

International Perspectives on
Early Childhood Education and Development 31
Pauline Harris · Cynthia Brock
Elspeth McInnes · Bec Neill
Alexandra Diamond · Jenni Carter
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Children's Multilingual Literacy

Fostering Childhood Literacy in Home
and Community Settings

International Perspectives on Early Childhood Education and Development

Volume 31

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Chapter 1

Introduction – In Children’s Words



One cannot expect positive results from an educational or political action program which fails to respect the particular view of the world held by the people. Such a program constitutes cultural invasion, good intentions notwithstanding.

(Freire, 1983, p. 95)

Abstract This chapter introduces readers to the project on which this book is based – that is, a 3-year, cross-cultural study in Fiji about understanding young children’s multilingual language and literacy practices in their homes and communities, and using these understandings to collaboratively develop strategies for fostering children’s multilingual literacy with them and their families. An overview of the project’s full team and summaries of the book’s chapters are provided. Ultimately, this chapter positions the book as a collaborative product of sustained dialogic encounters in the forms of extended *talanoa* in *iTaukei* settings and *baat-chit* in Indo-Fijian settings. These encounters involved a diverse range of co-investigators, children and adults alike, across time, place and setting; and led to the co-construction of knowledge and practices for developing community strategies that support young children’s multilingual literacies in their home and community settings.

So wrote Paulo Freire, whose words of provocation are particularly pertinent to the focus of our book – a 3-year, cross-cultural study in Fiji about understanding young children’s multilingual language and literacy practices in their homes and communities. These understandings were used to collaboratively develop strategies for fostering children’s multilingual literacy with them and their families.

We worked in and with communities that had no or limited access to kindergartens (preschools) so that communities might develop sustainable capacity for supporting their children’s literacy. The question driving this collaboration was:

In what ways can Fiji’s communities without access to early childhood services be supported to build local capacity to assist their preschool children’s literacy development in their home languages and English?

In late October 2014, a team of researchers from the University of South Australia arrived on Viti Levu in the Republic of Fiji. Together, we brought a range of experiences. Yet, we also knew that we were, in essence, cultural apprentices embarking on collective work with research partners and communities in Fiji to build community capacity for fostering young children’s literacy in home languages and English. This trip of the Australia-based research team was the inaugural visit for our Australian AID ADRAS research project, ‘Developing a Community Approach to Supporting Literacy for Preschoolers in Fiji’.¹

The Australia-based team research team comprised:

- Pauline Harris, project leader, who brought a broad range of literacies research undertakings in and across culturally and linguistically diverse settings, including engagement with myriad voices of children and their families and communities through dialogic encounters
- Anne Glover, project consultant, who has worked extensively as a researcher and consultant in Pacific early childhood education, with a focus on Papua New Guinea, Fiji and the Pacific
- Elspeth McInnes, who endowed the project with her wealth of sociological expertise in early childhood and family studies, including work she has done in Papua New Guinea
- Jenni Carter, who contributed her literacy expertise as well as insights from her experiences living, teaching and parenting as a partner of a *kaivulagi* senior executive employed in Fijian private industry
- Alexandra Diamond, who brought early childhood development expertise and her substantial years growing up in Fiji as a child, with a parent working as the archivist of the colonial government
- Cynthia Brock, who provided literacy expertise developed across culturally and linguistically diverse settings, including United States, Australia, England, Fiji, Thailand, Laos, Spain, Chile and Costa Rica
- Bec Neill, project officer, who contributed expertise developed across a diverse range of industry and educational contexts, including working with staff, management and children of kindergartens and early childhood organisations to build their capacity to deliver high quality early childhood education and care.

The project was grounded in awareness that not all communities in Fiji had access to early childhood education services and that most children in Fiji spoke languages other than English at home, whereas schooling language is English. As confirmed with research colleagues, partners and communities in Fiji, there was an expressed

¹ This research has been funded by the Australia Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade through the Category 1 Australian AID Development Research Awards Scheme under an award titled ‘Developing a community approach to supporting literacy for preschoolers in Fiji’. The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Commonwealth of Australia. The Commonwealth of Australia accepts no responsibility for loss, damage or injury resulting from reliance on any of the information or views contained in this publication.

need and desire for communities to develop strategies that would support their pre-school-aged children’s literacy and later transition to school. This work would need to address literacy in the children’s heritage or home languages as well as English.

