A JustPeace
Vanua Engagement

PEACEBUILDING APPROACHES TO CLIMATE CHANGE IN FIJIAN COMMUNITIES

Prepared by Transcend Oceania and Conciliation Resources with support from the Toda Peace Institute and Square Circle Global Development

First Edition
Contributors to this guide

Transcend Oceania is a regional peacebuilding Non-Government Organisation in the Pacific committed to advancing sustainable peace and development through justice and non-violence in the Pacific. Conciliation Resources is an international organisation committed to stopping violent conflict and creating more peaceful societies. This work has received research and evidence, advice, and support from the Toda Peace Institute run Climate Change and Conflict in Oceania network which is comprised of international and local academics, policymakers and practitioners working on climate change issues. Additional process facilitation support has been provided by Square Circle Global Development.
Transcend Oceania and Conciliation Resources have been undertaking a new programme of work that employs peacebuilding approaches to address the impacts of climate change and conflict in Fiji. This is the first edition of this guide — it is a work in progress and the methodology will continue to be tested. Transcend Oceania and partners have produced this Guide to document a ‘Community Engagement Approach’, which is both appropriate to the Fiji iTaukei context and to the ways in which Transcend Oceania and partners are working to ensure respectful and meaningful engagement with Fijian communities. This Guide was initially developed with the aim of supporting and strengthening JustPeace communities to prevent, mitigate and resolve conflicts arising from climate and environmental change, including for those communities facing dislocation and relocation. However, this Guide may also be useful for external partners wishing to work with communities in Fiji. It is grounded in traditional knowledge and culturally appropriate non-violent approaches to create just, peaceful, inclusive, participatory, sustainable and resilient communities. This community engagement approach is underpinned by action research that builds on local knowledge systems and worldviews, dialogue and peace process facilitation, training and education, trauma awareness and healing, and community development initiatives.
The Pacific is facing an era of significant environmental and settlement change as a result of climate change in combination with other factors. These include resource (mis)management, population growth, migration and ongoing changes in community life, governance structures, tradition and culture. Climate change poses significant challenges to the wellbeing of many Fijian communities — both urban and rural. Climate change impacts demonstrate different effects for each community. Climate change may impact leadership, resources management, where people can live and how they live.

Climate change also offers an opportunity to rethink and map governance by tracking reactive changes that further aggravate impacts of climate change, both in terms of empowering community governance, and also in terms of fostering collaborative relationships and contextualised accountability mechanisms between communities, civil society and governments. Responding and adapting to changing climates and environments offers opportunities for improved environmental management, and for strengthening community approaches that build peace and justice. There is an opportunity to transform existing structures in both state and society to prevent inequality, conflict and violence in Fiji. For iTaukei Fijian communities, the Vanua context (see below) continues to be a source of positive power and resilience. This resource guides learning and action within a deep respect for community worldviews in order to ensure successful outcomes based on appropriateness and relevance within each context.
The primary audience of this guide is peacebuilding practitioners, researchers seeking local approaches, community leaders and members for consultations, as well as those who are seeking to address climate-related challenges in communities. The guide contains strategies that promote the inclusion of different groups within communities, promote participation including those who may be left out of traditional structures. The secondary audience are those aspiring to leave aside ‘top-down’ approaches, engage in genuine partnership with communities and are willing to invest in the timeframes and resources to do so. This audience may include civil society organisations, researchers, government institutions, and international organisations. This guide provides strategies for co-designing ways of working with communities. It presents principles such as listening, respecting indigenous knowledge and priorities, conducting multiple visits, giving time to processes and working at the pace of communities to ensure success.

This Guide ensures that the value of cultural approaches are maintained and practiced. In doing so, community members willingly engage and actively participate knowing their cultural values are acknowledged. It also seeks to acknowledge and address power inequalities and injustices within and between communities, on both a national and international scale, by working productively with different forms of power — including the power with the Vanua or community context itself.
This work has been enabled through a broader programme of work that aims to work with and build upon the traditional approaches and knowledge, resources, and skills of Pacific Islanders to prevent and manage conflicts emerging as a result of climate change-related migration. It aims to do so through generating conflict analysis tools, skills and relationships building upon capacities of civil society organisations to work effectively with communities. This programme also aims to capture analysis and learning to communicate community perception and concerns of climate change conflict impacts in national and international policy-making arenas.

