



Strengthening
Citizen Engagement
in Fiji Initiative



*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*

Leadership Training and Dialogue for Chiefs, Community Leaders and Youth in Rotuma

An Initiative of the Strengthening Citizen Engagement In Fiji Initiative (SCEFI)



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FOREWORD

As an Advisor to the Council of Rotuma for most of the past decade, I consider it prudent that I acknowledge and commend the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the European Union (EU) for including Rotuma in the Strengthening Citizen Engagement in Fiji Initiative (SCEFI) in our collective effort to address an urgent need in the island for the present generation of traditional chiefs and members of the community to seriously attempt to resolve the lack of social cohesion and forward looking participatory leadership, conflict resolution and youth apathy towards community life and civic engagement which for too long, had unfortunately, hampered and severely hindered harmonious interaction, progress and prosperity within the islands community.

Being the smallest ethnic indigenous community within Fiji, it is considered prudent and imperative that Rotumans appreciate, value, protect and preserve their unique Polynesian cultural and traditional identity within the wider context of Fiji's very diverse racial composition as a multi-ethnic independent sovereign state within the international global community.

An important facet of the Rotuma identity is their reverence and acknowledgement of traditional chiefly leadership, therefore it is incumbent upon the present generation of chiefs to improve the manner in which they interact with the community, if they are to remain respected and relevant. In this regard they are expected to lead by example.

The SCEFI, "Training and Dialogue on Leadership for Chiefs and Community Leaders", is therefore considered apt and timely.



JK KONROTE

Major –General (ret'd)
President

SUMMARY

UNDP's programme on strengthening capacities for peace and development in the Pacific region supports innovative and creative initiatives that promote civic engagement and foster cohesive communities. Strengthening Citizen Engagement in Fiji Initiative (SCEFI), a three year project (2013-2016) implemented by UNDP and funded by the European Union, aims to enable citizens to engage in community-based activities to help build a better future in Fiji. The project seeks to foster democracy from the bottom up, build trust and strengthen collaboration between decision-makers and citizens.

In 2015, SCEFI initiated a three-step leadership training and dialogue in the island of Rotuma, north of Fiji, which is home to a small indigenous ethnic group called "Rotumans" who form a minority within the population of Fiji. A preliminary assessment by UNDP in 2014 highlighted critical challenges facing Rotuman society, which included a lack of cohesive leadership, conflict in communities over leadership issues, and youth apathy towards community life and civic engagement. The need was urgent in Rotuma for forward looking leadership and capacity development interventions to promote transformational leadership and women and youth engagement and empowerment.

The SCEFI Leadership Training and Dialogue for Chiefs and Community Leaders and Youth of Rotuma had the following objectives:

- conduct dialogue on critical leadership issues affecting Rotuma
- enable more participatory decision-making structures, including of youth and women
- foster collaboration among decision-makers for developmental planning efforts.

This Report is a documentation of the processes involved in the SCEFI training and dialogue sessions, including the specific actions that were decided for the way forward. The initiative consisted of two separate training sessions on leadership for:

- i) traditional decisions makers such as the district chiefs of the seven districts in Rotuma
- ii) and community leaders which included representatives from civil society, women and youth groups. These training sessions were followed by a joint dialogue session that brought together the two groups.

SCEFI's initiative in Rotuma resulted in new learning on many fronts for its participants. It was an opportunity for district chiefs in Rotuma to learn about participatory leadership and discuss issues that specifically affected leadership in Rotuma. The use of participatory learning methodologies on different leadership styles, and information on good leadership qualities, provided them with insights on innovative methods of outreach and engagement with their communities. The participation of women (two district chief wives) was also another first since such activities were normally reserved for the chiefs who were traditionally male.

Similarly, the session for community leaders included a broad representation of sectors including participants from churches, youth, student leaders, teachers, people living with disability and community-based groups. Participants in this group session also learned about different leadership styles and reflected on their motivations as leaders and good leadership qualities.

