of respect and reciprocity
9. Inclusive development	A broad range of groups have opportunities to participate in and/or benefit from the business
10. Well-being and self-determination	The business contributes to local perceptions that indigenous development is possible. The business is true to the values of the vanua/enua/whenua and wellbeing of the local community is duly considered.
11. Cultural embeddedness	Business operations and practices respect local customs Cultural protocols are upheld

Environmental criteria	
12. Sustainable use of resources	Land and other natural resources are used but not degraded Good waste management practices (reduce, reuse, recycle)
13. Local sourcing of materials	Utilising local materials minimises the carbon footprint
14. Environmental policy	The business has, and implements, a well-structured environmental policy across its operations

Source: Scheyvens et. al., 2017: p. 779



Source: Scheyvens et.al., 2017: p. 781.

**Figure 10: Example of a sustainability chart**

### 5.3 Data analysis

Ranges of data collected from the study need to be interpreted and organised for meaningful presentations to be understood. These data go through the data analysis process in order to respond to the research questions and purpose. A general definition of qualitative analysis is:

...breaking up, separating, or disassembling of research materials into pieces, parts, elements, or units. With facts broken down into manageable pieces, the researcher sorts and sifts them, searching for types, classes, sequences, processes, patterns, or wholes. The aim of this process is to assemble or construct the data in a meaningful or comprehensible fashion' (Jorgensen, 1989: p107).

This definition reflects the notion of problem-solving as part of everyday life. The two crucial and fundamental activities are segmenting information into fragments and reassembling to a coherent whole (Dey, 2003). In the case of this research, the process of segmenting and reassembling is conducted in response and alignment to the study purpose and research questions.

This study followed a deductive approach to qualitative analysis. The study of indigenous entrepreneurship existing on customary land in the Pacific nations is aligned to various pre-determined structures as in social embeddedness of economies, diverse economies, customary land ownership and obligations, and indigenous entrepreneurship in general. These frameworks and structures were used to guide the hypothesis, data gathering activities, and analysis of these data to confirm the theories used (Miles, Huberman, Huberman, & Huberman, 1994). It also followed the general qualitative analysis strategies followed by many qualitative researchers; the first process involves the preparation and organisation of data for analysis which is text data in transcripts or image data in photographs, the second is the reduction of data through coding and condensing of codes for thematic clustering, and finally demonstrating the data in figures, tables, and discussion (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Cheryl, 2018). This process is further explained in this definition:

Qualitative analysis is the segmenting of data into relevant categories and the naming of these categories with codes while simultaneously generating the categories from the data. In the reassembling phase, the categories are related to one another to generate a theoretical understanding of the social phenomenon under study in terms of the research question (Boeije, 2010: p 76).

This phase of the research requires the essence of creativity, systematic searching by talking to the data, and a blend of inspiration and diligent detection.

The following was outlined by Creswell (2009, 2013) and Stake (1995) to facilitate qualitative data analysis and case study data analysis. The researcher conducted data organisation into files and converted the different forms of data into text units, words, sentences, or even an entire story. This involved transcribing and translation of audio recorded data and other sources and converted into text units. The next phase included the researcher to familiarise with the entire database through reading, re-reading the entire database many times and immersing in the data and relooking at field notes, interview transcripts, physical pieces of evidence, and other raw data. This also comprised the scribbling of crucial concepts and ideas and memos in the margin of the field note pad or under photographs to recognise major organising ideas. This process simplified the entire database into shorter and collected categories and found evidence to support common categories. The subsequent stage involved describing, classifying, and interpreting data into codes by creating detailed descriptions and

thematic formation. The researcher also included personal interpretations and reflection on the literature and in-depth explanations of the setting, events, structures, and people involved. The process of coding refers to the categorising of data from the databases of the study into smaller information groups and given labels or codes that match with the text segments. Researchers are advised to begin with five or six categories or codes and then expand further after reviewing the database and looking for code segments that can be used later to develop themes (Creswell, 2009, 2013; Creswell & Cheryl, 2018; Stake, 1995).

Classification was the next phase of the analysis and involved the identification of five to seven general themes developed from several codes. This is always an overwhelming task to reduce the multiple codes into themes, and the principle is to reduce the large chunks of data into small and manageable pieces of information or themes that can be later included in the final narrative. This led to the interpretation of data comprising the reassembling of the codes or themes to the more considerable interpretation, abstraction, or making sense of the data. Again, it required the researcher's perceptions and that of the literature to rebuild the data. Once this is done, then the visual representation of the data was conducted. This was done in the form of texts, tables, or illustrations, and at this stage, the data are confirmed through obtaining feedback from informants as in the triangulation practice (Creswell, 2009, 2013; Creswell & Cheryl, 2018; Stake, 1995, 2005).

This study executed a case study analysis. The analysis involved the detailed descriptions of the cases and the foci were; on the settings or contexts, the negotiations and tensions that allowed the indigenous businesses to be successful, the structures which make the whole system work, and the customary land tenure system enabling business intervention. Together these features are analysed and seen as enablers of successful models of indigenous business interventions in the Pacific nations. To ensure the validity and reliability of data across the cases, the following procedures were implemented. Triangulation of data was conducted by examining different data sources and converging these to support common themes. The themes were confirmed by revisiting participants while the researcher was still in the field to ratify that the themes generated from the data exist. The other is making thick and rich descriptions in the discussion to enhance the element of shared experiences for readers. Detailed descriptions of the business contexts were conducted which build stronger

perspectives to the themes as well as building stronger platforms for the emerging themes (Creswell, 2009, 2013; Creswell & Cheryl, 2018; Stake, 1995, 2006).

#### 5.4 Summary

In summary, this chapter has explained how data collection methods were applied concerning case studies. Qualitative data was pursued, gathered, and recorded based on the worldviews and experiences of the participants in the located case study areas. Of key importance to this research was the need to generate more in-depth insights into the research problem. The emphasis was to identify factors leading to the success of indigenous businesses operating on customary land in the Pacific as well as to map the tensions, negotiations, and relationships developed at the interface of the business, culture, land, family, and society. The data was necessary to achieve the main aim of the research, which is to establish distinctive models of economic engagement that allow business development while retaining control over customary land, resources, community processes, and values.

## Chapter 6 Background of business case studies and foundational values

*Tamata dau tali magimagi* (to plait a coconut sinnet). Also refers to people who are gifted in telling every detail of a story, as specific skills are needed to plait coconut sinnet. The stories of the entrepreneurs presented in this chapter are worth listening to.

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the three-business case studies whose practices are explored in greater depth in the chapters to follow. In doing so, specific attention will be paid to the origins and development of each business, along with demonstrating how their foundational values have influenced the business. The three case studies, which are all indigenous Fijian owned businesses, are: Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring on the *vanua* of Conua, in Sabeto, Nadi; Aviva Farms at Natalau village and *vanua* Erenavula, Sabeto, Nadi; and Nayarabale Youth Farm of the *vanua* Wacawaca in the Vaturova district, Cakaudrove, as shown in the map on Figure 1.

It was essential to spend time talking to the elders of each community to collect information about the background and the values underpinning the businesses. Indigenous Fijians have two systems of keeping historical records; *a I vola tamata* (human records) and *a I vola gauna* (seasonal records) (Rokowaqa & Meo, 2013). *I vola tamata* includes four elements: first, intergenerational oral histories; second, tales, folklore, legends, and myths; third, the importance of names which carry meanings; and fourth, through *meke*, *serekali*, *vucu* (dance, poems, and songs). The *I vola gauna* is comprised of three components: the flowering of fruit trees coinciding with the breeding of certain fish and animal species, the flowering season for reeds, and the season where timber trees flower coinciding with the flowering of edible grass. These were the essential records that the elders from the three *vanua* of the case studies kept in control of their customary land, culture, traditions, ethos, and values (Rokowaqa & Meo, 2013).

The research revealed the immense connections of the people to their customary land, resources, traditions, culture, ethos, and values and demonstrated the creative ways in which

indigenous Fijians had unlocked the potential of their land to provide an enabling environment for indigenous Fijian entrepreneurial operations.

## 6.2 Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring

Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring is a locally owned family business established in 2012 and located along Wailoko Road, Sabeto, in Nadi. The business is registered under the family name acronym, TIFAJEK, named after Titilia Naisebua, Ilimeleki Susu, Filisi Nasau, Apisai Nabou, Josivini Nabure, Eparama Naika, and Kilioni Kubunakaravi who are brothers and sisters, and Titilia Naisebua who is their mother. Traditionally the family belongs to the *tokatoka* (extended family) Viribale, the chiefly *mataqali* (sub-clan) of Lumuni, the Conua clan of Sabeto, Nadi. This business is located 2 km off the Queens Highway on the same feeder road as the second case study, Aviva Farms. Incidentally, the owners of these two businesses are related.

### 6.2.1 Na neitou tauyavu (Our beginning)

In the 1960s to early 1990s, the land-use system in Fiji was driven by the sugar industry, which was the economic backbone of Fiji. At this time, three brothers subdivided their piece of land with a primary aim to grow sugarcane to support their families. One brother (Ilimeleki Susu senior) was both 'deaf and dumb' and his brothers through ill-will, and knowing that he was unable to argue, portioned the land with the hot spring where sugarcane would not grow well, for him. The other brothers did their cropping on suitable land around their village, and the family with the hot spring often failed miserably due to a lack of productivity. It was recalled by the grown-up grandchildren of Ilimeleki Susu senior that the land was always wet with hot springs, and their sugarcane farm was struggling. Afterward, the land was then used as grassland to graze animals, and the small hot water pond beneath the *vaivai* (rain tree) was used as a family bath with a few planks placed across as a seat and empty containers were used to get warm water from the spring. The spring was located on their grandfather's land, but the whole extended family and village used it. They recalled it as '*neimami isilisili vakavuvale*' (our family bath pool), shown in Figure 11.



*Photo credit: Suliasi Vunibola.*

**Figure 11: Family bath pool**

This land was sacred to the family, nobody could disturb the land, and shouting was forbidden. The perimeter was surrounded with colossal *vaivai*, and *ivi* (chestnut) trees and the environment itself was regarded as *vanua tabu* (sacred land). Ilami Susu, one of the brothers, said, *“Na gauna keimami se gone kina keimami dau talai mai me mai raica na bulumakau se lai sili e wai na neimami rere sa rui ka levu”* (When we were young we are so frightened to go alone to the place to look for our animals or to bathe alone). What was sacred was the hot spring (Figure 12) which was shared by the villagers as expressed by one of the brothers, Apisai Nabou:

*Keimami sa qai kila tu qo se cava na vuna e ra viria kina na bai ni vanua oqo na qase me kakua ni dua e tara se volitaka ni vanua tabu ni tiko kina e dua na tevoru e na veikau buto, sa keitou kila qo na kena vinaka.*

We now realised why the elders said that the place is sacred with a ghost living in it under the dark trees. This was a story so that we would not disturb the land and suggest it is not worth selling. Now we are reaping the benefit of that.

The elders realised that land in the area would be scarce in the future and that people would start leasing or selling their land as they believed that Nadi was already prophesied to be the *‘roro ni matanicagi e va’* (where the four winds land) depicting the international entry point

to Fiji. The idea was to have something that the family would continue to benefit from despite the tensions of modernisation, tourism, and future developments.



Photo credit: Suliasi Vunibola.

**Figure 12: The hot spring**



Photo credit: Suliasi Vunibola.

**Figure 13: The WWII monument**

### 6.2.2 *Na I yau talei e na waikatakata, ni keitou wasea (Our treasure at the mud pool and hot spring, we share).*

The family benefits from the mud pool and hot spring healing certain sicknesses and wounds, and the water being suitable for bathing babies. During WWII, the American soldiers used the water from the hot spring to bathe in and to heal their wounds (Figure 13). This made it known to the people of Fiji, and people from all over the country then came to use the springs to try to heal various sicknesses. Sometimes the village was filled with people seeking the healing properties of the hot springs, and their grandfather's preference was to provide healing to the people free of charge. The family recalled that their grandfather would say, *“Dou na buluta sara na mataqu e na qele dou na qai vakabisinisitaka na waikatakata”* (You will convert the hot spring to business after you cover my face with soil). He thus made it clear that he wanted to see people using the hot spring without paying until his death.

As their popularity grew and there was a need to cater to more people, the pools were enlarged. The family would then provide a resting place, food, and drinks for the visiting groups in their family homes. The elders once said in reference to their connection to and custodianship of the land; *“Na vanua oqo me maroroi, kakua ni vakasausataki e nodatou I solisoli ka na bula kina o kedatou kei na nodatou kawa mai muri”* (This land is to be protected at all cost, it is a gift from our ancestors, and we must look after it before we give it to the next generation to do the same thing; it will not be sold). The piece of land or *ikanakana* (the land to feed on) is like a jewel to the family, and the land and the business is sustaining the livelihoods of the family and the community.

There is another story in which the land was noted as not suitable for sugarcane farming, and the grandfather stated the land represents life. One day it manifest to providing a good life, and they, therefore, should take good care of it: *“na vanua qo e na solia ki na vuvale na bula me da taqomaka sara”* (this land will provide life to the family and needs protection). The grandfather then pulled out a sugarcane plant with its roots, put it in the hot spring of about 90°C, and said *“raica na mana ni vanua oqo e na bula mada ga na kau e na loma ni waikatakata”* (the mana on this land will cause the growth of a plant planted in the hot spring). It was witnessed that the sugarcane plant was able to grow in the hot spring. This story was shared with their children and among family members to remind them to stay connected to and preserve their family land.

During my field study with the business, there was a critical incident that demonstrated the spirituality of the *vanua*. There was a toddler who accidentally crawled into the hot spring and was saved unhurt from an 82°C hot spring; the burn was touched and healed by the owners. The tour guides promoted these stories to tourists to help them understand the concept and the values of the land to the family and the business as well as the overarching benefits to the whole community.

### **6.2.3 *Na kena bisinisitaki na waikatakata (Converting the mud pool and hot springs into a business).***

A Japanese scientist who visited the property in 1995 as a tourist asked for a mud-sample from the mud pools for laboratory analysis in Japan. It was later revealed that the mud contains essential minerals, which are suitable for Ayurvedic<sup>2</sup> treatments for healthy skin. A few investors have subsequently tried to buy this facility. One even said that he would buy the facility offering a multi-million-dollar deal, and on top of that, he would buy a piece of land near Sabeto village to relocate the family to live. He also promised to provide goodwill to all the family members individually to start over in the new place. Ilimeleki Susu the eldest brother said they refused this deal because:

*Sa rui bibi na keitou isema kin a keitou qele, neitou qase e ra vakatabuya, kevaka me keitou sa volitaka na neitou I solisoli levu qo oira na neitou kawa e ra na sega ni qai kila na I talanoa baleti keitou se na keitou qele se na neitou yavu ni keimami salai tu vulagi kina dua na tiki ni qele keimami sega ni sema kina.*

Our connection to our land is inexplicable, our ancestors would not allow this to happen, we discussed this and decided that money even in millions will finish one day, but our future generation will lose out a lot since we are not connected to our land anymore, and the new piece of land belonging to others and that connection money cannot buy.

After the grandfather passed away in 2005, the family subsequently decided to realise the economic potential of the mud pool and hot spring by developing a business. It coincided with the area around Nadi becoming well known for tourism activities. A few relatives who worked in the hospitality industry fuelled the discussion around creating a tourism product out of the

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<sup>2</sup> Ayurvedic is a reference to an old holistic (Indian) healing system

natural resources on their land. The business started in 2009 and was formally registered in 2012 with a straight-forward setup, and tourists started visiting in small numbers. A younger brother was then employed to look after the operation without pay while an uncle was responsible for the collection of entry fees of about \$2 to \$5 per person.

From then on the brothers agreed on the philosophy behind the business; *'e na vakacicivi na bisinisi ni taukei e na qarava na tamata e na sega ni sogo kina matavuvuale kei na veiwekani na vakayagataka'* (this is an indigenous Fijian family business, and it will need to serve the people as the elders want, we will also open it to our families and relatives for free usage).

Ilami Susu, one brother, worked to start marketing the mud pool and the hot springs as a package as well as asking the women who were working at home to do traditional *bobo* (massage). Vaviola Nai who is married into the family said:

*So na gauna au se savasava tu sa dau cici yani o Ilami ka tukuna meu veibobo, isulu suasua tu ga kau mai na waiwai kei na tauwelu, sa mai tekivu ikea na veimasi io keimami se veibobo sara ga vakaviti*

One moment I was doing our family washing and my clothes were wet. Ilami called me to bring my oil and towel to do traditional Fijian massage we learned from our elders—he initiated having a massage as part of the hot springs package.

Ilami marketed the massage therapy by using history and stories to explain to the visitors that Fijians have different traditional gifts they can share: *'Yadua na tamata e na loma ni mataqali e viti e sa tu vua na isolisoli ni veivakabulai'* (Clans all over Fiji have different gifts of healing). Ilami's marketing embraced the three combined treatments provided by the business: the mud for healthy skin and outward appearance, the hot spring for internal healing, and the massage therapy to relieve tension. That was the all-in-one health-giving package, which can now be seen on tourist and travel marketing websites, and it all came from that humble beginning.

The business is recognised and included as one of the tourist packages used by tour agencies in Nadi. Tourists come to the Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring through either direct bookings or tour agencies. Direct bookings pay an entry fee at the gate, and tour groups pay through an invoice. Initially, with just a reception area and a *bure* (Fijian house), the business was coping, and when the number of tourists increased, especially during cruise ship visits (Figures 14

and 15), they used to put up tents to accommodate them especially for the massage treatments as the business was without a dedicated massage facility. Waqa Raoba, a tour guide, remembered:



*Photo credit: Waqa Raoba.*

**Figure 14: Cruise ship tour groups rubbing mud on their bodies for drying in the sun**



*Photo credit: Waqa Raoba.*

**Figure 15: The business is busy on cruise ship arrival days; tourists bathing in one of the mud pools**

*So na gauna ni tau na uca keimami qai kelia wavoki ga na l vakata me drodro kina na wai. Vica na gone me ratou taura tiko na tutu ni laca me kua ni cagina. Gauna qo sa vanua ni veimasi vinaka, e dau vakaciriloloma tale ni da vakasamataka na dredre e a sotavi me yacova mai qo.*

At times it rained, and we needed to make drains to keep the tents dry; some people held the tent to prevent it being blown away with strong winds. Now that we have a perfect massage facility, it is so moving to reflect on those struggling days.

The business was then managed by a relative (Miliana Racule) from 2011–2017, and she raised the standard of the business to a new level, providing on-the-job training. Members of the extended family were employed as demand arose. Family members were later enrolled in hospitality courses and mostly undertook their practical training at the business. A few of the family members already employed in the industry contributed to the professional development of the business. A significant challenge was the requirement to have qualified masseurs for the business. The program was expensive and required people to have the right level of education. From 2012, the masseurs went through training from their application to PIPSO (Pacific Island Private Sector Organisation) who sponsored Senikai Spa, a private hospitality training institution that trains women in community-based businesses. They did two weeks of training using the business facility, followed by the practical work resulting in their certificates. When they got their certificates, the business was also given massage beds. In the beginning, there were thirty masseurs, and now there are just seventeen, some having been absorbed into big resorts with their experience and qualification. These former employees still find ways to assist the business, such as taking their day-off on cruise-ship arrival days to assist in managing the large tourist numbers at their family business.

#### **6.2.4 *Na veigauna e muri me baleti ira na luvei keimami (To the hands of our children our next generation).***

The business is registered as a family venture under the acronym Tifajek (names of the six siblings and their mother), but the eldest, Ilimeleki Susu, is the registered founder. The siblings have become the Board of Directors for the business, and one of the sons, Iliesa Susu (who also has experience working in resorts as well as with the ‘American Survivor’ TV series), now manages it. His networks have helped the business—the ‘American Survivor’ program hired

the mud pools and hot springs for one of their episodes and made it well known internationally.

The business has now become part of the identity of the family due to the multiple benefits that it contributes to the family and the wider community. Kiloni stated:

*Na gauna e ra bula kina na qase keimami se beci sara keimami tukuni ni keimami yawa mai tauni ka keimami kai veikau. Baleta na neimami bula e caka ga mai delana ya na kakana dina kei na kena I coi mai wai ya ka keimami cakacaka bobula e na veidovu. Qo sa veisau, ni keitou qai lako yani nakoro sa keimami raici me vaka e dua na tamata vakailavo baleta gona ya na bisinisi keitou sa mai maroroya rawa.*

When the elders were still around, we were recognised as people from the bush as our lives revolved around getting root crops from our mountain, fish from the river and money from the hard-enslaving work of sugarcane plantation. Now it is the opposite: when we go to the village, they look at us as a rich person. The perspective changes because of the business that serves our community. We looked after the business well, and we are proud of it.

The family has also looked at how their story is relayed to the younger generations. They have a ceremony, prayers, storytelling, reflections, and a celebration every 31<sup>st</sup> November for the family and children to remember the past and be part of the journey. One of the brothers, Eparama Naika, stated:

*O ira na luvei keitou e ra waqawaqa kei na buka ni kena vakacaudrevi na I talanoa kei na I gu ni sasaga oqo e na veigauna mai muri. E na dodonu me ran a kila na kena talei ni sa mai vuki na wiwi ni dredre kina kamikamica ni bula rawarawa.*

Our children are the vessels and fuel to the progress of this business in the future; they are also the face and the fuel for future progress. They need to own the same values and appreciate how the struggles are turned into sweet fruits as it improved our standard of living.

The story of the struggle is shared during the celebration. The elders relate the story about first settling into this village with their parents. They were having lunch when the rain started to fall. The giant taro leaves they used as plates filled with rainwater as the roof was leaking.

The ceremony allows their children to learn about their roots. Ilami usually informs his children:

*Rogoca na ka kece na gauna qo sa rawarawa sa totolo ni sa veisau na gauna kei na ka kece e da vakayagataka, na kemudou vakasigalevu vivinaka me kau ki koronivuli dou sa vakalewa. Keitou se tawa ga na kakana dina kei na I coi ti draunimoli me ivakasigalevu ka taubale. Dou kana soseti, yaloka siro ga mai vodobasi yani kei na Iesu mai."*

Listen to this, you need to realise that the time you are in now everything is easy and fast, your good lunch with eggs and meats you still complain about, in our time we had lemongrass tea in bottles with a piece of root crop, and we walk to school, and you travel by bus). We need to inform our kids about all these stories so that they will realise how lucky they are and for them to protect and be the custodian of this family business due to the benefits we are reaping from it.

It is an indication of valuing their humble beginnings for this family and capitalising on their customary land and the people to venture into business.

### **6.2.5 Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring as a family business**

Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring is a family-based business which aligns with some of the key characteristics of a family-based business as shown in Chapter 2. The definition of a family business, according to Litz (1995), is reflected the Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring business set up. Ownership and management of the business is concentrated within the family unit and the members strive together to achieve business excellence and family cohesion. As noted, the core values of Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring highlight the importance of maintaining a spiritual connection to the customary land and working as a family to utilise that land since it is a gift from their ancestors. Denison, Lief and Ward (2004), through the Denison Organisational Cultural Model, stated that core values become the anchor and contribute to the business environment of family businesses. These values helped in the decision making for the Tifajek family when they turned down a foreign investor who wanted to buy their business and their land as discussed in Section 6.2.3. In addition, this business has shown the ability to balance between the family and the business entities thus allowing progress in the dual system. The whole system approach within the 'dual system' of a family business (Kepner, 1983; J. Ward, 2011) involves the capacity of the members to view the business and

the family as equal entities and foundations for progress. Maintaining balance has contributed to the success of the Tifajek business.

One thing about Tifajek that stands out as being different from the trends for family firms discussed in Chapter 2 is that they also contributed to the development of the broader community. This will be discussed in detail in Section 8.4.1. This contribution is part of Tifajek's partnership with the wider society which might be something that is unique to family businesses based on customary land.

### 6.3 *Na I talanoa ni Aviva Farms (The Story of Aviva Farms)*

Aviva Farms belongs to Livai Tora of Natalau village in Sabeto, Nadi, Fiji. It was leased from the *tokatoka* (extended family) by his father Apisai Tora and later transferred to Livai's name. It is under the foot of the monumental sleeping giant mountain, which is well known to locals and visitors alike. Natalau was the *koro ni ivalu* (tribal war village) of the Sabeto tribe. The land belongs to the *tokatoka turaga* (chiefly extended family) under the jurisdiction of the *vanua* (tribe) known as Erenavula. Livai's father was a prominent member of the *vanua*, and he was a former member of the Fiji government. All of the siblings are employed in top positions of government and private companies except Livai, who is a farmer. Aviva is a derivative of the Hebrew word, which means 'the new beginning,' and in this case refers to the initiative of diversifying the farm. The Aviva Farms' approach resonates with the idea of reconnecting indigenous Fijians back to their customary land and distinctive experiences, which the global community can connect with, especially with ventures aligned to sustainably driven agro-development.

#### 6.3.1 *Na itekitekivu (The beginning)*

When Livai was a young man, his father always reminded him that the land is there for the family to use, and he could use 54 acres when he reached twenty-one years of age. After completing his school years at Nadi and then Navuso Agricultural College, Livai graduated on 14 November 1995. The next day was his twenty-first birthday, which was celebrated with the graduation, and he was offered the special gift, the piece of land where Aviva Farms is situated. This was Livai's response:

*Ni oti ga noqu siganisucu sa taura sara ga na noqu I yaya meu sa lai tu sara ga I na farm baleta ni sa rui balavu na noqu tatadrataka tu. E gauna donu sara ga ni se tu vinaka tu na noqu I gu kei na vakasama me cakacakataki na qele. Ya e dua na leqa vei keda na I taukei tamata via lako I cakacaka kece e na matanitu se kabani oti nio sa vakacegu mo qai vakayagataka na I lavo ni cegu mo qarava na qele. Cici ga valailai davo. E rawa ni da veisautaka na I lakolako ya me vaka ogo.*

The day after my birthday, I took my belongings and went off to the farm to live as I had been thinking about this life choice for a while. It was the right choice at the right age when I had the mental ability and the strength to use the land and benefit from it. That is a common problem for indigenous Fijians as the trend is for everybody to get a job with the government and companies and use your retirement money to build a business on the land, which always fails. We can change that like what I am doing.

Classroom learning and farming on the ground in most situations, the practicality of farming is different from the classroom theoretical coverage. The first fifteen years came with challenges and hurdles, which put Livai's passion to a test. The land was put into sugarcane production, achieving the most substantial tonnage (4,000–50,000 tonne) in the west of Fiji. Livai was achieving his dreams. *"Na ka ga au kila niu via tei dovu ia meu dovu levu taudua e viti"* (All I knew that I would like to plant cane and be the best sugarcane farmer in Fiji). Working on sugarcane farms is not an easy task, and most of the skills needed are learned in a short time. A successful farmer needs to understand the whole system from land preparation, planting, monitoring and management, harvesting, logistics, and cartage, through to milling with Fiji Sugar Corporation. Sugarcane was the only crop produced on a commercial scale in Fiji at that time, and achieving quality assurance throughout the value chain is critical. It means that a skilled labour force was needed to meet demands. The farm was partly mechanised with a tractor used to cultivate the land, and other tasks were done manually requiring considerable time and labour (commonly known as 'gangs').

#### **6.3.1.1 *Na I tavi levu e na loga dovu* (The huge responsibility at the sugarcane farm)**

For Livai, this is where all the hard learning occurred, especially in managing a responsibility on behalf of Natalau villagers. Apisai Tora (Livai's father) was a prominent leader who took up an initiative of housing development for the village and the farm lease-title was used as collateral for the loans undertaken. A discussion held with leaders and members of the

*tokatoka* (extended families) in 1990 and agreed that the villagers would work on the sugarcane farm to pay it off. This arrangement was made before the land was given to Livai in 1995, and Apisai Tora planned to pay that off before Livai's twenty-first birthday. Each family then eventually received a fully furnished three-bedroom concrete-built house. The hard labour on the farm was dedicated to the kind of living standard they wanted. It did not take long, however, for people to start disappearing, as the daily work under the hot sun of western Fiji was never an easy task. One day nobody turned up at all, and concerns started growing that the housing authority would repossess the farm as the lease-title was signed up as collateral.

Unfortunately, the way out for Livai was to pay it off himself or lose his birthday present and his livelihood. He then dedicated 15 years, which was from 1995 to 2010, to the sugarcane farm for the repayment of this loan to salvage the land and to support his father's reputation of providing adequate housing for the villagers. Referring to the sacrifice, Livai's close colleague Vatimi said:

*Au e dua vei ira na cakacaka kei Livai mai na nona tauyavu yaco mai qo. Ni sa yaco na veidredre e na nona bula sa tavutu na yavana e na vatu e na boto ni qara sa dua ga na gaunisala me na bula kina, me saga me lako cake mai. Sa qai vakalevutaka ga nona vakanuinui kei na vakabauta ka cakacaka vakaukauwa vosota na kena dredre. Sa qai vuki ga na kena vakasama me kauta mai na rawarawa.*

I am one of the people who knew Livai and was working with him from the start till now. When he went through those hardships, he landed on hard rocks in a cave, and the only way was to get back up. He held on to his hope, faith, and dreams and worked through hardships. Then he tried to navigate challenges through specific measures to retain ownership of the land.

Livai Tora achieved this enormous task by being multi-skilled. He was the tractor driver to plough the land, and truck driver for delivering sugar cane to the sugar-mill. He was also elected as the *Sardar*, who is the supervisor for cane farmers in the area and linked them with the leading company, Fiji Sugar Corporation. The farm needed labour seven days a week, and there were 60 members of the gang of different religions at the farm camp ensuring the work was undertaken all days of the week. Most of the income was used for paying off the village housing loan to free up his land.

In 2010, the village housing mortgage repaid, there was an opportunity to attend a farming-related workshop in Samoa. Livai was a bit reluctant to attend, however his parents persuaded him to reward himself with the trip. Livai reminisced over their words:

*Kua ni ulubaletaka na nomu sa sega tu ni bau taura e dua na peni e na 15 na yabaki mo lako mada ga de dua o na lai vulica e so tale na ka vovou. Sa mai oti na nomu soli bula me me ra vakavale vinaka na lewe I Natalau, sa dodonu me toso kina I lakolako vou*

To do a professional development to upskill is what you need after 15 years (1995 to 2010) on the farm; try to go, and you will learn many new things that you can use on the farm. You served the villagers of Natalau by giving up your life for 15 years paying their housing mortgage, and it was an honourable course, but now you are ready for a new change, so take it.