The second section outlines key principles underpinning the engagement approach, including a place-based approach to working with communities. The third section details the phases of the engagement process and the fourth makes some general conclusions.
Working in the Vanua context

The first principle for working with communities experiencing climate change impacts in Fiji and other parts of the Pacific is to take time to form a foundational respect for people’s worldviews. In many locations in Fiji, this means working from within the Vanua context by employing a holistic, value-based approach. To assume this vantage point is to take into account the traditional, culturally appropriate ways of engaging with communities, to research and understand how communities operate, and ensure outsiders apply this understanding when engaging a community. A ‘JustPeace’ Vanua approach engages with iTaukei cultural protocols. These processes embrace a consultative approach with community leaders and members. As demonstrated in the initial success of the programme, this principle presents an opportunity gain an appreciation of how environmental change and conflict affects access to resources, physical environments, settlement, economic opportunities and livelihoods, as well as social, community and spiritual life.
The Vanua can be understood as the relationship between iTaukei people, their place, environment, identity, tradition and culture. It is central to governance and decision-making, including how government institutions and outside partners engage with communities. The Vanua is the human embodiment of the profound relationship between iTaukei people and the natural and spirit world — including the land, sea and sky and everything in them, which a group of people ruled by a chief have claimed to belong to them and to which they belong. It is in this very profound relationship that the iTaukei identity is embedded and rooted. The land, the sea and the sky and everything within that defined world of reality is understood by iTaukei people as an extension of themselves.

A Vanua is divided into a group of Yavusa or tribes. A Yavusa is divided into a group of Mataqali or clans and a Mataqali is divided into a group of Tokatoka or family units. Yavusa is established following the male lineage of the eldest male, who passes down the mana of the Vanua. In some places, a female elder may also head a Yasuva. The Yavusa share a common name, a common origin myth, a common founding ancestor or God, a common series of ‘totemic’ features, such as a species of plants, animal or fish which are regarded as sacred and tabu. These totems form spiritual connections between people and a Vanua. All members of the Yasuva are registered in the iTaukei book of registration known as the i Vola ni Kawa Bula (VKB). This social structure provides a framework within which different members of the group relate to each other, and sets traditional roles for the Yavusa, Mataqali and Tokotoka. These may relate to seating arrangements at feasts or meetings, the order of drinking Yaqona (kava), and governance arrangements within places. The confederations of different Yasuva make up the Matanitu or ‘government’, which is headed by a paramount iTaukei chief.
The *Vanua* establishes the relationship with *place*. This includes agricultural land, forest land and fishing areas called iqoliqoli, which are communally owned. It contains sites that are connected with the original *Yavusa*. These sites may be spiritual, natural and also associated with ancestral farming sites or ikanakana, that is, being mortal made. Sites are diverse in nature, but examples of different sites include mountains, burial sites, original villages and other sacred places believed to have spiritual power.

The *Vanua* also forms a relationship with the *spiritual* dimension of life. It is essential to the systems of beliefs and identity that form a group. It forms the basis of the relationships between spirits and other spirits, humans and humans, and humans and spirits, as well as between humans, spirits and their environment. Today, this spirituality has been redefined by Christianity. However, it still holds significant power through its foundational common understandings and continues to influence governance and action within the *Vanua* for iTaukei people. Respecting community worldviews is essential to how change can be navigated, particularly in cases of relocation due to climate change.
Community engagement principles

Building on respect for community worldviews, the following principles can help generate more meaningful engagement with communities.

Local agency and understanding

Global narratives of climate change can have an unintended outcome of victimising Pacific Islander communities, while simplifying the effects of climate change impacts. The Fijian experience demonstrates that climate change impacts are mixed and complex, and people in communities are agents of their own change. Respecting the Vanua context means understanding the narratives of the profound relationship between the iTaukei and their physical and spirit world while working with community perspectives and understandings of climate change, displacement and conflict. This provides the basis for community-led strategies to be built collectively and inclusively.

Integrated conflict analysis

Conflict analysis is the exploration of the context, actors, relationships and dynamics of climate-related conflict. It is not a static activity, but a process of ongoing analysis conducted within relationships, which builds understandings, informs actions and helps to foster reflections while also giving ongoing attention to the context. By connecting conflict analysis to community engagement, peacebuilding actions become active and iterative processes. This principle ensures a do no harm approach — that is, one which is conflict sensitive. It understands external partners are part of the context once they choose to engage with a Vanua.
Building relational approaches

This involves intentional effort to support and strengthen relationships across power divides. A relational approach understands that relations are essential to how institutions function in practice. It acknowledges power relations within communities, between communities and between communities and external participants, including state institutions. Building mutual understanding and learning is a relational exercise that underlies each phase of the engagement approach.

