



Fiji Roads Authority®

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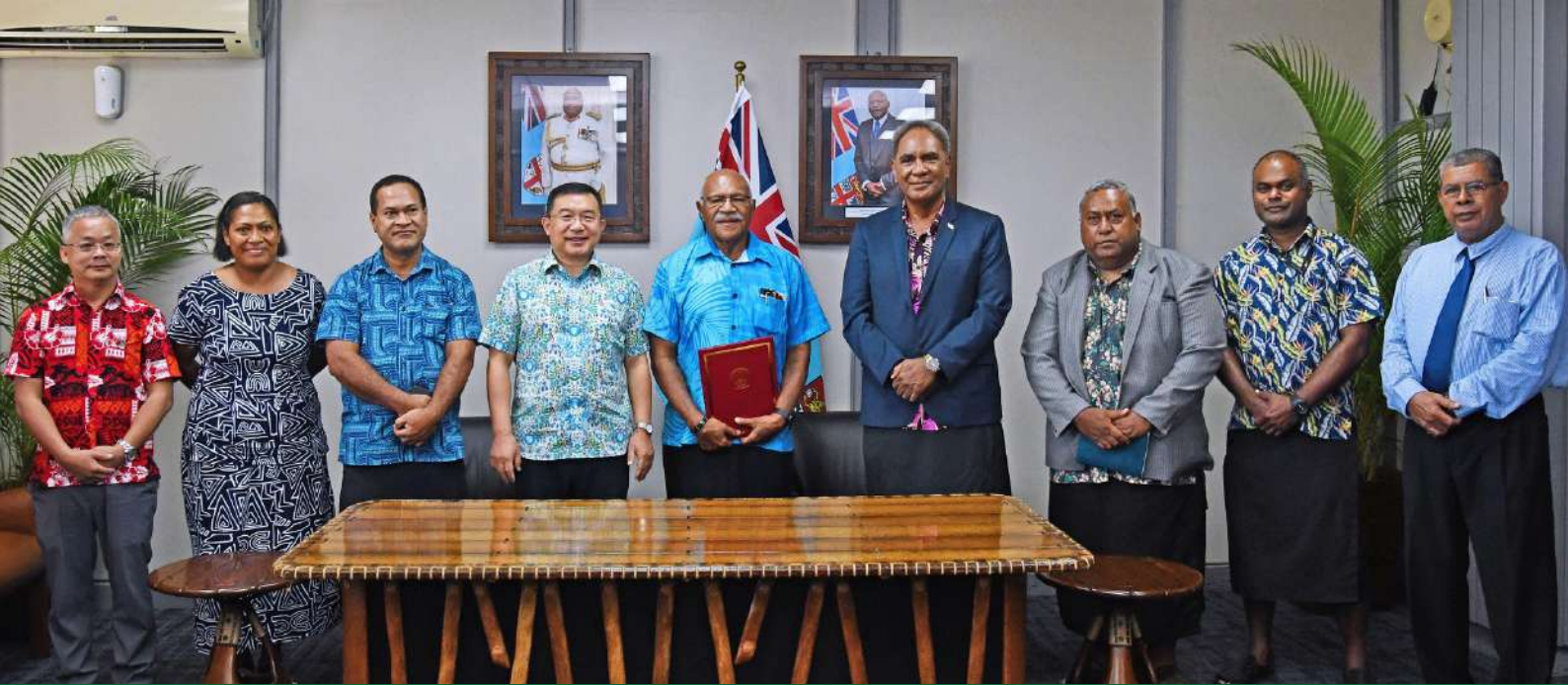
**QUARTERLY
NEWSLETTER**



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BOOSTING INFRASTRUCTURE IN VANUA LEVU

In a significant step towards enhancing infrastructure in Fiji, the Peoples' Coalition Government, led by Prime Minister Honourable Sitiveni Rabuka, and China's Ambassador to Fiji His Excellency Mr. ZHOU Jian formalized an agreement for a major road upgrade project in parts of Vanua Levu.