He attended the workshop in Samoa, where he met some of his old friends from Navuso Agricultural College who were studying for their bachelor's degree at the University of the South Pacific, Alafua campus. That sparked his interest again to pursue further studies at university. One of his friends said, *“lako mai mai vuli levu na ka tu qo e na yaga sara ga e na nomu I teitei, lako ga mo lai vuli DFL rawa qai saga e dua na nomu scholarship me mai fulltime”* (Come and pursue your qualification, there are many things that you can apply at your farm. Do some papers on DFL [Distance Flexible Learning] and then apply for a fulltime scholarship).

### **6.3.2 Na I lakolako vou kei na kena dredre (The new journey with challenges)**

Livai did two university papers while working on the farm before he got a scholarship to study full-time. Leaving the farm was not easy, but his parents reassured him that it would be looked after well during his absence. To be a farmer for 15 years and then relocated to a classroom is a challenge in itself. Livai shared this:

*Au sa bau kalougata ni se a tuga na FAB scholarship, dina niu bau pasi ga ia e ratou kila na ka au na rawata e na farm. Au bau sotava na dredre e na matai ni rua na semesters ia vinaka ga niu bau pasi.*

I was lucky at that time there was a Fijian Affairs Board scholarship which looks after indigenous Fijian scholars, and I got through—even though I passed with not such good

grades—as they knew what I was capable of at the farm. I stumbled for two semesters and took time to adapt, but I managed to attain a pass.

Another life-changing factor occurred on top of this challenge. The news came in 2006 that Livai's mother had passed away. *“Koya sara ga qo na marama na tinaqu e bau taura vata kece tu na ka kece e vale. Na vuvale, na bisinisi e na farm e a tu e ligana. Na nona yali e sa bau dredre”* (My mother was the one who held everything together for the family and the farm operations. Her passing created a big vacuum). There was no other option but to pack his bags and make the homebound journey to attend his mother's funeral and to secure the land once again. He realised that he needed to stay on the farm to ensure the land was safe. It initiated another challenge to take time out of study for a year to do that.

The year 2006 was spent on the farm for land security purposes and overseeing the sugarcane operations. Over time, the tonnage had dropped severely. When everything was normal again, Livai decided to finish what he started at Alafua but as a private student because the scholarship support was lost. The only option was to sell the farm vehicle for \$25,000 to pay for his education and traveling expenses. He managed to complete his Bachelor of Agriculture in 2007 and cherished his achievement; *“Au tauri vola io na noqu grades kece e ‘C’ io au vakatoka me noqu golden ‘Cs.’ Koya ya e tosoi au wavoki tu me yacova mai oqo, au vaka teitei vinaka, au sa saravi vuravura tale ga”* (I graduated with a lot of ‘C’ grades, and I called them my golden Cs. Those grades got me to where I am today; I have a good farm and I been around the world more). A well-known agribusiness consultant in the Pacific then took him on as a member of the consultancy team (Kokosiga Pacific), and that is where his skills were fine-tuned as well through exposure to farming activities around the Pacific region. Kokosiga Pacific is a consulting firm on agri-business and sustainable agriculture. The firm had been assisting farmers in the Pacific to adapt to changing economic and environmental situations. The Kokosiga consulting business worked for projects sponsored by organisations like; Pacific Community, Pacific Islands Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON), Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SREP), Gesellschaft fur Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (ICUN). For example, in 2011 he worked on a project involving non-formal adult education for self-employment in agriculture at Tutu Rural Training Centre in Fiji, a project involving the economic analysis of planting breadfruit orchards in Samoa and Fiji in 2014, and a New Zealand funded project

(2018–21) working with Napil Rural Training Centre in Tanna, Vanuatu. The consultancy experiences introduced him to the concept of diversifying the farm.

### **6.3.3 *Taiki na matanicagi ki na I teitei vou* (The new wind of change for the farm)**

During the 2009–2014 consultancy years, Livai developed a hobby of engaging in learning adventures through backpacking. He went backpacking around some Asian countries, including Thailand and India, and that is where he witnessed much diversification in rural economic activities, which was not common in the Pacific. Through backpacking social media platforms (Facebook) like Woofing (working for hosts who provide food and a place to rest) Livai gained experiences in diversified farms. The diversified activities involved: the development of an organic papaya farm, the introduction of agro-tourism in combination with horse riding, then native tree nurseries were built in the vicinity, and another business branch was developed to use the native trees in a landscaping business.

A significant change was to convert the sugarcane farm into a diversified farm project using the money gained from his consultancy work. The diversification venture for Aviva Farms took many people by surprise, even the government officials in Fiji. Ratu Meli, Livai's elder brother, stated, "*Ni dau kauta o Livai na nona model vei ira na agriculture I na tabana ni qele TLTB e ra qai dau taro lesu tale mai na cava mada na agro-tourism*" (When Livai tried to take his agro-tourism model to the Ministry of Agriculture and the land department of TLTB, they asked him again 'what is agro-tourism?'). The challenges piled on, but that did not stop the project.

A part of the farm has been converted into a papaya farm, partly thanks to *solesolevaki* based on the network made with a group of young relatives from Verevere village in the province of Ra during the cane-farming period. The group was contacted in 2013 and agreed on grounds to assist in diversifying the farm, and have continued to stay at the farm camp until the present (discussed further in Chapter 7). The cleared land was turned into a beautiful and substantial organic papaya farm with 4,000 plants (Figure 16) and 20 species of native trees. People from Natalau village and the youths from Verevere village are employed and learn from the farm through the guidance of Livai, everything from seed germination processes, nursery management, transplanting through to harvesting. The harvested papaya for export

is packed and transported for fumigation and quality assurance at Nature's Way Cooperative at Nadi airport. Livai is also the chair of this cooperative and one of the founders.

Throughout the diversification transition period from 2013 through to the present, Aviva Farms has become an organic farm. The farm requires much manual labour to maintain its organic standard. A man who had been helping Livai on the sugarcane farm was tasked with overseeing the operation when he was on tour as a consultant. Aviva Farms also went through many hardships in trying to secure an agro-tourism license through tourism Fiji including the expense of insurance for tour groups, venue preparation to host the tourists, and the logistic arrangements. However, through the sales from the farm and the consulting work, they have managed to get the agro-tourism venture into full operation.



*Photo credit: Livai Tora.*

**Figure 16: A worker at the organic papaya farm**



*Photo credit: Livai Tora.*

**Figure 17: Tourists with tour guides on the farm**

The agro-tourism venture involved tourists coming onto the farm and engaging in few activities. The farm provides the necessary infrastructure to cater to visitors such as: ablution blocks, resting *bures*, backpacking *bures*, camping grounds and bigger *bures* for hosting meetings and events. Tourists come through tour groups or privately (about 50–150 a week), pay \$70 entry fee, and are welcomed at a *bure*. They can choose to walk or go on horseback (Figure 17) and have a tour through the organic papaya farms with stories about the farm and the history of the people shared with them along the way. They will also be helped to pick their pawpaw and have a taste as well. The tourists also engage in the planting of native trees or papaya for them to revisit later. It creates a sense of belonging for the visitors and benefits the farm as well.

#### 6.3.4 The diversified approach of doing business on customary land

The organic papaya farm was used to conduct agro-tourism as an alternative income. *“Na agro-tourism e dua ga na I walewale ni ilavo ni o qarava tiko na I teitei. Keo teitei ga e sega ni dua na ilavo o rawata na gauna ni qaraqaravi ko na qai vakailavo sara e na gauna ni tatamusuki”*, said Livai. (The agro-tourism business is an alternative income. The money flows in at harvest for the farm, but during the growing period the tourists provide the income by visiting). Bookings are made through the Aviva Farms website or Fijian travel agents like Rosie Tours.

On his trips around Fiji over many years, Livai collected samples of outstanding native flora and fruit trees, which were grown at a nursery (Figure 18). Samples of the trees were planted at the farm in the transition period (2013–14), adding to the new look of the farm. The nursery was developed and later branched into two lines of business in 2016. A group of youths from the farm was selected to form a line of business, which was contracted by hotels to do landscaping activities. There was a need for new plants due to regular flooding incidences in the area.

In some cases, the hotels also buy trees from the nursery at Aviva Farms. Frequently landscaping workers have been employed by hotels to work as fulltime landscapers, and then they are replaced by other youths needing work. The other business branch involves nursery training and practical skills targeting interested farmers and agriculture-based institutions like Fiji National University and the University of the South Pacific.



*Photo Credit: Livai Tora.*

**Figure 18: Uncovered native trees at the nursery**

### 6.3.5 Recent challenges

The operations and lines of businesses were prosperous until Tropical Cyclone Winston on 20 February 2016, which destroyed everything on the farm. The resilience of the farm has been successfully tested since the inception of agro-tourism. Livai shared this, *“Na l teitei qori e sega ni vakila na draki veisau, cava ga e yaco e na cici ga na bisinisi qori”* (The farm is tolerant of any condition even climate change or whatever happen it can still cope). Livai was away on a business trip during Tropical Cyclone Winston but managed to call his friend to ask them to store away important things from the farm at a farm camp situated on higher ground and release the horses to run uphill as they are trained to do. The cyclone and flood completely wiped out the 4,000 papaya plants, but fortunately, the nursery was empty, as the hotels had recently bought all the trees for landscaping. The shade cloth was removed and stored away.

*After the cyclone, Livai returned home and contracted the papaya field to a tobacco company to use as an alternative income while the farm is under restoration (Figure 19). The agro-tourism business was closed off, but the horses were used to host horseracing events on Aviva Farms, scheduled four times a year for tourists and the public, which again provided an*

alternative income. It also does horse riding lessons for people (especially tourists), which still open daily. In March 2016, a few youths from the farm were asked to visit specific locations in Fiji (part of Aviva Farms' networks) to gather seeds and planting materials for the native tree's nursery. The nurseries were later restored with native trees, which in few months were ready for sale for hotel restoration contracts. Aviva Farms also teamed up with business partners from catering companies who use the facilities at the farm to cater to events (Figure 20), including meetings, retreats, team-bonding exercises, weddings, and the like. Aviva Farms provides the venue and facilities, and the partners provide the necessary decorations and equipment to facilitate events.



Photo credit: Livai Tora.

**Figure 19: The tobacco farm**



Photo credit: Livai Tora.

**Figure 20: The catering team of Aviva Farms**

The Aviva Farms brand resonates with the excellent relationship between the business and the workers. The two parties managed to look after each other's priorities. Tevita Ratu, the leader of Verevere youths at the farm, reflected:

*Au vakavinavinakataki Livai ni solia vei keimami na qele kei na vale me keimami tiko kina ka sega ni keimami sauma e dua na ka. Sa keimami cakacaka ka saumi, sa vaka ga e neimami na iteitei oqo. Ni dau yali e vaka ga e tiko ni ka kece e vinakati e caka vakavinaka. Levu na ka e sa caka ga vaka solesolevaki me keimami vukea me duri na bisinisi ni taukei oqo. Sa sega ga ni na davo na bisinisi oqo ni levu na tabana ka caka tu e na yalo vinaka, veiciqomi kei na veikauwaitaki.*

I want to thank Livai, he let us live here on his piece of land and use his house for free. We are employed and are paid; this farm gives so much to us, and we regard it as our own. If he is not around, he will not worry much as we do everything he wants. But we also do *solesolevaki* on the farm for free and give our best as we are helping this indigenous Fijians business to thrive during challenges he faced and be a light to the world that indigenous Fijians can do well in business. This indigenous Fijian business will never fail as it has many business lines and with business conducted with good relationships and a caring heart.

For Livai, sustaining the farm is the primary aim, and for the workers is to get a livelihood from the employment opportunities provided by the business arms of Aviva Farms. Creating a healthy relationship through '*veirairai*' (looking after one another) goes a long way.

### **6.3.6 Aviva Farms as a family business**

Reflecting on the literature in Chapter 2 it is apparent that Aviva Farms, like Tifajek, can be categorised as a family business. Aviva Farms is wholly owned and managed by a family and that enables the shaping of business behaviour and the pursuit of the family's vision (Chua et al., 1999; Litz, 1995). In this case, the vision is for the business to achieve sustainable agriculture for social, economic, and environmental stability. Aviva aligns with the 'semasiological' framework which recognises that there are often core values embedded in a family business (Vallejo, 2008, 2009). Aviva Farms values a vibrant working environment, which boosts participation and cohesion and ensures that the affairs of its workers and related groups are supported. There is also a high degree of trust in the leadership.

Maintenance of social capital is common to all the businesses in this study. A key factor for the success of family businesses is the capability of a business to provide a nurturing environment conducive to social capital development to achieve competitive advantage and superior performance (Arregle et al., 2007; Chrisman et al., 2005; Hoffman et al., 2006). Certainly, a cultural form of social capital known as *solesolevaki* (to be discussed in detail in Chapter 7) has contributed to the success of Aviva Farms as well as the other two businesses in this study. Innovation is also widely recognised as a so-called ‘game-changer’ to get a competitive advantage for family-based firms (Lindgardt, Reeves, Stalk Jr, & Deimler, 2009). This is evident with Aviva Farms as they have had the persistence to diversify into new business subdivisions that contribute to the business’s overall vitality and its sustainability (see section 6.3.4).

As with Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring, there is another dimension of Aviva Farms that is not necessarily acknowledged as a core component of family businesses. That is, the business is structured to support the community with contributions to sociocultural obligations, as will be discussed later in Section 8.5.2.

## 6.4 Nayarabale Youth Farm

Nayarabale village is in the interior of Vanua Levu, the second largest island in the Fiji group. It belongs to the Vaturova district in the province of Cakaudrove. The village belongs to the *yavusa* (clan) of Wacawaca, and Nayarabale is their primary village with a few other small settlements. The Nayarabale youth group is registered under the Ministry of Youth, and the members are the youth from the *yavusa*. The youth group has been showcased in the media in Fiji as an example of a million-dollar farm project, which achieved success without any assistance from the government or mechanised systems. Everything used in their farming activities is traditional, from digging forks to knives, and people are the key capital. That can be eye-catching as a news article, but the big question is about the process of getting to that place of running a valued enterprise.

### 6.4.1 Na neitou tauyavu (our beginning)

This initiative started during a church meeting in 2008 initiated by a Methodist church pastor as a response to how hard it was for villagers to handle social obligations. Important

institutions largely influence life in most Fijian villages; the *vanua*, *lotu* (church), *matanitu* (government) and the school. These institutions play essential roles in village life, and they have different programs and activities that the villagers need to follow and engage. The activities will take up people's time and resources, and this is a lifetime commitment. There is a saying in the village, *"e bau o maka ni solia nomu cau l na lotu, vanua, oronivuli na tamata e na vaatarogi l'o, na gauna e maka ina na magiti l vale e na maka ni dua e na lekataini l'o"* (If you do not play your role in the *vanua*, church or school, people will talk about you, then when you have no money or food for the family nobody apart from your family will care about it). This is how influential these institutions are, and many village people go the extent of giving and participating in the various sociocultural activities first, and if there are any leftovers, then their family can have some.

From this perspective the family generally comes second to these institutions. People who are familiar with or brought up in a Fijian village will be well aware of this. These words were uttered during a Nayarabale church meeting by the current youth leader, Iliesa Vakaruru; *'E dua tio ga na taga e tau taucoo mai ina na oga lelevu e so, io na noda bula yadudua vaavuvale e maka so ni kai asia sa dodonu me dua na veisau'* (there is only one pocket that feeds into the multi-sociocultural obligations of the people, and hence we tend to forget that our individual lives and our families are drastically affected).

The turning point of the discussions led by the Methodist minister was when someone had an idea for a farm initiative to focus solely on these obligations so that a day would come when people are free to look after their families. Therefore, the farm that was started was named *'bula raraba,'* which means farming to cover for the sociocultural obligation. The minister's meeting concluded with a modest investment decision to buy two battery torches for individuals, youths and elders alike to use for the 4 am starts when people had to get from their homes through the forest and up to the hills to the farm. More torches have been purchased since then: Keni, one of the youth leaders, noted *'a rairai sia nio sa raca ni sa laini cae na tamata ni ra yadua na cina livaliva, na l teivu ni ca'aca'avata'* (It is beautiful to see the lines of people with torches up the mountain early in the morning, people are united).

#### 6.4.2 *Toso va'amalua (We progressed slowly)*

The first farm was set up on land, which belongs to a *mataqali* (sub-clan) acquired through *veisolisoli* (traditional land gifting for a course). In 2007, the land was cleared, and 300 kava plants were planted. A small number of youths looked after the farm through *solesolevaki* (doing work without pay) for the following three years. In 2010, the 300 kava plants were harvested, and the stems (planting materials) were used to plant a bigger farm of 5,000 plants. The activities were moved over to new land belonging to a *mataqali* (sub-clan) who gave the land to do the project for the betterment of the *yavusa*. The money from the harvested plants was donated to the church. That was a turning point for the villagers realising that their land could assist in making a living and helping them to meet their communal obligations without them having to take money from their own pockets.

There was an ongoing concern that villagers were being attracted to the towns and nearby sugarcane farms as labourers to shoulder the sociocultural obligations back in the village. This isolated people from the village and village life, working for others to satisfy the demands of institutions such as the *vanua*, *lotu* (church), *matanitu* (government). The village was empty much of the time as people were away from home. Iliesa Vakaruru, the youth leader, stated,

*Sa dau lala na oro tamata lai ta tovu vanua sigasiga vei idra na aidia, tei tiau vei dua na lawyer me rawa na l lavo ni soli, au sa kai vaasamataina ni dodonu me eimami vaayagatai drea me eimami bula ina ka eimami ua ni biuta na oro?*

The village was always empty, people were working for Indian farmers cutting sugar cane, planting yams for a lawyer under the hot sun for their levies—why can't we use our land to get a good life and never leave the village?

The same group of youths managed and monitored the 5,000-plant kava farm and its subsequent harvest. Three bank accounts were created for the church, *vanua*, and education, and each received \$15,000 to cater to the sociocultural obligations that members of the *yavusa* were required to meet.

#### 6.4.3 *Na dre'a ni teitei (Land accessibility)*

The youth farm was initially planted on a sub-clan's land, and it was agreed by the members to allow the operation and benefit the *yavusa*. The first farm utilised that land, and more land

was then needed to do the second one. The nearby village of Le'utulevu which is closely related to the *yavusa* Wacawaca at Nayarabale village owns a large piece of land near the first farm. Through this traditional tie, the process of *solu dre'a* (land gifting) was done, and this required a *solevu* (land gifting ceremony) which involves the presentation of *iyau* (traditional artifacts like whale's tooth, mats, and tapa), a kava ceremony and food cooked in *lovo* (earth oven) for the landowners. As a response, the *turaga ni mataqali* (leader of the landowning unit) presented a *tabua* (whale's tooth) to inform the Nayarabale youths that they are well received and also to inform the landowners that the land is given '*ra va'ayagataina me baleta na sasaga si'a'* (to use the land for a good cause). The youth group is required to present the *isevu* (traditional presentation of the first fruit of the land) every year and help in their sociocultural activities for the landowners in reciprocity.

In 2017 when 25,000 kava plants, 12,000 yams, and 10,000 cassava plants were to be planted, more land was needed, and a local sub-clan gave their land, but this was formally leased to the youth farm via iTaukei Land Trust Board. The land was surveyed for an agriculture-lease title and the Nayarabale Youth Farm as the titleholder. It safeguards the sustainability of the project, which also means the attainment of *bula sautu* (peaceful, meaningful, and fruitful life) for the *yavusa*, including the lessor.

#### **6.4.4 I tuvatuva ni ca'aca'a va'avula (Monthly work structure)**

When the 5,000 kava plants were about two years old, people realised that the farm would be able to relieve their stress in terms of obligations. The word quickly spread that the farm was huge and doing well, which then attracted the support from members of the *yavusa* who had previously left the village to find better lives in urban areas and sugarcane farming belts.

Realising that the farm needed the support mechanisms of the institutions *vanua*, *lotu* (church), and *matanitu* (government), there was a work structure drafted, which is the main element that drives the current activities of the *yavusa*. A month is divided into four weeks, and each week has specific activities for each institution, as in Table 8. Week one is for the youth farm, week two for *solesolevaki* on an individual's farm, week three for *solesolevaki* on *yavusa* food security, and the last week is scheduled for gatherings and occasions by the *vanua*, church and any visiting group of the government, school, and others. Serupepeli Kaususu, a youth member, said:

*Eimami kai biu vuli sa ada tu na caacaa sa maka ni eimami kai mai lao tu sa tuga na a e tuvani me caa, sa eimami vaaneimami teitei me baleta na I lavo, tu na eimami magiti neimami oga sa colata na bula raraba. Sa asia na bula ni vaaituvatuva tu.*

When we left school, the villagers were following the monthly work plan, and we have a plan to follow every week. Now we have our kava farm that is our income, our crop farms to feed our family, our multi-obligations met by the youth farm. Life is better with this structure.

The work structure enables the Narayabale farm activities in the three weeks to thrive and able to assist the families as well.

The monthly work structure (Table 8) has revolutionised the village, and the support of the three institutions provided an enabling environment. It also led to stronger sociocultural bonds within the community, as one of the elders, Jovesa Serunisiga, declared:

*Sa dodonu me eimami solia na neimami veitoni vei edra na yakiti ni ra sa auta main a duavata ka na nodra I gu e na vaacegu ina na vanua, na lotu ei na vuvale. Liuliu ni lotu, vanua eina vuvale eimami sa veitoni vei ratou.*

We need to give our total support to the youths, and the farm as they brought unity within our *yavusa*, and their effort is a source of strength to our *vanua*, church, and family. As leaders of the *vanua*, church, and families, we give our support to them.

The work structure and the support of the elders enable a strategic organisation of the village activities for villagers to follow the weekly routine. It created balance in terms of the individual family and communal development.

#### **6.4.5 Bula e taucoko e na yavusa (Vibrant clan)**

The members of the village also recalled the day they celebrated their harvest, members of the *yavusa* in the village, as well as those from towns all over Fiji gathered at the village *rara* (open ground). With proceeds from the farm, the youth group gave cheques for \$15,000 each to the *vanua*, church, and education committee. As well as this, two new vehicles, a land-cruiser worth \$90,000 and an eight-tonne logistic truck worth \$70,000, were presented to the members of the *yavusa*. It was the bounty from all the struggles suffered by the group, including managing until harvest without being paid to get the job done.

**Table 8: The Nayarabale work structure**

Week	<i>Solesolevaki</i> Activities	Group involved	Venues	Salary/benefits for individuals and community
1	Youth farm	All youth members	Youth farm camp	\$120-\$250 per person for a week's work. The revenue from produce that is produced on the farm is used to pay for sociocultural obligations (table 1, week 4).
2	Individual farms	Small youth groups who farm on the same location do their small <i>solesolevaki</i> , helping on other individuals' farms.	Individual farm camps	\$200-\$400 from selling own crops at the market on Saturday in weeks when produce is harvested.
3	Tribal food security	All tribe members	Village	Staple crops are planted for each family within the tribe, including the teachers at their district's school and the pastor of the church.
4	Sociocultural obligations (prescribed by; the <i>vanua</i> , church, government or any visitors from outside the area)	All tribe members but the necessities for hospitality and cultural protocols (e.g. money, food, artefacts and transport) are provided by the youth farm. Members do activities like cooking and attending meetings and ceremonies.	Village	Creates a balance between the business and the key formal institutions (family, <i>vanua</i> , church, government). Provides the quality of life and community wellbeing.

In late 2017, the farm has some financial security, and by following the work plan, they can pay the youths and *yavusa* members when they do the youth farm activities during the first week of every month (Figure 21). At present (2020), they are paying out about \$120 to \$250 labour cost for that particular week of every month, depending on the days spent at the farm (see Table 8). The money gained from that week's work is used by members to buy things for their family as well as to buy foodstuffs for their *solesolevaki* program on individual farms the following week. The individual *solesolevaki* program (week 2, see Table 8) is conducted by groups of farmers who are farming in the same area and have a combined farm camp. The individual farms are for family needs and provide financial security for households as their *oga* (obligations) are covered by the youth farm.



*Photo credit: Suliasi Vunibola.*

**Figure 21: The youths after working at the youth farm on the first week of the month**

Specific activities are followed every week, and the work structure makes things easier in terms of preparing for upcoming events. It is clear when comparing with other villages without a working structure where the people never know when the *vanua*, *lotu* (church), and *matanitu* (government) will demand commitments. This structure had become the glue to this vibrant community and attracted many people back to the area when they had previously searched for a better life away from the village. Due to many people returning, they were able to plant 25,000 kava plants (Figure 22), 12,000 yam plants (Figure 23), a sandalwood plantation, 10,000 cassava plants, and a pineapple orchard in 2018, without mechanised inputs.



*Photo credit: Suliasi Vunibola.*

**Figure 22: Kava plants in the youth farm**



*Photo credit: Suliasi Vunibola.*

**Figure 23: Youths manually weeding the yam farm**

#### **6.4.6 I vesu ni bula sautu (social net)**

The village program and activities have also provided for a better quality of life for the people and more direction for the young. The youths are an essential group of people in any community, but the trend in most Fijian villages is to utilise the energy of youth during a *soqo* (traditional ceremony or gathering). They are seen doing the hard labour of erecting sheds, getting firewood, and helping with catering activities, and after that, most of them are left on

their own. Most of these youths are school leavers, but there is no structured program to use their knowledge and expertise. Ilesia Vakaruru (the youth leader) said, “*E dua na vanua e toa yavavala oto e uneraina tio na vanua o ira na taba yakiti. E o sa maroroi idra e ra sa na maroroya sara ga na nodra vanua.*” (The generation that shook the land are the youths. If we protect them now, they will save our *vanua* in the future). He further stated quite simply that we need to be close to the youth, understand them, and we need to know how to work and live with them. They are involved in meetings, in programmes and every phase of planning activity. For Nayarabale youth, their protection comes in the form of having a village life with some structure. However, people are still free to manage and look after their families independently and enjoy staying in the village.

During school breaks, the students of the *yavusa* also have a specific week for them to do some work at the *bula raraba* farm under supervision. Peni Rokodiva, a youth member, reflected on this:

*O ira na yakiti vuli ni yavusa e ni ra serei a maka na mai tu vaaveitalia tu, e tio na nodra macawa I na teitei ni bula raraba. E ran a lao tu na I tubutubu e ran a lai vulica na caaca ni teitei, ra lotu ni yavi, e ra vuli a vaa vanua viro ga. E dau tovoli viro ga I cedra ni e bau e ra sa maka ni kai vuli e ran a mai curuma na bula aria. Sa bau me neitou oronivuli ka ra saumi viro ga na nodra I yaya ni vuli.*

The students of this *yavusa* during school breaks do not roam around in the village or towns doing nothing, they will be in the farm camp for a week with parents and some elders. They learn about farming, and they learn their culture and tradition as well as their spirituality as the pastor will visit them too. They will also be told that when they finish school, the farm will be waiting for them. It's our model of schooling, and the children are paid for that and their stationery needs and allowance for school are also met by the youth farm.

The farm is like a school providing holiday programs for the children of the village. It assists in getting them involved in practical and lifelong skills and a way to keep them occupied during the school breaks.

An elder stated that the education system in Fiji is such that only a few will end up in the professional workforce. The others '*e kaburaki sara ga mai nakoro*' (left them in the village and deemed as school dropouts). The routines followed by the *yavusa* provide a social safety

net that captures the youths after school and channels them into a work practice that changes lives and prepares them for their future. A usual saying in the village reflects this, '*e na ligadra na cauravou na noda vei siga ni mataka'* (our future is in the hands of our youths). It has taken some time for new school dropouts to adapt to the system in the village, but the motivation has come from their peers who are engaged in the farm routine. For these youths, having their source of income in terms of kava and cash crop plantations and the ability to provide food is the highest honour. Nacanieli Serunisiga, a youth member, deliberated on this:

*Sa dua na a taleitai duadua ni mami sa rawa sede sa maka ni kai erei o ira na itubutubu. Mami sa vagani idra neimami vuvale na magiti sa maka ni kai vaararavitai ga o tamai mami, ni tovoli me vaakikisi magiti ni dua na soko mami sa cola magiti me lai biu. Sa laveti na yaloi mami ni eimami sa dua na a.*

We like the fact that we do not depend on our parents for money, as we have our sources and we are helping our parents now. We are feeding our families and not relying on dad to that; if food is required for an occasion, it is an honour to provide for the people.

It is a breakthrough in terms of youths living in the modern era of Fijian villages.

The structure is also vital in allowing choices for other villagers who decide to return to the village to live. The execution of the food security week is through the abundance of crops for families near the village, and the youth farm provides food for the *yavusa* if there is a need. One of elders shared this, "*na magiti tu I oro e a ana tio o vua'a I dua nay asana ko mami dua na yasana ka dulu ga o vua'a*" (the abundance of food in this village is such that we eat from one side of the farm and the wild pigs feed on the other, and there is still plenty of food). There is no problem for new families to resettle as food is generally in abundance; people can work in the youth farm for income, and families are there to help in the resettlement process. A few youths who had been employed by the government and hospitality industry in the main island of Viti Levu resigned from their employment to resettle in the village. Peni Rokodiva, a former prison officer, shared that:

*Ni mami ca'aca'a I na matanitu e lewai na noda gauna kai gasa sara na sede da maroroya rawa ni saulevu na magiti ei na sau ni vale I tauni. Na bula e otatai da oca dina oti da kai auta I vale na oca lai vaavu leka viro. I naoro o ca'aca'a o saumi, na magiti a vere tu maka ni voli, o mai tubu na teitei ni caa vaaituvatuva kai cegu na yalo ni da tug a I vale. Au sa*

*digia sara ga meu sat tu ga l naoro meu karava na watiku ei na luveku. na bula sia ga da ketia tio a tu e l naoro.*

When I was working for the government my time was used to work endlessly, I was unable to save money, as the rent, food and cost of living in town is so expensive. In the village you are paid to work, there is food in abundance, and you do not have to buy it, your farm progresses as there is a routine to follow, and you have the quality of life with family around. I made up my mind that I can look after my wife and daughter happily here in the village. The good life we are searching for is found in my village, so why not.

