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THE SOCIAL AND STRUCTURAL CAUSES OF ETHNIC FIJIAN POVERTY

Study of the participants of the ILO'S WOP- Fiji programme

BY

Tasneem Ali

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of
the requirements for a Master of Arts

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SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT, DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Development Studies Programme

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC

SUVA, FIJI

2012

Declaration

Statement of Authorship

I hereby declare that this thesis is completely my work. Except where reference is made, this thesis contains no materials published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis or dissertation for which I have been awarded another degree or diploma. Information derived from the published and unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given in the bibliography.



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Statement by Supervisor

I supervised Tasneem Ali's thesis and to my knowledge, it is her own work.



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ABSTRACT

“When discrimination and disadvantage result from the way in which people are trained, institutions operate, or laws are framed, the solution is to remove the injustice, not simply to offer temporary relief to those suffering from its effects”. (Barr, 1994:12)

In a world where the gap between the rich and the poor has widened disproportionately, adequate solutions to the poverty ‘problem’ within the context of indigenous, tradition-based communities have often seemed evasive. Instead, researchers have resorted to measuring poverty in terms of economic determinants such as housing, education, health, employment and income. Social and structural barriers are less often considered in search for solutions.

This thesis is primarily concerned with three issues: First, the social and structural barriers to the social and economic advancement of ethnic Fijians; secondly, how the ethnic Fijian poor view poverty, and finally, why previous Governments' efforts and affirmative action policies towards ethnic poverty reduction has failed to reap the results hoped for (see EUS 2004-2005, HIES 2002-2003, Narsey, 2007).

The research adopts two levels of analysis: first, a literature review that looks at the traditional approaches to poverty reduction at the macro and micro level, and secondly, a qualitative field survey conducted by the author of participants in an ILO programme that examined selected "traditional" and other behaviours and attitudes.

As the UN agencies are committed to poverty reduction as part of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), it seemed appropriate for the survey to select people from the International Labour Organisation’s ‘Working out of Poverty’- Fiji programme in which the author had also been involved. The social constructionist and constructivist paradigms were used for analysis.

The research finds a complex intertwinement of reality where poverty reduction actions continued to be overwhelmed with purely economic solutions to the neglect of the social and structural dimensions of poverty. This social and structural reality is camouflaged within traditional and religious structures, and entrenched as ‘norms’ and ‘values’. The unquestionable allegiance and adaptation to these elitist-controlled structures by the poor combined with the resultant trickle down effect of a colonial history seems to have transformed many aspects of ethnic Fijian values into tools of manipulation and control that have further perpetuated disparities and disadvantaged the poor among ethnic Fijians.

The research concludes that the structural and social causes of poverty are significant within the lives of indigenous communities such as ethnic Fijians. In turn, these need to be critically evaluated towards informed interventions and realistic, country and community relevant, poverty solutions.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADB - Asian Development Bank	MWSWPA- Fiji - Ministry for Women, Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation
ADB PR- Asian Development Bank Poverty Report	MWSWHSS- Fiji Ministry for Women, Social Welfare, Housing & Squatter Settlement
BNPL - Basic Needs Poverty Line	NZ ISR - New Zealand Governments Informal Settlements Report for Fiji
CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women	NDP- National Development Plans
CPAP- Country Programme Assessment Planning	NGO - Non Government Organisation
CROP- Council of Pacific Regional Organizations	NPO - National Planning Office
CSO's - Civil Society Organizations	OECD - Organizations for Economic Corporation and Development
CFC - Charter for Change	PAPDMC- Poverty Assessment in Pacific Developing Member countries
PCFC - People's Charter for Change	PCCP -Fiji -People's Charter for Change & Progress- 2007
DG - Director General	PDMC - Pacific Developing Member countries
DWCP - Decent Work Country Programme	PI - Poverty Index
DWPP - Decent Work Pilot Programme	PIC- Pacific Island Countries
ECR - European Commission Report	PICTA- Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement
EUS-Fiji Employment & Unemployment Survey- 2004-2005	PIDC - Pacific Islands Developing Countries
EU - European Union	PIFS- Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
FAS- Family Assistance Scheme	PPBP- The Pacific Plan Background Papers 2005
FBOS - Fiji Bureau of Statistics	PP No. 72- Fiji Government: Parliamentary Paper
FCOSS - Fiji Council of Social Services	PPP- Poverty Policy Paper
FISSR- Fiji Informal Settlements Scoping Report	PR – Poverty Report
FNCDP - Fiji National Council for Disabled People	PRSI- Poverty Reduction Strategies Initiative
FPR - Fiji Poverty Report 1995/1996	PSG - Policy Structure Group
FSPI- Foundation of the Peoples on the South Pacific International	PRSP -Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
FTUC - Fiji Trade Union Congress	SDP –Fiji Strategic Development Plan 2007-2001
GoF - Government of Fiji	SYB-Start Your Business
GDP - Gross Domestic Product	SLOP- Supplementary Livelihood Options for the Pacific Island Communities
GDWPP- Ghana Decent Work Pilot Programme	SPC- South Pacific Commission
GPRS - Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy	SPREP- Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
HART - Housing Assistant Relief Trust	SPTO - South Pacific Tourism Organisation
HIES - Household Income and Expenditure Survey Report –Fiji 2002-2003	TPAF – Training & Productivity Authority of Fiji
HDI - Human Development Index	UNDP -United Nations Development Programme
HDR - Human Development Report	UNDP HPI - United Nations Development Programme - Human Poverty Index
HDS - Human Development Strategy	UNDP FPR - United Nations Development Programme Fiji Poverty Report 2003, 2006, 2008
HLCLEP- High Level Commission on the Legal Empowerment of the Poor	UNDAF- United Nations Development Assistance Framework for Action
HRPC - Human Resource Planning Committee	UNFPA - United Nations Population Fund
IBRD - The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development	UNGA - United Nations General Assembly
ICT-Information & Communication driven Technology	UNMPR - United Nations Millennium Project Report
IFI- International Financial Institutions	UNPFII – United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
IHRD - Integrated Human Resource Development	WB - World Bank
IYB- Improve Your Business	WBPID - World Bank Policy on Information Disclosure
ILO - International Labour Organization	WDR - World Development Report
ILO-GPE - International Labour Organization – Gender- Poverty and Employment	WOP - Walking Out of Poverty Programme
ILO WOP -ILO Working out of Poverty Programme	WSSD - World Summit on Sustainable Development
IMF- International Monetary Fund	WTO - World trade Organisation
KAB-Know About Business	
MDG -Millennium Development Goals	
MSEs - Micro and Small Enterprises	

GLOSSARY OF FIJIAN TERMS

(Translation is based on the meaning as understood from the respondent's perspective, specialist interviews and/or from the Fijian dictionary by Capell A., 1991 and the Fijian Phrase book, 1994 by Geraghty P., Lonely Planet, Australia)

Bogidrau- Traditional 100 days of grievance Ceremony for a dead. People who pay their condolence take food and other items.

Bulubulu ceremony- the giving of gifts to ask for forgiveness in a traditional way. 'Bulubulu' means 'to bury the past and make peace for the future (Durutalo, 2003:170).

Grog- also called 'Yaqona' a traditional Fijian drink made from roots, slightly toxic and brown in colour. Commonly used for socializing purposes.

Kau ni matanigone- taking children whose parents originate from specific villages back to the mothers villages for the first time in a ceremonial way.

Kerekere – requesting for a favour. To beg to borrow something not meant to be returned

Kaindia- The name by which indigenous Fijians refer to the Fiji Indians.

Koro- Fijian village

i'Taukei – Indigenous Fijian belonging to the land in Fiji.

Mataqali - mataqali (pronounced mataŋ'gali]) is a Fijian clan or landowning unit .

Mammagi – the state of being mean or stingy.

Matasinqa- Small groups.

Reguregu- taking of goods and ceremonial items (Magiti –dalo, cassava,pig or cow], other food, mats-masi, tapa, cartons of fish),for an aggrieved family during a death.

Roqoroqo- giving of gifts after the birth of the child

Roko Tui- is the title for the executive head of any one of Fiji's 14 Provincial Councils.

Soli – giving of money as imposed by traditional Fijian culture and custom for various traditional or religious needs.

Soli in Church- offering from the members side to help the destitute and the poor or for death ceremony's. Usually money is given.

Soli ni yasana- an annual levy every Fijian i'Taukei' male or female over 21 years old must pay to the Yasana which is then given to a high level committee who invests it on behalf of the province

Soli Vakamisinari - Methodist Church Grand Soli where the church members impose a levy amount per head per household which each household has to contribute to the church each year.

Soqosoqo vaka marama- the women's club or church group or women's group belonging to the vanua who have their own leaders by choice and often weave mats and engage in other activities.

Teitei - Traditional Fijian garden where crops such as dalo, cassava are planted.

Talanoa – mostly informal talks and discussions held within an informal setting as a form of socializing

Taboo – sacred, not questioned or freely discussed

Tikina- is the individual villages.

Talatala- head of a series of smaller community based churches that belong to the same denomination

Tithe- giving 10 % of income or salary for church

Tuirara- voice of the people and voice of the gasi or Vakatawa.

Turaga ni koro - the Fijian village headman

Vakatawa- the person who leads the people in a particular village or location .

Vanua – an essential concept of indigenous Fijian Culture. Vanua means land, but also refers to social and cultural aspects of the physical environment identified with a social group.

Vanua- also the land area a Fijian identified with. (see: <http://www.koroisland.org/VANUA>)

Village – has many clans living together.

Viavialevu- boastful, being presumptuous, bold, proud. Not considered a good trait in the Fijian culture

Yasana – The 14 Provinces in Fiji that represent the Ethnic Fijian population.

Yavusa – village divided into clans.

Vulagi-Visitor, outsider on a temporary visit or errand

GLOSSARY OF TECHNICAL TERMS

Economic Indicators- Statistical data showing general trends in the economy. Is of 3 types: leading indicators; coincident indicators; lagging indicators; example, unemployment, housing, Consumer Price Index, industrial production, GDP, stock market prices, etc.

Empirical Research- research based on observed and measured phenomena i.e.; on actual observations or experiments using quantitative research methods. It may generate numerical data between two or more variables.(see:http://www.nsu.edu/library/pdf/Empirical_Research.pdf)

Poverty Alleviation - to be a charitable assistance involving efforts towards lessening the suffering of the poor, meeting their immediate pressing needs with welfare handouts and social security, providing safety nets, dealing with widows, orphans, the elderly and the handicapped (see: Casimira, 2003:1).

Poverty Reduction- a commitment to development involving the lowering of the numbers of those living below the poverty line and eliminating them from the rolls of the deprived through initiatives such as jobs creation, provision of health, education, credit for small business enterprises and so forth. The aim is to help reduce the severity of poverty symptoms without transforming people from 'poor' to 'non poor'. (see: Casimira, 2003:1-6).

Poverty Eradication - focuses on the longer term objectives that link to the challenge of restructuring society to minimize poverty so that the absolute numbers of the impoverished decrease to minimal exceptional cases. It requires the planning and resetting of priorities, shifts in power, restructuring society and for radical social and economic changes through policies based on justice, compassion and inclusiveness (see: Casimira, 2003:1- 6).

Lifting people out of poverty - reducing the numbers of poor people and/or transforming poor people into non-poor people.

Poverty prevention – enabling people to avoid falling into poverty by reducing their vulnerability (see: King & Palmer, 2005).

Social - relating to human society or organisations.
ii) Of the way people live and work together in groups (see: Collins Paperback dictionary 2002).

Social constructionism - seen as a “sociological construct” where all social action is socially constructed or where the meaning and power dynamics are used to explain the ways in which phenomena is socially constructed (see Brown et al, 1989:41). Under this paradigm, knowledge and social action is seen to go together based on complex and organized patterns of ongoing actions, thoughts and beliefs, ideas, concepts, languages and discourses (see Adler, 2001).

Social Constructivism - the interests and focus of the widely shared inter-subjective beliefs and the deeper meaning through thoughts, ideas, assumptions, conceptions that are widely shared among people and groups such as organizations, policymakers, social groups or society”(Tannenwald, 2005: 15). Communicative aspects of human behaviour involving the interpretive perspective (verstehen) where categories of knowledge and reality are actively created by social relationships and interactions linked to social structures and institutions. (Cunningham, 1992, p. 36)

Social structure - How society is organized by social institutions - the family, and educational, religious, economic, and political institutions—and stratified on the basis of various roles and statuses.

Structuralism – an approach to social science that which sees changes in a subject as caused and organised by a hidden set of universal rules (see: Collins paperback dictionary 2002)

Triangulation – the mixing of data or methods so that diverse viewpoints or standpoints cast light upon a topic. It involves an interaction of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints. It helps in the validation and cross verification of data

Trickle - down effect – known as a process by which benefits to the wealthy and affluent, via state policies, trickle - down to benefits for the poor.

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to the research

“The economic and political structures in society shape the way people think and act. Those people who gain either wealth or power or status in a society tend to preserve and maintain the structures because they benefit from them. Those who do not have wealth or power or status and are oppressed by these structures tend to struggle against them. And so there is conflict. Oppressive structures (economic, political or social) always cause problems of injustice. It is important to note that people can change structures in society.” (Barr, 2005 b: 37-38)

Since the advent of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by the United Nations (UN) and later, the Millennium declaration (2000), poverty eradication efforts have escalated manifold¹. This effort commenced at Copenhagen in 1995, with an agreed global compact in which the rich and the poor countries recognized their shared responsibility to end poverty and its root causes by 2015. Since then, numerous strategies been adopted to achieve the proposed poverty goals which have often linked to the terms in which poverty was defined. For example, the UN agencies have commonly linked poverty to “income” and a person’s “purchasing power parity” (UNDP 2002). Similarly, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) viewed it as “the level of income or consumption necessary to meet a set of minimum requirements to feed oneself and one’s family adequately and/or to meet other basic requirements such as clothing, housing and healthcare” (ADB, 2006).

A broader ADB focus now includes the “young, the old, people living with disabilities, those with no source of regular income, or access to adequate land on which to grow food” (see Parks, et al., 2009). An expanded approach by the World Bank (WB, 2007:1) now sees poverty as a “nuanced concept” that also linked to “indigenous people” whose poverty situation was seen to be more “comprehensive concept than that which standard poverty measures captured”. A UN report also describes the level of poverty amongst the world’s indigenous people as “persistent and pervasive” (UNPFII, 2009).

In contrast, acclaimed poverty analyst Green (2008:36) has emphasised several interrelated poverty dimensions including gender and equity. He links these to “people’s identity’ which “often rationalised and reinforced deep inequalities in treatment”.

¹ As stated in the World Commission on the Social Dimensions of Globalisation 2004 report.

However, what stands out in the above analysis is that poverty is linked to economic indicators such as the lack of income, education and housing with a visible gap on the social and structural dimensions. Walsh (2001) says that, “poverty was not even seen to be an issue of concern within the Pacific Island countries (PIC’s) until recently”. Moreover, the “Pacific paradise”, “noble savage”, “subsistence affluence” myths still persisted and wordings such as; “generous aid flows”, “large inflow of remittances”, “favourable resources for subsistence living”, “basic food and shelter readily available for modest effort” were still being used (see ADB 1996).

This misconception was seen to link to the “Pacific Paradise myths” which Walsh (2001) sees as “false, meaningless and unhelpful generalisations” based on the perception of overseas experts who saw “no real poverty” in the Pacific (ibid). Within the vast difference in terms of culture and resources within the Pacific, the above statements were “untrue for most Pacific Island countries” (ibid). Ironically, at the local level, the “denial syndrome” reinforced these myths (ibid).

In relation to the search for poverty solutions, one of the theoretical approaches that has been adopted has been the “flawed character theory”. This theory puts the blame on the poor for their own predicament, such as “the accusation of poor decision-making, laziness or being solely responsible for their plight” (see Shah, 2010). Duncan (1984) is critical of this assumption that “the poor have ample opportunities for improving their economic status, but lack the initiative and diligence necessary to take advantage of them”. Walsh (1976: 90) asserts that “negative attitudes (were) reinforced by the use of negative terms such as ‘slum’, ‘squatter’, ‘marginality’ ‘shantytown’; by the belief that physical conditions and moral attributes are related and that the poor are responsible for their conditions”.

Similarly, the UN agencies have often blamed the uneven progress in the fight against poverty on the “unmet commitments, inadequate resources, lack of focus and accountability, and insufficient dedication to sustainable development” (MDG report 2010:4). These included “the global food and economic and financial crises”, “climate change” and “social and economic instabilities” (ibid, WB, 2006, EUS 2004-2005, HIES 2002-2003). The inability to generate enough jobs and livelihood opportunities by Pacific Island countries (PIC) has also been classified as a key factor in poverty (see: UNDP - FPR 2006). In line with the above variations, global economist, Sachs (2005) states that “no single definition encompasses all the connotations of the term 'poverty' ”.

In pursuit of the poverty reduction goals, the Government of Fiji (GoF), together with the development agencies committed to several broad economic and social goals. This included the 'People's Charter for Change, Peace and Progress initiative', which has several pillars targeting the building of a better Fiji (see PCCPP, 2008). Out of these, pillar 6 of reducing poverty, 8 of making land available, 9 providing proper housing and 10 of better education and health services were regarded to be of special significance (Barr, 2010). The GoF was also estimated to have spent over 1.5 billion from the year 2000 to 2008 on affirmative action and poverty alleviation efforts" (see Barr, 2011:2).

Yet, reports continue to indicate that poverty in Fiji remained a "significant concern at 31.4%" despite efforts towards its alleviation" (see MDG report, 2008, 2010, EUS-2004-2005, Barr, 2011). It had also reportedly worsened due to the "20% devaluation of the Fiji dollar" and the "increase in Value added tax" (Barr, 2010:3). This suggests that the theoretical engagement and practical approaches toward poverty eradication "was philosophically varied with very few if any example of local success models" (ibid).

It is also noted that, while the doctrine of equality and equity dictated that "economic growth be shared for the benefit of all people", the growing inequality in Fiji revealed that the economic growth "had not been equally shared over the years" (Barr, 2004:4). As such, it was imminent that a household's sense of well-being depended "not just on its average income or expenditures, but also on the risks and vulnerabilities", and 'prevention' efforts towards poverty alleviation" (Jha et al, 2008:5).

From a constructionist perspective, Durutalo (2003:166) writes that the "customs and traditions still regulate(d) the lives of individuals in many parts of Fiji from the moment of birth until death". Moreover, "under such beliefs, an individual was born into a gradation of social units which range from the *i Tokatoka* to the *Vanua* where the traditional social rank, status and roles are inherited at birth and one cannot be changed later in life"(ibid:167).

Nabalarua (2002:2) also contends that, "our present circumstances have been perpetuated by a form of institutionalization that has further widened disparities at all levels, in all sectors and between the two main ethnic communities". Ravuvu (1987) has asserted that the "tradition of ceremonial gift-giving and reciprocal exchange ... (was) a stimulator to ethnic Fijian poverty". Additionally, the cultural borrowing (*kerekere*) is described as a constraining "traditional ethnic Fijian activity" with no expectation for reciprocity (ibid). Ironically, Ravuvu (1987) adds that the educated Fijians seemed to be well aware that "indigenous societies were finding it difficult to maintain traditional, social and kinship obligations in the modern day" (ibid).

On the other hand, in situations where some members of the group had “moved further into dependence on the cash economy than others, or where the cultural safety net ha(d) broken”, this situation may no longer exist (O’Collins, 1997). O’Collins writes that;

“The excessive and sometimes extreme demands placed on the modern day Islander as a result of kinship and communal obligations in light of the current day high populations, extrogenous marriages, commitments to many political, social, and kinship groups through highly exclusive kinship ties ... have become a source of deterrent to progress and prosperity for many”. (O’Collins, 1997)

It is interesting to note that there is now an acknowledgment that religion and religious institutions can be some of the “most powerful forces that can shape attitudes and beliefs and remains at the centre of community life for many communities” (see Green,2008:36). From a theoretical perspective, Barr (2005:64) says that, “within a social group or culture, reality is socially constructed by inter connected patterns of communication behaviour defined not so much by individual acts, but by complex and organized patterns of on-going actions”.

Barr’s analysis of the “culture of silence” amongst the poor within the ethnic Fijian community and its link to the ethnic social structures also raises questions as to its historical origins. It has been reported that “social constructs linked to the divide and rule polices of colonialism” and its constructivist impact on the mindset and attitudes of ethnic Fijians had, in turn, “affected ethnic Fijian productivity and performance in relation to work” (see Durutalo, 2003:168-169; Nabalarua, 2001:2; Zandra, 1997:117).

Thus, while there were several stated reasons why the poverty goals failed to achieve the anticipated results, there is a clear indication of an obsession with the economic indicators linked to the signs and symbols of poverty. These have included, ‘housing’, ‘education’, ‘health’, ‘jobs and income’, ‘sanitation’, ‘equal opportunities’ and determinants such as ‘minimum or just wages’ (see Narsey, 2009). In contrast, the “institutional and structural considerations linked to the poverty situation of the vulnerable and marginalised groups continued to be sidetracked” (see Nomae et al, 2004; Narsey, 2007). This shows that the social structural dimensions have often failed to be captured by data and statistics.

In also adds weight to the argument that the approach by the current development institutions who designed poverty eradication strategies and policies was “a denial to apply reason” (Walsh, 2000). Denise Pantin et al (2005:3), in a Caribbean study asserted that, “the legal, institutional and policy infrastructure established to address poverty issues ironically disserved the goal”. Moreover, “the anti-poverty goal was not mainstreamed but

in fact side-lined through the creation of Ministries, sub-Ministries or Departments ... without any central coordination” (ibid).

Again, the above arguments support the assertion that the challenge for poverty may often lie beyond what statistics could measure. In turn, these link to this research objective and the question of why poverty continued to prevail and was increasing amongst the ethnic Fijian population despite several targeted action programmes and policies? In order to answer this, the research looked at what the causes of poverty were within the social structural dynamics on the ground that affected the participant’s lives and their ability to progress. An understanding of the impact of these on the population in relation to time, money and resource utilisation and consumption habits helped clarify whether the current approaches had been realistic. Thus, a close analysis of the social world of the participants of the International Labour Organisations ‘Working out of poverty’ (WOP) Fiji programme provided an ideal opportunity for this investigation.

A critical theory perspective was adopted using the paradigms of social constructionism (see Burr, 1995) and constructivism (see Brown et al, 1989: 32-41) to enable a better understanding of the social world and behaviour and actions of the target group. Often, these are interpreted to be the result of “the social constructions of reality and the often unintended or unconscious by-products of countless human choices rather than laws resulting from divine will or nature” (Vygotsky, 1978). Under social constructionism, knowledge and social actions were “based on complex and organized patterns of ongoing actions, thoughts and beliefs, ideas, concepts, languages and discourses” (Adler, 2001). These helped in the analysis of the “interests and focus of the widely shared inter-subjective beliefs and the deeper meaning through thoughts, ideas, assumptions, conceptions that was widely shared among people and groups such as organizations, policymakers, social groups or society”(Tannenwald, 2005: 15).

The research acknowledged that the topic of poverty within the context of a community with manifold sources of power relations was complex. The adaptation of a sociological perspective with critical, interpretive analysis aimed at a better understanding of the research topic within the context of an indigenous community. It helped shed light on the power dynamics that unfolded within their lives the ways in which these influenced their social priorities for time, labour, money and resource usage.

Moreover, as a researcher of Indo-Fijian background, special effort was made to counter the constant possibility of misinterpretation or value judgement during the research by the use of interpreters and translators. This process helped to identify the existing gaps within

the current poverty reduction approaches towards realistic, country based solutions. In line with this approach, the thesis structure is outlined in the following sections.

1.2 Research Aims

The research looked at the social world of the target group and the various social institutions and their norms and practices that prevailed and impacted upon their lives. This included key decisions pertaining to livelihood by means of time, income, consumption and labour and resource utilisation. The aim was to identify why poverty continued to prevail and was increasing amongst the ethnic Fijian poor despite several targeted policies and programmes and how the social institutions contributed to this situation. In turn, this would help identify the existing gaps that needed to be addressed.

1.3 Research Objectives

Often, the concepts that define poverty also determine the methods that are employed to measure it. This, in turn, influences the policy and programme packages used to address its resultant concerns. This thesis compared the conventional approaches to poverty reduction with field research findings on the social, structural causes of poverty for the target population in order to help identify the existing gaps in research and policy action towards realistic and country relevant poverty solutions.

1.4 Statement of Propositions

- i. The social structural causes of poverty are a reality within the entrenched, hierarchy and class based value system of the ethnic Fijians and need to be critically evaluated over and above the top-heavy, policy action focused approaches that only consider the signs and symbols of poverty in pursuit of poverty solutions.
- ii. The constructionist impact of a colonial history that is the background of the current social structures combined with racial politics and policies within the context of financially constraining traditional and religious norms and practices has helped institutionalise the social and structural causes of poverty for the ethnic Fijian.
- iii. An inverse relationship between what the poor and the more affluent can afford to give towards the communal and institutional goals has disguised the fact that the relationship and exchange is not reciprocal and the poor are giving out more under the misconstrued perception of benefiting from the system.

1.5 FIELD RESEARCH PARTICIPANT DETAILS

1.5.1 Demographic Location

The research centred on the main Island of Viti Levu, in Fiji and focussed on localities along the Suva-Nausori and Suva-Navua corridor, Nausori and Tailevu rural areas in addition to the outer suburb Housing and informal settlements around Suva, Lami and Veisari. The majority of the respondents were second or third generation migrants from rural villages and outer Islands already living in Suva. As many were new migrants from the outskirts villages, including the western division and outer island. These also included youths who had come in search for jobs.

Table 1: Sample population for Field Interviews

Demography	Ethnicity	Male	Male	Female	Female	Total
	(EF)-Ethnic Fijian (IF)-Indo-Fijian	Age 17-35	Age 36-55	Age 17-35	Age 36-55	
1. Squatter Area (city periphery)	EF	4	3	4	5	17
	IF		1			
2. Squatter Area (outer city)	EF	4	2	4	5	15
3. Housing Authority Homes	EF	2	2	5	8	17
4. HART Homes (semi urban)	EF	-	-	5	2	7
5. Rural Village	EF	3	5	9	5	22
Total		13	13	27	25	78
6. Village : Convenience Interviews	EF	13	6	8	13	40
7. Squatter and Housing Authority Areas: Convenience Interviews	EF	5	8	7	14	34
	IF	-	2	-	3	5
Overall Total		31	29	42	55	157

Aggregation of sample population from the WOP – Fiji programme by ethnicity, Sex and age

In addition to demography, the populations background linked to social groups such as the Governments Family Assistance Support recipients, prisoner's families dependents, ex-prisoners, displaced people, single mothers, widows, people with disabilities, domestic workers and rural based subsistence farmers.

1.5.2 List of Specialists Interviewed (see Annex 3)

These included NGO heads, a former Government Minister, 2 senior staff of the Labour Ministry, 2 staff from the MWSWHPA, and a poverty consultant amongst others.

Table 2: Sample population for Focus Group discussions

Demography	Ethnicity	Male	Male	Female	Female	Total
	Ethnic -Fijian-(EF) Indo Fijian- (IF)	Age 17-35	Age 36-50	Age 17-35	Age 36-50	
1. Squatter area	EF -12	5	4	7	5	21
	IF -1	-	-	-	-	-
2. HART home	EF	-	-		2	2
3. Housing Authority Homes	EF	-	-		1	1
4. Rural Village	EF	1		6	4	14
			3			
Total		6	7	13	12	38

Aggregation by ethnicity, Sex and age: WOP Fiji Field survey Focus Group Discussions: Dec 2010

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The varied interlinkages to poverty and its complexity are often addressed using economic indicators towards desirable results. By comparison, the social, structural causes of poverty within tradition and religion based societies may often decide how of the lives of the poor unfolded on the ground. While the field research included unstructured interviews, considering the weakness of the above factor in poverty research, the following research questions guided this thesis:

1. What was the current social and economic situation of the trainees and what were some of the key social structures that prevailed within their lives?
2. How and in what ways did these structures affect the lives of the target group in relation to their economic progress? (Time was used as an indicator to assess institution related social factors such as time spend for religious and community activities, teitei, socializing such as yaqona drinking, talanoa, television, radio, sleep, and so forth). In order to assess this, following factors were considered;
 - **Key Decisions** - i.e.; how income was used and daily commitments were prioritized in relation to family, communal duties, jobs, savings, service towards social institutions such as the church, vanua and the village and so forth.
 - **Livelihoods** – how the trainees survived- i.e.; their main sources of food, what was the consumption pattern like, how income was prioritised for the various needs, level of dependency on subsistence food, access to amenities, how these were paid for, the level of material comforts and how these were accessed, was the government support or remittances an option, in what ways, were children or family members into full time or part time jobs, how many depended on their income and so forth.

- **Level of Commitment to Work** – was there commitment in the search for jobs, were jobs secured, was attendance to jobs consistent and timely, were there any obstructions, was there a preference for specific jobs, or to stay home, etc.
 - **Time utilisation** – how and in what ways was time utilised for the above activities.
 - **Income Utilisation** – (ditto)
 - **Resource Utilisation** – (ditto)
- 3) Based on the findings, were the current efforts on poverty reduction realistic and relevant to the ethnic Fijian community and their social and structural situation?

1.7 BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION

“In the absence of valid theory, social development remains largely a process of trial and error experimentation, with a high failure rate and very uneven progress”.

(Jacobs and Cleveland, 1999:1)

As Fiji is currently going through a process of restructuring that has also included a constitution review, how it views the poverty situation and redesigns its institutions including the state machinery that handles poverty becomes significant. Considering the level of past Government efforts on the economic development of ethnic Fijians, it is important that this process was informed by empirical evidence of what the causes of poverty were and what actions would work towards its elimination.

Local poverty expert Kevin Barr illustrates poverty to include “low income” and its “related economic disadvantages” (Barr, 2010). Poverty of access is illustrated to include the “lack of the decent home, wages, education, ability to pay fees, buy medicine or healthy food” in addition to “feeling humiliated, worthless, excluded...voiceless, powerless, depended...helpless ...”(ibid). The GoF is also seen to recognise that “certain groups of the unemployed such as the old, the sick, women, the disabled, handicapped and the unemployed” were more exposed to poverty than others (FPR, 1997:33-34).

The ILO also views poverty within the context of “a lack of income” and the world of work as “the key for solid, progressive and long-lasting eradication of poverty”. In turn, it has addressed these concerns since 1919 and later, as a UN agency from 1949, through its social justice agenda (ILO, 2010). However, the above determinants again emphasize the signs and symptoms of poverty with a marked failure to capture the social, structural causes of poverty within a community context. As such, it is not uncommon that several European Union (EU) supported programmes such as the ILO’s 5 country Pacific Youth

unemployment project (YEP) have been criticised by constituent members as being “theory based and impractical”².

Similarly, a preliminary analysis of the ILO’s WOP-Fiji programme showed that 96.6% of the 780 trainees from December 2003 to June 2007 were ethnic Fijians. In contrast, statistics show that all communities in Fiji were equally poor (see Fiji EUS, 2004–2005). In addition, several follow up field visits by the ILO programme staff indicated that most of the trainees remained unemployed and had sold most of the equipments.

Thus, the question related to why a community which received special preference and favour in the past government’s affirmative action policies and programmes towards economic progress continued to remain poor (see; Narsey 2007, FHRCR 2006). Thus, this research provided an ideal opportunity to delve into the social world of the population that linked to this poverty reduction programme in order to understand what poverty meant to this group and how the social and structural factors affected their lives. The literature review enabled a comparative analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the macro to micro level efforts on poverty reduction. The overall research objective was to enhance knowledge and understanding on the social and structural causes of poverty for the ethnic Fijian poor towards community and country relevant poverty solutions.

1.8 THE WOP - FIJI PROGRAMME

After the UN General Assembly (UNGA) proclaimed 1996 as the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty, the ILO launched its ‘Working out of Poverty’ (WOP) programme as a global initiative under its Decent Work agenda (DWA) (see ILO-ILC, 2003:3). The programme aimed at skills development towards employment creation in efforts to address poverty concerns in its member countries.

The ILO Pacific Office is seen to have readily adopted the globally endorsed methodologies on poverty reduction despite the variations in country and community context. The programme was also aligned to the national Government policy on poverty and aimed to train the target group in trade skills that would enable them to eventually “move out of poverty”.

The programme focused on 13 vocations that included sewing, cooking, tie-dyeing, screen-printing, flower nursery and gardening, carpentry, electrical, electronics, joinery, welding, plumbing, honeybee keeping, and chicken and duck farming. Meant to act as a

² The author worked in a UN Pacific agency *and* was very familiar with project outcomes and evaluation reports.

best practice, the GoF through the Ministry for Women, Social welfare, Housing and Poverty Alleviation (MWSWPA) implemented the pilot programme from December 2003 to June 2007 with technical support from the ILO. The Training and Productivity Authority (TPAF), the Fiji Institute of Technology (FIT) and the Fiji National centre for the Disabled (FNCDP) were used as training venues. The Poverty Alleviation Unit (PAU) ran a similar programme, in which busloads of ethnic Fijian participants from around the Suva -Nausori corridor participated and displayed their creative skills to dignitaries and the public.

According to Mr Sowani of the MWSWPA, “even though the PAU programme was adhoc, this celebration helped gain government sympathy and budgetary support”. However, the ILO records showed that this programme did not receive any financial support from the MWSWHPA. The next section outlines the demographic locations of the population.

1.8.1. DEMOGRAPHIC COVERAGE

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Housing & Squatter settlement | 13. Namosi village |
| 2. Vatuwaqa Housing & Squatter settlement | 14. Makoi Housing |
| 3. Cunnigham Housing | 15. Lami Squatter and Village |
| 4. Newtown Housing | 16. Veisari village / Squatter settlements |
| 5. Delainavesi village/squatter settlement | 17. Qauia village |
| 6. Dreknikelo village | 18. Fiji Muslim League Squatter –Nabua |
| 7. Kasavu –rural | 19. Jittu Housing and squatter |
| 8. Kolambu Village | 20. Nadonomai village |
| 9. Lakena No. 1 Squatter settlement | 21. Wainigasau village |
| 10. Lakena No. 2 Hill Squatter settlement | 22. Tailevu |
| 11. Vuninudrovu village | 23. Veisari village |
| 12. Bua village Sawani village | |

1.8.2 SELECTION PROCESS

The basis of the programme selection criteria linked to the poverty situation of the target group, as verified by the MWSWHPA field staff through field surveys and also by its Family Assistance recipients records. The initial intake from 2003 to 2005 were females who were taken into female dominated trades such as sewing and cooking. These included the unemployed, single mothers, widows or mothers from broken marriages, many of whom were on the Family support. Unemployed youths also formed a large percentage of trainees for the later years together with some ex-prisoners and people with disabilities.