This project was further grounded in previous work in Fiji and the Pacific conducted by the research team’s School of Education early childhood colleagues, including members of this project’s research team. Most particularly, the project was grounded in the imperative that arose from a meeting of Pacific Education Ministers² for member nations to recommit to vernacular education and language learning, and to establish appropriate policies and practices to support this priority.

The Australia-based research team engaged with two in-country Fiji research partners: Ufemia Camaitoga and the National Council of Women Fiji (NCWF). Both these partnerships were supported by the project’s ADRAS grant. Ufemia Camaitoga is an early childhood academic and consultant in Fiji and the broader Pacific. She brought to the project her long-standing history and expertise in early childhood education, early childhood teacher education and early childhood consultancy. Ufemia provided brokerage with research sites and stakeholders; assisted in identifying communities and community mentors for the study; worked with the project leader to oversight the research conducted in the case study communities; gave advice on the early childhood education and care context of Fiji and the Pacific; and provided insight in the collection and analysis of research data for the project.

The NCWF is a national coordinating body of women’s organisations and groups across Fiji advocating for sustainable improvement in the lives of women and their children. Their partnership with this project closely aligned with our collective grass roots focus on children and their families in terms of literacy practices in household and community settings. NCWF assisted in identifying communities and community mentors for the study; facilitated the researchers’ entry into communities; provided advice on cultural protocols to the Australia-based researchers; housed the study’s in-country research assistant; provided administrative support, catering and venues for project meetings; and facilitated the study’s dissemination amongst its affiliate organisations through workshops and other means.

In the first in-country meeting with Ufemia Camaitoga and NCWF, the Australia-based research team were greeted with kind hospitality and a keen interest in the project as we all gathered around the table to formally begin this collaborative work. This was the first of many meetings in which all members of the research team met with partners and those who joined the project as our mentors who lived in the communities participating in the project.

These community mentors provided the Australia-based researchers with intercultural mediation and language translations; and shared their invaluable advice and insights into cultural protocols and relations germane to their respective communities and the study at hand.

The team was joined by Fulori Turaga as an in-country Research Assistant to this project. Fulori brought extensive media, communication, research, community liaison and project management experience to the project from having worked across a range of government and on-government authorities. With her purview of national issues that her professional history afforded, Fulori lent key insights to our project.

² *Islands Business* (2012) <https://www.islandsbusiness.com/2012> Retrieved 10th March 2017

Later in the project, we were joined by Meresiana Krishna as in-country research assistant. Meresiana mentored and supported the project’s work across *iTaukei* and Indo-Fijian settings, drawing on her long-standing lived experiences in both cultures. Meresiana has a long-standing history in Early Childhood Education in Fiji and has taught in diverse settings in Fiji, including rural and remote villages, urban and semi-urban localities and informal settlements. Meresiana also has worked with a number of government agencies and non-government organisations.

The project team also included an External Reference Group. This group comprised the project’s research partners as well as a major early childhood education provider; two influential early childhood care and education individuals; an early childhood professional association; two universities in Fiji and the Pacific that were providers of early childhood teacher education; and two NGOs whose work related to early childhood care and education in Fiji and the Pacific.

Our Study

Thus began a 3-year journey that would take us all down myriad highways and by-ways of young children’s multilingual literacy worlds in Fiji. We would come to know these worlds by entering into the folds of community and family lives in three communities³ who chose to work with us:

- Duavata, a small, semirural indigenous Fijian village where families’ first and primary languages are Bauan and other *iTaukei* dialects
- Dovubaravi, an Indo-Fijian cane-farming and fishing community in a rural setting, where the main home language was Fiji-Hindi, with the presence also of Tamil, and shudh Hindi and its potential to be written in Latin and Devanagari scripts
- Wavu, a culturally diverse suburban community in Fiji’s capital, with approximately 52% of the population being Indigenous Fijians whose first languages were Bauan and other *iTaukei* dialects, and 48% Indo-Fijians whose first languages were mostly Fiji-Hindi, with other Indian languages and dialects also spoken.

In these rich and very welcoming settings, we spent time in dialogue with children and their families and communities with whom we were co-investigators. Without access to early childhood services, these communities sought to develop alternative approaches to foster their young children’s literacy.

We collectively came to understand communities’ and families’ language and literacy practices and broader contexts in which these practices were situated. We also came to understand families’ aspirations for their children, and how they viewed children’s learning and their roles therein.

³The communities have been given pseudonyms to protect their privacy and confidentiality.

