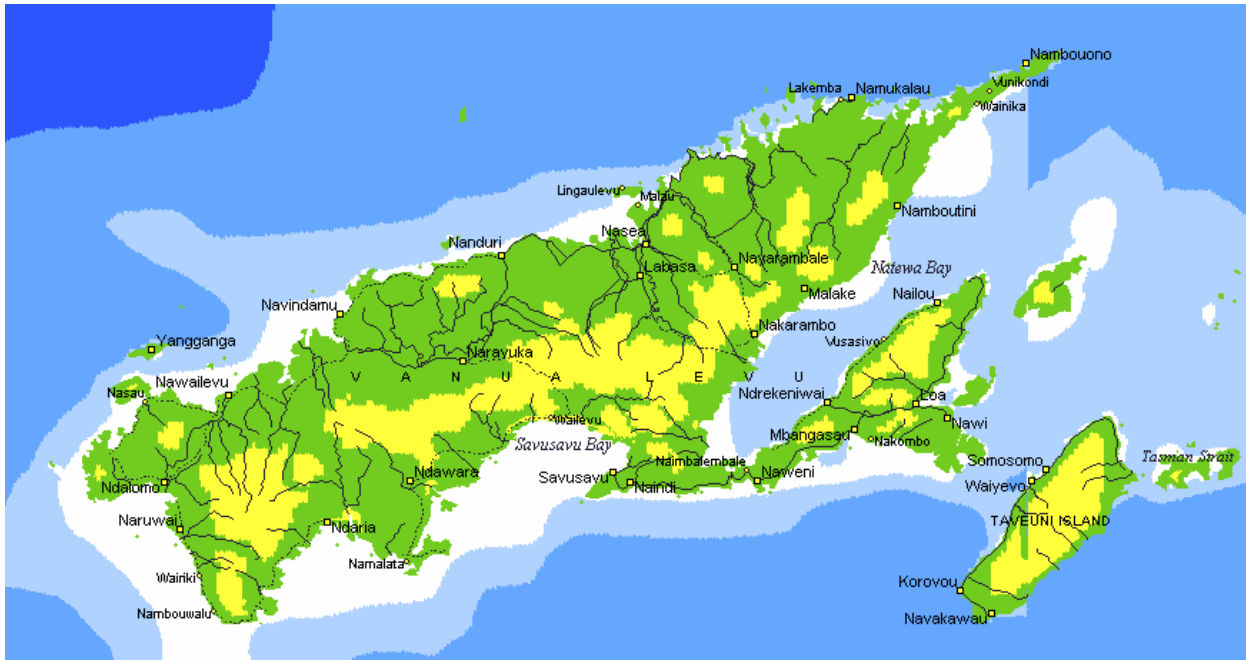


BALAWAVIRIKI

An Indigenous Vanua Response to Access and Equity



Educational Experiences, Challenges and Possibilities of a ‘relocated’ people

RESEARCH REPORT 2009

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Acknowledgement

I wish to express my appreciation to a number of people and acknowledge their valuable assistance in the undertaking of this study. First I would like to acknowledge the time, resources, wisdom, hospitality and the love offered to us, the research team, by the Balawaviriki community. In particular I deeply respect the tremendous help offered to us by Rakai Lalagavesi and the people of Wainika, Savenaca and the people of Vatu, Peni and the people from the village of Yasawa and Vilitati and the people of Nagasauva. I also wish to acknowledge the landowner and Turaga ni Mataqali of Ravinivatu, Motikai Seadroka, who willingly shared his story and views with us.

I am indebted to my research team, specifically Dr Bogitini and Dr Nabobo-Baba, whose expert guidance and wisdom greatly contributed to the success of this research. I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Mr Sairusi Lui - Coordinator, Savusavu Centre and Ms Unaisi Bicinivalu from the Northern Campus, Labasa.

My sincere appreciation to the USP Research Committee for providing all the financial costs for this study.

Last but not the least, a very special thank you to my sister Mere Tora for editing this report and my daughter Mere Naisilisili for designing the cover page.

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1.0 Introduction

This report arises out of a research on how a relocated population from the tribe of Cuku from Udu Point in Vanualevu have maximized their opportunities through the enabling processes of *vanua* relationships. The Balawaviriki Project is an example of “traditional gifting” of land and embodies existing indigenous values of *veirairai* (looking out and looking after each other), *solisoli* (the gifting of a wealth, land or portion of ones inheritance for example traditional skill), *loloma* (compassion or more rightly empathy for one’s kind or kinsmen) and reciprocity to name a few. The gifting of land has allowed the Cuku people, a remote and rural tribe to divulge into commercial farming. Income from this activity has enabled families to send their children to urban schools and remit money, goods, foods and services back to their villages whenever these are called for by the village elders, families and chiefs. Balawaviriki is an emblem for success in the blending of traditional and modern strategies to resolve economic challenges.

The relocated people of Balawaviriki are mainly part of the *vanua* of Koroivoco and Cuku which comprise the villages of Tawake for the former and Wainika, Vatu, Nagasauva and Yasawa for the latter. These villages are located along the eastern side of Udu Point, the northern tip of Vanualevu, Fiji. The area is historically renowned for its remoteness and ruralness (Baba, 2008:58). Colonizers found the area around Udu Point to be off the regular shipping routes, so the place was seldom visited. Udu Point or ‘Ucu ni Potu’ tapers to a stretch of approximately 2-3 km separating Natewa Bay and the Babasiga coasts.

The people in the study have been disadvantaged back home by a geographical environment that offers very little land for commercial farming. The village topography is dominated by rugged and hilly terrains and rocky mountains that crowd in upon the shores. This leaves a narrow strip of alluvial soil that is only sufficient to support subsistence farming rather than commercial. Given such a limitation, the people of Cuku have resorted to the ‘*solisoli*’ as a solution to match new demands in their changing lifestyle.

The study hopes to unearth, through the voices of the people on Balawaviriki, the responses of the Cuku people themselves on the issues of access and equity. The responses are expected also to capture their views on enabling mechanisms such traditional relationships of “*solisoli*” (gifting) means for them.

2.0 The Study

2.1 Aim:

To examine how Balawaviriki as an indigenous response to access and equity plays a pivotal role in the schooling and other development needs of Cuku people. The study aims to listen and document voices of indigenous farmers, their women folk and children in terms of their views regarding access and equity issues of education and training of rural and remote school children and peoples.