This was the result of the shift to the male dominated trades from July 2005 to June 2007. The key training vocations in the later years also included welding, plumbing, joinery, electrical, carpentry, poultry and beekeeping skills. At the time of the training, carpentry was highlighted as a vocation with major trade skills shortage in addition to handicraft skills, tile laying and service work within the hotel industry (see FIBS, 2006:11).

Pre – Surveys and an evaluation report indicated that 96.6 % of trainees were ethnic Fijians while 3.4% were indo-Fijians. A major racial discrepancy in the selection and training process was imminent. This is contrasted with the latest poverty reports which have indicated that indo-Fijian and ethnic Fijian communities in Fiji were “equally poor” with the possibility of indo - Fijians being “on a higher poverty ratio” (see Narsey 2007, UNDP, 2009).

1.8.3 EDUCATION LEVEL OF THE PARTICIPANTS

The pre-selection survey questionnaires revealed a 100% literacy rate amongst participants with majority having gone through primary and/or secondary school, albeit, at different levels of education. The 2003 to 2005 cluster suggested that 17% participants had primary school education and 83% had two or more years of secondary education. The July 2005 to June 2007 cluster showed that 46% of the respondents had full primary education, 38% had up to form 4 level education and 16% had up to form 5 and 6 level education.

1.8.4 OBJECTIVITY IN IMPLEMENTATION

The WOP Programme included majority ethnic Fijians as reflected from the database and questionnaires. Existing information also indicated that several trainees had close family links with Minister Caucau and her staff and a significant number were also from villages which the female Minister had close affiliation with. The ILO records indicate that Ms Caucau’s sister, Luci, was put in charge of the programme on behalf of the MWHSWPA despite being a non staff while her two sons, her biological father, brothers and close relatives also participated in the various trainings.

1.9 THESIS OUTLINE

This research thesis commences with the abstract and content page outlining the details of each chapter followed by the individual chapters as outlined below.

1. Introduction

This section consist of the research aims, objectives, research questions, demography, the background and justification for the research, a summary of the WOP – Fiji programme and a summary outline of the methods adopted together with a thesis outline.

2. Methodology and methods

This chapter outlines the philosophy of the research including the research methodology and methods, which included selection of the population sample, research ethics and the research strategy for the thesis. These reflections are followed up in chapter 5 (a) and 5 (b)

3. Literature Review

Chapter 3 covers the Literature review which analyses the various meanings and perceptions of poverty with the various theoretical paradigms and development approaches to poverty reduction in contrast to the historical and social institutional sources of poverty.

4. Research Findings

The field research findings are laid out in chapter 5 supported by tabulated and graphical portrayal of research findings together with two case studies that enhance the findings.

5. Evaluation

Chapter 6 revolves around reflections from the research and major causalities and possible generalisations that can be deduced from the analysis in chapter 3, 4 and 5.

6. Conclusion

Chapter 7 lays out the conclusions to the research and illustrates the answers to the research question on what have been the social and structural causes of poverty for the ethnic Fijian poor and how these have operationalized in the respondents lives towards the perpetuation of their poverty situation.

7. Bibliography

This section lists the detailed references for this research

8. Appendices

This section outlines the additional graphs and tables linked to the research topic and analysis in addition to other relevant information.

CHAPTER 2.0 METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

This chapter details the research method adopted for this thesis including the process of population selection, literature review, research ethics and the research experience. It begins with an illustration of the key reason for the choice of the topic.

2.1 CHOICE OF RESEARCH TOPIC

This topic of study linked to my work in poverty related programmes while working for a United Nations agency in the Pacific. It also closely associated with a previous 10 years of work exposure which involved service to the vulnerable communities within Fiji while attached to an NGO, the Soroptimist International. As ILO Pacific Office's staff, the process adopted in the implementation of various country-based projects and programmes often contrasted with the reality of the people and their expectations on the ground.

The questions of relevance and practicality of poverty action for the UN Pacific agencies linked to globally endorsed mandates and policies at the macro level. These were often inconsistent with individual country situations. In turn, key donor funded programmes were often designed based on short country visits by foreign 'consultants' and 'specialists' which often linked to theoretical assumptions and solutions.

Thus, it was no surprise that poverty-focused programmes such as the ILO's IHRDPEP and the Youth Employment programme(YEP), had received critical evaluation. A key question was why such efforts failed to reap anticipated results. A comparison with a few Indo - Fijian trainees suggested that similar opportunities were often seized as a means of livelihood that gradually expanded. What was the factor that prevented an ethnic Fijian population who had been given both training and backup equipment support, from economic progress?

The fact that UN agencies such as the ILO continued to promote their global mandates towards employment creation as a generic path out of poverty raised further questions. During the launch of the ILO's global 'Working out of Poverty' programme, the agency made a firm stand on the path it would follow towards eradicating poverty in its member countries. It affirmed that, "No longer was the focus on poverty alleviation – improving things around the margins.

Copenhagen put the spotlight on poverty eradication – getting to the heart of the problem and fixing it" (ILO WOP, 2003:4). This research enabled an opportunity to

find out whether the process adopted by development agencies such as the ILO was ‘able to get to the heart of the poverty problem’. Secondly, whether the variation in the country and community context and social situations were taken into consideration by development agencies towards the possibility of other models of development within tradition-based societies.

Thus, this research aimed to find out why the ethnic Fijian poor remained within their poverty situations and what factors hindered their progress. These would help provide answers towards more country and community relevant solutions in relation to poverty amongst indigenous communities.

2.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

In a world currently engrossed with poverty eradication towards the achievement of the MDGs, it was important that prospective solutions to poverty eradication were grounded in sound research methods and realistic theory. Thus, the research guideline was:

“Researchers use qualitative data analysis to examine and organise the observable data so that their ideas and theories about the social world reflect not only the surface level reality but more important, the deeper structures and forces that may lie unseen beneath the surface.” (Neuman,2000: 441)

In order to understand the social and structural dynamics that prevented many ethnic Fijians from improving their poverty situations despite varied poverty reduction initiatives, an investigative empirical survey and analysis using triangulated methods of data collection was adopted. This comprised of unstructured interviews combined with participant observation, focus group discussions and expert interviews as the primary sources of information. This combined with the analysis of secondary data from existing records.

In addition, a comprehensive literature review enabled a theoretical insight into current perspectives and methods adopted towards poverty reduction. This was in harmony with the new UN approach that “PICs need to develop and implement evidence based regional pro-poor strategies and national sustainable development strategies that stimulate equitable growth and quality employment ... based upon sound data and research’.³ The next section details the research methodology and methods.

³ The UN Development Assistance Framework results matrix 2008-2012 and the UN Network for Action towards

2.2.1 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

“Critical social scientists believe that it is necessary to understand the lived experience of real people in context ... Critical approaches examine social conditions in order to uncover hidden structures ... Critical theory teaches that knowledge is power. This means that understanding the ways one is oppressed enables one to take action to change oppressive forces”. (Robert, 2006 as interpreted from Littlejohn, 1992: 238)

In a world where massive effort and financial commitments were being made towards poverty reduction, it was important that the solutions were relevant to a country situation and its population. Considering that Fiji was a combination of a modern, tradition and religion based society amidst a state apparatus that recognized both the traditional and the modern systems, a critical interpretive analysis using the constructionist, and constructivist paradigm was adopted.

Foucault (1980) described the constructionist epistemology as a “relational” process where power was viewed as interdependent within a complex network of structures and organizational dynamics (Best et al, 1991:39, quoting Foucault, 1980). From a critical perspective, the economic workings of society were seen as “a means of exercising control - as controlled and manipulated by the power of knowledge” (ibid).

This research adopted the epistemological position under social constructionism together with social constructivism in social analysis of results and outcomes (see Collins et al, 1989:32-41; Burr, 1995). The former linked to the study of “unintended or unconscious behaviour and actions, which were the by-products of countless human choices rather than divine laws and development of phenomena relative to social contexts”. The later focused on ‘the deeper meaning through thoughts, ideas, assumptions, conceptions and beliefs of an individual making meaning of knowledge within a social context’ (see Vygotsky, 1978). It was also more psychological in nature where the communicative and interpretive perspective (verstehen) dominated the analysis of social action (Tannenwald 2005: 15).

Moreover, Constructivists have argued that, “learning is an internal process of interpretation” where learners “did not transfer knowledge from the external world into their memories” but created “interpretations of the world based upon their past experiences and interactions in the world” (Cunningham, 1992:36). Social scientist Max Weber suggested that “interpretive understanding (verstehen) need(ed) to be employed in order to analyze social action” (Littlejohn, 1992:191).

¹‘Poverty and economic growth’ adapted the above strategy towards the delivery of equitable, accessible, culturally sensitive and affordable social and protection services for Pacific People.

“Poverty and powerlessness can only be overcome by challenging the structures in society that keep the people poor and powerless.” (Barr, 2005, quoting US Bishops, 1986)

Tradition has also often been used “as an instrument of repression ... as a benchmark against the legitimacy and authority of institution, office holders, power brokers and so forth, helping entrench the interests of an indigenous elite at the expense of other interests” (Lawson, 2003:18). Loy and Mundine (2007:1) point out that “without challenging the discourses and power structures which continue to impoverish indigenous groups, the MDGs are ineffective in addressing Indigenous poverty”. In summary,

“(W)e need to be able to look objectively at our society- its values, its attitudes, its structures and be able to critically evaluate them in order to assess their strengths and weaknesses”. (Barr, 1994:5)

These convictions formed the basis of this research. The literature review guided towards this analysis by comparing the current poverty reduction approaches with the historical, traditional and religious factors that the target group identified with.

Thus, in order to understand the issues that being addressed, the research first sought to identify the types of institutional structures that prevailed within the respondent’s lives and how these impacted upon their poverty situations. The indicator of time was used as a measurement that linked to institution related social indicators such as s community, grog, sleep, talanoa, entertainment, church, vanua, teitei, family amongst similar activities. This indicator was more reliable as most participants did not have regular sources of income.

Moreover, income was seen to have been more readily affected by individual perceptions and attitudes towards work as compared to time utilisation, which was more consistent. An inductive analysis helped enhance the understanding of how time, income and resources were utilized.

In addition, other unstructured probing questions and participant observation provided philosophical insight into some of the social factors that affected and influenced this group. These were compared with the literature review findings of the ways in which the macro factors affected poverty at the national level in order to gauge the practicality of the current poverty reduction efforts.

The research results aimed to help strengthen the development agencies and Governments awareness of the significance of the social and structural causes of poverty in search for solutions and as a guide to future research.

2.2.2 RESEARCH METHOD

This research adopted the empirical analysis through field research using the social constructionist and constructivist paradigms for analysis. The adoption of an inductive empirical research method through unstructured interviews and observations enabled vital information to be collected for this thesis. Some dimension of psychological analysis was adopted during the participant observation process to assist in the exploration of the respondents perceptions and emotions in relation to the different social issues, motivation, behaviour and personality traits.

It also enabled in the symbolic interpretation and inductive analysis of the social situation of the population. ‘Time’ as an indicator and its utilisation was used towards interpretive analysis, as most respondents did not have fixed sources of income. Thus, a random sampling process helped identify the respondents for the research from the ILO’s WOP Fiji database which contained a numerical list of the people trained under the programme.

The research involved unstructured face-to-face interviews and participant observation through field visits and occasional overnight stays within targeted locations. This enabled an in-depth analysis of the participants physical world including their home situation, social well-being together with in-depth observation of the ways in which ‘time’ as an indicator was balanced for the various chores and other commitments.

It also included the participant’s time and income priorities in relation to social and community based activities. The fact that two to three days overnight stays within some villages may not be adequate towards generalised observations meant that a series of follow-up visits had to be undertaken towards the cross-verification of information.

In addition, a random sampling linked to demographic location was used to select participants for the focus group discussions in addition to six professionals connected to poverty related programmes who were selectively identified for the ‘expert’ interviews.

Key aspects of field research information using ‘time utilisation’ as the indicator for analysis, was quantified in order to expound on the respondents priorities for time and its prioritisation for daily activities. Where possible, income usage and consumption habits were also used for comparative, interpretive analysis. The field research combined with the literature review and quantitative analysis assisted in complementing the research and the assumptions made.

2.2.3 SELECTION OF POPULATION SAMPLE

This sample population of 10% was selected from an ILO database of an overall population of 780 which had been under varied stratum classified as 10 different vocational areas. The commonalities in the stratum included their link a unified programme objective and goals. In addition, some stratum such as sewing and cooking had large proportions (98%) females while others such as electrical, carpentry and plumbing had almost 100% males compared to other stratum such as poultry and flower nursery which had only 2.1 to 3.5 % respondents. This meant that a 10% random selection from each strata enabled a proportionate representation of participants from each vocation. This selection of population through the stratified probability sampling from each stratum was seen to help reduce sampling error in a population with multiple strata.

Through this method, I was reasonably convinced that the final selection of the sample was representative of the overall population. In addition to the 10% of the population sample totalling 78 participants, several convenience interviews of people in similar trades and locations added up to an overall population of 158. In addition, the views shared by household members, neighbours and community members further helped in the cross verification of field research information.

Moreover, three focus group discussions comprising of 38 people, was conducted using the non-probability, convenience-sampling method within locations more convenient to cover. Observers to the focus group discussions included neighbours, friends, working people and businesswomen living within the respondents locations near Nabua, Naulu, Qauia, Lami and Veisari. Travel allowances and tea was provided to the focus group participants and observers who contributed their opinions towards this research.

Similarly, the expert interviews comprised 3 in-depth face-to-face interviews, 3 questionnaire surveys and phone interviews. The shortlisted candidates had connections to the WOP programme or to poverty related work within their professions. These included 2 senior staff from the MWSWPA, two staff from the Ministry of Labour and Industrial Relations, 3 NGO representatives, an ILO staff and a former Cabinet Minister.

2.2.4 RESEARCH ETHICS

Before conducting the field research, key norms of conduct were established where interviewees were informed of the ethics of the research and assured a guarantee of anonymity on their statements unless they gave permission otherwise. Participants were

also assured that the research would be analyzed based on their combined feedback without any presumptions or personal opinions of the author or any third parties. The aim was to enhance the atmosphere and put participants at ease about sharing crucial research related information.

Walsh (1996) has shown the effect of ethnic and gender bias in Fiji survey work, most especially where the interviewer and the interviewed came from different racial and cultural backgrounds. I am an Indo-Fijian Muslim woman and most of those I interviewed were ethnic Fijians. Thus, during the interviews and in my analysis of findings, I constantly reminded myself of the possible effects of bias and made every attempt to offset its influence.

Moreover, as a gesture of respect within a cultural setup, I wore the traditional sulu and *jaba* before visiting the trainees within their settings and homes. I also tried to display confidence and competence through my demeanour and put effort to create a relationship of mutual respect and trust during the interviews.

The purpose of the unstructured face-to-face interviews was not to change the respondents' attitudes and behaviour, but to reveal them (Keats, 2000:7). I was conscious of the danger that the problems I was trying to find answers to could be the result of the predisposition of assumptions that underlie my work.

Objectivity and neutrality was exercised at all times in line with the precaution that "the results of qualitative research projects are integrally influenced by the theories, emotions, morals, and policies of the researchers" (Liamputtong and Ezzy, 2005:283). In addition, corresponding interviews were held within the same location with at least two or more people with the same skills training.

The analysis of the primary and secondary data was carried out in a similar manner. In situations of reluctance by the interviewees, convincing techniques were applied. Where a respondent refused to be interviewed due to personal reasons, their wish was respected.

Moreover, in situations where a respondent could not be located, convenience interviews were conducted. All respondents were graciously thanked for their time and cooperation. Moreover, in order to analyse the ways in which the different concepts and approaches were adopted and poverty reduction programmes implemented by the different agencies, it was important to undertake a comprehensive literature review, as highlighted next.

2.2.5 LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review was guided by the research aims and was significant in providing a wide perspective on the current theoretical paradigms on poverty reduction together with the traditional approaches adopted by UN and other development agencies. A comprehensive reading was undertaken in order to understand the poverty reduction efforts from different perspectives including the UNDP reports (2004, 2006, 2008), the WB and ADB reports on Poverty in Fiji (1990, 2008) and scholarly articles.

Reports on countries with similar historical backgrounds and economic conditions to the PICs was also analysed (see Gibbings, 2000) in addition to the various national and global debates and theoretical perspectives on poverty captivated.

Taking into consideration the efforts made towards the timely achievement of the MDGs, the differing perspectives and poverty approaches by UN and donors agencies were compared with the views of writers such as Sachs (2002), and the World Commission report on the Social Dimensions of globalization (WCSDG) (2004).

Of special significance was the analysis of the Fiji poverty situation and labour market assessments by local writers such as Barr, 1994, 2004, 2005 and academics such as Walsh, 1976, 1996, 1997,1998, 2001, 2006, 2011; Nabalarua, 2002; Durutalo, 2003; Chand, 2006: 2; Naidu, 2004; Narsey, 2007, amongst others.

The literature also tried to capture some of the variations in the debates that lingered on human rights, equitable and sustainable development and economic and social development. This helped strengthen the understanding of the relevance and practicality of the current strategies and theoretical approaches to poverty reduction. The literature findings were compared with the research results towards a better insight of how poverty was viewed at the macro level and the practical realities on the ground that played a crucial role perpetuating poverty in the lives of the poor amongst the target population.

2.2.6 QUALITATIVE FIELD SURVEY

A reconnaissance field survey for this research on WOP- Fiji participants, conducted in 2009, enabled a preliminary assessment of whether the study matched my research objectives. The triangulated method of data collection enabled a wide range of information to be collected towards a deeper insight into the underlying dynamics that unfolded within the populations lives. An investigative empirical survey using the stratified purposive

sampling method helped in the identification of the research participants from an ILO database that was categorised according to training programme and dates.

Walsh (1996:145) has cautioned on the possibility of interviewer bias “where the interviewers preconceived, and perhaps unconscious views influence the collection, interpretation and recording of information”. As such, the research relied on both direct feedback from unstructured interviews combined with participant observation through overnight stays in several locations.

It also included the support of translators in addition to the interpretation of verbal and non-verbal description of participants’ experiences. This helped give a deeper insight into the human meaning of the “participant’s social lives and experiences from their own perspective” (see Myers, 2009).

The field research findings in addition to three focus group discussions and six expert interviews strengthened the research findings. Some aspects of the field survey findings were quantified “to ensure a better opportunity to corroborate results from diverse methods of studying a given phenomenon in a more rigorous manner” (Neuman, 1997).

2.3 THE CHOICE OF FIELD RESEARCH OVER QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

“One of the key strengths of field research is the comprehensiveness of perspectives it gives the researcher. By going directly to the social phenomenon under study and observing it as completely as possible, you can develop a deeper and fuller understanding of it”. (Babbie, 1986:239)

The initial initiative for this research was a questionnaire survey which was posted and/or distributed to a population of around 200 trainees. My familiarity with the trainees demographic locations made the questionnaires easy to deliver even though it was time consuming and expensive.

However, the process of collection of the feedback found that many questionnaires lay untouched while those that were completed, upon cross verification, revealed major contradictions. Several relatives and siblings of the trainees had filled in the 18% of questionnaires that were completed with specific instructions from the programme trainees that “they give a good impression”. In addition, the effort to interview trainees based on questions from structured questionnaires was difficult to follow as the flow of conversation was often broad and made note taking difficult.

This experience highlights the fact that information obtained through questionnaire surveys in relation to poor segments of society, may not always be as authentic as traditionally assumed. It points to a weakness that has failed to be captured by researchers. This links to the fact that questionnaire information can be distorted, irregular and sometimes superficial and the quality of the feedback can be forfeited in situations where respondents viewed it as “a painful task and delegated the task of completion to others”.

This was a key reason that the questionnaire survey was replaced by the unstructured face-to-face interviews. These were further strengthened by participant observations through overnight stays within some villages. While this process was time consuming, it was much more thorough and enabled an inductive analysis of the actual physical and social world of the respondents and a better appreciation of the condition of the respondent’s houses including food and material luxuries and social activities such as participation in the community activities and so forth.

My earlier experience with the questionnaires and later with the interviews convince me that, for this particular enquiry, the insights I obtained in the interviews more than compensated for what might have been gained from the use of questionnaires.

As such, I was convinced that this was a more superior method of qualitative analysis as compared to survey questionnaires. The goal of the learner is stated to be “central in considering what (was) learned” (Ackerman 1996, Brown et al.,1989).

“The more time spent on each person can produce information that is more elaborate and with finer points”. (Gardner, 1976:88)

2.4 THE INTERVIEW PROCESS AND DEIMITATIONS

“Surveys are also excellent vehicles for measuring attitudes and orientation”.

(Babbie, 1996: 243)

Because poverty is a complex topic with many interwoven cause and effects that cannot meaningfully be reduced to a few discrete variables and linear, cause-effect relationships, the survey adopted a holistic perspective. Cue was taken on the question format from Babbie (1996:244) and Liamputtong et al (2005: 55-73) who have suggested that. “Conducting a good in depth interview is an art that cannot be achieved by following rules or particular methods”.

Walsh (1996:145) has also illustrated that “the answers of those interviewed may be influenced by the gender and the threatening or less threatening demeanour of the

interviewer”. As such, special effort was taken in the choice of dress and demeanour during the interviews.

In addition, “in depth interviews require an ability to relate to the others on their own terms” (Liamputtong: 62, quoting Taylor et al, 1998:99). As such, the survey relied upon unstructured, open-ended questions during the field interviews and “double-barrelled questions were avoided together with technical phrases, leading questions and negations in the questions” (Babbie, 246 -249).

While the process of field survey has its limitations, during the interview, “questions (we)re reformulated as understanding emerged during the interviews’ and “the phrasing of the questions and the order in which they are asked altered to fit each individual” (Liamputtong’s et al: 61, 62)

It is acknowledged that the current findings have its demographic limitations as compared to a countrywide representation of the ethnic Fijian poor and a comparative analysis of the Indo-Fijian poor, which could have enabled a more comprehensive analysis of the results. Nevertheless, an effort was made to capture variations in a systematic manner and survey questions were backed by direct participant observation within several households in relation to the respondents’ daily activities. These, while unstructured, linked to community activities, income usage and expenditure in relation to religion and tradition related activities, contributions towards special events, savings, shopping habits, socialising habits, utilisation of subsistence crops and farm animals and so forth.

Moreover, close observation enabled an understanding of the type and quality of housing, household numbers, types of food eaten, access to amenities, material possessions and so forth. Questions were also initiated with other household or community members for cross verification purposes towards a deeper insight into the ways in which the various social structures operationalized and impacted upon the lives of the respondents. Field notes were summarised upon completion of each interview at the earliest possible. The “respondent’s perspectives and experiences was the centre of attention in both the field interviews and focus group discussions” (Neuman, 2000:370,371).

The possibility of researcher bias linked to stereotyped judgements also prevailed due to the fact that I, as a researcher, was a fourth generation indo- Fijian. To prevent bias in interpretation, translator services were used. Moreover, caution was exercised in the interpretation and recording of information where “the possibility of misunderstanding and researcher bias was possible” (Babbie: 245).

The unstructured interviews enabled “access to additional information by questioning the early answers” (Keats, 2000:19). Thus, “motives behind the responses were easier to uncover and every question tends to be answered without exception” (ibid). This process “provided richness to the data, permitting numerous individual dissimilarities in opinions and ways of thinking to be exposed” (ibid).

The research considered the level of independence and self-effort exercised by the participants in relation to their lives and choices. My familiarity with the WOP Fiji programme participants as an ILO staff member, and efforts towards a mutual relationship of trust during the interviews made it easier to gauge their priorities, passions and allegiances in their real life situations through inductive analysis.

Moreover, the empirical findings were compared with the macro to micro level analysis of poverty reduction efforts at the global, regional and national level in order to compare the interlinkages and the trickle-down effects via the literature review. Neuman (2000:383) considers this approach suitable for investigating a combination of social factors that “produce particular outcomes and contribute to long term societal changes”.

There was a constant awareness of the fact that survey research is seen as “comparatively weak on validity and strong on reliability” (see Babbie, 1996:278). Added to this was the possibility of distorted, ‘wanting to please information’, considering the fact that most of the respondents knew me as an ILO staff. This combined with the constant possibility for value judgements based on my indo-Fijian background. Walsh (1996:155) quotes Roth (1973:10) that “(t)he better we can describe the behaviour of social science researchers as they go about their research tasks, the better we will be able to evaluate their products”.

As such, the cross verification of the research findings through convenience interviews aimed at a counter balanced response. Davidson and Tolich (1999:143-149) have suggested that this approach allows “some degree of objectivity in the analysis of qualitative data”. However, random convenience sampling was minimized due to it being “regarded as one of the least desirable form of sampling within qualitative research” (Liamputtong et al, 2005:46).

Moreover, survey research continues to be regarded as “the best method available to the social researchers interested in collecting original data for describing a population too large to observe directly” (Babbie, 1986:243). The empirical survey research combined with the focus group discussion formed the main source of research data while expert interviews and quantitative analysis of secondary data helped compliment the findings.

2.5 QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

The quantitative analysis through secondary sources included information from the ILO database on WOP – Fiji in addition to reports and files, questionnaires plus the equipment delivery, field visit and programme evaluation reports. In addition, scholarly research, journal articles, internet articles and other relevant materials on poverty reduction were assessed. The Fiji HIES (2002-2003) and the Employment and Unemployment survey (EUS, 2004-2005) helped supplement the data in support of the arguments made.

This matched the new UN approach that “PIC’s needed to develop and implement evidence based regional pro-poor strategies and national sustainable development strategies that stimulated equitable growth and quality employment and are based upon sound data and research”.⁴ The field research experience is illustrated in the next section.

2.6 DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Initially, the process of setting limits to the enquiry was time consuming due to the varied demographic characteristics of the respondents and the requirements for sensitivity and discretion. Nevertheless, the process of delineating into types, categories and level of analysis was easier because of my prior knowledge of the programme and trainee details. A major challenge was to remain focused on the thesis objectives while still doing justice to the research topic in light of its complexity within a community bound by traditional and religious norms amidst a parallel system of a market economy.

In addition, focusing on one aspect such as social institutions or a weak programme would have meant ruling out all the other factors such as economics, politics or development policies that may affect project outcomes. This was countered by the literature review.

In contrast to the emphasis given to questionnaire surveys data by economists, the research found this process of information gathering in relation to social issues to be unreliable. The survey experience illustrated that “the survey questionnaires could have led to an entirely different set of results and any conclusion drawn from them would not have been reliable”. These considerations and the fact that survey questionnaires were generally qualitative in the nature led to a change in the methodology. Thus, an inductive analysis was adopted involving direct face-to-face interviews in order to verify information in relation to the social world of the respondents which the survey questionnaire or first instance interview failed to capture. The respondents were also more

⁴ The UNDAF results matrix for 2008-2012 towards ‘Poverty and economic growth’ strategy aims at equitable, quality, accessible, culturally sensitive, affordable social and protection services for Pacific Island People.

approachable during the face-to-face interviews and family and village elders and others helped compliment the information.

A key weakness that Walsh (1996:145) has illustrated in relation to interviews is the possibility of “subject bias”, where “the response of some or all of the persons interviewed is influenced to a lesser or greater ... degree, by the overt characteristics of the interviewer”. He quotes Clegg (1988:104) that the effect on survey results “of an imposing looking male as compared to a less threatening female cannot be entirely ignored”. As a female, this hypothesis transformed into an actual survey experience and was to my research advantage. It provided added opportunities for information gathering that also involved the process of participant observation of interviewees within their social world.

To capture the actual experience rather than simply collecting dry facts was a refreshing approach to learning. It enabled added insight into what otherwise would have remained the hidden dimensions and interrelationships amongst people, their social surroundings and the social and economic challenges in their personal lives. “Being there is a powerful technique for gaining insights into the nature of human affairs” (Babbie,1986:260).

The qualitative data was noted “in the form of text, written words, phrases, or symbols describing or representing people, actions, and events in social life” (Neuman, 2000:417). In line with Babbie’s (1986:254) suggestions, “in order to be able to grasp the different expressions and behaviour patterns”, the respondents behaviour and commitments were categorised using a key indicators using time as the common denominator for measurement. This linked to institutional social factors such as ‘family time’, ‘grog time’, community service’, ‘religious activities’, ‘sleep’, ‘teitei’, ‘talanoa’ and entertainment such as ‘television’ and ‘radio. An interpretive analysis was adopted in relation to the level of household income and its usage as most trainees did not have fixed sources of income.

In addition, the field survey was also expensive to conduct as a private student by way of repeat visits and other related costs, considering that the University could not support me with any funds. While it was also time consuming and stressful amidst other commitments, the quality was not forfeited. Moreover, repeat visits enabled a thoroughness of results, especially where a series of interviews needed to be conducted.

Impromptu visits were also enriching in addition to convenience interviews where other trainees were available within the same vicinity. In Nadoria village, a single person interview turned into a focus group discussion due to the collective presence of six other trainees. In situations where the village and house elders took it upon themselves to

answer questions on the respondent's behalf, individual interviews were conducted later. Some matured respondents were shy or emotional on issues while a few were also apprehensive on some questions. Information was constantly cross-verified with family members, neighbours, or village elders. All interviews and discussions were summarised into written notes at the earliest possible or translated from memory later on.

Considering the protectionist attitude displayed by elder members to questions pertaining to culture, tradition and religion, extreme caution was exercised. Strategized effort was made to establish a relationship of trust and keen interest shown in the respondents' feedback. While the male members took the lead role in talks and discussions within rural and village locations, the female members were more articulate and outspoken in squatter settlements nearer to towns. This could be linked to the greater level of responsibilities and sense of freedom within their particular demographic areas.

In addition, the simplicity and sense of humility displayed by the poor respondents was a contrast to the suspicious and unwelcoming attitude displayed by several more educated and rich ethnic Fijian families within the same vicinity.

While there was a receptivity and desire to share and answer questions by the former, there was visible apprehension and unwillingness by the later. The fact that some chiefs and church elders voiced concerns about my research also suggested a preconceived notion of me as an indo-Fijian.

Vice versa, I was aware of the ever-present possibility of preconceived bias in my interpretation of the behaviour and social habits of the population linked to my background as an Indo-Fijian. Walsh (1996:155) has illustrated the possibility that the interviewers "preconceived and unconscious views affected the collection, interpretation and recording of information".

Babbie (1986, quoting Kahane, 1980) also points to the dangers of drawing conclusions "framed by our particular histories and current situations ... so that it makes sense from the researchers own point of view" (p: 255).

Thus, the technique of 'introspection' via inductive analysis combined with the qualitative field survey was augmented with the literature review and quantitative analysis to enrich the research results. It is clear that the results would have differed significantly had this survey been based on the initial questionnaire methodology. The next chapter details the literature review and the common approaches to poverty reduction.

CHAPTER 3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

This review of the literature is to illustrate the meaning of poverty and the technical and theoretical dimensions of poverty reduction and the ways in which these have been adopted by agencies and governments at the macro, meso and micro level of society.

The aim is to assess what the current poverty reduction approaches are and whether these have realistically addressed the concerns that indigenous communities within developing countries such as Fiji face on the ground. Section 3.1 comprises of the introductory section, which summarises the overall literature while section 3.2 outlines the general meaning and technical and theoretical approaches to poverty reduction. Section 3.3 analyses its commonly understood causes while section 3.4 considers the ways in which data inconsistencies may affect its outcomes. In addition, section 3.5 considers the range of approaches commonly adopted towards poverty reduction at the macro to the micro level.

It also elaborates on the social structural factors such as traditional and religious and their influence on the lives and development prospects of the poor. Gender and disability are taken on board as poverty causation factors that often affected the most vulnerable while section 3.6 summarises the literature findings.

The literature review is deliberately broad in order to cover the wide scope of poverty causation factors from the macro to the micro level. In addition, the understanding of the meaning and theoretical approaches to poverty was important towards a deeper understanding of its social and structural dimensions. The technical distinction ‘poverty reduction’ is used for analysis as it closely matched with the ILO approach to reducing the severity of poverty through skills development programmes. As a learning exercise, this approach enabled a duality in analysis using the constructionist and constructivist paradigms towards practical solutions.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

“As things stand today, the MDG of reducing extreme poverty by half in 2015 will not be reached. There is a perverse interaction blocking the way: inequitable national and international income distribution patterns, governance problems from the local to the global level in the public and private spheres, and a model of globalization incapable of stopping the growth of unemployment and the informal economy.”

(ILC 2003, WOP Rpt: 8)

Copenhagen had put the spotlight on poverty eradication-getting to the heart of the problem and fixing it” (ILO WOP, 2003:4). This global pledge stimulated many global and national level commitments towards poverty reduction. At the macro level, a concrete action plan commissioned in 2002 aimed to reverse the grinding poverty, hunger and disease affecting billions of people worldwide through the UN Millennium Project (UNMP). Jeffery Sachs was convinced that there was “every possibility of poverty being halved” in the world because “the political framework” had already been established” (UNMPR, 2002).

However, “while inequality has received greater attention in recent years, rich-country decision-makers have shied away from the idea of widespread redistribution of the kind that occurred in Europe after the Second World War or in the New Deal in the USA” (Green, 2008:6). Thus, despite massive efforts towards poverty reduction, the UN General Assembly confirms that the rise in poverty and its trickle-down macro to micro level effect on nations and people in the lower social strata remained “one of the greatest global challenges facing the world today”.⁵

Social concerns linked to the alarming increase in the gap between the world’s richest and the poorest 20 per cent of people. These were seen to double from 30 to 60 fold between 1960 and 1990 (UNDP-FPR, 2008:i-ii). The above data created a fear that these concerns, if not addressed could, “undo years of progress in poverty alleviation and towards the attainment of the MDGs”.⁶ This fear was strengthened on the basis that the current rate of progress “had been uneven” (UNCTAD, 2010:1).