The three-phase training and dialogue process resulted in critical breakthroughs in two areas. As a result of its face-to-face discussions, a reconciliation process was initiated in the district of Noa'tau which was facing prolonged conflict, after the passing away of its former chief in 2014, over the issue of who would claim the district chief title. The dialogue session opened a way for the claimants to reach an agreement on finding a way forward to elect a new district chief. Secondly, each district in Rotuma formed a plan of action to address its immediate developmental needs through a collaborative approach. The plans were to be implemented by not only the district chief and sub-chiefs but also community leaders and members.

This Report also captures the findings of a follow-up phase in Rotuma conducted from June 9 – July 3, 2015 which evaluated the district plans of action decided upon in February, assessing successes, challenges and opportunities. District chiefs and community leaders reported that the training

and dialogue sessions in which they participated were catalytic for their personal learning and transformation. Positive changes were documented across districts in varying degrees at a personal, relational, cultural and structural level. This included improved changes in leadership styles of many district chiefs, particularly in their ability to listen and involve other people in decision making processes. Districts such as Oinafa and Noa'tau conducted reconciliation sessions starting with families, followed by community members, and eventually the district as a whole. In districts such as Itu'muta women led the implementation of the district plan of action.

The follow-up phase also included a programme on youth empowerment – the “Rotuma Youth Empowerment Programme: A Response to the current and future needs of youth (RYEP)” – given that lack of youth interest and participation posed a critical challenge to effective leadership in Rotuma. RYEP was an important intervention to strengthen the capacity and confidence of Rotuma youth through training and dialogue on participatory development, responsible citizenry, and youth rights and responsibilities. During the RYEP training youth participants identified critical issues that affected them, and conducted a SWOT analysis – assessing their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats – to better understand their current situation.

A highlight during the RYEP training was a visit by a high level team – comprising of the UNDP Resident Representative, the Senior Peace and Development Advisor, EU Head of Delegation for the Pacific, Ministers and Senior Government representatives – to interact with youth participants. Conductive discussions were held on topics such as the social and educational needs of Rotuma youth, and members of the high level team provided technical information on how development assistance for young people could be accessed.

In conclusion, the Report assesses the considerable longer term impacts of the SCEFI leadership training and dialogue on peace and development efforts in Rotuma. Due to the resolution, in February, of the longstanding conflict over Noa'tau's chiefly title, a new chief was successfully installed in the district. Districts such as Oinafa, Itu'muta and Malha'a districts also reported improved social cohesiveness. As a result, district chiefs of Rotuma initiated a reconciliation process for the whole of Rotuma which was planned in three phases. Two phases were completed in 2015. There is strong hope that these significant changes in leadership and community life will sustain and shape a peaceful and prosperous future for Rotuma.

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1. ROTUMA: AN OVERVIEW

Rotuma, which consists of Rotuma Island and nearby islets, lies about 646 kilometers north of Fiji. Rotuma Island itself is 13 kilometers long and 4 kilometers wide with a land area of approximately 43 square kilometers. A small indigenous group called "Rotumans" makes up a recognizable minority within the population of Fiji. It is estimated that less than 2000 Rotumans currently live on the island.

Rotuma is governed as an integral part of the Republic of Fiji. It is divided into seven autonomous districts: Noa'tau, Oinafa, Itu'tiu, Malha'a, Juju, Pepjei, and Itu'muta. Each district is led by a male chief (Gagaj 'es Itu'u). The districts are further divided into sub-groupings of households called "ho'aga", which function under the leadership of a sub-chief (Gagaj 'es ho'aga). All district chief and the majority of the "ho'aga" headmen are titled. Titles, which are held for life, belong to specified households called "fuagri". All descendants of previous occupants of a "fuagri" have a right to participate in the selection of successors of titles. The Rotuma Island Council, made up of district chiefs and elected district representatives, is responsible for the internal governance of the Island. It currently includes women and youth representatives.