The schedules for the villagers provided by the work structure and the unity of the tribe assisted in the quality of life of the members.

#### **6.4.7 Na itavi ni matanitu (government input)**

The project has also attracted government interest and support through the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Youth, and the Department of Police. The Ministry of Agriculture has provided funds to build farm roads up the mountain so that the farm truck can carry heavy loads to and from the farm that, for many years had been carried by the people or on horseback. The Ministry of Youth provided farm camp building materials for structures that were built by the Nayarabale youths, one for the dry season near the river and a camp for the wet season on the hill. The Youth and Agriculture ministries also conducted a national youth workshop (at Nayarabale village) inviting representatives from across Fiji displaying the Nayarabale Youth Farm. The workshop was focussed on agroforestry and farm diversification, where planting materials for sandalwood, pineapple, and taro were provided, and the workshop attendants participated in the planting of a sample farm. The relationship with the Police Department was indirect as they provided workshops in the village concerning citizen education. The police department highlighted the social ills of youths who are caught up with life on the streets in towns and cities and the web of social problems connected to it. They also declared that these social problems are seen in villages where the youths are idle and do not have a routine to follow. The youths of Nayarabale Iliesa Vakaruru, the youth leader, declared:

*Mai na gauna eitou teivu ina yaco mai e se maka vaadua ni dua na yakiti ni yavusa e me vaacalai vaalawa, eitou sab au caaca vaaveivoleati sara ei na tabana ni ovisa. Ratou*

*veivue viro ga l na neitou caacaa ni gauna a leva ina e so na kitagane na gauna ni caacaa e rat u mai tauni, lasa l na veiororo dau kiriti ga o ratou na ovisa kai ida ena sae le ie na lori ni ovisa dra usa lesu main a kitagane dra dau vosatai ga vaamalua.*

Since the inception of the Nayarabale Youth Farm project none of our youths are in jail or under any criminal investigation. We are working closely with the police department. They also help in our operations especially when some youths are in town or any other village through peer pressure, the police will be called, and they will be brought home safely and received with very caring words from us.

Having the support of the formal institutions like the youth ministry and the police department is a strong pillar to the youth development at Nayarabale.

#### **6.4.8 Nayarabale Youth Farm as a cooperative**

Cooperative businesses were discussed extensively in Chapter 2. Nayarabale can be classified as a cooperative business according to the definition of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) which refers to a voluntary and autonomous association of people who decide to meet their economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a democratically controlled business (ICA, 1995). The Nayarabale Youth Farm aligns with the international literature on the dual nature of cooperatives. The cooperative business model is unique in terms of its economic engagements with social outputs, or the use of the business division for social returns (Mazzarol et al., 2011; Puusa, Kirsi, & Antti, 2016). This is evident in the discussion about Narayabale in Section 6.4.1, as a meeting was conducted in the church to discuss utilising farming to eradicate the sociocultural burden on villagers.

Narayabale also has many of the success factors as identified by the Enterprise Development Centre at the Cranfield School of Management in the United Kingdom (Harper, 1992) as leading to the success of cooperatives. These factors include the similar background of members, collective community need, capitalising on a single activity, no direct political link, not relying on subsidies, and utilising collective decision-making. However, Narayabale does not fit with one official cooperative value—that of ‘equity’—where equal sharing of dividends and capital reserves is paramount. Rather, Narayabale has its own way of sharing benefits among members. This is further discussed in Chapter 9.

## 6.5 Summary

The indigenous Fijian businesses under study have similarities and differences in how they operate as business ventures. All of them businesses understand the significance of their customary land, culture, wellbeing, indigenous knowledge, kinship, and values as enablers of entrepreneurial ventures. The businesses were all established with limited knowledge but effectively worked to achieve good things. For example, Tifajek Mudpool & Hotsprings and Aviva Farms managed to operate and survive in the abundant tourism region of Fiji, where foreign investors dominate the sector. An essential element of initiating a business is to conduct a market evaluation. Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring and Aviva Farms managed to do this by tapping into the already established tourism sector in the Nadi area. In comparison, Nayarabale competed with the middle persons and directly accessed a market, which is largely dominated by entrepreneurs of Indian descent, but still managed to thrive. Due to their tourism-aligned businesses, Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring and Aviva Farms are formally registered and have developed infrastructures, business structures, and operating hours. Nayarabale is communally owned and managed, and village-based; it is acknowledged in Fiji as a thriving youth group. These stories highlight how utilising customary land, clearly glued to underlying values, sustains these successful indigenous Fijian businesses together through to today.

Each of these three businesses carry out special annual ceremonies: *sigā kei Waikatakata* (hot-spring day) for Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring, *sigā ni solesolevaki* (solesolevaki celebration) at Aviva Farms and *sigā 'ei Wacawaca* (Wacawaca Day) for Nayarabale Youth Farm. These are the days where stories are shared in different forms of cultural celebrations and *talanoa* (stories and reflections). The primary purpose is to celebrate their achievements, for networking, and to pass the passion and interest to their children at the same time uphold culture, ethos, communal wellbeing, and kinship. They share how the elders managed to initiate and operate their businesses and navigated through challenges and the way forward for the future generation. These are the *domo ni talanoa* (voices telling stories) of the people who assisted these businesses; Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring, Aviva Farms, and Nayarabale Youth Farm.

# Chapter 7 Solesolevaki

*E dua ga na siga ni cola qele* (A day to carry the land). Refers to people who work together (*solesolevaki*) and achieve many things, it is said that their collective effort they can carry the land on their shoulders.

## 7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents aspects of *solesolevaki*, including its role in pre-historic indigenous Fijian lives. Solesolevaki is showcased as an enabler for indigenous entrepreneurship in Fiji by drawing from case studies to illustrate how *solesolevaki* strengthens the community-driven social safety net. This chapter also proposes how to assist an indigenous Fijian community struggling with *solesolevaki* through a *solesolevaki* model, including the enabling environment to execute it successfully. It shows how action research was conducted in this research, as discussed in Chapter 5.

As discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.6.2 *solesolevaki* refers to an indigenous Fijian cultural agency that involves the process of using the available resources (natural, social capital, systems, and values) for a common intention and to benefit members.

*Solesolevaki* is a term used throughout Fiji; some places have different names for it in their dialect, but the philosophy remains the same. Some other names include: *vilalawa* or *vilala* (in groups), *balebale vanua* (to move from one place to another doing work collectively), *cakacaka vakailawalawa* (group work) or *cakacakavata* (work in unity), *balebale* (cooperative work) and *veicavuki* or *cakacaka veicavuyaki* (taking turn in doing errands for others). *Solesolevaki* is like a gem buried within the indigenous Fijian culture, and the indigenous businesses under study for this thesis were able to uncover and utilise it in their respective communities to support both their entrepreneurship and community wellbeing.

This chapter begins with the deliberation that *solesolevaki* was the social capital used in traditional indigenous Fijian societies. It then moves on to the case study findings on how *solesolevaki* was utilised by the businesses under study and became a success factor for indigenous Fijian entrepreneurship. The next section focuses on *solesolevaki* as an essential element linking the businesses to each other, after which, the section that follows discusses

how *solesolevaki* enables the formation of an informal network, which assists the companies. Moreover, *solesolevaki* benefits the community by providing a community social safety net. Afterward, some challenges in conducting *solesolevaki* are discussed. A *solesolevaki* model for implementation in indigenous Fijian settings is then explained, after which the *solesolevaki* enabling environment in terms of leadership, work structure, and *solesolevaki* output is considered. The chapter concludes with a summary of how *solesolevaki* is a significant component for indigenous Fijian entrepreneurship, and the discussion of *solesolevaki* as social capital in indigenous Fijian settings.

## 7.2 *Solesolevaki* as the social capital in traditional indigenous Fijian societies

The ancestors of the people of Viti (Fiji) arrived by sea and settled in various traditional *yavu* (tribal locations) and developed methods for survival in their new environment. In most cases, their survival techniques were developed in response to the challenges faced in the search for a better life after experiencing disease, malnutrition, unbearable climatic conditions, and the need to travel the vast oceans. One of the strengths that arose from this time was the communal *vanua* structure of the kai-Viti (people of Viti or indigenous Fijians) made up of the subsystems or sub-clans. These sub-clans have distinct skills and roles that help the villages to function at their best, as groups of people work together through *solesolevaki* using specific skills to achieve desired tasks communicated to them through sub-clan leaders.

The essence of this *vanua* structure is the individuals who are born into these sub-clans. Individuals are said to have special *isolisoli*, which refers to their innate ability, skills, and talents. A child is immersed within the sub-clan doing *solesolevaki* on their specific responsibilities, and this is the place where informal learning occurs through watching the elders at work. It is followed by *talanoa* (engagement in conversations), and then comes a time of practicing under the watchful eyes of the elders until they attain the mastery of skills. *Solesolevaki* was required for the community to sustain itself and to eliminate threats, primarily when the safety of the members dictated the main village activities—for instance, moving to a new island due to the scarcity of food required considerable preparation, which meant related sub-clans combined to do *solesolevaki* in building the *drua* (double-hull canoe) to suit a long and potentially rough sea journey and accommodate a few hundred villagers.

Warriors were sent ahead to roam and guard the destination island while the builders collectively built *bure* (Fijian thatched houses) to withstand all climatic conditions, and other groups gathered and hunted for food to be shared. All these small units of people operate through *solesolevaki* on different activities in each time.

More changes over the years revolutionised the life of indigenous Fijians as they descended from their *koro ni ivalu* (tribal war villages) and relocated to places within their customary land. *Solesolevaki* was still part of the fabric of society with energy focused primarily on agriculture, village development, and *vanua* interests. There is an old saying that elders use to explain this transformation, "*Sa mai lutu na l wau ka sa vu'ica na mataisau me to'o me tei ina na magiti ni vanua*" (The war clubs were collected and given to the carver to convert them to farming tools to plant crops to support the *vanua* and people). Life revolved around *solesolevaki* of planting crops and rearing animals to help the *vanua*, ceremonies, and family lives.

*Solesolevaki* is the main engine of life in the village where the hands of many share the responsibilities. People use *solesolevaki* on two essential concepts; '*na gauna ni vuavuai*' and '*na veivukei vakaveiwekani*.' '*Na gauna ni vuavuai*' refers to the seasons following the *vula vakaviti* (Fijian lunar calendar) which depicts the season to cultivate the land for specific crops, the harvesting of particular flourishing land and sea resources, and requires the whole village to do it and to share the produce later on. The food is also preserved and stored in food banks in various homes. '*Na veivuke vakaveiwekani*' (helping your relation) does not depend on seasons or resources, but it is how individuals respond to the need for a person in the village. Tevita Ratu, the leader of the Aviva Farms' *solesolevaki* group, shared this:

*Na dina ni solesolevaki e na laurai ni ciciva na nomu bula e na nomu nave sara e loma ni tukuna vei iko mo kila ni gadreva na veivuke na wekamu kei na cava mo cakava mo vukea kina na tamata oya. Ke o raica e dua ni teitei tiko e tabu niko lako sivia mo vukea rawa ya na vuna e ra dau ruku kece vamataka me vunitaki ira na buto. Ke o sa raica ni dua e cola duru mai na tamata kece e raica e sa na kila na ka me caka. E da na qai lai sota kece ga e kea colati mai na bitu, koya e ta drau mai ka vukei sara me oti na vale oya. E sega ni dua e kerekere wavoki e kila ga na tamata n aka me cakava. O koya ga e na qai kila na oco me vakavinavinakataki kernudou kina. Na bula lagilagi dina ka sa sega so ni da raica e na gauna oqo.*

*Solesolevaki* is embedded within the belief systems that determine your actions without anybody telling you that your relations need help, and you will know what you can do about it. If you are going to your plantation and your relation is already in his garden, it is a norm that you help him; that is why everybody wakes up very early in the morning to go to their plantation. The houses are close together in the village, and that has a purpose, so help is just nearby. The whole village sees a person carrying a post to a house site, and everybody knows what they can do to help. Instantly they will all meet at the house site with people bringing in building materials for the house and assist in the building, and the owner knows what to do in return. A *bure* can be built just in a day through *solesolevaki*, but indigenous Fijian societies are losing that skill today (Tevita Ratu, October 2018).

In the past then, the Fijian people were attached to the values that support *solesolevaki*, and there was a general understanding that the hands of many would make work at the village level easy. The process encouraged the sharing of burdens, and there was usually lots of laughter and songs, making tasks more enjoyable.

While the tradition of *solesolevaki* has died out in many places across the Fiji Islands, all three case studies discussed in Chapter 6 successfully used *solesolevaki* to get their business off the ground. This is now discussed in detail.

### 7.3 *Solesolevaki* as a success factor for indigenous Fijian entrepreneurship

The businesses included in this study belong to indigenous Fijian communities situated in rural locations in Fiji, where life reflects any typical indigenous Fijian village. *Solesolevaki* is one form of capital that these businesses use to venture into business, capitalising on the essential resources of customary land and *veiwekani* (kinship relations). Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring is in Nadi, a popular tourist area, and the family was initially been involved in sugarcane farming. To step away from farming was entering into uncharted waters because they lacked significant business expertise and experience (see Chapter 6, Section 6.2), but the family members were keen to support the vision. Converting the sugarcane land into an area appropriate to build and host a tourism business required considerable investment. Without much finance, the alternative capital was *solesolevaki*, and the members of the family had discussions to determine a plan of action. There were constant reminders by the

elders that getting the business up and running would have many benefits for everybody, engaging in a business they own rather than following the prevailing trend of becoming cheap labourers for others. The vision was to include family members for *solesolevaki* activities. The men engaged in the direct clearing of the land before the women came in to collect the debris. A group of older women was responsible for the preparation of food for the whole group. The extended family members were involved in a *solu* where relatives were invited to donate seed money to help in the cleaning process and the extension of the pools to accommodate many people.

The eldest of the siblings Ilimeleki Susu shared this concerning *solesolevaki*:

*Na bisinisi qo e tauyavu tu e na sega, e tauyavu ga e na qele vakaitokatoka ka kena i yau sara ga na tamata e ra solu bula me bau dua na ka keimami rawata e na neitou I tikotiko mai na bula ni tu ga e na koro. E tauyavu dredre io ni keimami buno tu ni lewe levu, vinaka tu na draki ni veimaliwai, da veirokovi tiko, qo sa laurai na ka. AU rawa ni kaya ni solesolevaki sa yaga vakavuvale e lamata kina na bisinisi ni vuvale oqo qai mai vakayagataka na nodra taledi na neitou tamata e loma.*

This business started with nothing, all we had was the land belonging to our extended family and the treasure of the land which is the people. We aspired for a change in lifestyle into owning a business venture instead of just being a villager where many people do nothing or work tirelessly for others. We started with many difficulties, but the sweat, songs, and laughter of many eased the work, we respected the individuals and strengthened our relationship, which made our dream into reality. All I can say is that *solesolevaki* within the extended family propelled this business and provided the platform where our people could put their talents into use (Ilimeleki Susu, October 2018).

Many members of this extended family were part of the *solesolevaki* and were later employed by the business. Over time, others gained relevant experience from the business and ventured into more lucrative employment opportunities within the hospitality industry. The business was able to open opportunities for the youths who had dropped out of the formal education system and recognised that suitable employment allowed them to support the family and provide meaning in life.

Aviva Farms is also in Nadi, and the family resides at Natalau village, Sabeto. Some villagers had employment with the hospitality industry, but the majority stayed in the village and were dependent on lease money and informal employment. Livai Tora, the founder of Aviva Farms, turned to the land to secure their future rather than following the norm of the so-called 'quick fix syndrome' where indigenous Fijian landowners are often influenced to give up their land to gain a lump sum of money while investors run their business on the land. When this occurs, indigenous Fijians become lifetime labourers on their land under new bosses. Returning to the land was seen by Livai Tora an option to break free from this bond and run a business.

The farm was once a thriving sugarcane farm before Livai converted it to a diversified farm under the Aviva brand. As discussed in detail in Chapter 6 (Section 6.3), *solesolevaki* was utilised to convert the sugarcane farm to the diversified business approach. Vatili, Livai Tora's assistant and supervisor at Aviva Farms, explains the importance of *solesolevaki* to the farm:

*O au cakacaka tu kei Livs mai na gauna sara ni dovu me yaco mai nikua. Sa bau levu na I lavo e gole saumi tamata o Livs io e sega ga ni bau export rawa ni keitou sega ni yacova rawa na ka e vinakata na makete. Au a tukuna vua na I lawalawa qo e rawa ni vukei koya, na yabaki kece oya e export kina o Livs e na nodra buno na I lawalawa oqo, E Viti, oira ga na vasu e ra exporter, e na cakacaka ni solesolevaki e export kina o Livs ka tauyavu tale ga nona agrotourism. Ka marau ni keimai raica sa ra sobu mai na sara vanua, kei na veitusiti kece keitou vakavodoka e vica na drau na tere ni weleti. O Livs e qai dau solia ga na oco kakana se I lavo me lai voli tu kina na keimami kakana, keimami sega ni saumi ni keimami via laveta na bisinisi taukei.*

I was with Livs [Livai Tora's nickname] on the sugarcane farm until now...I introduced him to this group of relatives from Verevere village who also worked for his dad, and all these years, he managed to reach export requirements through the sweat of *solesolevaki*. In Fiji, the exporters are mostly of other races, but through *solesolevaki* Aviva Farms was able to export, an indigenous Fijian exporter. We were so happy to see the fruit of *solesolevaki* when we loaded hundreds of trays of organic papayas every Tuesday and witnessed tourists coming in on the agro-tourism venture. Livs reciprocates through *oco* (traditional presentation of food and kava to thank the group) or some money to buy foodstuffs, and we never paid for our accommodations. Livai was happy for the exports,

and we were happy to support an indigenous Fijian business, and our relationship will bring in more fortunes on both sides (Vatili, October 2018).

Now Aviva Farms is an exporter, and a prominent indigenous Fijian business in the area based upon *solesolevaki*, which was the initial capital that initiated and propelled this business. By using that relationship, members of the *solesolevaki* group are now employed in the business or working in other businesses using the Aviva network and experience.

Nayarabale Youth Farm involved the whole *yavusa* (tribe), and like the other case studies, a group of people looked within the indigenous Fijian systems and resources to make a change. Life in a rural-remote indigenous Fijian village revolves around sending six-year-olds to school and, in return, receiving young and energetic youths out of the formal education system about ten or so years later. Most of these youths are trapped in the cycle of the laidback village lifestyle, where the absence of opportunities stifles their creativity and motivation to make a change. A small group of dedicated youths and some elders initiated their *solesolevaki* on the farm, as detailed in Chapter 6 (Section 6.4).

The *solesolevaki* faced a few hurdles, but they did not let these situations deter their dream to make a change for the tribe. There were hurdles at the tribal level since many people were of the view that *solesolevaki* was outdated. This handful of dedicated people held on to the vision and agreed to, '*Sa maka ni rawa na veiba eitou lewe kisi, sa rawa ga ni ra vaalusi e na caacaa me ra raica*' (to take on these objections not by words but through work and let the work do the talking as we are few in numbers compared to them). After harvesting, the planting materials were gathered (for example stems of harvested kava plants) to expand the next farm, which the group accomplished through *solesolevaki* to make three years of better crop management. The leader of the group, Iliesa Vakaruru, declared:

Na salevu dredre eitou laova mai ni a sia taucoo e na tu na ena meca. Na tamata bau ga na bu'a maka ni o rawa ni udre ece, ni biu vata e levu na bu'a a caudre kai raici levu, bau ina o eda eitou lewe vica voli ga eitou vosota voli mai. Yacova sara ni sa eitou vaarogotaina vei edra na matua e rawa ni ra gade I na i teitei ni yavusa. Sa ra kai sarasara ka sa dewa na ena I talanoa ni ra sa raica e vica na baba Sinai tu e na yakona ei na suli. Kai gauna ni neitou lai sasamai tarava sa sinai na I teitei na tamata me yaco mai niua maka ni kai lala vaadua.

O ratou wale ga na dina voli arai mai vaavuna na toso sia ka sa mai tauyavu vaasia neimami sasaga, vaavuvuli sia me da ua ni dana na solesoleva'i.

We had a challenging journey as all good things had many obstructions. *Solesolevaki* is like firewood; you need more firewood to light up and be productive. A few of us managed to hold on and encouraged each other until the tribe members saw those hills covered with kava and taro crops. The word spread so fast, and we informed the elders to have a look at the farm that we had dedicated our lives to on behalf of our tribe. Our next farm day, it was full of people, and it was a beautiful day. Through until now, it attracted many people. Those few who believed were able to initiate our business venture, but this also is a good lesson on why we should hold on to *solesolevaki* (Iliesa Vakaruru, November 2018).

*Solesolevaki* was not only instrumental in setting up the tribal business venture but reinstating the beliefs that one needs to look within established systems like *solesolevaki* to support entrepreneurship, innovation, village unity, and wellbeing.

The following section will move on to discuss how *solesolevaki* was a point of discussion during one of the gatherings, which included the businesses under study. It provides an example of how *solesolevaki* can also build an indigenous Fijian business network where businesses assist other members intending to provide entrepreneurial support.

#### 7.4 *Solesolevaki* at work amongst an indigenous Fijian business network

In October 2019, I was engaging in the first case study (Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring) and by chance, there was a ceremony scheduled on the 26<sup>th</sup> of October. The researcher was invited to be the chief guest as the discussions centred on the support mechanisms for indigenous Fijian entrepreneurship. The objective of the gathering was to strengthen the network for indigenous Fijian businesses and indigenous Fijian village-based development initiatives. Representatives from the three case study businesses were there spearheading the ceremony, and there was a range of activities, but the focus was to find out how assistance can be provided at minimum cost to each other. The group elected the three businesses to lead the others in terms of expert advice and assistance as that was their promise five years

ago when they initiated their network chains. An elder shared this in referral to the researcher's visit as a researcher and also an indigenous Fijian:

Na nomu gole mai e dai e sega ni ka vakacalaka, e na lima na yabaki sa oti ni mai sasagataki nailakolako oqo keimami a nakita kina me sa na toki yani ki vuravura. Na kena kilai ni o keda na I taukei e da rawa ni vakayagataka na noda I tovo, noda veiwekani noda qele me da vakatubu bisinisi ka rawa ka kina. Ia na noda bisinisi e duidui mai vei ira na tani baleta oira e ra raica na tubu me ra binia na I yau o keda e da binia me da wasea me bula kina na noda vanua, lotu, vuvale kei na rawa ka ni kawa I taukei. Sa kalima ni yabaki oqo ka o sa basika main a dua na univesiti ni vuravura mo na vakadewataka.

Your presence here today is not a surprise. Five years ago, when we started and decided that after five years, our message will be known to the world. The message is about how we can build successful businesses from the foundations of our culture, kinship, and land. Our business is different from the western ideology where success is determined by growth and money; for us, we share our success to our *vanua*, church, family, and support for indigenous Fijian entrepreneurs. Today is the fifth year of commemoration, and you will take this back to your university and let the world know that our culture, tradition, land, family, kinship, *solesolevaki* can support our form of entrepreneurship (Apisai Nabou, October 2018).

This process made it more comfortable as a researcher to relate to the businesses and communities under study at that moment (Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring), and two others to be visited (Aviva Farms and Nayarabale Youth Farm). The ceremony provided the opportunity to make connections with the participants from the businesses involved in the case studies. The meeting was conducted at Nawai settlement and hosted by the Aviva Farms *solesolevaki* group and Livai Tora (founder of Aviva Farms). Aviva Farms and Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring were leading the discussions, and other businesses like Silana Ecotourism, Tsunami Farm, and Nayarabale Youth Farm provided support. There were other small indigenous Fijian businesses and budding entrepreneurs taking part in knowledge sharing and networking. The main aim was to spread the message that '*tekivu e na sega na buno ga e rawata*' (we start with nothing, but through collective sweat, we achieve).

The discussions identified five distinct objectives to be achieved through *solesolevaki* for the businesses involved:

- *bula vakayalo* (strengthening spiritual life);
- *bula vakavanua* (strengthening lives through culture and *vanua* living);
- *bula vakaveiwekani vakatamata kei na veika bula kei na nomu qele* (enhancing relationships between individuals and maintaining the connections with and protection of the land and natural resources);
- *bula vakabisinisi* (strengthening entrepreneurial spirit), and;
- *bula vakaiyau* (the value of saving and investments).

The businesses under study provided the opportunity for their *solesolevaki* groups to execute the objectives and immerse themselves into the practicality of running a business. They also used their experience in doing *solesolevaki* to assisting other indigenous Fijian businesses, for example: helping the landscaping and cultural activities for the ‘Tribe Wanted’ tourism business at Vorovoro, in Vanua Levu; *solesolevaki* on Tsunami farm in Labasa, Vanua Levu; and providing support in the building of the concept and landscaping for Silana Ecotourism, Tailevu province near Suva. The group also aided in landscaping and building of infrastructure for Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring and Aviva Farms. Providing support for other indigenous entrepreneurs is not a new concept, and *solesolevaki* was the main means to achieve this.

The system of using *solesolevaki* at the commercial level works better for both parties. *Solesolevaki* activities provided benefits for the businesses in this study as expenses are covered by the *solesolevaki* activities. For instance, the *solesolevaki* group at Aviva Farms executing *solesolevaki* activities at Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring. The cost of hiring a landscaping company could be FJ\$10,000 or more depending on the area, and then building a *bure* (or traditional house) costs FJ\$8,000. The *solesolevaki* group of about 40 talented youths with their leaders executed these jobs. In return, the *solesolevaki* group also benefitted in many ways. It was an opportunity to display the skills of traditional craftsmanship to other entrepreneurs who later hired the group for similar jobs, and the money was shared equally within the group. *Solesolevaki* also helped some of the youths move into employment in hotels or tourism using their experience. A few were employed full time at Aviva Farms and Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring. Others continue to work in the *solesolevaki* group. The group leader said:

Na yaga ni cakacaka qo sa ra vukei na vuvale kei na neitou vanua mai Ra sa ra cakacaka na gone e na gauna ni dredre ni cakacaka qo dina ni ra sega ni vuli vinaka sara. Na ka bibbiga ni rawa ni keitou tiko me ra vulica na I tovo dina vaka vanua ka sega ni caka rawa mai nakoro kei na neitou vakaraitaka e Viti ni noda I tovo kei na solesolevaki e I vurevure ni bula sautu kei na bisinisi.

Our *solesolevaki* initiative now bears fruit, and the benefits are also shared with our families and our *vanua* back home in Ra where there are fewer options. These youths gained employment when our country had too few formal job opportunities, and most of these youths were school dropouts. Most importantly, it allowed us to relearn our culture and traditions and showcase that our culture including *solesolevaki*, can support entrepreneurship and provide better well-being for indigenous Fijians (Tevita Ratu, October 2018).

The leaders of the various businesses and village development groups present at the *solesolevaki* ceremony at Nawai settlement had a strong understanding of *solesolevaki*. It was a core component of a previous program—run by the Christian Youth Development Association of Fiji (CYDA), which was an offshoot of the Methodist church and closed before 2000. The late pastor Sakeasi Salababa initiated the institution and located it at Waila, Nausori, and this is where most leaders of the businesses under study attended a three-year program. The institution was set up to equip landowners with the relevant practical skills to sustainably use their land and engage in the commercially oriented economy to alleviate the social problems faced by indigenous Fijian youths. It also focused on the need to do meaningful development for indigenous Fijians, to use the land rather than seeing it end up in the hands of foreigners. The businesses under study are at the forefront of building stronger networks and support for indigenous Fijian entrepreneurship on customary land.

The next section discusses practical examples from the case studies of how *solesolevaki* between the businesses is conducted, which strengthen the informal networks between indigenous Fijian businesses.

## 7.5 Practicing *solesolevaki* (or informal networks) between indigenous Fijian businesses

The sample businesses were established using *solesolevaki* and they use it to support other indigenous Fijian entrepreneurs. They all had experience as indigenous Fijian entrepreneurs and used *solesolevaki* to assist other budding entrepreneurs. The kind of assistance comes in many forms depending on interests and proposed business engagement activities. Their assistance generated interest by indigenous Fijian landowners to make use of the resources available to them. The owner of Aviva Farms noted that:

*Sa dodonu e na gauna oqo me sa veisau na noda rai, levu e da sa nanuma ga me da I taukei ni qele ga ka mate yani yacova ni ra sa mai lewa na qele na I taba tamata tarava. Sa dodonu me da sa raica e da na vakayagataka vacava na qele ka vakavure bisinisi kina. Na noda sega ni vakayagataki qele e sa ra levu kina na tamata vutuniyau e ra mai vakayagataka ka da cakacaka tale kina me da bobula.*

It is time that we change our perspective from just being passive custodians of land and resources and leaving it to the next generation [to decide what is best]. Instead, it is time that we focus on how our land and resources can become business opportunities for further investment. Not using this opportunity lends itself to us becoming slaves [labourers] for foreign investors on our land (Livai Tora, October 2018).

The informal network strategy varies depending on the need of any business. Most of these businesses had been operating for many years and had the relevant experience to hand out advice or provide direct support to help others. For example, Aviva Farms and Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring businesses had experience in the hospitality industry and thus provided information to Silana Ecotourism, which was a breakthrough for them. After consultations and meetings with stakeholders, the advisory group (including the businesses under study) came up with options for Silana village based on its' pristine beaches, rainforest, and position near the highway. The advice from the group aided in the building of a few homestays and incorporated the rainforest hiking and the beach as part of its ecotourism business.