It is noted that the ADB’s concerns on poverty within the Pacific has focussed on social issues including education, school drop outs, rise in youth unemployment, rapid internal movement of people from rural to urban sectors, rising informal settlements and rising unemployment (see ADB, 2004:11-15). On the other hand, Narsey (2007:1) has emphasised poverty in Fiji in relation to the “political instability” and the “ethnic drives for political control”. Narsey asserts that the controlling ethnocentric leaders, when in power “have ignored the legitimate interests of the poor of other ethnic groups, resulting in political instability, lack of investor confidence, and sub-optimal economic growth” (ibid).

Historically, the concerns for the social dimensions of poverty in Fiji saw a Poverty Task Force set up to address its related concerns in 1990. These efforts culminated into the 1996 Fiji Poverty Study by the Fiji Government and UNDP which resulted in a series of policy commitment to address poverty reduction in Fiji. Fiji has consistently received an

⁵ The Proclamation was made by the UN during the Second UN Decade for the Eradication of Poverty from 2008–2017.

⁶ *ibid.*

unfavourable ranking in the past years on the UN Human development index⁷. Moreover, the UNDP FPR (2006, and 2008: ii) confirm that, “it is a myth that growth was being widely achieved”. A similar situation prevailed at the macro level. Global unemployment was reported to have increased by 11 million in 2008 and predicted to “worsen in developing countries by an additional 50 million by 2009 in the wake of the global economic crisis” (ILO, 2010). The number of unemployed youths was also reported to have increased by 8 million between 1997 and 2007 with the risk that the lack of “work opportunities could permanently compromise the young people’s future employment prospects” (ibid).

Considering this research was focused on an ethnic community, several WB supported studies on the indigenous population in Peru, Panama, Bolivia and Guatemala have found that “the incidence of poverty was ... severe amongst the indigenous population...(who) were more likely than any other social group of a country’s population to be poor” (WB,2007:230, quoting Psacharopoulos et al, 1994). In addition, “consumption poverty” was stated to be high for the indigenous population in Latin America other than the “lack of access to social services” (ibid: 231).

As a coping mechanisms, poverty within the PIC's is seen to have traditionally been “something taken care of by the “redistributive mechanism of kinship networks” (ADB, 2000). On the other hand, the traditional support mechanisms were reported to be “coming under strain and breaking down” (ibid). In addition, several past reports have suggested that the poverty reduction efforts at the country level in Fiji may have been feeble.

This is reflected by the fact that poverty continues to be visible and an issue of major social concern in Fiji (see FPR 1996, Barr, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2010, Fiji HIES 2002-2003, Fiji EUS 2004-2005, MDG -2005, 2008). A key example was the fact that in 1990-1991, 29% of the people were reported to be living below the poverty line, which increased to 35% in 2002-3 and then decreased to 31.4% (see HIES, 2007-2008). This situation reportedly prevailed before the devaluation of the Fiji dollar by 20% which saw an “increase in the price of food and building materials” (see Narsey, 2006).

Added to this was the fact that the living standard in the PIC’s has also linked to “economic and environmental shocks” (see ADB, 2004, 2006, Barr, 2005, Narsey, 2007, Chowdhury et al, 2008). Poverty was also seen to have worsened when the 2010 budget in Fiji, which was proclaimed as ‘pro-poor’, was followed by “the rise in the Value Added Tax (VAT) and resultant increase in basic food items and cost of basic utilities and services based upon advise by the WB and IMF” (Barr, 2010). This can be concluded as a key reason for the

⁷ Out of 177 countries, Fiji was ranked 92nd on the UNDP HDI and 49th out of 103 on poverty in 2005.

strong reliance by the population on the “subsistence base and kinship ties as safety nets” as depicted by the UNDP FPR (2008, 2010)..

There is noted to have been a visible mismatch in policies and national budgetary allocations for poverty that prioritised private sector interests based upon advice by global institutions such as the WB and IMF. Barr (2010:3) labels these policies as “instigators of poverty”. Green (2008:2) also criticises the state of global inequalities and the forces that drove them. He says that,

“inequality and redistribution have been out of fashion among rich-country decision-makers for many years and warrant barely a mention in the Millennium Development Goals” (MDGs).

There were reported inconsistencies between donors ‘intentions’ and development programme ‘outcomes’. Green sees the shift towards manufacturing and service-based economies to be “biased in favour of educated labour, and away from the poorest countries and workers” (ibid:1). In addition, “the global agricultural trade liberalisation was undermining small-scale farmers in the poorest countries ... these actions exacerbated inequalities between and within countries” (ibid). Ironically, the MDG’s gives emphasis to one only aspect, ‘Gender inequality’ (ibid).

Moreover, the estimate of poverty depth (the gap in comparison between the average poor household and the poverty line) also increased in the wake of the global economic crisis with an “88% increase in urban poverty gap from rising food prices” (WB, 2008). Thus, in recognition of the disjoint outcomes of development projects within the PIC's, the UN agencies have put greater emphasis on the ‘Human Rights’, ‘Human Development’, and ‘monitoring and evaluation’ at the country level.⁸ Under its reform process, the UN changed from a “macro, top-down focus to a gradual reassessment of the existing approaches to poverty reduction” (see ADB PAR, 2004, PP, 2005:11-15).

The search for more realistic solutions at the global level saw the ILO governing body set up a high level World Commission to look into the Social Dimensions of Globalisation (WCSDG, 2001:2). It looked at the political and economic interlinkages to poverty and the macro factors via globally endorsed policies and its trickle - down effects on poor countries (ibid:2-5). The committee saw some advantages of macro planning, but was strongly critical of the process of globalisation as having “major shortfalls” linked to the “unequal

⁸ Within the UN system in Fiji from 2005 to 2010, this was seen as the new approach under the UN reform process.

distribution which generated unbalanced outcomes, both between and within countries” (ibid). The WCSDG (2004: x) states that;

“While (globalisation) has set in process a far reaching change with new technology and open policies, leading to new prospects in a more interconnected world with the potential for good being immense, it has also been a stimulator to create poverty ... too many countries and people are not sharing in its benefits, ... (or) shaping its process”.

In turn, several past efforts to counter poverty has seen the GoF adopt specific policies and affirmative action programmes aimed at ethnic Fijian parity with ‘other races’. Reddy et al (2002) says that these were “designed to alleviate discrimination against individuals and groups”. However, questions remained on the effectiveness of the above programmes that targeted only one community with criticism labelling these efforts as ineffective and discriminatory (see Kumar S. and Prasad, 2004:469-486, Narsey 2008, HEIS, 2002-2003, EUS, 2004-2005).

This was in the sense that “all ethnic groups in Fiji were afflicted with poverty of one kind or another with some groups being more intensely affected than others” (Nomae, et al., 2004: iv). Additionally, the affirmative action programmes were also critiqued for “lack of adherence to the principles of good governance combined with the revelation of major scams, corruption and mismanagement” (Reddy, et al, 2002). This resulted in the GoF losing “millions of dollars” (ibid).

Comparatively, a critical analysis of the Caribbean experience by Pantin (1997) suggests that “most authors who wrote major studies on poverty and sustainable development had an obsession with emphasising the ‘smallness of size’ and ‘the delineation of the specific problems and obstacles which lie in the way of small islands achieving economic growth and development”.

This illustrates that a society and its cultural, traditional and religious institutions and its impact upon people did not form part of the poverty equation. Thus, the poverty eradication effort has now seen new dimensions of moral and ethical considerations including the human rights and equality based approach being adopted (see Pantin et al, 1994, 1997, 2005, 2007, Sen,1992, 1995, 1997, Crosbie, 1997, 1998).

Another area of scrutiny was the theoretical dimensions of the poverty. This research adopted the paradigms of social constructionism and constructivism together with an interpretive analysis in order to understand the ways in which the existing social structures and their prevalent norms and practices affected a population’s ability to progress out of

poverty. This helped enhance understanding on how reality “was defined by the interpretation of the complex and organized patterns of ongoing actions” (Vygotsky, 1978, McMahan, 1997). Similarly, the social constructivist paradigm enabled a deeper understanding of the ways in which “inter-subjective beliefs and the deeper meaning through thoughts, ideas, assumptions, conceptions and beliefs of the populations (was) widely shared” (Tannenwald 2005:15). In addition to institutions such as the ‘Vanua’, and the ‘Mataqali’, “religion and church” plus “race and ethnicity” were essential factors to be analysed in efforts to search for solutions (see Nomae et al, 2004, Narsey, 2007).

It is also a fact that poverty also linked to gender and disability. A positive sign was the acknowledgement by the GoF that ‘this group of the unemployed were more exposed to poverty than others’ (see SDP-Fiji, 2003-2007, FPR 1996:33, 34). In light of the social structural factors within a tradition, culture and religion based community as compared to the current distinctions and theoretical approaches to poverty, the literature proposes a practical, interventionist approach similar to what C. Wright Mills (1970 labelled 'liberal practicality' and what Karl Popper (1962:64) described as 'piecemeal social engineering', as a more scientifically logical way forward.

3.2 Poverty Reduction –Multiplicity in Meaning and Scope

“What poverty is taken to mean depends on who asks the question, how it is understood, and who responds”. (R. Chambers, 2006)

The word Poverty is generally understood to be 'the state of lacking adequate food or money' while 'absolute' is seen to mean 'total and complete' and 'poverty stricken' is described as 'extremely poor' (Collins Dictionary, 2002:640). In a traditional approach, economists echo the common approach to poverty as “a lack of adequate income generating opportunities compounded by insufficient basic service provisions” as a source of increased poverty (see: Narsey, 2007; HIES, 2002-2003; SDP, 2007-2011:71). The ADB (2006) views poverty as “the level of income or consumption necessary to meet a set of minimum requirements to feed oneself and one’s family adequately and/or to meet other basic requirements ... as represented by the Poverty line”.

In addition, extreme poverty has been described as “an income of less than US\$1 per person per day in terms of purchasing power parity” (PPP, UNDP 2002). Similarly, the World Development Report (WDR) (2001:34) defined poverty as a “lack of income and assets to attain basic necessities;” a “sense of voicelessness and powerlessness in the institutions of state and society;” and “vulnerability to adverse shocks, linked to inability to

cope with them”. However, these definitions puts more emphasis on the weaknesses and vulnerabilities faced by the poor countries.

Walsh (1979:6) has also used other poverty indicators for the urban poor in Fiji such as “income, house ownership and security of tenure”. He says that “adequate income depend(ed) on a more equitable distribution of wealth in Fiji and the perpetuation of income support system of the urban poor” (ibid). Similarly, while employment and income have traditionally been the poverty defining measures (see: HEIS, 1995, 2007 and EUS, 2007), the GoF expanded this definition to include ‘social justice, housing, urban, rural and island development, health, environment and sustainability’ (SDP 2007-2011: 7-36).

Alternatively, the Pacific context of Poverty was “an inadequate level of sustainable human development”, “lack of access to basic services and opportunities to participate in the socioeconomic life of the community” (Parks, et al, 2009, Abbott and Pollard, 2004). It also included “a lack of adequate resources to meet the basic needs of the household and customary obligations to the extended family, community, and church”(ibid).

Parks et al (2009:7) is of the view that the Pacific societies are “justly proud of their culture and in particular, the strong emphasis on the caring and redistribution that exists within the extended family system”. He suggests this to be one of the reasons why the “the usual images of poverty, i.e., starving children, landless peasants, and men and toiling with ox ploughs (did) not apply to the Pacific”. Similarly, the debate on the Pacific Plan has concluded that, “poverty did exist in the region but should be equated with hardship” (ibid).

It is noted that the poverty assessments also varied according to a country’s socio-economic circumstances, data availability and the extent to which poverty (wa)s perceived to be an issue (see: ADB RTA, 2000). However, distinctions such as ‘absolute poverty’ assumed that “a minimum basic need uniformly and universally applied to all social and economic categories in all societies” (Njeru, 2004:3). This assumption has been criticised as it implies that the “variations in culture, perceptions, gender dimensions, racial and other forms of biases stemming from it were consistent throughout every community” (ibid).

Similarly, it has also been argued that the entrenched system of reliance on the labour market data and employment statistics and the fact “that international definitions of poverty tended to emphasize cash income levels and poverty lines has resulted in a notable reluctance to change the approach and to accept ‘poverty’ as a problem” (O’Collins, 1997).

This is exacerbated by the fact that the use of economic indicators such GDP or PPP had reportedly ‘failed to capture the poverty phenomenon and its eradication measures’. Bryant

(1993:13) states that the use of 'income' as an indicator has created "confusion in establishing poverty levels in societies, which may still be partially, or wholly subsistence".

In addition, poverty is stated to be difficult to assess in countries where large numbers of people were involved "in the informal sector employment, as well as multiple employment and subsistence farming for home consumption" (ibid). This helps validate the argument at the scope and analysis of poverty was 'incomplete unless the full multi-dimensional nature of poverty, both quantitative and qualitative is addressed' (Narsey, 2007).

A WB study acknowledged the definition typically adopted under the qualitative approach "involved a broader conception of poverty and deprivation than that typically adopted under the quantitative approach" (Carvalho, et al, 1997:5). The former "captured the processes and interactions between social, cultural, political, and economic factors such as vulnerability, isolation, powerlessness, survival, personal dignity, security, self-respect, basic needs and ownership of assets" (ibid).

Added to this were variables such as "low levels of education, health, vulnerability ... , voicelessness and powerlessness" (WB, 2001). Emphasis has been made on the need for more attention to "results, monitoring, evaluation, capacity building, gender equality, private sector development, environmental sustainability and regional cooperation" (see ADB PR, 2005). Thus, a wider perspective now distinguishes "human poverty" from "income poverty" (UNDP-HDR, 1997:23) with a renewed stance that:

"(T)he greatest strategic potential of the 21st century is not gold, not land, not stocks, not technology, but the undereducated, under-nourished, under-employed three billion people of this world. Sustainable human development is the key to unlocking this richest resource on earth." (Speth, UNDP-FPR 2008: ii)

A similar distinction of vulnerability, inequality, and gender has been used to understand and measure poverty within the context of the PIC's (see Barr, 1990). In Fiji, poverty has been identified with households that cannot afford the basic minimum nutritionally adequate and palatable diet or are unable to obtain sufficient amounts of food, water, shelter, clothing, education and health care to meet their basic needs.⁹

This analysis suggests that poverty alleviation programmes within the Pacific "required a multi -dimensional approach where access to cash income or economic benefits was part of

⁹ Basic needs is classified as the level of income or expenditure below which an individual or family is deprived of the basic necessities of life for a specified time and period. url: http://www.unsiap.or.jp/participants_work/homepgs/index1.htm.

the solution” (O’Collins, 1997). Understanding the theoretical paradigms that linked to the concept of poverty is also important, as is illustrated in the following sections.

3.3 POVERTY REDUCTION – THEORETICAL PARADIGMS

Other than the multiplicity in meaning and approach to poverty commonly linked to the economic data and economic solutions, various theoretical perspectives have been adopted in the search for poverty solutions. For example, the development approach promoted economic growth through open markets, low tariffs together with good governance, human rights and democracy.

Alternatively, the structural functionalist approach promoted institutional strengthening towards empowerment and participation. On the other hand, the post-development theorists have argued that all ideas of development implied the exercise of power over subject peoples in the third world, thus, constituting a new form of colonialism.

Similarly, social scientist Foucault has argued that knowledge and power are deeply connected (1977:25). In the “Genealogy of Knowledge and Domination”, Foucault (1983: xiii) outlines social constructionism and constructivism as “closely related paradigms that looked at the meaning and power dynamics that unfolded in society in order to explain the ways in which phenomena was socially constructed.

Moreover, development theorists often tend to place the blame for escalating poverty on the developing countries under the ‘flawed character theory’ that assumes that the poor lack the initiative and diligence necessary to take advantage of the opportunities (Duncan 1984:7). It maintains that poverty prevailed because many amongst the poor were “not psychologically geared to take advantage of opportunities that may come their way (ibid).

Duncan finds no support for the ‘culture of poverty’ theory and suggests, “educational attainment is relatively powerful in distinguishing individuals with different levels of earnings, while attitudes and a simple measure of cognitive ability are not” (p: 123). Walsh (2000) affirms this contention and refutes the fact that poverty is “primarily caused by the shortcomings of the poor or by a lack of national resources”. Instead, he sees poverty “as the consequence of the shortcomings in policy and action – and the misdirection and use of resources –by those holding political and economic power”.

At the macro level, the multilateral system have been critiqued as “under-performing” and “lacking in policy coherence, with a lack of democracy, transparency and accountability”

(WCSDG,2004:xi). It is stated that global policies “favoured the powerful who ha(d) designed these strategies along mainstream structural functionalist ideologies” (ibid :112). These entrenched global political system were seen to have “helped perpetuate poverty for non-European countries via a trickle down process in a global village” (ibid). This analysis confirms the trickledown effect to be a reality that affected poverty in the poor countries.

Pantin, et al (2005:3) put forward a similar theoretical argument in relation to the coastal zones in the Caribbean. They suggest that, “some of the more comfortable social classes responsible for anti-poverty policy tend to have personal values which explained away the poverty (of others) as somehow destined by faith (normally of a God who has simultaneously spared those responsible for poverty eradication policy of any such misfortune)” (ibid).

Moreover, this value set, Pantin et al outline, “existed not merely at policy level but also within communities” where “social, ethnic and class bias and prejudice were also seen to jaundice the perceptions of at least some in the public policy arena” (ibid). In situations where people were classified by public authorities as ‘lazy’ or a ‘lost cause’, etc, Pantin et al point out that “the actual visits to the community revealed a significantly differing picture in terms of entrepreneurial drive” (ibid). In addition, other factors that may exacerbate poverty also linked to inconsistency in data, as discussed in the next section.

3.4 POVERTY REDUCTION – DATA INCONSISTENCIES

Other than the “trickle down process”, the variation in meanings and conceptual approaches to poverty reduction has led to some confusion in poverty data reconciliation and integration. A reflection on the poverty assessments in Fiji, Vanuatu and PNG illustrates that “quantitative data on household surveys was often unable to identify poor individuals in non-poor households” (O’Collins (1997).

Additionally, neither could these aspects be “easily gauged from the 'hard' data dealing with cash income and access to productive resources or the 'soft' data dealing with access to the psychological support of kin and community and the sense of personal security” (ibid). It has been suggested that “sampling inadequacies or logistic problems faced by interviewers tended to exclude remote marginal communities” and household surveys “were unable to identify poor individuals in non-poor households”.

Thus, the different assumptions regarding sampling or non-sampling errors and reliance on official attendance records or individual recall often led to “widely differing result ... Yet,

despite the defect in data, they formulated into national policies and actions” (ibid). Voigt Graf (2006:9) also highlights the limitations and out datedness in information that was available on Fiji. She points to the labour market website called the ‘Fiji Computerised Human Resource Information System’ that was developed with the ILO technical support, with “no references later than 2002” and “some data also not being reliable” (ibid).

Additionally, despite the significance of the labour market data in poverty planning (see annex 3 and 4), there was no evidence of any comprehensive labour market analysis being undertaken in any PIC since the ILO’s inception 37 years ago. The next section highlights the common causes of poverty.

3.5 COMMON CAUSES OF POVERTY AND ITS INTERLINKAGES

In addition to the multiplicity in meaning and technical distinctions, the causes of poverty are seen to be distinguished at the macro, meso or micro level of society. The UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific's Economic and social survey of 2006 points to geographical and demographic characteristics as the contributors to and perpetuation of poverty (ESCAP, 2006:66-7).

The above survey further points to economic regression impacting upon social regression and contributing to many daunting problems in the PIC's quest for economic growth and development. These also included “the physical disadvantage of remoteness”, “smallness and dispersion, rising transport and other development costs” and “limited opportunities for realising economies of scale” (ibid). Chowdhury and Vidyattama (2008:125) reaffirm that the “PIC’s faced serious development constraints stemming from their geographical and demographic characteristics”. The next section looks at some of the indicators of poverty.

3.5.1 EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME AS POVERTY INDICATORS

The ILO views unemployment and the lack of productive sources of income as a key poverty determinant and the absence of income support alternatives as “the cause of urban, suburban and even rural poverty” (Peccord, 2004:7). It links poverty to “the inability of many PIC’s to generate enough `jobs and livelihood opportunities” (ILO, 2009). In turn, the lack of or low wages was seen to affect households through reduced purchasing power, leading to an increase in the proportion of working poor (ibid). Thus, the ILO regarded work and income as the answers to poverty that “enabled people to expand their choices to a better quality of life ...” (ILO, 1969, 2003).

At the local level, the FPR (1996) and the UNDP FPR (2003, 2006) have indicated that the majority of the poor in Fiji were the “working poor” (see annex . Similarly, the HIES 2002-2003 , EUS 2004-2005, have taken into consideration the ‘ability of a person of working age in paid employment’ and the ‘distribution of income’ in their assessment of the ‘working poor’. Chetwynd, et al (2003: 11) is critical that “often, an increase in income may benefit the better-off rather than bringing the poor out of poverty”.

“Without spending power, individuals in a very real sense, simply don’t exist. For most individuals, spending power depends upon current and past earnings. “Work” is the name of the economic game”. (Thurow, 1990:20)

However, Thurow’s (ibid) assertion is debatable within the context of Fiji as domestic workers and informal sector farm workers were often excluded in economic assessment of the unemployed and poor (see FPR 2006,2008, HIES 2002-2003, EUS 2004-2005).

Moreover, the fact that the labour force in Fiji had a high level of unskilled component with an estimated “14,000 school leavers expected to enter the labour market each year” (NPO, 2004, FBoS, 1996) raises further poverty concerns. Analytically, the fact that the FPR (1998) illustrates the unemployment rate in Fiji to be 8% indicates that a large portion of the youths who finished high school every year but could not attend University or find jobs were not included.

Similarly, the emphasis on the “working poor” also misses the contribution of thousands of women into subsistence who helped sustain their households without any form of cash income or social security or the many elderly who brought up the grandchildren within their villages and households without any form of state support. What this highlights is that one sided economic assessments failed to consider a “large proportion of the working age population who were unemployed” or the ‘non-working poor’ who survived on subsistence’, ‘small businesses and custom gardens’ for national planning purposes (see UNDP FPR, 2008, 2009, also see annex 3, 4 and 5).

Further analysis reveals that, while unemployment in Fiji was stated to be 8%, the 2006 Annual Employment Survey revealed that “paid employment in registered establishments at the end of June 2006 was 134,854” (FBoS, 2010) (see annex . These figures suggest that, in a total population of 837, 271, 134, 854 were economically active while the unemployed were a percentage in the remaining figure of 702,417. A major inconsistency is noted when one compares the figure of 8% or a total of only 66981 (see FBoS, 2010) as

the unemployed without any form of “paid employment by way of wages or salary” within a total population of 702,417.

The question was what the remaining population including the elderly, youths, plus the domestic and subsistence workers were doing?. Narsey acknowledges that, “the normal comparison of the unemployed would be with the “economically active” population, and “the later estimates (were) probably inflated for some groups and would have resulted in biased estimates of unemployed rates” (ibid). This suggests major weaknesses in the scope and depth of economic data as a reliable source of national planning. The next section discusses the economic and political causes of poverty.

3.5.2 ECONOMIC CAUSES OF POVERTY

The ADB, as a major regional partner in the Pacific, sees the scope of poverty assessments to vary “according to country socio-economic circumstances, data availability and the extent to which poverty is perceived to be an issue” (ADB- RTA report, 2000). In turn, it stresses “economic growth” as a “prerequisite for poverty reduction through the neo-liberal policies associated with an export-oriented, market-driven economy” (see Barr, 2004:4).

Chetwynd, et al (2003:11) also states the “absence of economic growth (or negative growth)” as a factor behind the increase in poverty. In Fiji, poverty reportedly increased since the coups “as a result of poor economic growth, weak governments or lack of good governance, lack of accountability, weak economies; rapid rural urban migration and low investments” (FPR, 2006 :33-24).

The above situation was seen to be enhanced by “the political sanctions and boycotts leading to political and social isolation of Fiji by its more developed trading partners such as Australia, NZ and the Commonwealth” (O’Collins, 1997). In turn, these negatively affected both health and education by “limiting the access of the poor people to productive resources and services, thus, making it increasingly difficult for poor people to take advantage of poverty alleviation strategies” (ibid). Gounder (2009:1) adds that “Fiji’s poor economic performance, political instabilities and economic crises ha(d) pushed more people into poverty without recourse”. This exacerbated the poverty situation where more than 25% of the people “ha(d) income levels below the poverty line” (FPR, 2006:33-34).

It is noted that the current Government of Fiji has acknowledged that poverty had escalated with the post 1987 coup and onwards “as a result of low investments and related economic consequences”. Moreover, it has also recognised that the coups has caused “severe ruptures

in the very fabric of Fiji society, resulting in a loss of confidence thus, debilitating Fiji's economy and hampering developmental progress and prosperity" (GOF:PCCP, 2007:1).

At the macro level, Green (2008: 434) has elaborated on the economic dimension as asserts that the "development planners were obsessed with specific areas of focus "in isolation and overspecialisation". Green says that some disciplines had "focused on quantitative research, and considered qualitative research to be lacking in rigour and objectivity ... experts in one discipline frequently find it impossible to penetrate the abstruse language or mathematical formulae contained in the journal articles of another" (ibid). In the process,

"economists had learned very little from sociologists about human motivation and generally maintain simplistic assumptions about human nature while political scientists focused primarily on institutional processes, and rarely drew on the insights of social psychologists about the determinants of individual and group behaviour". (Green, 2008:43)

In addition to the economic factors, other dimensions of poverty determinants that may affect the poor via a trickledown effect are discussed in the next section.

3.5.3 POLITICAL CAUSES OF POVERTY

3.5.3.1 Good Governance and the Trickle-down Effect

Linked to the economic and political determinants was the emphasis on "good governance, democracy and the enforcement of human rights" as top priorities for recipient countries towards development (see Barr, 2004:3). Seen as a part of the economic strategy towards poverty reduction, good governance is defined as "the way public officials and public institutions acquire and exercise authority to provide public goods and services, including basic services, infrastructure, and a sound investment climate" (WDR, 2006:107). It is seen in terms of "strong government" with stress made on "transparency, accountability, a good judiciary, the rule of law and the enforcement of human rights" (Barr, 2004:4).

Moreover, it is noted that the WB links "accountability, effectiveness, regulatory frameworks, the rule of law" and the "curbing of corruption" to be the broader definition of good governance (Singh, 2004:1). The recognition of the link between good governance and successful development is noted to have "stimulated efforts to monitor the performance of governments and other public institutions by private commercial rating agencies, multilateral development agencies and nongovernmental agencies" (WB, 2006). Thus, enforcement action by donors such as New Zealand, Australia, and the Commonwealth in

relation to the good governance agenda as a precondition for aid saw the suspension of all new aid programmes for Fiji after the 2006 coup. This was subject to a successful resolution of important constitutional issues by the government.

The ADB has also stressed the need for good governance as “a prerequisite for poverty reduction through the neo-liberal policies associated with export-oriented, market-driven economies” (see Duncan and Pollard, 2001). Donor and development agencies saw it as necessary for the poverty reduction policies to be effective and in terms of ‘strong government’ with stress made on the need for transparency, accountability, a good judiciary, the rule of law and the enforcement of human rights (see Barr, 2004:4). It was also important in trade, investment and the furthering of neo-liberal policies (ibid). The UN agencies reform process closely incorporates Good Governance and Human Rights in its country programmes.¹⁰

On the other hand, while this neo liberal approach “puts emphasis on contracts and rights to private property, issues such as minimum wages, the right to a just wage, workers unions, and rights of association, are down-played, as being unhelpful for investment and employment” (ibid).

Barr says “the private ownership of land is given preference over communal ownership - the latter being seen as an obstacle for investors”. In turn, such strategies were seen as a means of reducing poverty based on a misconstrued concept that “there will be more employment and the benefits of economic growth will provide revenue for governments to build schools, hospitals and roads for the benefit of the poor” (ibid).

Alternatively, the good governance strategy has also been subject to severe criticism. For example, Barr (2004 :4-5) describes this as “the old ‘trickle-down’ theory in new dress”. Singh (2003:17) critiques the underlying workings of the good governance agenda to be “based on the assumption that the developed countries have the best institutions, which should be embedded across the world irrespective of cultural and historical conditions”.

In addition, various studies have pointed to TNC’s often forming trade cartels and indulging in manipulative transfer pricing which caused substantial loss of tax revenue and foreign exchange to the poor and the developing world (ibid). These concerns show that the impact of macro level decision-making does influence the poverty situation in the poor countries via the trickledown effect. This is further elaborated in the next section.

¹⁰ As elaborated in the UN Pacific Joint Programming for Young People Draft Concept Paper of March 2008:1.

3.5.3.2 Globalisation and the Trickle-down Effects

“The fact that we live in an international society means that what we want and, in some ways, who we are, is shaped by the social norms, rules, understandings, and relationships we have with others. These social realities are as influential as material realities in determining behaviour...In political terms, it is these social realities that provide us with ends to which power and wealth can be used”.
(Finnemore, 1996: 128)

It is undeniable that most of the development agencies fail to see a link between the macro, meso and the micro level policies and poverty and often seem to relate the MDGs of poverty eradication to the ‘macro’ solutions as distinct from the concept poverty at the local level.

However, many critiques see macro factors such as the current form of globalisation as “a catalytical force that is adverse to the poverty reduction efforts of poorer countries” (see Greider, 1997, Lester, 1996:20). It is seen to have “socially, economically and environmentally sidelined the poor in the race forward for wealth and prestige” (ibid).

Globalisation is critiqued as “a major creator in the escalation of economic and social distances between the advancing world and the poorer nations” (see Grindle, 2000; 179). Many post modern and critical social science theorists such as Foucault and Neo Marxists such as Wallerstein have also critiqued globalisation “as a major cause of rising global poverty” in direct contrast to development theorists who it as a ‘poverty solutions’.

Thurow (1996:1) commented on the operations of the capitalist ideologies of economic growth. He sees contradictions between the theoretical ideologies, under material capitalism, “which are viewed as the correct strategies as compared to the reality on the ground” (ibid: 2). The recent Global Economic crisis adds weight to Thurow's assertions that the inherent weaknesses of the globally endorsed system of globalisation and global capitalism “had a trickle-down effect on the poor”.

However, it is not to be overlooked that the People’s Republic of China has developed and advanced rapidly as a result of having adopted the ‘development theory and capitalist ideologies’. China was also reportedly, not affected much by the global economic crises. Neo- Marxists have justified China’s progress to be was linked “to its ability production sector and its export oriented trade policies as compared to nations dependent on import”. China also reportedly had a strong internal resource base, which enabled it to minimize

dependency on imports. On the other hand, neo-liberals have linked China's advancement to its adaptation of the principles of modernisation.

Similarly, within Fiji, Barr has linked the private sector oriented policies and the less than anticipated programmes outcomes on the "policy advice emitting from global institutions such as the WB and the IMF" (see Barr, 2008, 2009, 2010]. Lester (1996:20) writes that "new technologies, in the wake of modern capitalism, ... the adaptation of open, barrier free access to markets policies ... have socially, economically and environmentally sidelined the poor in the race forward for wealth and prestige".

The open market policies are also seen to be "designed to be most effective in democratic, information and technology rich societies practicing capitalist ideals are influenced and controlled by the major capitalist powers of the rich Northern states ...". (see Grindle, 2000:179). The impact of these macro level realities can be seen to take effect in small nations like Fiji through the loss of preferential trade agreements such as PICTA, SPARTECA and the LOME agreements "with the trickle – down effects of this injustice seen to be affecting the poor on the ground" (ibid).

At the country level, the Fiji Government has expressed its disappointment at the adverse effects of global capitalism on the poverty reduction efforts. This was seen from a former Prime Minister's presentation during the high-level plenary meeting of the 60th Session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in New York on September 17th, 2005. Mr Qarase voiced concern at "the current state of global affairs, which was contributing to poverty escalation". He strongly asserted that, "the increasing global emphasis on privatisation and liberalisation by the Breton Woods Institutions such as the WTO helped escalate poverty".

In turn, the policies of these organisations, "make a mockery of the very idea of free trade" and the "unrealistic and inequitable world trade policies make it much harder for countries to eliminate poverty" (Qarase, UNGA, 2005).

In addition, global pledges such as the MDGs have also been critiqued as referring to "only some basic dimensions of human development" and "failing to cover certain human development dimensions" such as participation or human security (Jahan (UNDP), 2004:1).

Moreover, "the MDG focused only on the equality and non-discrimination aspects in relation to gender inequality" as compared to, for example, 'global trade policies or age and education related discrimination in global migration policies', amongst others (ibid). The next section looks at the commonly assessed causes of poverty in Fiji.

3.6 COMMONLY ASSESSED CAUSES OF POVERTY IN FIJI

Other than the macro level analysis of poverty causes, the poverty causes Fiji was seen to continue to be assessed through employment, income and material and economic well being measures (see Narsey report on HIES and the EUS, 2007, MDG report 2008,2010, ADB 2011). However, the UNESCAP's 'Pacific's Economic and social survey of 2006' points to geographical and demographic characteristics as the contributors to and perpetuation of poverty (ESCAP, 2006:66-7).

These included "the physical disadvantage of remoteness, smallness and dispersion, significantly rising transport and other development costs and limited opportunities for realising economies of scale" (ibid). The resultant economic regression is seen to have caused "social regression", resulting in "many daunting problems in the PIC's quest for economic growth and sustainable development" (ibid). Chowdhury and Vidyattama (2008:125) also assert that the PIC's face serious constraints to growth and development "stemming from their geographical and demographic characteristics".

The GoF-HIES 2004 – 2005 and the EUS 2002 – 2003 reports suggest that "pervasive and persistent poverty formed a defining characteristic of the poor" across the two major races in Fiji. However, poverty was reportedly more intense amongst the indo Fijian community (see Kumar and Prasad, 2004:48, Narsey, 2007). A key source of indo-Fijian poverty linked to "the military coups of 1987 and 2000", "the indigenous Fijian domination in politics", "the expiring land leases" and the "lack of opportunities" (ibid: 469 - 486).