Ensuring action is adaptive

Community engagement should implement processes that are adaptive and open ended instead of outsider defined ‘results’ and timeframes. Both conflict and change occur in highly complex and evolving systems, meaning the enforcement of top-down or linear change is rarely possible. Being open to different pathways and approaches while recognising indigenous knowledge enables peacebuilding approaches to be built through shared insights and understandings. This further allows for greater responsiveness to events such as the COVID-19 pandemic and other disasters. Understanding external events as inevitable and being adaptable is crucial in maintaining momentum for change. Therefore, adaptive action is a fundamental strategy for ensuring the longer-term sustainability of changes.

Connecting scales and promoting comparative learning

The engagement approach utilises a community-up approach and creates the opportunity to connect community understandings of how to prevent and resolve conflicts arising from climate and environmental change with national, regional, and international arenas. The approach connects learnings and evidence that identifies peacebuilding and conflict sensitive approaches when responding to a range of climate change-related needs. Additionally, learnings can be connected across different contexts and geographies through comparative learning, which can help to build insights and creativity to share and develop peacebuilding responses.
Peacebuilding Approaches to Climate Change in Fijian Communities

Promoting inclusion

An analysis of who is included and excluded in decision-making within each scale is required to promote sustainable peace and livelihoods for all. Community engagement done well presents an opportunity to transform relations within places through strategies that promote greater inclusion. A process of identifying exclusion and marginalisation must be carried out while considering the power dynamics within and between the community, national and international scales. This involves moving beyond blanket categories such as women, youth and disability, to understand power dynamics within and beyond the Vanua. Meaningful inclusion based on contextualised power analyses of different community identities requires the transformation of project and policy mechanisms to ensure a greater inclusion of voices and the experiences that these voices represent.

Conflict sensitivity and do no harm

This guide is developed with a do no harm approach in mind. It is based on a place-based understanding that seeks to work with communities rather than ‘deliver’ to them. It is based on an understanding that any external partnerships and associated action, once entering the community context, is then part of the community context. This is not always obvious to external partners who feel that they or their activities exist outside the context. However, the community system in which actions occur are shaped by local dynamics and can have positive and negative outcomes for different people.

Keeping people safe

In our work we are jointly committed to keeping all people who are part of community engagement safe from harm. This harm could not only be physical or sexual violence but also harassment, discrimination, abuse of power and any related inappropriate behaviour that can traumatisate those with whom we work. The keeping people safe approach builds on standard safeguarding policies by ensuring that procedures and practices are developed in a participatory manner with partners and beneficiaries. This ensures that safeguarding systems keep people safe and are not seen as an ineffective bureaucratic burden. The JustPeace methodology not only adheres to keeping people safe but also gives opportunities to participants to reflect on safety and security in their own communities and to address any issues this may raise.
The following diagram sets out an engagement approach for working with communities. The sequence in the figure facilitates relationship building, reflection and action. It is based on grounded action research principles, seeks to embed strategies that promote inclusion and communicates learnings across various scales. The engagement approach takes place over a series of phases which include:

1. *I Sevusevu* and relationship building
2. Participatory research
3. Sense-making and analysis
4. Community-led peacebuilding actions
5. Reflection and learning

This process integrates key peacebuilding approaches into a series of interactions, including research, dialogue, trust building, conflict analysis, conflict prevention, advocacy, gender sensitivity, training and so on. While the engagement approach is sequential, it is non-linear. Instead, it is based on an understanding that change itself is non-linear. Phases can overlap with other phases, they may occur multiple times or in different orders than suggested. For example, learning and reflection should be an ongoing process, while a cycle may require immediate community actions.
Peacebuilding Approaches to Climate Change in Fijian Communities

I Sevusevu

1. Relationship building
2. Participatory research
3. Sense-making and analysis
4. Community action building
5. Reflection and learning

Vanua context
1. /Sevusevu/ and relationship building

The purpose of /Sevusevu/ and Relationship Building is to gain entry and build rapport with communities. This lays the foundation for relationships and exchanges between communities and those entering them. It strengthens the shared commitment within communities, promoting reciprocal exchanges. Transcend Oceania does this as a key way to demonstrate our actual and lived respect for community worldviews.