Children shared their places with us. They took us on guided tours to show us what mattered to them in their communities. We heard how children named and talked about their worlds and what makes life valuable to them. Such was the start of gathering raw material through children's words and voices for the literacy work we were beginning together. This start enabled our collective work to foster unbroken beginnings of children's language and literacy development. We continued to ensure the strategies we developed were firmly embedded in children's worlds across time and place, so as to sustain these worlds as they continue to evolve.

Through this organic, culturally sustaining approach, the Australia-based researchers were careful not to impose westernised ideas. Instead, the Australia-based team members learned as cultural apprentices from and with the community mentors, partners and participants. As we were to document, the children in this study were living rich and sophisticated literate lives – they did not need westernised ideas and materials to supplant their ways of being and becoming literate in their worlds.

Thus, in this cross-cultural research collaboration, we engaged with children and their families in dialogic transactions of ideas and perspectives. Through dialogue and observations, we came to understand children's and families' language and literacy practices embedded in their life worlds, leading to our collective development of strategies for fostering children's multilingual literacy within each community.

An overview of the people involved in the project is shown in Fig. 1.1. Research partner, Ufemia Camaítoga, likened the team to a mixed floral bouquet, each individual piece making a unique and necessary contribution to the whole.

The Australia-based researchers' time in-country was spent in dialogue with communities, with one another, and with Fiji colleagues. It was a time for getting to know one another. It was a time for listening, a time for reflecting, and a time for examining assumptions and revisiting ideas mediated by being in-country. It was a time for making further plans and moving forward. Together.

The story told in this book is everyone's story. It is a multi-voiced account of what it has meant to collaborate on developing community approaches to fostering young children's multilingual literacy in their home and community settings, and the benefits, challenges and outcomes of doing this work.

Our Book's Plan

Chapter 2, In Fiji, provides accounts of *Fiji's geography* to provide a sense of place and orientation to the broader physical context of the study; *Fiji's history* to illuminate how Fiji's people came to be in Fiji, and changes that have affected their lives and governance, including the lives of the study's participants; *Fiji's people* to provide the demographic context of the study and to situate the study's participants in this broader context, including an account of what economically sustains Fiji as a nation of traditional and contemporary cultures situated in an increasingly global world; *early childhood and school education in Fiji* to acknowledge the nation's educational context in which researchers were engaged with early childhood

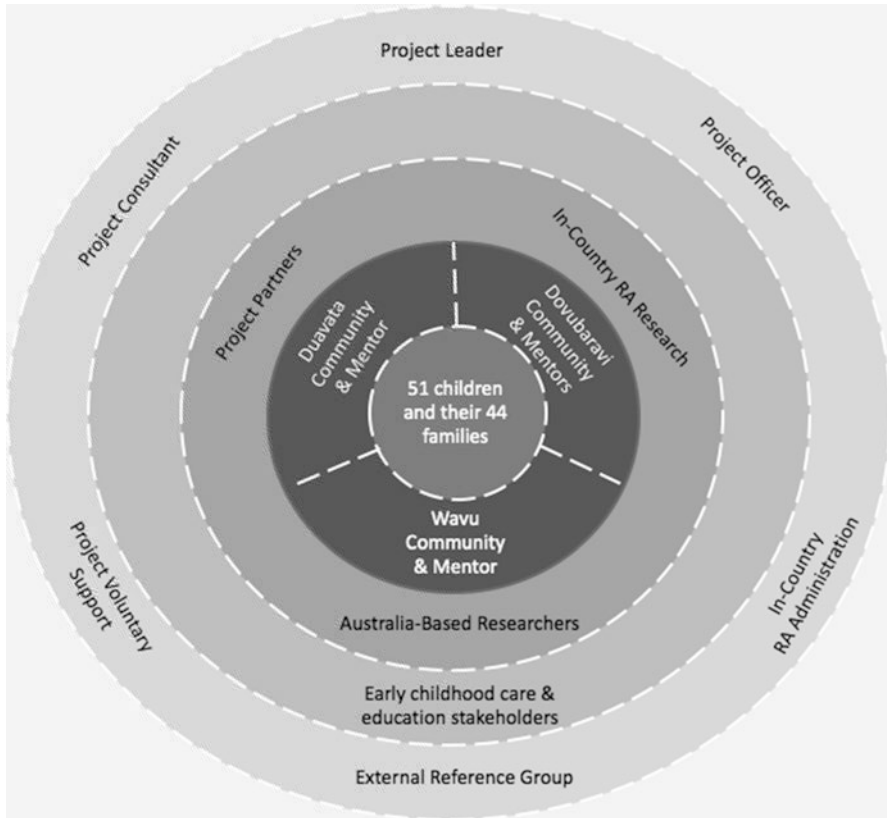


Fig. 1.1 The project team

literacy education in children’s homes and communities; and *the Pacific’s and Fiji’s languages and dialects* to set the study’s linguistic scene in a broad national and regional context.

