



Gender-Responsive Infrastructure: Empowering Women through Inclusive Development



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

As we celebrate 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.



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

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, 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 per cent 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.

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