2.2 Objectives

The study objectives are as follows:

- i) To document and evaluate the enabling opportunities created by a traditional indigenous Vanua process of “solisoli” ni qele- (the gifting of land to a kins-people) to enable access and equity to development where arable land is scarce.
- ii) To examine Vanua Perceptions of Development
- iii) To document how Balawaviriki has played an important role for people in terms of access to education and development as well as document “the opportunity to learn” (OTL) by this particular people
- iv) To critically analyse the role women play in such a project as Balawaviriki in especially how they support the goals of development of Cuku
- v) To hear the voices of children in terms of their schooling and challenges of access.
- vi) To identify development- and related Education & Training Needs of this particular farming community

2.3 Research Questions

The research questions include:

- i) What opportunities has Balawaviriki created for you and your people? (In terms of soli ni qele). Please Explain in detail
- ii) What developments have you done here and elsewhere that you can say is the direct or indirect result of Balawaviriki?
- iii) What are some very important Cuku or Indigenous Fijian values do you think are at play here in the whole “giving” and utilizing of land in Balawaviriki?
- iv) How has Balawaviriki increased opportunities for your children and you in terms of training and education? Please discuss this in detail...
- v) What role do women play in such a project as Balawaviriki in especially how they support the goals of development of Cuku and the education of children of Cuku (their own and relations)
- vi) What sorts of support do you need in terms of training or further education in order to maximize your opportunities here at Balawaviriki
- vii) In what way do you think Balawaviriki has been an ideal in terms of access to land and opportunities? Please explain

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Ethnography

It was crucial in this research to use a methodology that would draw out the important knowledge and processes needed to understand a people whose web of relationships and structures have been ingrained in their life styles for longer than recorded history. Searching for the appropriate methodology in the scientific paradigm literature was problematic but this experience was confirmed to be typical of indigenous people's research methodologies, knowledge and processes (Sillitoe et.al, 2002; Duara,2004). However, the area of ethnography was found to be close enough to guide this research. Ethnography is a form of research that focuses on the 'patterns, institutions, dynamics and changes of cultures' (Berry, J.W. et.al. 2006). The approach allows a researcher to describe 'the entire way of life of a people' by being part of the group participating and observing activities as they happen (Brym and Lie, 2005). The ethnographic method is a means of tapping into local points of view, into households and the community's pool of knowledge.

In choosing ethnography to guide this research, the researchers were aware of the claim by Smith (1999) that its Western paradigm orientation could lead to misinterpretations and misrepresentations of indigenous peoples' cultures and languages. The people of Balawaviriki have been exposed to Western research approaches where they had been measured, judged and treated as the 'object' of research – the suppressed 'other' in answering government and political questions for community development. It was therefore critical in this research that the Balawaviriki people, the relocated people of Cuku be provided an outlet to voice their expectations through a methodology that would naturally liberate these voices. Therefore, this research has been approached using the indigenous methodology.

The only academically legitimate ground for indigenous methodologies is in the decolonization paradigm (Smith, 1999; Rigney, 1997 and Battiste, 1996). Decolonisation is the process of unraveling colonial constructs and influences using the challenges of imperial hegemony (Ghandi,1998; Duara, 2004; Ashcroft, 2001). The cultural methods of inquiry used in this research were deliberate attempts to liberate the 'voices' of the Balawaviriki community as a strategy to challenge imperial hegemony. Thiong'o (1986) claims that decolonization must start with the mind and should involve a conscious decision to uncover, uproot and remove western imposed values and beliefs which have been ingested through colonial encounters for centuries (Hotep, 2003). Therefore, the local '*talanod*' sessions in the form of focus group interview and indepth interview were

found to be particularly useful in drawing out some deep cultural realities and knowledge that are of crucial value to both indigenous and non-indigenous people today. These cultural methods were not meant to reject Western knowledge but rather, they were aimed at centering the Balawaviriki people's concerns and world views in order to know and understand theory and research from their own perspectives and purposes. The methods of inquiry were also drawn extensively from the underpinnings associated with the Vanua Research Framework (VRF) by Nabobo-Baba (2005).

3.2 Fieldwork

Although the initial proposal was to begin the fieldwork in August, 2008, the research proper was carried out between 10/11/08 and 29/11/08. The USP research team included the following people:

Dr Samu Bogitini – Director of USP Northern Campus
Dr Unaisi Nabobo-Baba – Coordinator, Indigenous Affairs, USP
Sairusi Lui - Coordinator, Savusavu Centre
Unaisi Bicinivalu – Secretary Northern Campus, Labasa
Sereima Naisilisili – A/Lecturer, School of Education, Laucala Campus

Following *vanua* protocols, it was appropriate to use existing *vanua* contacts as entry points. Being an insider and a daughter of the *vanua* of Cuku, I used my *veiwekani* (relational) connections to access the Balawaviriki community. I first rang my brother Epi, who lives in Wainika village to brief me with protocols and provided Rakai's phone contact. Rakai is the community leader in Balawaviriki. Another member of the research whose husband is from the area, also alerted her relatives from the village. Soon research logistics at the site were finalized. Accommodation, transport and other logistics had been arranged by Dr Bogitini prior to the date of the research.

3.2.1 Focus group *talanoa*:

Farmers

The first focus group interview was held straight after the welcome ceremony on 12th November, 2008 with the farmers. The session was conducted in a normal *vanua* context where visitors were accorded hospitality in a village. Men were gathered in the meeting house over grog drinking as the interview was conducted. Women only appeared to serve the visitors with tea and lunch. The research team sat at the left front of the room while the community elders sat at the opposite side. As questions were asked, people

raised their opinions individually as the others listened. Tense and serious moments were eased with a bowl of grog during the talanoa session. The focus group interviews for men were held in three sessions between the 12th – 13th of November. All interviews were recorded on tapes.

Women

The women's group interview was conducted on the 12th November, in a farmer's house. About six to eight women were in the house helping with lunch preparations when the talanoa session took place. The two interviewers were both women functioning as insider and outsider researchers. As insiders, the interviewers were already familiar with the local culture and customs and also had already established a free relationship with the women. Such an environment naturally relaxed protocol and allowed the opportunity for the researchers to gain participant confidence easily and to be privy to 'insider' information that would not be trusted to a stranger. Nabobo-Baba (2006) claims that the interview process is much easier when the interviewee and the researchers are equal in social status and closely related as assumed in this research.

3.2.2 *Talanoa as Indepth Interview*

Indepth interviews were conducted between the 13/11/08 and 29/11/08. The following Indepth interviews were conducted:

3 Balawaviriki farmers – Rakai, Suluka and Jale

The Agricultural Officer Savusavu, Sakeo Matakavesi

The Chief of the *vanua* of Seavaci – Motikai Seadroka

The Chief of the *vanua* of Cuku – Epi

3.3 Researcher and researched Relationships

The researchers are all related traditionally and via marriage for one of the members, to the people in Balawaviriki. As the team comprise indigenous Fijians, Fijian ceremonies of entry (*sevusevu*) was conducted and reciprocated appropriately by a full scale ceremony of welcome by the hosts. Like most things Fijian and conducted in the *vanua*, silence was the dominant voice as silence befitting a ceremony was maintained especially during the presentations. Silence¹ and in this case silence of ceremony provides mana and dignity to the *vanua* (Nabobo-Baba, 2005, 2006).