Rotuman culture and language relate more closely to the Polynesian islands, especially Tonga, Samoa and Futuna. A social difference between Rotuman and Fijian society is the matriarchal structure of the former, which sees women as recognised heads of the family and key decision makers. Rotumans are culturally conservative and maintain their customs and traditions in the face of changes brought about by increased contact with the outside world. Violence is extremely rare in modern day Rotuma, and serious crimes nearly nonexistent. Social control in Rotuman society stems from their strong emphasis on social responsibility, and mechanisms such as shaming, gossip and belief in supernatural forces ("atua" or ghosts of ancestors) that punish wrongdoing.



The Chiefs, sub-chiefs and wives Leadership Training participants

While significant class distinctions based on wealth or resource control have not emerged in Rotuma, living standards of a few families stand out amongst others. Sources of local income include the processing and sale of copra (dried coconut interior used to produce oil), small entrepreneurial family businesses, and salaried jobs for a few employed in schools and government offices. These include teachers who work in the district primary schools and at Rotuma High School (the only high school on the Island), and civil servants employed at the Ahau government station. Ahau, the site of the government administrative center, also hosts a post office, bank and hospital. A rural road connects all districts in Rotuma. The Island can also be accessed by air and boat. A cargo boat takes about two days to sail from Fiji to Rotuma, while Fiji Link airlines flies into Rotuma once a week depending on weather conditions.

2. LEADERSHIP TRAINING AND DIALOGUE IN ROTUMA: AN INITIATIVE TO CONSOLIDATE PEACE AND FOSTER COHESIVE COMMUNITIES



Some chiefs, sub-chiefs and community leaders during the Cross Generational Dialogue at Itumuta Community Hall

UNDP's Strengthening Citizen Engagement in Fiji Initiative (SCEFI) is designed to provide communities and local governments information, skills, tools and platforms to support developmental objectives in Fiji including strengthening decision-making and enhancing transformative leadership as it relates to a future democratic Fiji. SCEFI seeks to strengthen collaboration between decision-makers and citizens and focuses on building capacity and civic engagement in six broad areas:

- transformative leadership
- advancing human rights
- equitable service delivery

- decision-making
- enabling voice and choice
- non-discrimination and inclusiveness

In February 2015 SCEFI initiated a “Training and Dialogue on Leadership for District Chiefs and Community Leaders” in Rotuma as a response to critical economic and social challenges facing Rotumans. The training and dialogue was aimed at strengthening local capacities for development, building peace and citizen engagement.

2.i. Preliminary Findings: Lack of cohesive leadership and “abandoned” communities

The challenges facing Rotuma were first highlighted in 2014 when a local SCEFI facilitator conducted two field visits to the Island and engaged in a series of discussions with various constituencies and with the Rotuman population on Viti Levu. The findings of this preliminary assessment included the following:

Rotuma was facing pressing social issues due to lack of cohesive leadership among its district chiefs.

Communities reported feeling a “sense of abandonment” from their leadership and a breakdown in social relationships and trust. Community cohesiveness was at an all-time low.

Rotuma suffered from lack of food security and there was dependency on expensive food items such as noodles, flour and sugar. Their supplies were often affected by transport irregularities on the Island, which sky rocketed prices and exposed the local population to serious vulnerabilities.

Many young people left for Suva to look for employment and study opportunities since both productive social and economic opportunities were rare in Rotuma.

The need was urgent in Rotuma for forward looking leadership and capacity development interventions to promote transformational leadership and women and youth engagement and empowerment. The SCEFI facilitator succeeded in obtaining commitment from the seven district chiefs to participate in a leadership training and dialogue initiative. The district chiefs themselves proposed two leadership training sessions that would focus on conflict analysis and resolution.