Narsey (2008:10) links the political instabilities in Fiji over the last twenty years to the "political struggle between ethnically driven political parties for control of state power". In turn, the primary interest of each party became the "furtherance of the interests of client political groups". This illustrates that, "when in power, the controlling ethnocentric leaders have ignored the legitimate interests of the poor of other ethnic groups, with the resultant political instability, lack investor confidence, and sub-optimal economic growth" (ibid).

A principal strategy towards poverty reduction for ethnic Fijian, as part of the government's affirmative action plans, had focused on raising the economic growth rate and increasing income-earning opportunities (GOF, 1994:30). Initially, it included the endorsement of an inclusive social welfare support scheme upon recommendations of the poverty task force in 1991 and the extension of the MWSW portfolio to include poverty alleviation in 2002.

The past two decades have seen several policies and action plans towards ethnic Fijian advancement such as the 50-50 by 20-20 plan, the Parliamentary paper No. 72, 2002, the SDP 2003-2005 and 2007-2011 amongst others. The easing of loan accessibility mechanisms combined with easy accessibility to educational scholarships and the strengthening of Cooperatives and small and micro enterprises in the 1980's and 1990's were also amongst such measures. Yet, despite these efforts, "the answers to the underlying causes of consistent and cyclic indigenous Fijian poverty still seem to have remained evasive"(Barr, 2010). The next section looks at the labour market situation.

3.6.1 THE LABOUR MARKET SITUATION AND SKILLS BASE

It is noted that Fiji's education service per population ratio has been considered more favourable than most other PIC's with only 3% of the overall population reportedly illiterate (FBOS, 1996, as cited by ADB, 2006). However, the labour market is seen to have suffered a significant imbalance between the supply and the demand of labour with an "excess supply of labour market entrants with limited skills and experience who did not satisfy the significant demand for skilled personnel" (ADB, 2006:v; see Voigt Graf, 2006:11).

A major concern can be seen from the 17,000 new entrants to the labour market in Fiji each year, including about 14,000 school-leavers and "their limited prospects of getting paid work in the formal economic sector" (see ADB, 2006:v). In addition, "wage jobs were available for only 50% of the labour market entrants with the rest needing to find work in the informal sector" (ibid).

In comparison, there is noted to be a reasonably high level of education in Fiji with a comparative equality for males and females at the primary and secondary level. Yet, Fiji has not fared well with the HDI where its position declined from 61st place in 1997 to 92nd place in 2005 (see MOFNP, 2006). Other than skills, The impact of social structures such as the traditional and religious institutions and their impact upon the lives of the poor is elaborated in the subsequent section.

3.6.2 TRADITION, CULTURE AND RELIGION : STIMULATORS TO POVERTY?

"Ending inequality's 'lottery by birth' is perhaps the greatest global challenge of the twenty-first century. And it is one that concerns all nations ...". (Green, 2008:3)

and

“Poverty and powerlessness can only be overcome by challenging the structures in society that keep the people poor and powerless”. (Barr, 2005)

It is noted that the perception of culture, tradition and religion by the grassroots ethnic Fijians in light of their allegiance to traditional authority is seen to be “based on their perception of tradition as static, and unchanging, as handed down from generation to generation since time immemorial“ (Barr,2005:38).

Ironically, religious institutions and its prevalent norms and practices together with racial politics and discriminatory policies is reported to have often perpetuated poverty in Fiji (see Fiji HRCR 2006, UNDP FPR 2006, Reddy, et al 2002, 2003, Casimira 2003).

Jacobs et al (1999) write that at a particular social phase of human development, “the vast majority of people depend psychologically on the collective as the primary determinant and power for their development and subconsciously act in conformity with its expectations”. Often, these value systems were reinforced based on “established social and cultural systems, perspectives and approaches” as a “valuable link to their identity and security” (ibid). This suggests the need for decision makers to understand the epistemological analysis of poverty and paradigms such as social constructionism and constructivism that focused on meaning and power within traditional and religion-based society such as Fiji.

Durutalo (2003:168) illustrates that “many of the indigenous Fijians who own 83 per cent of the land in Fiji still live in villages or in the rural areas and outlying islands where traditional social relations were still observed”. Nabalarua (28 Oct,2001:3) is of the view that the “ clash of culture and its related conflicts in traditional societies ... may lead to assertions of traditional values ..., often conflicting with the ideals of democracy and legal rational authority”.

Similarly, Walsh (1997) states that “no human being has a totally free choice but those who hold political or economic powers have far more choice than most...”.

Summarised in the words of O’Collins (1997), the "Chiefs and Fijian elites exploit the commoner’s allegiance to custom as a political tool to retain entrenched power and status". The outcome of this has “often erupted in the form of internal unrests as was seen during and after the military coups in Fiji in 1987 and later in year 2000” (Nabalarua,28 Oct,2001:3). Religion and tradition have also resulted in behavioural tendencies such as “the culture of silence”. Barr illustrates that,

“In a culture of silence not only are people told to be quiet, to listen and to obey but they tend to become dependent on other people. If anything is to be done they must wait patiently for someone in authority to take the initiative and make the necessary decisions ... the culture of silence does not encourage initiative and responsibility, decision – making and a sense of adventure and creativity. It does not even encourage people to imagine that things could be otherwise. People are caught in a net which binds them to accept the status quo ... in a culture of silence, people usually think that what they have is so little and so unimportant that it is not worth using”.

(Barr, 2005:64)

However, the Bainimarama Government is seen to have exercised restraint on the Methodist church’s annual fundraising activities that was known to raise millions of dollars within a few days. This fundraising was reported to severely affect the poor and vulnerable members of this Christian denomination within squatter settlements, housing homes and villages.

Similar forms of financially stressful ‘duties’ imposed by religious institutions saw the former University of the South Pacific vice Chancellor, Mr. Siwatibau challenge the churches in the Pacific. Mr Siwatibau asked the churches to “be more radical in their approach to social issues” towards justice in society. He is quoted as saying that,

“Should the churches stick to their role as saints and administer only of the spiritual needs and the physical needs of the victims? Do they ask questions about root causes and seek answers to correct these? ... To ask about causes is to analyse, to publicise and to work to root out causes of exploitation, of oppression and of corruption in our countries. It is not to be afraid to question those in power. Is it possible that the churches can be accused of cowardly silence or even compliance in the face of abuse or power by those who wield it in our countries?” (Barr, 2005: 220)

On the other hand, Fiji’s elitist indigenous leaders have shown support for the entrenched, hierarchy based structures and the role of traditional and religious leaders within the political mainstream. For example, former Prime Minister Qarase, in the Marama magazine (2002:53) reiterated that voting by the ethnic Fijian people “along racial lines was a long term security” and “a political and social reality in Fiji” (ibid). He justified this based on the history and cultural makeup of Fijian society.

However, this assertion is debatable on the grounds that the traditional religious allegiances together with race based politics and policies resulting from historical colonial constructs

have been a key to “some of the non –economic and institutionalized causes of poverty in Fiji” (see Durutalo, 2003:165-173, UNDP FPR 2006, Reddy, et al , 2003, Barr 2003).

From a constructionist perspective, Barr (2005: 38) writes that the structures in society were “never fixed” and just as “societal structures influence people and the way they think and act, the people also influence structures and they can change them”. The “person is indistinguishable from its roles, culture and relationships”, and reality “is continually being constructed through language and other systems of symbolic representation” (Barr: 220).

On the positive side, the Bainimarama Government has openly acknowledged the debilitating effect of some aspects of entrenched social and cultural beliefs and norms on the poverty situation of the indigenous Fijians. It states that for three decades, Fiji’s politics and overall governance had been “dominated by and deeply mired in divisive, race based politics, policies, and institutions” (GoF PCCP, 2007:1). These linked to ‘adversarial, ethnic based politics’, ‘failed leadership’ and ‘lost development opportunities’ (ibid). Race has also been factored in the struggle to reduce poverty as elaborated in the next section.

3.6.3 RACE - A FACTOR IN POVERTY?

Other than the traditional and religious causes of poverty, race and ethnicity within the context of the Fiji society is seen to closely overlap as a key cause of racial discrimination, isolation and segregation of particular groups of people through the process of racial marginalization. The current Prime Minister of Fiji, in an Australia radio and television interview, stated that:

“Fiji’s social problems were based on racism and racist policies and the domination of the poor by the rich and this was the key reason of the last coup of December 2006... the country has been dominated by racist policies since the last decade of past governments. Racism leads to corruption. It is the lies that are fed to our indigenous people, lies fed by the chiefs for their own benefit”.

(Fiji’s Prime Minister F. Bainimarama, May 9th, 2009).¹¹

This helps confirm the ADB assertion that the rising poverty levels in Fiji was around “35-40% of the population”¹². Mr. Bainimarama, as the current Prime Minister of Fiji was of the view that the underlying and resultant impact of institutional forces had led to policies that perpetuated the social and economic problems in Fiji. He saw the prevailing structures to be

¹¹ Mr Bainimarama, in a close up television interview on Sky news Australia on 9th May 2009

¹² See: Fiji Times online at www.fjitime.com/10-03-2011

“ marginalizing the people of Fiji along racial lines and worsening Fiji’s political and social situation for many of its citizens” (ibid). Mr. Bainimarama pointed out that.

In turn, Bainimarama is seen to have committed his regime towards bringing about change to these forces, “regardless of the resistance by its financially richer neighbours Australia and New Zealand”(ibid).

Similar sentiments were earlier shared by Prasad (1996:6) that “race (w)as a factor and racial discrimination a creator and contributor to increased poverty for particular groups of people through the process of marginalization”. Prasad illustrated a “strong association between continued authoritarianism, the political marginalization of the Indo-Fijian community and the dismal economic performance of Fiji since 1987” (ibid).

This linkage of poverty to the various coups in Fiji also exposes the ‘religious authoritarianism through religious leaders as a key instigator to race based politics’ and the ‘resultant racial disunity amongst the races in Fiji’ (Narsey 2007, 2008, Barr 2006, 2008, 2009). A key concern of CERD-UN Report, 2003 was the “damage to race relations caused by the 1987 and 2000 coups d’état in Fiji”.

Additionally, the military coups in Fiji since 1987 were noted to have contributed to a huge percentage of the indo-Fijian community becoming internally displaced, landless and homeless through the loss of land and property (see UNDP FPR 2006, Reddy, et al 2002, 2003, Barr 2003). In turn, “the prevailing and underlying constructs of past years were marginalizing the people of Fiji along racial lines and worsening political and social situation” (Bainimarama on Fiji TV, 9th May 2009).

Racism was also seen to have led to “policies that perpetuated the social and economic problems in Fiji, injustices which (his) government was adamant to change” regardless of the resistance by its financially richer neighbours” (ibid).

The above analysis implies that, in order to seek constructive solutions to the multitude poverty causes, “one has to look objectively at our society- its values, its attitudes, its structures- and be able to critically evaluate them in order to assess their strengths and weaknesses” (Barr, 1994:5). The approach by the current government in Fiji is seen to match Walsh’s proposition that “a fair and just society also required a government of talent and imagination whose members (we)re motivated by ethical principles and service. Racial politics ha(d) no role to play in such a society” (Walsh, 2000:7). The next section looks at issues of inequality and discrimination.

3.6.4 BRITISH COLONIALISM- A HISTORICAL LINKAGE OT POVERTY?

Added to the above was the process of colonialism which was seen to have been a key structural cause of poverty amongst the migrant communities in former colonies. For example, Roger (1998:6) links the contemporary patterns of indigenous poverty and discrimination in Guatemala to the “impact of the Spanish colonial past. This included “the colonial governments formidable fiscal and tributary obligations with the concentration of land in the hands of a few people as a deliberate aspect of colonial economic policy” (ibid: 7). Naidu (2004:ix) says that the contemporary conditions of former colonies “have depended upon their historical, demographic, economic and political circumstances”.

In turn, the structural and institutional cause of poverty is seen to link to tradition, culture, and religion which also closely link to the colonial strategies during the colonial era in Fiji. For example, Naidu (2004:ix) states that “Social oppression and violence have historically played out in diverse and peculiar ways in Fiji’s ethnic landscape”.

Nabalarua (2001: 2) asserts that “much of what Fiji is experiencing today is a result of historical and contemporary processes”. These linked to “aspects of divide and rule, an entrenched Westminster system, patronage of indigenous interests through a system of traditional and benevolent leadership structures, a legacy of indenture and a form of multiracialism in which ethnicity played a significant role in the country’s political, economic and social spheres” (ibid).

“The most disturbing feature of racism in Fiji is the communal voting system inherited from the Colonial Government ... is the root cause and symbol of the continuing political instability in Fiji, as the division of seats along racial lines perpetuates a similar racist party system ... illustrated through the overt racism found in the administration of the 2006 national elections, where most of the polling stations were supervised by civil servants who were predominantly indigenous Fijians, thus raising the question of systemic ethnic bias. Hate ‘speeches’ harboring racist comments were frequently aired under Parliamentary Privilege ... The Qarase Government had condoned the ‘hate speeches’ in the Parliament. The media, by reproducing racist material, has become a party to the perpetuation of racism in Fiji”. (CCF et. al. submission to the Constitution Review Commission, 2007: 3)

Zandra (1997:117) asserts, “the constructionist ideologies that were crafted and ingrained in the colonies always were deliberate and linked to a well planned strategy that could always act to the advantage of the colony in the long run”. Naidu (2004:ix) further elaborates on the

colonial link “with its intimate ties to big business sectors dominated by whites” led to “the oppression of one faction of the poor, the Indians in Fiji from the time of the colonial era”.

In turn, the “colonist policies of divide and rule, to keep majority uninformed and the feeding of colonial literature was aimed at safely retaining the colony within a better and more strongly welded cage of conquest” (ibid). Durutalo (2003:167) confirms, “the British established the colonial state by indirect rule in Fiji by incorporating aspects of traditional Fijian structures into modern forms of governance with British features”.

On the other hand, Barr (2010:2-4) does not emphasize the gullibility, nativity and sharing and caring nature of the ethnic Fijians as key tools which the British Colonialists exploited for resources. Instead, he says that these traits drew out “compassion and sympathy from the British colonial administration” who saw these as “favorable traits” considered “healthy, productive, and conducive to good order”. In turn, the British “praised the subsistence economy, the authority of the chiefs and the communal ethic of caring and sharing” (ibid).

Barr also asserts that ‘poverty’ amongst the Fijian population “was a non - issue during the colonial era” and what is seen as a problem today was viewed as “a cherished culture of strong ethics of caring and sharing within an extended family” (ibid). As such, “in order not to disturb the traditional way of life, the British chose to bring laborers from India and poverty first became an issue only in relation to the Indian indentured laborers” (ibid).

Barr sees the first formal acknowledgement of poverty amongst Fijians to have resulted in the “destitute allowance” which was introduced in Fiji in 1920 “to help the Indian laborers who had no means of support and care in old age” (ibid). Comparatively, the British administration saw ethnic Fijian poverty to be linked to “the way of life which they introduced” which gradually eroded the traditional way of life, which “the British wanted to preserve” (ibid). Thus, in 1959 when the British saw poverty “as becoming a problem within the Fijian community” ethnic Fijians were brought into the allowance scheme re-named the ‘Family Assistance Scheme’ (ibid).

However, several aspects of the colonial influence “still prevail(ed) within the various traditional structures” such as the fact that the structure of the current day “Fijian administration still very much resemble(d) what was established by the colonial rule” (Durutalo, 2003:168). It is also a fact that development and centralization also triggered widespread internal migration in Fiji in search for paid jobs and better living but with attached social consequences for many migrants, as elaborated below.

3.6.5 URBANISATION AND POVERTY

“Urban squatting (was) a major problem facing third world cities ... was the fastest growing type of residential area ... and a major obstacle to urban planning, modernisation and development ...”. (Walsh, 1978:1)

It is reported that the movement of Pacific island people to towns and cities “gained momentum in the 1960s and intensified considerably” in the later years (Ward, 1998, WB, 2000). Currently, more than half of Fiji’s population were reported to be living in urban or peri-urban areas which was expected to rise to 70% by 2010 (GoF–SDP 2007-2011, 2006:18). As early as the 1970’s, Walsh (1976: ii) indicated that more than one fifth of the population of the Suva urban area were possible squatters with an expected ten percent increase in this population annually. In Fiji, Callinan (2007:28) now states that “more than 730 new households (are) being added to informal settlements each year”.

“(S)quatting probably provide(d) the most visible evidence of poverty and inequalities in the distribution of wealth and access to resources in the third world countries” (Walsh (1978:3)

The various coups in Fiji were seen to have exacerbated the movement of people and impacted upon the poverty situation of the most vulnerable (see UNDP FPR, 2008, ADB, 2004). A draft NZ AID funded paper elaborates that the rural to urban migration “resulted in unplanned settlements where those with little or no cash income joined the ranks of the urban poor” (NZ ISR, 2007). Concerns related to the fact that the total population within these settlements “comprised of around 140 000 people” and “was growing at a rate of 3.7 percent as an average rate in largely peri-urban areas” (ibid).

Moreover, while the drift of rural families into cities in search of better jobs and improved living conditions was a global trend, the land ownership policies were stated to have exacerbated the problem, especially for the indo - Fijians (see Callinan, 2007: 28). He asserts that the “eviction from farming land was a key cause of rural to urban migration for the indo Fijian poor in addition to their inability to purchase their own houses” (ibid).

As such, the most severely affected were “the indo-Fijian communities” who became “landless, homeless, and internally displaced, through the loss of land and property upon expiry of land leases” (Prasad, 1996:6). Reddy et al (2003:128-154) concur that the informal sector in the third world and its common roots in abject poverty linked to the “insecurity of land tenure, poor education, lack of institutional support, and weak organisation”.

Comparatively, while the ethnic Fijians owned almost 93% of the land in Fiji, they also reportedly made up a large portion of those who had moved to live in squatter settlements around Fiji (Callinan, 2007:29). This can be justified by O'Collins (1997) argument that the increased poverty in the PIC's was "the result of the shift to a more Western-style cash economy and the move to towns and cities in search of monetary income".

The urbanisation of poverty can be further supported by the argument that it was perpetuated "by the high rates of unemployment and landless people", that resulted in the "search for paid jobs", or for migrants who left their villages "the hope of getting an urban income higher than their agricultural income (see HIES 2002-2003, Chaudhuri,1989).

In turn, "the falling income, rising malnutrition, poor health, drop in public services, increased pressure on women and violence" were reported as key problems that led to a cycle of people falling deeper and deeper into poverty (see Goundar, 2009). An added concern was the "strong possibility of large numbers of children living in poor conditions dropping out of school and becoming street kids because of Fiji's rising poverty" (ibid).

In search for solutions, Walsh (1978:ii) sees the urban squatter dwellers as living a more flexible life towards supplementary informal economic activities and kinship networks as compared to those within the Housing Authority homes. Thus, he illustrates support for the dependency theory that "squattling was a residential manifestation of poverty ..." (ibid). Walsh also sees income as the "most critical variable" which he says "increased among Fijians by accretions of kin and among Indians by accretions of time" (ibid).

However, he says that "few households had sufficient income to permit them to alter significantly their position in society". Thus, it can be argued that the "interlocking and interdependent aspects of disadvantage create a 'deprivation trap', which serves to create and maintain poverty" (O'Collins, 1997). In turn, the concerns of rising poverty have resulted in varied action measures towards its reduction, as discussed in the following sections.

3.7 KEY APPROACHES TOWARDS POVERTY REDUCTION

This section discusses the key approaches adopted by development agencies and the government of Fiji towards poverty reduction.

3.7.1 AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND ETHNIC FIJIAN POVERTY

"Ending inequality's 'lottery by birth' is perhaps the greatest global challenge of the twenty-first century. And it is one that concerns all nations ..." (Green, 2008:3)

The ILO (2008) has stated that “pervasive discrimination confronts indigenous people in the world who account for 15% of the world’s poor, although they make up 5% of the world’s population”. The widening poverty amongst the indigenous communities worldwide is seen to have been addressed through special UN Conventions pertaining to the rights of indigenous people.

Historically, the affirmative action programmes in Fiji originated with the colonial rule, when the government’s policy on land and education was designed to provide special protection for the indigenous community (Reddy et al, 2002:58).

However, Naidu (2004: vii) illustrates that in majority of the former colonies, “racism and the politics of ethnicity had been persistent offshoots of colonialism which have dogged post colonial construction”. In turn, the efforts to address indigenous Fijian poverty were also openly biased in favour of ethnic Fijians (ibid, also see SDP-Fiji, 2003-2005, 2007-2011).

These were also seen to be openly “discriminatory” and leading to “unequal development and distribution of benefits” (see Reddy, et al, 2002:58, UNDP FPR 2006, 2008; Barr 1990, 1994, 2004). It has been reiterated that “since the first 1987 coups, when Fijian political parties have been in control,” attempted remedial action “coalesced into affirmative action strategies and programmes which have being racist” (see Narsey, 2008).

In turn, various International instruments such as the ILO Convention on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, No. 169 have been relied upon to justify affirmative action linked to racial and discriminatory policies by the GoF. The GoF is seen to have ratified this convention towards policies and programmes targeting the progress of the ethnic Fijians through several measures. These have included the establishment of special grants, Trust Funds, interest free loans, the easy excess to interest and mortgage free loans for Fijian businesses through the FDB, government grants to the Native Lands Trust Board (NLTB) and enterprises such as Yasana Holdings as institutions that looked after Fijian interests (see GoF, 2002).

This was in addition to the requirement for 50% of all government contracts to be reserved for indigenous Fijians, tax exemption for Fijian companies and government rental for all buildings owned by Fijian entities (ibid). Added to this was the GoF’s preferential funds towards affirmative action via the '50-50 by the year 2020' policy paper and the 'Blueprint for the advancement of the indigenous Fijians' (ibid).

However, a close scrutiny suggests that the emphasis on indigenous rights in relation to the ILO C.169 was directed more towards the “marginalised, property less, indigenous

population in caste based societies” such as India where the ‘Harijans’ and ‘Dalits’ were “disempowered in major ways” due to entrenched forms of societal power dynamics (ILO factsheet, 2008).

In contrast to the poverty situation of the indigenous population in Australia and the Philippines, Loy et al (2007) find that “the situation of the indigenous population in Fiji may be the opposite in relation to resource ownership and leadership roles”. The politically motivated riots in Suva in the year 2000 combined with the various past coups in Fiji before 2006 has seen the use of violence to achieve political objectives. Such events suggest parallels with several other countries, that the problems confronting the Pacific were “rooted in a specific set of historical and contemporary circumstances” (Finin and Smith, 2000:6).

Narsey (2008:10) has also asserted that, “the political instability that Fiji has faced over the last twenty years, in large measure, has been the result of political struggle between ethnically driven political parties for control of state power, with each party’s primary focus being the furtherance of the interests of client political groups”.

It has been reported that, “when in power, the controlling ethnocentric leaders have ignored the legitimate interests of the poor of other ethnic groups, with the resultant political instability, lack investor confidence, and sub-optimal economic growth.”(Narsey, 2008: 10).

Table 3: Ethnic Differences in The Incidence of Poverty in Fiji		
1997 BNPL (%)	2002 BNPL (%)	Perc. Diff
Fijians 33	32	-3
Indo-Fij 36	39	8
All Fiji 34	34	0
% Diff. Ind-Fij	9	22

Statistics taken from the 2008 Report on the Analysis of: ‘The Incidence of Poverty and the Poverty Gap in Fiji: Ethnocentric political parties and political tragedy for the poor; USP

The inconsistency of the past Governments approach to poverty is indicated by the fact that indo-Fijians made up 54 %per cent of all poor households, compared to 42 per cent ethnic Fijian and 4 per cent others. Thus, the fact that the two major races in Fiji were seen to be equally poor, with the Indo-Fijian community being more intensively into poverty as compared to the indigenous population reflects nationally endorsed and implemented policy action that has been racially biased.

In turn, the affirmative action policies, which focused on ethnic Fijians as “the most deprived and poor”, had been “inconsistent” (see Narsey, 2008:1, HEIS 2002-2003). Added

to this was the fact that other minority races were also seen to be as poor or “more marginalised and poor in Fiji such as the minority Melanesians who could benefit from affirmative action programmes” (Nomae et al, 2004:1).

A 2004 Fiji Human Rights Commission (FHRC) investigation into the SDL¹³ Government’s Affirmative Action Programmes under the Social Justice Act 2001 and Regulations, the 50/50 by 2020 Affirmative Action Plan also found major discrepancies. These programmes were reported to have failed to comply with the Constitution and the Social Justice provisions (Chapter 5, s 44) of the Constitution (FHRCR 2006). They also “lacked a proportional balance between the disadvantage intended to be addressed and the measures taken to alleviate them ...in contradiction of the legal standards imposed by the Constitution, the Human Rights Commission Act and international law” (ibid).

Reddy et al (2002:60) see the Fiji example as a major wastage by way of millions of dollars over the years “to satisfy the elite indigenous Fijians and politicians with no real benefits to the ordinary and poor indigenous Fijians who have continued to suffer in poverty”. This institutionalised discrimination towards other communities was linked to the Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua (SDL) government under the leadership of Laisenia Qarase. Reddy, et al indicate that it “had put ethnic Fijians into poverty”. They suggest that “affirmative and positive action for the advancement of the economically disadvantaged groups need(ed) to be formulated as a national policy without any racial barriers” (ibid).

Moreover, “action policies should not be race based, but rather specific to individual's living conditions” (ibid: 6). Ratuva (2002:6) also says that affirmative action policies as practiced in various places “lacked any clear strategic philosophy and often ended up as handouts by the government”. This in turn, helped create a handout mentality for the people and raised the question of whether affirmative action “should be focused on creating self-help and self-sufficiency, skills development, enhancement of potential or goods delivery?” (ibid).

Acknowledging the past weaknesses, the Bainimarama government has attempted to address the concerns through various decrees including the enactment of the ‘People’s Charter for Change towards Progress’ (PCCP, 2007:5). This decree imposed restrictions on established forms of institutional constructs that influenced and financially burdened the marginalised and poor within the community. Its aim was “bringing about change within institutions and structures that have become entrenched will not be an ‘overnight’ process nor are there any ‘quick fixes’ to change” (ibid).

¹³ relates to the Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua (SDL) government under the leadership of Laisenia Qarase

The PCCP 2008 illustrates that the 'Road Map' "must consist of a programme of major political, institutional, social, and economic reforms through policy measures ... to restore stability, law and order, strengthen good governance, public sector reform plus the social issues of growing inequality and race based divisions between and within major communities". The next section elaborates on the overwhelming tendency towards economic solutions to poverty by development agencies and national governments.

3.7.2 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, GOOD GOVERNANCE AND POVERTY REDUCTION

"The economic and political structures in society shape the way people think and act. Those people who gain either wealth or power or status in a society tend to preserve and maintain the structures because they benefit from them. Those who do not have wealth or power or status and are oppressed by these structures tend to struggle against them. And so there is conflict. Oppressive structures (economic, political or social) always cause problems of injustice. It is important to note that people can change structures in society". (Barr, 2005: 37-38)

In addition to targeted policies and programmes towards poverty reduction, as discussed above, Economic development theory is a "commonly favoured approach" to poverty reduction in the later part of the 20th century and early 21st century (see Thurow, 1998:1). The concept of modernisation and globalisation, which closely linked to the economic theory, emphasized market based approaches as the ideal answers to poverty reduction.

It is noted that Economists in Fiji also suggest the adoption of "appropriate macroeconomic policies to ensure that the labour market remained competitive and flexible" (Barr, 2005:37-38). Thus, the adaptation of economic strategies has become popular amongst development agencies towards poverty reduction within a capitalist political system.

It is further noted that the emphasis on the economic dimension has often been made in crisis situations which have encouraged "labour market reform and public sector reform (as a) a pre-requisite for increased levels in investment towards improved labour market and in turn, economic performance in the PIDCs" (see Prasad,2007: v-iv). In a paper on "Priorities in a Country Poverty Reduction Strategy", co-authors Duncan and Pollard also stress the need for 'economic growth' as a prerequisite for poverty reduction (ADB, 2001).

It has been emphasised that the adaptation of 'neo-liberal policies' associated with 'an export-oriented, market-driven economy' and 'Good governance' agendas, 'strengthening of the framework for fiscal policy making' would help towards the maintenance of "sound

public finances over the medium term” (see Prasad, 2007, Duncan, 2001). In turn, it is assumed that the realignment of national macroeconomic policies to support market-led growth opportunities would enable the PIDCs, “to increase exports under increasingly competitive regional and global trade regimes through economic reforms” (ibid).

However, such measures within the context of a developing country like Fiji linked to the economic development theory “where the market was seen to play a key role” and where “success was defined as rising material standards of living” (Thurow; 1998:1). It was noted that the economic measures towards growth had actually led to “an escalation of poverty in Fiji amongst all communities ... within the marginalized populations which was not been counterbalanced by social reform efforts” (Barr, 2004:3-4).

Additionally, the 2004 Budgetary support for private sector development saw “a decrease in personal and corporate taxation from 33% to 32%, a static social welfare spending and an increase of tariffs on food and other items affecting the lives of workers and the poor” (ibid). Similarly, the VAT initiative after the 1987 coup also saw a “10 year tax rebate to overseas investors” and the “Value added tax (VAT) of 10% being raised to 12.5% in 2003 as a regressive tax measure to be used for poverty relief” (Barr, 2004:3).

However, all the above measures seem to have “failed to benefit the poor, instead, resulting in companies and those in the higher tax bracket having their taxes reduced” (ibid). Instead, these resulted in “a significant increase in poverty and inequality from 25% in 1990 - 91 to around 33% in 2002” (ibid: 4). It is assumed that most of the benefits of growth had “gone to the well-off and little "trickle-down" to the poor has materialized, even in a period of relative prosperity” (ibid: 5).

Despite these outcomes, the GoF has readily accepted advice from the WB and the IMF on policy directives such as expansionary fiscal policy measures to promote economic growth to increase income-earning opportunities, especially for the most disadvantaged (see GoF, 1994:30,31). These have linked to “budgetary decisions aimed at expanding the economy, promoting investment and growth and readily adapting to the conditions of AID that required good governance and transparency” (ibid).

A former Member of Parliament, Ms Ganilau has been critical of this approach that, “the obsession with the economic indicators of poverty and its solutions aimed at conceptual usage often lacked the details of the social situation on the ground that communities could help provide”.¹⁴ This oversight included the “strength of the subsistence base”, “the social

¹⁴ As stated by Ms Ganilau during a Decent work and skills development meeting with the ILO in June 2009.

capital present within cultures and communities”, “community networks and family support” which could easily help complement the disadvantages indigenous societies faced as a result of the impact of institutions and structures of society¹⁵.

“Economic reforms often tend to be aligned with the so called ‘successful models’ of economic growth and development in accordance with WB and other development agency specifications, yet, these models have not reaped results as anticipated.” (Barr, 2004:3)

A Participatory Poverty Assessment in 2003 by the GoF and ADB suggested that the remedies proposed for poverty and hardship were “the same set of old economic policies similar to those preached by the WB” (ibid:2). These included “increasing corporatisation / privatisation leading to increase in cost of basic necessities like water and support for private sector development” (ibid).

However, “public sector downsizing (was seen to) make island states even less capable of managing large scale change and keeping a lid on conflicts when they emerge” (Kelsey, 2004). Barr sees these policies as a cause of poverty in Fiji “with little account taken of the fact that there can be other models of economic and political development” (ibid, p: 3-4)

“What use is it to say that government will use economic growth to assist the poor and needy, if that economic growth is achieved by actually creating more poverty and need? It is not surprising that people are sceptical when government says growth will lead to poverty reduction”. (Barr, 2004:3-4).

The ILO has acknowledged that “the economic benefits of globalisation in the latter part of the last century was not enjoyed ... on an equal basis, inequalities within and between countries ha(d) increased, and for many, globalization and economic restructuring have brought increased insecurity, uncertainty or marginalisation” (ILO, 2000).

As a prospective solution, the founder of the Grameen Bank suggested the need for a broad and inclusive approach to poverty reduction” which he saw as being caused by “the failure at the conceptual level” (Yunus,2006).

What this points to is that the market based solutions towards poverty reduction, as proposed by economists, may not change the situation unless “bold, and constructive interventions were undertaken” (see Pantin et al, 2005). The Human Development approach to poverty reduction is elaborated below.

¹⁵ This was gauged from feedback by ILO member country constituents and stakeholders during country missions.

3.7.3 HUMAN DEVELOPMENT TOWARDS POVERTY REDUCTION

“Human beings are the ultimate resource and ultimate determinant of the development process. It is a process of people becoming more aware of their own creative potentials and taking initiative to realize those potentials. Human awareness, aspiration and attitudes determine society’s response to circumstances. Development occurs only at the points where humanity recognizes its power to determine results”. (Jacobs and Cleveland, 1999:6)

It is noted that several weak outcomes of past poverty reduction strategies resulted in the emphasis on the Human Development (HD) and the rights based approach by the UN agencies. These linked to factors such as “social and economic development via health, education, social security” amongst others (UNDP HDR, 2000, 2001, 2004).

Mahbub al Haq, an advisor to the UNDP, has articulated that the HD strategy seeks “to place human concerns at the very centre of the development debate and to move the study of economics ones again closer to its primary objective" (Griffin, et al, 1994: ix). It is seen to be a “people centered strategy, not a goods or production cantered strategy” (ibid: xi).

Thus, a broader approach now includes “good governance, accountability, transparency, gender and participation” with emphasis on “sustainability and assistance to vulnerable groups” (UNDP HDR, 1996:43). This was in addition to “life expectancy, adult literacy, and real per capita income aimed to measure relative poverty and vulnerability” (ibid).

The Pacific Plan Background Paper (2005: 15) has also elaborated on the development of broad HD security policy “including environment, water and food security”. It is noted that the GoF has also modified its poverty definition to include “social justice, housing, urban, rural, island development, health, environment and sustainability” (SDP 2007-2011:7-36).

This analysis points to the need for poverty action to be “strategies to mobilise the poor, so that they are equipped for collective action” (ibid). As suggested by the Grameen bank founder and Nobel prize laureate, the motive towards poverty reduction was “not on assessing the material possession of a person but on the potential of a person that can be unleashed” (Yunus, 2006). The next section looks at the WB and IMF approach to Poverty.