¹ See Nabobo-Baba (2005, 2006) for a proposed Fijian cultural taxonomy of silences.

In the speeches of “entry” by the research team and vice versa of welcome by the hosts, all tribal affiliations and relationships present were recognized. This is through the mention as usual, of the titles of the paramount seats of the three indigenous Fijian states Kubuna, Burebasaga and Tovata. For instance Samu Bogitini in presenting the sevusevu on behalf of the team said the following:

...kina veidelani yavu au cavubaleta ena...na mataka ni siga nikua...Dou rai saka tiko mai na turaga, dou raica e dua na i lakolako malumalumu...mai na koronivuli ni veivakatorocaketaki na Univesiti ni Ceva...le tale tiko ga mai ena veidelaniyavu...mai Kubuna mai vei ira saka na Goneturaga na Vunivalu na Tui Kaba, vaka saka talega kina na vanua o Burebasaga, na Marama Bale na Roko Tui Dreketi...(To the traditional houses that I rise today to address and may not have mentioned quite specifically, I seek your forgiveness, this group from the University of the South Pacific who are also from the traditional Fijian confederacies of Kubuna as headed by the Vunivalu na Tui Kaba and Burebasaga, from the Gone Marama Bale na Roko Tui Dreketi...)(PO, 1-Balawaviriki, 12/11/08)

This is followed by a brief explanation of the purpose of the visit by the research team and a plea to seek the cooperation of the hosts. The visitors in the presentation have their heads bowed in a customary show of deference and respect to the local owners of turf and continually via their spokesman articulate how humbled they are at the warm reception, the kindness of the hosts and make constant remarks apologizing ahead of behaviours or manners of speech, quality or quantity of gifts, or deportment that may not augur well with the hosts nor meet their expectations. Such remarks especially the seeking of apology in advance for instance by Samu reflect this and is seen as vakaturaga² or chiefly in manner:

...kereji saka tiko ga me dou vosota kevaka e lailai... Keveka e sega talega ni rakorako na kena I tukutukuni vei kemudou na Turaga...sa qai kerei saka tiko na Turaga sa tabogo me na vakalougatakataka na nomuni i tavi, na neitou i tavi, dou bulabula vinaka tiko, qaravi tiko nai tavi ni veivakatorocaketaki (Can we ask for prior forgiveness if the grog we are presenting (for the sevusevu) is small and the manner in which the presentation and our conduct in general may not be suitable ...I will ask God to bless you, your work, and bless us as well and your efforts at development...)(Ibid)

² See Ravuvu (1985) *Fijian Ethos* for detail.

Research in the tribe or *vanua* is among other things for “insiders” or “insider-outsider” researchers-and especially among indigenous peoples, a process of establishing relationships. Research relationships acknowledge local owners of land, new settlers, relationships, the departed in terms of ancestors getting recognized in things ceremonial, and other such detail that comprise the tribal protocols of knowledge access, permission and other related sensibilities. For indigenous researchers the research exercise is not an end in itself, nor is it treated as separate from everyday tribal relationships; it is as Nabobo-Baba (2005) pointed out a continuation of lifelong and established kin based relationships.

The research team’s spokesperson emphasizes how grateful the team is to be received in proper traditional manner and sought God’s blessings on the people. He pointed out specifically Vanua values of “loloma” (love/compassion) and the accommodating nature of the people to be able to set aside their time to receive and be with the team. He noted for instance:

...Vinaka saka. Vinaka. Ena vuku ni veiqaravi cecere vakaturaga sa vakayacori vei keitou. Keitou sega ni namaka me na mai vakayacori vei keitou...ia ni vakayacori vei keitou nai valavala vaka Viti, valavala vakavanua eda kilai kina na I Taukei. Sa duatani na neitou vakavinavinaka...keitou vakavinavinakataka vakalevu na yalo ni loloma ni veiciqomi ena vakarawarawataka talega vei keitou na neitou cakacaka... (*...Thank you most respectfully. Thank you. We thank you for the wonderful and chiefly ceremony of welcome you have accorded to us today. We did not expect this to happen this way...the traditional Fijian ceremony of welcome...we are indeed grateful and indebted to you for this. We are thankful for your generosity and love and for your warm reception and embracing us and our work here...*) (PO, 3-Balawaviriki, 12/11/08).

The other important element that Fijians do and observe when they meet especially in formal ceremony such as the one observed in Balawaviriki is the introductions of participants especially the visitors so that traditional ties and relationships are registered and then affirmed. After such introductions, people then talk and behave given the relationships identified. This is an important protocol that Fijians observe as all conversations, social courtesies and necessary social proximities/ distances and behavior, in such a setting will then be decided or governed by the established relationships - after they are clarified. One of the team members said for example:

Oi au mai Gau vasu i Tailevu...sa saini tu ga mai Wainika...(I am from Gau and my mother is from Tailevu...but I am married to Wainika (the hosts are from Wainika and related clans of Udu...)) (PO, 4-Balawaviriki, 12/11/08). ...).

4.0 Findings - The Balawaviriki community speaks: Indigenous ideas of land gifting, relationships, education and development

The indigenous research approaches above have unearthed some very interesting and valuable findings regarding the *solisoli* or land gifting. The following discussions reveal some indigenous knowledge and values that were related to us with emotions as each story was told.

4.1 *Na Rai Yawa*: Tribal visioning by Elders and the indigenous Fijian philosophy of 'i *solisoli*- an examination of its nature and possibilities as a response to development needs

The vision

The development initiative and project that is now Balawaviriki began with the vision of an elder who was the *vanua* representative of the people of the district of Tawake to the Cakaudrove provincial council meeting. Tawake comprises the six villages of Tawake, Wainigradru, Wainika, Vatu, Yasawa and Nagasauva. In Fijian, such vision is referred to as *rai yawa* (lit: looking far beyond into the future). Here is how his vision took shape as recounted to the research team by Rakai Lalagavesi in the hearing of the community at Balawaviriki when we assembled for our visit on 12th November, 2008.