Chapter 3, Language and Literacy Learning in Multilingual Settings, provides a review of research related to language and literacy learning in multilingual settings. This review is presented against Fiji’s contextual backdrop and linguistic landscape that is presented in Chap. 2. More specifically, the chapter examines *the call to action in the Pacific concerning the maintenance of Pacific languages* vis-à-vis the cultural and historic significance of Pacific languages and related cultural and linguistic rights; *self-determination in Pacific early childhood care and education*, with a particular focus on language and literacy as it examines key regional initiatives and frameworks (namely, the Dakar Framework, the PRIDE Project, universal access to early childhood care and education services, and Fiji’s Kindergarten curriculum guidelines); *young children’s literacy in their home languages and English*, with careful consideration of how children navigate different languages in terms of code-switching and translanguaging; *culturally sustaining pedagogy*, including an

exploration of educational practices related to language and literacy teaching and assessment; and *implications of the foregoing review for informing the study at hand*.

Chapter 4, Conceptualising language, literacy and learning as sociocultural practices, presents the study's conceptual framework for understanding language, literacy and learning. It does so against the backdrop of Fiji's diverse and evolving cultural and linguistic context discussed in Chaps. 2 and 3, and in terms of Fiji's early childhood curriculum framework, *Na Noda Mataniciva*. The chapter explores language in terms of a *functional view of language* and relates this perspective to *understanding children's multilingual language and literacy practices* in the communities of the study. Literacy is conceived in terms that situate *literacy in children's lifeworlds and broader cultural and linguistic settings*. We relate learning to *sociocultural and rights-based perspectives of seeing, understanding and supporting literate children and literacy learners* – recognising each child's voice and agency and developing child-voiced strategies that foster authentic, culturally relevant and sustaining learning in the study. The chapter concludes with an example of *how the project team brought together the three elements of language, literacy and learning* in a key action that emerged in the three communities of the study – that is, co-creating multilingual books with children and their families in their home and community settings.

Chapter 5, Research as Transformative Encounter in Cross-Cultural Collaborations, provides accounts of the *research team, sites and participants* and the study's 3-year *critical participatory action research approach* (CPAR) (Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon, 2014). This approach enabled participants and university researchers alike to engage as *co-investigators* and optimised consequence and sustainability through strategic research design, partnerships, and communication and engagement. We explicitly link this CPAR approach to how the research defined community capacity in this study and to key considerations for *building capacity within a CPAR framework*. Accounts of *data collection and analysis* procedures are provided. Measures taken to ensure *the study's trustworthiness and ethics* are explained. Throughout the chapter, we highlight and explore the *complexities of conducting a cross-cultural study in an overseas context*. Drawing on examples from the study, the chapter shows how the Australia-based researchers worked with these complexities in collaboration with co-investigators, community mentors and research partners.

Chapter 6, Exploring Stakeholders' Perspectives of Young Children's Multilingual Literacy, presents findings from interviews with influential stakeholders who have been actively involved in the development of Fiji's and the Pacific's early childhood education and care policies, curricula and/or programs. These interview findings highlight key considerations and complexities inherent in the study's focus on building community capacity for fostering preschool children's multilingual literacy in their home and community settings. The chapter explores stakeholders' perspectives according to the focus of each of the research questions in turn: *preschool children's literacy development contexts; enablers and constraints* that impact preschool children's literacy learning; *local resources and strategies* for fostering preschool children's literacy in their home languages and English; and *effective*

strategies for developing local community capacity to support preschool children’s literacy development in their home languages and English. The chapter closes with a discussion of *implications for developing community capacity for fostering young children’s literacy*, a matter core to the aims and focus of this study.