This China Aid initiative, costing approximately FJD300 million, aims to upgrade and maintain 82 kilometers of rural roads, including sections of Natewa-West Coast, Nabalebale-Naviavia/Dawara Roads in Cakaudrove, and Nabouwalu-Makolei Road in Bua. The project, part of China's Belt and Road Initiative in Fiji, will also see the construction of 22 bridges, benefiting 61 villages and 15 schools, and improving access to healthcare, education, and markets across the region. Ambassador ZHOU Jian highlighted the scope of the project, stating, "When completed, the project will successfully connect 61 villages, 15 schools, and help improve the infrastructure construction level and traffic condition in Vanua Levu."

"This project will be the flagship of the Belt and Road cooperation between China and Fiji," he added, emphasizing the strong partnership between the two countries since the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding

on the Belt and Road Initiative in 2018. The project will commence with a feasibility study, with a technical team from China collaborating closely with the Fiji Roads Authority and the Transport Department of the Ministry of Works. This study will pave the way for the comprehensive upgrade, including road tarsealing, maintenance, and the construction of brand-new bridges.

The upgraded infrastructure is expected to significantly enhance the socio-economic landscape of Vanua Levu, facilitating smoother travel and improving access to essential services. It will also support local communities by providing better connectivity to hospitals, educational institutions like the USP and FNU Campuses in Labasa, and public services.

"We are committed to working together to build this into a high-quality and model project," Ambassador ZHOU Jian affirmed, underlining the cooperative spirit that defines the bilateral relations between China and Fiji.

This initiative marks a milestone in Fiji's infrastructure development efforts, promising a brighter future for the residents of Vanua Levu through enhanced connectivity and improved public infrastructure.



PERMANENT SECRETARY TOURS THE NORTHERN DIVISION

The Permanent Secretary for Public Works, Metrological Service and Transport, Mr. Paula Baleilevuka toured the Northern Division from 10 – 14 July 2024. The aim of the tour was to visit crucial infrastructure projects, sites and meet with statutory bodies under the Ministries portfolio.

While touring the Northern Division Mr. Baleilevuka also visited the Fiji Roads Authority (FRA) offices in Labasa and Savusavu. He thanked the FRA staff for the work done over the years and encouraged staff to continue elevating the level of service delivery. “Over the years, Fiji has witnessed remarkable progress in its road infrastructure, thanks to the collective efforts of the government, stakeholders, and dedicated professionals like yourselves. However, as we look ahead, we acknowledge the need for new and renewed strategies to address the evolving challenges and opportunities in our road sector,” he said.

The Permanent Secretary also had the opportunity to meet and discuss issues with other inter government agencies such as the Water Authority of Fiji (WAF), Maritime Safety Authority of Fiji (MSAF), Land Transport Authority of Fiji (LTA), and Commissioner North Office.



STRENGTHENING GENDER INTEGRATION: FRA STAFF ATTEND ADB CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP



Fiji Roads Authority (FRA) staff, alongside partners from the Ministry of Finance, Water Authority of Fiji, and Department of Energy, participated in a Capacity Building Workshop focused on “Strengthening Implementation and Monitoring of ADB’s Requirements for mainstreaming gender in Projects and Programs.” During the workshop, the participants explored Fiji’s gender context, exploring challenges, gaps, impacts, and opportunities. They also learned about ADB’s gender mainstreaming guidelines, covering project design, implementation, and completion reports. The workshop provided valuable insights into preparing Gender Action Plans and effective implementation strategies, ensuring that gender considerations are integrated into our projects for maximum impact.

FRA STRENGTHEN EFFORTS IN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES



Our team participated in a one-day workshop aimed at enhancing communication skills. During the workshop, the participants learnt about the importance of professional etiquette in communication and the significance of tailoring messages to meet the needs of our audience. They also gained valuable insights into communicating with a focus on outcomes and received an introduction to the basics of public speaking. The workshop was conducted by Mr Peter O’Connor from Ethos CRS in partnership with the Australian Awards.