...E donuya na neimami mata ti'o 'ina o Simione Kanibuata. E donuya viro ti'o ya na gauna ni nona la'o ti'o yane 'ina ena dua na bose ni yasana mai Yaroi...(ena 1986 beka se vole'ata). Ni'a 'auta ca'e na bose ni yasana na 'ere qele ena ti'ina o Tawa'e. Na gauna e a va'atura 'ina na nona mosoni ...'eitou vina'ata ti'o edua na qele na ti'ina o Tawa'e', e sega ni dua vei ira na dabe ti'o 'ena bose ni yasana me ciqoma va'adodonu sara. Ni tu'una o 'oya ni sa oti na bose sa su'a sa la'o mai tautuba na nodratou bure, sa rogo yani edua na i tu'utu'u vua me la'o mada yani vua e dua tale na qase ena dua tale na vale. Na gauna e la'o yani 'ina o 'oya, sa dabe to'a na qase oqo e loma ni vale, tara to'a edua na I vesu ni yaqona. A sa qai tu'una vua me la'i tu'ia mai na yaqona. (...It was during the time when Simione Kanibuata was our district representative to the Cakaudrove Provincial Council. Then a provincial council meeting took place in Yaroi [near Savusavu town]. This was in 1986 or thereabouts. It was here when he took up as a meeting motion the request for land for the people of the district of Tawake. When he took up the motion, there was no immediate response from the meeting. It was after the meeting when a messenger of an elderly man

billeted next door to him told him that the old man wanted to have an audience with him. On arrival, he saw the elderly man, almost his age, holding a bundle of grog (the roots of the plant) who then asked him to go pound the bundle... (FG-1, Balawaviriki, 12/11/08).

The *rai yawa* or tribal vision as indicated by the field data ensures that sustainable development or livelihoods of one's people is acquired. The *isolisoli* is also done with the same spirit in mind. The act of visioning involves a selfless move that the younger generations are eternally grateful for as articulated here:

...Na yavu e tovolei 'ina me vaqarai tu na qele e da sa raica tu ga na baravi mai ca'e. Na baravi sigasiga veivatuvalu. Ia e dua na 'a 'ei mami va'avinavina'ata'ina ti'o na nodra rai na qase, rawa ni 'eimami nanumi 'ina na lalai me rawa ni vakasaqarai tale e dua na qele me rawa ni 'eimami bula 'ina... *(The foundation or idea behind the search for new land is because up there [in their villages in Udu], the vegetation is grassland and the rugged and hilly terrain has limited scope to provide for all peoples. That's why we are eternally grateful to the wisdom and vision of the elders, that they thought of the younger and future generations – to search for new land to provide for our needs)* (FG-1, 12/11/08).

The Nature of I solisoli or Land Gifting

In the process of the *isolisoli*, the original owners, in this case it is the Vanua of Ravinivatu, continue to be acknowledged and uplifted in all things that relate to Balawaviriki. This is to do partly with the fact that the landowners or *taukei* are honored and accorded respect and due recognition and especially in this case, for the ultimate blessing of their land to the people of Cuku or Cu'u. Generosity of spirit is summed up in the Fijian notion and ideal of *loloma* (lit: love). Landowners are mentioned and recognized even though physically absent, in indigenous ceremonies. The public confession is a general reminder to all and especially to visitors or those that do not know who the landowners are.

So for instance, in the absence of the original tribal owners of the land –Ravinivatu-a portion of which is now called Balawaviriki; the ceremonial expressions still acknowledged them. The host presenter pointed out for instance during the reception of the teams' i sevusevu, the following:

....Cabe tio'na yaqona I Cu'u vua na goneturaga na Tui Cu'u...'ei ira na masi ni vanua era ti'o voli ena vanua o Balawaviri'i. Cabe tu na yaqona na vanua Ravinivatu 'ei na 'ena I tau'ei...(*...we accept the i sevusevu – the sevusevu presented to the tribe of Cuku (Cu'u in local dialect) , to the chief of Cuku and all other chiefs present in Balawaviriki...we also accept your iseusevu to the tribe and land of Ravinivatu – to its paramount chief...*)

(PO, 1, Balawaviriki, 12/11/08)

The actual giving away of the land began with the summoning of the visionary Simione Kanibuata by the old man after the provincial meeting as stated earlier. The person to give the land or landowner actually in this rare instance – a differing of process from norm or customs so to speak- provides the *yaqona* and tells the seeker of land to prepare it and serve it so that they drink the *yaqona* together. In the process the landowner seeks clarification to the seeker's plight. Here is the account as reported by Rakai Lalagavesi to the team:

E rau taba vata ga, ia rau sega ti ni vei'ilai. La'i tu'ia mai na yaqona sa qai tu'una me losea me qaravi 'oya mai na yaqona ya. Ni sa oti na yaqona sa 'au mai sa mai qaravi na yaqona sa tu'uni me talo, sa talo oti na yaqona sa qai tu'una vua na qase qo ni rogoca ni 'e're qele ti'o na ti'ina o Tawa'e. Sebera mada ya rau sa qai vei'ilai sa qai lululu sa qai va'amacalata'ina o oya ni qase ni Ravinivatu – na qele 'eimami sa ti'o 'ina qo. *Both men were of about the same age but had not known each other previously. The landowner told the other man to pound the grog and prepare for drinking. The grog was then prepared and the two men drank. Then the land owner said that he heard that he was asking for some land for the district of Tawake. Before that, they introduced themselves to each other, they shook hands then the land owner introduced himself as the owner of the land of Ravinivatu, the land we are living in right now.*

(FG,1. 12/11/08)

The two men in establishing relationships, found quickly that both of them had traditional ties to Namuka. In their conversation, they also found that they were closely related. The mother of the landowning unit was from Namuka and the seeker also had close blood ties to Namuka. Namuka therefore was the point of convergence- a similar focal point where their "blood meets so to speak". The old man (landowner) then affirms that he had land or rather his family had land in Ravinivatu that he could offer to the people or district of Tawake as requested. The seeker returns to Tawake and relays the information about the land.

The next move in the process of the *veisolisoli* was the collection of traditional wealth (i yau) by the villagers – all the villages of Tawake to go and officially present their gift to the traditional owners in Sevaci.