3.7.4 POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY PAPERS AND AID POLICIES

Under the development discourse model, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) approach is a key WB and the IMF, which was launched in 1999 and has become the overall framework for assistance and cooperation in countries with high levels of poverty (WB, 2006:206). This model outlines the “neoliberal economic policies” as “the only reliable way to achieve economic growth that would enable poverty reduction in addition to “market growth ,donor aid and international borrowing”.

However, many studies point to the failure of development efforts and an increase in poverty in the wake of free trade (see Chomsky 2006, 2007, Thurow, 1996, Grieder, 1997). This approach has seen global markets to grow rapidly without the parallel development of the economic and social institutions necessary for their smooth and equitable functioning (WCSDG, 2004: xi).

Barr (2004:2) sees this as a factor behind developing country poverty, where, under the influence of the WB, the IMF and the ADB, the poor countries have “pursued the export-oriented, market-driven economic agenda and policies”.

Similarly, Kelsey (2004) sees Aid being used as a “conditionality to encourage market-led economic growth, trade liberalization, and good governance practices” where “underlying donor interests often decid(e) the extent to which a poor country prospered”. Firth (1989:75-76) has proclaimed that “the greater the strategic value of an island territory”, the less it was “to proceed to sovereign status”.

Thus, in the process of requiring developing Third World countries to mould themselves after the image of the `developed' first World, little account was taken of the fact that “there could be other models of economic and political development” (Barr, 2004:2). On a similar note, Greens says that;

“There are an enormous number of contextual factors that affect change or are an obstacle to it. Development strategies tend to underestimate the importance of such contexts, and hence overestimate the possibilities for successful change. Sometimes advocates of change default to ‘If I ruled the world’ visions of Utopias, with little analysis of how such visions could be achieved given the existing distribution of power and influence”. (Green, 2008: 442)

3.8 GENDER EQUALITY AND THE NEED FOR INCLUSIVENESS

Green (2008:3) says that amongst the many sources of poverty, inequality compounded, and often stemmed from “discrimination based on gender, race, or caste”. It is noted that, in the wake of massive advocacy by feminist movements worldwide, several analytical reports such as the CEDAW reports have brought to the fore that fact that “the social relations between men and a woman formed a major source of marked social and economic inequalities that went against the interest of most women”.

As such, inequalities and non-discrimination between men and women, when translated into power relations became “essential components for examination in any poverty reduction process” (ibid). Thus, these were the core priorities in the rights based approach endorsed at Copenhagen that enabled the endorsement of CEDAW in Beijing, in 1995.

The ILO says that Gender is “not only about the granting of legal status to men and women but also about the creation of an enabling environment in which human rights could be enjoyed by all” (ILO, 2000). It is of the view that within traditional societies, men and women had “different economic and social roles and responsibilities” which led to gender differences in “access to productive resources and public services” (ibid).

The PIC’s are seen to have committed to the gender equality goals through the endorsement of several regional and international legal and policy instruments such as the Pacific Platform for Action, the Pacific Plan, CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action, Agenda 21, and the MDG's.

Similar goals have also been incorporated in the national development strategies of several PIC’s including Fiji which has also ratified all of the ILO’s core Equality based conventions. The ILO (2000) acknowledges that, “during economic restructuring for economic transition, social spending (was) the first to be cut, thus making it difficult for women to balance productive work and care work”.

However, many poor households in Fiji were still seen to be “headed by a higher proportion of women than men and the poorest households were more often headed by an Indo-Fijian” (see UNDP-FPR, 2006, 2008, HEIS 2002-2003, EUS 2004-2005). Despite this, women “continued to be marginalized within the Fiji society” with a higher risk of poverty and destitution associated with “labour discrimination, increasing divorce and separation” (ADB, 2006).

Similarly, the oversupply of labour in the informal sector in many PIC's linked to “the lack of support for child care in the PICs which disadvantaged women ...” (see Prasad, 2007:36). This suggests that women were “less able than men to translate labour into

income, income into choice and choice into personal well-being” (Kabeer, 1996:19). Disability also linked closely to poverty, which is illustrated below.

3.9 DISABILITY, INCLUSIVENESS AND POVERTY REDUCTION

In addition to gender, the people with disabilities have also been linked to poverty in Fiji where disability has been reported to be alarmingly on the rise (Fiji Times, 28.3.09:3). Often, the poverty status of people with disabilities (PwD’s) has been linked to their “lower educational and skills development attainments which resulted from societal barriers to equal opportunities ... in education and vocational training” (ILO 2003:3). Under the HR provisions of the 1997 Constitution, non-discrimination and inclusiveness became essential components in the field of development after the GoF ratified the ILO C-159 in 2004.

However, Duncan (1984:46) has highlighted that most past theories used to explain poverty “have focused on able-bodied, non-elderly adults, whose potential for escaping poverty rested on their ability to work enough hours at a sufficiently high wage rates”.

The UN is also seen to have widened the scope of disability from the ‘medical’ model to a human rights (HR) issue centred on the concept of human dignity linked to the way society perceived and reacted to impairments. Moreover, the ILO Disability Convention 159 also addresses the rights of PwD’s including the right to Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment, inclusiveness, equality and equity.

3.10 ANALYSIS OF THE LITERATURE

The literatures suggests that the various approaches adopted by development agencies and governments to address poverty concerns and its link to the various theoretical approaches were often, philosophically varied. In turn, poverty was illustrated to be multidimensional. This included both the economic, social and structural dimensions in addition to historical factors such as colonialism and macro factors such as the operation of the market forces.

The literature also highlighted the ways in which global policies on poverty translated into national policy action on the ground. The trickle down effect of these forces has been indicated to link to the national decision-making processes that often sided with the private sector or the elites and were sometimes racially motivated, divisive and discriminatory.

It was also highlighted that disadvantages to the poor were further enhanced by the social structures and its practices that prevailed within the communities, despite which, poverty assessments continued to be overwhelmed with economic data and economic solutions.

The macro causes of poverty linked to global policies have been critiqued as “inequitable” and segmenting the world into “distinct social groups of the rich and the poor” (see WCSDG, 2004: x-xii, Øyen, 1996: 3-4). Overall, the literature has given weight to the argument that economic and social disparities, lack of equal and equitable markets access, existence of special protection of markets, combined with the massive comparative advantages of the first world over that of the developing countries formed some of the key factors behind developing country poverty. Thus, in line with the reformist tradition, the literature suggests the need for a comprehensive review of current poverty reduction approaches towards a multi-disciplinary agility and action amongst disciplines.

Moreover, Walsh (2000) has stated, the “sporadic and piecemeal efforts have succeeded in making a few poor people a little better off, but the inevitability of poverty remains embedded in the basic thinking and structures of society ...”. This helps reiterate the fact that poverty reduction, as a topic, cannot be concluded with a few tidy generalisations given the wide complexity in its scope and containment efforts.

In turn, there is a suggested need for closer analysis of the underlying social dimensions and its links to institutional factors in relation to how communities were affected and coped with poverty.

There is an added need for deeper analysis of the link between the macro and micro causes of poverty towards a better understanding of the reasons why cyclic poverty prevailed within indigenous communities such as in Fiji. As suggested by the Grameen bank founder and Nobel Peace Prize Winner:

“The sooner we take the right approaches, the faster we can banish poverty from the world ... we built our theoretical framework on assumptions that underestimate human capacity; we develop concepts that are too narrow (such as the concepts of business, creditworthiness, entrepreneurship, and employment) ... institutions that remain half done (such as financial institutions that leave out the poor). Poverty is caused by the failure at the conceptual level, rather than by any lack of capability on the part of the people”. (Yunus, M., 2006)

The next chapter details the field research findings.

CHAPTER 4.0 RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research findings, as elaborated below, were specific to the ethnic Fijian respondents, their family and other household and community members who combined to form part of the convenience interviews or focus group discussions. By extrapolation, the findings can also, probably, be generic to the experience of the poor ethnic Fijians living within similar locations around Fiji. Key aspects of qualitative data were quantified using indicators such as 'time utilisation' in the absence of majority respondents not having any fixed sources of income. This helped towards a logical analysis, which helped feed the research findings. Within the context of the social constructionist and constructivist paradigms, the field research enabled a better understanding of some of the reasons why many genuine, well-intended efforts towards poverty reduction have proved futile and why many respondents have remained in poverty.

4.1 : BREAKDOWN OF RESPONDENTS FEEDBACK

Table 4: Current Overall Employment Situation of the Respondents	Percentage (%)
1. Unemployed or lost jobs	58%
2. Casual Jobs (grass cutting, carpentry, garage, gardening, house girl, etc)	37%
3. Fixed Jobs (work in factory, garment industry, house girl, nanny, etc) as per total female population	8%
4. Reliance on Remittances (plus children support, rental, etc)	16%
5. Casual Job with matched the skills training	6%
6. Reliance upon Subsistence crops as main source of food in addition to income and/or other sources of sustenance .e.; cash income, FASA and remittances	92%
7. Unemployed Youths attached to rural villages and staying home (estimated as per total youth population)	43%
8. Able to retain jobs for longer duration (majority females)	16%
9. Reliance on the Social welfare family support allowance plus other support {community, family, small cash income etc)	
10. Reliance upon Church or vanua for financial and livelihood support (church helped built house, vanua allocated land for crops, etc)	0.5%

The above table represents the sample population for the field research totalling 78. Combined with the convenience interviews of WOP respondents on the ground, the interviewees for direct interviews totalled 157. This was in addition to focus group discussions and expert interviews. Several activities amongst the different age groups and between males and females overlapped, leading to the percentage inconsistencies.

4.1.1 CURRENT SITUATION OF THE RESPONDENTS

The field research brings to the forefront the fact that majority of the participants of the five year WOP–Fiji programme remained within the same situations they were in before the training, i.e., unemployed, laid off from jobs or into casual forms of work or activities. The enthusiasm for the skills training seems to have gradually eroded with trainees resorting back to “the more convenient routinal activities of life”. Comfort was seen to be taken from life and living that “was familiar and established”.

Moreover, several male and a reasonable portion of female respondents had not pursued serious effort to search for jobs while many had changed jobs or were still looking for casual forms of employment. Effort was made to seek jobs for small cash income, especially by the male respondents where payments had to be made for utility costs such as electricity and water bills. Once these essential monetary needs were met, many participants were seen to revert to the relaxed pace of life.

Employment was seen to be of more significance by the more mature females and males living within the city suburbs and squatter areas in order to meet the food, utility costs and house rental expenses. However, while some respondents were working 3 to 5 days a week, majority of the population, both males and females, did not have fixed jobs. As such, many were found to be ‘sleeping’ within their households when visited during the daytime hours. It was noted that the daytime ‘sleeping’ was a “comfortable” and routine habit and, in many instances, did not link to any previous day’s work activity such as fishing or crabbing. This was also because majority of the respondents did not see fishing as a regular activity due to them having resettled inland in peri- urban squatter and housing areas.

On the question of whether Fijians were “poor, lazy and laid back and this became a factor that perpetrated their poverty’, Ms Benedette Ganilau was of the following view,

“I guess that could be right but you could apply that across the community and that exists in every sector, even the civil service so it’s unfortunate to highlight the poor in this scenario. There are also outstanding people who have worked themselves out of poverty and one salutes them. When you see persons who have done well and were farming folk or village folk and are captains of industry or leaders in the community you have hope. Mahend Patel has a picture of his parents’ house and where he grew up (in Ba I believe) behind his desk to remind him from where he came – he got himself out of that cycle and created his own opportunities! Sashi Singh started FRIEND and this mobilized 1000 women to be self-sufficient – she has overseas orders and a whole

industry in place for and from the women – from nothing! YP Reddy and Dewan Maharaj never forget their education standards and simple upbringing and they are millionaires/billionaires! So that statement doesn't always ring true”.

Comparatively, the above examples that have been shared of success models from poverty to wealth relate only to the Indo - Fijian poor and no example has been given of the ethnic Fijians. Similarly, job losses and the search for new jobs was also noted to be common amongst the male respondents with some who had joined garages or worked as sales boys but gradually left the job or were laid off.

A closer analysis suggests that the younger male participants changed jobs several times due to sports related commitments in addition to community and church related work. It was also noted that several matured male carpentry trainees had gone into construction work but were later laid off due to absenteeism and redundancies.

Moreover, many of the male workers “got tired” and “needed to rest”. Further investigation into this concern indicated that many male workers “did not have breakfast and never took lunch to work”. Many were of the view that “if they had money, they would buy lunch, like their other friends in white collar jobs”. Some males and females “drank only water at work” and when at home, “ate when there was food with was often tea and cassava”. This lack of adequate food is seen to be a key cause of absenteeism or dropout from work. This concern is seen to have been evaded in the mainstream analysis of poverty amongst ethnic Fijians.

Several male and female respondents were seen to be into various forms of casual and part time sources of income through work as house girls, nannies, sewing machinists, market vendor and the sale of roti parcel, pies, subsistence crops and mussels. 2 female respondents had found jobs on casual basis in the garment factory while 1 had been given work for 20 hours per week as a sales girls. Some male respondents in settlements nearer to towns and cities were into grass cutting, carpentry, handy men and security jobs on a casual basis.

Other common related activities for the male respondents included ‘tending to the subsistence gardens’, ‘talanoa’, ‘grog taking’ which were seen to be often followed by long hours of relaxation or sleep. Those living in settlements closer to the town areas were seen to also depend on the food support from families located in the rural villages while some even travelled to the rural villages in order to clean the teitei and bring back the food.

This contrasts with the WOP programme justification that “the respondents has missed out on opportunities and were desperate to find fixed sources of income”. Several younger

respondents were in “casual jobs” which they described as “easy to handle and relaxing”. It was also noted that several male respondents who were able to secure a paid job often withdrew voluntarily once an immediate need for cash income was met. Thus, the issue of when a respondent was into a job or out of job was seen to often dependent on the respondent’s own convenience, social commitments and the significance of the monetary income and whether it linked to a situation where it could not be compromised.

One example was that of Jerry who originated from Navutulevu, a village near the sea in Serua and who trained under WOP while staying at his cousins house in the Nabua squatter. As his wife was about to have a baby, Jerry went diving for fish “for 3 extra days of the week instead of one in order to buy the essentials needed for the new baby’s arrival”. Later, he switched back to his routines, which also included long hours of relaxation. Occasional fresh fish in his house complemented subsistence food. This also included “coconut, cassava, dalo and rourou”. The occasional need for money for Jerry’s family linked to clothes, bread, cigarette and grog and bus fare. Second hand shops were “the common place for clothes shopping”. The government’s family support allowance received by his mother was often relied upon as a back up in ‘tight’ situations.

A similar situation also prevailed in several other households and locations and it was common to see children playing while grown up adults of working age spent productive daytime hours relaxing or sleeping. Within coastal villages, a few men and women who dived for fish and mussels were also seen to sleep long hours during the day.

However, this was in minority compared to the majority who slept after drinking ‘yaqona’ during the night. The afternoon hours were seen to be spent preparing dinner, grating coconuts while several males and some females also relaxed around the grog bowl in groups. The matured female trainees from the squatter areas seemed to have more stable families and were also into fixed sources of small income such as house girl, nanny and market vendor work.

The research noted the populations strong allegiance to the established norms and practices that prevailed and which linked to contributions and fundraising activities of church, vanua and village. This was sometimes combined added services such as “giving of food to the pastor’s and chiefs households or free labour towards any construction work or to maintain their subsistence gardens”.

This contrasted with a lack of initiative towards self-development and was reflected by the fact that several respondents had ‘sold’ their cooking and baking ovens and sewing

machine' s which they received under the WOP-Fiji programme. The justification included the need to meet the various soli and other household needs for cash income. It was noted that some trainees kept the cooking ovens as decoration in the house while in four instances, the baking ovens were broken and used outside as chicken houses. Sewing machines were being utilised by several respondents for personal use and occasional incomes while as many ovens and machines had become defunct or been sold.

Remittance was also a source of support within some households in addition to the Family support allowances. This seems to have also resulted in family homes of a few village based respondents being constructed or renovated by the children within the security forces aboard. There was pride expressed by most parents in relation to children who were within the security forces such as the police and army. This pride was also extended to some parents admitting that the current government's restriction on grog and alcohol consumption and the prioritization of family was "a good action towards discipline".

The research finds that several elderly village based parents had been put in charge of the care of grandchildren. This was in addition to the task of tending to subsistence gardens as a means of survival and to support extended family living away from home.

This was seen to have enhanced the poverty for several elderly parents both within rural village and Housing Authority areas. The next section looks at the key reasons why participants undertook the training.

4.1.2 REASONS FOR UNDERTAKING THE TRAINING

Several respondents participation in the skills training linked to their desire "to do something new and exciting" as compared to "staying home". Moreover, several youth respondents saw it "as an opportunity to get fare allowances", "a decent lunch" or an "opportunity to obtain a skills certificate and get a job" while majority were attracted because of the "backup equipment support". The female respondents were grateful for the sewing and cooking trades "which could enable small cash income from within the home environment". Some respondents said that their "close family links to Ms Caucau and other MWSWPA staff enabled (them) being accepted in the training". Three middle-aged garment worker participants said they joined in "to be able to get sewing machines" which they could "not otherwise be able to buy".

It was noted that skills such as traditional gardening, casual carpentry and animal husbandry were taken as "natural skills" by the village and rural area respondents. Thus, their

participation in the poultry, flower nursery or carpentry training was a “means of securing back-up equipment and micro-finance support”. The next section looks at the populations ability to maintain jobs after the training.

4.1.3 CONSISTENCY IN JOB LOSSES

There was a notable consistency in job losses for respondents in relation to their employment history that linked to absenteeism from work, late arrivals and a lack of interest. It was also made obvious that the females were more consistent in various small, informal sources of income earning activities in all locations and this included sewing, market vending, road side stalls, prawn catching, vegetable gardening.

Several matured participants were seen to be supporting the family through casual jobs and through subsistence crops while a few younger males and females were into part time jobs such as sales girl, packing boys, gardening or house girl work. There was also a visible difference in the time allocation for socialising by males as compared to females. This linked to the long hours of evening talanoa over the traditional drink ‘yaqona’ or ‘grog’. Combined with the type of food eaten, this seemed to reduce the energy level and the awakening time and resultant productivity of the respondents. The research presumes this to have affected the work performance and the ability for respondents to retain jobs.

Several village elders, relatives and family members agreed that the above “was a key cause of job loss for several male respondents”. It was also noted that the failure to have a proper breakfast or to take lunch to work for almost all respondents who had worked in the past or continued in any form of paid work, was also common factors that was also contributing to their performance and low energy level. The fact that black tea and bread or breakfast crackers or cassava was a common food that was eaten “when available” is also seen to link to the low energy level in several respondents.

In addition to the long hours of evening socialising, the socialising habits was gauged to be a key factor behind the lack of enthusiasm, absenteeism from work and the gradual loss of jobs. The next section looks at the ways in which cash income has been utilised by respondents and its effect on families.

4.1.4 INCOME UTILISATION AND SOCIAL CONCERNS

The research notes that the more mature female respondents with children, the key income related concerns linked to the family, food and children’s education. Other uses of income included short-term impulsive needs such as cigarettes, bus fares, drinks and shoes and

clothes for young males in addition to self and family and clothes, hairstyles, make – ups, hair gels, deodorants, colognes for younger females. However, on average, income was commonly used for basic food items such as bread, tin fish, noodles, sugar and soap in addition to grog and cigarettes, combined with occasional drinking.

This was in addition to routinal contributions to the tithe for the church and other vanua obligations. Subsistence food was seen to be a main source of food for many which was occasionally complimented by mussels and fish for those living in coastal areas or near rivers and creeks or what was regarded as “luxury meals” such as “frozen chicken” for others. While money was also used towards utility costs several water and electricity bills were overdue or disconnected while others were seen to be sharing with neighbours.

In addition to seeking jobs when in need of immediate cash income, the research noted an inherent impulsive tendency for free spending amongst most respondents in relation to taxi services, restaurant food, ‘partying’ and ‘celebrating of events’ such as a birthdays, visiting hairdressers and buying clothes for many when having access to money. The lack of the above opportunities was seen by many youthful respondents as a sign of “disadvantage and deprivation” linked to “a lack of income”. This combined with the credit purchase of goods from the local or village shops, electrical appliances or furniture within Squatter and Housing Authority area by those who had white-collar jobs.

The resultant payments or for luxury goods was also seen to have financially constrained many families in their ability to support their children’s education or to provide consistent and balanced meals. It was gauged from the mature respondents in both squatter, Housing Authority and village based locations that “the false perception of ‘normal living’ had led several younger members to property crime for electronic gadgets such as music players and mobile phones”. Two young male respondents admitted to having served time in jail for burglary and robbery and undergone “a process of spiritual cleansing and forgiveness in church”. However, repeat offences relating to property crime were also seen to be common.

Most female respondents with school age children and/or grandchildren seemed to place a higher priority of monetary income towards school fare and fees and food related costs. Again, the subsistence and communal support bases were seen to counter balance these costs but with consequence on children, their education and wellbeing”. This compared with the other residents within the targeted located who had white-collar jobs, several of whom the respondents saw as “more dependent on purchased, processed food”.

A major cause of the social problems faced by many households and families was the tendency for extended families to visit ‘uninvited’ and to stay for prolonged periods. Combined with the tendency for families to be large with four to six or more children, the extra support for single mothers from broken partnerships, the added burden of support for extended relatives was seen to be a source of strain especially in relation to the payment of utility costs.

On the other hand, it was noted that extended family support was often consistent and reciprocal amongst the poor families and from the part of those who visited as compared to the rich ethnic Fijian families. This form of reciprocity was noted to be somewhat weaker amongst the Indo - Fijian community. Despite the financial and food constraints, it was noted that most of the poor families “never voiced any concerns in relation to the uninvited relatives even if their privacy was severely hindered.

In addition, while single parent families was on the rise, the question of the “financial responsibility of the father” in single parent homes was not seen to be a key concern even though most mothers had lodged maintenance claims with the relevant departments. There was a notable irregularity in the maintenance payment processes in addition to the fact that most fathers who had deserted their partners were unemployed.

It was noted that several younger male respondents had access to earphones, mobiles and other entertainment gadgets despite their unemployment status. Two male interviewees who had been to jail for house burglary after the skills training also had a number of children from different girlfriends and admitted, “not being able to support them”. However, both had good to say about the life in jail and the fact that, unlike villages, “prison provided good food, shelter and also training”.

In addition, the tendency by most respondents towards selfless service to the community and to the traditional and religious institutions was noted to include financial contributions to community projects, Vanua and church related soli obligations in addition to family needs, food and education. These services were seen to also link to the ways in which time and income was prioritised and balanced.

However, it was noted that the ordinary members failed to benefit through similar reciprocal service by the vanua and provincial institutions or as a result of the profit from their multimillion-dollar vanua investments. This reflected in the quality of the housing, food eaten and access to household accessories by the poor.

While generally, many houses were neat and presentable with items such as radios, one or more beds, and some with television sets, children from several households were still noted to be going to school without shoes and some without lunch. It was indicative that many of the poor failed to realise the extent to which the commitment to the traditional and religious activities and the daily grog session, cigarettes or alcohol was affecting their family life and the attitude of the children towards education and progress within these households.

“When an average i – Taukei male gets his wages, he has a long list of where it goes ... credit purchase, food, the soli’s ... soli ni Yasana, soli Vakamisinery, soli to church ... if there is left over than the weekend partying with friends with a few cartons of beer or sometimes clubbing for the young . Enjoyment before the money was given for other needs was the general tendency for several amongst the youths and many amongst the rich ... exceptions existed, but these were the lesser few ... most poor Fijians do not know how to say ‘No’, keeping quite is seen as a sign of respect”. (Specialist Interview, July, 2009)

Credit purchasing was also seen to perpetuate a cycle of poverty as elaborated next.

4.1.5 TENDENCY FOR CREDIT PURCHASE

Credit buying was seen as a common trend applicable to almost all respondents amongst the ethnic Fijian population. These also included civil servants and those earning incomes within the respondents’ houses. The credit purchasing habit was also seen to link to respondent’s perception of life and material living in accordance with the multi-media advertisements that emphasised having access to these as “normal”.

Interviewees also said that “the job security of working relatives was often utilised in order to indulge in the higher purchase of material goods”. In turn, the common purchase items with those with a source of fixed income in the household have included both luxury and non-luxury goods such as radios, television and videos, beds in addition to food.

The above was more common in squatter and Housing Authority areas nearer to the city as compared to villages as was reflected in the spending habits and regular payments for credit purchases. However, it was noted that the amount of credit purchase by individuals often exceeded their ability to pay, which, in turn, resulted in litigation action or repossession of items. In turn, the payments for credit owed was often seen to link to a lack of money for food, fare and school fees in several homes.

In addition, several ethnic Fijian civil servants with fixed jobs were also, reportedly, in a perpetual state of debt repayment linked to credit purchasing. The field research illustrates

the tendency towards “free spending” to also exist amongst the more successful ethnic Fijians. There is also noted to be a general lack of concern for the longer term financial implications of credit purchasing or the benefits of bargaining techniques. The non-payment of money borrowed from neighbours and friends was seen to have transcended into a similar attitude towards credit purchases. Income was seen to be easily utilised without much consideration for saving. There was also a tendency by several respondents to easily discard damaged household items such as radio, toasters or even furniture without thought of recycle and re-use. The respondents perception of poverty is illustrated in the next section.

4.2 RESPONDENTS PERCEPTION OF POVERTY

The research notes that the majority of the trainees and elderly household members within the village locations did not see themselves as poor. Having a house and a means of livelihood through subsistence was seen by majority to “be enough to go by without struggle”. Excess was commonly sold in the market or by the roadside and the money was often adequate for bus fare and other small monetary needs. On the other hand, several respondents within the squatter areas, Housing Authority and HART homes nearer to the city area were “okay with life and small income” but thought “fixed jobs with income would have helped ease some burdens”.

However, payment of fares to reach job locations was also seen to be a major concern and addition to utility and food costs for many of those living within the city periphery. Most respondents within the squatter areas also had small teitei’s within their compounds or in public drains and empty blocks of land within the town and city areas.

Additionally, as many also relied upon subsistence food support from the home villages that were often manned by elderly parents. The squatter and Housing Authority home respondents saw poverty in “the inability to grow sufficient amount of their own food due to lack of land combined, lack of government support and the various utility costs”. In turn, weekly visits by most city and town periphery based respondents to the rural villages for crops such as dalo, cassava, rourou and coconuts helped save costs on food for many.

Several respondents who were young parents or single mothers had left the children with parents within villages to resettle nearer to the towns and cities in search of better jobs. These respondents clarified that “this helped ease the stress related to the added costs of raising children and providing for their education”.

In turn, several elderly parents living within rural and village locations were seen to be subject to financial and physical stress that linked to their increased responsibilities of having to raise their grandchildren in addition to supporting their own family including daughters who were single mothers parents. It was also noted that many elderly parents did not receive any form of regular financial support from their own children who were working. As a result, several elderly parents within rural and village locations were seen to be burdened with added responsibilities and poor.

It was illustrated that there was a connection between choice of livelihoods, large families, financial obligations, family break-up's school drop-outs, young children helping parents earn small incomes and social ills such as crime. Absenteeism from school due to lack of fare and food was also noted to be a concern within several households. Feedback from the village based elderly members who supported their grandchildren indicated that constant fare increases had "made it difficult for many to hire vehicles to sell produce in the city".

Several observers and respondents indicated that "the Qarase and Rabuka Governments had helped create the awareness that they were poor and deprived and needed to have special types of help ...". This was seen to have been reinforced by the constant proclamation of "ethnic Fijian poverty" and "the redress the situation" during the past election campaigns. Several respondents shared that "the past governments vision and awareness creation of the quality of life and material living of the *kaindia*, helped (them) to understand their deprivation and disadvantage". As articulated by two vanua leaders;

"Rabuka and Qarase helped open our eyes to the wide gap in the quality of life of the two races in Fiji ... a gap that needed to be bridged as it was injustice to the i-Taukei that the 'vulagi' were using our resources to prosper without benefit to us".

It was noted that the sense of being poor also seemed to related to what the previous ethnic Fijian leaders had promoted as "Indo - Fijian greed for *i'Taukei* land". Thus, there was an inherent fear amongst several elderly respondents that indo-Fijians had "well strategized plans to dominate over the ethnic Fijians and take over political control".

In contrast, the fact that most respondents had not efficiently utilised the back-up support equipments such as ovens and sewing machines which lay in disrepair or had been sold for small gain suggested a lack of initiative and planning. It also noted that the immediate need for money or service to the vanua or soli often dominated over strategized, long term needs of many within this group. The tendency for respondents to query for "more training and

financial support” also reflected the “desire for short-term fulfilments and material goods over more serious, longer term commitments towards productive alternatives’.

The specialist interviews reaffirmed that “it was not only the unemployed and poor who often entrapped within the cycle of payments, but also as many middle class members with white collar jobs”. Respondents shared that most of the money from income within a Fijian home “was used for credit payments for goods, soli and church expenses in addition to food and entertainment”. The field interviews of neighbours and relatives indicated that, “several school teachers, nurses together with police officers were also struggling to pay loans and credit payments”. A common reason given by respondents for constantly owing money and goods to neighbours and other members was the “need for money, soli, demands of city life, food costs, rent, higher purchase, loan repayments and other payments... ”.

Most male and the younger female respondents seemed to consider excess to the radio an “essential need” in addition to occasional access to television for entertainment and sports. As such, not having a radio were often regarded as “being very poor”. Thus, radio’s were seen to be a common higher purchase item within most homes in addition to the television and electrical appliances. A key poverty concern for female respondents was ‘the need for income in relation to children’s education by way of uniforms and fees. Several matured females and single mothers saw the family assistance allowances as meagre and not enough to meet their various financial needs.

In addition, the matured respondents showed a strong sense of commitment towards the financial duties and obligations to the village, ‘vanua’ and the church and to events such as births, marriage and death ceremony’s. As many also saw these acts as signifying the traits of a ‘good Christian’. A good community member was regarded as “one who gave generously without complaint”.

In turn, those who hesitated to give from their income and crops were labelled ‘poor and miserly’. Moreover, while there was a constant reference to the indo-Fijian community in relation to ethnic Fijian ‘poverty’, most respondents seemed to have harmonised their behaviour in line with the expected norms. As summarised in the words of a Chinese/Fijian businesswomen and observer during the focus group discussions;

“Fijians are lazy sometimes and often drink much grog,... and love to party ... But the current government has shown that people can change if bread and butter is at stake ... a good leader must put his foot down ... Our poor people like to keep their eyes closed but are generous and give from their heart even if they have nothing while our Fijian

systems keeps asking for more ... this has often left many pockets with holes, many families have split, there is a rise in single mothers and many parents are burdened to raise their grandchildren, ... Yes, there is a lot of inequality because the system divides its people along the lines of birth privileges ... and God's name is used as justification ... the Yasana and qoliqoli continue to utilise people's trust and faith and drain money ... a people who remain ignorant to many basic facts about success. The returns from resources is often grabbed by those already fortunate while the poor dream of a change that will happen one day where they can still get away without bank accounts and savings. The food from the 'teitei', community support and the communal support is a strength ... The real poor are they who take from these people ... the rich who have become like the vulagi, blind to the truth about their people's suffering ... and our poor dread to face the truth. Keeping silent means avoiding confrontation and maintaining peace ... this becomes a salient means of control and domination by the rich." (Businesswomen observer- Focus Group Discussions- February 2010)

Another concern by the more educated female respondents was that the “privileged few benefitted more readily from the ‘Fijian system’ than the poor by way of educational scholarships and other privileges”. These reservations also prevailed amongst some of the below 45 age group and high school educated male and female respondents, some of whose children had completed up to form six of form seven level education.

One expert shared that it was not uncommon for scholarship funds “to be diverted to the children or relatives of the elite Fijian and Rotuman children from more affluent and educated families who often held good civil service jobs”. Several educated female respondents also raised similar concerns on the “easy access to scholarships by certain Fijian and Rotuman students from affluent families”. Examples shared were of students from similar backgrounds were “able to get scholarships at the Fiji School of Medicine (FSM), despite their lower than scholarship marks”. Two expert interviewees also pointed to similar discrepancies including the “racially biased intakes and the disproportionate ratio in the nursing school intakes for students from certain vanua and provinces ...”.

The suggestion by the more educated female respondents and focus group participants suggests that, “while there were brilliant ethnic Fijian and part Fijian children doing well in education, there were also as many cases of ‘favoritism’ and ‘nepotism that linked to “connections” or “lineage to people in positions of power” in relation to intakes and scholarship distributions. A form seven educated female says;

“Many barriers still existed and favouritism prevailed in relation to who benefitted from the i-Taukei system ... things worked smoothly for the rich and most Rotumans, who are already into well established sources of income, yet their children get scholarships and entry into tertiary institutions with ease despite many having lesser marks ..., you can verify by going through these intakes of the past year students at the FSM, USP and the School of nursing. They rich often put their people in the right institutions ... Nepotism has become second culture, it is a sickness with no cure ...”.

The specialized interviews saw support for this view with awareness that “genuine concerns existed where affirmative action policy support of the past governments had not been accessed by deserving poor children, both from Indo - Fijian and ethnic Fijian backgrounds as compared to some of the more well connected, educated and affluent members of society”. It was also acknowledged that “the current government was putting effort to change the way things had been in the past”.

The above feedback suggests that wealth, prestige and demography may often dictate who benefits from the special measures designed to benefit the poor. The fact that many amongst the poor felt that they “were marginalized over the interests of the vanua and civil service leaders and their families” suggests that government benefits still failed to reach those in need in equal and equitable ways. It indicates the prevalence of nepotism within the various Government departments, which was severely marginalizing the ethnic Fijian poor. As stated by a lay pastor, “it was tough being an *i’Taukei* these days”. The impact of religious and traditional practices is elaborated in the next section.

4.3 INSTITUTION IMPOSED RESPONSIBILITIES FOUND CONSTRAINING

The research finds that the past, present and an ongoing obligation towards the Fijian religious and traditional institutions, while adopted as ‘a normal part of being Fijian’, was a source of financial stress for many. Several respondents were convinced that their duty to traditional institutions and its obligatory norms and practices linked to their Fijian identity.