/Sevusevu/ is a Fijian iTaukei traditional form of entry into a formal Vanua community setting. /Sevusevu/ begins with respect to the traditional owners of the land. It formally informs Vanua leaders — and members of the community returning home after being away for a length of time — of the arrival and entry of a visitor, or the entry of a new program or project. Those entering are introduced and the purpose of the entry is discussed, including what will be involved to fulfill that purpose. This takes place during a ritual presentation where, typically, the chief and/or the elders of the community will be present. When they agree to allow entry and are willing to engage in the process, they receive the /Sevusevu/. The /Sevusevu/ might consist of a bundle of Waka (roots from the Yaqona (kava) plant). At this point, visitors become guests and are welcomed. When the /Sevusevu/ is done in the appropriate manner, there is a higher likelihood of receiving the full support and community participation needed for success.

The interactions occurring alongside an /Sevusevu/ also provide informal opportunities for building trust and interpersonal relationships on the terms of the community. For example, engaging in forms of dialogue at the pace of communities, developing empathy for the issues (e.g. for Talanoa in its more informal sense — see below) and obtaining a visceral understanding of the environment. This process can, in a subtle way, work to address power imbalances typically found in relationships between communities and external partners.
2. Participatory Research

The purpose of participatory research is to co-produce knowledge and analysis on the range of issues communities are facing. It is built on the understanding that each community context is different, depending on local histories, leadership, environments and events. The participatory research should follow action research principles, which aim to enable community members to work towards positive transformative change by analysing, taking action and reflecting. While qualitative in nature, participatory research can replace traditional ‘baseline’ approaches, support monitoring and evaluation processes.

Different methods can be employed depending on the context. However, key qualitative methods appropriate for the Vanua context include overlapping approaches of Talanoa (Fijian dialogue method), Listening and Storytelling, Relational Mapping and Participant Observation.
### Appropriate methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Purposes</th>
<th>Data Capture</th>
<th>Data Analysis</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Talanoa</strong></td>
<td><em>Talanoa</em> refers to a respectful way to conduct dialogue in Fijian (and other identity) communities. It is group-based and processual. <em>Talanoa</em> aims to promote relational development and is key to how negotiations take place.</td>
<td>As a large group dialogue method, it can build relationships, exchange expectations, explore issues, co-produce plans in a way that is appropriate for a collective community context.</td>
<td>Individual reflection and note-taking.</td>
<td>Thematic analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Listening and storytelling</td>
<td><strong>Listening</strong> is a relatively unstructured and flexible interviewing approach that captures conversations in the different forms. The listener provides an initial open question then seeks to understand and explore, through feelings of the person/people. The listener is a facilitator whose role is to provide initial prompts, to pause, encourage and ask follow up questions. <strong>Storytelling:</strong> Stories help people understand, and shape action, in the world around them. Storytelling links the past to present, can be used to better understand challenges and find sources of resilience.</td>
<td>Carried out with individuals. <strong>listening and storytelling</strong> can also be tailored to capture perspectives of different intersectional identities. It can create spaces for excluded groups to feel comfortable to express their experiences and therefore can overcome internal forms of exclusion. Listening and storytelling can be used to ensure a range of perspectives and issues are captured without pre-assumptions. It can be used to collate general themes and trends occurring in a community.</td>
<td>Individual reflection and note-taking. Documentation of direct quotes where possible.</td>
<td>Short written case study stories. Thematic analysis.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relational mapping (see below)</td>
<td><strong>Relational principles</strong> recognise the interconnectedness of people and environments in the Vanua context, as well as the need to focus on the ‘space between’ people, land and resources. Relational Mapping explores the relationships and linkages between people, place, spiritual life, rights and culture, land, settlement, livelihoods and economic activity. <strong>Relational mapping</strong> may also form the basis of a conflict analysis as it seeks to understand structural relations between climate change impacts and conflict drivers and identify opportunities for justice and community peacebuilding.</td>
<td>Individual and small group method to explore the relationships and linkages between people, place, spiritual life, rights and culture, land, settlement, livelihoods and economic activity, as well as understandings of climate change, conflict drivers, productions of justice and peacebuilding strategies. Relational mapping can be done in two layers. The first layer might map community actors themselves to gain a greater understanding of power relations internally. This may include families, leaders, church and social groups, organisations, settlers and landowners, excluded members, institutions (both formal and ‘traditional’) and outside actors. The second layer can then map the dynamics — relationships between groups, roles and power, rights and culture, spiritual life, land and place, economic activity, livelihoods and settlement, and understandings of climate change.</td>
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### Participant observation
An ethnographic method that can follow on from relationship building established during the I Sevusevu stage. Participant observation is part of a reciprocal ‘dialogue as equals’ between community members and external partners centred in the community setting.

