

FRA EMPOWERING RURAL WOMEN THROUGH INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

By: FIJI ROADS AUTHORITY

As we mark International Women’s Day with the theme “Accelerate Action,” it is crucial to acknowledge and celebrate the significant contributions of women in critical infrastructure development. Women have been at the forefront of transformative projects that enhance the quality of life for communities worldwide, from sustainable energy initiatives to innovative transportation systems. Their diverse perspectives and solutions have not only driven economic growth but have also prioritized inclusivity and sustainability in infrastructure planning and execution. Recognizing these contributions helps pave the way for future generations of women to pursue careers in these fields, fostering greater innovation and resilience in our infrastructure systems.

The Fiji Roads Authority (FRA) recognizes the vital role women, particularly in rural areas, play in our communities, as well as the challenges they face. In many rural areas, inadequate road networks limit access to essential services such as healthcare, education, and markets. Poor infrastructure can restrict the mobility of women and girls, making it harder for them to find work, attend school, or seek medical assistance. For example, a mother may have to travel long distances on unpaved roads to get her child to a clinic, often risking their safety and health due to the lack of proper transportation.

To address these challenging issues, the FRA is actively working on significant infrastructure initiatives. We are currently preparing designs for 40 critical bridges and 3 jetties. Recognizing that many structures are high-priority, we have engaged a consulting firm to conduct feasibility studies and due diligence, laying the groundwork for these much-needed upgrades. The 40 Bridges and 3 Jetties design that is currently undertaken by BECA International is reaching its completion stage for the ten bridges under the Priority 1 group, with the construction of the four most critical bridges (Lami, Medraukutu, Sabeto, and Viseisei) expected to begin in mid-2025. Our goal is to replace critical bridges in poor condition, improving service, safety, and reliability across the network while accommodating future growth. Our approach to infrastructure development prioritizes social inclusion and gender equity. We aim to enhance the FRA’s capacity in planning, design, management, and maintenance by taking a



Women sharing ideas to improve our road infrastructure through focused group discussions

holistic view that incorporates climate change considerations, gender-responsive design, and disaster risk factors like cyclones, flooding, and rising sea levels. In the design of 40 bridges and 3 jetties, the Gender Action Plan (GAP) has been incorporated into the design. For example, all the new bridge designs will include separate footpaths on the bridge alignment to improve safety and remove physical barriers and constraints on access by women and children. In some of the bridges, an access way, including the handrail, will be provided for easy and safe access

for the local community, especially women. Engaging women through public consultations and focused group discussions in the planning and implementation of these projects is crucial. They have valuable insights into the specific challenges they face, and their perspectives can lead to more meaningful improvements in their communities. Moreover, better roads and bridges enhance safety for women traveling long distances, particularly in areas where security is a concern. With improved infrastructure, they can navigate their journeys with greater confidence and

ease, knowing they have reliable routes to follow. This not only safeguards their physical safety but also empowers them to participate more fully in society. The benefits of enhanced infrastructure are truly transformative. Improved transportation connects women to essential services and opens up new economic opportunities. For instance, women entrepreneurs can reach broader markets to sell their products—whether fresh produce or handmade crafts—stimulating local economies and creating jobs. As we look ahead, it’s vital to consider the intersection of gender and infrastructure. Enhancing rural infrastructure is a key step toward achieving gender equality. By supporting initiatives that improve transportation networks, we can empower women, uplift communities, and foster sustainable development. Let’s remember that infrastructure is more than just roads and bridges; it’s a pathway to empowerment.



40 BRIDGES AND 3 MARITIME STRUCTURES PROJECT

40 BRIDGES					
1.	Medraukutu Bridge	Lami, Central Division	21.	Nadi River Bridge	Nadi, Western Division
2.	Lami Bridge	Lami, Central Division	22.	Natogadravu	Rewa, Central Division
3.	Navutu Bridge	Nadroga, Western Division	23.	Watyaniu Bridge	Navua, Central Division
4.	Vunitogoloa Bridge	Ra, Western Division	24.	Naduru Bridge	Naitasiri, Central Division
5.	Viseisei Bridge	Nadi, Western Division	25.	Savu 6 Bridge	Naitasiri, Central Division
6.	Vitawa Bridge	Ra, Western Division	26.	Wainisusu 2 Bridge	Navua, Central Division
7.	Navola	Nadroga/Navosa, Western Division	27.	Renwick Nabukalou Creek	Suva, Central Division
8.	Matawalu Bridge	Lautoka, Western Division	28.	Koronubu 2 Bridge	Ba, Western Division
9.	Sabeto Bridge	Lautoka, Western Division	29.	Narewa/Namotomoto	Nadi, Western Division
10.	Lomolomo Bridge	Lautoka, Western Division	30.	Naboutolu 2 Bridge	Ba, Western Division
11.	Vuninuidrovo	Naitasiri, Central Division	31.	Oinafa	Rotuma
12.	Sarava Bridge	Rewa, Central Division	32.	Wainalako 2 Bridge	Levuka, Central Division
13.	Sawani Bridge	Naitasiri, Central Division	33.	Naivicula - Wainaviti Bridge	Korovou, Central Division
14.	Namoli 2 Bridge	Macuata, Northern Division	34.	Navaca Bridge	Taveuni, Northern Division
15.	Labasa Bridge	Labasa, Northern Division	35.	Buca Crossing	Cakaudrove, Northern Division
16.	Savarekareka Bridge	Savusavu, Northern Division	36.	Qacavulo 2 Crossing	Taveuni, Northern Division
17.	Kulukulu Bridge	Macuata, Northern Division	37.	Sese Bridge	Cakaudrove, Northern Division
18.	Vulovi Bridge	Savusavu, Northern Division	38.	Wai Bridge	Taveuni, Northern Division
19.	Naseakula Bridge	Macuata, Northern Division	39.	Waica	Taveuni, Northern Division
20.	Lomaloma Slip (New Bridge)	Labasa, Northern Division	40.	Naba / Karoko Bridge	Cakaudrove, Northern Division

3 JETTIES		
1.	Nabouwalu	Northern Division
2.	Natovi	Central Division
3.	Savusavu	Northern Division