However, the younger respondents expressed reservations on “the increasing financial stress resulting from the vanua and church duties like a second form of tax”. Many saw these to have worsened by “the high cost of food, electricity and water”. Majority of the working members within respondents homes and vicinity agreed that the “vanua and soli contributions to church, yasana, soli vakamisinary, bulubulu and ‘kerekere’ were tough on the poor” . Despite this, the support for the social institutions seemed almost unflinching and was seen to link to the fear of being ostracized within their own community and amidst their own people.

On the other hand, several village heads and vanua leaders towards Naitasiri and Tailevu were adamant that their people's poverty "was the result of other races that had come in and occupied the land and resources that could have enabled Fijians progress". Several mature and educated male respondents and village elders were also of the firm view that "once the Indian issue was resolved, problems to poverty would be solved ...". Some respondents disagreed with the above view. These were noted to be migrants from Sigatoka and Rakiraki who had settled within the Jittu area.

Several younger male and female respondents living within the squatter areas along the city periphery also contradicted this view and were averse to the way the traditional institutions functioned. A few had even stopped associating with communal groups and going to community churches and prayed within their own homes.

It was also noted that 'defiant' members were labeled "vulagi" or "kaindia" by the chiefly and more influential members within the community. The elderly respondents were convinced that life was "easier, more enjoyable and less worrisome within the villages" as compared to "the worries for money for rent, bills and food for those living near the city and surrounding areas".

As such, a main source of contentment for most mature and elderly village based respondents was "the ability to have access to subsistence crops ... one can sleep in peace knowing food is available when needed ...". The next section elaborates on the concerns pertaining to the youth respondents.

4.4 CURRENT SITUATION WITH THE YOUTH RESPONDENTS

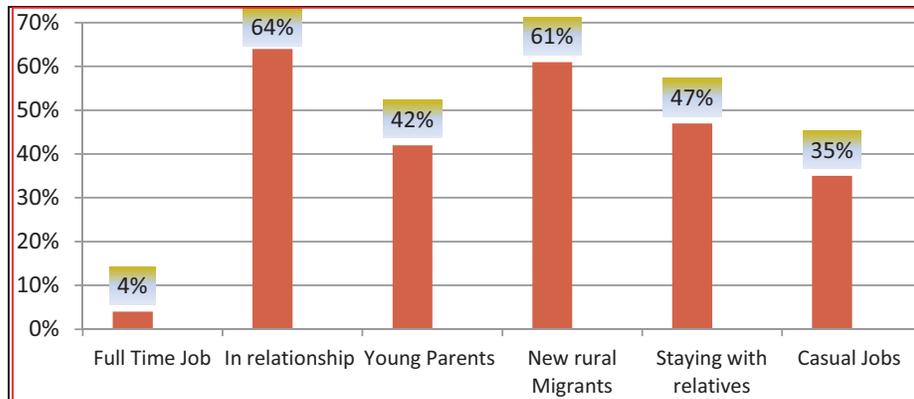
The feedback indicates that many youth respondents within the squatter and Housing Authority areas were second and third generation migrants from rural areas with as many new migrants who were staying with families or relatives. The majority indicated "looking for jobs" while as many were also into "active relationships" or having already become young "parents". The choice of vocations in the initial survey questionnaire suggested a preference for technical skills such as carpentry, welding, joinery, block laying and plumbing as common trades that were in demand in Fiji.

However, it is noted that the enthusiasm displayed during the training did not seem to match the effort that was put in to search for jobs or the ability to retain jobs through

punctuality. Many youths admitted their preference for a “normal life” including “taking part in sports activities, teitei, community and church activities along with grog taking”.

It also included the preference for casual work in fields such as “carpentry, garage work, loading boys, security or sales work”. The elderly within the community saw the high rate of youth unemployment as a “key social concern linked to anti-social activities including house break-in, livestock theft and stealing of clothes from the lines at night”.

Bar Chart 1: Current Situation of the Youth Respondents by % (n=58)



**For the purpose of this research, youths were classified as between the age of 17 to 30 age group.*

Many Youths said that their inability to find jobs linked to “social commitments” and the fact that employers “needed proper references and certificates from FIT and TPAF”. In addition, some respondents who found jobs in factories or supermarkets lost these later due to “late arrivals and absenteeism due to social commitments”. Another reason for dropout from work by several youths was “work stress” and “low pay”.

Moreover, many youths admitted that their afternoon or evening hours were spend “playing rugby or soccer”. Several younger females were seen to be better able to retain their jobs as sales girls, cashiers, garment workers and house girls while a few were dismissed for misconduct or absence due to sick leave. Some respondents were of the view that “being Fijian made the Indian bosses dismiss them more readily”.

It was also noted that most youths who had been in some form of employment had never taken lunch and a common consumption by way breakfast for many was either “no food” or “leftover cassava from the previous evening and black tea or biscuit”. In contrast, a similar consumption trend was noted from the feedback from the more matured male and several female respondents.

Thus, “being hungry” while at work was a social concern. As compared to the young mothers, the more matured females seemed to give higher prominence to family, children and concerns linked to education, school fees and bus fares. Overall, a ‘good life’ was seen to link to ‘good jobs with good pay’..

Young male and female respondents indicated a lesser sense of commitment to religious and traditional activities as compared to the matured respondents. While the more educated male youths seemed “not so sure about their future”, the younger females saw “opportunities in marriage” such as to “an army officer” as opportunities towards “a better life” because “soldiers had chances of joining the British army and going abroad”. Moreover, while majority of the youth respondents shared their lack of interest in farming, horticulture or animal husbandry, most showed keen interest in the desire for “a nice life and material comfort with a regular and fixed source of income”.

The younger male respondents showed keen interest in sports activities and desired to join rugby or soccer clubs abroad or to take up army job as soldiers in order to ‘avoid’ the current situation. Many were noted to be active members of community based rugby, soccer and volleyball teams or were playing with prominent sports teams within the country.

The desire to “get an opportunity to move abroad” and “earn big money” was noted to be a key stimulator for young respondents taking sports as a passionate pastime. Many also knew of colleagues who “had been selected for international tournaments” and they “also welcomed an opportunity to join a sports training academy and commit to the training even if there was a slight chance that they could join overseas sports clubs”. The next section looks at the prioritisation of time, resources and money by the respondents.

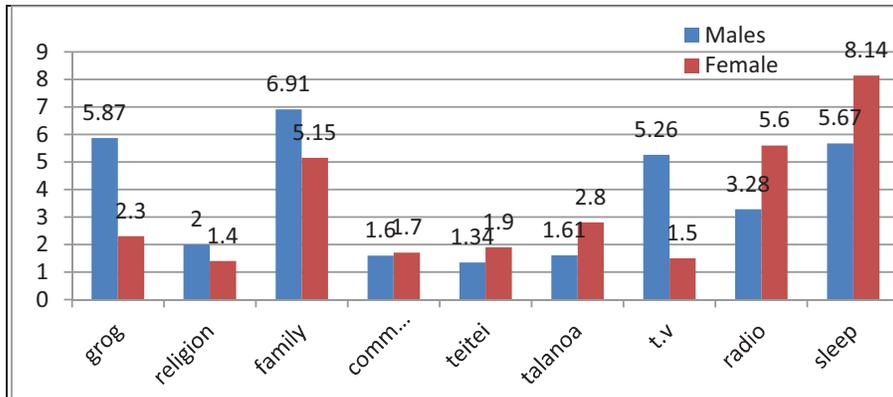
4.5 PRIORITISATION OF TIME, RESOURCES AND MONEY

The research notes that the manner of time utilisation reflected the population’s priorities for activities and events. It was noted that a large portion of time was used towards ‘talanoa’, community, church and vanua related activities and this trend remained unchanged after the skills training.

Such activities were seen as signs of “fitting into society” and vice versa was regarded as a “rejection of the traditional and communal values”. The use of ‘time’ as an indicator is elaborated in the Bar charts 8 graphs below.

Bar Chart 2 : Average % Time Allocation for Activities per week

(n = males 60, females 97)



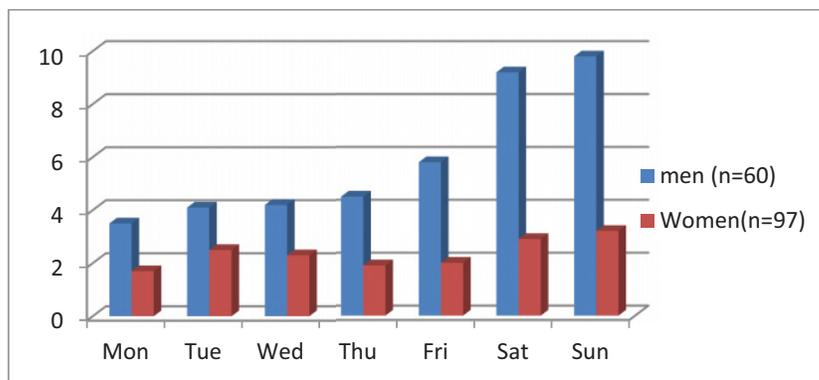
Remarks: The graph indicates that the weekly average time allocation for various key activities by the respondents was for resting and sleeping and was the highest for the male respondents in addition to family, grog, radio and television hours. For females, time allocation for family, radio and sleep was also high. However, ‘family time’ was seen by male respondents as time spent watching television and listening to radio “within the sight of the family” while the females did the regular chores around the house..

In contrast, the females regarded ‘family time’ to include service to the family by way of cooking, washing, collecting firewood, diving for mussels with children and shopping with family. Overall, the above calculations based on time allocation are not conclusive as most activities overlapped except for sleep hours, which seemed consistent.

It is acknowledged that the above data does not adequately represent the lesser percentage of respondents who were into casual forms of work as sales girl, house girl, grass cutting and so forth as their figure in relation to the majority dominated in the above graph.

4.5.2 TIME ALLOCATION FOR DRINKING GROG (OR ALCOHOL)

Bar Chart 3: Average % time allocation for grog (or alcohol) (n = males 60, females 97)



The research shows that more time is spent by the males for grog taking as compared to the females. Almost 78% of the male participants took grog as a common social activity sometimes during the day or mostly in the evenings, the exceptions were respondents from the Assemblies of God and some from the All Nations church. There was a preference for beer over that of grog by the younger male respondents when having access to money. For 34% of the male respondents, weekend grog were replaced by beer sessions on an average of at least one to two weekends per month if made available by friends or colleagues.

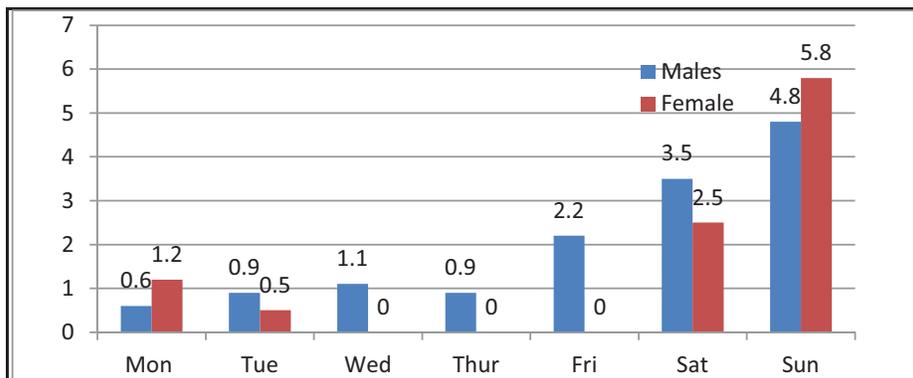
Small cash income from subsistence crop sales was often utilised for evening grog sessions which were often held within homes with large front porches, sheds or at friends homes. In several squatter and village based locations, several unemployed males were seen to participate in both day time and evening grog sessions.

This activity was followed by prolonged hours of sleep during the day. Several educated members from within the community or from within the upper echelons also joined in the grog sessions on the more controlled basis. Some middle aged and some younger, females took part in evening grog sessions while majority of the younger females refrained from it.

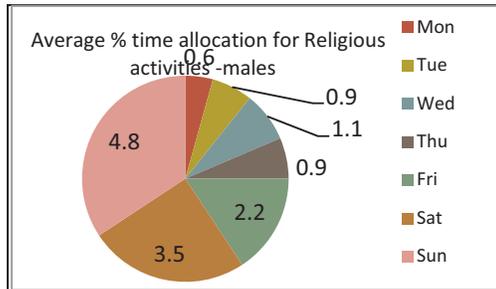
4.5.3 TIME UTILISATION FOR RELIGION RELATED ACTIVITIES

It was noted that on average, the female respondents allocated more time to religious activities such as church services, church fundraising and related activities as compared to the males. The majority of the respondents also belonged to the Methodist church in addition to other denominations. For the male respondents, church activities also included service by way of building renovation, painting, meetings in addition to prayers while females were more into prayers and fundraising.

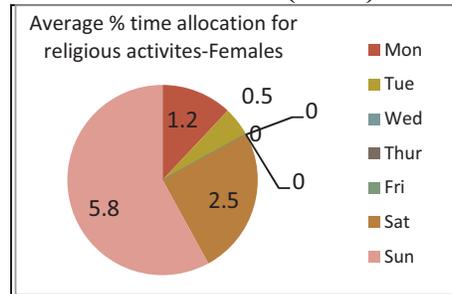
**Bar Chart 4 - Average % time utilisation for religion related activities
(n = males 60, females 97)**



Pie Chart 1 (n= 60)



Pie Chart 2 (n= 97)



Remarks: Similarly, the research finds the commitment to religion related activities to occupy a major portion of the time of respondents, majority being from the Methodist denomination. Religion was also seen by many as an inherent source of security and “the roadmap on the way lives were to be lived and service rendered for the pleasure of God”.

The compassion for religion was also reflected in the neat, clean attires, consistency in attendance, actions of generosity and giving towards soli and other church related activities. Visits to a few church sermons were noted to emphasize the need for “God fearing lives”, “generosity in sharing and giving towards service to God”, “patience in poverty” and so forth.

It was seen to reflect a platform where overwhelming focus was made on the process of ‘giving’ and ‘service’, “being God conscious’ and ‘salvation”. Moreover, religious emotions were seen to be openly and sometimes loudly expressed. Some females said that they “cried to God and felt relieved of all anguish of poverty”. As stated by the head of the Single mothers association, who came from the Naulu Housing Authority area;

“The strong emphasis made on the strength of the church over and above that of the family often made the faithful give away the best of their possessions ... but our young no longer seemed as committed, many of our girls are subject to violence or get pregnant easily and many of our sons are going to prison. Education is not being taken seriously and as many family’s do not have enough to eat nor the fare for children, yet, whom do we blame ... the church should be telling our men who stay at home to be more productive, to reduce their grog and sleep time and work hard... it is time for a new approach and people will take heed as they want a new way”.

In addition to being overwhelmingly generous, there was an overwhelming obsession with religious services by most respondents. The exception was in some Housing Authority homes and a few squatter settlements where some female respondent’s with fixed sources

of household income seemed more individualistic. It was also noted that a significant portion of the church funds was used for missionary related work with several church Ministers on the field, not only in Fiji but within the PIC' in efforts to "spread God's message abroad and through the television". In the words of a lay Methodist priest,

"The church is the house of God ...outside problems cannot be brought into church ... people need to serve. Family is important but bringing in any diversion about other priorities other than God and church is 'unchristian. ... giving money to God's cause is a duty, the Lord finds a way for those that give generously".

The research finds that the consistent financial contributions to the church, vanua and community related obligations in addition to the unplanned usage of money by several respondents to have left several families drained of money, crops and even livestock such as farm animals. Most respondents regarded the process of giving as a 'symbol of their faith' and of "being Christian" and felt that they "could not question the church and its operations". In contrast, the common tendency to live an easy life and 'enjoy' also seemed to counter balance with a lack of productivity or planning towards self development.

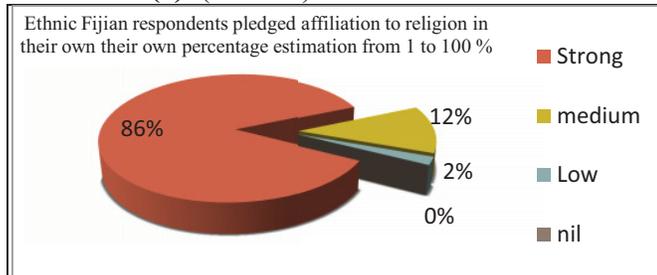
It was noted that even paid jobs were occasionally forfeited due to commitment to religious and communal activities with a keen desire to "follow the leader" in the form of the village chief or the church leader. The respondents were also seen to regard the religious structures as a source of unity and strength while the 'vanua' leaders and church leaders seemed to view them as "a source of institutional survival".

Moreover, discussions with 'vanua' and 'church' leaders indicated that several well strategized, multimillion-dollar church investment properties were "the result of adaptation to the modern day, commercial objectives that enabled institutions and its people to survive". It is noted that, while the churches and traditional institutions had adapted to the material and economic realities of the modern day Fiji, the same process does not seem to have impacted upon the poor members within this ethnic group.

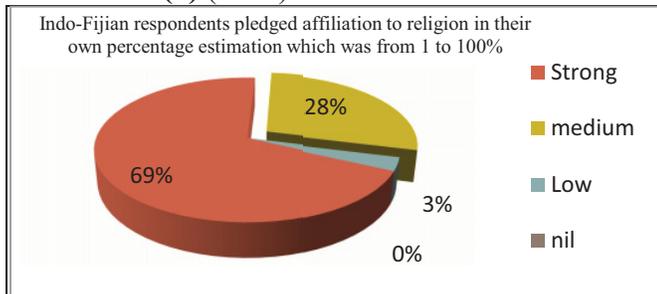
There was a strong indication that the interest of the rich and powerful was maintained at the cost of uncomplaining poverty amongst the poor. The research also finds that, while the poor were receptive to me as "a guest" and praised me for "being so friendly and polite", the elites within the same communities were no so welcoming and were resistant to my questions and especially those pertaining to hierarchy based system, the church and the vanua. They also showed suspicion on my motives as a researcher and, in many instances, refused interviews outright for want of "privacy and time commitments".

4.5.4 Level of Affiliation to Religion % allocated as per indicators below

Pie Chart 3 (a) (n = 151)



Pie Chart 3 (b) (n = 6)



A comparison between the views of three Indo-Fijian and three ethnic Fijian interviewees suggested that both the two communities were almost equally strong on their perceived conviction to religion.

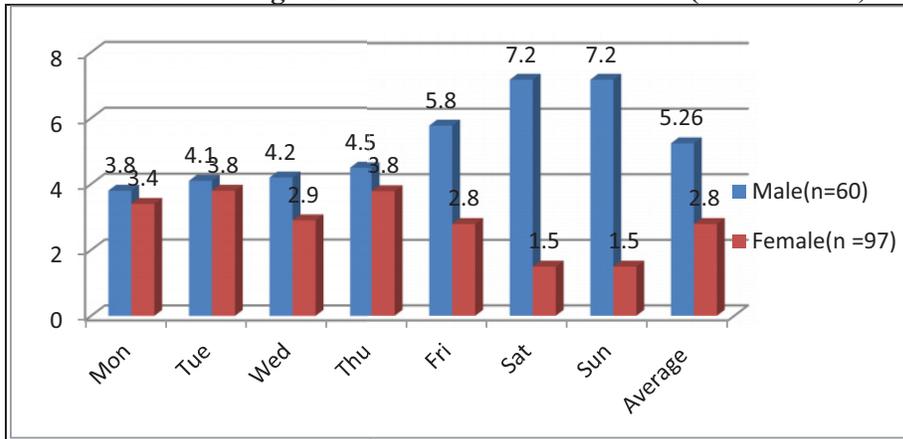
Moreover, while both the groups saw religious activities also as opportunities to socialize and share, the level of religion related fundraising was minimal amongst the Indo - Fijians while much higher within the ethnic Fijians. The willingness to utilize income, subsistence cash crops and livestock for religious and traditional purposes was seen as an essential norm by the ethnic Fijians compared to the indo-Fijians whose priorities seemed to be more towards individualistic and immediate family needs.

In addition, a portion of income was also seen to be diverted towards bank savings on a routinal basis by the Indo – Fijian who were also seen to give a similar prominence to religion but in a more modest way. it was noted that the time allocation for daily prayer and related activities did not hinder with their daily work pursuits.

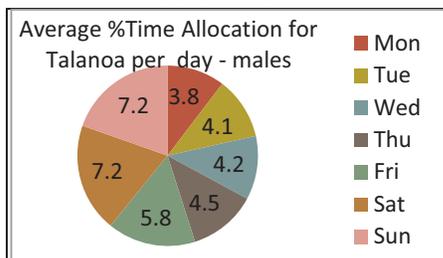
A more comprehensive research in relation to the way each group responded to their religious duties and obligations could give a better indication of the extent to which income and time and energy was utilised towards this commitment. It could also help clarify the manner in which the religious institutions operated and the level of financial obligations they imposed upon their members.

4.5.5 TIME ALLOCATION FOR TALANOA

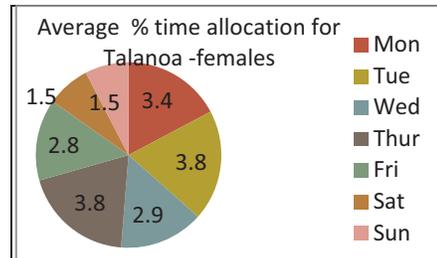
Bar Chart 5 : Average % time allocation for talanoa (n = males 60, females 97)



Pie Chart 4 (a) (n= 60)



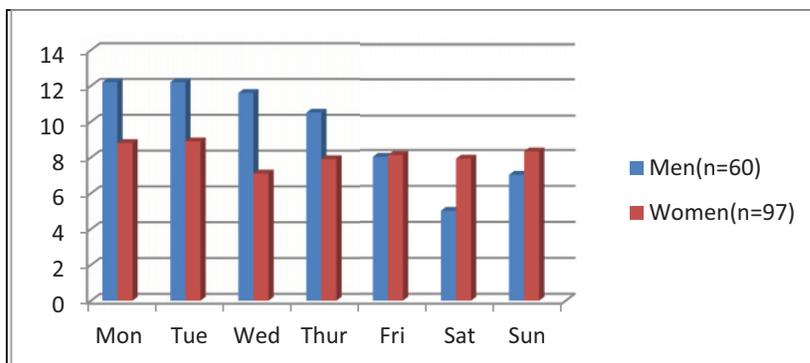
Pie Chart 4 (b) (n= 97)



Remarks: It was noted that the *talanoa* or casual, informal talks for several many male respondents overlapped with grog, radio and/or television viewing hours in addition to community activities. In addition, females also saw group activities towards community work and informal socializing with neighbours and friends as linked to ‘talanoa’. Moreover, talanoa hours were regarded as an essential aspect of the community life within the various locations by the male respondents while the female respondents were seen to take this in their pace while going about their routinal chores.

4.5.6 AVERAGE % TIME ALLOCATION FOR SLEEP

Bar Chart 5: Average % time allocation for Sleep

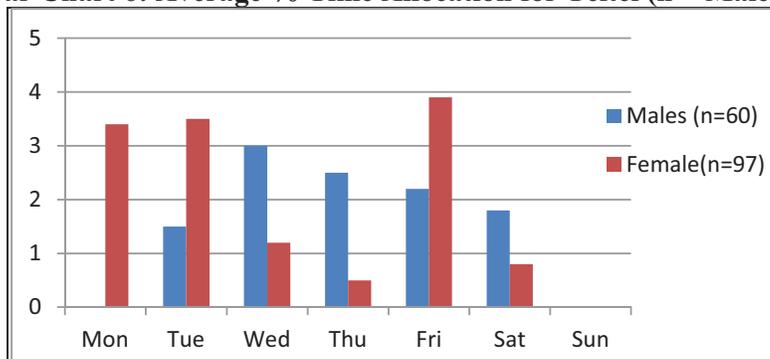


Remarks: Based on the field information, it was noted that men were spending more hours for sleep as compared to women. Women usually rested after finishing their housework in the morning or after their share of teitei work. A proper lunch was not a common meal except in the weekends and several respondents took black tea and cassava during breakfast. In addition to other work such as tending the gardens, the sleep hours in the weekdays was a longer duration compared to the weekends for both males and females.

Moreover, while the sleep time was in accordance with what was obtained through questions and observation, verification suggests that sleep time for several unemployed males commenced late night to early morning until 3 to 4 pm the next afternoon. Thus, several respondents had to be ‘awakened’ during impromptu daytime follow-up visits including as many females who were unemployed and sleeping during the day. As such, the actual sleep hours may, in several individual cases, be more than that shown here.

4.5.7 TIME ALLOCATION FOR TEITEI (Traditional garden)

Bar Chart 6: Average % Time Allocation for Teitei (n = Males 60, Females 97)



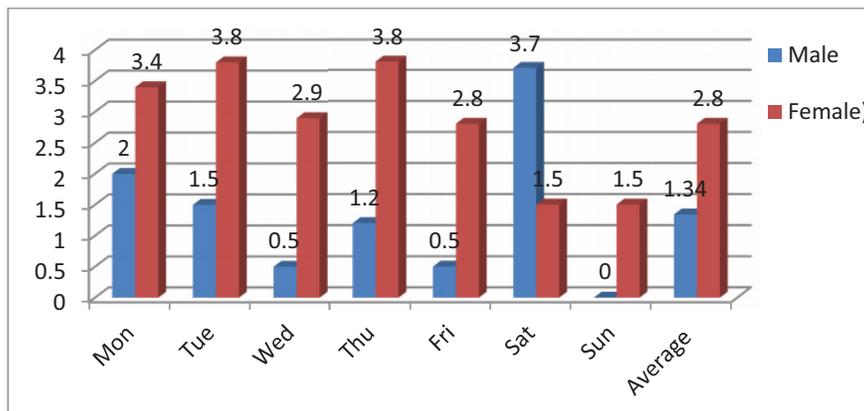
Remarks: There is seen to be overlaps in activity where one partner remains on the teitei while the other may go to prepare the evening meal or collect firewood. For the respondents living in Squatter, HART and Housing areas nearer to city, teitei was done in the backyards, public drains, creeks, empty house blocks, unutilized state land and roadsides. The common easy to plant crops included cassava, rourou, bele and dalo. It was noted that the amount of time spend on teitei by the rural male respondents was much higher and more planned than by males living closer to towns and cities.

Similarly, the amount of weekly time spent by village based male respondents on subsistence farms was higher than that of females. In addition, the time spent by females on the teitei within squatter areas was also seen to be significant as most respondents admitted that they “needed subsistence crops from their garden, teitei and home villages on a regular basis for food”.

A key grievance was the theft of crops and the fact that “several clan, settlement or locality members often helped themselves to crops planted by others”. While roots crops such as cassava, dalo and rourou formed the common subsistence food that was consumed regularly by respondents, these were occasionally complimented by meat, fish or other purchased food in homes with fixed income.

4.5.8 TIME ALLOCATION FOR COMMUNITY RELATED ACTIVITIES

Bar Chart 7: Average % time allocation for community related activities
No. = Males 60, Females 97



Remarks: It was noted that group unity entailed strong commitment to community work within most of the settlements. These included joint activities for fundraising purposes that linked to social work towards footpath construction, church fundraising, support for sick relatives, the construction of community halls and buildings, member’s houses, house for poor and so forth.

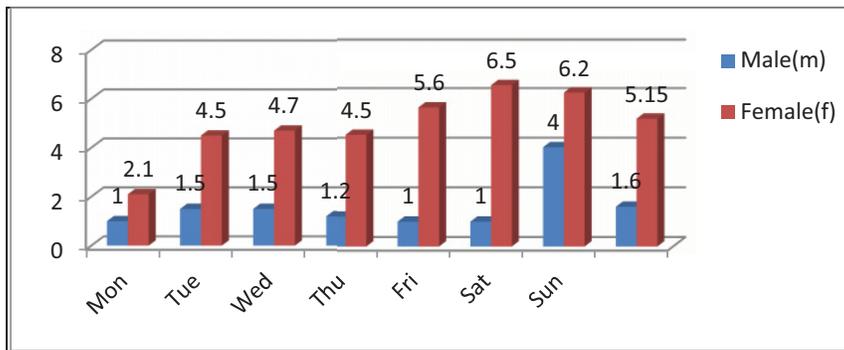
The energy and effort was seen to be utilised by the male respondents to bring the subsistence crops from the farm. This was counter balanced by the female contribution by way of finding root crops, fish and vegetables and cooking of the food.

A strong source of support and safety for respondents who lived within the squatter and Housing Authority homes nearer to the city was the dependency on subsistence sources of food from the home villages in addition to extended family support.

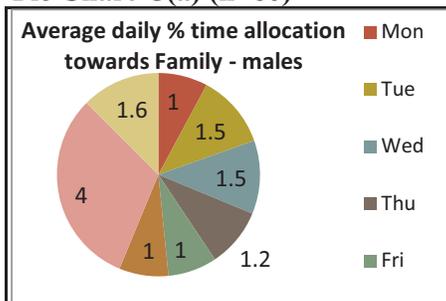
These were also, in many occasions, shared by the poor with their neighbours even in situations where the neighbour had a white-collar job with a fixed income. Generosity is seen to abound amongst the poor in relation to sharing and caring which links to coping mechanisms for poverty.

4.5.9 AVERAGE % TIME ALLOCATION FOR FAMILY ACTIVITIES

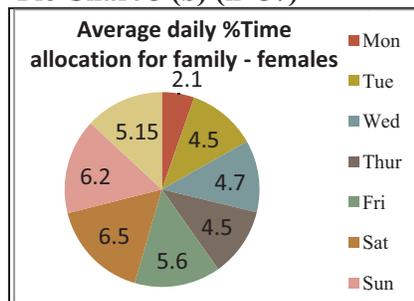
Bar Chart 8 :Average % time allocation for family activities, N = males 60, females 97



Pie Chart 5(a) (n=60)



Pie Chart 5 (b) (n=57)



The findings suggest a major overlap in the way respondents utilised time for family related activities. While females viewed this as “time spend with children and the spouses as a group, having meals, watching television, taking walks, going shopping or cooking with family”, the male counterparts regarded ‘family time’ as “time spent in the house within ‘sight’ of the family. This included watching television, news, entertainment and church channels in addition to the teitei or going to church with the family”. Family conversation was often seen to be linked to issues of ‘income, bills, church dues, payments related to bus fare, soli, food, fees, payments other the sharing of the latest in village gossip’.

Some married females were seen to have been subject to ‘occasional violent situations’ over household finances when “there was a shortage of food” or upon “refusal to indulge in sexual relations with the male partners late at night” or to “give their earnings towards grog and cigarettes”.

These incidences seem to have driven some females to seek alternative forms of work such as market vending, food sales or house girl work while some had “left their husbands and found new partners or moved in with relatives”. Some of these were seen to refrain from church and community related activities and the parents and elderly members were often seen as support pillars by most women and mothers from broken relationships.

4.5.10 TIME UTILISATION FOR ENTERTAINMENT

The research notes that a key means of entertainment for most male respondents included listening to the radio, watching television and ‘talanoa’ sessions which included long hours of grog drinking. Female respondents were seen to regard listening to the radio as a common means of entertainment in addition to television, visits to town, and community based group activities as “exciting events’. The most revered radio programmes linked to music, church and news events and the common television programmes included the news, church and sports programmes and entertainment channels. Many male respondents viewed the news reports and sports programmes with friends over the grog sessions.

Moreover, a ‘good life’, to the below 35 age group included ‘having money to buy things including clothes, groceries, able to make higher purchase payments” and “to be able to have a good time including going to the movies, occasionally able to buy cigarettes and a few drinks’. Faith in “good fortune” as a means of progress was also common amongst the male respondents, several of whom admitted to “trying their luck at the lottery outlets when having cash income”. Several younger male and a few female respondents nearer to the city areas also visited nightclubs when having access to money as a means of entertainment.

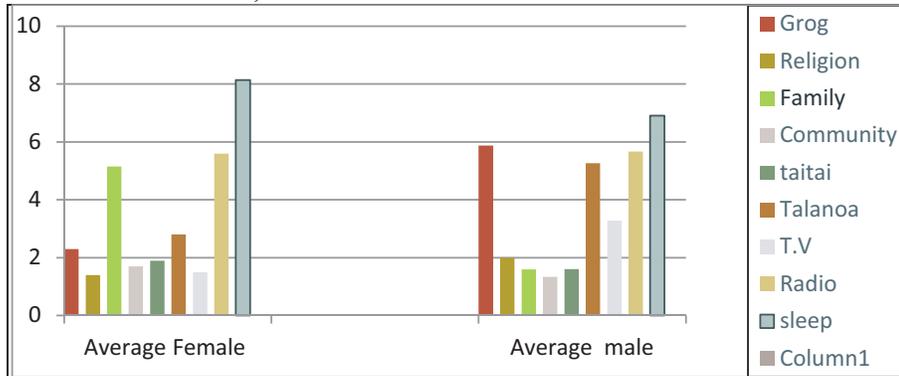
4.5.11 COMPARISON OF THE COMBINED AVERAGE % TIME USAGE

The time utilisation by male and female respondents in sequence from high, as per the bar chart below, indicates that several social activities closely overlapped such as the Talanoa sessions and radio and grog hours while maximum time was utilised for “sleep hours”. As such, calculating averages was a difficult task.

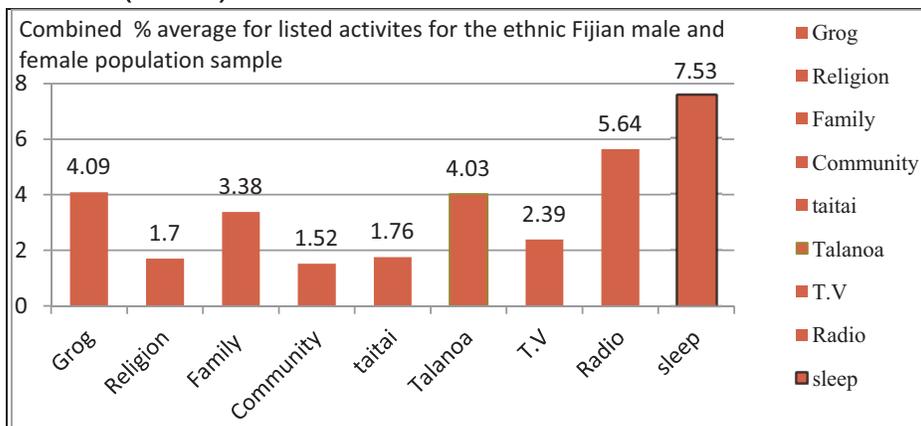
It must also be noted that these figures pertain to a target group that is poor, generally unemployed or into casual forms of work. It may differ in relation to the working class people and rural based farmers who did not form part of this research. Some males spent the afternoon hours on the ‘teitei’ twice or thrice a week with their female counterparts and some also helped in the preparation of evening meals.