2.ii. UNDP SCEFI Training and Dialogue on Leadership, Rotuma (February 5-13, 2015)

UNDP's SCEFI "Training and Dialogue on Leadership for Chiefs and Community Leaders" in Rotuma brought together traditional chiefs and community leaders with the aim of:

- (a) conducting dialogue on the leadership issues affecting Rotuma
- (b) strengthening democratic governance and enabling more participatory decision-making structures
- (c) fostering collaboration among decision-makers for future planning efforts.

The main intervention tools that were employed during the programme were training, education, peace process facilitation and dialogue. Participants included district chiefs, their wives, sub-chiefs and 60 community leaders. The training and dialogue itself took place in three phases:

- a two-day leadership training for traditional decision makers which included seven high chiefs, their wives and the sub-chiefs from the seven districts in Rotuma
- a two-day leadership training for community leaders including from churches, civil society organisations (CSOs), women and youth groups
- a one-day cross-generational dialogue bringing together participants from the two groups.

2.ii. a) Leadership Training and Dialogue for District Chiefs, Wives and Sub-Chiefs

Leadership skills for traditional leaders and chiefs in Rotuma are generally believed to be knowledge passed down through generations, and acquired from teachings of previous chiefs, leaders and community elders. While district chiefs and sub-chiefs had come together for meetings and trainings in the past, SCEFI's training was the first time traditional leaders met to specifically discuss issues that affected leadership in Rotuma. The presence of women in the sessions, the two wives of district chiefs, was also another first since such activities were normally reserved for the chiefs who were traditionally male (see Box 1).

Participatory learning methodologies provided participants with ideas and insights on innovative methods of outreach and engagement with their communities. These included:

- learning about different leadership styles

- discussing and learning about good leadership qualities and governance principles
reflecting on their value systems as leaders
- identifying and analyzing issues affecting leadership in Rotuma and strategies to respond to them (see Box 2).

The training and dialogue provided an opportunity to bring the district chiefs together within a safe space, particularly for those who were not in good terms. It indirectly became an intervention strategy to support communication and the rebuilding of trust among participants in a non-violent manner.

Box 1: Voices from the Leadership Training and Cross Generational Dialogue

The SCEFI “Training and Dialogue on Leadership for Chiefs and Community Leaders” in Rotuma represented a first-time experience for its participants in many aspects, from engaging in constructive dialogue about issues that affect leadership to its broad representation in participation, including that of women and youth.

- A district sub-chief pointed out that the training and dialogue was a first-time opportunity for many district chiefs to learn about participatory leadership. Such engagement would help support inclusivity and reduce conflicts arising from the lack of consultation with community members.
- The wife of a district chief whose husband was away in Fiji categorically stated that it was the first time that wives of district chiefs were invited to a training course along with the chiefs, and that she learned enough for two people during the training.
- The Rotuma Youth president expressed his appreciation at the opportunity to engage with traditional decision makers and other community leaders. He commented that the voices of youth were not usually considered in decision making processes. His participation at the training and dialogue would lead to awareness among traditional and community leaders of the need to engage young people in such processes.
- The head girl of Rotuma High School also expressed that her presence at the training was a first-time for her, the head boy and the student with disability who were also present. Their participation as students was not only an important learning opportunity for them, but also created awareness for the need of inclusivity among the community leaders in Rotuma.

2.ii.b) *A First Multi-sectoral Leadership Training and Dialogue on Leadership for Community Leaders*

The difference of SCEFI's leadership training and dialogue from past multi-sectoral dialogue sessions in Rotuma lays in its broad representation of sectors, and its adoption of participatory strategies and methods. Participants included leaders from churches, women and youth groups, student leaders, teachers, people living with disability, and representatives from government, business, community-based groups and development partners. Using fun activities and reflective exercises participants learned about and reflected on different leadership styles, their value systems, their motivations as leaders, good leadership qualities and good governance principles. Similar to the training and dialogue of the district chiefs and sub-chiefs, the two-day event provided space to community leaders to connect with each other and resolve differences. Honest and respectful conversations were successfully held on matters of importance for the leaders.