...La’o mai nai la’ola’o mai ca’e ena ti’ina o Tawa’e e vica na ‘ena mata, na mata ni ti’ina, turaga ni ‘oro, vata ‘ei na...mata ni vanua...Eratou la’o mai ena vei’ere’erei ni qele. Mai tuberi ‘ina na tabua, sa mai ‘erei na qele sa mani va’adonui yacova sara na gauna me sa mai dusi vei ratou na vanua me mai tauyavu ‘ina...erauta tiko ni 1,000 na eka dua na koro. Ia mai na gauna e yaco ti’o ‘ina na veisolisoli qo e donuya ti’o na walusagavulu ka ono e’i na walusagavulu ka vitu...me yacova sara ni sa mai dusi na qele qo ena walusagavulu ‘a vitu me sa tauyavuta’ina...Na gauna talega ‘oya’eimami se lewe lailai sara ‘eimami sa ciqoma tu ni sa tu na qele qo, me ‘eimami ca’aca’ata’ina.Sa ratou la’o voli ga mai e vica na qase, main a vei’oro. E ono na ‘oro ena ti’ina o Tawa’e, e lima ga na ‘oro eimami teitei ti’o i Balawaviri’i...Te’ivu to’a ga mai na ‘ena Tawa’e eratou le vica ti’o ga, ‘ena vo ‘eitou la’o sa’a mai ena yavusa o Cu’u ena va na ‘oro...’. Eimami mai teiva’ina ti’o na qele qo ni rauta e lima na yaba’i sa qai mai ca’a na ‘ena magiti. *(The team from Tawake comprised village reps, district reps and Vanua (tribal) representatives. Traditional wealth including whaletooth was presented to the landowners at Sevaci. This was sometimes in 1986. Each village in Tawake was to receive 1,000 acres of land each to farm- only five of the six (Wainigadru was not included as it was deemed to have sufficient land for its people). In 1987 farming officially began in Balawaviriki with a few elders from each of the villages. From the beginning Tawake village only had a few people farming, the main ones were from the vanua Cuku – this includes the villages of Wainika, Vatu, Yasawa and Nagasauva. Five years after farming began, a feast was then prepared to officially thank the people or traditional owners of Ravinivatu. (FG-1, 12/11/08).*

The presentation of traditional wealth followed the beginning of land utilization and settlement of Ravinivatu by the settlers from Tawake. Five years later, a feast was then held to commemorate the whole process of land giving. The Cuku people actually of the four villages- Wainika, Vatu, Yasawa and Nagasauva have been consistently farming and tilling the given land.

The feast mentioned above and the gift presentations by the people of Tawake to the traditional landowners took place in 1991 as mentioned earlier, five years after first settlement. The people of Tawake travelled on foot through thickly forested areas of Vatuova to reach Sevaci – the village of the traditional owners of the gifted land. The story of this journey goes like this:

...Na ciwasagavulu 'a dua, 'e donu noqu va'anananu, e ya ca'a 'ina na ca'a magiti na 'ena sa soli va'adua vei 'eimami na qele. 'Eimami yauta 'ina e dua na i yau levu, na magiti, na dramu karisini, na i sulu, na ibe, na voivoi, na I lavo, na vua'a. O ira na turaga, na marama, na cauravou yaco sara vei ira na gone lalai... 'eimami colacola 'ena loma ni siga rua 'eimami la'I ca'ava na magiti ni vanua – na 'ena soli va'adua vei 'eimami na qele. Au a vola ti'o ena noqu I vola na I tu'utu'u 'o, ia a sega ni macala vei au na i vola oya au sa biuta tu ivei. Au vola tu na yacadra kece na lako – vei ira na gone era la'o ti'o 'oya era se gone lalai sara, se bera ni vuli, qo era sa cauravou ka goneyalewa tale to'a, sa ra teitei tale tu qo...

'Eimami la'o ti'o ena gauna ni dra'I ca, 'eimami colacola ya sa vica ga na vale sa tara tu I 'e, era se vale ca , a'a tu ena lalaga na bitu. Na vale ni 'uro tu ga na bitu , ena gauna au vosa ti'o 'ina qo. Va'a na i rairai dou sa raica tu'ina qo sa tadola tu na loma ni veikau qo, sa tu na vivale vina'a, sa cici tu na gaunisala , sa tu na 'ena lori,so vei 'eimami sa tau'kena tu eso... na gauna au tu'una ti'o na gauna sa oti ni'ua e ruasagavulu na yaba'i-sa oti ni 'ua e ruasagavulu na yaba'i. Ca'a 'ina na kakana qo, na 'ena soli na magiti, namagiti ni qele- na I tau'ei ni somo, ni a solia na vanua ena ti'ina o Tawa'e , ena yavusa e rua o 'Oro I Voco, 'ei na yavusa o Cu'u...

(...In the year 1991, if my memory serves me right, we made a feast to mark the official giving away of the gifted land (na I solisoli). We took a huge amount of wealth, food, drums of kerosene, bales of cloth, mats, dried pandanua leaves (used for weaving), money and pigs. The group comprised men, women, young men and even children...we carried our loads on our shoulders and backs and took two days to reach the landowners' village. I (Rakai) had written this account down in a book I had since misplaced. In the book I had written the names of all persons that took the trip to Sevaci to do the ceremony. Those on the trip who were kids at the time are now grown up young men , some of whom are now here utilizing land in Balawaviriki...

The trip [to Sevaci] was during very bad weather, we carried our gifts there at a time when houses in Balawaviriki were really temporary in nature, most made out of bamboos. Today as you can see, homes are better, the forests are now 'open' (he meant accessible by road), there are now good houses and a modern road, we have vehicles (some of us own these), the time I'm talking about now is about 20 years ago when land here [at Balawaviriki] was given to the two tribes of Koroivoco and Cuku ... (FG-1, 12/11/08).

4.2 Principles and other Values associated with Land gifting

Firstly there is the important principle of loloma (love) especially for one's own kin. As stated earlier the land was given because the old man from Sevaci in the provincial meeting chose to follow up and grant the wishes or request of the representative from Tawake. The commitment to give land was further enhanced after their introductions over *yaqona* where it was established that both men had ties to Namuka and that they were closely related by blood. In things Fijian, the gifting of land shows generosity of spirit associated with chiefly behavior and leadership. Leadership that is unique looks over and after those weaker and "lesser" in society – at least that's the ideal.

Two other Fijian values alluded to in the fieldwork and closely linked to loloma are the principles of veirairaici and veinanumi. *Veirairaici* is the practice of looking out for one another's needs. Within this idea is included the idea of *loloma* as explained above as well as *veinanumi* - the idea of thinking of others while one is well to do or comfortable, especially in the distribution of one's wealth. *Veirairaici* and *veinanumi* are values that are first and foremost expected amongst tribal members as well as inter tribally amongst related peoples. These values ensures that no one lacks basic needs of food, water and currently money to sustain life in society. It also ensures that no one goes hungry in society.

Fijians talk of the importance of veiwekani (see for example Tuwere, 1992, Ravuvu,...and Nabobo-Baba, 2005). Amongst Fijians the importance of relationships – acknowledging, affirming, looking out for one's relation, attending to the needs of one's kins [when one can], attending and contributing to things ceremonial and in this case the gifting of land in Fijian called "na soili ni qele" is emphasized at all times in various ways. The process of land gifting in Balawaviriki epitomizes this as land is so important to Fijians – a commodity of immense value not given lightly (see Tuwere, 1992 for a detailed treatment of the subject of land as pivotal to Vanua (tribe) and Bogitini, for a similar discussion).