Regular grog pounding by the younger male members was also a routinal activity in several village and squatter areas. In addition, time spend with children in the house, joint meals, listening to radio, watching T.V, or community interaction outside activity where family was involved was seen as ‘family time’. The research noted a lack of specific time allocation for children and their school work or couple communication as compared with participation in church and communal activities.

**Bar Chart 9: Comparative illustration of average % time usage for illustrated activities
N = Males 60, Females 97**



**Bar Chart 10: Combined Average % for Listed Activities –
(N = 157)**



Remarks: the chart shows a maximum time used by most respondents for ‘sleep’ in addition to grog taking, talanoa and listening to radio. While the overall average for religious and community activities is seen to be much lesser, the segregation of percentages by gender gives a slightly different result, thus, the actual time allocation for some activities may be more than that shown in the graph. In addition, the research findings show that essential household funds and food were often diverted towards religious and community goals and purposes and did affect the wellbeing of many households.

In addition, while almost every male respondent optimistically indicated, “looking for a good well paid job”, the tendency to rest and sleep was seen to take prominence over the efforts to seek permanent jobs. Additionally, there was a marked preference for casual work and manual labour as and when the need for cash income arose. The feedback indicates that the high rates of absenteeism and job loss linked to “tiredness” and “body pains”.

In turn, this could be linked to both the long hours spent socialising and *talanoa* over the traditional drink ‘*yaqona*’ and to eating habits where the lack of meals such as breakfast and

lunch in addition to a lack of healthy and balanced meals could be a cause of “tiredness”. However, while the above depicts some of the key reasons behind ethnic Fijian poverty, it could be further verified through a larger survey and may not apply to all ethnic groups or those within this group who were the more affluent in society.

4.6 FEEDBACK FROM THE SPECIALIST INTERVIEWS

In light of the preconceived notions of poverty as economic based and the general tendency by the Government towards economic solutions, the experts who were interviewed were generally of a similar view as expressed by a former Government Minister and NGO head;

“Theoretical approaches and economic solutions are not effective at all. I just feel that most of these academics have never worked in the private sector, run a business or invested in a cause/business they believed in apart from their own education, thereby endangering their hard earned investment – they look from afar, study trends, and make expensive comments. So learned textbook analysis is always forthcoming and not common sense advice – that’s a great pity for us as they could be so useful”. (Ms Benedette Ganilau, 10th April 2010)

The expert interview, similar to the field research findings, suggested that the poor living nearer to the towns and cities were more dependent on monetary income as a means of livelihood. Ms Ganilau was of the view that “the way the national government machinery and its poverty arm placed priorities decided the extent to which poverty prevailed within a country”. She further said that;

“Many things affect the poverty level ..., leadership has not always been visionary, neither has it been always good. The higher echelons of our community that are a minority have done well and therefore we say our country/community has done well. Why I say leadership here is because when I was in the Interim Administration in 2000, I was the Deputy Minister for Social Welfare – I really thought we were just giving out welfare funds and not doing much training with it. The budget at that time was \$600,000 per annum. ... The poverty level at that time was something like 22% – 24% of the population earning below \$3000. We submitted a budget to Cabinet for \$1.2 million, the first time poverty even had such an amount. It was approved and we were ecstatic ... New elections brought in a new government ... The budget for social welfare was placed at \$28 million and we were ecstatic all over again as we knew poverty would really and truly be reduced! 5 years later, poverty had risen to 44% with scams

still being exposed – that has been my yardstick and experience with poverty and government.”(B. Ganilau, interviewed 10th April, 2010)

This view compares with that of Barr (2010), whose localized definition of factors that he believed, added to poverty in Fiji, was presented to the GoF in October 2010 and included the “overgenerous giving to the Vanua and the church”, the “overspending on mobile phones and other short term, instantly gratifying luxuries”.

Barr again strongly links the causes of poverty to the advice by IFI that resulted in “the devaluation of the Fiji dollar”, the “commercialization of public rental and Housing Authority homes”, the “corporatization of water”, “the lifting of price control” and the rise in fuel costs in addition to the “loans given by the ADB and IMF”. These, he says, were often on the condition that “social spending be reduced”.

The majority of the professionals who were interviewed did not seem to grasp the social dimensions very thoroughly, but showed concern that “the ethnic Fijian poor were not benefitting from the special Government incentives and investments made by the Fijian institutions such as the Province or Yasana. The head of an NGO said that “the ethnic Fijian society was slowly disintegrating due to the inequality in the way the whole process was structured but change was being manifested slowly”. The experts concurred on the need for “a review of the transparency and accountability processes for these institutions and the manner in which funds were utilised so that it could be used to help the poor”.

As pointed out by two former Methodist church members who had changed their church denomination, “the affluent lifestyles and spending habits linked to expansive houses, vehicles and high utility bills of some of the church and vanua members was a concern which members must question and get answers to instead of keeping silent about it”.

There is awareness of the inherent strength by the poor to counter the impact of poverty. Walsh (1978) illustrates that the strength of many urban poor lie in the “informal exchange between kin” and the fact that these were “often reciprocal”. Ms Ganilau, the former cabinet minister also reiterates that “the Fijian kinship ties and network links amongst the poor remained strong and enabled many to counter the effects of financial and other constraints that resulted from cultural and religious demands”.

The research finds this form of support to have helped counter the negative effects of poverty for many. However, the same did not seem to be true in relation to several of the more affluent members who seemed much more individualistic and drifting away from the

traditional ideologies. A few of these who were living within the city periphery, were even noted to refrain from even speaking their vernacular language and mingling too closely with the grassroots community. However, ironically, to quote a Provincial chief;

“The chiefly system is not our making but Gods calling. He has placed these responsibilities on our shoulders, to maintain structure and order within our society so that the people are always united ... we stay traditional and continue to honour our practices ... so everybody is happy. There is the ‘mana’, the wrath of the spirits for non adherence ... you will not understand ... Our people like giving, they like to serve ... it is a system that has enabled our survival and the security of our people ...”.

In summary, it is noted that traditional and religious obligations had created stress and family problems within many households as elaborated in the subsequent sections.

4.7 SOCIAL CONCERNS

4.7.1 STRESS ON ELDERLY FAMILY MEMBERS

The research illustrates that several respondents without secure jobs who have shifted to live nearer to towns and cities had placed the care of their children with elderly parents and relatives within rural villages. This was seen to have led many elderly males in rural and village-based locations to seek jobs, or put constraining efforts towards seeking means of food to support their grandchildren. Many of these grandchildren were seen to be the result of broken partnerships or by single mothers who had changed spouses.

It was also noted that elderly parents who were looking after their grandchildren were some of the most productive within rural and village communities. In addition, several young children left in their care contributed equally towards income earning pursuits from the age of eight or nine years. This included support on the subsistence farms, market or roadside vendoring and occasional fishing and prawn catching.

It was further noted that village based relatives and elderly family members took care of the mentally and physically challenged in several instances compared to the more mobile younger members who had moved to informal settlements within the city peripheries. A significant number of squatter based respondents were also noted to rely on food support from elderly relatives based in villages.

In turn, the elderly members were seen to be very patient and modest in their disposition despite the lack of sibling support. The responsibility to look after grandchildren in

addition to those with physical disabilities in some instances while also providing traditional food for family's living in town and city suburbs was seen as a major stress factor for this group. Youths were also an essential part of the search for poverty solutions in Fiji as elaborated in the next section.

4.7.2 SOCIAL CONCERNS LINKED TO YOUTHS

The empirical research found the majority of the male youth respondents to be unemployed and comfortable within their home environments. Many were seen to be attached to various church and community activities in addition to active involvement in sporting activities. Several male youth respondents were of the view that a failure to have access to the desired material luxuries and fashionable items as depicted by the audio-visual industry was 'a sign of their poverty situation'.

Moreover, many youths were noted to search for jobs "after moving in to stay with relatives and friends within the squatter areas and city suburbs". Some had worked in casual jobs several days a week while others were into gardening, grass cutting or sold raw coconuts for small income.

However, the tendency for youths to "drop out of jobs" was very high with many youths who had been into paid jobs saying that "breakfast was never taken as a compulsory meal, nor was lunch and tea and cassava were usually the normal food at home". While they laughed away the significance of meals as "the Indian way", it was noted that several youths left work "because of physical tiredness" and "being stressed at work".

The research notes that the modern media devises such as the television, news media, magazines and movies. These had helped create the perception of a materialistic lifestyle where having access to various music, entertainment gadgets and fashionable clothes was seen as essential by both the male and female youths who lived nearer to town areas. In turn, several youths not only sought to own these devises but actually had access to expansive mobile phones, eye-pods, MP – 3's and so forth. It was noted that a few young and middle-aged males and a few females had also been to prison for theft and brought to the fore the question of income, affordability and the link to property crimes.

The research also found that the continuity in internal migration was leading to "overcrowded houses, lack of food and basic necessities and, in some situations, criminal activities. As such, several community elders and some church leaders saw the unemployed youth population as "a social concern linked to the rise in property crimes,

pick pocketing, bag snatching and house break-ins”. Another rural community concern was “the increase in theft of subsistence crops from farms and sale of farm animals for quick cash that was often utilised for drinking and entertaining”. Some elderly male members labeled this law breaking behaviour of the youths to be the result of “television”, “western values” and “the weakening of traditional methods of discipline”.

Similar concerns were reiterated during the focus group discussions and expert interviews. Two ex-prisoner respondents shared that they “used to make random visits to tertiary institutions and computer repair shops “to grab laptops that lay unattended”. These “fetched easy money and the returns were used for drinks, clothes, hair do’s and food”. Other than the above concerns, the poor were seen to rely on a series of social safety nets as a means of survival. This is elaborated in the next section.

4.8 CURRENT PERCEPTION OF SOCIAL SAFETY NETS

4.8.1 EXISTING FORMS OF SOCIAL SAFETY NETS

The findings suggest a contradiction in the development and donor agency depiction of poverty as creating ‘a sense of powerlessness and indignity’ compared to the way the ethnic Fijian poor viewed poverty. Instead, several forms of social safety nets were seen to be used as ‘lifelines’ towards survival. Relatives who dropped in for prolonged stays were tolerated as part of “communal and family support”.

This suggests that the communal value system and networks remained as strengths for the survival of the ethnic Fijian poor as compared to fixed income and fixed jobs. The research interprets this to be the essence of social capital, which donor and development agencies often missed out and which economic data failed to adequately capture. A breakdown of these safety nets is indicated below.

4.8.2 COMMUNITY AND COLLECTIVE APPROACH: A SAFETY NET

The research notes that the tendency to abide by the community-based norms towards communal goals by most people linked to the sense of group safety and collective security. This was seen to supersede the urgency development agencies placed on paid employment, monetary income and bank accounts. These included the ‘Kerekere’ system for goods and services, dependency and reliance on lineage, family ties and religion as pillars of support, voluntary sharing of subsistence crops by rural and village based respondents combined with collective support for the various ‘soli’ and communal events.

As shared by respondents, these were seen as “the strength amongst the poor that worked as a result of group unity”. They were also more visible within the poor segments in relation to sports activities, fundraising and the seeking of food sources.

Group solidarity was also visible in relation to people coming together under the *turanga ni koro*'s instructions to support soli activities. This included support to aggrieved families by way of funeral related expenditures or to built members houses and so forth. Another feature was group socializing with long hours of '*talanoa*' over the traditional drink '*yoqona*'. However, youths living in squatter and Housing Authority settlements seemed less committed to subsistence gardens and seeking jobs or food sources as compared to their commitment to sports, socializing and casual work.

It was noted that the group approach consistently reinforced social norms and institutional expectations of unquestionable giving and sharing towards village, province or church based projects and goals. There was noted to be “stigma” linked to those within the community who “refrained from giving towards the obligations that resulted from traditional and religious institutions”. In turn, some village chiefs and vanua leaders were of the view that “all produce, including vegetables and farm animals were a collective property of the village to be used for communal usage whenever needed”. The “needs” included “funerals, vanua meetings, meetings with senior government officials, visit by senior chiefs or the vanua or province leaders” amongst other uses.

On the other hand, several village based respondents and their families were modest and reserved in their views in relation to the above practices of the communal usage of farm produce and livestock. While there were no restrictions on the commercial or sale of these in relation to the farmers needs, several elderly respondents saw the communal use of their crops and animals upon the chief's directive as “a deterrent to their progress”.

Such a practice was seen to have deterred many poor farmers from animal husbandry and even large scale farming. Some farmers shared that, “it was often not the chief who gave away his crops, bullock or goat, but the ordinary, hardworking flock”. Both the focus group discussions and individual interviews heard from several matured male and female respondents who had owned land and livestock including those who had moved to squatter settlements that such practices “reduced their desire to pursue any form small business initiatives towards profit making goals”. A village-based respondent said;

“what was the use of all the effort when I do not get any money. When my crops and animals are used towards a village activity, many kind words are spoken and promises made but I never get to see any money once the animal is eaten. Stealing of livestock and crops is increasing and the police seem not to be so interested plus government support is low. Thus, a simple life with my small teitei is my best option”.

As elaborated during the expert interviews, “this deterrence has led many hardworking and poor members to revert back to a laid back pace of life”. Similar feedback from several other male community members suggests that the social norms that prevailed and were taken as ‘normal’ within the village setup amidst and the traditional value systems often acted as a deterrent to the poor from pursuing profit oriented goals.

Thus, a lack-luster attitude to work and fixed forms of income by several poor within villages and squatter areas was counter-balanced by their reliance on the subsistence base and communal support, which also formed a social safety net, as, elaborated below.

4.8.3 SUBSISTENCE: A SAFETY NET

Added to traditional values and the emphasis on the collective over the individual, the subsistence base was seen by most respondents of all age groups as a key source of sustenance and ethnic Fijian survival. It was noted that both Indo-Fijians and ethnic Fijians within the poor localities relied on the subsistence gardens and cash crops as a backup. This dependency also prevailed amongst those who had shifted to towns and cities and who travelled to home villages for the weekly subsistence food needs. On the other hand, the village based family members saw such forms of ‘giving’ as a part of ‘family obligation’.

In addition, majority respondents living closer to the city periphery within informal settlements and in Housing Authority homes were seen to be planting subsistence crops in drains and available land in their ‘backyards’ or empty plots.

It was also noted that some mature, rural based male respondents had reduced their subsistence farms as “members took advantage of their labour and often helped themselves to free crops”.

For several matured females, the family assistance support scheme “complimented the subsistence gardens to help meet several financial needs”. The strong dependency on the subsistence base as a taken for granted, key source of sustenance was also preventing the economic progress for many. The next section looks at alternative sources of food security.

4.8.4 OTHER SOURCES AND MEANS OF FOOD

Respondents, in addition to subsistence food, also used processed food. These commonly included canned food such as tin fish, tealeaves, sugar and flour bought occasionally from casual incomes or money received from the social welfare. In addition, the respondents within the squatter and housing areas also consumed bread and canned fish other than subsistence crops. Food was also obtained “by fishing and diving for mussels in rivers” for those living near rivers and sea while many squatter area respondents also “caught eels and small fish in creeks”. The majority of the village based respondents indicated they were ‘okay’ with life compared to the respondents from the informal settlements who found it more difficult to meet expenses such as bus fares, book fees, rents and bills.

4.8.5 FIJIAN INSTITUTIONS SEEN AS SAFETY NET

The traditional, cultural and religious institutions were seen as uniting forces. The research noted a strong awareness amongst respondents of their provinces and the traditional structures including the ‘Tikina’, ‘vanua’ and ‘mataqali’ as backup safety pillars. In turn, the respondent’s lives were seen to circulate in a sphere where the centre of life was the community and the village together with the church and the prevailing norms and values. There was a strong conviction in the strength of the traditional culture of sharing and giving which was also seen as a source of collective unity for the people at all times.

As such, the question of disparities or inequalities in the process did not seem to be a major social concern for most people while “the life based on Christ” was viewed by many as “the path out of poverty”. Similarly, the whole process of community living and its social, religious and communal activities within the hierarchy based setting was seen “as a part of God’s Planning”. This was despite the fact that the sharing of labour, resources, money and time towards community goals was often disproportionate and more demanding of the efforts and time commitments of the poor compared with the relatively more affluent.

There was a notable strength within the context of informal relations that was reinforced by strong verbal communication networks amongst the grassroots population. These included the willing support towards group activities and joint goals through joint sharing of crops, money and time by the poor. This communal process is seen to provide the collective strength that enabled respondents to counter stressful and challenging situations.

In contrast, the more affluent and educated members seemed more individualistic and their level of interaction with the grassroots people seemed less regular. Comparatively, the

female members amongst the more affluent group seemed to maintain their social distance from the poor on a more visible scale. Nevertheless, those belonging to the upper hierarchy of the ethnic Fijian society tended to be respected and honored as a part of the traditional norm despite the above situation. As shared by a form seven educated respondent;

“whom you know mattered within the Fijian society. As such, many genuine poor have often been sidelined over the interests of the children from richer Fijian and Rotuman families and scholarship awards to many who were not really deserving of it ... nepotism was a cruel fact amongst the i - Taukei ...”.

It was also noted that some children from the poorer families within the settlements who had benefitted from state support and scholarships and were into white-collar jobs were seen to have willingly ‘joined the club’ of the upper class. However, it was noted that several civil servants living within the target communities were also in a perpetual state of debt repayments for goods and services.

This was in addition to supporting extended relatives or their children who stayed within respondent homes. Alcohol consumption amongst some of the more educated males and females with white-collar jobs was also common in the weekends while as many church going respondents and especially older females within the poor communities refrained from alcohol. This compared with grog consumption that was common, not only amongst the unemployed or those in casual jobs, but also several of those with white-collar jobs. The research noted that religion was also regarded as a form of social security within the ethnic Fijian community, as elaborated below.

4.8.6 RELIGION: A SAFETY NET

The research finds that most respondents viewed religion as a key source of inherent, God-given security which enabled within them a generous and sincere process of ‘giving’ towards various religious purposes including the soli and gifts and services to the more senior religious leaders and their families. This service was rendered regardless of the poverty situation of the poor. There was gauged to be a sense of stigma for noncompliance with the various religious obligations including the support for the soli and tithe.

A visible practice that prevailed was where the local priest made random visits to a poor person’s home and imposed upon the host of the house service by way of tea or food. In situations where there was no food to provide, the ‘kerekere’ system was mobilized and food was ‘borrowed’ from a neighbour or friend in order to ‘entertain’ the ‘holy men’.

The older respondents shared that “the biblical teaching of ‘endurance’, ‘salvation’ and ‘forgiveness’ had helped create contentment in many lives”. However, the process of ‘giving’ was seen to have affected several families by way of lack of money for necessities including money for food, fare and medicine in addition to school fees for children. A former Women’s Ministry staff admitted that;

“If this government had not intervened in the ways in which some churches and Fijian institutions made financial demands upon poor, life would have become unbearable for many ... efforts to survive amidst all the many demands for time and money have compelled many towards crime as seen from the burgeoning prison population ... it is high time the church and the chiefs take responsibility for this ... when there is extreme frustration with life, there is bound to be unrest ... the system of reliance on the income of the poor as a means of running institutions that fail to be accountable for their multimillion dollar investments is not getting the needed mainstream media attention ... it has reached explosive levels and dispersed in the form of coups with the blame on Indo-Fijians. It is high time the glossy wrappings behind the so called ‘Fijian values’ is unveiled. It is this that has enabled the rich to survive at the expense of the poor. Sadly, those who exploit the system hold the power and control which helps to reinforce nepotism and favoritism. People’s faith and allegiance has become the armour for the corrupt ... to bring about change, this disease needs to be captured within the ambit of civil society rules”. (Mr. John Sowani, MWSWPA, 2008).

In addition, lineage and family ties were also regarded as safety nets, as outlined below.

4.8.7 LINEAGE AND FAMILY TIES : A SAFETY NET

It was essential for this survey to understand the constraints, priorities and opportunities of each respondent and their patterns of interaction within the household and community and the wider context. As such, it was noted that the ethnic Fijian poor depended strongly upon extended family including parents and grandparents as the basic production and survival unit. It was also seen as a social safety nets and uniting force in times of crisis and for religious, cultural and traditional oneness.

This dependency was more pronounced within the context of single mothers and broken families where the younger biological parents relocated for jobs or for other reasons. It was noted to be a common procedure where several younger parents in the various locations nearer to city areas passed on the responsibility of child care to elderly parents located in

rural and village areas. In turn, several elderly parents were noted to indulge in physically stressful activities or searching for jobs in order to support their grandchildren and family in addition to maintaining subsistence plots or farms for subsistence crops.

The multiple responsibilities is noted to have burdened many amongst the elderly within the ethnic Fijian society who lacked any fixed source of income other than the money obtained from the Government's Family support scheme. This is seen to have created further poverty for several parents' and elderly grandparents within the rural locations. In contrast, there was an indication of a lack of concern for the financial implications on the parents by the younger respondents which included single mothers and male parents who had left their children in the care of elderly parents within villages and squatter locations.

Moreover, stress on several elderly parents within village areas was seen to have been furthered by the demands for subsistence crops by children living nearer to the towns and city areas. As shared by several elderly, "the root crops and other subsistence food was supplied to the children living within towns and cities because they have to struggle to pay rent and bills and buy other food ...". Several village based elderly parents linked poverty to "the lack of adequate family support allowance", "lack of support from children who had moved to live nearer to city areas", "old age and inability to do work on the farm or raise farm animals", and the "inability to support the costs for the grandchildren's education".

Some middle age female and male respondents also relied upon remittance support from family members abroad. An ethnic Fijian British army officer who was visiting to see his mother who was a WOP Fiji trainee shared that his remittances did not only support his parents but also his siblings, live-in nephews, nieces and relatives who stayed with the family in the "big concrete home". It also paid for his family's "soli obligations to the church, vanua and those entailed by community living". Some respondents shared that "when family members know that money is coming, they come over ... they are often poor and it is un-Fijian to say 'No'. If we share, we are blessed ...". A common trend was for extended family members and relatives to 'drop in' and stay for long periods without notice.

Moreover, some of these were noted to gradually become 'permanent or long term guests' within the Housing Authority and squatter areas. This process was seen to create overcrowding and financial stress within several families. It was seen to have resulted in family rifts, separation of spouses and in some instances, also led to elder children moving out to stay with relatives in efforts to 'avoid crowded households'. The research noted that education and the ability for children to do their homework was seen to have been as

severely compromised within several homes where the social life and entertainment of guests including grog taking created a situation of a complete lack of privacy.

It was also noted that the more affluent and educated members were changing from the traditional way of life towards more individualistic values as compared to mingling openly with the poor or contributing to communal activities. It was further noted that children from these families fared better in education and economic progress and had bank savings.

4.8.8 (a) COMMUNITY SUPPORT : A SAFETY NET

In addition to family ties and subsistence crops being utilised as a support bases and as a means of survival, community support through collective unity was also noted to be regarded as a safety net by many respondents. Other than the reliance on family ties during stressful times, community support was actively rendered to those in need as part of the collective approach. This was especially in relation to births, deaths, sickness and other similar needs where such form of support was rendered. It was noted that this social action was further manifested through the process of the *kerekere* system when respondents did not have money for groceries or crops or needed money. It was also seen to be entrenched and readily tolerated while the ‘borrowed items’ were “not expected to be returned”.

However, there was reciprocity and the process worked vice versa within the poor in all locations despite their meager belongings and overcrowded households. The collective, communal approach to village or community events had boasted some successful projects such as community halls, footpaths through villages and churches. In addition, the culture of giving was also seen to help counter the harsh realities of poverty, as outlined below.

4.8.8 (b) THE CULTURE OF GIVING : A SAFETY NET

The field research reveals that the allegiance to the Fijian culture, traditions and values meant that the culture of giving remained strong amongst the poor with no expectation for reciprocity. Several village chiefs saw this as the source of ‘Fijian institutional survival’.

This system of ‘collective living’ and ‘giving’ of resources for communal and religious purposes was regarded by respondents as a ‘generic blueprint’ and ‘a source of Fijian strength’. The village leader -Turanga ni Koro, and educated Fijians linked the culture of giving to be a ‘uniquely Fijian strength’ and “the basis for the success of major events”.

The research analyzed that the people’s ability to give despite the economic situation was a unique form of ‘social capital’ which community living and group unity enabled. This

linked to fundraising, support towards major projects, payment of dues such as the ‘soli vakamisinary’, ‘soli ni yasana’, or community support work. An NGO head said,

“If the chief demanded your crop, money or time towards any occasion including high level visitors to the village such as Ministers and high chiefs, or for funerals or church events, you had to prioritize this request with your time and money and goods ... many see it as a privilege to give upon the chiefs request... Chiefs have got the ‘mana’. If you don’t give, then the chiefs can curse you or something bad can happen to you. You must feel good in giving...”. (Salote, Tamani, 18th May 2010)

On the other hand, the focus group discussions and the face-to-face interviews indicated that the obligatory “giving” for the various traditional and religious purposes had also become a “source of stress and family problems within many homes”. Moreover, these concerns “failed to be highlighted as causes of family separation or during family dispute resolutions within villages or in church”. To quote one of the experts who was interviewed,

“The head of the mataqali, the turanga ni mataqali or turanga ni yavusa in the village follows orders from the province chief who is the Ratu of the province, e.g.; Ratu Dawa Samu which has about nine Qoro with each village having two to three Mataqali’s. When the head of the mataqali orders food such as dalo, cassava, yagona from the villagers to entertain visitors, the people who have access to these must provide it. In addition, tasks are allocated to different households in preparation for the entertainment of the visitors such as catching fish, cooking, baking, meke and so forth. The food and gifts are also given to the visitors to take back. This creates a good impression of the village people and yields the possibility of Government support ...”.

The wider implications of the ‘culture of sharing’ is illustrated by Jerry, a lay pastor and ex-convict, that, when Ratu Mara or his Government delegations visited the Lau province;

“massive effort was put in towards their food and other comforts. People who were poor with no means of income still gave whatever they had, including their crops and farm animals, to the high chief and his representatives. In turn, the Lau group received special kindness from the government. Our children were given special privileges in the civil service including the police force, government jobs and scholarships towards the nursing and other professions ...our chief was like our God”.

The research finds the above to be key reasons that the more affluent beneficiaries of the system were adamant that “the culture of giving and sharing was a unique Fijian way that

enabled unity and social zeal unlike other cultures”. These passions, while not quantifiable, are psychological and constructivist. They linked to institutions and their influence on people’s minds, thoughts, perceptions and overall mode of life and living.

In contrast, the striving, and money oriented culture of the Indo-Fijian community was viewed as ‘*mamagi*’ or ‘greedy living’ by several village based vanua leaders and elderly respondents. In comparison, the few Indo-Fijian respondents saw value in ‘saving’, ‘recycling’, ‘re-using’ and ‘bargaining’ as “the catapult of their gradual success due to the lack of government support”. It was noted that the awareness of the government’s special programmes had also impacted upon the respondents work ethics and their lack of self initiative to change as illustrated below.

4.8.9 AWARENESS OF SPECIAL INCENTIVES AND ACTION POLICIES

The research notes a strong awareness amongst most respondents of the state’s welfare support policies and affirmative action programmes for ethnic Fijians. It was also noted that, while around 59 percent of the first two year trainees were on social welfare support, around 24 percent stated that they had already benefitted in some way through the previous government’s affirmative action programmes. However, several male respondents from village-based locations said that, “the prominent community members had benefitted in more ways through the affirmative action measures”.

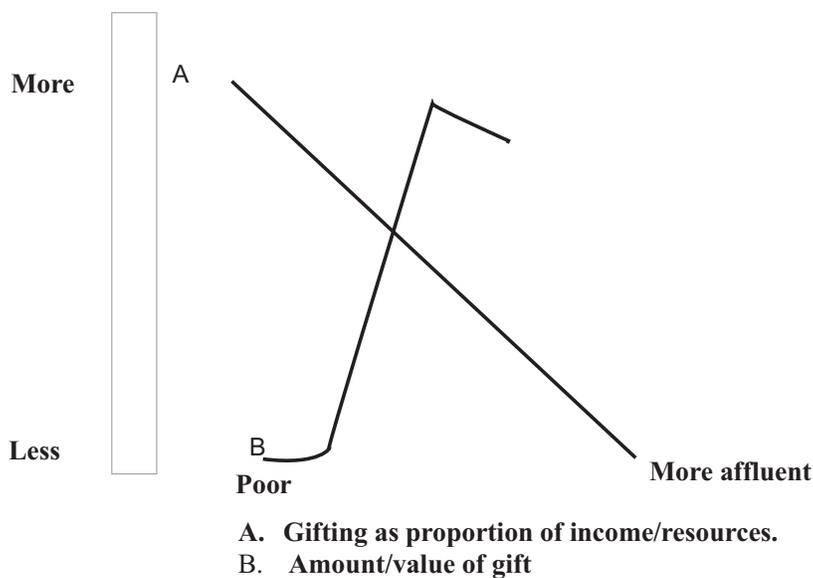
Similarly, as many rural based respondents and other community members said that “many affirmative action support that related to small business ventures including business startup or farming equipments were accessed by those with more clout within the community”. In addition, the general view was that “these ventures had failed because the recipients had lost interest once the money ended”.

Some elderly members who had their own small farms said that, “some members including civil servants or their relatives within the village received around \$6000 for bee keeping farming through special grants”. Moreover, “equipments were bought and training undertaken, but, within months, most of the equipments lay rotting away and the bee farmers had gone back to their government jobs ...”. This was verified and bee boxes were seen to be lying in derelict conditions in the backyards and farms overgrown with weed within several target areas. A few villagers indicated that, “some past project support by way of animal husbandry lasted until the animals were old enough to be eaten or the communal obligations led to their slaughter”.

In addition, the farm animals owned by individuals including the poor were often used upon instructions of the village chief or ‘turanga ni koro’, for communal or ceremonial purposes. However, those affected by this ‘imposed generosity’ seemed to calmly accept such measures “as a part of tradition”. Combined with the various safety nets and the expectations for continuity of the various forms of state support including micro-finance support’, these were gauged to be some key factors behind the general lack of self - initiative and physical effort amongst the poor. In contrast, the richer members within these communities were convinced that “affirmative action policies and programmes were a guaranteed source of Fijian survival”.

This reflects an inverse relationship between what the poor and the more affluent can afford to give. While the rich were known to give money towards obligatory norms and ceremonies, the poor gave both money plus long and consistent hours of their time and labour, in addition to their crops and farm animals. Yet, the combined monetary value of these was never questioned. The fact that the poor continue to see this relationship as reciprocal means that they are being cheated by a system which they think is to their advantage but which is actually perpetuating the poverty situation for many. An in-depth, investigative research can help provide more information to support the way this inverse system works towards the disadvantage of many amongst the ethnic Fijian poor. The above illustration is depicted by the following graph.

Graph 11 The Poor and More Affluent: A possible Inverse relationship in Gifting



The next section looks at two cases studies in relation to how the social structures, norms, and values within the ethnic Fijian society affected people’s lives.

4.9 CASE STUDIES

4.9.1 CASE STUDY ONE – TIM’S STORY

Tim’s story is significant as Tim trained under the WOP-Fiji programme but is no longer a financially poor person. His personal reflections help shed light on the lack of options for many ethnic Fijian youths and the link between youth crime and poverty.

Tim (pseudonym) is a young, gay male respondent who trained in the cooking and pastry in late 2005. He is an orphan brought up in the care of an uncle with four elder male cousins. The uncle’s wife separated from the family 1 year after Tim took up residence, forcing him to become familiar with the household chores of housekeeping, washing and cooking.

While growing up, he was subject to occasional bullying but also experienced the normal adolescent and teenage years with his cousins. However, Tim was evasive about ‘a particular incident a few years later’, which made him move out of the uncle’s house to live with an aunty within the squatter area. This incident made Tim very discouraged because “the uncle, the village elders and the church failed to be convinced by his story”.

Being unemployed and a form 5 level school dropout, Tim selected cooking and pastry as the hobby and a possible career path and enthusiastically joined the WOP–Fiji cooking and baking training with support from the MWSWPA field officers. Later, his group of three living within a squatter area used their backup support by way of a baking oven, cooking gas and pots and pans to start their small business. This saw Tim selling cakes and other baked savories and delivering food packs to students around the Vatuwaqa industrial and University and city areas. His assertive and articulate personality made him chose to do the sales work even though he contributed equally towards the cooking tasks with his two female colleagues. All members were informed of Tim’s daily sales and all profit was ‘saved’ by one of the members so that the small business could gradually expand.

However, despite the trust, Tim felt cheated when he returned from one of the daily village sales and found that his two partners to have sold the oven and absconded with the money and the pots and pans. Tim reported the incident to the ILO and also brought it to the notice of the MWSWHPA staff but, “nobody came forward to help or assist despite an MOU having been signed by the respondents with the ILO and the MWSWHPA”.

In addition, the turaga *ni koro* (*village head*) “remained indifferent to the complaints”. Instead, Tim was asked to “drop the matter and be forgiving”. Later, he put effort to get an honest alternative jobs and “was teased about his girlish ways”. In one restaurant, “the

high-class expatriate restaurant owner gave the job that paid well in return for special favour's". Gradually, he admits "going into the sex trade as a means of livelihood".

Tim does not go to regular church. He believes that 'one has to chart their own future and decent life'. His faith in religion weakened as he found it "hypocritical that many churchgoers were preaching loudly but owed a lot of credit to many people and failed to keep their word". He saw the "habit of daily grog taking by church and village elders" to be " a bad example to young people who stayed at home and who mocked (Tim's) lifestyle". He says that "those who kill time doing nothing find grog drinking and talanoa exciting pastimes". Unlike many of his unemployed youth friends who "had expensive mobile and ear phones", Tim "bought everything" he had through "hard work." He knew of several male youths from the settlement who were living with relatives and into "occasional purse snatching and house break-ins which families ignored as "gifts were hauled in".