### Capturing observations and reflections
Capturing observations and reflections about community life, the project and the research questions look both ‘internally’ at their own thoughts and feelings, while also looking ‘externally’ at what they are observing in the community.

Group debriefing after each peacebuilding activities to capture reflections on process and outcomes.

### Team Debrief
Team Debrief notes.
Note taking, journaling.

### Thematic analysis
Thematic analysis
Relational mapping in the *Vanua* context

- Settlement
- Understandings of climate change
- Conflict
- Roles and power
- Rights and culture
- Spiritual life
- Land and place
- Economic Activity
- Relationships
- Livelihoods

Peacebuilding Approaches to Climate Change in Fijian Communities
Sampling and inclusion

Participants can be identified and selected through three main sampling methods. First, in consultation with the village headman and village leaders during I Sevusevu, and at the start of each visit. Second, using a participative snowballing approach, where community members are recommended by other community members. Third, opportunities emerge through relationship building while considering inclusion and power. This purposive sampling is organic in nature and involves selecting community members across key characteristics. This ensures perspectives are captured from a broad range of community members, including all types of leaders (e.g. traditional, religious), youth, the elderly, disabled people, and people with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics. External participants should seek to get a cross-section of different characteristics based on where power lies. For example, those with formal education and without, with formal employment or those who are subsistent farmers and, importantly, those who speak for land and those who may be considered “settlers” in any one place.
Suggested guiding research questions

The following are some basic guiding questions, which can be adapted and contextualised to each community context:

- Within the Vanua context, what expectations do communities have about the future when it comes to climate and environmental change more generally? How do these expectations connect the past to the present?

- How do events (such as COVID-19) or sudden onset disasters impact community life? What can responding to these events tell us about how communities might build resilience to the impacts of climate change? What do community members value, and how are such values being threatened or disrupted as a result of climate change impacts including possible relocation?

- What types of pre-existing and new conflicts are being exacerbated as communities come into contact with the impacts of climate change?

- How do understandings and responses to climate change and relocation change the relationships within communities, and between communities and external actors, including the government? What are the challenges and opportunities for strengthening these relationships?

- What adaptive capacities come from community understandings of climate change, displacement and conflict, and how can these capacities help communities prevent or mitigate violent conflict and build peace through local systems of governance and justice?
There are two types of ethics at play in activities such as externally-led research engagements. These are related to different cultural approaches to accountability.

The first is the more formalised and documented approach, commonly associated with external and institutional approaches. This will involve providing an information sheet about the purpose of the research and how the data will be used. This is often accompanied with a formal consent form, which will contain information should a participant wish to withdraw consent at any time.

The second form of accountability is based on a more cultural and relational approach, which encourages investment among participants in driving their own action and holds external guests accountable in their purpose. This is more than a form and involves taking the time to gain informed consent, talking through any concerns, and work out the mechanisms to report back on the key emerging themes (see phase 3 below).
3. Sense-making and analysis

Suggested guiding research questions

Drawing from the deep information, data and insight generated through Participatory Research, the information is collated and analysed using grounded analysis. This involves a process of understanding, clarifying and interpreting data to find emergent themes and common issues. The documentation of the sense-making (e.g. the production of a report) for each community may include:

- Key themes — a summary of key themes across all participatory research methods.

- Key stories — selected stories written up as small case study narratives or captured in digital formats.

- A meta-story — an overall story for each community that weaves together the combined understandings of the collective lived experience as it relates to climate change, conflict and peacebuilding pathways.