The other principle is the pivotal role and extreme importance that the whole process of isolisoli for both sides and is therefore treated with utmost respect and reciprocated. Land gifting is the ultimate marker of relationship and caring for one's own kin. On the said day of the feast to formally mark the handover of land, both parties were attired in full ceremonial costume during the ceremonies of handover and reciprocal giftings.

Ia na gauna ni veisolosoli, keimami dabe taucoko sara tu ga ena vakatunuloa I lomanikoro ya, ia na gauna au vosa e... ia ni'o lako I Sevaci mo raici Sevaci ena gauna oqo sa 'oro vina'a tu. Ia ena gauna oya se vica toka ga na vale, sega tu ni ra

vale vina'a ...yaco ti'o na veisolisoli. E u'u mai na tau'ei ni qele oqo, e u'u masi mai, e tiniyara, e vesa tu na ligana, tubera ti'o e dua na tabua, dua tale na cauravou e yasana, vica tale nona tabua, me solia o 'oya na qele...Sa solia oti ya, me sa qai ca'ava na neimami I yau ni va'avinavina'a. Ni sa solia va'adua vei 'eimami na qele qo...duanadrau na yabaki,me yacova ni 'eimami mate, se me keimami sa besetaka ga, me 'eimami va'asua...(During the ceremonial gifting of the land , we were all seated in the shed in the Sevaci village-Sevaci at that time was not a pleasant place to be- no modern houses...today the story is different[all houses are concrete, running water, there is flushed toilets and the village green is well maintained and mowed, the village is beautiful nestled among a range of mountains in the interior of Vaturoua Vanua Levu]. The landowner [Luca] the oldest brother of Pita [he was the landowner who had attended the provincial meeting and initially put in place this discussion of land gifting with Saimone-later Pita informed his older sibling who then ceremonially accepts and hands over the land], was ceremonially dressed in the best of tapa cloth, practically draped to the ground [alluded to here as a sign of chiefly status], his hands were covered in leaves like bangles, he was holding a whalestooth, another young man stood next to him, dressed as well for the occasion and holding a couple of whalesteeth...this is how they "gave the land" ...after that we the gifted party then presented our wealth and gifts to mark our deep respect and show our deep gratitude...for the said land was given to us for a hundred years, or till we all died, or whenever we tire of it hence return it...) (FG-1, 12/11/08).

The other factor is to do with the need for access. Land in this case was requested for because the people of Tawake did not have access to sufficient arable. Land shortage and request of access to furnish family and community needs was given on the grounds of lack of access.

The other important principle is to do with equity and distributive justice. When the gifted land was given to the tribes of Koroivoco and Cuku, where there are six villages, only five were considered in the distribution of the land. The reason as highlighted in the focus group interview was because the people of Wainigadru, the 6th village in Tawake had sufficient arable land to meet their needs hence were not considered. Those that received land therefore were Tawake, Wainika, Vatu, Nagasauva and Yasawa. Distribution therefore was done on the principle of equity not equality.

Field data had it this way:

Ia e dua na 'oro e sega ni wasei o Wainigadru ...baleta ni tu na nodratou qele levu mai ca'e ...e va'a vuna na nodratou sega ni wase. Sa tu nodratou vanua ni teitei.(One village was not given land is Wainigadru...because they have a lot of land...this is the reason they did not get a share of land [at Balawaviriki].They have a lot of farming land (FG-1, 12/11/08).

Distributive justice is also a strong underlying principle here.

The element of struggle and the need to show appreciation and commitment for the gifted land by the recipients. It is evident from the field data that the struggle for land has been going for a while in the villages of Tawake. When in the provincial meeting the rep put forward the motion and received silence he had assumed that their struggles would have to continue as no one actually responded at all to his plea. But since the post meeting episode of *yaqona* sharing and the subsequent giving of land, the people of Tawake in Balawaviriki (both of the clans Koroivoco and Cuku-but largely of Cuku) have been careful to ensure that they struggle really hard to make Balawaviriki productive. For instance in terms of ease of access to the rugged terrains of Balawaviriki, Rakai Lalagavesi noted:

Me va'a na gauna ya se dredre sara na gaunisala, se sega tale ga na salevu, se veikau vakalevu sara tu na loma ni colo qo...*(It was a difficult time. The road was difficult, there was no gravelled road and the place was thickly forested, virgin forests...)(FG-1, 12/11/08).*

Another dimension of struggle came in the form of new settlement issues. There were shortages of food for instance, a lack of suckers to begin planting taro and *yaqona* cuttings. There were other issues, especially at the start:

'Eimami la'o ti'o mai na mai teitei, 'eimami sa mai le vica ga 'eimami sa mai teitei ti'o. 'Eimami sa mai ca'a na neimami vale, donuya viro na gauna dredre ni gaunisala, sega na magiti, sega na vale 'eimami mai tauyavu rawa 'ina...sega na i tei, so na i tei ena neimami mai tauyavu i'ea lai 'au sara mai Labasa...na laqere mai na loma ni le'utu *(Those of us who came to farm, the first batch of farmers, there was only a handful of us. We began building homes [as rudimentary as they go], the road was difficult[there were no gravelled roads to the area], there was not much food available, and no houses that were already here or nearby where we could have depended on[beginnings from scratch], there was no available cuttings or shoots for planting, some of these we had to go all the way to Labasa to acquire them...the gravels for the roads and buildings had to be collected further inland (FG-1, 12/11/08).*

As a means of easing some of their immediate problems of settlement, some went to find work in the closest villages of Numunicibi and Nakarabo. Some farmers had to go all the way to the other island of Taveuni to acquire seeds, cuttings and shoots or suckers to begin their farms.

Another issue raised was the way 20 or so framers lived under the same roof in the beginnings so as to enable them to begin. Such overcrowding and the imminent [but not articulated] absence of women over long periods of time may have created their own sets of troubles. This was part of the initial struggles to begin. After the first harvests, the farmers then began building their own houses where extended families lived; this is how most of the settlers live today. Today there are fifty houses altogether in Balawaviriki including the five village halls.

Land Gifting as an Enabling mechanism for development and sustainability of communities. All types of Fijian *isolisoli* when carried out usually are for the purposes of providing a relative or relatives with some provision of land to ensure they live well or looked after in terms of their needs or some of their needs.

Balawaviriki today has been a positive source of development among these re settled peoples of Tawake. Today, there are about two hundred farms. Most of these if not all, provide both family consumption and ceremonial use - in the villages and elsewhere for example the towns where ceremonies of relatives and their families live. A great percentage of produce from Balawaviriki today is for economic benefit of farmers and their families as well as their communities back in the villages in Udu and elsewhere in Fiji.

