

## Fijian Stories from the Heart of Communities

### Enhancing Water Access and Management on Rabi Island



Rabi Island, a small island off the east coast of Fiji's second largest island, Vanua Levu, is home to approximately 5,000 Banaba people, descendants of people from Banaba Island in Kiribati. The island comprises of four villages: Tabwewa, the administrative center in the far north, Uma, Tabiang, and Buakonikai and operates under the leadership of the Rabi Council of Leaders.

In early 2023, the Rabi Council reached out to Habitat Fiji for support with their water supply issues in the Tiburaro and Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) communities in Tabwewa, and Kesukesu and Nadoi communities in Uma. The Council shared that

over the years, the SDA, Kesukesu and Nadoi communities accessibility to water had significantly reduced to the point where people only had access for 1-2 hours per day while families in Tiburaro had to walk to creeks and streams to get water.

As a result, managing household chores and caring for the elderly and persons living with disabilities became more challenging for women. The Council also shared that due to financial constraints, maintenance of the water system became difficult causing it to deteriorate over time. This resulted in women and children fetching water from polluted creeks and streams despite the risk of water borne diseases.



Ms. Tiaureina Rokouea

Ms. Tiaureina Rokouea's husband suffers from partial paralysis. She shared that she fetches water for him and assists him with bathing and using the toilet. She constantly finds herself worrying about the water running out especially when she is at work.

Recognizing the severity, Habitat Fiji partnered with the New Zealand High Commission in Fiji to facilitate the installation of a new water system for the Tiburaro community and make improvements to the existing water systems for the other three communities.

*"Finally, each home has its own tap which is connected to the new water system. Without Habitat's support we would still be facing the same problem,"* says Charlie Bobo, a community member of Tiburaro Village.

The first ever water committee was also established on the island to support the Council in the operation and maintenance of the water system. A financial

literacy training was conducted to further support the committee to manage the levies collected from the community members. This project has improved the quality of life for approximately 800 people in four communities on Rabi Island.



Installation of the water tank in Kesukesu community



## Rabi Island Receives Bucket Water Filters

After improving the access to water in the four communities on Rabi Island, we provided further support to improve the quality of water consumed. Habitat Fiji together with its generous supporters were able to source Bucket Water Filters. These user-friendly portable filters enabled the community to easily remove impurities, making it safe for consumption.

38 filters were distributed to the families for their daily use, 2 filters were provided to the community health centres while 7 filters were allocated to the Rabi Council of Leaders for disaster response efforts.



## Strengthening Skills for Safety, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

Habitat Fiji works in diverse communities around the country. This means that our team is faced with strengths and barriers that are unique to each community. By understanding and addressing the unique needs of the vulnerable population, we are inclusive in our efforts to serve more effectively and compassionately.

Our team was part of a training held by the Fiji Disabled Peoples Federation which focused on strengthening inclusiveness in our programs. The second training, conducted by the Pacific Centre for Peacebuilding, centered on strengthening conflict analysis and resolution techniques

enabling our team to better support the diverse communities we serve for a lasting impact.

Our team also undertook an essential Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) training to enhance safety measures during our builds.

Our training coordinator Eroni Finau states that the *“success of our projects depend on our ability to effectively support the vulnerable communities. We ensure our programs are centred around the needs of the people. These trainings enhance our understanding of their challenges and helps our team to tailor our program to support them better”*.



- **First ever Global Village Build will be happening in Lautoka this July - the first ever international volunteer engagement for Habitat Fiji after COVID 19.**
- **Habitat Fiji will be building six kitchens in Narikoso Village, Ono Island in Kadavu**

## Staff Spotlight: Adi Arieta Vesikara



Adi Arieta Tupou Baleivale Vesikara also fondly known as Eta, began her journey with Habitat Fiji as a research enumerator in April 2019. During her community engagement visits, she discovered a deep passion for community work.

*“I realized that this is my passion, visiting communities, meeting new people, and listening to their voices”,* she shares. Wanting to continue her work in the community, she took on the role of a Community Development Officer with Habitat Fiji. Part of her role included conducting capacity development trainings such as the Participatory Approach to Safe Shelter Awareness (PASSA) and Wash and Sanitation and Hygiene (WaSH) for community members.

*“As I conducted trainings and met with more people needing support, my passion kept growing”.* She fondly recalls the first time she presented to the Beneficiary Selection Committee *“Only one family was selected but it was a great learning opportunity for me.”*

Her career highlights include navigating challenging disaster response situations during Tropical Cyclone Ana. *“We were in Labasa when TC Ana struck Fiji in the year 2021 and we were stranded for one week without water and electricity. It was a very challenging experience being away from my family with the ongoing cyclone.”*

This year, she co facilitated the PASSA Training of Trainers in Tonga, for Habitat Partners in the Pacific such as ADRA Samoa, Live & Learn Tonga, and the Talitha Project Tonga. This was a first for both Eta and Habitat Fiji.

Over the years, Eta has become an integral part of the Community Development Team and has now been promoted to the role of Senior Community Development Coordinator. She has taken on the significant task to review the PASSA, WaSH and Climate Change Adaptation training manual to ensure that it is holistic and well informed through the current realities faced in Fiji and the Pacific.

Eta’s dedication to community development shines through her unwavering commitment to improving lives and fostering sustainable change.

*“People matter to me, and they are my greatest motivation,”* she says.



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