Ideally, the sense-making will involve research participants so that a verification of the data by community members takes place, particularly regarding the “meta-story”. This follows the principle of good research, which feeds back into what has been ‘extracted’ and interpreted by those outside the community. This allows participants to have an opportunity to validate, correct and add additional information, if required. The validation process is also often a key strategy to promote gender and other forms of inclusion internally. For example, it can be an opportunity for a leader to hear perspectives of youth in a culturally safe format.
Analysis

An additional layer of analysis can be conducted, such as through employing common conflict analysis tools that help to situate learnings in a broader social, political and economic context and identify peacebuilding pathways. Common elements of conflict analysis include an examination of the context, identifying key actors and the relationships between actors, identifying key issues (as well as their root causes and impacts), considering conflict dynamics, and exploring opportunities to manage, mitigate, or resolve conflicts — that is, to explore strategies for fostering peaceful relations. Conflict analysis is linked to supporting advocacy and strengthening community voice, enabling inclusion in institutional processes, and informing effective policy and decision-making.
4. Community-led peacebuilding action

The shared insights, understandings and relationships created and strengthened through the sense-making and analysis processes will form a community-driven evidence base for Community Action Building. Sense-making and conflict analysis can help identify peacebuilding pathways and foster agreement on immediate actions. One action may be to summarise findings from phases two and three, communicating needs to local and national policy makers and other external partners. In this way, the engagement approach is non-linear and has different phases occurring concurrently or at different times. Types of action should be led and decided by communities, however, as a guide these may include the following.

Dialogue

The first peacebuilding action might involve creating more inclusive relationships and improved understandings between community members, or between members of different communities, civil society, churches, governments and relevant international actors depending on the needs and context. Dialogue is about participants sharing their views, concerns and hopes with others but, very importantly, also about being open to hearing the views, concerns and hopes of other participants. Dialogue differs from debate or discussion because it does not aim to convince participants to change their mind or to reach an agreement. The aim of dialogue is to help participants become more informed of other people’s truths, to reach mutual understanding and perhaps transform their relationships and attitudes. There are many different methodologies to promote dialogue but it is usually a structured process that is guided by dialogue facilitators to ensure constructive communication. This could take the form of a structured Talanoa in keeping with appropriate methods for the Vanua context.
Dialogue in practice: Creating platforms for communities to understand and address their situations

Transcend Oceania created a platform to conduct a *Talanoa* or dialogue with community members on post-relocation issues. The dialogue session identified key challenges brought by the disruption in community governance arrangements after a relocation caused by climate change impacts. During the relocation, houses had not been built according to the traditional village structure format grounded in the *Vanua*. These structures normally influence decision making and ensure the power of the people in the *iTaukei* settings. Conflicts linked to how youth and future leaders will sustain their future identity in the face of these changes were arising. The *Talanoa* or dialogue helped community members to speak to each other about how to adjust and adapt to changes while finding strategies to maintain common threads that guide the sharing of resources and channel positive developments. In the dialogue session, community members were given the space to reflect upon the changing context, to listen to other community members and understand the re-emerging community governance system.
Addressing and preventing conflicts

Conflicts involving communities may arise from seemingly incompatible goals, a breakdown of communication or relationships, unmet expectations or needs and other situations that may escalate into violence. This includes disputes caused by an imbalance in power relations within and between community actors and external partners. Mediation can help to resolve conflicts constructively and allows parties to find a solution that works for everyone — a win/win outcome. Mediation is a structured process in which a third-party neutral actor assists those involved in a conflict to re-establish constructive communication and a mutual understanding with the aim of resolving the conflict. The role of the mediator is to assist the parties to discover the interests and needs behind their positions and generate options that satisfy all the parties involved. Mediation support can include conflict coaching with conflict parties to help them resolve the conflict themselves, assisting parties with the analysis of the situation, reality testing solutions and conflict resolution skills training. A mediator can work together with the parties in a conflict or, if a group process is not appropriate, can work with each independently by shuttling between them. Conflict prevention involves identifying root causes of conflicts and conflict drivers, in order to address them proactively and minimise the risks of conflicts escalating into violence in the future.
Addressing conflicts in practice: Taking the first steps

A significant multi-party dispute has been occurring in a district where Transcend Oceania works. Through community-led peacebuilding, Transcend Oceania brought together different groups with different forms of leaderships including an important chief. This was the first time the chief directly heard the concerns of different groups, including women and youth, and he committed to engage in resolving land and other conflict issues in the village. In this way, Transcend Oceania as a civil society organisation was able to open a space for dialogue between different land owning-groups. This provided a safe platform for women and youth to speak to their concerns when normally these voices would not be heard. This was not the end of the conflict issues the community faces, but it represented an important step in a long-term process.