EMPOWERING FEMALE LEADERS: FRA & MSAF ATTEND INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP WORKSHOP



15 female participants from the Fiji Roads Authority (FRA) and 5 from the Maritime Safety Authority of Fiji - (MSAF) gathered to engage in self-reflection and explore various values and leadership styles at a 1-day Inclusive Leadership Workshop. The workshop was an opportunity for professional development and growth, with a focus on fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace. They delved into the factors that impact the realization of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the Fijian context, gaining valuable insights along the way. Additionally, they worked on building supportive networks to empower female leaders to thrive and succeed in their careers. The workshop was conducted by Ms Ren Hunter from Ethos CRS in partnership with the Australian Awards.

FRA EQUIPS TEAM WITH STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT SKILLS



The staff of the Fiji Roads Authority (FRA) explored Strategic Management, learning new skills. During the workshop, the participants learned about the importance of looking at the big picture, sharpened their reasoning skills, and discovered the power of creative and critical thinking. They also discovered ways to encourage their teams to think and work strategically. The workshop was conducted by Mr Peter O’Conner from Ethos CRS in partnership with the Australian Awards.

CAPACITY BUILDING TRAINING FOR FRA SURVEYORS



The Fiji Roads Authority (FRA) facilitated a three day in-house survey training to upskill FRA survey technicians. The training was facilitated by FRA Senior Surveyor, Mr. Shiri Narayan to enhance operations around data collection, data reduction, plan and drawing presentation. The training included staff participation from the Western, Northern and Central teams.



KINGS ROAD UPGRADE PROJECT A & B

Project A is taking place between Vitawa and Vadravadra while Project B site comprises the existing Kings Road between Tobu to Wailotua.

The selected project sites are located on the main Kings Road Highway, which serves as a crucial transportation route connecting major population centres such as Ba, Tavua, Rakiraki, and Korovou with Suva and Lautoka in Fiji. This highway is particularly significant for women and men as it provides improved connectivity to essential

services and market access. Along the route of Kings Road, various vital services are available including healthcare facilities, education institutes, government offices, public services, and markets. With the upgrading, residents, including women, men, and elders, living along Kings Road can easily access medical clinics, schools, and administrative centres. Moreover, it connects

several towns and urban centres where commercial activities and public facilities are concentrated, enhancing access to employment opportunities, retail outlets, and other amenities. The benefit extends to women living in rural areas who rely on the main highway to access these essential services.

10 BRIDGES PROJECT

The Fiji Roads Authority (FRA) aims to build resilient infrastructure that improves access to essential services and facilities.

The following bridges are complete and fully accessible to the public. This was part of the critical Bridges program;

- Waidra Bridge, Baulevu, Koroqaaq
- Yaqara Bridge, King's Road, Rakiraki
- Korovou Bridge, King's Road, Tavua
- Tavualevu Bridge, Tavua

- Velovelo Bridge near Lautoka
- Bulu Bridge near Sigatoka
- Matawale Bridge, Keyasi
- Vuniyasi Bridge near Nadi
- Wainawi Bridge, King's Road, Nausori

The following bridge work is currently in progress:

- Waidalice Bridge, King's Road, Korovou

These improvements will continue to bring about economic and socio-economic advancements in addition to making our infrastructure resilient.



IMPROVING ROAD SAFETY AT NAVESAU ADVENTIST SCHOOL



Josua Qalobula, the Principal of Navesau Adventist School, expressed his appreciation for the new Kings Road Upgrading Project (KRUP). The enhancements include the installation of footpaths, road humps, and a pedestrian crossing that will significantly enhance road safety for both teachers and students who commute to the school daily. Mr Qalobula highlighted the dangers posed in the past by over-speeding vehicles and potential accidents

caused by vehicles veering off the highway in front of the school. He said these risks have long been a concern for the safety of pedestrians in the area. However, with the introduction of these new road features, there is renewed hope that pedestrian safety, particularly for students, will see a marked improvement. He said one noticeable change since the road upgrade works is the reduction in traffic speed as vehicles approach the school vicinity.