Another mode of *solesolevaki* is labour mobilisation where a *solesolevaki* group assists other businesses, which need labour. For example, Tsunami Farm in Labasa, Vanua Levu, the largest sugarcane farm in Fiji needed help during harvesting and did not have enough labour from the

area. It made contact with the other businesses, and some of the youths from the business network travelled to harvest cane and were paid and looked after by Tsunami farm. Nayarabale Youth Farm shared labour and planting materials after cyclone Winston in 2016. The farm provided free planting materials for villages drastically affected by the disaster. The planting materials were transported, and the Nayarabale youths travelled to the smaller islands in the central division of Fiji to plant seed farms for various youth groups. Another form of *solesolevaki* is that businesses with access to the market can use that connection to assist others. For example, Aviva Farms is an exporter, and there were cases where village farms used Aviva's business networks to export their own crops.

While *solesolevaki* is a contributor to entrepreneurial activities and support systems, it also benefitted the villages and rural communities through the building of social safety nets.

## 7.6 *Solesolevaki* provides a community social safety net for young people

When a child is born to a family in indigenous Fijian settings, he/she is called '*luve ni vanua*', meaning that all the people, the land, culture, and traditions are responsible for nurturing the child. During the child's christening in church, it is a norm for the congregation to stand up and promise to assist in the upbringing process. These promises are broken on many occasions when people continue to follow the 'individualised and laid-back lifestyle' of the village. From the case studies covered in this research, *solesolevaki* contributes to this social safety net when individuals feel out of place from the systems that influence their lives. In the communities under study, *solesolevaki* is also; '*karua ni vuvale*' (a second family), '*neitou koronivuli*' (our village school), or '*i vesu ni neimai veiwe'ani*' (strength of our kinship).

The Fijian education system strongly influences indigenous Fijian lives. Education was introduced later into the indigenous Fijian way of life, and it adds to the status of individuals. People with proper education gain respect in the community; however, it is complicated for them all to complete their schooling due to the costs of education, capabilities, mixed quality of teaching, and other factors. Those who do not complete are called school dropouts and are said to be a '*vakamadia i na vuvale*' (shame to the family). For Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring, their *solesolevaki* acts as a bridge for school dropouts leading to a productive life in the village. As explained by the leader of Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring:

*Mai na yabaki ono ki na ruasagavulu e ra tu kina e koronivuli na gone, e ra vulici ga me ra bula duadua. E ra caka lesoni duadua, veitarogi duadua, ni ra lesu mai nakoro e ra mai sega ni yaga sara ni bula eke e vinakati na cakacakavata. Na gauna ni sereki e ra curuma na solesolevaki na gone ke so e lai lutu mai sa ra kila na ka e ra na mai cakava.*

From six years old to about twenty years of age, our kids are in school and they are taught to do things individually. They study and are assessed individually, and when they drop out of the school system, in many cases, they are unproductive at the village since collective effort is needed here. For us, we include our children in our collective work during school breaks, and that prepares them if they happen to come back to live at home (Ilami Susu, October 2019).

The *solesolevaki* at this level is like a school, it offers bridging courses for youth engagement in collective work. It is a place where proper behaviours are encouraged for the youths to achieve 'yalomatua' (maturity) and become better villagers.

Aviva Farms is supported its *solesolevaki* group (see Chapter 6, Section 6.3). Their ancestors initiated the relationship, and the *solesolevaki* group benefitted both Aviva Farms and acted as a safety net for the young people. The lifestyle in the village had encouraged social problems like drugs, alcohol, and kava abuse, which negatively influenced their lives. As a result, during a village meeting, an elder spoke out forcefully about the youths and how they were damaging the reputation of the village and should search for a life somewhere else. The youths were preparing to leave the village when an elder sibling who is now their *solesolevaki* leader, met them. He reflected:

*Au a tiko e na bose au sa bau lomani ira na gone, qo na vuna e sa levu na noda itaba gone e ra sa osota yani na tauni. Keimami talanoa ka sa donu me keimami sa gole i na Aviva Farms ni keirau sa talanoa oti kei na kena I taukei. Sa kauta tiko ga mai na leqa oya ia sa mai oti e lima na yabaki, sa yali na i tovo ca kece, sa ra cakacaka vinaka e levu, e vica koya e lewe tiko ni solesolevaki oqo. E sa vukei tale na vuvale mai nodra koro, ka veivuke vakalevu e na oga vei ira ga na veicemuri mai e na matai ni gauna.*

I care much for the youths, and I was not happy with how they were dealt with during the meeting. I talked to the owner of Aviva Farms, and the youths agreed to accompany me. They came with the same bad social issues, but now after five years, I can proudly say that they all changed. All have jobs in the industries or with the *solesolevaki* group. They are

helping their families back home, including the same people who displaced them for not contributing to sociocultural obligations (Tevita Ratu, October, 2018).

The same youths are now respected when they return to their village with transformed behavior and support for the village. There was no program to cater to the challenges faced by youth: the *solesolevaki* activities at Aviva Farms provided for this.

One of the dilemmas for people living in rural indigenous Fijian settings occurs when people are caught up with the festivities after their ceremonies. For a traditional ceremony, a group of people attends as part of their sociocultural obligations. After the ceremony, the elders will make their way home, but the young ones are sometimes trapped in the merry making, which can last for a few days or even a week. It can be a burden to the host community, and the matter is made worse when there is another ceremony to be attended at another location. The youths will, at times, attend a few consecutive ceremonies before returning home. This is called '*soko sema*' (youths engaging in merrymaking in more than one ceremony). When Nayarabale Youth Farm started with the *solesolevaki* on the farm, it kept the youths engaged, as there was a structure of planned activities to be followed every week (see Chapter 6, Section 6.4.4 ). The *solesolevaki* provided the system which allows people to be connected to the group and to follow basic routines. The routine allows bonding between members, which aids in collectivity, and helps them when they become leaders in the future.

The following section discusses the challenges faced by the case studies when implementing *solesolevaki*.

## 7.7 Challenges to implementing *solesolevaki* in contemporary times

Most indigenous Fijian communities at the *vanua* or the village level find it hard to regain the momentum of *solesolevaki* practiced by the ancestors. People tend to focus more on their own families and lives. The things that kept people together were their sociocultural obligations—*cakacaka vakakoro* (village work), *soqo* (attending cultural ceremonies), *cakacaka vakalotu* (church activities) and *cakacaka ni koronivuli* (work related to the district's school). These activities required the people's presence and contributions, and in many instances, people living up to these expectations could end up with less for themselves to provide better opportunities for the family.

The effort to revive the art of *solesolevaki* should first focus on the underpinning values of it. *Solesolevaki* provided equal opportunities for the members to ease the load in regard to sociocultural obligations on families and also a platform of weaving sustainable economic development for individuals. Reviving this lost art in indigenous Fijian settings remains a challenge, as most of the underlying values are not reflected in the daily lives of the villagers. There is a need to revive these critical values. During village meetings, people discussed the need to do *solesolevaki* to rebuild the families and the *vanua*. The Nayarabale Youth Farm assistant youth leader said:

*Sa veivaalekai tio na e na dei vaacurumi tio na vaasama ni solesolevai e na bose vaoro. Na turaga ni oro e tutu vaamatanitu, me ra liutaina ga na veitalanoa ni solesolevai o ira na turaga ni tio na taliga e vaarorogo ina. Maka ni rawa ni tauyavu na solesolevai e na bose e tauyavu me lesuva na tamata na ena I tovo dina.*

Efforts to revive *solesolevaki* are wasted in village meetings. The government selects the village headman, but he holds no traditional status. The chiefs should initiate the *talanoa* around *solesolevaki* as people are there to listen to them. The village meeting is not a good starting point, but the conversation around the underlying values of *solesolevaki* is essential (Keni Rokomasa, November 2018).

Having the elders' reflections, knowledge, and skills in these values and a continual conversation between the people is vital as it builds into a solid foundation to reinitiate the work of *solesolevaki* in indigenous Fijian settings.

Life in many contemporary indigenous Fijian villages is mainly individualised apart from those sociocultural obligations which are executed collectively. A handful in the village can utilise the opportunity to work individually and are successful. Others become their labourers to sustain their families. It became a common trend lately for many villagers to work as labourers for successful farmers instead of improving their family farms. The study found that there is a division between the well-off villagers and the poor. A drawback arises when members start complaining that they need to work for another villager to maintain their families. The findings from the case studies suggest that food security is the first step for *solesolevaki*. The families should have access to staple root crops and vegetables in the first place; crops are planted in abundance and the surplus sold at the market in town for their short-term income. At the initial points, people conduct *solesolevaki* on food security by collectively planting

crops for an hour in the morning on individual family farms with the rest of the day for people to look after their affairs. After four months, a family will have an abundance of crops both for food and for income. Once the crops are matured, *solesolevaki* will be much easier as members can commit to the time since their respective families are looked after by their food security farms. The *solesolevaki* activities then organise and manage activities for their mid-term or long-term income through selling crops, working for the businesses under study, or employment through the business networks. The *solesolevaki* activities assist in developing people and families equally through its inclusive development structures.

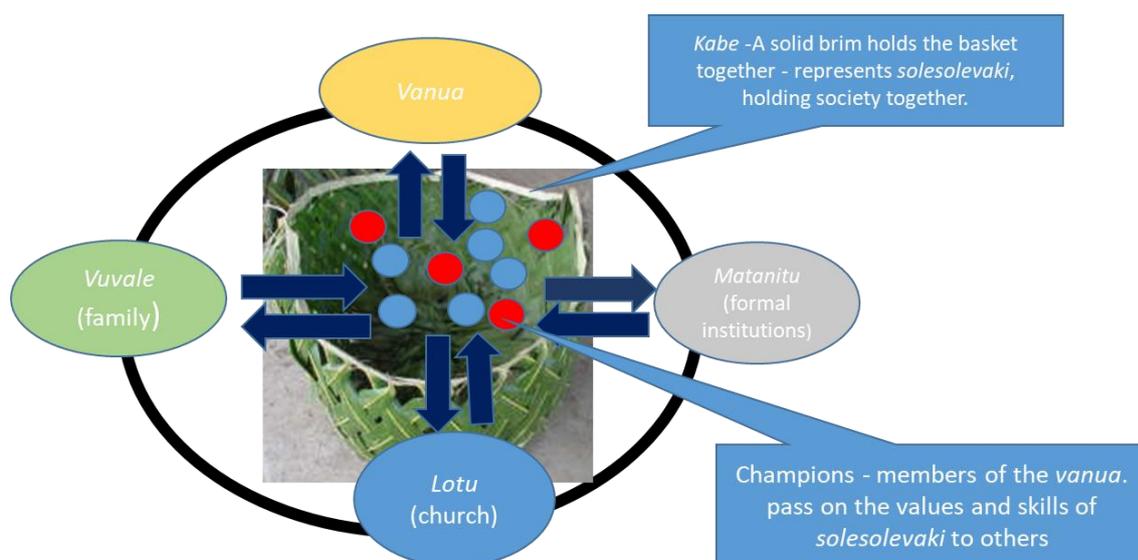
Sociocultural obligations can affect the progress of *solesolevaki* in two distinct dimensions. Participating in sociocultural activities contributes to the quality of life at the village, but it can affect the *solesolevaki* program if it is not managed. The first aspect is regarding how sociocultural obligations are scheduled to avoid pulling people away from the *solesolevaki* activities. Proper planning and discussions need to be conducted to put some work structure into place. One way is to set aside the last week of the month for all sociocultural obligations; collectively managed by the people, this avoids interfering with the *solesolevaki* activities (see Section 7.9.2). Second, at the initial phase of *solesolevaki* people's levy or contributions towards a sociocultural obligation like church levy or food for a ceremony, should be achieved. In the case study businesses, specific funds are put aside, or a farm is dedicated to handling these obligations for all members. This provides the freedom for people to participate in collective activities, which later improves their wellbeing.

Revitalising *solesolevaki* is a change process, patience and determination are necessary to get through all the phases from initiation to implementation until it becomes enculturated into people's lives. Peoples' collective and proactive responses to challenges is needed to achieve success. From the research this mechanism also allows people not living in the village to be part of helping to support traditional institutions and reviving *solesolevaki*.

The following section deals with the model, which can provide insights into the revitalisation process of *solesolevaki*.

## 7.8 The solesolevaki model

The *solesolevaki* model devised here by the author is a simple description of what needs to be done to reintroduce *solesolevaki* in indigenous Fijian society where the people otherwise find it hard to execute. *Solesolevaki* is a dying tradition in society due to many factors. The process of reviving *solesolevaki* is represented in Figure 24 as a food basket known as 'voco, sova, or ketekete' (men's basket) used to carry food from a *lovo* (earth oven) and presented during traditional ceremonies. It is made from coconut leaves and usually plaited by men.



**Figure 24: Solesolevaki model**

A coconut leaf is split in half and made into a circle or oval shape, making the hard skeleton called *kabe* forming the solid brim. The *kabe* represents *solesolevaki* as the only hard element of the basket determining its oval shape and its durability and holding the basket together. The fronds of the coconut are plaited to make the body of the basket. These fronds represent the target community to revitalise *solesolevaki*, and each frond has a stick forming the spine that adds strength to each frond. Then these fronds are interwoven, converting the leaves into a stronger body to contain and carry a more significant load. All these processes make the basket (the community) strong enough to hold the benefits of *solesolevaki*, which brings meaningful life to the *vanua* for its people. The base is thickly plaited to avoid weak links. In the initial plaiting phase, each frond is weak, and when the plaiting layers progress, the

strands become interwoven, making it stronger, depicting unity and unison of vision. The layers represent time, and the people are united and stronger together, by practicing *solesolevaki* over time.

*Solesolevaki* needs its deep-rooted values. These values can reattach people in a world already promoting and capitalising on individualism, personal growth, segregation, and personal gain. It is a phenomenon that goes against current western norms, but the case studies clearly illustrate that it is possible for people to initiate and practice *solesolevaki* to benefit every member in this modern era. The reattachment process requires the immersion of people into these underlying values deeply interwoven in the culture and *bula vakavanua* (indigenous Fijian way of life and being). Four institutions in indigenous Fijian settings have critical roles in promoting these underpinning values. The *matavuvale* (family), *vanua* (traditional hierarchy), *lotu* (church), and *matanitu* (government and formal institutions) form the crux for the values that feed into *solesolevaki*. The *matavuvale* (family) is the first school for family members where intergenerational wisdom, skills, culture, and appropriate behaviors are facilitated and enhanced. Family is an institution that prepares a person to enter the world with proper values. The *vanua* includes the people, culture, social strata, clans, the environment, traditional practices, kinship, and ceremonies. People belong to *vanua* sub-groups as in *tokatoka* (extended family), *mataqali* (sub-clan), *yavusa* (clan) and *vanua* (tribe), which became the layers in which these values and behaviours are displayed and enriched. The *lotu* (church) plays crucial components even though it had been introduced later to the indigenous Fijian way of life. All *vanua* in Fiji accepted Christianity and that the Christian values work in coherence with the indigenous Fijian 'way of being'.

Individuals are governed by the *matanitu* (government), which has a constitution that allows the protection of personal integrity and freedom. It also includes other formal institutions that come in partnership to support the *solesolevaki* initiative. For instance, POETCOM, the leading organic body in the Pacific, worked progressively with the *solesolevaki* group until Aviva Farms was certified as an organic producer, and TLTB assisted in obtaining the commercial and tourism lease. Pacific Island Private Sector Organisation (PIPSO) sponsored the certified masseurs' training at Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring, and TLTB organised the tourism lease. The agriculture, police, and youth ministries were assisting at Nayarabale

Youth Farm. In combination, people with the right values and the support of the formal and informal institutions propel the revitalisation initiatives for *solesolevaki* in rural areas.

In the *solesolevaki* model (Figure 24), the inside of the basket contains members who take part in the process. There will be a few of them who already have the values and vision of the practice and its benefits. These become the champions. In all the case studies there were a few people who believed in the tradition and managed to hold on as described by an Aviva Farms *solesolevaki* leader:

*E lewe vica e tauyavutaka ka keimami kila vinaka na kena I cakacaka, kena I tovo, kena vosa. E so e ra kauta tu ga mai na duidui ni I tovo ni bula taudua e sa tu e vuravura e na siga oqo. So na gauna e keimami lewe levu so na gauna keitou sa vo ga e vica. Oti sa qai kila ga na tamata ni ka dina e caka tiko qo sa laurai ni sa tu na ka sa qai guta na lomadra me ra bau tiki ni sasaga vinaka oqo. Sa ra qai mai tu e loma me yaco mai nikua, ia e taura na gauna kei na vosota vakadede.*

A few of us were part of *solesolevaki* in the past, and we knew the values, behaviours and the kind of words. Life is more individualistic today. At times there were few of us doing *solesolevaki*, but we held on. As time went on, people realised that we were doing something important, and they saw the results and benefits of *solesolevaki*, and this pulled them in to be part of the course. Now all of us have managed to adopt *solesolevaki*, but it took time, patience, and perseverance (Tevita Ratu, October 2018).

Over time, every member of the village has come on board with the vision, and *solesolevaki* is again the main component of this indigenous Fijian setting. It can lead to a basket full of members working together and overflowing with benefits for all. The benefits of *solesolevaki* are also reaped by the institutions (family, church, *vanua*, government and formal institutions) as the people have things in place to provide the necessary support in the sociocultural obligations and making the community a unique place for members to rebuild a life together.

## 7.9 Enabling environment for *solesolevaki*

The enabling factors for *solesolevaki* can be discussed in three separate dimensions, namely: leadership, work structure and *solesolevaki* output.

### 7.9.1 Leadership

A *solesolevaki* group is like an organisation where people work together for a common goal. For the businesses under study, having appropriate leadership skills is crucial. The leaders were not trained in leadership courses but through experience, and each possessed values embedded in the '*bula vakavanua*' (way of being an indigenous Fijian), an element contributing to their success. Leadership is contextualised to the indigenous Fijian tradition and culture as the members are from the same extended family, sub-clan, clan, or tribe. The manager of the tourism section for *iTaukei* Land Trust Board reflected on this:

*Na solesolevaki e itovo ga vakavanua e ka bibi dina na veiliutaki ka dodonu me ra muria ga na veiliutaki vakavanua. Me vaka na lai solevu vakavanua, e siro mai na turaga me veinanumi vei ira na nona tamata ka vakarogotaka na soqo, oti e kaciva na veitalanoa ka sega ni vakatau lewa vakataki koya. E vakaitavi ka duri e liu e na i lakolako ia ni lesu mai e siro tale me vakasaqara na kakakna me vakavinavinakataki ira na nona tamata ka wasea na iyau e ra kauta mai e sega ni lai maroroya kece. E caka e na dela ni vanua sa dodonu me veiliutaki ga vakavanua.*

*Solesolevaki* is part of the indigenous Fijian culture, and leaders should reflect indigenous Fijian traditional leadership. For example, going to a ceremony, the chief descended to his people, informed them the details of the ceremony, and politely ask for a discussion. During the discussion, he allows good discussions and takes part in the sociocultural obligation. He leads into the ceremony, and when they return, he again to do a feast to thank his people. He will also share the artifacts gained from the ceremony and not keeping all to himself. Above all, we are doing this in the *vanua*, so our way of being is part of the leadership (Peni Qalo, October 2018).

*Vanua* leadership has the status of being a servant of the people, and to value and respect the people. It requires individuals who honour the view of the people knowing that loyalty is gained through love and respect. That sets the grounds for *solesolevaki* leaders to operate, and for people to be loyal to the course.

The challenge of effective leadership is particularly significant when leaders work with youths. For these businesses, the youths are the main groups who do the hard work. One of the common aspects discussed in the case studies is the energy, skills and talents of these youths during traditional ceremonies. They are responsible for getting firewood, hunting for

meat, fishing, and staying awake all night, ensuring that everybody is well or otherwise it will be a disgrace to the chiefs and elders of the host community. Capturing the same energy in *solesolevaki* is a great initiative, and leaders who inspire this in youths is a necessity. As the Aviva Farms work group leader said:

*Keimami mai tauyavu ike o ira na cauravou se ra kauta sara ga mai na nodra bula duidui. E ra kana mariwana sara, e ra mateni e ra vakaduidui le, sega so sara na vakarorogo kila ga na bula ni cauravou. Ia e sega ni veisau na neitou loloma, e ra vosataki vinaka ga e ra kacivi vakamalua tiko ga. Qai lako na gauna sa yaco na veisau me yaco mai nikua sa duatani sara na nodra rai.*

At the start of the *solesolevaki* our youths brought in their differences, drugs, getting drunk, they do not listen, less respect you know the life of that age group we all went through it. It does not change the way we look at them, and we do not brand them with names as society does, we talk to them politely informing them that what they are doing is destructive to our *solesolevaki* and their future. Time goes, they change, and they became young adults with good visions (Tevita Ratu, October 2018).

Leading the workgroup with compassion and patience is vital as the members are mostly still maturing. Leaders need these values, and the ability to provide mutual respect for the members goes a long way as these values are manifested in actions and words and also become the determining factor for group unity.

Another crucial element is how the *solesolevaki* leaders correct indiscipline within members. People have different perspectives and trying to rule from a dictated perspective can be a challenge. It is vital the leader respond to indiscipline while maintaining a good relationship with the people involved. Reflected here is how the youth leader of Nayarabale Youth Farm corrected four youths who were still playing with their phones when their lunch hour was over by fifteen minutes.

It was after lunch hour than four boys appeared from the bush when sixty youths were already clearing the bush for a new plantation. The youth leader asked them why they were late and told them if they could lift a piece of log and carry it to about ten meters to make room for planting. The work continued, and the boys tried with all might to carry the large log that only a machine can move. After about thirty minutes, the leader called out everybody and asked them politely to carry the log together. The large log was easily

carried and dropped ten meters away. The leader with a smile, politely told the four boys that in unity through *solesolevaki*, a lot can be done. One of the boys reflected on this; *“mai na gauna ma ca’a ina arai eitou maka va’adua ni kai dau bera”* (after that incident we were never late during our *solesolevaki* activities) (Iliesa Kaususu, November 2018).

Coming up with very creative and practical ideas during such a situation was the turning point for these youths, not only to the four boys but to the whole group.

In all the case studies, the people involved in the workgroup activities are related through blood ties, they are from the same *vanua* and connected through their ancestors. The leader needs to make this clear for the members to understand how individuals are connected through the families they belong to and how these families will lend the appropriate support to these groups to actively participate in the workgroup activities. It means that the leader needs to have an excellent relationship with the and their families. For example in the initial phases of Nayarabale Youth Farm when parents started to ask about why their children are heavily involved in the *solesolevaki* and had less time to engage in family activities, once the leaders visited individual families and helped the parents understand the details and benefits of the *solesolevaki* events this problem eased. These visits were a breakthrough to the community and strengthened the kinship relationship as well as people's understanding in regard to working in a group.

Communication and good relationships with the people are linked to the idea of transparency and are a vital component to keep *solesolevaki* progressing. The members of the group of whatever age need to know every detail of the daily activities they execute and the reason for engagement. In these indigenous Fijian business case studies transparency means everything as mentioned by the leader of Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring:

*Vei keda na i taukei kevaka e ratou veiliutaki na qase e dredre me da taroga se saqata na ka e ra vinakata. Sa dodonu vei keda na veiliutaki me matata na cava e caka nikua, cava na kena yaga, e lako i vei na i lavo, na lori e vakayagataki e vei na cava na kena yaga? Ka me matata vei ira na lewe ni vuvale kece na ka e da cakava tiko. Oqo e rawa kevaka e da dau talanoa wasoma. Na ka kece ga me matata.*

For indigenous Fijians we do not question the decision of the elders. It is on us as leaders we need to be transparent to the members; what activities we are doing today, why are we doing it, what happened to the money? Who uses the vehicle, and for what reason?

Whatever we are doing together in *solesolevaki* should be communicated well to all families and members through frequent discussions on this issue. We need to be very transparent in all things (Ilimeleki Susu, October 2018).

*Solesolevaki* is a vehicle for development, and the body parts of this vehicle are the people; each component is fundamental for the full functioning of the vehicle. Transparency gains the loyalty of the people in the group and boosts cohesiveness.

Most of the people who partake in the *solesolevaki* are members of the *vanua* who are already trying hard to make a difference in life. However, this does not rule out the occurrence of challenges, such as restoring balance and harmony within the group. A quality of a good leader is to be attentive to indicators, which also means keeping a close relationship and making *talanoa* (discussion) part of the *solesolevaki* routine. The Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring masseur group have a routine of conducting a *talanoa* in the morning and after work where individuals collectively encourage each other or reflect on the day's activities. These collective discussions provide an opportunity for people to discuss tensions and collectively solve things. They also have prayer meetings and *talanoa* (discussions) at the end of every month and the manager shared the significance of these: "*keitou vinakata me veiyakavi me ra lako i vale e na mata mamarau me ra sota vakamatavuvale ka kakua ni kau i vale na leqa mai vanua ni cakacaka*" (We want the staff to go home every afternoon wearing a smile to meet their families, we do the discussions to solve everything at the workplace rather than taking the baggage home) (Iliesa Susu, October, 2018). This is part of the business's responsibility to the staffs' quality of life and making a healthy working environment. The Nayarabale Youth Farm always starts with a discussion before working to discuss the details for the day's activities and general discussions in the evening with prayers for members to voice their concerns. A group member said: "*ratou na matua e sa bau asia nodratou veimaliwai ei mami, rawarawa ni mami tovola neimami leka vei ratou, sa iwali ga ni mami dau talanoa vaalevu*" (our leaders have a good relationship with us and make it easy for us to communicate our problem with them, the solution is through continual discussions) (Emosi Sekelala, November 2018). The environment to conduct *solesolevaki* should be one where individuals' talents are recognised, and personal development enhanced, and there are many things that leaders can do to achieve this.

### 7.9.2 Work structure

For the indigenous Fijian business case studies, *solesolevaki* functioned well when there was some form of working structure. The working structure comes in the form of planned activities occurring at the business site. Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring and Aviva Farms merged the world of commercial business engagements and the business operations at the *vanua* level. From 8 am to 5 pm, the businesses are open to tourists and other guests, which is the main priority of the businesses. The guests entering the two businesses need attention and care, and it is between the manager and the leaders of the *solesolevaki* groups to decide on the appropriate time to execute the *solesolevaki* activities. *Solesolevaki* on the business vicinity includes activities like building or repairing a *bure* (thatched house), landscaping or cleaning up in a way that does not disturb the business operation. The other thing to consider is merging that attention with the *vanua* level, as the same *solesolevaki* groups are also needed if there is a work-related to the *vanua* or the church. Juggling these becomes a part of the work done to satisfy the different layers and institutions that influence the members of *solesolevaki*. The Nayarabale Youth Farm follows a similar approach at the *vanua* level. A month has four different weekly activities (Table 6.1), which inform the people and stakeholders. The *vanua* and the government administrators are informed that there is a specific time they can visit the village, and this has been working successfully for eight years. Communication and networking are essential since other institutions also influence people who are members of *solesolevaki*. It all leads to the sense of peace, harmony, and quality of life at the various communities when there is a balance in business and sociocultural obligations and community wellbeing.

### 7.9.3 Solesolevaki output

Practicing *solesolevaki* improves the status of the community where the business is. Two elements contribute to this status, the real results, and the economic output of *solesolevaki*. For indigenous Fijian communities, the people are related and regularly visit each other by attending traditional ceremonies, cultural activities, gatherings, and church activities. It is how people get to know what is happening in different villages. From the case studies, *solesolevaki* is successful when people witness the actual product created as the result of *solesolevaki*, and when the members benefit economically. For instance, Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring and

Aviva Farms witnessed the beautiful work done by the *solesolevaki* group in the landscaping and the infrastructure built at the business sites and, in return, the businesses supported the members of the *solesolevaki*. It provides a ripple effect for the group as other businesses start to hire the group to do similar activities at resorts and hotels after looking at their work at the two businesses. Nayarable Youth Farm also functioned similarly when the farm increased in size, and it started to pay people working on the farm and pay for everybody's social obligations. It attracted more people into the *solesolevaki* group, including people who live in the village but were still in doubt, and people who live in the town with or without jobs. As the activities have visible with economic output, this adds status to the community, and it encourages people to be part of the *solesolevaki* initiative and be part of the success story.

The people are the critical elements at the centre of the whole *solesolevaki* process. The internal environment for the *solesolevaki* group contains the web of the relationship created by individuals of different age groups and social statuses, and the external is the influence of the institutions (family, *vanua*, church, government, and formal institutions) that affect indigenous Fijian lives. At the interface where systems and relationship interplay, people are the actors who create balance and harmony within the community. One of the challenges faced in all case studies was the absence of people during the *solesolevaki*. It is doing collective work, and everybody benefits as a result, but people continue to question the lack of input from those who do not join in the *solesolevaki*, and this dampens the morale of members who sacrifice their time and energy to do the work. The Nayarabale Youth Farm example is a way to look at this:

*Maka ni rawarawa ni da veisautaina na rai ni tamata, tara na gauna. Na a dredre ni so e lao mai ka so e maka e dau vaamavoa yalo e na solesolevai. Au sa dau aya vei edra, na nodatou sokosoko e bucini ina na tamata tagane me yalo sia, na nodra leva me vaakakataini datou. Na noda caacaavata e na kai dreti edra ga mai. A tou caava me asia na awa mai muri.*

It is difficult to change people's heart but takes time. When people do not turn up, others are hurt and started asking about this. I told them from the beginning, and now I am still telling them that our group creates real men with good hearts; the absence of others makes us stronger. Our collectivity will influence them, and we are doing things to benefit future generations (Iliesa Vakaruru, November 2018).

This resulted in many improvements for Nayarabale Youth Farm in terms of relationship building and success of the business. For Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring and Aviva Farms, the people involved in *solesolevaki* continue to show significant ways of managing change and hurdles. People involved have shared visions and values towards *solesolevaki* and the business, and in return, the individual companies treated the workgroups with dignity. The symbiotic relationship between the company and the *solesolevaki* group is indeed a success factor.