Chapters 7, 8 and 9 present the three action research community case studies:

Chapter 7, In Duavata: Collaborating with children and families in an Indigenous Fijian semi-rural community

Chapter 8, In Dovubaravi: Collaborating with children and families in an Indo-Fijian rural community

Chapter 9, In Wavu: Collaborating with children and families in a culturally diverse urban community

Each of these three chapter’s accounts is distinctive to the community’s social, cultural, linguistic and historic context. The approach to each case study account is consistent across these three chapters, facilitating connections in the reader’s mind and assisting our synthesis in Chap. 10. Each account yields a research narrative and a set of new insights unique to that setting – a product of its community’s constituency, geographical setting and social, linguistic and cultural context. Supported by data extracts and images, each of these chapters provides rich, illustrated accounts of:

- *The literacy development contexts* for preschool children in the community
- *Enablers and constraints* that impact on the community’s capacity to support their preschool children’s literacy learning
- *Local resources and strategies* that were used to foster preschool children’s literacy in the community
- *Strategies that were effective* in developing the community’s capacity to support preschool children’s literacy development in their home languages and English.

Chapter 10, Fostering Children’s Multilingual Literacy in Home and Community Settings, provides a synthesis of what was learned from the three community CPAR case studies and the stakeholder interviews. This synthesis pulls together recurring themes common across these data sets as well as points of difference, in terms of the first three of our four research questions:

1. *What are the literacy development contexts for preschool children in communities in Fiji that do not have access to preschools?*
2. *What are the enablers and constraints that impact on community capacity to support their preschool children’s literacy learning?*
3. *What local resources and strategies can be used to foster preschool children’s literacy in their home languages and English, in communities in Fiji that do not have access to pre-schools?*

The chapter concludes with our conclusions for these questions. These conclusions lead into the final chapter which provides a synthesis of findings for the fourth and final research question that focuses on strategies for developing community capacity.

Chapter 11, On Effective Community Capacity Development and Sustainability, provides a synthesis of findings on strategies for developing community capacity.

More specifically, this chapter discusses *eight key strategies* and their underlying principles that address the final research question about *effective strategies for developing local capacity to foster preschool children's literacy in their home languages and English*. The chapter then presents the final conclusions for our central research question. *How can communities in Fiji that do not have access to early childhood services be supported to build sustainable local capacity to foster their preschool children's literacy in their home languages and English?* The chapter includes an account of *the capacity that was developed in the study* and the *impact and benefit* that grew from this capacity.

Ultimately, this book is the collaborative product of extended *talanoa* in *iTaukei* settings and *baat-chit* in Indo-Fijian settings – a myriad of dialogic encounters with a diverse range of co-investigators, children and adults alike, across time, place and setting.

This is our story.

Reference

Freire, P. (1983). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.

Chapter 2 In Fiji



Abstract This chapter provides accounts of *Fiji's geography* to provide a sense of place and orientation to the broader physical context of our study; *Fiji's history* to illuminate how Fiji's people came to be in Fiji, and changes that have affected their lives and governance, including the lives of the study's participants; *Fiji's people* to provide the demographic context of the study and to situate the study's participants in this broader context, including an account of what economically sustains Fiji as a nation of traditional and contemporary cultures situated in an increasingly global world; *early childhood and school education in Fiji* to acknowledge the nation's educational context in which researchers were engaged with early childhood literacy education in children's homes and communities; and *the Pacific's and Fiji's languages and dialects* to set the study's linguistic scene in a broad national and regional context.

Introduction

Noqu Viti - Nikua. Ni mataka
Mera Fiji – Aaj Aur Kal
My Fiji – Today and Tomorrow

- Meresiana Krishna

The Republic of the Fiji Islands lies in the Oceanic region of Melanesia, where it forms part of an archipelago in the southwest of the Pacific Ocean. Fiji is situated on the cusp between the Indo-Australian and Pacific Tectonic Plates (Rodd, 1993). It is there in relatively more recent years that Fiji's peoples have trod the folding and faulting of rock that has brought transformation and divergence across the ages.

It was on this cusp that this study was conducted in local communities that had no access to early childhood services – a cusp where people's present realities and past histories converged as global futures beckoned. These three communities were:

- Duavata, a small, semirural indigenous Fijian village where families' first and primary languages are Bauan and other *iTaukei* dialects

- Dovubaravi, an Indo-Fijian cane-farming and fishing community in a rural setting, where the main home language was Fiji-Hindi, with the presence also of Tamil, and shudh Hindi with its potential to be written in Latin and Devanagari scripts
- Wavu, a culturally diverse suburban community in Fiji's capital, with approximately 52% of the population being indigenous Fijians whose first languages were Bauan and *iTaukei* dialects and 48% Indo-Fijians whose main first language was Fiji-Hindi, with other languages from the Indian subcontinent also spoken.