This indicates that road users are becoming more conscious of the need to slow down in areas such as schools, villages, and other populated areas. Mr Qalobula said these road upgrades are not only enhancing the safety of the school community but also promoting a culture of awareness and responsibility among road users that contributes to a safer environment for all.

This project is under the Transport Infrastructure Investment Sector Project funded by the ADB /WB and the Fiji Government.



NEW ROAD UPGRADE FOR ENHANCING STUDENT SAFETY AND COMMUNITY WELL-BEING



Mr Tevita Tawake, the Head of Nailega District School, is grateful for the positive impact of the new Kings Road Upgrading Project (KRUP) on student safety. The road upgrade including, the installation of footpaths, pedestrian crossings, and bus shelters, has made traveling along the road safer for students. Mr Tawake emphasized that these improvements have reduced the risk of accidents and increased overall safety. He mentioned that features like

bus shelters and raised pedestrian crossings have helped protect students and prompted drivers to slow down, making the road safer for pedestrians. He also noted that the project has enhanced safety for pedestrians and improved the well-being of the community. The addition of road humps, street lights, road signs, and proper drainage has played a crucial role in ensuring student safety during their daily commute. Additionally, he observed a positive change in traffic flow, with vehicles moving more smoothly and efficiently in the area.

Furthermore, Mr Tawake emphasized that the project has also created employment opportunities, and improved access to essential services like farms, local markets, schools, government, and health facilities, thereby elevating the living standards of the community as a whole.

This project is under the Transport Infrastructure Investment Sector Project funded by the ADB /WB and the Fiji Government.



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QUEENS ROAD UPGRADE PROJECT

The selected sites are situated on the main Queens Road Highway, which connects major population centres such as Nadi, Sigatoka, Korotogo, Pacific Harbours, and Suva. Along the route of Queens Road, various vital services are available including healthcare facilities, education institutes, government offices, public services, and markets. The rehabilitation of these roads

provides improved access for women and children, and other road users, including local villagers, to reach central markets, 16 local markets, 7 schools, and 2 medical facilities. This area is a tourist destination with numerous resorts and hotels that employ many local women. The improved roads have facilitated better transportation, enabling women to access jobs in their local areas more easily. A notable

example is Sigatoka, a town renowned for its vibrant markets where local women play a crucial role in selling fresh produce, handicrafts, and other traditional Fijian items. These upgrades are essential not only for the project sites but also for women living in rural areas who rely on the main highway to access these vital services.

ROAD UPGRADE IMPROVES LIVELIHOOD



For the past decade, Zarina Wahab, 44 has been selling her products on the side of the old dusty road near the Momi junction in Nadi. “It was challenging, but it was

my livelihood,” says Zarina. However, things changed when the FRA initiated the Queens Road Upgrading Project (QRUP).

“The new road is wider and safer, and there is no dust issue. More people are travelling on it, and with the availability of parking spaces, it is easier for them to now access my products.” She said this project has not only helped increase sales but has also improved the livelihoods not just

for her but for other women vendors in the area.

Queens Road is part of the main arterial road network in Fiji connecting Suva to Nadi.

QRUP B involves road pavement upgrades, small sections of road widening within the existing road reserve, footpath repairs and footpath installations.



Nanise Nasikeli, 42 says the new Queens Road Upgrading Project (QRUP) has brought about many positive changes in their community, and one of them is the opportunity to sell tea, coffee, parcelled food and

pastries on the roadside along Namada Village in Sigatoka.

“Our roadside stall, *Vah Coffee Corner*, run by a 5-member women’s group, has had an influx of customers who are traveling on the new road and stopping by for a quick coffee and a bite to eat.” With the new footpaths, pedestrian crossings, road humps, bus shelters, and road signs, she said they have noticed a general sense of safety in the area for drivers, pedestrians, and most

importantly for women and children. “We are so happy that the new road has also improved travel time significantly. The smooth surface of the road and the lack of congestion have made it easier for people to stop by our stall, as they have more time to spare.”