Moreover, Tim's "affluent circle of customers paid well" and he was also "sometimes able to help the village youths with money". He also knew several "straight guys and girls" who "made money through a similar trade". These included "very young people whom you cannot believe get lured by money... but these days, everything is about money... ". Several single mothers within his villages remained dependent on parents and extended relatives. Tim was of the view that "the generation before were different and more honest and family support and moral support enabled many to succeed ...young people need to feel wanted ...now, it is a struggle to survive ... ". He believes that "a poor Fijian family could never be separated from his teitei - the rourou, dalo, bele, cassava patch was a means of survival".

Tim suggested that it was "important to assess the reasons behind the rising crime rate amongst the indigenous Fijians.". He was convinced that it was "not the need for basic necessities that caused youths to commit crime ... but the way society was going, the way parents, the community and the church were too forgiving of wrong actions ...".

He believes that "the rising problem of broken families, desire for modern entertainment gadgets, the awareness of fashion trends and addiction to drinks were the key cause of poverty". Moreover, Tim was of the view that "sex was being taken as an exciting pastime by many who did not have much else to do. As such, there were many single mothers and children growing up often without fathers or being left with old grandparents. He says that " there is a lot of confusion in life and our past leaders have made it tougher".

4.9.2 CASE STUDY 2: MARIE'S STORY

Marie's story helps shed light on the way the traditional and religious institutions operationalized and impacted upon the lives of an ethnic Fijian poor and how the poor perceived them in return. This story gives some insight into how religious gifting obligations, dictated by ethnic Fijian custom, and their use contribute to the difficulties of the poor while providing opportunities for enhanced mana and material gain for the more affluent. Hers is an insider story looking up from the bottom of the church hierarchy.

Marie (pseudonym) is married to a lay Methodist church pastor who is her second husband and lives in a squatter settlement around the Suva city periphery. She separated from her first husband after being subject to constant violence when their children did not have enough to eat in the house, and later, after her husband found another partner. As such, she brought her four children with her to her second husband who also had three children of his own. Her second husband was of kindly and gentle disposition and accepted her as a good Christian gesture, into his family. All the children of both partners "were been looked after by the grandparents within their home villages" except for two who remained with them.

Marie participated in the cooking training under the ILO's WOP-Fiji programme and obtained a baking oven, cooking gas and cooking pots as back-up support. She says much of the first month of the stove utilisation helped raise money for "essential church related activities". However, "once the gas was used up, it remained empty and was gradually sold" when her family "needed money for a church soli". Before it was sold, the stove and oven were "proudly covered with lace in the house together with the training certificate".

A similar need led to the sale of the cooking oven. Other items that she was asked by her husband to sell in order to meet the soli obligations included "a wrist watch which was a gift from her father, two Fijian mats which were gifts from her family and a dinner table". She was of the view that "the majority of the poor did not know how to save and used money easily and many were also suffering because they gave from the heart to the church and vanua and the soli. Many families often missed out on food, school fees and fare for children in efforts to meet these needs".

Within her locality, the lay preachers at the lower ranks of the church hierarchy were mostly unemployed but contributed equally towards community work. As a result, several cement footpaths and small homes for the poor had been built with the help and support of the women's club and the community and lay church members through fundraising.

Within her area, the church hierarchy consisted of the church leader as the head of a group called the 'vaqatawa' (leading the people in that location), and the 'tuirara' (voice of the people) and voice of the gasi or vaqatawa. The villages were under the mataqali which comprised of several villages with one senior head. Marie's locality, similar to most other Fijian settlements and villages had the 'turanga ni koro' and several 'lay preachers' while the more senior priests lived in bigger houses often, in more expensive areas.

The Matasiqa was made up of 13 churches – 1 in the Nabua squatter, 3 in Veinquawawa, 2 in Namadi, 1 in Lovoni, 5 in Samabula and 1 in Nauluvatu which combined to have one key talatala based in the main church in Nauluvatu. Lay pastors from the area identified the poor with the support of the community and their details were then officially shared by the talatala at the 3 monthly meeting. Here, the matasiqa (small groups) and a committee appointed by the talatala looked into the affairs of the poor. In turn, money that was provided by the small churches to the matasiqa was given to the bigger Methodist church. However, Marie was not aware of how the poor had been helped with this money.

Soli was seen as "a traditional system of giving for various purposes such as the village or community need, the poor, church, death and birth ceremonies or to the 'vanua' or yasana". Similarly, the 'soli in church' required the paying the 10% tithe as an obligatory and unavoidable contribution to God without exemptions on the individual person or the size or age of the family members nor their social and economic situations. Moreover, "several poor were often not able to be helped by the church despite the above effort because "money had to be diverted by the church for other essential and needy causes...".

She also shared an incident "where the *Vakatawa* spend \$300 of the church money to buy corrugated iron roofing from the Public Rentals Board for his uncle's house without consultation with members and this was never questioned out of respect for his title". Her husband also shared a similar situation where "the talatala responsible for the church funds commenced a taxi business despite not having a fixed job". As an expression of displeasure, several members "changed to another church".

On her background in a village in Lau, Marie and her family were obligated to give a portion of their meager earnings from the sale of root crops towards their soli obligations regardless of being a "very poor family". She says that it was common in situations where a government delegation, high chief or other dignitary visited the village that "every family regardless of poverty had to give the best of their produce and farm animals as gifts". This "also prevailed in relation to religious functions or the death ceremonies where farmers

were not expected to voice objections regardless of the consequences. Even the sale of crops imposed obligations to give the required dues for the church and the Yasana ... as such, the lack of financial gain led many to lose interest in hard work on the farm ...”

Marie says that, “as a result of the various traditional and religious obligations, the common food eaten by most of the poor often included rourou, cassava or dalo, topped occasionally by fresh fish or tin fish which we used sparingly for 2 to 3 meals once cut open ...”. Other duties included obligations to the ‘Grand Soli’, the ‘Soli Vakamisinary’ by the Methodist church where the amount given was based on the head count per household where each member could be asked to pay \$150 each towards the church annually. This amount often went over a thousand dollars for several families”.

She describes the ‘Yasana’ as resembling the ‘province’ and the head of the Yasana allocated a fixed sum of money each village and mataqali under its wing had to raise as part of the “Soli ni Yasana”. Its aim was provincial development towards bridges, houses and churches. Marie had belonged to the ‘Yasana o Lau’ where her village collected amounts similar to other villages ranging from \$1000 or more depending on the project. These were seen to be “obligatory and could not be avoided and caused much strain on the poor households”. The collected dues “were passed by the mataqali heads to the village chief who, in turn, gave it on to the Turanga ni Koro to be passed on to the leader of the Yasana.

Members were aware of community halls and single room houses being built with the yasana funds but “the major developments in the province as bridges, roads and schools had been through government support. She shared that “often, the Yasana took credit for work done through Government support while refraining from accountability of its own funds”. These “were never shared with the ordinary members nor were they aware of how the revenues the Vanua’s multi million dollars investments were utilized”.

Marie believes that the current government “brought hope to the poor and it should ensure that the Yasana investment profits were used to help relieve the poor people from obligatory contributions to the *vanua* and the *yasana*”. This, “would help curb the many social problems that were caused such as marriage problems, family breakdown and job losses leading to neglect of children and to several underage children into meager sources of paid income”.

The next chapter is an evaluation of the research.

5.0 EVALUATION

“The values of a society are a crucial aspect of its people’s self-conception of what they want to become’ and ‘constitute the cultural infrastructure on which all further social development can be based’. Because values are intangible to our senses and their formation is the result of a very long process, we tend to overlook ultimate determinant of its future course”. (Jacobs and Cleveland, 1999:4-5).

5.1 OVERVIEW

The research findings have illustrated that, despite the myriad of policy recommendations by development analysts regarding poverty solutions, there has been little attempt to grasp the social and structural dimensions of poverty within tradition and religion based communities such as the poor amongst the ethnic Fijians. In Duncan Green’s words:

“While inequality has received greater attention in recent years ... decision-makers have shied away from the idea of widespread redistribution ... When the rich world talks about development, it is more comfortable talking about poverty than about inequality, and it prefers inequality to redistribution.” (Green, 2008:6)

While the poor ethnic Fijians showed kindness and generosity, the research findings suggest that the various conventional rules and obligations imposed upon them and portrayed as ‘unique’, ‘exceptional’ and ‘valued culture of caring and sharing’ were in need of review. The impact of these rules and practices were seen to have been constraining and resulted in the perception of progress towards self-development having become insignificant for many.

This was seen to have been overtaken by the need for ‘submissiveness’, adherence to obligations and the acceptance of their current lives and conditions as “God’s choice” and “normal”. It was also noted that the allegiance of the poor towards certain political ideologies had been reinforced by the vanua and church views on the political, religious and traditional structures and their supposed roles and purposes in society. The failure to acknowledge the linkage of the above structures to the power bases of the upper echelons of ethnic Fijian society seems to have helped perpetrate the existing situation.

Another area of social concern is the fact that the crops and farm animals owned by an ordinary ethnic Fijian poor were often communally shared or used upon the directives of traditional leaders without any reciprocal financial benefit to the owner. The research interprets this to have been a key deterrent towards lack of self-motivation and monetary pursuit by many matured respondents.

The systematic institutionalisation of such norms as a part of “Fijian communal values” and “service to the vanua” is found to have had a gradual psychological impact and affected the poverty situation of many respondents within the rural and village based locations. It is also seen to have been “a cause of several families choosing to shift from village based locations to live more freely in the squatter areas”. A similar feedback was obtained from several younger male respondents living within informal settlements and Housing Authority homes, which indicated a greater awareness of the efforts of their own labour and monetary goals.

A key social concern that was hinted at by some female respondents and their household members was the fact that they had to “sometimes hide the disclosure of their income or material item of monetary worth in order to refrain from it being given away towards the church and communal contributions”. These apprehensions and anxieties may suggest a need for regulatory intervention. It can be deduced to be a key factor that has resulted in the gradual inevitability of the cracks that seem to have started appearing in a system that has been revered as “Fijian values” but which was marginalising the poor towards unquestionable subservience and service.

Yet, despite the above constraints that seemed to have tested the generosity of many, the personality traits of many amongst the grassroots ethnic Fijian poor still stood out as unique compared to the rich. Their level of courtesy and politeness seemed more outstanding as compared to what I know of the poor amongst the Indo-Fijian community.

The research sees this as an incomparable form of social capital that was the result of communal unity and the church’s teachings of generosity, politeness and sharing that was visible in the actions of the poor. The same level of courtesy, generosity, politeness was not visible amongst the more affluent amongst this community where those who were interviewed suggested a ‘lack of time’ and strongly indicated that my presence was ‘invasive’ and my ‘motives suspicious’.

In turn, the fact that this unique form of social capital was being utilised by the traditional elites and religious leaders towards the financial survival of the various ethnic Fijian institutions was a factor many poor seemed ignorant about. The literature had also depicted that this strength had also been utilised towards organized action with the support of the masses during some of the economically and socially disrupting past coups in Fiji.

Several of the experts interviewed agreed that, “the good nature within the ordinary poor may have been exploited for the wrong purposes by the past governments in Fiji”. In addition, the general suggestion made was that ‘the past government strategies had helped

enhance the mindset of dependency by the poor on state institutions through affirmative action measures such as interest free loans and other forms of support”.

The research finds that some members within the community who owned land and farm animals and also had remittance support, “also easily accessed the various forms of family support allowances and other affirmative action support...”. Some of these were noted to be related to former Minister for Women, Ms Asenaca Caucau.

Durutalo (2003:168) has expounded upon the elitist link that the Fijian institutional structures were “the result of colonial strategies targeting the development interest of the European countries” (ibid). The literature also illustrated a similar cognitive interplay where the hierarchy based institutions and their norms and practices regulated the lives and behaviour of the poor through social, institutional control.

In turn, the focus group discussion and the expert interviews found that “the traditional or religious institutions were not being brought to task by the masses for accountability and transparency in relation to traditional and religious institutional management”.

The above views again suggest that the poor, in one sense, may have become willing victims of their own poverty situation. The psychological impact of institutional control is interpreted to have translated into conditioned and binding behaviour patterns that worked to the economic advantage of the privileged over the poor. In turn, it had resulted in an internalised process of domination and control by elite controlled institutions which the poor saw as the roadmap to their future prosperity. In contrast, the factors of “time” and “money” or “savings” did not register as serious factors for most respondents due to their continuous “need to give” was a potential area of further research scrutiny.

It is acknowledged that this research is not sufficient to provide the depth of critical information needed on the vast range of social impact and the resultant poverty consequences of the Fijian traditional and religious obligatory practices, such as church soli, soli vakamisinery and soli ni Yasana on the grassroots population.

Nevertheless, the research has strongly suggested that these practices have, over the years, contributed to the unconscious assimilation and unknowing indoctrination of the perceptions, attitudes and behaviour amongst the poor to their own long term detriment and disadvantage. As such, a broadly based research project involving a comparative study with the time utilisation habits of the Indo- Fijian community could help strengthen the basis of these conclusions.

5.2 SOCIAL ENCULTURATION THROUGH INSTITUTIONS

The analysis of secondary data illustrated weaknesses in the overwhelming obsession with the economic analysis of poverty. While these tended to describe the poor as having a “sense of powerlessness and indignity”, “unable to think, plan or dream beyond the daily struggle to survive”, “reduced working capacity”, “low productivity and shortened life expectancy”, the research found that this was not at all the way in which the ethnic Fijian poor viewed poverty. In the words of a poverty specialist, “the above classifications of poverty generally apply to “the poor in the developed world whose self esteem and often desire for affluent lifestyles were affected when having reduced sources of income”.

While the strength of reciprocal exchange often helped counter the effects of poverty amongst the ethnic Fijians as compared to the Indo - Fijian community, this cultural practice was seen to be weakening amongst those with better education, white-collar jobs and living closer to the city areas.

The sharing of resources and communal support also seemed to be weakening in light of “increasing crop theft” and “the movement of people to squatter areas nearer to towns in search of a better life”. The dependency on extended families was also being affected because of the increasing food and fuel costs which the poor in squatter and Housing Authority areas relied upon.

The head of the Single Mothers Association said,

“this unquestioning acceptance of the established ‘system’ and the fear for the ‘mana’ based on traditional and religious beliefs has prevented many Fijians from realizing the true cause their poverty ... , the media has helped promote materialism and an artificial vision of reality that was expensive and risky to maintain. The poor need to be re-educated, income and saving was necessary as was hard work and commitment”.

The literature has illustrated the various ways in which the disadvantages for the poor have been furthered through global policies linked to international policy directions as promoted by multilateral agencies such the WB, IMF and ADB.

The theoretical presumptions that formed the basis of these policies often transformed into national economic policies linked to abstract solutions based on statistical data that captured only the signs and symptoms of poverty. This meant that the actual causes of poverty often remained camouflaged.

The fact that these directives have often been readily adopted by donor and development agencies, as indicated by the literature, was not been matched by any practical best practice outcomes. Moreover, such approaches were seen to fail to acknowledge the “historical and market based linkages of global policies to the development interests of the developed world” (see Green, 2008, WCSDG, 2006).

It was also hypocritical that the IFI prioritized “the private sector and developed country interests over and above that of the developing country or its poor and vulnerable population” (Barr, 2011). This meant that global development jargons such as ‘Human Rights’, ‘equality’, ‘democracy’, and ‘free trade’ became euphemisms. In turn, they often “mismatched the discriminatory policies of fiscal trade and migration laws and conditional aid packages that further marginalized the poor” (ibid).

The ‘rights based language’ linked to unfair trade practices and migration laws was also seen to be missing in relation to the poor nations within the much-acclaimed ‘MDG’ (see Green, 2008). The fact that these laws favour one group of people over another illustrates the need for further research that could enrich these findings.

One expert says that the way the development agencies worked could help create other ‘problems’ while resolving one;

“Development agencies also, often, create vulnerabilities for a poor country ... Their organizational mandates tend to emphasize unconditional rights and freedoms linked to western ideologies of acceptable behavior. Often, these allow young people to become susceptible to exploitation of their most vulnerable component - their mind and their ability to think straight ... sexually explicit advertising pertaining to individual freedoms, distribution of free condoms ... ‘flavored condoms and promoting the idea of condom machines in schools?... Sex is sold as a human right that must be easily accessible. The psychological impact of this compels strong sexual awareness amongst young minds, it encourages pre-marital sex that is enhanced by a sexually charged audiovisual industry ... thus, what was once a sacred union has now become a cheap animal act of casual physical gratification. And its consequences ... HIV and aids, single mothers, child neglect, working children, violence, criminal activity, ... and the elderly get burdened with grandchildren to look after, ...this leads to more poverty. As the development agency mandates are often promoted based upon foreign and imported value systems, the UN must be careful that it does not end up contributing to the weakening of the moral fabric of a nation ... that its human rights efforts does not cross bounds and override local efforts

towards restraint and responsible living. Ironically, the same development agencies later come in as good Samaritans to help counter the problems they help create. Its operational procedure seems to be designed to ensure its own long term survival as an NGO dependent on charity, its idealistic goals may represent the political interest of donor countries instead of the poor country”.

(Statement by a senior civil servant, Department of Labour in Fiji, June 2009)

5.3 SUGGESTED ALTERNATIVES

- 1) While political instability and low economic growth are flagged as the common economic causes of poverty, the poverty of the ethnic Fijian poor is also a social construction that linked to culture and tradition in addition to the policies of the colonial era and the resultant interests of a colonially created ‘ethnic Fijian elites’. As most of the poor saw their subsistence gardens, religion, and community support system as assets to be relied upon in the absence of income, a critical review of the social and institutional factors including the traditional and religious structures was incumbent. This would help expose the ways in which the motivation and initiative of the ethnic Fijian poor was dampened and their social capital utilised towards institutional goals that mostly benefited the rich.
- 2) The research finds that poverty and the reasons for job losses amongst the ethnic Fijians could be more accurately assessed by consumption habits as income for many was irregular and fluctuated based on the national economic and political well-being. In addition, the majority of the respondents depended on livelihood sources that was not monetised and were obtained through self-production and reciprocal exchange. This means that the current measurement of poverty that heavily depended upon economic indicators need to be reviewed.
- 3) Additionally, the socialising habits, consumption pattern and spending tendencies have impacted upon most respondent’s current situations and contributed to the choice of lifestyles and resultant job losses. The common tendency by many to lean easily towards luxury and depend on restaurants for meals and taxi’s as compared to public transport for travel when having access to income suggests the need for further analysis using theories not yet covered in this research for want of word limit, but which will help give a wider scope to this topic. These include the ‘structural theory’, ‘asset theory’ and the theory of institutional design.

- 4) Regulation of the manner and extent of fundraising activities carried out by the Church and Vanua institutions. There is need for accountability and transparency of their investments. The elimination or regulation of compulsory contributions imposed upon the poor through the various soli and vanua obligations could ease several financial burdens imposed upon the ethnic Fijian poor.
- 5) Firm legislative measures could help address self-sustainability through individual initiatives without manipulation and control by self-interested leaders.
- 6) The constructivist impact of inflammatory information pertaining to the Indo – Fijian community being the cause of ethnic Fijian poverty needs to be deconstructed to be replaced by emphasis on ethnic Fijian institutional restructure and work values.
- 7) Regulation is needed on the responsibilities of income earning children towards parents and the extent to which elderly parents are burdened with the nursing of grandchildren.
- 8) Massive awareness and education is needed on the way global policies worked, its relevance to local situations and the trickle down effect in which imbalances were created between the developed and developing countries was an essential aspect of knowledge needed amongst key decision makers including national leaders.
- 9) It is important to review the race-based affirmative action policies and practices in order to eliminate inequitable distribution that was enjoyed by the more privileged and powerful members of the ethnic Fijian society. This would help catapult the drive towards greater productivity and performance amongst the ethnic Fijian poor.
- 10) The promotion of greater investment and growth needs to be matched with the full protection for Fiji's own production sector and small businesses. (This needs to be guaranteed in light of the disappointments resulting from past agreements such as PICTA and PACER). An essential part of the solution was also the fact that a global cooperation was needed that was no longer one sided but clear on issues of equality and equitability and which safeguarded against exploitation and unsustainable development towards a process of development that was no longer theoretical, but practically.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The research findings combined with the literature review is summarized as follows;

“Within families, communities, and nations at large, people in positions of power are usually better resourced, connected, organized, and skilled in pursuing their interests, and can use that power to maintain privileges and exclude others from the charmed circle. Economic power and political power are always interwoven. Elites in all countries have historically gone to extreme, often bloody, lengths to maintain and even increase their dominance. That structures and practices on issues such as the lack of transparency or accountability reinforce these inequities is no accident: efforts to reform them meet dogged, sometimes violent, resistance. Redistributing economic and political power more fairly is often the first step towards disrupting this self-perpetuating cycle of inequality”. (Green, 2008:30).

One of the reasons for this thesis was to identify the ways in which the social, structural factors impact upon the poverty situation of the ethnic Fijian poor within the targeted locations. Few studies completely achieve all their aims, but the comprehensive literature review and the research method chosen, have, I think, advanced an understanding of structural factors perpetuating poverty and the inadequacy of current approaches to poverty alleviation.

The researcher acknowledges that the research analysis and findings may have been influenced to some extent by the value judgments of an Indo-Fijian. However, it can also be argued that an "outsider" view can provide insights that may be overlooked by "insider" research.

In addition to the literature review, it is believed that the strength of this research lies in its use of direct participant observation, face-to-face interviews, focus group discussions and expert interviews. These methods are thought to have provided valuable qualitative information on what might be termed "the missing factor" in poverty research.

The literature review illustrated that the traditional theoretical engagement and practical approach towards poverty reduction often philosophically varied while the macro and the micro policy solutions were often interlinked. This was seen from the variation in development agency mandates and the lack of ontological considerations in poverty planning such as what the reality was out there within the lives of the people, what this reality consisted of, how it was perceived and what could be further known about it. In turn,

the trickledown effect of global decision-making had helped create “a dependency and vulnerability situation” for the poorer countries (see Barr, 2001, WCSDG, 2004)

The fact that these were “engineered in ways that favored the commercial and market interests of the developed countries over and above those of the poorer nations” means that the Fiji government needs to reassess its level of willingness to adopt economic policy advice by the developed countries (see WCSDG, 2004: xi).

The thesis has not closely examined poverty policies but it is evident, even self-evident, that most are based on statistics and labour market data which address the signs and symptoms of poverty. In turn, they fail to take on board the social, structural dimensions of poverty amidst the many layers of traditional and religious allegiances and duties that prevail within developing countries such as Fiji.

It is hoped the research will help to unveil some key weaknesses in the scope and depth of what is often seen as ‘appealing facts and figures’ linked to economic data as a reliable source of national planning. There were seen to link, not to poverty causes, but only to the poverty signs and symptoms such as employment, income, housing, education, health, water and sanitation (see HIES 2002-2003, EUS 2004-2005, Narsey 2007, MDG report 2008).

The thesis had also aimed to find out how the ethnic Fijian poor viewed poverty and why the previous Governments’ efforts and affirmative action policies towards ethnic Fijian poverty reduction had failed to reap the expected results. There is a clear distinction between what the development agencies say about the poor and how the poor perceived their own situations. The research findings highlight the need for scrutiny of the practical reality on the ground so that the poverty reduction agenda remains on track in relation to the project and programme initiatives that target ethnic Fijian progress.

The field research has indicated that the poverty of the ethnic Fijian poor is linked to social constructions that are intrinsically interwoven and interrelated but camouflaged under many layers of historical, political and social structures. These have helped strengthen the existing status quo and the interests of the rich and powerful over those that of the ethnic Fijian poor.

Thus, based on the above interpretations, any programme that attempts to address the poverty situation of an indigenous community such as the ethnic Fijians also needs to understand the social constructionist and constructivist dimensions of their poverty situation first before attempting to devise community specific solutions.

Edwins (1995:21) observes that “If a belief or practice stops working for enough members of the group, it will fall out of use, and will cease to be a tradition (or what one might call a 'living' tradition) - instead, it becomes history”. It would seem that this process is not very far advanced in Fiji.

The literature also indicated that racial politics and discriminatory policies have helped create a mindset of dependency which some poor see as their “natural right”. The research findings support this assertion and indicate that the poor are well aware of how and in what ways the benefits resulting from the affirmative action measures are “being easily accessed and utilised by the rich and middle class”.

However, the nature of tolerance and the culture of silence combined with the tendency to “put the blame on Indo-Fijians” were seen to have helped prevent this awareness from exploding into actions of discontent. This highlights the fact that the anticipation of the ‘trickledown effect’ from government policies and programmes is a façade that shadows the reality of the situation on the ground.

In turn, the tendency for such ideologies to be accepted as a way of life for many and to rely on the subsistence not as a source of income but as an ‘established means of survival’ had further complicated efforts towards change. Moreover, the religious fervency within a few mainstream churches was seen to act as a means of emotional release for many of the poor from the concerns and frustrations of poverty. This implied that the intricacy of the situation for many seemed “impossible to disentangle from” due to factors such as “the fear of the mana” and what poverty expert, Barr (2005:64) labeled, “the culture of silence”.

The visibility of the situation is further disguised and cushioned by the strong awareness of extended family and kinship ties, and communal and community support networks. The resultant behaviour is seen by some as evidence that many ethnic Fijians are lazy, laid-back and unproductive. The situation may also be seen as behaviour that benefits the elites by way of better education, well-paid and secure civil service jobs that linked to hierarchy and tribal allegiances compared to the allegiances of the poor.

This points to the need for a critical scrutiny on the modus operandi of the ethnic Fijian institutions and their shift from traditional, service oriented goals towards commercialized, profit-oriented objectives. Additionally, the theory of ‘institutional design’ or ‘human capital theory’ could further enlighten on the ways in which the institutional processes operate, their historical links and their impact on poverty.

Moreover, a critical assessment of the ways in which the original motives of some of the religious and traditional institutions had been modified could shed light on the factors that have been utilised towards the psychological acceptance of the above practices as normal and unchangeable.

It was noted that the existing social constructions and the ‘follow the leader’ mentality is also seen to have helped camouflage the negative implications of a class structure that currently formed the barrier that prevented the ethnic Fijian poor from progress. This was evaluated to be a key factor that entrapped many within an intergenerational and cyclic poverty,, or, as Barr (2005: 37-38) has asserted,

“The economic and political structures in society shape the way people think and act. Those people who gain either wealth or power or status in a society tend to preserve and maintain the structures because they benefit from them. Those who do not have wealth or power or status and are oppressed by these structures tend to struggle against them. And so there is conflict. Oppressive structures (economic, political or social) always cause problems of injustice ... people can change structures in society”.

Thus, the research further concludes that we can no longer fight poverty within indigenous societies by focusing only the economic indicators, no matter how comprehensive. It was important to address the social and structural causes of poverty within the context of the social constructionist and constructivist paradigms.

The research fieldwork also showed the importance of consumption patterns as indicators of poverty as these impacted upon productivity at work and the ability to retain jobs while maintaining lifestyle social habits such a talanoa and yaqona. It is only by addressing these factors that the salient international best practices, such as the Grameen Bank project, which focus on small and micro enterprises, bank accounts and savings could ever work for the ethnic Fijian poor.

However, any solutions towards their collective development needs to utilise the existing strengths in the form of social capital towards a mindset change amongst the ethnic Fijian poor. This would help reduce the impact of the social and structural causes of poverty. This is possible if attention is focused on the typical individual. Or as Barr says, “each person has a great value and must come first in all planning and thinking— before ideologies, structures, profit, the economy and everything else” (Barr, 2005:36).

Thus, the interventionist approach, similar to what C. Wright Mills (1970), labelled 'liberal practicality' and what Karl Popper (1962; 64) described as 'piecemeal social engineering' can be a recommended way forward.

Interventions will, however, do little to help the poor unless existing traditional and institutions become less financially constraining and more service-oriented. Unfortunately, moves in this direction are likely to trigger rejection from those benefitting from the system.

As such, resistance seems inevitable from within an entrenched social order that is manipulated by elitist interests which play on the "traditional loyalties" and emotions of the masses, as was seen during the 1987 and the year 2000 coups. Change requires strong and visionary leaders who can stand above the threats from within and not be swayed by the dictates of rich aid donor countries.

The fact that the current Government has successfully exercised restraint on the operations of key ethnic institutions such as the Fijian Affairs Board and the Methodist Church heralds strong leadership. Such a stand on what was traditionally labeled as 'sensitive issues' reflects a growing awareness of the impact of repressive social structures upon the lives of the poor.

It is only when the full creative potential of a social capital rich, ethnic Fijian poor, living within a society bound by financially constraining norms and practices is realized and regulated will euphemisms such as 'poverty alleviation' begin to have literal meaning. Summarized in the words of the ILO Director General, Juan Somavia (ILC, 2005),

"... the poor do not cause poverty. Poverty is the result of structural failures and ineffective economic and social system ... the product of inadequate political responses, bankrupt policy imagination and insufficient international support. Its continued acceptance expresses a loss of fundamental human values."

Similarly,

"the ultimate test of any nation is how it treats its poorest, most vulnerable and disadvantaged people. A just society must be one that cares for the well being of all – not just a few. The economic system it adopts must work for the good of all – not just for some at the detriment of others...". (Barr, 2010:1, quoting John Rawls, 1972)

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LIST OF ANNEXES

Annex 1

Table 5(a) : Average % time usage per activity - male respondents

Week days	Male Respondent Activities indicated by % average No. of hrs per day per week								
	grog	Religion	sleep	Family	Community	Teitei	Talanoa	T.V	radio
Mon	3.5	0.6	12.2	1	2	0	3.8	2	5
Tue	4.1	0.9	12.2	1.5	1.5	1.5	4.1	3	5
Wed	4.2	1.1	11.6	1.5	0.5	3	4.2	3	5
Thu	4.5	0.9	10.5	1.2	1.2	2.5	4.5	2	4.5
Fri	5.8	2.2	8	1	0.5	2.2	5.8	1	5.8
Sat	9.2	3.5	5	1	3.7	1.8	7.2	5	7.2
Sun	9.8	4.8	7	4	0	0	7.2	7	7.2
Average	5.87	2	6.91	1.6	1.34	1.61	5.26	3.28	5.67

Table 5(b): Average % Time usage per activity - female respondents

Week Days	Female Activities indicated by % average number of hrs per day per week								
	grog	religion	sleep	family	community	teitei	Talanoa	T.V	Radio
Mon	1.7	1.2	8.8	2.1	0.4	3.4	3.4	1.2	6
Tue	2.5	0.5	8.9	4.5	2.2	3.5	3.8	1.3	6.2
Wed	2.3	0	7.1	4.7	1.89	1.2	2.9	1.4	6.2
Thur	1.9	0	7.9	4.5	2.6	0.5	3.8	1	5.9
Fri	2	0	8.1	5.6	3.2	3.9	2.8	1.3	6.8
Sat	2.9	2.5	7.9	6.5	1	0.8	1.5	2.6	3.1
Sun	3.2	5.8	8.3	6.2	0	0	1.5	1.8	5.2
Average	2.3	1.4	8.14	5.15	1.7	1.9	2.8	1.5	5.6

Table 5(c) : Tabulation of average and overall average time usage by activity for the female and male respondents –WOP-Fiji

Average	Grog	Religion	Family	Community	Teitei	Talanoa	T.V	Radio	Sleep
Average Female	2.3	1.4	5.15	1.7	1.9	2.8	1.5	5.6	8.14
Average male	5.87	2	6.91	1.6	1.34	1.61	5.21	3.28	5.67
Overall average	4.09	1.7	6.03	1.65	1.62	2.205	3.36	4.44	6.91

ANNEX 2 - List of Names of Professionals interviewed or whose opinions were sought

1. Ms Bernadette Rounds Ganilau – Former Member for Parliament and Deputy Minister for Women Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation. Current NGO Head and Business Women in Fiji.
2. Mr. John Sowani - WOP Programme Coordinator for the MWHSWPA, Principal Assistant Secretary –Poverty Unit of Fiji, Principal Planning Officer -Poverty Project Monitoring Unit.
3. Father Kevin Barr- Director of the Pacific Community Network, Former long serving Consultant for ECREA–Ecumenical Centre for Research, Education and advocacy in Fiji
4. Mr. Luke Mataicewa Rokoua - ILO Staff and Project Manager for the MAPRH Project.
5. Ms Ana Tagikavatini -Senior Welfare Officer, MWSWHPA- Poverty Unit
6. Dr Sitiveni Yanuyanu – Director , Fiji National Council for the Disabled (FNCDP)
7. Ms Salote Tamani - President and Founder, Fiji Single Mothers Association (FSMA)
8. Solomon Islands – Representatives from the department of Labour and Employers and Workers Organisation.
9. Vanuatu- 3 ILO constituent members and the ILO Country based National Officer.
10. Kiribati- 2 Employers and 2 Workers organization representatives

ANNEX 3 - Table 6 .

Percentage Poor In Fiji by Location and Ethnicity							
Location	Rural			Urban			
Ethnicity	Fijians	Indians	Others	Fijians	Indians	Others	Total
% in poverty	38.0	43.1	41.3	27.2	29.1	17.3	34.4

Source: 2002/03 HIES Report

ANNEX 4

TABLE 7: Fiji Islands Rural & Urban Population by Ethnicity 1996 – 2007

Division	1996				2007			
	Total	Fijian	Indian	Others	Total	Fijian	Indian	Others
Central	296607	175878	98660	23069	340843	213515	102799	5720
Urban	214628	108671	84475	21482	247141	132916	91212	5419
Rural	82979	67207	14185	1587	93702	80599	11587	301
Eastern	40770	36302	695	3773	39074	35409	572	2029
Urban	3746	2673	405	668	4290	3197	382	44
Rural	12468	12046	131	291	12125	11854	64	9
Western	297184	116455	172975	7754	317376	152243	156379	2142
Urban	111070	42045	62583	6050	133823	60934	65539	1853
Rural	30051	7946	20572	1533	183553	91309	90840	289
Northern	139516	64940	66488	8088	130607	72816	51841	246
Urban	30051	7946	20572	1533	35832	13715	20383	154
Rural	109468	56994	45916	6555	94775	59101	31458	92

GOF: Extracted from FIBOS Census data 2007 (p)