The collective aim in these communities was to develop sustainable community approaches to fostering young children's literacy in their vernacular languages and English. We – the children, families and communities, Fijian project partners and Australian researchers alike – worked together to develop strategies that would maintain children's evolving cultural identities and languages while supporting children's transitions of change to school and later life chances.

We contextualise this work in this chapter with accounts of:

1. Fiji's geography, which provides a sense of place and orientation to the broader physical context of our study
2. Fiji's history to illuminate how Fiji's people came to be in Fiji, and changes that have occurred that affect their lives and governance, including our study's participants
3. Fiji's people to provide the demographic context of our study and to situate our study's participants in this broader context – including an account of what economically sustains Fiji as a nation of traditional and contemporary cultures situated in an increasingly global world, with 'culture' referring to 'the way of life of a people which includes their language, values and knowledge systems' (Thaman, 2009, p. 1)
4. Early childhood and school education in Fiji, to acknowledge the nation's educational context in which we were engaged with early childhood literacy education in children's homes and communities
5. The Pacific's and Fiji's languages and dialects to set the study's linguistic scene in a broad national and regional context

Fiji's Geography

The communities in this study were located on Fiji's most populous and diverse island of Viti Levu. Meaning 'Big (or Large) Fiji' (Gatty, 2009, pp. 140, 301) and covering around 57% of the nation's land area, Viti Levu is the largest of Fiji's volcanic islands. It has a population of 715, 219 – 81% of Fiji's population of 884,887 people, according to the Fiji Bureau of Statistics' 2017 census (FBOS, 2017a, 2017b). The nation's capital city, Suva, is situated on Viti Levu, as are the city and seaport of Lautoka, most of Fiji's major towns, and Fiji's international airports in Nadi and Nausori (see Fig. 2.1).

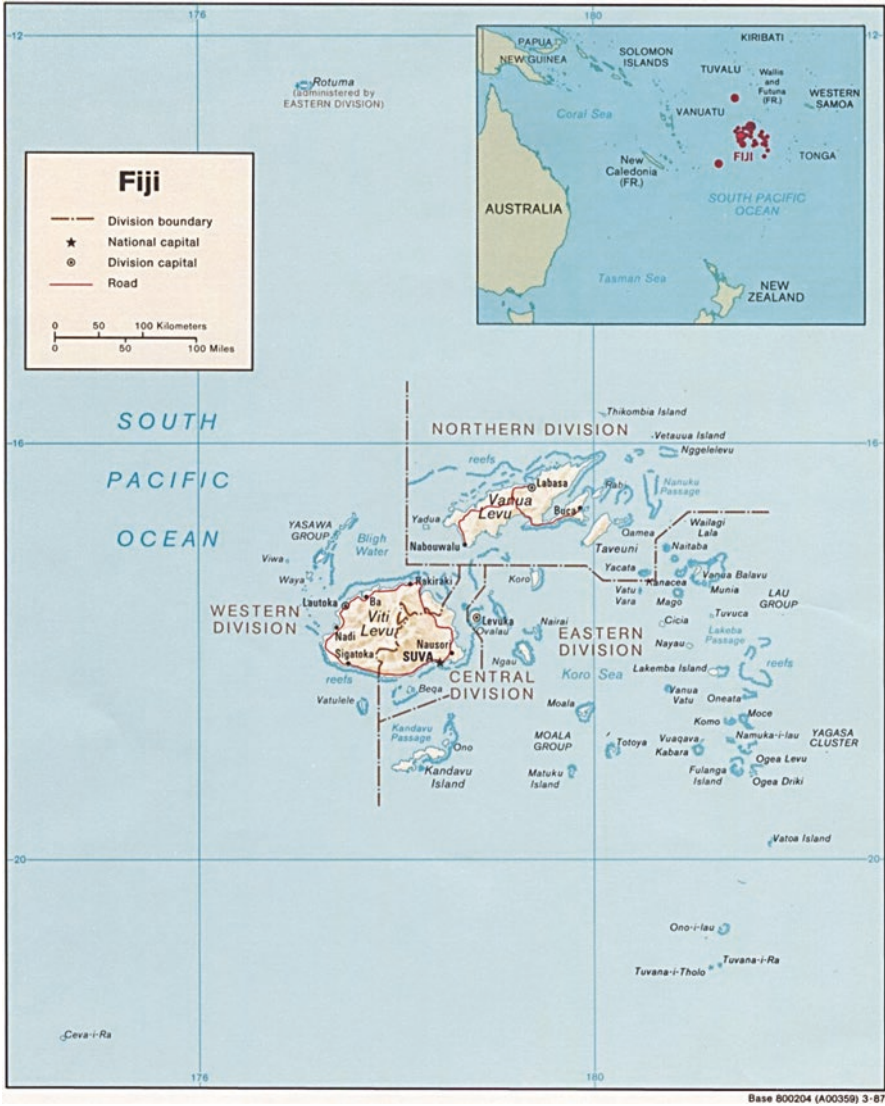


Fig. 2.1 Map of Fiji, with insert showing Fiji's location in relation to other nations in the South West Pacific