## 7.10 Summary

The three firms involved in this research, Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring, Aviva Farms and Nayarabale Youth Farm, are successful indigenous Fijian businesses based on their customary land. One of the contributing factors to their success is through *solesolevaki* and building a working relationship with *solesolevaki* group members. This highlights how cultural elements like *solesolevaki* can function in contemporary societies where economic demands dominate life. The indigenous Fijian businesses managed to revive *solesolevaki* to support indigenous Fijian entrepreneurial success. In the absence of financial capital, social capital via *solesolevaki* was the primary supporting mechanism for these indigenous Fijian businesses. It was used to create a support network for the businesses under study as well as for other budding indigenous Fijian entrepreneurs. *Solesolevaki* contributes to inclusive development as it provides a social safety net in communities. The *solesolevaki* activities provided avenues to reinstate traditional processes including; the reattachment of people to underlying cultural values and ethos, getting the support of various institutions (*vuvale* - family, *vanua* – land, and cultural sub-group systems, *lotu* - church, *matanitu* - government), and ethical leadership. The research also shows that a visible physical output and shared economic benefits of *solesolevaki* encourage continued input of people's unpaid labour, and a sustainable venture. In summary, *solesolevaki* supports the businesses under study, positively influences the economy of the country by supporting indigenous entrepreneurship in indigenous Fijian communities, and hence, contributes to inclusive development and well-being.

Making *solesolevaki* work in contemporary society is a challenge. Continual discussion on its underpinning values needs to be conducted by members. The individual families need to be sustained in terms of food security, most importantly at the village level, with a little bit of

finance so that members can participate fully in the *solesolevaki* activities. The other challenge is for the community leaders to agree and follow a structured system for sociocultural obligations and ceremonies so that sufficient time is dedicated to the activities.

# Chapter 8 Successful business strategies on customary land in Fiji

*E da sa mai tarai Burotu sara.* (Now we reach Burotu). Burotu is a magical land of prosperity in the indigenous Fijian context, a saying that refers to an achievement. Successful businesses are indeed achievements for indigenous entrepreneurs that are operating on customary land in Fiji.

## 8.1 Introduction

The business strategies discussed in this chapter are different from how business strategies are conventionally seen. The focus is specifically relevant for businesses operating on customary land, and in the case of the Pacific, social embeddedness factors are crucial. These are some of the measures in which the entrepreneurs and the communities included in this study execute for the businesses to be a success. Belonging to the land, people, and culture, there are specific roles and responsibilities to be facilitated, which influence the business model and approaches.

Many businesses operating on customary land in the Pacific, and specifically Fiji, at times function against the capitalist profit-seeking imperatives central to the business operation. Gaining profit becomes secondary to the primary aim of an inclusive and holistic approach to entrepreneurship. This holistic approach also dictates the way businesses function through forming a partnership with the community and assisting in the revitalisation of rural economies, and opening up opportunities for locals. This sets the premise for a better understanding of economics and development in the Pacific and a way forward for future development.

This chapter follows the preceding one (Chapter 7: *Solesolevaki*) in determining the success factors for administering businesses on customary land. *Solesolevaki* was identified as one success factor for businesses on customary land in Fiji. Other success factors include safe cultural affiliation of the business, supporting collective wellbeing within the community it serves, developing robust business strategies while remaining connected to customary affairs, custodianship of the environment, climate change mitigation strategies, developing

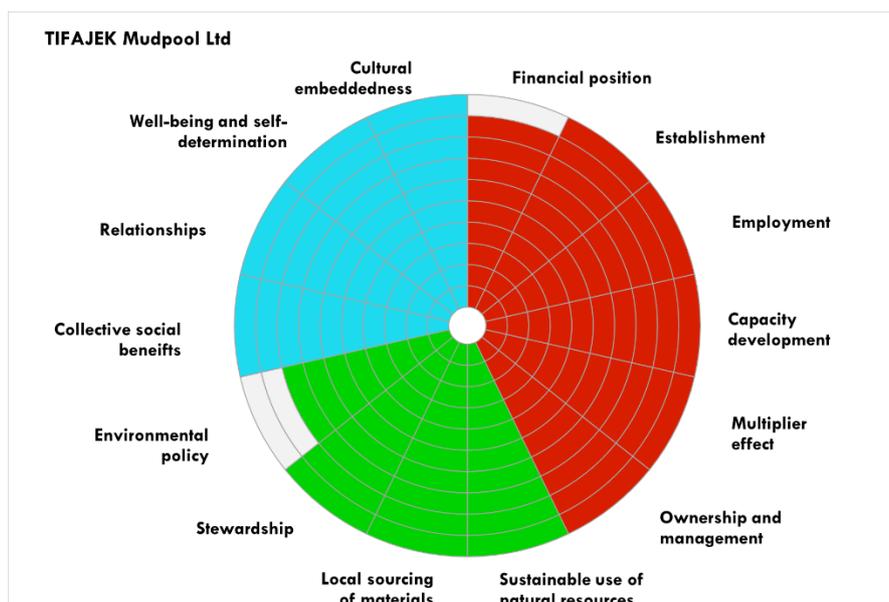
informal business networks, and having a supportive business strategy and vision. These issues will now be considered in turn.

First, however, the sustainability measurement tool introduced earlier is applied to each of the case studies to provide a visual representation of how well these businesses are performing in terms of their sustainability.

## 8.2 Measuring sustainability

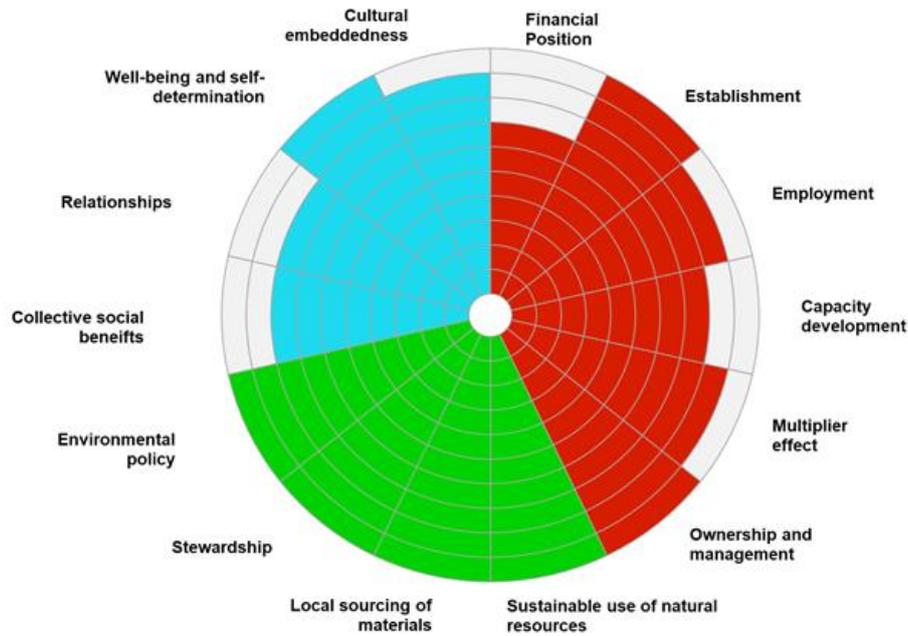
Chapter 5 (Section 5.2.5.6) discussed the sustainability measurement tool which can be used to present in a simple way a picture of the economic, sociocultural, and environmental sustainability of each business.

Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring scored well in the three sectors (economic in red, sociocultural in blue, and environmental in green) that indicate sustainability and success of indigenous businesses in the Pacific (Figure 25). The diagram was created by grading the indicators (from 1-10) as provided in Table 7 (Section 5.2.5.6). While it did not follow a strict environmental policy so does not get 10/10 for this, it nevertheless does abide by government environmental policies and has practices that protect the natural environment. The three sectors are interconnected and are the foundational structures contributing to the success of this business.

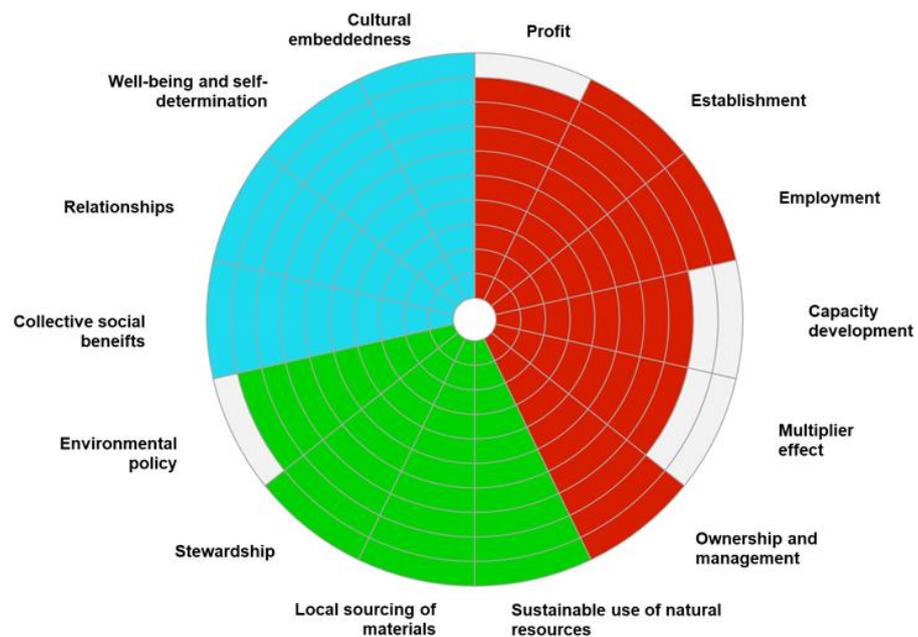


**Figure 25: Sustainability of Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring**

Aviva Farms scored particularly well with environmental contributions. The business is doing well economically, but due to the diversification strategy of the business, revenue has to be juggled among the various arms of the business. The business is committed to contributing to the community in a variety of ways, although it does not do this as extensively as does Tifajek as shown in Figure 26.



**Figure 26: Sustainability of Aviva Farms**



**Figure 27: Sustainability of Nayarabale Youth Farm**

Nayarabale Youth Farm is managed by local villagers. The business does not have a formal environmental policy, but farming is conducted manually following the traditional farming systems of their ancestors, which is very sustainable. With very sound economic standing of this business, they are easily able to meet their social goals which are paramount in this business (Figure 27).

Now that we have a general idea about how these businesses have performed in terms of economic, sociocultural and environmental sustainability, the remainder of the chapter will elaborate on some of the critical factors that led to their success.

### 8.3 *'Na bisinisi e na dela ni vanua me kauta mai na vinaka'* (Safe cultural affiliation of the business on the land to bring about good change and partnership)

Running a business on customary land in Fiji and the Pacific should be done in a safe cultural space. The Rotuman saying *'the land has eyes and teeth'* denotes the significance of attending to social and cultural needs otherwise a bad omen to the venture and the people involved is likely. The Pacific cultures also have a commonality in that the land is said to 'have the spirit and the heart' which can be linked to native American environmentalism beliefs (Porter, 2014), of supporting the business or development venture on the land. The indigenous Fijian businesses under study in this thesis have managed to go through the process of entry, ground-breaking protocols, and get great support from their communities for their various business ventures. The reasons for this are now explored.

Customarily in Fiji, the people comprise the landowning unit (sub-clan or *mataqali*) with a chief as the leader. In some places in Fiji, the landowning unit is the *tokatoka* (extended family), and a chief who descends from the eldest ancestor is their leader. In most cases, where the landowning unit is the *tokatoka* the families are given a land allocation to own, and this is registered through *'vola ni kawa bula'* (genealogy registry) kept by the *iTaukei* Affairs Board office and administered by *iTaukei* Land Trust Board (TLTB). To establish a business within the territory of customary land, one needs to respect and follow the proper protocol of *'veivakarogotaki'* (to inform) through a traditional presentation of *tabua* (whale's tooth) or *yaqona* (kava) to seek the approval and the guidance of the chiefs. The chief or the leader also needs to liaise and discuss matters with *vanua* leaders (tribal or superior chiefs) and the

landowning unit members before it is finally approved. The ‘*veivakarogotaki*’ process opens the door to proper discussion and consultation, which leads to informed decisions.

The Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring is set up on customary land that belongs to the landowning unit, the *tokatoka* (extended family). The extended family was initially given the piece of land through their grandfather, Ilimeleki Susu, senior (see Chapter 6, Section 6.2). At first, the elders/and chief of the *tokatoka*/held a *talanoa* (discussion) with the extended family to ensure all members agreed with the need to establish a family business. A letter was written, including the signatures of the members present during that discussion showing their agreement to proceed with the process. The next phase involved the process of ‘*veivakarogotaki*’ (to inform), involving a traditional presentation of *tabua* (whale’s tooth) to the ‘*Na Momo na Tui Sabeto*’ (the tribal chief) to get his blessings and the approval of the *vanua* (people of the tribe). This is the story shared by the leader of this extended family:

*Na qele kei na bisinisi keitou lai kerea qo e neitou ga ia keitou lako ga vua na Momo na Tui Sabeto ni koto ga kina na neitou sala ni veiwekani vaka dra. E caka ga ni nodra gaunisala ni veirokovi na noda qase ka vinaka ni ra raica na gone na noda gaunisala ni veirokovi vaka koya. Keitou dau rokova na neitou turaga e tu kina e levu na veika vinaka sara. E dau gade mai ka mai eivakayaloqaaqataki e na vakacici bisinisi, ke lako mai ni yakavi keitou na sogota na sisili vei keimami e nakoro me kakua na vakasausa, e da veirokovi ga baleta na turaga sa mai vua na kalou.*

The land and the business belong to us; we are still informing our chief about it, as he is also our relation and paramount chief. It is how our elders taught us, and it was a good learning experience for our young people to see how we show our respect. We do respect our chief; much blessing comes with showing respect. The chief always comes for a visit after business hours to encourage us in running the business or for meetings; the pools will be closed to the public to maintain silence until the chief leaves. God gave us our chief; it is our duty to show respect (Ilimeleki Susu, October 2018).

The phases of ‘*veivakarogotaki*’ were documented and sealed with the chief’s signature. This was the first piece of a legal document provided to institutions including the *iTaukei* Affairs Board, *iTaukei* Land Trust Board, and Registry of Titles office for the legal registration of the business and commercial lease application. The capacity to show respect is the underpinning

value for a traditional presentation like ‘*veivakarogotaki*,’ and it is used to get the approval and support of members and leaders for the sustainability of the business.

The Aviva Farms experience is similar to the above. The sugarcane farm was in full operation when it was given to Livai Tora (see Chapter 6, Section 6.3). His father (Apisai Tora) is the leader of the landowning unit (*tokatoka*) and followed the traditional protocol of *veivakarogotaki* for members of the extended family as well as the ‘*Momo na Tui Sabeto*’ (the title of the tribal chief) for approval and support. A documented report with signatures from the members and the chiefs was collected, and processes were followed to get the land under agriculture lease for the sugarcane farm and then later a commercial lease for Aviva Farms. Traditional leadership and the members of the *vanua* are still valued by the owners of Aviva Farms, as Livai said:

*Sa neitou vakarokoroko levu taudua ki na vanua, veiwekani kei na kena veiliutaki na neitou sauma na dinau ni veivakavaletaki levu e a caka e na loma ni koro ko Natalau. E ra qai tubu mai na i tabatamata vou sa ra susu e na veivale vinaka ka bula marau.*

Our most significant sign of respect to the *vanua*, our relations, and the leaders is shown through our contribution when the farm paid off the village housing loan at Natalau village. The next generation is bred in modern houses that also contributes to the wellbeing of the members (Livai Tora, October 2018).

Remaining connected to the landowning community through involvement in the business phases and contribution to customary affairs and communal wellbeing is crucial to the Aviva Farms business.

The establishment of Nayarabale Youth Farm (see Chapter 6, Section 6.4) began in church. The *Turaga ni Mataqali* (chiefs of the landowning units) were all present during the discussion and agreed to each contribute land for the youths to undertake farming activities. There was a traditional presentation of kava (*yaqona vakaturaga*, kava ceremony), and the chiefs all drank together to show their unity.

Over time the farm expanded, and people were enjoying the benefits of the farm until the leaders realised that there was a problem. Early in 2017, for almost every week dedicated to the farm, somebody was injured. The matter climaxed when a youth member was killed on the spot from a falling tree being cut by a chainsaw. The youth leader gathered the chiefs and

asked for a discussion to see if the farm work had been breaching any *vanua* (land, culture, and customs) issues. The youth leader shared this:

*Sa eimami talanoa tio kai aya mai e dua vei ratou na turaga me raici mada vaasia na l yalayala ni vanua mami teitei ina. Sa kai laovi ratou na butu vanua kai ilia ni eitou sa tea tio na nodratou drea na ai Leutulevu ka ratou mak tu ni ila. Eimami sa kai lai matanigasau na magiti levu ei na l yau levu, ra lai soro neimami turaga ka ratou cikoma mai. Ratou aya me eitou vaayagataina na drea e na maka na leka e na kai yaco.*

During the discussion one of the chiefs suggested that the boundaries of the land used by the farm need to be re-assessed. We went to the *iTaukei* Land Trust Board and *iTaukei* Affairs and realised that we had been farming on Le'utulevu's boundary, which is for another village. We took loads of food and artifacts, and our chiefs presented our *matanigasau* to seek their forgiveness since we never knew the boundary was causing us problems. It was received with good hearts. They told us to keep farming, and now there will be no problems (Iliesa Vakaruru, November 2018).

Since that time, there has been no further problem at the farm, and the youth group always presents the *isevu* (presentation of the first fruit of the land) to the chiefs of Le'utulevu village. The family of the victim is still looked after by the youth group in terms of food and finance and moral support. The youth farm also takes part in some *oga* (sociocultural obligations) for the landowners from Le'utulevu village to show appreciation for using their land.

In running a business or development initiative on customary land, one needs to be attentive to sensitive customary issues to alleviate complications.

The findings case studies presented here show that the businesses contribute to collective wellbeing, which is deliberated in the next section.

#### 8.4 Contributions to employee wellbeing and economic opportunities for others

The primary aim of many indigenous Fijian communities is *bula sautu* or *vanua sautu* (wellbeing) ahead of growth, progress, or profit maximisation. The businesses under study have all been contributing to collective wellbeing within their localities in terms of employment opportunities, the multiplier effect of the business, looking after workers' welfare, and ensuring that local people can enjoy what the business has to offer.

### 8.4.1 Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring

Finding livelihood options around the Sabeto valley area was a problem for many locals before the Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring business was established. People who do not have formal employment in Nadi town depend on labouring work on sugarcane farms or planting crops to be sold at the Nadi Market. Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring has provided employment opportunities and regular income for the family members and the wider community as well. This business serves the community and staff members in four diverse ways, including employing those with few options, training and upskilling employees, local people using the business without charge, and maintaining workers' welfare.

Twenty-seven women who are members of the massage operation follow a programme taking turns throughout the week so that individuals can earn some money every week. During cruise ship arrivals, which can be once or twice a month, all members come to work and earn about \$200 to \$300 a day as the business caters to about three hundred visitors. There are two tour guides required daily, and the business has four tour guides who take turns daily with four landscapers. Other youths are engaged through the *solesolevaki* program (see Chapter 7, Section 7.5). The members of the community are further engaged through cooking groups from the community selling lunch (the business pays for staff lunches), local farmers selling fruit and vegetables to visitors and staff members, women selling handicrafts (as in Figure 28) and school children doing fundraising for their schools.



*Photo credit: Suliasi Vunibola*

**Figure 28: A woman from Natalau village selling handicrafts at Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring**

Limiva Tora, a widow employed as a masseur said: *“na bisinisi qo e vukei au sara vakalevu, au sega ni lewe ni vuvale qo ia e ratou vinakata me ratou vukei au. Ke sega au dadabe sara tiko ga mai vale. Qo au rawa sede ka qarava noqu vuvale.”* (This business helped me a lot, I am not from their family, but they employed me since I lost my husband. Otherwise, I would be just at home. Now I can earn money and look after my family) (Limiva Tora, October 2018). The business has gained a reputation in the community for providing a platform for communal economic engagement and connection.

Over the years of business operation, the business has become a stepping-stone for staff by acting as a training ground for experience and skill development and assisting people into more lucrative job opportunities in the hospitality industry. The masseur group is an excellent example of this, whereby the women were once practicing traditional massage at the business without formal training. The manager (the late Miliana Racule) arranged for training at the business vicinity through the sponsorship of the Pacific Island Private Sector Organisation led by Senikai Spa. Most of the women had not finished high school but became certified masseurs by following this training. Mrs. Vulakoro, a masseur, said:

*Levu vei keimami e sega ni vuli vinaka baleta na vuli qo e caka e na koronivuli lelevu qai mai sau levu yani. Sitivikiti oqo e vaka ga e soli vakailoloma mai, keitou vakavinavinaka ga vei ratou na veiliutaki.*

Most of us do not have a good education as the study is usually done in tertiary institutions and it is costly. Our masseur certificate is like a gift to us, thanks to the management of the business (Mrs Vulakoro, October 2018).

Some of the women are now employed in luxurious resorts and hotels but still come back to Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring to help during cruise ship days. The story is the same for the tour guides as other tour groups such as Tourist Transport Fiji (TTF) have recruited the farm’s tour guides, creating vacancies for youths in the *solesolevaki* group (see Chapter 7, Section 7.5). The business had been instrumental in creating training opportunities for workers by using business networks. This, in turn, has assisted the wellbeing of individuals and families and formed an everlasting bond between the staff and business.

Collective wellbeing for people associated with the business is achieved through two crucial factors; ensuring local people can enjoy what the business has to offer, and the systems put

in place to support workers' welfare. The local communities of the Sabeto valley have the privilege of utilising the business products, especially the mud bath and hot spring pools after hours. It is a way of building relationships with the communities as shared by Apisai Nabou:

*Na bisinisi e vaka e dua na koro ni oti na aua ni bisinisi, e ra lako mai kina na tamata kece ga, neitou vuvale ni Idia keitou veivolekati. E dau vakayacori tale ga eke e so na soqo ni siganisucu, kanavata ni vakamau na bose lelevu ni vanua, lotu, koronivuli baleta ni tu na kena vale qai vanua rairai vinaka. E sala ga ni veiwekani kei ira na tamata.*

This business is a shared space after-hours, the community is allowed, and even our Indian family neighbours. We also do gatherings like wedding receptions and birthdays free for our families; we host church, school and *vanua* meetings as we have a beautiful environment and facilities. It is how we build our relationship with the community (Apisai Nabou, July 2019).

Every fortnight, Friday afternoons are dedicated to a family *solu* (donation) of about \$40 to be donated by a staff member and a *talanoa* (informal discussion) with kava as a team bonding exercise. Each fortnight they can collect about \$400, the donation is given to a particular family to assist in family expenses, and the families take a turn in receiving the assistance. When a staff member's family is faced with a situation like a death in the family, the business and the staff members will provide donations to assist the members. The business also deducts \$5 from every staff member every pay week for personal savings. At the end of the year, the business will host a Christmas party, and the annual savings will be handed out for individual staff members for the family to enjoy during the Christmas holiday. This has created a caring family atmosphere at the business, and in return, the workers do their best to look after the business.

#### **8.4.2 Aviva Farms**

Employment opportunities are scarce in rural areas like Sabeto valley, Nadi, Fiji. The establishment of businesses like Tifajek Mudpool & Hot spring and Aviva Farms in the area has assisted in the revitalisation of its rural economy. Aviva Farms employs the family, the *solesolevaki* group from Verevere village, Ra (see Chapter 7, Section 7.4) and the members of the community as well through its various business arms. Many of the workers are school dropouts or have been in the village doing subsistence farming and working for Aviva Farms

has assisted in their livelihoods. Kesaia Buirua, one of the youths from the *solesolevaki* group said:

*Keimami kece vakai tikotiko vata ga e Aviva Farm sa mai vinaka sara na bula. Mai Verevere e levu kina na dredre ka sega ni rawarawa na cakacaka. Ia e na neimami cakacaka oqo keimami sa veivuke sara kina vakalevu kina neimami vuvale. E ra salai vakacegu kina na neimai I tubutubu mai nakoro.*

We the youths of Verevere village are staying together at Aviva Farmhouse, Nawai settlement, and our livelihood has improved a lot. At our village in Verevere we face many difficulties and fewer opportunities. Now that we are employed, we manage to look after ourselves and help the livelihood of our parents and siblings back home (Kesaia Buirua, July 2019).

The various work done on the farm is managed by the *solesolevaki* group as the owner (Livai Tora) commits to other business arms like the consultancy company and the landscaping work in hotels. Building ‘*veivakabauti*’ (trust) is an essential component of this business. Livai Tora shared this, “*These are the people we are targeting. They need clear direction and coordination, and they also need some forms of discipline and vision. They benefit as a group of youths with improved lives, and the business thrives as well. Investing in your staff is just investing in your business*” (Livai Tora, October 2018). The community is engaged when more work is available, for instance, papaya harvesting and the horseracing event and nursery work. The business has assisted with the livelihood of many people in this rural locality, avoiding mass rural-urban migration.

The presence of Aviva Farm in the Sabeto locality has expanded opportunities for workers outside of Aviva Farms too. Many of the youths are school dropouts who gained relevant experience while working for Aviva Farms. The networks provided by Aviva Farms have been an enabler of more lucrative employment opportunities for the youths. Landscaping is a branch of Aviva Farms where youths are based at various hotels and resorts to carry out landscaping work. The Nadi area is prone to flooding, and natural disasters are occurring more frequently, so the need for landscaping activities has risen. For instance, Livai Tora took ten youths to carry out landscaping at the new Vunabaka Resort in the Mamanuca Islands, Fiji. After the prescribed work, the resort recruited five of the youths to work permanently as landscapers. The ‘*Rise Beyond the Reef*’ NGO was established next to Aviva Farms in 2013 to

work with women in remote communities by reinvigorating skills in traditional art and handicrafts and finding markets for them. 'Rise Beyond the Reef' needed contacts for rural communities, and Livai Tora introduced them to the *solesolevaki* group from Verevere in Ra. This NGO now works successfully in the Ba, and Ra provinces and some of the *solesolevaki* group youth were recruited as permanent employees due to their skills gained at Aviva Farms.

Aviva Farms is prominent in the area due to its various means of supporting the local people and community. It is a way of remaining connected to the community and the people who make the business flourish. Looking after the welfare of the people builds a stronger relationship, and that is a crucial ingredient for success. For example, Livai Tora has leased some land in the farm to a tobacco company and assisted the *solesolevaki* group to plant about ten thousand tobacco plants for the women's group. Here is the story by Sila Ratu, a woman in the group:

*Ni oti na gauna ni bisinisi eimami sa siro taucoo atu me veivuetai na neimami loga ni tavao. Eimami solesoleva'i na ena karavi ni sa oti main a nodra ca'aca'a, io na sede e eitou adavaina na marama. Sa veivue vaalevu sara e na neimami bula e na veisiga ka sa toso na I sokosoko vaamarama. Eimami dau tug a I vale na veikaravi, iya eimami sa vaasede viro gas a veivue I na vuvale, eimami marautaina sara.*

After business hours we all go to the farm to help in the tobacco farm. The *solesolevaki* group also help the women's group looking after the tobacco farm, but our women's group manages the money, and profit usually divided up by the women. We are always at home doing errands, and now we can also contribute to our family, we are so happy (Sila Ratu, October 2018).

Other services provided by the business include free horse riding and practice after-hours, especially getting ready for horseracing at the nearby a horse-racing track. Besides, Aviva Farms share fruits and vegetables like papaya and pumpkin and catering for events like birthday celebrations and wedding receptions for the family and their relatives. The farm is like a typical village shared space in the evening, where the community appreciates the services from the farm without paying the cost.

### 8.4.3 Nayarabale Youth Farm

The Nayarabale Youth Farm assisted the upward mobility of this agrarian community at the time the members needed it the most. The youths keep returning to the villages when they finish school instead of drifting into towns, and the tribal population is increasing. In many other villages in Fiji, the youths are the main groups who are influenced to look for livelihood options in towns and cities. The youth farm has created a major opportunity for people to sustain their wellbeing as a tribe. The founders initiated the farm through *solesolevaki* (unpaid communal work) following a monthly work structure (see Chapter 7, Section 7.9.2) and provided some forms of income for the youth and community members. For the youths, the salary usually covers groceries for their homes in the village to support their parents and some groceries for their farm camp the week after. Their parents and other community members can work at the youth farm for income in the same week (week 1 of the month), which means extra income for the family. The tribal members have now been following the work structure for a few years, realising the benefits in terms of improved livelihood, and supporting people to remain in the village.

In contrast to other case studies, the youths and members of Nayarabale village are attracted back to the village rather than into towns and cities. Instead of tribal members getting permanent positions in companies or institutions, the farm business attracts more members to make a life together in the village. One member's story follows:

*Au a vuli ga neitou ronivuli ni tiina kau lao i na vuli toroca'e i Labasa. Au lai curu e na veitarogi ni caacaa e na veikabani lelevu, au rawata sara. Au ca'aca'a tu e na loma ni lima na yabai, oti kai dua na noku gade mi naoro. Au kai mai raica na caacaa I na youth farm. Au kai vaatautauvatatana na I lavo au rawata ei na bula vaacegu ni noku caacaa ei na tu e na oro sa veicalati sara. Kai oti noku musumusu e na macawa ni veisaumi sa maka ni dua na a kai vo. Sa kai toso cae viro na sau ni bula e viti, kai da muri lewa mai na vanua ni caacaa. Noku sa mai tu e, eitou vaasede na veisiga maka ni voli na magiti maka ni saumi na vale, levu neitou gauna vaavuvale ka levu na maroroi sede e na noku loga ni yakona ga me baleti edra na lueku. Da mai tu ei na noda vuvale sa vaacegu dina sara ga.*

I was educated at our district school and finished high school at Labasa town [a town in Vanua Levu island]. I was interviewed to work in a big company in Viti Levu, and I got through. I worked for five years. Then when I visited my village during a break, I was

introduced to the youth farm activities. I started to compare the money I earned with that for the youths at the youth farm. After paying for my expenses, my family was left with very little. The cost of living is high in the urban areas, and you keep on working to make ends meet, and in my profession, you follow orders. Now I am at the village, we have money every week, we do not pay for food and rent, we have a lot of time with the family, and I have a kava farm just for our investment and savings for my children. My families surround me, and this is life at its best (Tomasi Vakameau, July 2019).