Training and mentoring

Community leaders and members may require additional skills, knowledge and confidence to be able to address their own concerns. Identifying these needs and addressing them through particular training or mentoring may be appropriate. This may involve skills in communication, leadership, advocacy skills, governance, conflict resolution, gender and inclusion.

Confidence building in advocacy

As part of connecting actions across scales, advocacy strategies can help communities to communicate needs and have their voices heard within different scales, including those national and international. Support to overcome power differentials and to avoid ‘tokenism’ is important. Confidence building among community members supports participation in national and international forums. Mentoring and support can be given to community members to help increase advocacy effectiveness. Outside partners can also help by creating platforms for community voices to be heard.
Advocacy in practice: Skills development for engaging government actors

Transcend Oceania has been working with community representatives to build confidence when engaging government representatives on community needs and priorities. Co-organising a COP26 side event in 2021, Transcend Oceania invited community representatives to share stories of the impact of climate change on their communities and to raise their voices to national and international levels. At another policy advocacy event in Savusavu in 2022, Transcend Oceania prepared a mix of community representatives (30 in total), including women and youth, to engage with the Divisional Planning Officer. This was a positive experience that led to community representatives feeling heard and acknowledged. It resulted in continuing engagement between the local government and communities, as well as progress for one community in addressing a complex land tenure issue.

Comparative learning

Through exposure to the climate change and conflict experiences of other communities in Fiji, the Pacific and external partners can help build insight and awareness, and spark creative ideas for new actions. It can also bring together different perspectives — including that of the Vanua context — with science and environmental knowledge, as well as national and global policy frameworks on climate change.

Trauma healing

When a community faces a natural disaster or other traumatic event (e.g. the impacts of COVID-19) past trauma can rise to the surface and have an effect on the collective response to climate change impacts or the ability to carry out peacebuilding plans. For example, Transcend Oceania has a community-based collective trauma healing approach that provides psycho-social support following the devastating impacts of disasters.
Healing in practice: Understanding trauma and its effects

Following a cyclone season where TC Yasa and tropical cyclone Ana hit Fiji, several communities in Vanua Levu were left devastated and traumatised. As one community member commented: “We never imagined that a category five cyclone can also hit our village... we thought that it only happens in other countries but this year, it has hit us hard. It was intense and shocking to many of us, we were terrified, worried and helpless on that dreadful night.” After giving community members an opportunity to communicate their needs, Transcend Oceania ran a Trauma Informed Preparedness and Resilience activity. This is a form of psycho-social support that can help to retain and build resilience after the sudden onset of climatic events. This is essential to ongoing conflict prevention within communities. Disasters bring a range of painful experiences related to loss of loved ones and belongings, trigger trauma from previous climatic and other events — such as tropical cyclone Winston in 2016 — and uncover pressures and tensions within existing relationships. Activities in this context focused on helping communities to understand how traumatic events affect individuals, different identity groups and the collective as a whole. This assisted communities to brainstorm and dialogue on their own understandings of trauma, observations of psychological impact and how this may link to cycles of violence. Using a circle process for different community groups to conduct story-sharing helped to revisit traumatic experiences and create a safe space for sharing. This can help link individuals with particular needs to professional counselling or other support. The outcome is for communities to then make their own action plans to assist with recovery. As one community member shared: “Trauma is like a prison and it will control you like a slave, if we are not careful, we will be stuck there all our lives. This process has helped me to build courage and not be afraid to share my sensitive stories, because if I didn’t and if you don’t it can put you in a place you wouldn’t imagine, just like what happened to me... [this activity] has helped me find the real reasons as to why my behaviour, thinking and attitude had changed.”
5. Reflection and learning

Reflection and learning should occur throughout the engagement process. However, at key points, or following key interventions, more structured learning linked to Monitoring and Evaluation can take place. The same methods used in the participatory research phase can also be used here. Additionally, in methods such as learning circles, a Talanoa-styled approach can enable reflections. It is also important to keep in mind inclusion principles and internal power dynamics by creating multiple spaces for different identity groups, giving groups opportunities to provide feedback and participate in their own reflections. Reflection and learning questions should be generated based on the context. However, some key guiding question might include:

- What has changed and why?
- What has not changed/stayed the same and why? What could be done differently?
- What changes are significant? What is the level of impact and influence of the change?
- What would the community like to see happen next, in their community, and at the provincial, national, regional and global levels?