Viti Levu is one of Fiji's 332 islands and 522 islets surrounding the Koro Sea, of which 106 islands are permanently inhabited. Sixty-four kilometres (40 miles) to the north of Viti Levu lies Vanua Levu – 'Big Land' – which covers around 30% of Fiji's land area. Fiji's other islands, including Taveuni, Kadavu and the Mamanuca, Yasawa, Lomaviti and Lau island groups, comprise about 13% of the nation's land area and are home to around 4% of the population. Two outlying regions are

Ceva-i-Ra, 450 km (280 miles) to the southwest of Viti Levu, and *Rotuma*, 400 km (250 miles) to the north, a relatively autonomous Fijian dependency geographically situated in Polynesia.

Fiji has a tropical climate with warm weather throughout the year and an average temperature of 25 °C. A hot, humid and rainy season runs from December to April, when temperatures can exceed 30 °C (86 °F) especially in December and January. A cooler season extends from May to October, with trade winds blowing in from the south-east and temperatures dropping to 18 °C (64 °F) in July and August. Rainfall and humidity are reduced from May to October, considerably more so in the leeward west than the windward east, with Fiji's tourist season peaking during June and July.

Given Fiji's location, the island nation is susceptible to climatic fluctuations and a range of natural hazards including cyclones, hurricanes, storm surges, coastal flooding, river flooding, droughts, earthquakes, landslides and tsunamis. These natural disasters have wreaked destruction of life, property and livelihood – especially in rural areas where Fijians' agricultural enterprise and subsistence are made and broken by fluctuating climatic forces. Cyclone Winston in 2016, for example, struck heavy blows to sugar cane farming, as seen in Fiji Sugar Corporation's 2016 Annual Report¹ in Fig. 2.2.

Fiji's natural resources contribute to the nation's economy, including timber, fish, gold, copper, offshore oil and hydropower. Fiji uses a range of energy sources for

'In February 2016, Fiji was hit by the catastrophic Category 5 Cyclone Winston, the biggest to hit the Southern Hemisphere. Winston ravaged the northern and western parts of Fiji. In its path, many of our grower farms were severely impacted. Furthermore, it also negatively affected the sugar crop and our replanting initiatives. Many growers were displaced for a significant period of time. FSC's infrastructure was not spared by Winston's ravaging. There was substantial damage to buildings, sugar cane milling equipment and sugar in storage. The mill at Penang was the worst affected. In view of the mill's extensive damage and poor financial prospects vis-à-vis the cost of repair, the Board decided to close the mill permanently, with a commitment to divert all sugar cane produced in Rakiraki to Ba. This has since been achieved with significant assistance provided from government financing. Penang Mill's management and staff were redeployed to the two remaining mills on Viti Levu. Unfortunately, extreme weather conditions did not lighten and towards the latter part of the year, we faced intense dry weather conditions, again adversely impacting land preparation and replanting of the sugar crop.'

From Fiji Sugar Corporation's 2016 Annual Report¹

Fig. 2.2 An example of climatic impact on agriculture from *Fiji Sugar Corporation's 2016 Annual Report*¹

¹From <http://www.fsc.com.fj/reports/FSC%202016%20Annual%20Report.pdf>. Retrieved 10 March 2018.

residential and industrial purposes, including hydro, biomass, solar, wind, wave and geothermal energy.²

Fiji's heavily mountainous terrain is mainly made up of dormant and extinct volcanoes, with other mountains formed from limestone and coral islets. Fiji's highest point is Viti Levu's Mt. Tomanivi, towering 1324 metres (4344 feet) above sea level. Lush tropical rainforests clad half of Fiji's lands, mountains and lowlands alike, where abundant and diverse trees, plants and wildlife flourish. Coconut palm trees, tropical fruits and vegetables are common. Dry grasslands are found in the large islands' western areas, mangrove swamps in the east, with sandy swimming beaches, coral reefs and rocks making up most of Fiji's shorelines.