Members of the tribe who had been working in urban areas include military officers, hotel workers, prison and security officers, and labourers. They are now working within the youth farm programme and creating a better life. The members are all encouraged to have savings accounts or investments for the future of their families and children.

Apart from paying for the work conducted by tribal members, the youth farm also provides some bonuses such as meals and ice cream desserts in the jungle setting. In 2017 the youth farm paid all expenses for the youths to watch the super rugby competition in Suva. This is a way to enhance the loyalty of the youths and tribal members. The youth leader said, *“E ra maka ni marau na yakiti sa dra biuti eimami. Eitou sa kai dau caava na a me ra marau tio ga ina.”* (If the youths are not happy, they will leave us. So, we put things in place to make them happy) (Iliesa Vakaruru, November 2019). The youth farm has also provided free planting materials for individual farms (kava, taro, yams, and cassava) and assists in transportation for individual farmers to set up farms or to take products to the market. This is the sign of a community transforming from the inside and controlling its development to the benefit of its members. The members of the tribe are also assisting their relatives who are living in towns and cities through the supply of food and financial support.

The next section will focus on the social embeddedness of the businesses taking part in customary affairs, by contributing to sociocultural obligations.

## 8.5 Sociocultural contributions

Businesses established on customary land in the Pacific need to be socially embedded, which can be achieved through involvement in and contribution to customary affairs. Ulaiyasi Baya, an indigenous lawyer with experience working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders,

Maori, and indigenous Fijians, deliberated on this in referring to a metaphor for building a house.

*Na bisinisi sia e dela ni vanua e bau na tara vale, na ena duru e teivi e na loma ni vanua maka ni biu wale ga e na dela ni vanua. E maka na vale e lutu l ra, na bisinisi viro ga e cavera ni maka na veimaliwai si'a.*

Successful business management within the *vanua* (land, people, culture) is like building a house: the posts are embedded into the land, and the land will hold it together, the post is not just on the land. Otherwise, the house falls, meaning the business fails as the relationship is not enforced (Ulaiyasi Baya, personal communication October 2018).

The case study businesses have all implemented a way of respecting customary affairs through contributions to sociocultural obligations. Apart from the usual business expenses, these contributions provide for sustainability and maintaining relationships with the community. Sustaining the businesses while at the same time shouldering sociocultural obligations is a solid business strategy for businesses in Fiji.

### **8.5.1 Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring**

The business handles less cash in daily takings as there is an increase in electronic transactions. Online bookings and tour groups are done through invoices that are paid directly into the business's bank account, so the business handles less cash daily which is an advantage for this rural business. A large number of tourists come as part of tour groups compared to other modes. One tour operator, Valentine Tours, make their contribution directly into the board of directors' account. The board of directors uses the money for sociocultural contributions and community development initiatives. The sociocultural obligations include tribal ceremonies such as weddings, funerals, installation of traditional chiefs, and the like. Communal development initiatives include: constructing village footpaths and ablution blocks, support for the village school and sponsoring the village sports team. Part of this money is also set aside for educational support. The business earns \$3,000 to \$3,500 a month (2018/19) in this account. The money is used after discussions between the elders, and spending is monitored so that it is used appropriately. At times when there are no ceremonies to attend for the month, the money is transferred into an education support account. When the board of directors' account lacks finances, the manager informs them that they need to

wait for the end of the month. They also set up an emergency account for unforeseen family issues. Creating a mechanism to sustain the business is crucial when the business needs to contribute to customary affairs over and above the usual business expenses.

The church is an essential institution for indigenous Fijian supported by this business. All the reception entries (entry fee paid at reception not including tour groups) from Sundays go directly to the church account. This has resulted in the payment of members' annual church levy and the building of a new modern church, therefore allowing members to look after their families. Sunday's massage operation also makes church contributions. There is a \$2 deduction from each massage, and that money is managed by the same group of women (masseurs) to run their women's group within the church. This alleviates the need for these women to divide their salary again for obligations. The owners of the business and the staff members are all happy with the current arrangements.

### 8.5.2 Aviva Farms

Aviva Farms serves the purpose of transforming lives by finding ways to serve the community better. When it was still involved in the sugar industry, the business managed to pay off the village housing loan (see Chapter 6, Section 6.3). For Livai Tora this is his most significant gift to his relatives and the village as a whole:

*E a sega sara ga ni dua na ka au vakabula rawa e na cakacaka levu oya e na loga dovu. Au a sega ni via vakayalolailaitaka na noqu qase, ke a sega ni saumi na loan e san a rogo ca na yacana. Oqo na noqu I tavi levu taudua meu vakayacora vei ira na wekaqu kei na lewe ni vanua meu vukei ira me ra vakavale vinaka. O au veitalia meu qai tauyavutaki au tale.*

I did not have any savings from work on the sugarcane farm. I did not want to let down my old man; if we did not pay off the loan, it would create a bad image for our family. It is the biggest gift this business can ever give to my relatives, for them to live in good modern homes. For me, I can find ways to restart all over again) (Livai Tora, October 2019.

After this, the business was trying to progress from the ground up again; it contributed in-kind rather than providing financial assistance to the community. This came in the form of supplying vegetables and fruit to cater for traditional ceremonies and church meetings. The Nadi area is prone to frequent flooding, and Aviva Farms are now the primary contributor of

trees free of charge for replanting. This led to the river-bank tree planting projects around Nadi in 2017, as seen in Figure 29. Schools are also encouraged to book appointments for children's excursions (especially in sustainable land use and nursery tours), trips that are also free. After the planting of crops, the leftover seedlings and planting materials are handed out to villagers, farmers, and members of the public for planting. Creating procedures to enrich their partnership with the community can be achieved without the use of money, and this ultimately benefits the business.



*Photo credit: Livai Tora.*

**Figure 29: Aviva Farms workers re-stabilising the Sabeto Riverbank with environmental students from Wisconsin, United States in 2017**

### 8.5.3 Nayarabale Youth Farm

The main reason for setting up the youth farm was to combat the challenges of multiple obligations of tribal members. During harvesting in 2014, the youth members decided to set aside some funds for sociocultural obligations and then keep two separate savings accounts. The planting programme was such that the youths kept harvesting annually, and after every harvest, money was allocated to these accounts. As noted in Chapter 6 (Section 6.4.5), sociocultural obligations include three components: *vanua* ceremonies and obligations like funerals and chiefly meetings, *lotu* for church levies and church-related gatherings, and lastly one for village development and education. Each of these receives \$15,000 annually from the Youth Farm to pay for all respective obligations allowing members of the tribe to focus on their individual lives and families. In every ceremony, the youth leaders facilitate a discussion with the elders and the leaders of the tribal women's group about the expenses which need

to be covered for the occasion. After discussion, the youth committee responsible for the finances then travels to Labasa town to get the money and pay accounts. There are two savings accounts for investments and business overheads, the latter covering daily expenses by the youths for camping (e.g. food while working at the youth farm), as well as for running two vehicles. These activities are well monitored and the tribe, as well as the youth members, are satisfied with their contribution to the quality of life and wellbeing needed within their rural settings.

## 8.6 Roles of intermediary organisations

Another business strategy is to partner with intermediary organisations such as NGOs and government departments. The case studies businesses all stated that going through their legalities was the most significant hurdle to setting up indigenous businesses on customary land—leasing of customary land, applying for organic certification, tax subsidy applications, staff certification processes, and infrastructure permission (e.g. to get a road to the farm). Partnering with appropriate intermediaries assisted the businesses in their establishment with legal standards as well as support for the daily business activities.

### 8.6.1 Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring

This business has also benefited from building partnerships with intermediary organisations and is further supported by the need for maintaining networks with people and organisations. A typical example is the certification process for the masseurs, a group of women recruited within the family and the community. The tourism sector recommended that masseurs be certified for the safety of tourists. An NGO, PIPSO (see Section 8.3.1) provided the support and funded the training of the masseurs. Another hurdle for Tifajek Mudpool & Hotsprings was the environment levy of about \$15,000 over eight years. There was a stage when the government required the business to cease operation unless the taxes were sorted. A retired Fiji Islands Revenue and Customs Authority (FIRCA) worker happened to visit the business and said that he had formed his private company and was willing to investigate the issue. After a week, the manager was called by FIRCA and told to pay \$700 instead as the explanations indicated that natural products like mud and water are used in the pools without poisonous seepage. The business has also hired this private company for auditing over the years.

### **8.6.2 Aviva Farms**

For Aviva Farm, collaborating with NGOs and private companies was a way of sharing their experience and dynamism, and accessing relevant expertise as appropriate. A hurdle for the business was gaining organic certification of the farm and its products. The NGO, POETCom (Pacific Organic & Ethical Trade Community, funded by the United Nations International Fund for Agricultural Development, IFAD) and Secretariat of Pacific Commission (SPC) are currently responsible for the capacity building for organic farmers and organic products in the Pacific. They provided assistance and guidance through fieldwork and documentation until organic certification, which was a breakthrough. This has led to the export of organic papayas and the sale of organic fruit and vegetables to local markets.

Cooperating with private companies has assisted this business in many ways. When Livai Tora was studying at the University of the South Pacific in Samoa, a private company Kokosiga Consultants was hired by the university to undertake workshops and experiments for students. Livai made connections with the company, and some of Kokosiga's trial planting programmes were conducted back at Aviva farm. This partnership is even stronger now as Kokosiga introduced Livai Tora to other experts in the agriculture sector, for example, landscaping business specialists, nursery experts and bio-security technicians. Livai was later invited to be a paid member of the consulting team and the chair for Nature's Way Cooperative, a biosecurity and fumigation company. This has helped in the diversifying processes and ideas for Aviva Farms (see Chapter 6, Section 6.3.5) as well as its sustainability.

### **8.6.3 Nayarabale Youth Farm**

After discussions with senior government officials, the local officers were sent to the village to conduct conversations and field visits. The reports were sent to the head offices, and support was directed for the farm due to its role in creating opportunities for the youths and the community. As a result, a farm road and a farm camp were built funded by the two government ministries. This has assisted the tribe in the farm work in terms of reducing the travel of long distances daily, and the youths can reside at the farm camp for a week with the vehicles to transport heavy loads. The Ministry of Agriculture has also helped in the supply of planting materials like sandalwood and pineapples for crop diversification. A worthwhile

partnership is also currently underway with the police department, which contributed to their success, as shared by the youth leader:

*Eitou vaavinavinaa na veivue taucoo e soli vei eimami. Eitou laougata va'alevu ni eitou ca'aca'avata ei ratou na ovisa. Dina ni maka ni ratou veivue sara me raici i nai teitei, ratou sa bau veivue I na e na maroroi na neitou taba yakiti, e maka na teitei e maka na betena. E ra dau mai vosa ie vaabibi e na leka ni tabayakiti me bau na waigaga ni veivaamatenitai ei na nodra yadravi tio. Neitou tabayakiti e ra marau ni mami tu ga I naoro maka e lao vere tu.*

We thank the assistance of other departments. We are lucky that we are working closely with the police department. Their help may not be directed to the farm, but they assisted in the upbringing of our youths without which the farm is unsuccessful. They provide talks and workshops in the village focusing on challenges facing youths, especially with drugs, other substance abuse, and help in youth monitoring. Our youths got a purpose and are happy here with us in the village (Iliesa Vakaruru, July 2019).

This is the kind of partnership required in communal development settings. People are creating meaningful developments that improve their standard of living as well as setting up systems and support procedures aiding the sustainability of their business venture.

The following section covers the critical aspect for the businesses putting into place appropriate practices that look after the environment.

## 8.7 The business logic of environmental sustainability

The land is life, and mother as well; it is a place of nourishment and sustenance, the most significant sanctuary for indigenous groups in the Pacific. It is a protector as the ancestors are buried within the land and become part of that land and connected to the living generations because their umbilical cords are buried and protected marked by their totem plants (an indigenous Fijian tradition where the umbilical cords of babies are buried in one's customary land and a totem tree planted on it as a marker). Totem animals dwell on the land and totem fish in the sea or waterways, all sharing the same sentiment of maintaining balance in what the land produces for consumption and the activities to give back and protect the environment (Joeli Veitayaki, 2000).

The Pacific as a region is at the 'front line' in terms of global climate change and development debates. The effect of climate change is drastic and becoming increasingly evident for South Pacific communities, including Fiji. The businesses under study have been the victims of climate change with ravaging natural adversities, but they have managed to be operational afterward. Their contribution of looking after the environment is double-pronged, as traditional custodian of the *vanua* (land and resources) to benefit future generations and a mitigation mechanism to climate shocks.

### 8.7.1 Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring

The tourist product for this business is known worldwide, and the most significant market is the cruise ship tours. The package involves thermal mud-bathing, thermal pools, spa, and massage. All these products are sourced naturally from the mud in the pools for the skin, to the naturally scented coconut oils for massage. There were many moves by more prominent hospitality companies to include commercial products in the business with financial support, but the owners held on as shared by the business leader:

*Sa levu sara gauna e ra lako mai e levu na veibisinisi lelevu ka ra dau vakarau l yaya kina veiotela lelevu. E ratou vinakata me ra vakatoroicaketaka na neitou na neitou bisinisi kei na kena vakailavotaki. Keitou sa qai nanuma ga ni waikatakata e neitou i solisoli mai vei ratou na qase ka sega ni neitou keitou maroroya ga me nodra na muri mai. Sa mani sega ni keitou duavata kina baleta ni ra tukuna mada ga ma sara vanua ni ra sili oti e sega mada ga ni bau boi na soso oya. E ka vinaka sara ni keitou dua na drau na pacede natural ka a qai veivuke tale ga e na neitou environmental levy keitou sega ni sauma ni keitou maroroya na neitou vanua.*

Many businesses that supply commercial products to hotels and resorts visited us. They wanted us to use their products with financial assistance to buy them. We discussed, and we remembered that the mudpool and hotspring is a gift from our ancestors, it is not ours, but we are just custodians we look after it for the future generations. We decided not to use any artificial products as the tourists also recommend that the mud is not smelly. We use a hundred percent natural products, and that helped us, as we do not pay environmental levy (Ilimeleki Susu, October 2018).

The biggest challenge is that of modernising the business with profitable products accompanied by financial avenues. Having a general discussion in regard to every

development of the business has assisted in making worthwhile decisions and, in this case, standing firm about being the custodian of the land, ensuring the benefit is long term.

Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring has been affected by tropical cyclones and being underwater through flooding, both of which have hugely affected the business. Following Cyclone Winston, the family members were in tears with the devastation and the thought that the business was over. The leader of the Aviva farm *solesolevaki* group was there for the group to assist and asked one of the youths: *“Mo qalo mada ka nunuva na tobu ka tara se katakata tiko ga se sega. E a qai tukuni ma ni katakata vinaka ga. E na sega ni oti rawa na bisinsi oqo.”* (Please swim to the pool and feel it. The youth said that it is still hot underwater. It represents that this business will never end) (Tevita Ratu, October 2019). The family has revived the business and initiated a plan to lessen the effect of natural disasters; a sign of strong strategic intent. They have now begun a tree-planting program around the pools and the business to hold the topsoil as well as the bank of the creek.

A food security programme was conducted with more focus on flood-resistant crops like taro and giant taro near the creek and low areas as well as drought-tolerant crops like cassava, *kumala* (sweet potatoes) and yam farms on higher grounds for the family and the staff members. A success factor for this business is how the people have persevered together to work through challenges like natural disasters and finding sustainable measures to mitigate climate change. The business continues to spend resources to research and learn better ways to adapt to climatic challenges, to benefit the business and the families involved.

### **8.7.2 Aviva Farms**

Aviva Farms dedicated the activities of the business to reconnecting indigenous Fijians to their land. The land is a gift from ancestors, and people are custodians, but due to globalisation people are moving away from indigenous settings in the rural areas of Fiji to urban settlements. The farm is a model of a sustainably driven agro-development movement, which assists in regulating rural economies and opportunities. Many lands are left vacant, and the younger generations are blamed due to their perceived lack of interest and opportunities to use the land for their livelihoods.

The vision of the business is driven by its activities, focusing on preparing future generations and agro-development in response to climate change:

Aviva Farms strengthens the connection between Fijian people and their land while offering our global community an opportunity to participate in, understand, and explore the complexities and interconnectedness of this relationship. We believe that practicing and promoting sustainable agriculture strengthens the bond of local communities to their homeland, ultimately preparing a socially and economically stable climate change ready generation. (Aviva Farms Vision Statement <https://agrotour.wixsite.com/avivafarms/our-story>, retrieved 1.08.2019).

Part of the process of climate mitigation is the transition back to traditional sustainable methods like mixed cropping techniques, as done by Livai Tora's ancestors. The farm used to be a commercially driven sugarcane farm, a mono-cropping technique. The farm deteriorated, and an alternative way of operating, diversifying the farm to have several crops and trees are grown together at the same farm, as conducted by his ancestors. Recreating this was hard work (see Chapter 6, Section 6.3.5), re-growing 20 species of native trees for fruit, medicinal purposes and to protect the topsoil, planting climate resistant crops like *kumala* (kumara) and *uvi* (tropical yam), managing flood prone crops like taro and giant taro. These activities also provided an economic return for the business.

This diversification model is a way of ensuring the business is sustainable, as activities are diverse, and some are resistant to climate variations. The main activity started with planting 4,000 organic papaya plants for export, and vegetables. Horse riding is another activity which costs \$45 for about one hour (2019 prices). The farm also does horse racing four times annually attracting local communities and tourists, and with the stunning backdrop of the farm and environment it has been hired to host special events. Aviva farm also conducts agriculture and nursery training with nursery tours. Lately, the farm has started to sell native trees to hotels, and the business is hired to conduct landscaping work in resorts and hotels. Landscaping jobs often arise in the region due to frequent flooding, and Aviva Farms saw this as an opportunity to include a new business branch. The Papaya farm was destroyed during Cyclone Winston in 2016, but luckily, the other business arms kept Aviva Farms afloat. Livai Tora also kept satellite nurseries on higher grounds and tree investments with other nurseries so that he can still access them when needed. The latest development is that Livai Tora is also working as a private consultant with Kokosiga Consultants and had been working in Fiji and the Pacific in the last three years. Using the land for a variety farming and business strategies

is a factor which has assisted Aviva Farms to create a range of products that assist the environment, while at the same time making a profit.

### **8.7.3 Nayarabale Youth Farm**

In comparison to the two businesses already introduced, the people of Nayarabale are in the rural-remote area of Fiji, where people are familiar with subsistence living. Their environmental connection is not only a spiritual connection; the environment is their life. The environment contains all the totems, and it is the one-stop-shop that provides sustenance, medicine, building materials, quality drinking water, firewood, and sociocultural benefits. The youth farm progressed into a commercial scale and size, but people continue to use the agrarian techniques used by their ancestors. They still use traditional hand tools and digging sticks that do not disturb the soil texture as machines do. Agroforestry and mixed cropping are still a common feature of agriculture here, as trees are not cleared to make room for machinery. People do not depend on artificial inputs like fertilisers and chemicals, so a genuinely indigenous and organic system prevails. Within the daily farming practices, the youth members are reminded that the land is there to provide sustenance and protection for the ancestors, the present generation, and those yet to come, protecting the land and making sure sustainability is maintained. For example, an elder accompanies a group of youths in surveying new areas to be cleared and planted. Surveying involves the identification of essential trees like hardwood trees, fruit trees, and the like which are marked, denoting that they should not be removed. The crops need sunlight, and regenerative trees are cleared off due to their recovering nature. The plantations are reused after fallowing phases and still produce a higher yield. The ideas stem from the ancestors and part of the knowledge and experience passed generationally, and now the present generation continues to reap the benefits of sustainable land-use practices.

The sustainable practices by the Nayarabale Youth Farm do not stop the disrupting effect of climate change. In the 2017–18 planting season, the farm lost almost 13,000 kava plants to drought, valued at \$300,000. In searching for alternative means the researcher's experience working in the horticulture sector in New Zealand and a coconut research specialist from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fiji developed a mitigation plan. The focus was to use organic manure in breeding kava cuttings in the nurseries, which are transplanted into the field after three

months. At that stage, the plants developed permanent roots and plant systems to withstand drought. The nurseries were made from bamboo and coconut leaves before proper shade-house elements were bought, as seen in Figure 30. This nursery method has saved 25,000 kava plants in 2019. Climate-resilient crops like yams and kumara are planted with sandalwood plants and pineapples on the slopes to prevent soil erosion. During impending tropical cyclones, the stems of kava plants are removed (about 70 cm from the soil to reduce wind damage), leaving the stumps, and they will regrow to full length in less than eight months; this does not affect the roots which are of the higher market price. The pruning of stems had been trialled by the youths and was successful in not affecting yield. The pinnacle of looking after the environment is also about the learning journey of modifying systems and continuing to adapt to challenges brought about by climate change.



*Photo credit: Suliasi Vunibola.*

**Figure 30: A kava nursery made from coconut fronds and bamboo**

In building an entrepreneurship ecosystem, informal networking brings in more benefits for the businesses under study, as discussed in the following section.

## 8.8 Support from informal business networks

The indigenous Fijian businesses studied here are part of a group that provides support to each other. Many hurdles are faced in terms of legalities to establish the business, getting the right product to the market, or simple strategies to handle finance and people. The informal network created by these businesses is clarified in Chapter 7 (Section 7.5) and is a success factor as it is expensive to seek formal support such as business consultants and legal advice.

The informal network is a structure which allows conversations, collaborations and innovation. One of the crucial principles is problem-solving and support mechanisms within the group. A business identifies a problem, and they openly discuss it (interpersonal conversation or using social media or phone calls) with the other groups. The other parties will provide their experience if the same issue persists and openly discuss and collaborate on remedial options. The remedial measures will be tested out, and then the group will continue to reflect and modify the actions suitable for each context and business practice. It promotes a platform for innovative actions, which lead to more legitimate business standards of action leading to business efficiency.

The informal networks are a strength when they utilise the full functions and talents of people involved in the business. Each business involves a group of talented individuals who are champions to drive change. The key is leveraging these key influencers to propel the changes as a result of innovative ideas through problem-solving strategies. The identification of champions is a way to empower the people and to speed up the adoption process within the work culture and to affect everybody in the business. An example is how *solesolevaki* was revived within the business context (see Chapter 7, Section 7.8) and the people involved.

In running a business, changes keep coming due to multiple factors. For the businesses involved in this research, the ability to maintain focus on their vision and remain in control assisted their development, as discussed in the following section.

## 8.9 Maintaining a clear vision and staying in control

The original vision for the case study businesses was to create opportunities for members of the family of the tribe. The businesses also extended their services to the community through collective benefits and wellbeing (Section 8.3). Staying connected to that vision influences the processes and activities that are in place to make each development venture meaningful in terms of running a profitable business, allowing better staff welfare and collective wellbeing. It allows businesses to operate at a manageable pace and scale, making the businesses perennially viable. For Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring much pressure occurred during two occasions: when a Japanese investor tried to purchase the property and the push to include modern facilities rather than *bure* (thatched houses). The elders and the members, after a *talanoa* (discussions), rejected the new changes, and those decisions benefited them later.

The family continues to manage and control the business, and the tourists recommended the Fijian *bures* (thatched houses) as it adds to their Fijian experiences. There is a different feeling for the owners to operate a business with local retention of benefits and handling the pressure to bring new changes to the business.

The visions of the businesses are communicated through their family or collective *talanoa* (discussions and meetings), so the members can take ownership as well. The visions are further linked with the values, and the daily activities carried out by the staff members. The secure informal networks created within the businesses allow better communications and connections, which become the stronghold of the business. As an example, the founder and owner of Aviva Farms, Livai Tora, is often away on business travel or with the consultant group. The arms of the business are collegially managed by the staff members and discussed during weekly meetings. After cyclone Winston in 2016, the farm faced multiple challenges, and investors tried to purchase the land. The business survived using the business arms not affected by the cyclone, the consultant agency, native tree nursery, and nursery training, landscaping work, horse riding, and horse racing. The staff members also support putting in the effort to assist the business recovery. The strong sense of community within the business is a crucial factor for the resiliency of this business.

Change initiatives in running a business can be challenging, depending on the stage of the business. At times, the pressure to exert change within the business comes from the people or institutions that are deemed to be experts in the field. It happened to the Nayarabale youth group when they were advised to become an export business due to the massive agriculture produce, they harvested annually. The words shared by the youth leader focused on this:

*Sa siati me eitou export au sa kai talanoa ei ratou na neitou taba yakiti ei edra na matua. Eimai sa kai veivosaitaina ka raica na cava soti e na auta main a veisau arai. E sana levu na tamata e ra e na dau e na export e na siati io e ra na sau levu sara. E levu na tamata e ra maka ni ila na mosi e tarai mami matai ni gauna e sana vaataulewa vei mami. E na sagai me tubu ga na teitei sa na rawa ni au main a misini ni teitei io san a vaacacana sara na vanua ei na levu viro na a e auta mai. E sa yaco me toso ka eitou sa maka ni karava rawa e na rawa ni voli eitou e dua na bisinisi levu me kai bobula viro na lewe ni vanua. Oti eimami sa duavata ga sa rauti tou vaasia toa amu e, eitou lewa eitou ila na ena asia, eitou*

*na toso malua ga. Eitou marautaina na veikaravi ni neitou bisinisi e na dela ni neitou vanua ei na yalovata ka bula sautu e solia.*

I called for a meeting with the youths and the elders on the pressure to export. We discussed what the new change would bring. We need to bring in experts in the area of export, and that will be expensive. There will be people who do not know our ‘painful and humble beginning’ making decisions for us. We will need to plant more crops due to export demands, machines, and chemicals that will be integrated, and that is devastating to our environment with other detrimental effects. If we go bankrupt, a big company can absorb the business, and we become slaves again. After that discussion, we all agreed to remain as we are, we control it; we own it, and we decide what to be done. We are happy with how our business serves our *vanua* and how it united our people and contributed to our quality of life (Iliesa Vakaruru, July 2019).

Their vision is to unite the people of the tribe and to use the potential of the natural resources and the people to run a business that serves communal and family needs first. So far, it has achieved its business purpose and made an adequate amount for investment. The business as a development agency is controlled and managed by the people and contributes to wellbeing and status.

## 8.10 Summary

The chapter covered the success factors for the businesses under study—Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring, Aviva Farms, and Nayarabale Youth Farm. Running a business on customary land requires a safe cultural affiliation with the people and the culture as in having the approval of traditional leaders and following proper protocols of ‘*veivakarogotaki*’ (consultation). This is the first building block of business activity on customary land in the Pacific. In return, people accept the business and form a good partnership with it. Another factor is for the business to contribute to the community it serves. The businesses under study provided employment opportunities for the people and contributed to communal development and wellbeing.

The businesses are all socially embedded, and they remain connected to customary affairs that lead to the sustainability of their ventures. The different cases established mechanisms that keep the business stable while also participating in community processes. The business ventures blended local knowledge with the indigenous notion of being the custodian of the

environment and assisted in protecting that as well. In the same process, their various activities are geared towards long-term learning to mitigate climate change. The firms developed informal networks with other businesses that are connected to their vision, which contributed to their resilience and successful operations. Thus, social and cultural aspects of business development on customary land are central to whether the business succeeds, not just economically, but in terms of being respected and appreciated by the wider family and community.

These findings can be incorporated into the planning and implementation of meaningful development on customary land in Pacific communities in the future so that local needs and interests are protected.

## Chapter 9 Discussion

***Sa matua na yabaki*** (The year has matured). This is an indigenous Fijian saying referring to the *uvi* (yam) harvesting season. It is a crop of chiefly status. A ceremony of *i-sevu* (first fruit offering) to chiefs and churches is conducted. People also share their yams with the communities. This denotes the sharing of the findings to benefit many lives and generations.

### 9.1 Reflection on aims and objectives

The main aim of this thesis was to explain how communities across the Pacific have been able to establish distinctive models of economic engagement on customary land, enabling them to engage in successful business development while keeping control over their land and supporting community processes and values. There were three discrete, but related objectives derived from this aim (Table 9).

**Table 9: The objectives of the study and how they are addressed within the thesis**

Objective	How it is addressed in the chapters
1. OBJECTIVE ONE: To discuss the relationships that have developed at the interface of business, culture, land, family, and society through case studies of three successful indigenous Fijian businesses.	In Chapter 3, the notion of social embeddedness is described including other thinking that aligns with it, for instance, sustainable development, inclusive development, diverse economies, hybrid economies, and doughnut economics. This chapter provides the basis backed by literatures for including the community, culture, and family within the economy. Connections to the land and related development are provided in Chapter 4. Examples of these relationships are described in the stories from the case studies in Chapter 6, the background of business case studies, and foundational values.
2. OBJECTIVE TWO: To explain the practices by which these successful, socially-embedded family and cooperative businesses are structured, planned and operated	Chapter 2 includes a general understanding of the structures of the family and cooperative business models, including their dual nature and their values. This includes material on family and cooperative business models within the Pacific. The findings chapters (Chapters 6, 7 & 8) show how the socially embedded businesses in the case studies are structured, planned and operated.
3. OBJECTIVE THREE: To show how the practices can be used to construct a new way of theorising Pacific economies.	The practices are deliberated in detail in the findings, presented in Chapters 6, 7 and 8. Detailed discussion about the theorising of Pacific economies is conducted in Chapter 9.

## 9.2 Discussion

This study has shown that customary land is not necessarily a barrier to economic development in Fiji or the South Pacific region, as portrayed by some academics and economic commentators (Anderson & Lee, 2010; Hughes, 2004). Culture and customary land were seen as barriers from past studies on failures of indigenous entrepreneurs, but it is unfair to blame the indigenous culture and way of life when, firstly, culture can actually facilitate development, and secondly, there are other influential factors. One of the factors for Fiji is historical, especially the lack of implementation of the indigenous governance system as recommended by Governor Sir Michael Philips before independence. Governor Philips, who was a liberal leader, had experience in Africa with colonial administration and stated that a governing system should allow the Fijian chiefs and the people to be introduced and assisted into the cash economy so that they can engage successfully into the Fijian economy after independence (Lasaqa, 1984; Nayacakalou, 1975; Norton, 2013). This did not come into fruition, but they were kept in a much stricter system of 'indirect rule' as discussed in Chapter 4, which restricted interaction with outside communities. Meanwhile those of European, Indian and Chinese origins were involved in commercial undertakings and economical production. This was one of the factors that led to the challenges faced by indigenous Fijians communities in the face of the modern economy and governing system of Fiji.