As the field data had it put and alluded, a lot of good things are now remitted to families and relatives from Balawaviriki. It has become a source point, a provider of sorts and most people – relatives of farmers would call Balawaviriki farmers for food, grog or even money when in need. Not that relatives need to call all the time. Cuku farmers for instance under the current leadership of Rakai Lalagavesi collectively put together food, grog and money for ceremonies and other related development works that villagers in the land call for. The same applies for requests coming from the urban centres.

The focus group interviews had pointed out how enabling Balawaviriki has been in terms of the life and development of families and communities of settlers both at Balawaviriki and most importantly back in the villages of Cuku and Koroivoco in Udu. Developments related to church, tribal affairs, family, and schooling or education are taken care of largely through the income and wealth earned at Balawaviriki.

...Ia na ogaoga mai na 'oro, na ogaoga ni lotu, na ogaoga ni vanua, na oga ni vuvale, na oga ni vuli, sa qaravi va'adua mai Balawaviri'i. E levu vei keimami na tu qo, keimami qaravi vuli, 'eimami qaravi vuli e na loma ni tauni, so qaravi vuli i Savusavu, so qaravi vuli i Labasa, so ra vuli tu ga i Vunisalusalu, so ra vuli i Navatu. Ia na so vei 'eimami era sa qaravi vuli tu ga mai na'oro...(*...The needs of the village [monetary or in kind – like food and yaqona and other farm produce] including*

those of the church, social and cultural needs of the village, family needs, education needs and the like are met from Balawaviriki. A lot of us here have kids who have children attending school in the towns of Labasa, Savusavu, the village schools in Udu or the two schools in Vunusalusalu and Navatu, schools in the neighbouring districts...) (FG-1, 12/11/08).

4.3 Opportunities created by the 'I solisoli' or traditional land gifting

A lot has transpired in terms of opportunities created at Balawaviriki. Opportunities have included the opportunity to farm the lands for daily consumption and to meet ceremonial demands both locally in Vanua Levu and elsewhere in Fiji as well as to have sale or marketing of crops. Sales of the two main primary crops, dalo and yaqona have enabled the farmers to build modern houses in their respective villages, purchase generators for electricity for their villages, a number have purchased or made investments in the urban centres, especially in Labasa.

Opportunities have been created out of the access to arable land as well as in relative terms (when compared to the villages), the closer proximity to urban centres of Savusavu and Labasa. Where once villages did not have enough arable land, now Balawaviriki has provided equitable access and opportunities for the villages provided they were ready to work hard. Interviews conducted noted that over the years, a number of villages who had come to settle at Balawaviriki have found the work overwhelming and have since returned to their villages or sought employment elsewhere. Many that have stayed compared to the few who had found Balawaviriki overwhelming in terms of hard work.

Other opportunities have also been found, especially of people finding employment in neighbouring estates and villages around Balawaviriki.

Another prominent opportunity is the ability of farmers to finance the education of their children. Education is seen as the key towards a better lifestyle than the one the parents are used to. The general expectation of parents is for their children to be educated and find a paid job in the government or private sector. This is reflected in the following response by a community member.

'....Au mada ga au nanuma tu na neimami ti'o I'e dua ga na 'a 'eimami rawa ni va'akaukauwata'ina na neimami veiqaravi vei ira na luvei 'eimami me ra na vuli me ra na rawa 'a, me yaco mai muri me ra rawata na nodra bula. Me ra qai 'a'ua ni va'araravi ti'o ina qele.'Eimami va'asamata'ina ti'o me tu'uni vei ira na gone, ni vuli vakaukauwa mo ni rawata na nomuni ca'aca'a ni rawata na nomuni vuli'. (As for me, I think that the only way we can get our children to live a better life is through education. They no longer need to

depend on the land.....We keep reminding our children that they are to work hard in school so that they can find a good job when they have completed their education) (FG-1 12/11/09).

4.4 Vanua Perceptions of development

Solisoli, Balawaviriki as a Place of Development

People in Balawaviriki during things ceremonial and in the talanoa sessions made references to Balawaviriki as the “vanua ni veiva’atoroca’eta’i” (*place of development or lit: place of lifting up oneself or improving oneself or one’s community*) (PO, 2, Balawaviriki-12/11/09). Other perceptions of Balawaviriki that reflect how development is defined locally is the reference to Balawaviriki as “na nodatou vanua ni bula” (*lit: our place of life or our place to source/ find life*) (PO, 4, Balawaviriki-12/11/09).

Development as achieving much needed items or commodities

Development or *veivakatorocaketaki* has been used to imply the achievement of a means of survival, the basic needs: food, money, house, education and other family and community needs. Fijians interviewed in situ referred a lot to Balawaviriki as meeting their needs as well as their *oga* (obligations- both customary or traditional as well as those related to family) as noted in the following field data:

“... mai na yasana ni veiva’atoroca’eta’i bau o ‘aya, e sa sagavulu na yaba’i na ‘ena la’o ti’o o Balawaviri’I sa la’I va’amawe sara ena yavusa o Cu’u. Ni o raica na vei ‘oro’oro o rawa ni ‘o va’adinadina ta’ina na veivalevale ra tu ‘ina e rawa ga mai na I lavo era rawata ti’o na dauteitei na vanua o Balawaviri’I. Era la’i tei yaqona, yacova na nodra tamusu’a ra va’auta lesu yane me ra la ‘I ca’ava e dua na tudei ena loma ni yavusa....

Na ‘a tudei be’a au tovola ti’o sai ‘oya na veivalevale era sa ca’ava. Era sa ca’ava me te’ivu mai na ‘oro o Waini’a me yaco I Yasawa, e dua na wase levu ni vale era tu ‘arai e rawa mai nai lavo ni teitei mai Balawaviri’i. E wili viro ga ‘ina na nodra boto. Au ‘ila ni dua na salevu ni veila’oya’i na nodatou baravi ‘arai e va’ayagata’i ga ‘ina na dini cavu. E sa tu na nodra dini cavu, tu na nodra vale me sala vata ‘ei na veiva’atoroca’eta’i ena gauna ‘o”. (*In terms of development, Balawaviriki has been operating for more than 20 years. Evidence of development can be traced through the modern houses you see in the villages of Cuku. Farmers have planted yaqona, sold them and have been able to construct modern buildings that you find today. From the villages of Wainika to Yasawa, the majority of the houses there have been funded by the Balawaviriki project. Farmers have also bought outboard motors for easy travelling to and from the villages*) (FG-1 12/11/09).

Development as hard work

Those who leave their villages to live in Balawaviriki are expected to work hard. Hard work is gauged not only by the number of yaqona plants in the farm but also by the identifiable and solid structures of houses, boats and other material things that contribute towards the quality of life back in the villages. Hard work is motivated by the thought that the money obtained from the yaqona/dalo sales would provide an opportunity for their children to be educated and live a life that is better than the one their parents were used to.