It was to these shorelines of this richly endowed archipelago in the Pacific that Fiji's first peoples arrived around 3500 years ago, creating Fiji's precolonial history, culture and education systems (Thaman, 2009).

Fiji's History

A timeline of Fiji's history since first migration is shown in Table 2.1, with key highlights that we elaborate upon below.

Table 2.1 Fiji history timeline

Date	Event
3500 years ago	First peoples begin to migrate to Fiji in waves of transpacific migrations
1600s–1700s	First Europeans visit Fiji European explorers name straits, for example the archipelago was referred to as 'Bligh Islands' for a period of time
Early-mid 1800s	Americans, Australians and Europeans pursue commercial interests in Fiji Fiji Island kingdom of Bau rises to dominance amidst inter-tribal conflict Bau's ruler, Ratu Cakobau, proclaims himself as <i>Tui Viti</i> (King of Fiji)
Late 1800s	More Europeans arrive to establish cotton plantations Instability rises and erupts within Fijian communities and between Fijians and Europeans. Britain intervenes Ratu Cakobau renounces his <i>Tui Viti</i> title, signs Deed of Cession to the British, and Fiji is declared a British colony in 1874 English missionaries' earlier work – based in Lakeba and then Rewa and eventually Bau – to develop a Latin alphabet orthography and subsequent publications in Fijian languages (Derrick, 1946/1974) facilitates the adoption of Cakobau's Buan dialect as an colonial language

(continued)

²From Pacific Islands Applied Geoscience Commission, 2008 at <https://web.archive.org/web/20081201144948/http://www.sopac.org/FJ+at+a+Glance> Retrieved 10 March 2018

Table 2.1 (continued)

Date	Event
1870s–1920s	Indentured labour system imports around 61,000 people from India to work on sugar plantations (1879–1920)
	Fiji's colonial government establishes communal franchise whereby the Legislative Council apportions seats on ethnic basis
	Colonialists refer to indentured migrants as 'coolies' or 'Indians' and indentured migrants self-refer as <i>girmityas</i> (Lal, 2012a, 2012b)
1930s–1940s	During World War II, Fiji contributes troops to serve in Solomon Islands campaign. 'Indian' citizens of Fiji refuse to serve in solidarity with Indian quest for independence from Britain
	Colonial government refers to indentured migrants and their descendants as 'Indians'
1950s	Indians' outnumber indigenous Fijians
1960s	Development towards Fiji's independence begins
1970s	Fiji is declared independent on 10 October 1970
	Indentured migrants and their descendants referred to as 'Indians', 'Fiji Born Indians' and 'Fiji Indians'
1980s	Inter-racial coalition, formed by Indo-Fijian dominated National Federation Party and new indigenous Fijian-led Labour Party, wins power in 1987
	Two coups perpetrated by radical Fijian nationalists, led by Lieutenant Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka, overturn the government in 1987
1990s	Fiji's new constitution is promulgated to guarantee first Fijians' dominance
	Rabuka is elected Prime Minister in 1992
	Fiji elects first Indo-Fijian Prime Minister, Mahendra Chaudhry, in 1997
	Term 'Fiji Indians' used in the 1997 constitution (Pacific Media Centre, 2011)
2000s	Chaudhry and his reformist government are taken hostage and deposed in a violent civilian coup led by businessman, George Speight, in 2000
	Civilian administration and coup-supporting party are victorious when Fiji United Party wins 2001 election, and again in 2006
	Six months later in 2006, there was a further coup, when Commodore Frank Bainimarama, in his role as Commander of the Armed Forces, assumed military and governmental control of Fiji
	Term <i>iTaukei</i> emerges with diverse contextual meanings (Gatty, 2009)
	Term used to denote descendants of immigrants from the Indian subcontinent is highly contested (Radio New Zealand, 2006)
2010s	Now Prime Minister, Bainimarama announces plans in 2014 to develop a new constitution that includes an independent judiciary, transparent governance and enshrinement of a selection of human and civil rights
	Bainimarama wins 2014 election and remains Prime Minister as of July 2018
	Term <i>Indo-Fijian</i> emerges (Pacific Media Centre, 2011)
	Term <i>iTaukei</i> mandated by 2010 Government Decree to replace the term Fijian, where used to refer to indigenous Fijians, in all official contexts (Fiji Public Service Commission, 2010)
	Term <i>Indian</i> remains the legal term for Fijian citizens of <i>girmitya</i> and immigrant descent (Dodd, 2012)