This study refutes the 'blaming' of customary land, customary measures, and culture, which are said to impair economic development in the Pacific (Steven, Hughes, & Windybank, 2004). The indigenous Fijian businesses presented here are examples of successful enterprises based on customary land where culture, traditions, and kinship are used successfully as supporting systems. For example, customary land has been accessed through customary means and cultural protocols, which creates a comfortable arrangement based on trust and support. Once the customary land is secured, there are established systems like *solesolevaki* (see Chapter 7) allowing people to work without pay to support getting the businesses onto its feet. The notion of *veiwekani* (relationships and kinship) has also played a significant role in the supporting structures for these businesses, as discussed in the *Uvi* model (see Figure 33). These enterprises under study become beacons for others in terms of how to set up productive firms on customary land, while also serving their communities (Scheyvens et al., 2020).

A new way of theorising Pacific economies through the model in Figure 33 is apparent. Past researchers who examined the failure of Fijian businesses (Dana, 2007; N. Reddy, 1991; Vaughan, 1995) did not critically analyse the capacities of those firms in negotiating the tensions and challenges related to operating in their localities. Customary land, culture, kinship, and traditions can be hurdles to executing successful enterprises, but on many occasions, the culture and land are blamed directly. In other words, some literature (Reddy, 2007; Reddy, 1991; Vaughan, 1995), recommends people need to dislocate from their land, kinship, and culture in order to attain successful entrepreneurial operations. In doing this, people would need to leave their village settings and relocate to towns and cities to be away from the 'hindrances' where all these elements (customary land, kinship, and culture) exist. However, the enterprises included in this study were able to build their dream within their village settings and developed good ways of managing pressure on them. This included having a branch of the business that looks after sociocultural obligations and communal development, while the rest of the business is kept aloft. This relieves the pressure from the primary firm handling all requests for contributions to various sociocultural commitments.

One does not need to leave their land, culture, relatives, and their identity to be a successful entrepreneur. A quote from Ilimeleki one of the founders of Tifajek Mudpool encapsulates this point:

*Sa dua na ka talei ni da cakacaka tiko e na noda bisinisi ga ka cakacaka kina o ira na luveda kei ira na wekada. E da sa saumi keda ga, ka vakacegu ni da tu ga kei ira na wekada. E sa rawa ni da tukuna vei ira na luveda, e na dela ni noda qele ga kei na noda i tovo e da rawa ni vakacici bisinisi kina. Sa ka levu na veiqaravi ki na neimami oga kei na veivukei.*

It is a beautiful feeling to work for our own business and to see our children and relations as working colleagues. We pay ourselves, and we are just with our families and relatives. We can inform our children that our customary land and culture can support a business like ours. We are also able to assist others and contribute to sociocultural obligations (Ilimeleki Susu, 2019).

The entrepreneurs developed approaches for sustainably managing their businesses in or near the village while remaining connected to their communities. These are the kinds of placed-based (Curry, 2005) and socially embedded economic development factors, which are

acknowledged and celebrated for their alternative means of economic development by authors like Kate Raworth via the doughnut economics model (Raworth, 2017).

Current land and resource policies in Fiji include the *Land Use Decree 2010* and *Surfing Decree 2010* (Dodd, 2012; Ramesh, 2010; Ratuva & Lawson, 2016a; Sakai, 2016). The landowning units were blamed for not putting their land to good use, and these policies were put in place to make it easier for investors to make use of the land. Land has now, in some cases, been alienated from the traditional landowners.

Establishing businesses on customary land has many benefits for indigenous Fijians. The businesses become tools of land protection and retention for the people, rather than giving it up to an investor for ninety-nine years and waiting for the land rent or becoming labourers for a foreigner on their land. In comparison, the income and services for surrounding communities provided through the businesses are sustainable and much more beneficial than the modest land rent for the whole landowning units to share. On top of that, they have avoided the alienation of their land to others. This provides a good turning point and an answer to indigenous people of the Pacific in regards to land retention in the face of modern economic pressures and the debate on customary land, thus upholding indigenous land rights (Milne et al., 2017). It is also a shift in how locally-based and socially embedded ventures are viewed in terms of their contribution to the protection of their land, their identity, wellbeing, and the national economy.

Individuals do not own customary land in the Pacific. This creates an opportunity for Pacific communities to use that collective ownership framework to initiate economic development on their customary land. It can be a corporate business or tribal business with a cooperative type structure as in the Nayarabale Youth Farm, or family firms like Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring, and Aviva Farms. In return, such businesses are duty-bound to contribute to the benefit of the collective land-owning units. Their funds cover the sociocultural contributions for the landowning units, provide support for communal development initiatives, safeguard staff welfare, and ensure activities are in place to protect their natural environment (Scheyvens et al., 2020). This alleviates the pressures or social burdens on the extended families or the *mataqali* (sub-clan) or the *yavusa* (clan) members and strengthens cohesion. It enriches partnerships between the business and the landowning unit members; in return, protection and support are provided towards the enterprises. These actions contribute to

broader spiritual, social, and environmental concepts of collective wellbeing (Spiller, Erakovic, Henare, & Pio, 2011) as the firms are directed and protected by social connections and traditions according to the place-based systems and structures (Curry & Koczberski, 2012).

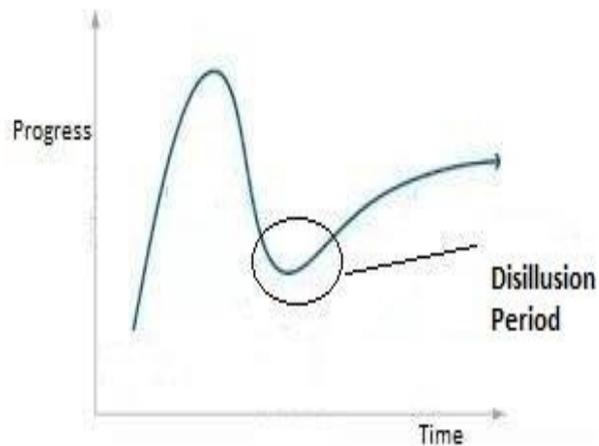
A family and a business are different institutions, and there is always friction happening within the interface. This is also present in cooperative business formations like Nayarabale Youth Farms whereby the managers need to balance satisfying membership needs and sustainable business arrangements. This links to the idea of the 'dual nature' of family and cooperative firms (Mazzarol et al., 2011; Ward, 2011). From the findings of this study, the firms also play significant roles in managing the welfare of the family. These firms not only look after their family affairs but also cover extra things for staff members, such as buying school uniforms for their children. It has become a top priority that conflicts are managed, and family burdens are met collectively. For instance, discussions are conducted on issues faced by the staff. Fijian communities are close-knit, and everybody knows what is happening for individual households as they are all related in some way. The staff members, including the entrepreneurs collectively, provide cash or in-kind help to assist with family burdens. For instance, the staff of Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring participate in a *solu* (donation) and share food and kava for the families on Fridays on a rotational basis. The business also makes an initial deposit in a savings account for each staff member and help them save from their wages for Christmas.

The Nayarabale Youth Farm also monitors individual members' farms and provides support to boost personal savings and investments. The arrangements lessen the friction that can emerge when families want to borrow from the business to meet family demands. These examples show how indigenous firms develop hybridised forms of business development and adopt a place-specific, socially embedded, and kin-based economy (Altman, 2009; Farrelly, 2009; Yang, 2000).

All the businesses involved in this research went through a familiar pattern termed as a disillusion period (Figure 31). These periods were also testing points for the firms: tensions and challenges, both internal and external, can have drastic effects on administering enterprises on customary land. Internal challenges refer to tensions like negotiating customary, kinship, family, and community-based hurdles. External factors may include natural shocks, legalities, government policies and other factors that the firms find difficult to

control, respond to, and manoeuvre around. These challenges became learning junctures in all of the businesses studied. The capacity of the firms to recover from such shocks using the resources around them as well as traditional networks (Trask, 2001) are crucial lessons for current and future entrepreneurs.

As noted earlier, natural disasters can be a major hurdle. Structures at Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring were destroyed and under water following Tropical Cyclone Winston in February 2016 (Figure 32), which also destroyed the crops on the ground for Aviva Farms and Nayarabale Youth Farms. These firms were salvaged through their social and cultural capital, and networks, factors which a number of authors have identified can be central to supporting indigenous development (Meo-Sewabu & Walsh-Tapiata, 2012; Movono & Dahles, 2017; Putman, 1995; Ravuvu, 1987; Vunibola & Scheyvens, 2019). Family members, relatives, and community members conducted *solesolevaki* to clean up, replant seed farms, and to do other rehabilitation work without pay. Labour was mobilised within the informal networks of the enterprises for skilled tasks like building *bure* (traditional thatched roof houses) for the tourism-based businesses. Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring went back to business after a short while, as their thermal pools and the mud pool were not destroyed. Aviva Farms was closed to tourists for quite some time while the crops were rejuvenating, but they depended for their survival on other branches of the business like their consultancy business and landscaping subdivision. The ability to revive the business from such trying times reflected the benefits of having good partnerships with the communities and other businesses through informal networks and having mitigation plans in place like the diversification strategy of Aviva Farm. Developing strategies for different types of shocks is a critical element that should be adopted well ahead of time to boost the recovery process.



**Figure 31: A pattern of resilience often followed by the businesses**

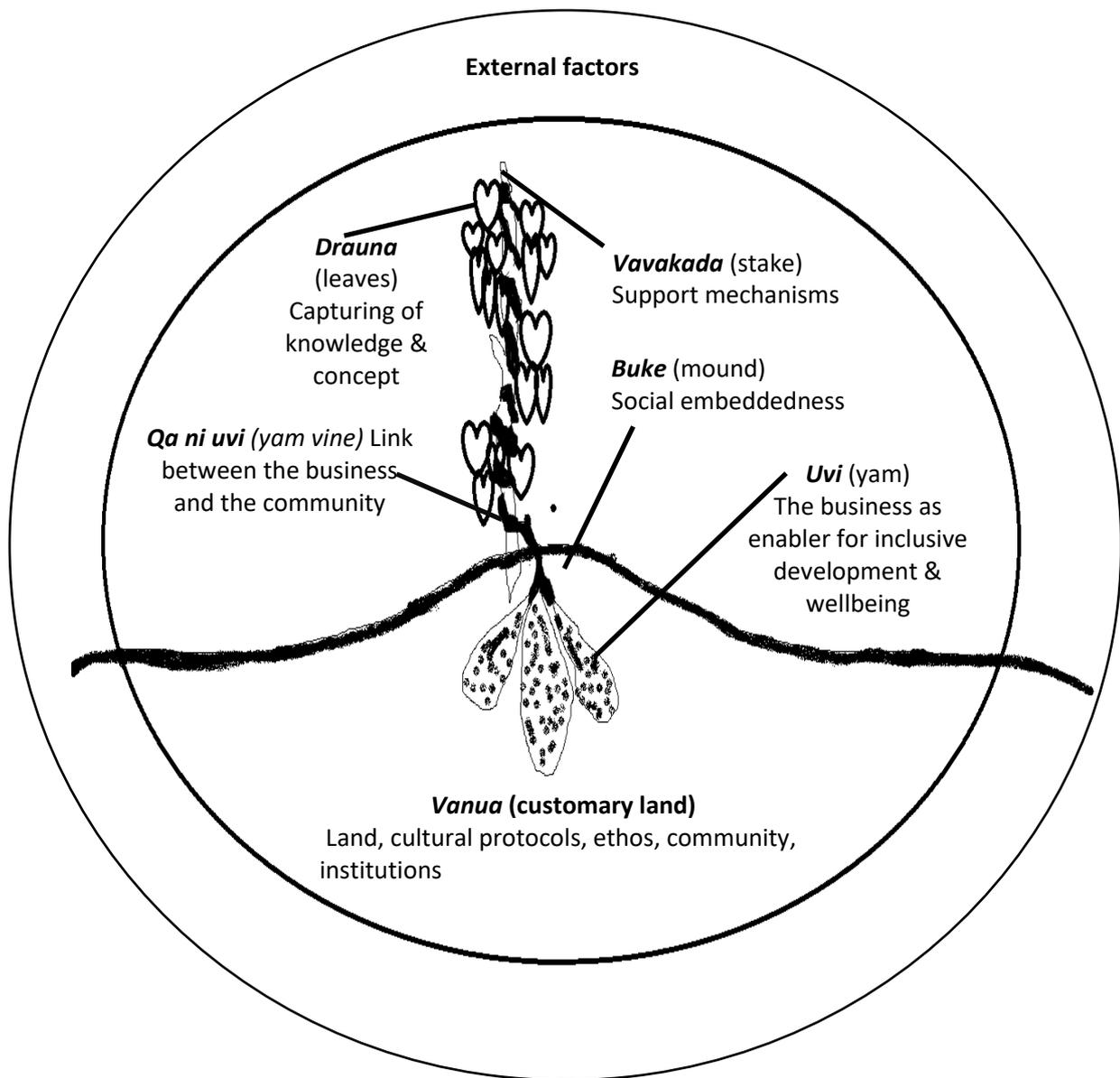


*Photo credit: Waqa Raoba.*

**Figure 32: Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring under water in 2006**

### 9.3 A model of economic development on customary land in the Pacific

The findings from the study lead to the creation of an indigenous business model for customary land, which is unique to the Pacific (Figure 33). The model acknowledges: the knowledge of the entrepreneurs, social embeddedness of the businesses, support systems that make the businesses successful, land and culture, partnership, and inclusive development. It is adapted from an earlier version (Section 5.2.5) based on the findings of this research.



**Figure 33: Uvi (yam) metaphor to show how culture and customary land can be the basis for effective economic development in a Pacific context.**

The yam is known as the *vua ni qele* (fruit of the land) which is harvested and shared with one's family and sometimes the broader community. All components of the metaphor contribute to the productivity of the yam tuber. The yam represents the business as an enabler for sustainable, inclusive development.

### 9.3.1 *Drauna* (leaves): capture knowledge and ideas

Managing businesses in indigenous Fijian settings on customary land has many challenges. Just as leaves capture sunlight, the entrepreneur must capture knowledge and ideas from outside the business, then process and utilise the knowledge into a strategic plan and manage their business well. If they do this, their business will thrive and the fruits of their labour will be clear that is, the *uvi/yams* will be large and abundant. There is a familiar saying referring to the mass failure of indigenous businesses in Fijian villages, '*na bisinisi e duri me davo*' (businesses are built to fall). Many times the indigenous Fijian culture is blamed for this (Gibson, 2012; Ratuva, 2000). In the Pacific in general, culture is always seen as an inhibitor:

...within the island Pacific there is little sign that culture, in whatever form, is seen as a resource but much more that it is seen as a brake on hopeful structures of development (Curry & Koczberski, 2012: p. 122)

For any business operating successfully on their customary land and setting, being able to manoeuvre around these challenges and withstand the test of time is indeed an incredible journey. The knowledge and experiences gained are crucial to constructing a new model for indigenous business on customary land in the Pacific. The experience of planning, processing, capturing, and implementation, as well as adapting to both internal and external factors surrounding each business, are vital for the business to thrive.

A critical experience includes the initial phase of knowledge capturing and filtering processes. The findings show that the businesses under study were involved in the discussions and analysis of the details of the business they would like to establish. This involved the study of what might work best for the area and a business concept that caught the passion and interests of the people involved. It also included comprehensive consultation with the 'know-how' of available networks as well as close family members. Notably, it is critical to acquire the core values positioned by the business founders, which anchored them and, over time, new knowledge is integrated (Denison et al., 2004). For the case studies, the businesses were familiar with tourism and agriculture due to their locations and the experiences of the people involved. This knowledge capturing and filtering exercise proved to be critical in the business establishment phase as well as for any new market assessment strategy and a way to include their indigenous knowledge systems in their venture. Family members of Tifajek

Mudpool & Hotspring and Aviva Farms had experience in tourism-based businesses too due to their geographical advantage near Nadi Town, a well-known tourist area, and the international airport. Similarly, Nayarabale Youth Farm is located in a rural and remote setting where traditional agriculture is the norm, and crops like kava, taro, and cassava are commodities to the people and, therefore, well understood for commercial production.

Capturing and maintaining indigenous knowledge is also crucial to business based on customary land. The indigenous knowledge system is used within the business operations, but it also allows the transmission of traditional knowledge to the younger generations. For instance, the practices of building a *bure* (Fijian thatched roof house) were passed on to young people while building the infrastructure at Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring. Another example includes the utilisation of traditional agricultural practices of mixed cropping, using *doko* (a traditional digging tool) while following the *vula vaka-viti* (Fijian lunar calendar) for Nayarabale Youth Farm and Aviva Farms. This use of indigenous knowledge is supported by Koczberski and Connell (2012), who state that indigenous ideas can be adapted by landowners in ways that recreate alternative modernities. The businesses in this study revive and maintain traditional knowledge and practices while engaging with the modern economy.

### 9.3.2 ***Buke* (mound): Social embeddedness of the business**

In the picture (Figure 33), the business represented by the yam tuber is embedded within the mound which protects and nurtures the growing tuber; this mound represents the need for social embeddedness of businesses on customary land. A mound is prepared by piling on top-soil rich in nutrients to support the yam. Likewise, a business on customary land will be nourished and supported. A yam plant needs to be planted well under the soil to be productive and is not like some other crops that do better on or near the surface of the soil. A significant component of social embeddedness is the cultural support mechanism, which refers to established communal structures based on culture and traditions that support entrepreneurship and development (as discussed in detail in Section 8.3). As postulated by Polanyi (1944), a realistic, social, and cultural system to economic intervention is achieved when economies are embedded within society and culture.

Gaining access to customary land and getting the support of the locals to permit the development was essential to the businesses under study. The entrepreneurs belong to their customary land to which they are connected through blood ties. *I kerei* (to formally seek permission), or *veivakarogotaki* (to inform), are the cultural means of the presentation of kava and *tabua* (whale's tooth) to the chiefs and elders of the landowning unit. Extensive consultation will follow on this issue and this is relayed back once a meeting with the members of the sub-clan has been conducted, as land is owned communally. Once the sub-clan is in agreement, the entrepreneur and the family present *magiti vakaturaga* (food prepared in the traditional way in the earth oven) as a form of reciprocity and thanks to the chiefs and sub-clan members for agreeing to use the land. The phases of traditional protocols and reciprocal elements reflect the crucial element of showing and gaining respect. This forms a solid foundation of trust and respect from the start, which then needs to continue while the business is operating (this occurs through sociocultural contributions, as discussed in Section 9.4.5). Doing this allows the business to be socially embedded, with practices aligning with the norms and sociocultural expectations of the people and their way of life (Curry & Koczberski, 2012). The practices gain the support of locals for the sustainability of the business.

### 9.3.3 *Vavakada* (stake): Support mechanisms

Various support mechanisms have helped to establish and contribute to the sustainability of businesses on customary land in the Pacific. From the findings, there are three categories for support systems: the social and cultural capital including kin support, the utilisation of both informal and general networking, and the assistance of intermediary organisations.

The findings suggest that *solesolevaki* is a form of social and cultural capital supporting indigenous entrepreneurship, as detailed in Chapter 7. Initially, the businesses had insufficient capital, but *solesolevaki* was used to gather their relatives and resources to help with the establishment of each business. They worked without financial reward during the early days and other challenging times, whether farming or collectively constructing buildings. In many cases, *solesolevaki* is aided by kinship ties (Ratuva, 2000) and is seen to build good partnerships and cohesion within the community. This links to the work on social capital as the effort of doing public or the common good. In this case, the business is

something that the family and community should provide support to as they will benefit from it in the future (Kwon et al., 2013). These behaviours are cultural components of Pacific communities rooted in specific underlying values found in their indigenous cultures. The same values and concepts are still valid to be utilised for people to participate in the modern economy, with specific attention to the enabling factors, as introduced for *solesolevaki* in Chapter 7 (Section 7.9). Place-specific practices like *solesolevaki* provides strength that has assisted indigenous Fijian communities allowing people to work for collective visions and values benefiting both the business and the members (Kingi, 2006; Meo-Sewabu & Walsh-Tapiata, 2012; Movono & Becken, 2018; Prakash, 2003). Through *solesolevaki* communities have reconstructed and refashioned what works well in the village using informal and established structures to bring about economic development that ultimately improves the collective wellbeing of the villagers.

A similar kinship support system is *solu*, where relatives collectively donate funds to support a particular social need such as a funeral or when fundraising for a school or to start a business. In all case studies, it was evident that people agreed to collectively source funds to help establish the businesses. The funds are used on occasions like buying food for the people conducting *solesolevaki*, payment for business registration, and other minor expenses. Due to financial hurdles and the challenges of getting financial assistance from banks due to customary land not being seen as a source of collateral, this sort of assistance based on kinship and cultural collectivity is particularly important.

This 'spill-over' (Putman, 1995) of social capital becomes a crucial supporting element for indigenous entrepreneurship and supports cohesive networks, especially at the establishment phase. For place-based firms, the partnership with the community is strengthened right from the start; therefore, the business needs to ultimately give back, maintain the cohesive bond, and be socially embedded.

The backing provided through informal business networks is also a major contributing factor for business success. The outcomes of this study suggest that indigenous Fijian businesses form informal networks which support their operations. They participate in gatherings to discuss how they can aid other businesses. This form of networking is similar to informal support systems like *solesolevaki* (Curry, 2003, 2005). For instance, Aviva Farms helped in building a walkway for Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring in exchange for some technical support

and assistance and the provision of seedlings after tropical cyclones and flooding. Informal networking is a lifeline to the businesses involved in the case studies and strengthens the bond and partnership between entrepreneurs and the communities they serve. This provides a new way of looking at Pacific communities showing that traditional values of sharing and reciprocity can be recognised and esteemed in business operations.

The third form of support comes from the assistance provided through intermediary institutions. NGOs, government departments, development banks, donors, and/or other entities provide assistance in terms of resources and services. This includes the provision of training, technical assistance, or the provision of planting materials for agriculture-based businesses. These services are crucial in the process of strengthening the businesses and making them more competitive, a well-known challenging area for indigenous businesses based in rural Fijian settings. They also strengthen and widen the networks for the businesses. As most indigenous entrepreneurs are coping with meagre resources and facing a range of common challenges (Foley & O'Connor, 2013), this type of assistance is very helpful to them.

#### **9.3.4 *Vanua* (customary land, culture, and other institutions)**

Indigenous people always identify with their ancestral or customary land, and the same applies to Pacific communities, including indigenous Fijians. Their customary land is a place for sustenance and provides a context where traditions and culture are practiced and retained (Anderson, 2006). Indigenous Fijians have sustained the indigenous knowledge systems that allows them to live on their customary land, sustaining each generation using their intergenerational resources. Customary land also provides an assemblage of diverse components as in the physical realm, social aspects, and spiritual connections of people and their intergenerational resources. In another sense, land is not like a mat where one can buy and roll it up and is deemed its owner; land to indigenous people is more than an asset as there are intimate and intricate connections and systems that are reflected in the land (Li, 2014).

For the businesses in this study, a benefit for establishing their businesses on their customary land was to utilise the land and protect indigenous Fijian interests. There were questions and controversies around having a business within the *vanua* (land, culture, and tradition) with

the risk of losing traditions and culture while engaging with the modern economy. For instance, the tourism venture at Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring has risks of tourists bringing in new lifestyle changes like dressing style into the village. In reality, once tourists were advised, they were able to respect the way of life of the locals. As mentioned by Veitayaki (2019), a development model needs to be established in rural areas to include rural dwellers in economic engagement and protect the culture and the interest of indigenous Fijians. This was achieved by the businesses, as discussed in Section 8.5 and later in Section 9.4.5, by engaging with the modern economy and supporting customary affairs.

Business operating on customary land in Fiji is referred to as a form of *somo-kovukovu* (researcher's dialect) which is glomalin, or soil proteins that bind soil particles and minerals together. In the indigenous Fijian context, *somo-kovukovu* holds the soil or the land together. The *Land Use Decree 2010* and *Surfing Decree 2010* put customary land and traditional fishing grounds at risk of alienation (discussed in Section 4.3.10) (Chambers, 2015; Dodd, 2012; Govan et al., 2012; Sakai, 2014, 2016). Customary land which is vacant but still under customary ownership is most at risk of alienation (Chambers, 2015). The businesses in the case studies were able to utilise their customary land via forms of locally controlled economic development and protect the customary land from alienation.

### **9.3.5 *Qa ni uvi* (yam vine): Relationships/partnership between the business and community**

The vine is the only component of the yam plant linking the outer world to the *drauna*/leaves (where the entrepreneurs capture knowledge) and into the soil (where the tubers are developing). This represents the relationship and inclusive partnership that is created between the business and the community it serves. This partnership is established while following traditional protocols for accessing customary land and gaining the respect of the landowners at the initiation phase (Section 9.4.2). The vine's tendrils find their way and connect with the stake all the way up, and they need each other; the vine needs the stake to grow successfully, and the stake without a vine has no purpose at all. Likewise, the business and the people of the *vanua* need each other for sustainable development.

A way of maintaining this inclusive partnership is through contributions to the broader community. The contributions come in the form of community development initiatives and sociocultural obligations: *vanua* cultural ceremonies, family gatherings, church obligations as well as those prescribed by formal institutions. This was covered in detail as a business strategy for success in Section 8.5. Supported by Polanyi (1944), the economy is indivisible from society as it is interwoven within social relationships and becomes part of the fabric of society. To an outsider, entrepreneurs who provide varieties of support to the broader community can be looked down upon (Reddy, 1991). From the findings of this study, these contributions are reciprocated through several arrangements, including loyalty, *solesolevaki* and protection of the business. For instance, during lean times like after Cyclone Winston in 2006, the whole village provided *solesolevaki* to rebuild Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring without receiving monetary payment. The Nayarabale Youth Farm funded the newly built footpaths throughout the village and the primary school in 2020. Sociocultural and community development initiatives reduce the risk of others in the community taking issue with a business and its success, and secondly, it reduces the risk of the business causing any social discord within the community (Scheyvens et al., 2020).

For businesses to contribute effectively is not an easy task. It is no wonder that establishing a business based on customary land needs to develop a system to negotiate various tensions while working in coexistence with the institutions. The capacity of businesses to mitigate these tensions developed at the interface of the business, culture, land, family, church, and society also determines the success of indigenous Fijian enterprises operating on customary land (Scheyvens et al., 2017).

Too often culture and customary land are blamed for business failures in the Pacific (Hughes, 2004; Vaughan, 1995). It is a complex task for businesses to come up with systems to balance demands of meeting sociocultural contributions and community development activities and, at the same time, sustain the business. In response, though, the case study businesses have devised various strategies including the allocation of separate funds and contributions; for example, the allocation of funds specifically for the *oga* or sociocultural obligations (\$15,000 for each category church, education, village development activities, and traditional ceremonies and gatherings) for Nayarabale Youth Farm. Aviva Farms allocated plots of vegetables, root crops, and fruits for village gatherings and ceremonies, so instead of giving

money to cater to the occasions, food is provided. Such systems enable the sustainability of the business and enhance community cohesion and social protection. This represents a new way of doing business on customary land in the Pacific. These arrangements provide meaningful economic development for the businesses and the communities involved and contribute to collective wellbeing.

In developing a strong vine for the *uvi* plant, it is important to have careful management of relationships developed at the interface of business, culture, land, church, family, and society. They solidify these relationships by making the business a vehicle of meaningful development in the community and a crucial component of society. Meeting sociocultural obligations then safeguards of the business, ensuring there is widespread support from the people. To an outsider, the relationships formed at the interface are not easily apparent. There is a symbiotic relationship between the business and society, and if that is recognised, it will provide a platform for the engagement of people in meaningful economic development within their settings.

### 9.3.6 *Uvi* (yam): The business

In the case studies, the businesses become a vehicle for sustainable and inclusive development in their communities. All these businesses are located in rural areas and became a hub of economic activities that engages the wider community. The businesses provide employment and services for the communities as in sociocultural obligations (Section 8.5), economic opportunities, and wellbeing of others (Section 8.4). For instance, wider economic opportunities include families selling lunches and vegetables at the Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring, families near Aviva Farms being provided with planting materials for food and income, and women being paid for cleaning and drying kava at Nayarabale Youth Farm. Lawson (2010) and the United Nations Report (2015) recognise the economic development imbalance is negative for humanity and that people need to be encouraged to participate, retain and share the benefits of development. Creating opportunities for the broader community in these rural areas makes these businesses significant in the eyes of the local people. And just as there is more than one *uvi* tuber, the success of the main business can have a ripple effect for nearby communities encouraging them to do similar initiatives and

realise the benefits. In addition, as some workers gain skills and experience and move on to take up lucrative employment in larger businesses, there are now positions that can be taken up by a relative.

The *uvi* will only grow well if the environment is nurtured. Similarly, the case study businesses needed to operate in ways which respected the *vanua* and the broader natural environment. In terms of biodiversity, the case study businesses managed to implement activities that protect the ecosystem on which all life depends. This is shown in Section 8.7, which describes the practices that are in place to replenish and look after the environment for issues of sustainability and climate change mitigation. Avia Farms and Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring replenished their overused land, which was formerly used for commercial sugarcane farms, with traditional multi-cropping techniques and with native trees around the business vicinity. Anderson (2006) and Liotta (2009) stated that ecological management has been practiced by indigenous people around the world due to their sense of belonging or their traditional role as custodians of their environment. These indigenous Fijian businesses showed the efforts of protecting nature while running a business on their customary land. The theory of Doughnut Economics (Raworth, 2017) also mentioned that the economy is embedded within the life-supporting system of nature and social and economic initiatives should only occur in ways which do not impinge on the environmental ceiling (Figure 7).

The discussion has shown how the *uvi* metaphor encapsulates a new way of conceptualising effective and inclusion economic development on customary land in Fiji. To follow, there is a short reflection on the significance of the case studies as family and cooperative business models.