These learnings and reflections can feed into follow-up actions or into spin-off activities that are community driven so as to sustain the process.
This guide has been produced to document the ways in which Transcend Oceania engages with communities from a position of deep respect both for the power of agency in community worlds — including in iTaukei worlds — and the concept of Vanua as central to understanding how to work with people. The initial results from applying this community engagement model has, so far, revealed that community members exhibit a low level of trust in the short-term engagements often carried out by external partners. The myriad of projects that have been carried out by outsiders in communities, such as the many one-off visits and the lack of follow-up, has disillusioned communities. This makes it more difficult to assist Fijian communities manage climate change impacts over time. Given the challenge brought by changing climates and environments, participatory and long-term and sustained initiatives are required. Transcend Oceania’s JustPeace community engagement methodology aims to sustain relationships as the foundation of accompanying communities on their journey as they themselves navigate changes around them. The methodology has demonstrated communities trust and value approaches that place community participants as equals when responding to climate change impacts. The practical nature of this guide demonstrates processes that governments and international partners can follow in order to invest in relationships and enable JustPeace outcomes. This guide demonstrates a way of engaging community that enables respectful, effective, and sustainable action for everyone involved.
The guide is a work in progress and, being a first edition, these approaches are still being developed as Transcend Oceania, communities and external partners grapple with how to respond to climate change. One key theme that occurs throughout this guide is the need to be accountable to communities, and to continually reflect upon where different forms of power lie. This presents a challenge to governments and international partners to change practices and frameworks by investing in more flexible timeframes — especially project timelines — fostering interpersonal relations, focusing on the relationship between institutions (both community and national) and being adaptable to external events (especially sudden onset disasters). It is not about communities changing to fit our requirements but for outsiders transforming practice to meet communities half-way. This engagement is then relational, reciprocal and appropriate to the Vanua context.
<p>| <strong>GLOSSARY</strong> |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| <strong>Ikanakana</strong>     | Sites or places with ancestral meanings. These sites may be spiritual, natural or associated with ancestral farming sites. |
| <strong>Iqoliqoli</strong>     | This includes agricultural land, forest land and fishing areas. It contains sites that are connected with the original Yavusa. |
| <strong>I Sevusevu</strong>    | <em>I Sevusevu</em> is a Fijian <em>iTaukei</em> traditional form of entry into a formal <em>Vanua</em> community setting. <em>I Sevusevu</em> begins by paying respect to the traditional owners of the land. It formally informs <em>Vanua</em> leaders and members of the community returning home after being away for a length of time, of the arrival and entry of a visitor, or the entry of a new program or project. |
| <strong>iTaukei</strong>       | Indigenous people of the Fiji Islands, who live in an area informally called Melanesia. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>i Vola ni Kawa Bula</em></td>
<td><em>iTaukei</em> book of registration in the state of Fiji.</td>
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<tr>
<td>JustPeace</td>
<td>A methodology with community at its core. It aims to prevent, mitigate and resolve conflicts arising from climate and environmental change, including for communities facing dislocation and relocation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mana</td>
<td>A widely use cultural concept denoting knowledge and spiritual power that is found in many Pacific Islands communities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Matanitu</td>
<td>A form of governance which is headed by a paramount <em>iTaukei</em> chief.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Matagali</td>
<td><em>Mataqali</em> stems from a <em>Yavusa</em> and is divided into a group of <em>Tokatoka</em> or family units.</td>
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Peacebuilding Approaches to Climate Change in Fijian Communities

Talanoa

*Talanoa* refers to a respectful way to conduct dialogue in Fijian (and other identity) communities. It is group-based and processual. *Talanoa* aims to promote relational development and is key to how negotiations take place.

Tokatoka

*Tokatoka* Family units that are generated from *Yavusa* and *Tokatoka*.

Yaqona

*Yaqona* Kava, a root plant used in ritual and to build relationality between people and place.
| **Yavusa** | A group of people divided according to a *Vanua*. The *Yavusa* share a common name, a common origin myth, a common founding ancestor or God and a common series of ‘totemic’ features, such as a species of plants, animal or fish that are regarded as sacred. |
| **Vanua** | The relationship between *iTaukei* people, their place, environment, identity, tradition and culture. A relationship to and with place. |
| **Waka** | Roots from the *Yaqona* (kava) plant. |