Development as maintaining traditional ties and obligations of the village

Even though the farmers are miles away from their villages in Udu, they have managed to maintain social structures, albeit edited to suit their new diasporic context. When the land was divided, it was done to reflect the five villages the farmers originated from. Each village also keeps a village community hall. This is where farmers of each of the five villages congregate to have village meetings, hold things ceremonial and attend Sunday church service. Village life, one can say has been transported to the “development site” at Balawaviriki but edited to suit. In this sense one can say that development is perceived by farmers as useful for themselves and their families, extended families and community at large.

All functions, village ceremonies and needs of families are met by farmers from Balawaviriki. So while farmers have gone to Balawaviriki to find a better life for their families who live either with them, back in their villages or in one of Fiji’s urban centres, they also are obligated to attend to and provide for community calls and needs.

4.5 Role of Women in meeting Development project goals- the case of Balawaviriki

The new 'diasporic' context as well as the rise in demand for cash economy are redefining the role of Cuku women in the farming community. Women play an important part in the production and post harvest activities and are active in planting and harvesting yaqona and dalo, the main cash crops in the area. While dalo harvesting is less laborious, yaqona requires more attention. Yaqona harvesting involves uprooting the plants, washing, *karikari* (scraping off the yaqona skin) and drying either in the sun or in a wood-fueled drier. These activities were once male dominated in Cuku, their traditional community, but they are now done by women in Balwawiriki.

A big part of women's activities also involve household decisions including those concerning production, use of resources, and expenditures. As a result, women are well versed with the economic environment and the changing costs involved. The following comment shows how knowledgeable and updated women are in the area of expenditures and costs.

'Qai la'i saumi viro mai Savusavu na sau dei 'a to'a va'alailai e? Lutu sobu na sau ni yaqona da sa va'aloloma viro na volivolita'i. 'O bau sau ca sara tu na noa 'arai ...lutu sara tug a.

Tini 'a ono sara tu ga na dola. 'Eda sa va'aloloma sara ga. 'Arai sa 'a ca sara?'

There are additional costs to pay in Savusavu (town). When the price of yaqona is down, we, the sellers suffer more. Right now, yesterday, yaqona prices were very low... Sixteen dollars. That's very bad (FG-2 12/11/09).

However, women's decision-making role tends to be marginalized outside the household, especially in public decision-making bodies. For example in decisions about *solu ni yasana* (district levies), church levies, vanua levies and obligations, women are normally left out and men's decisions overrule.

4.6. Balawaviriki Community- Education and Training Needs

The education and training needs of the community in Balawaviriki can be viewed under two main categories – Farming skills and diversification; and job market skills.

Farming skills and diversification

There is a general awareness that the traditional crops are long term yields and take up to 3-5 years for yaqona and 8 – 12 months for dalo to be harvested. Short-term cropping appears to be an alternative cash supplement. The following analysis by a community member, indicates that the farming style of the indigenous Fijians is no longer sufficient to meet increasing needs. Farming ideas from the Indo-Fijians could be useful to increase cash flow.

...E matata to'a na va'arau ni bula ni tau'ei, na va'arau ni teitei. E sega ni mataqali vata o ira na veimataqali 'o. O ira era tara nai teitei, e eka e? O 'eda sa dua tu ga nai va'arau mai te'ivu mai liu me yacova tu 'o. E na qai tutu yadudua, o ira era via cila ca'e me ra tautauvata 'ei ira na....

(It is clear that the way we farm is different. When they (indo-Fijians) take up farming, they engage acres and acres of land. But with us, we keep to the same traditional method from before. It is very rare to find any of us farmers to rise and be in par with them...)
(Field data 12/11/09).

The interviews disclosed the community's desire for change in their farming styles and their need for training in this area. Specific training needs are strong in the following areas.

- ◆ Short-term farming e.g. vegetables, honey production, flower planting etc.
These should include postharvesting and packaging techniques.
- ◆ Budgeting and personal finance. There appears to be a general need for training in the area of finance. Basic knowledge such as financial planning, budgeting, cash management, credit options, investment basics etc. are some new knowledge that could help the community.

Job market skill training

Most of the young people on Balawaviriki have been pushed out at the Form 4, 5, 6 and 7 levels. Some of them have resorted to yaqona planting as a way of recovering from their own failures and hurts, while others are using it as a 'parking lot' to await opportunities in the job market. These people have a different set of needs from the permanent farmers. Short skill training courses in TVET and IT appear to be the popular choices for this group. One or two farmers are taking USP courses through the Distance and Flexible learning mode.

5.0 Summary and Implications of this study

The overall objective of this research was to examine how Balawaviriki as an indigenous response to access and equity has played a pivotal role in the schooling and other development needs of Cuku people. This report highlights Balawaviriki as an emblem of success in employing traditional and modern strategies to resolve economic challenges in the 21st century. Using indigenous approaches to research, the study has employed traditional ethics of entry and the process of *talanoa* and observation to listen to the voices of the community. The indigenous approaches allowed the research to be carried out in the most natural environment of community life where the researchers were received and became part of the community themselves.

The study revealed six major findings. The first involves the nature of '*Rai Yawa*' or tribal visioning which involves a selfless move to ensure sustainable development and the livelihood of one's people. *Rai yawa* has led to the acquisition of Balawaviriki, a '*I solisoli*' (land gifting) which has resulted in enabling possibilities as a response to development needs. The second finding highlights the principles and other values related to '*I solisoli*'. The principles of *loloma* (love), *veirairai* (looking out for other's needs), *veinanumi* (thinking of others) and *veivewekani* (being related) are motivational factors behind land gifting. The third finding is the great opportunities created by the traditional land gifting. The opportunities to farm for cash for daily consumption, for ceremonial demands, for education and to improve livelihood back in the village. The fourth finding highlights vanua perceptions of development. The perceptions include Balawaviriki as a place of development, development as a needed commodity, development as hard work and development as maintaining traditional ties and obligations. The fifth issue deals with the role of women in meeting development project goals while the last finding is concerned with the education and training needs of the Balawaviriki community.

Overall, this study has shown that vanua relationships, based on indigenous values can be harnessed to resolve economic challenges for disadvantaged communities. Vanua values are selfless, always looking out for other's needs and are reciprocal in nature. These values are inherent in indigenous Fijian communities and have withstood the test of time. It is therefore prudent that agents of development acknowledge and build on these values and relationships to address the recurring challenges of access and equity. While this recommendation may not be the culmination, it is the beginning of an exploration to find the balance ground between culture and westernization, in which the issues of access and equity, particularly in educational and economic development, may be resolved.

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