### **9.3.7 Family business and cooperative business**

The innovativeness of the indigenous entrepreneurs introduced here become their strength in establishing strategies to sustain their businesses and community. This was a similar to what Farrelly (2009) found in Fiji and where she identified the business *va'avanua* indigenous entrepreneurship model whereby kinship and reciprocity blended well with the tribal business. Yang (2000) refers to this as the hybrid economy where the union of economic logic,

activities, and practices of varied epochs can produce better development that is sensitive to the context of the business.

As discussed in Sections 6.2.5 and 6.3.6, most of the literature on family-based businesses notes the dual nature of the businesses (Carlock & Ward, 2001; Pieper & Klein, 2007; Tagiuri & Davis, 1996). The dual system is a way of looking at the family and the business as unique social institutions, which support each other. Aviva Farms and Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring have both found ways of balancing the commitments for the business and family. However, there was also a third dimension to these two family businesses that the literature does not seem to consider. Based on both the case studies and the examples of Pacific family-based businesses discussed in Chapter 2, it appears that family-based businesses in the Pacific also seek to contribute to the broader community. This adds another layer of their commitments, obligations, responsibilities, and the complexities of what they do. Nevertheless, the case study showed that these businesses were able to do that successfully.

Similar to the family-based businesses, the case of Nayarabale Youth Farm is interesting. It was not set up with a formal cooperative structure at the beginning, but it aligns with the definition, the dual nature, and key factors associated with cooperatives provided by the literature presented in Chapter 2. The business agrees with all the values of a cooperative set by the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA, 1995), including self-help, self-responsibility, equality, solidarity, except for equity. The value of equity indicates how members are considered equitably with dividends and capital reserves (Prakash, 2003). For Nayarabale Youth Farm, the profit is not shared directly with the members, as in the literature. The ultimate aim is to alleviate all the sociocultural burdens of the households in the community and to contribute to communal development initiatives, so the profits are shared with the wider community via these indirect means (refer to Sections 6.4.1 and 8.4.3).

The literature also states that many cooperatives in the Pacific failed due to various reasons, one of them being the inequitable distribution of dividends and mismanagement of funds (Section 2.5.4). Maybe a reason why other cooperatives have not worked is that they are based on an external idea and structure. Nayarabale Youth Farm shows how a culturally embedded cooperative in the Pacific works where it attends to the immediate needs of the members. The business is guided by kinship, social connections, culture, and customs. It produced a form of locally controlled, socially and culturally-embedded business model for

those seeking an understanding of alternative economic forms. As was shown by Vunibola and Scheyvens (2019), this model was picked up and adopted by young people in Saroni village where it is now working successfully as well as other villages in the district.

To the people of Nayarabale, their youth farm is organised to enhance life-changing opportunities for the members. Zaimova et al. (2012) refers to such rural-based, bottom-up projects as a lifeline to social well-being and support. Birchall (2003) added that cooperatives boost participatory development and can be used by communities by submitting to group discipline to solve problems and to achieve development goals.

This aids in reshaping the understanding of Pacific economies. Just as yam is shared and appreciated by the wider community, alternative economic models such as the family and cooperative businesses examined herein need to be shared widely to enable better understanding of economic options for indigenous people across the Pacific. This form of inclusive, alternative economic philosophy and arrangement is significant amid existing trends towards rural-urban drift, foreign domination of investment, and extractive modes of development prevalent in the Pacific.

The following section will highlight the key findings, some final thoughts and recommendations.

# Chapter 10 Conclusion and recommendations

*Sa mai yala 'oto i 'e na salevu, ia sa i dola i na i lao'lao' vou*

Where the end meets the new beginning.

## 10.1 Key findings

The findings elucidated from this study will assist in guiding the operations of indigenous landowners, entrepreneurs, policymakers, government, businesses, stakeholders, and other economic development organisations which aspire to assist local businesses on customary land in the Pacific. Several lessons about successful indigenous entrepreneurship based on customary land were derived from the case studies.

First, the examples demonstrate that indigenous Fijians can use their customary land themselves to create a business. Such businesses operating on customary land provide a way to put indigenous peoples' intergenerational resources into use and provide meaningful forms of economic development. In the Pacific, much customary land has been alienated through external factors, but now landowners are coming to realise that transacting land for short-term gains does not create sustainable development and wealth for themselves as indigenous people and their future generations. Using their customary land as a base to build a business is a form of protection for indigenous people and their interests.

Second, *solesolevaki* can lay the foundation for a successful indigenous business based on customary land. *Solesolevaki*, as a form of social and indigenous Fijian cultural capital where people with kinship collaboratively pool their resources and effort without any financial return, is particularly evident in the establishment phase of the indigenous Fijian businesses and continues in some form after that. *Solesolevaki* is a dying tradition, but the case studies presented show that maintaining the tradition can be challenging but is possible with an appropriate enabling environment. *Solesolevaki*, as an element of social capital, has many benefits, and it creates a web of relationships between business and society as a foundation for successful businesses.

Third, a business developed on customary land must follow protocols to be culturally safe. This allows the business to have a sound cultural relationship and partnership with society generally. Cultural safety is attained through following traditional protocols in accessing

customary land and seeking permission to establish businesses on the land, for example, taking time, consulting widely, and the presentation of gifts and reciprocity. There are particular channels, ceremonies, meetings, *talanoa* (discussions) required until the approval is achieved both traditionally and legally to use the land.

This points to the fourth significant finding; the businesses were seen as successful not just in conventional terms, but to locals they are required to contribute directly to broader communal wellbeing. Businesses operating within the safe cultural space of the society need to uphold community processes, customary affairs, and values. The customary land that these businesses are built upon belongs to communal groups, not individuals; therefore, they need to contribute to the affairs of these communities. This is achieved through contributions to sociocultural obligations as in traditional ceremonies like funerals, and community development activities such as building footpaths for the village, or other types of support such as providing educational scholarships.

The fifth finding is that having a degree of separation of the central business and a branch that covers sociocultural demands is a very useful strategy. Various mitigation strategies have been developed by indigenous businesses to balance daily operations and sociocultural demands. These strategies are unique to each of the case studies, but the commonality is their ability to keep the core business activity successfully functioning. For example, Tifajek Mudpool & Hotspring separated out the income from a particular tour group (Valentine Tours) to handle sociocultural obligations.

Sixth, the success of indigenous businesses on customary land fosters dynamism and inspires further rural development, for example the Saroni action research project (Section 5.2.3.4) (Vunibola & Scheyvens, 2019). The attributes of indigenous entrepreneurship highlighted through the case studies have created the determination for economic development contributing to indigenous settings, building opportunities and capacity in rural areas, and a positive economic contribution. For example, such initiatives protect their customary land from being alienated, contribute to collective wellbeing, create social safety nets, reduce rural-urban migration, and support revitalisation of rural economies. Collectively, these main attributes promote partnership, strengthen cohesion within indigenous society, protect indigenous interests, and ultimately promote business sustainability.

## 10.2 Final Thoughts

The businesses included in this research make important contributions to their communities and the rural and national economies. Indigenous Fijians are a very close-knit people living in villages, and their way of life comes from their ability to gather resources to satisfy collective needs within a collective and communal lifestyle. The resources are used in a collective effort for the benefit of all members. Their sense of belonging and collectivity to attain community wellbeing become paramount (Scheyvens et al., 2020). Attainment of a better kind of wealth is used in the Happy Planet Index work and also in Vanuatu's alternative indicators of wellbeing in the Pacific (Vanuatu National Statistics Office, 2012). This helps to explain why traditional ways of life are still relevant to building better contemporary communities in the Pacific and elsewhere.

Indigenous Fijians have a culture and traditions guided by their *vanua* process; the church became an influential institution that also guides behaviour and merges with the values and ethos of the *vanua*. Most people are educated, and some are employed at urban centres and are detached from their village settings. The so-called school dropouts remain in the village with their elders. There is massive rural-urban migration in search of better lives; a missing link is evident. There is a real need to revitalise the rural economies across Fiji, rather than having native Fijians in rural areas being bystanders in the economy of Fiji, or seeing migration to the urban areas as their only option for a better life. From this study, it is apparent that rural areas in Fiji, the Pacific, and beyond have much to contribute to their people and national economies if appropriate systems, support mechanisms, visions, values, and strategies are in place (Vunibola & Scheyvens, 2019).

The businesses covered in this study were primary drivers of their rural economies, with benefits and control retained locally. The entrepreneurs belong to the communities, and they also understand their roles in serving their people in diverse ways, maintaining business sustainability, and contributing much to their collective wellbeing. Culture is fluid and always open to change; incorporating economic development with appropriate systems into indigenous lifestyles in the Pacific has many benefits. The benefits are retained locally; locals are employed with regular income; community members can sell their products to the business, for example, handicrafts, vegetables, and lunch packages. This creates

opportunities for many people, and in some cases, people who work in urban centres are drawn back to the village as it is cheaper to live there, plus they are surrounded by their family, have economic stability, and good quality of life. 'The real Fiji, the way the world should be', should allow for thriving alternative, diverse economies based on customary resources; this is something that has relevance throughout the wider Pacific islands (Aguiar, 2012; Gibson-Graham, 2010; Vanuatu National Statistics Office, 2012).

The notion of doing business in such a context is not explicitly to make a profit; it can be to create an opportunity for the family, people, and tribe to use their resources and attain a form of income that would support lives in the rural areas. It can also support holistic development in native Fijian settings. Some political commentators have declared that indigenous Fijians mostly supported the coups in Fiji as they see their native interests threatened with lack of government support for rural development (Knapman, 1990; Jolei Veitayaki, 2019). The media also maintains that the unprecedented upsurge in hard drugs and related crimes and the effects on youth in urban centres in the Pacific, as the Pacific Ocean became the drug traffickers highway (Posada, 2019), is a political factor. The majority caught in the use and abuse of such hard drugs in the Pacific are the disillusioned indigenous people (Lyons, 2019). In most countries in the Pacific, indigenous people have their customary land, their people, and their tribe. A typical factor for all the businesses in this research is their ability to contribute to meaningful forms of economic development which protect their land, culture, and traditions, reversing the effect of rural-urban migration and at the same time providing a chance for local youth to engage in their rural economy and build a better future. This form of economic development can be replicated in other indigenous Fijian communities in the Pacific, and beyond.

If this kind of economic development cannot be initiated from within the communities, then it is a role for the members who are living away from the village settings to try to facilitate these opportunities. There are studies about various Pacific island economies supported by remittances (Brown, 1999) sent from relatives living abroad to meet the needs of their relatives in the islands. Those living elsewhere could also assist relatives in rural areas with ideas and start-up capital for their businesses on customary land. A related project was initiated by the researcher of this study, who conducted action research in Saroni village to replicate the findings, especially from the work structure of Nayarabale Youth Farms. He also

drew upon the established informal systems like *solesolevaki* and *veiwekani* (kinship) to create economic livelihoods in a rural setting (Vunibola & Scheyvens, 2019). The work structure was able to put in place a routine with organised activities (refer to Chapter 6, Section 6.4.4), which resulted in diversified and improved farming systems. The ripple effect of this action research is that it has since been taken up by four other village settings. This has in each case enhanced communal cohesion, improved income generation activities for individual families, aided in their food security programmes, and on top of all this, an elder stated.

*Sa une na magiti, sa na une na lavo, na a talei duadua ni sa kai lesu mai na ca'aca'avata, veinanumi ei na veirogoci ma sa leva tu e na dua na gauna, au marau niu bula ti'o au sa raica.*

This project enabled our access to lots of food, there will be secure finances from the commercial farms. Unity was lost from this community a long time ago, I am lucky to be alive and realise the restoration of unity, and people are helping one another (Merelea Tibaleta, 2019).

This is a good learning point for indigenous people in Fiji, the Pacific, and elsewhere. Getting a good education is not a pre-requisite for undertaking entrepreneurial ventures on customary land. Apart from this project, there are many instances where people who do not have academic qualifications have managed to use their customary land and turn it into businesses that support their families and communities. For instance, the villagers from Sawaieke in Gau, Fiji ventured into commercial kava and taro farms on their tribal land for communal and family economic development (Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development Fiji, 2019). Recently, Anasa Tawake used fifty acres of customary land for commercial farming in Naitasiri, Fiji, with a profit of about FJD\$133,000 in 2018 (Nataro, 2019). Sala Sagato Tuiafiso, a long-serving government executive in Samoa, turned to taro farming on his customary land in Samoa, earning WST\$ 5000,000 per year, which is more than that of his government job to support his families and communities (Hi, 2019). There are more stories like these in the various Pacific settings. This at least should change the perspective that the prestige and well-paid jobs of the urban centres are the only destiny for future generations. Rural settings have much more to contribute, but it needs visionary leaders, *yalomatua* (maturity), dedication, sacrifice, and patience to set up ventures to invigorate rural economies

with their benefits and ripple effects. Such initiatives will lessen the dependence of people on government services and support. It enables the creation of more sustainable sources of income and the revitalisation of locally-based, locally driven, and locally oriented forms of development where benefits are retained by the people (Barraket, Eversole, Luke, & Barth, 2019).

This thesis offers potential as a guide to motivate positive change for Pacific communities. It restates the belief that indigenous people can do well in participating in their own forms of economic development and, at the same time, retain control of their intergenerational resources whilst upholding community processes and values. It also reinforces the indigenous presence gaining visibility in economic engagements within their national economies. Ili Vunisuwai, the author of the book *'Na Tagi Ni Yaloqu'* (My soul in sorrow 2019), encourages indigenous Fijians to use their resource-rich status to make economic engagements and invest more capital. He states:

*Sa kena gauna vinaka oqo me da vakayagataka sara na noda iyau bula ka da vukica ka solevaka me da vakaciciva na veivakatoroicaketaki vakailavo. Ni sa rawa oya me da kukube matua me da maroroi I lavo me baleti ira na makubuda. Ke sega e da na vakalolomataki, vakatotogani mai vei ira e tu vei ira na lewa kei na I lavo. E da sa na qai kawa bobula e na noda qele ka ra a se maroroya na tubuda.*

It is time to use our natural resources and use it for locally-driven economic development. Once that is done, then we should engage in investments for our grandchildren. If this is not done, prepare to face drastic measures by people with power and money as they will try their best to have access to our resources. We will be enslaved on the customary land that our ancestors had protected for many years (Ili Vunisuwai, personal communication, 2019).

Thus, to have a share in the economy, our indigenous communities need to work collaboratively, utilise their intergenerational resources and manage and retain the benefits of development within their own communities.

### 10.3 Recommendations

The findings of this study portray the benefits of utilising intergenerational resources like customary land to create meaningful forms of economic development. There are multiple

hurdles faced by indigenous entrepreneurs to establish and run a successful enterprise on their customary land. The lack of capital, lack of sufficient support services, inability to create collateral out of customary and communally-owned resources, and lack of technical support and knowledge, are the main ones. It is highly recommended that specific policies and supports are put in place to assist indigenous entrepreneurs in establishing economic development on their customary land. Indigenous people who reside in villages can never be compared to other ethnic groups in rural areas who live on leased land. Leaseholders have access to financial assistance and commercial farming support. Villagers, on the other hand, need more of this, and the only way forward is to revitalise their rural economies and development. As seen with the businesses in this study, their contribution to the national economy, supporting rural economies, and collective wellbeing, is impressive. It is time for replication of such initiatives that enhance national economic stability, wellbeing, peace, and harmony.

Wherever land is under customary ownership in the Pacific, there are traditional structures and systems in place to ensure that this land can be the basis of people's livelihoods. Through advocating support for traditional values similar to *solesolevaki*, with good leadership more development can benefit local people. Moreover, for rural development efforts in the Pacific to be more productive and sustainable, there is a need for governments in the region and development agencies (both international and local), to capture the passion and interest of locals. For instance, the identification of crops for agriculture-based businesses or a business type that will do well in a specific area needs to be established. Then channel that energy through established structures around collective development, like *solesolevaki*. *Solesolevaki* is not all 'plain sailing'; it involves many people, and there are often drawbacks. However, encouraging customary values and having visionary leadership skills have enabled the process to go well in the case study examples. This symbiotic relationship between the businesses and the *solesolevaki* group is an excellent example of development in indigenous settings.

Development systems in smaller nations like Fiji face many dilemmas, and they could do better to realise the capacities of the rural areas and provide support services. Development-supporting elements often occur in silos through the research institutions for innovation and experimentation, the governmental ministries, the NGOs and consultants, the primary industry, banks, marketing agents, the local farmers on the ground, and the like. There is a

need for the walls to be broken down to allow more interaction and a free-flow of information and support systems. This is more about creating an entrepreneurship ecosystem, which is one of the contributing factors of similar economies like Rwanda moving up the world economic ladder (from 143rd to 67th). An entrepreneurship ecosystem has also assisted the economies of countries like Chile, Taiwan, and Israel (Fraiberg, 2017; Isenberg, 2010, 2011). A consultation will be crucial, but clear guidelines need to be put in place and implementation strategies piloted. The economies and capacities of the rural sectors can be realised in this way (Veitayaki, 2019).

Throughout this study, one can also recognise the evident role of the church in the lives of indigenous Fijians. The roles, ethos, and values administered through the church are amalgamated with the way of life and traditions of indigenous Fijians. There are two ways in which the church can contribute to the future economic development of the people within their jurisdictions. The first includes the need to change the perspectives of the church members in regard to *'ena sega ni lako vata na bula vakayalo kei na bula vakaiyau'* (money is the root of all evil). This had been preached by the church for many decades with the belief that being rich is a sin, while at the same time, the church still requires financial levies from the congregation. This message needs to change, by including economic development as part of the church. It should be included in their training curriculums as well as their church activities and monitored by their networks. When people are financially stable, then the values of sharing, love, and unity can be realised, as one will never express *loloma* (love) or share anything if he has nothing (Vunisuwai, 2015). This sort of economic development initiated by the church was evident in the initial stage of Nayarabale Youth Farm (see Chapter 6, Section 6.4.1). This can alleviate the burdens like church levies, allowing families more freedom to look after their affairs, and contribute to their wellbeing.

This research adds to the knowledge academy aligned to indigenous development, particularly in the Pacific. It is not the end of the knowledge seeking exercise on customary land and economic development, rather it is a contribution to the continuum

of learnings and understanding on resilience of indigenous communities. The following proverb reiterates this concept.

*Na yaba'i ni sa matua, me na tei viro me rawa ni ua ni cegu na noda va'amagiti*

Yams are harvested and replanted again so we continue to share our food.

This proverb reflects the need for continued research and new findings supported by the sharing of knowledge to benefit our people and their future.

***Vina'a va'alevu na solesoleva'i ni 'ena vueti na bula e yaga sara e na noda dui yavutu, ei na tarai cae ni noda veivanua me vanua sia mai muri.***

**(Thank you for the collective efforts that enable better wellbeing and livelihood in our communities, making this world a better place to live in).**

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### Appendix 1 'The land has eyes and teeth' project information sheet.



MASSEY UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES  
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES  
TE KURA PŪKENGĀ TANGATA

#### "The land has eyes and teeth": customary landowners' entanglements with economic systems in the Pacific

##### INFORMATION SHEET

###### Introduction

The aim of this research is to explore how communities across the Pacific have been able to establish successful businesses on customary land while retaining control over this land, contributing to local wellbeing, and respecting community values.

The research is being conducted between 2017 and 2019 by a team of researchers, mostly based at Massey University in Palmerston North, New Zealand. The main investigators are senior academics in Development Studies each with 25 years research experience in the Pacific, along with a Fijian national who is a specialist in Pacific wellbeing and in doing culturally-appropriate research. They are also supervising two PhD students: Suliasi Vunibola and Hennah Steven. They are supported by an eminent professor from University of the South Pacific.

Principal Investigator: Prof. Regina Scheyvens (Development Studies, Massey)  
Associate Investigators: Dr Litea Meo-Sewabu (School of Social Sciences, USP), and Prof Glenn Banks (Development Studies, Massey)  
Professor Vijay Naidu (Governance and Development, USP)

###### Project Description and Invitation

This research will utilise predominantly qualitative research methods including interviews, observation and talanoa sessions to allow in-depth investigation of what makes for successful business on customary land in the Pacific, seeking perspectives from business owners and managers as well as community members and key informants (e.g. government, donors and business organisations). It will also explore the relationships between businesses and communities.

We have asked you to participate as we would like to draw on your experience and insight to help build our understanding of successful business on customary land. We would therefore appreciate it if you would consider taking part in this research. If you are a business owner or manager, or community member, a PhD researcher will live in or near your community for several weeks, and will undertake semi-structured interviews (1 hour) and more informal talanoa (discussions with groups) (up to 2 hours). If you are a key informant (e.g. government official or development specialist), a PhD student will invite you to take part in an interview (1 hour).

###### Data Management

The information you provide will be kept confidential and stored safely (using codes instead of names). All physical data, including interview transcripts and notes will be stored in a lockable cabinet or suitcase, and electronic copies of this data will be saved on the research project's password-protected Dropbox site.

###### Participant's Rights

We would be delighted if you agreed to participate, but please be assured that you are under no obligation to do so. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study at any time;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;

- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.

### **Project Contacts**

If you have any questions about this research please contact one of the following investigators:

Regina Scheyvens  
 Mobile: +64 21 2179481  
 Email: [R.A.Scheyvens@massey.ac.nz](mailto:R.A.Scheyvens@massey.ac.nz)

Litea Meo-Sewabu  
 Mobile: +679 323 2424  
 Email: [litea.meosewabu@usp.ac.fj](mailto:litea.meosewabu@usp.ac.fj)

### **Committee Approval Statement**

*This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern A, Application 17/08. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Lesley Batten, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern A, telephone 06 356 9099 x 85094, email [humanethicsoutha@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicsoutha@massey.ac.nz).*

## Appendix 2: Approval letter to conduct research from Ministry of iTaukei Affairs



MINISTRY OF ITAUKEI AFFAIRS  
ITAUKEI TRUST FUND BUILDING COMPLEX  
87 QUEEN ELIZABETH DRIVE, SUVA  
P.O.BOX 2100, GOVERNMENT BUILDING, SUVA, FIJI.

TELEPHONE: (679) 3100 909

FAX: (679) 3317 077

Reference: MTA – 4/99/8-2

30<sup>th</sup> August 2018

Mr. Suliasi Vunibola  
School of People, Environment & Planning  
Institute of Development Studies  
Massey University  
Palmerston North 4474  
New Zealand

### **Re: Research Request - Letter of Support**

In response to your request dated 26<sup>th</sup> August 2018, this is a support letter by the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs (MTA) for you to carry out Free Prior and Informed Consent sessions with the community prior to continuing on with your field research from September - November 2018. The villages of interest are tabulated below:

No.	Village	Tikina	Province
1	Koroyaca	Sabeto	Ba
2	Narokorokoyawa	"	"
3	Natalau	"	"
4	Naboutini	"	"
5	Nadele	"	"
6	Korobebe	"	"
7	Nayarabale	Vaturova	Cakaudrove

It is noted that your research project is titled, "*E da dravudravua e na dela ni nodā vutuniyau, Customary land and economic development: Case studies from Fiji*".

Mandated to oversee the welfare and good governance of the iTaukei community under the iTaukei Affairs Act 1945, this letter is granted on the condition that the following will be undertaken:-

- i. Roko Tui responsible for the proposed site(s) be informed of the research objectives and the communities that will be impacted in the process;
- ii. Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) guideline Principle is obtained by researcher and evidence of this provided with a copy of final report;

- iii. Individuals/communities that participate in the research are appropriately informed of the objectives and duration of the research;
- iv. Cultural sensitivity and traditional protocols are observed;
- v. All fieldwork and research activity is to be put on hold on Sunday; that Sundays' be respected as a day of rest;
- vi. Status update(s) of the ongoing fieldwork be submitted at regular intervals to the respective Provincial Council office and the designated MTA desk officer;
- vii. That the respective village communities are acknowledged in the research report;
- viii. A copy of the finalized research findings report is submitted back to the community; and
- ix. A Copy of the finalized research findings report document with corresponding Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) forms is submitted to the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs, and each Provincial Council office.

Kindly be advised that this support letter is also based on you meeting institutional requirements from other line Ministries / Government Departments that are directly/indirectly linked to your area of research interest.

The designated officers, as point of contact with regards to reporting and other necessary issues is Peni Torawale on email: [peni.torawale@govnet.gov.fj](mailto:peni.torawale@govnet.gov.fj) telephone: 3100909 (ext 1029) or [noa.bale@govnet.gov.fj](mailto:noa.bale@govnet.gov.fj) ; telephone: 3100 909 (ext 1026).

You are advised to liaise with the Roko Tui upon arrival, for further assistance.



Naipote Katonitabua

**Permanent Secretary for iTaukei Affairs**

cc: **DCEO, TAB**  
**Roko Tui Ba**  
**Roko Tui Cakaudrove**

## Appendix 3: Research permit application



MASSEY UNIVERSITY  
TE KUNENGA KI PUREHURA

8 September 2017

To Whom It May Concern

Re: Research permit application for 'The Land Has Eyes and Teeth'

The proposed research is a large project spanning three to four Pacific countries over three years, led by Professor Regina Scheyvens at Massey University as part of a research team also comprising Professor Glenn Banks, Dr Litea Meo-Sewabu and Professor Vijay Naidu. I can confirm that the proposed research has been peer-reviewed by international reviewers and has been determined to be an excellent proposal of high standard. The proposal was awarded funding in a highly competitive research funding process through the Royal Society of New Zealand and the Research Ethics office at Massey University subsequently provided the project with low-risk ethics clearance, providing assurance of its quality and robust methods.

The funding awarded by the Royal Society of New Zealand will cover the travel, accommodation and associated research expenses involved and Massey University will ensure access to the appropriate facilities and support to allow its successful completion.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'O. Britz', written over a circular stamp or seal.

Oliver Britz  
Acting Director, Research & Enterprise

## Appendix 4: Research ethics notification



Date: 22 February 2017

Dear Prof Regina Scheyvens

Re: Ethics Notification - SOA 17/08 - "The land has eyes and teeth": customary landowners' entanglements with economic systems in the Pacific

Thank you for the above application that was considered by the Massey University Human Ethics

Approval is for three years. If this project has not been completed within three years from the date of this letter, reapproval must be requested.

If the nature, content, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please advise the Secretary of the Committee.

Yours sincerely



Dr Brian Finch  
Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and Director (Research Ethics)

## Appendix 5: Support letter to conduct research



MASSEY UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES  
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES  
TE KURA PŪKENGĀ TANGATA

6 September 2018

### Details of Suliasi Vunibola's intended field research

Dear Sir or Madam

I am writing to you as the primary supervisor of Suliasi Vunibola's PhD, which is exploring positive examples of economic development on customary land in Fiji. Suliasi is a full time student doing his PhD in Development Studies at Massey University in New Zealand. He has a 3 year scholarship as part of this, and funding to support his field research expenses, including approximately 3 months of field work in his home country of Fiji.

He wishes to conduct 3 case studies for this research. The following outlines his research plan:

September 20th to October 10th - Sabeto Mudpool, Nadi  
October 11th to November 8th - Aviva Farms, Nadi  
November 11th to November 27th- Nayarabale Youth Farm, Nayarabale, Cakaudrove.

In country, Suliasi will be supported by his co-supervisor, Dr Litea Meo-Sewabu, who is now lecturing at University of the South Pacific.

If you require any other information, please let me know. Otherwise, I hope that you will be able to support Suliasi to progress his research.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Regina Scheyvens

[r.a.scheyvens@massey.ac.nz](mailto:r.a.scheyvens@massey.ac.nz)

+64 21 2179481

Te Kunenga  
ki Pūrehuroa

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## **Appendix 6: Guiding questions for *talanoa* and semi structured interview**

### **Guiding questions for *talanoa* and semi-structured interviews**

#### **With Pacific businesses on customary land (questions for owners or managers)**

1. Please provide us with some background on the origins and history of your business e.g. who started it, when and why, and how has it evolved over time.
2. Do you consider your business to be economically successful? Please explain (e.g. does it turn a profit; have you been able to grow the business; does it provide local employment)?
3. Do you consider your business to be socially successful? Please explain (e.g. does it make contributions to local community groups)
4. Do you consider your business to be environmentally successful? Please explain (e.g. do you practice effective waste minimisation and management; do you actively seek to improve the surrounding environment)?
5. Do you consider your business to be culturally embedded? Please explain (e.g. do you abide by any cultural protocols, or consult local leaders on any decisions when the business might affect the community)?
6. What relationships, business or otherwise, are important to the success of your business?
7. Do you think your business contributes to local wellbeing and development? Please explain.
8. To what extent is your business locally owned and/or locally managed?
9. What are the challenges to operating a successful business on customary land?
10. What do you think are the key ingredients for success of businesses based on customary land?

#### **With communities**

1. What do you see as ‘good development’ for your community?
2. Do you think that business X ‘puts back’ into the community (or contributes to local wellbeing and development)? Please explain.
3. Are you proud to have business X in your community? Please explain.
4. What do you think is necessary for a business on customary land to be both successful and to be respected by local people?
5. To what extent does business X abide with cultural norms and protocols? Do you think cultural embeddedness is important in terms of the operation of local businesses? Please explain.
6. How would you describe the relationship which exists between the business and your community, and how has this changed over time?

#### **With other stakeholders (e.g. government officials, donors, business associations, NGOs)**

1. What do you think are the key ingredients for success of businesses based on customary land?
2. What are the challenges to operating a successful business on customary land?
3. Does your organisation do anything to support businesses based on customary land? Please explain.
4. What relationships, business or otherwise, are important to the success of businesses based on customary land?
5. Overall, do you see customary land as an enabler of, or barrier to, development in country X? Please explain.

## Appendix 7: Participant consent form



MASSEY UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES  
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES  
TE KURA PŪKENGĀ TANGATA

### Customary landowners and economic development in the Pacific

#### PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.

I wish/do not wish to have data placed in an official archive.

I would like to be referred to in this study in the following way (fill in your preference):

- My name and title i.e. ....
  - (e.g. Netani Naivalu, Plantation owner, Saroni village)
- My title or a descriptor i.e. ....
  - (e.g. Plantation owner, Saroni)

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

I would/would not like a summary report of the findings sent to me on completion of this research.

Signature:

Date:

.....

Full Name - printed

.....

Email address:

.....

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