The overall objectives of the QRUP B are improved access to markets, employment opportunities, and social services.



SAFER ROADS EMPOWER WOMEN, INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES



The new Queens Road Upgrading Project (QRUP) has been a boon for many local vendors like Sangeeta Wati.

“I have been selling at Momi junction, Nadi, for the past 8 years, and one of the most significant changes that the project brought is the improved parking allocation for customers,” says Sangeeta.

“In the past, the lack of parking space was a significant issue

that resulted in a loss of income for women vendors like me. It also compromised our safety” She said customers would often avoid stopping by because of the inconvenience of finding a place to park. “This meant that we would lose potential sales, and our livelihoods would suffer. However, the new parking space has resulted in a significant increase in sales for us vendors, and it has also enhanced safety, and we are so grateful.”



QRUP- B involves the rehabilitation and upgrade of six sections; from Sigatoka to Nadi in the western region of Fiji, with a total length of 23 kilometres.

Both the QRUP and KRUP bring a range of significant improvements for road users and the community. The road features improved pavement strength and ride quality, ensuring a smoother and more comfortable experience for all. Safety has been a top priority, with enhanced road safety measures and resilient access for users. Pedestrian crossing facilities and lighting have also been upgraded, enhancing safety and convenience for pedestrians. Additionally, the road now boasts improved bus facilities, including new bus bays and shelters. Overall, this project promotes regional economic growth and social benefits for the community.





GENDER-RESPONSIVE INFRASTRUCTURE: EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT

Caption: Female staff of FRA contributing their different expertise towards the national road infrastructure development

As we celebrated International Women in Engineering Day (INWED), it is crucial to highlight the transformative impact of gender-responsive infrastructure on fostering gender equality. The Fiji Roads Authority (FRA) is leading projects that enhance connectivity and safety while empowering women across communities.

Integrating a Gender Lens in Infrastructure Development:

This year's INWED theme, "Enhanced By Engineering," underscores FRA's commitment to inclusive infrastructure development. The FRA takes a proactive approach by integrating a gender lens into its capital projects. By prioritizing gender-specific designs and community-participatory models, FRA ensures that infrastructure meets the diverse needs of men, women, children, and elders alike. Through extensive public consultations and

focused group discussions with women, FRA gathers invaluable insights into community needs. This inclusive approach promotes accessibility and addresses safety concerns, particularly for women who historically faced challenges in accessing essential services and participating in economic activities.

Impactful Projects Leading the Way: Let's explore some of the impactful projects led by FRA:

Queens Road Upgrades: The Queens Road Rehabilitation Package B involves upgrading approximately 20 km of road in the Western Division's Nadroga Province. It includes pavement enhancements, widening, and footpath improvements, significantly benefiting rural women in areas like Sigatoka by improving access to markets, schools, and healthcare facilities.

Kings Road Upgrades: The Kings Road Rehabilitation sub-project upgrades 55 km of road from Wailotua to Ba, enhancing

connectivity to services and markets for residents, including rural women, through pavement upgrades, widening, and footpath installations.

Suva Arterial Roads:

Enhancements to Suva's arterial roads have strengthened connectivity to crucial social, medical, and educational institutions. This improvement has streamlined women's access to essential services and educational opportunities in urban settings, marking a significant step towards gender equality.

Fiji Wide Pavement Reseal Subproject:

The resealing of over 200 km of major and minor highway infrastructure ensures safe access for both women and men to markets, schools, and healthcare facilities, promoting safety and accessibility for all road users.

Viti Levu Crossing at Solovi and Rabaraba:

This project significantly enhances safety,



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Caption: Focused group discussion with women, empowering dialogue on gender-sensitive road construction in local communities

flood resilience, and access to vital services such as markets, education, and healthcare facilities for local villagers, including women, children, and elders.

Public Consultations and Gender Inclusion:

A cornerstone of FRA's approach to these projects is its commitment to gender-responsive public consultations. Engaging over 3,000 participants, including 40 percent women, FRA ensures that women's voices are heard in decision-making processes. These consultations, conducted in local languages and through focused group discussions, empower women to express their needs openly, shaping inclusive and effective infrastructure plans. Feedback gathered during these consultations has been instrumental in identifying and addressing safety concerns, such as inadequate footpaths and shelters disproportionately affecting women using public

transport and women vendors.

Creating Opportunities for Women :

In addition to improving infrastructure, FRA actively promotes gender diversity within the road construction sector. While less than 10 percent of technical roles are held by women at the FRA, projects like the Kings Road Upgrades and Queens Road Upgrades have provided opportunities for approximately 30 percent of women in skilled roles such as social and environmental management, occupational health and safety, accounting, and human resources. Challenges remain in increasing the representation of women in traditionally male-dominated roles within construction, with less than 10 percent of total project road construction employment being female in unskilled roles.

Training for local communities:

The FRA has facilitated targeted training sessions within local communities, focusing on comprehensive HIV/AIDS and STI education for a total of 806

participants. Notably, 316 of these participants were women, comprising 39 percent of the attendees. Sessions were thoughtfully tailored separately for women and men to ensure sensitivity to the subject matter. The training emphasized critical aspects including prevention strategies, transmission methods, symptom recognition, and the importance of testing and counseling. Local villagers, including women and workers, underscored the significance of increasing awareness, particularly in high-tourist areas such as Sigatoka.

As we celebrate International Women in Engineering Day, FRA's initiatives not only create safer and more accessible roads but also empower women to fully participate in economic and social life. The FRA remains dedicated to creating a society where women benefit through every mile of progress toward inclusive development.



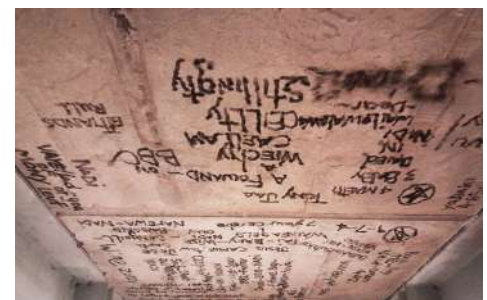
PROTECT OUR ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE: PROMOTING CIVIC PRIDE

Caption: Fiji Roads Authority assets such as bus stops are vandalized.

The Fiji Roads Authority (FRA) is concerned on the increased number of cases of vandalism specifically of public property and road assets. After a continued assessment and inspection, FRA notes that assets such as bridges and bus stops are vandalized, with continued acts of graffiti and vandalism - damaging public property. Vandalism is generally described as the deliberate damage or destruction of property, while graffiti is the act of marking, writing and drawing words or pictures on public property or surfaces without permission. Vandalism of public property is considered a criminal act and the perpetrators can face severe legal implications. While these road assets are built to ease commute and facilitate ease of access to public facilities,

acts of vandalism continue to disrupt flow of service and is continuously becoming an eyesore. Vandalism and graffiti are costing a significant amount for the authorities in rehabilitating these sites. These actions not only cost the authorities in dollars, but endanger public safety, increasing fear of crime within the community/vicinity and loss of service for the underprivileged. There has been an increased number of complaints and concerns about vandalism and graffiti throughout all divisions. It is important to tackle this issue as soon as possible because, not only is public property being continuously damaged, these crimes are likely to impact the public's perception with many commuters not feeling safe and avoiding these areas. It is disheartening to note many of FRA's newly built bus shelters and bridges are falling victim

to vandalism and graffiti. Each act of vandalism takes away the pride we should feel in our public spaces. FRA encourages all to share a unified responsibility to protect and preserve these assets for the benefit of our community. By demonstrating respect for our public spaces, we not only enhance the beauty of our neighborhoods but also foster a sense of belonging and unity among residents. Let's stand together in safeguarding our community's assets and promoting a culture of civic pride.



Vandalism under the Vuniyasi bridge, Nadi.