2.ii.c) *Inter-Generational Generational Dialogue Amongst Chiefs, wives of Chiefs, Sub-Chiefs and Community Leaders*

The third phase of training involved yet another historical event for Rotuma, where participant across generations and sectors -- chiefs and their wives, sub-chiefs and community leaders -- held dialogue on their dreams and expectations for the future of their communities.

Box 2: Issues that Affect Leadership and Community Cohesiveness in Rotuma

Several critical issues affected not only leadership unity but also posed challenges to community cohesiveness and security in Rotuma. During the cross-generational dialogue for chiefs and community leaders participants identified the following as "common issues" across Rotuma.

- Lack of proper training and grooming for future chiefs and leaders
With the growing influence of globalization, district chiefs and community leaders increasingly faced the challenge of making decisions on emerging social and political issues that affected their communities. At the same time, the traditional role of the "mosega" in preparing and grooming future chiefs and leaders had weakened, in part as a result of the mass migration of significant "mosega" members from traditional settings. Younger chiefs were installed without proper leadership training, particularly in adopting democratic styles of leadership to allow wider participation in decision-making processes.

- **General lack of understanding of the Rotuma Acts and the 2013 Fiji Constitution**
Many chiefs and leaders did not possess a good understanding of The Rotuma Act and the Rotuma Land Act, the two reference points used in decision making by district chiefs and leaders on land, titles and other traditional issues. The Acts are currently under discussion with the Parliamentary Committee on Social Affairs. These knowledge gaps also impacted about what laws to follow when making governance decisions.
- **Divisions caused by differences in religious beliefs**
Catholicism and Methodism were the two churches traditionally established in Rotuma. In recent years, however, there was increase in the establishment of new Evangelical churches whose difference in the manner of worship and practice created divisions in Rotuman communities. It also led to disruption in community identity as traditionally understood in the Rotuman context.
- **Urban drift**
The lack of tertiary educational institutions in Rotuma forced many students who had completed their secondary education to migrate to Fiji or other countries for further education. Many who migrated remained in Fiji where the chances of finding paid employment were better. Over 8,000 Rotumans have migrated to Fiji and other countries, leaving behind abandoned lands and homes and older generations to take on the responsibilities. Hampered by a declining male youth population, the urban drift further caused a strain on Rotuma's rural labour force, significantly impacting the completion of development projects.
- **Movement from communalism to individualism**
While communal life was intact in Rotuma, a number of factors still posed a threat. These included formation of new churches with differing practices, political movements with differing ideologies, and conflicts within communities. As a result traditional community cooperation weakened, particularly for the elderly and the needy. Participants of the training raised this issue as a key challenge facing leadership in Rotuma today.
- **Impact of climate change on Rotuma**
Climate change posed serious problems for Rotuma. Like other small island countries, climate-change related damage was on the rise impacting people and environment. During the training, a presenter described how the burial ground of a particular community was now under the sea as a result of rising sea levels. Participants expressed their concern that if climate change was not taken seriously in Rotuma its damage to its people and environment would be very serious. Leaders indicated their interest in becoming more proactive to understand the challenges posed by climate change, its potential impacts, and to increase awareness in their communities so that practical adaptation steps could be adopted.

- **Infrastructure and lack of access to quality facilities**
The poor standard of infrastructure in Rotuma posed a big challenge to its chiefs and leaders. While roads, water supply, and communication services were in place, there was great need for further improvements to guarantee quality, safety, consistency. The following examples delineate the state of infrastructure on the Island:
 - No electricity in Oinafa wharf which made loading and unloading a very risky business at night.
 - The sole airport had a grass runway and did not allow planes to land or take off during rainy days.
 - Digicel tower's location, which provided mobile communication service on the Island, was located in an area that had limited reception. Only the western part of the island benefitted. Other parts of the island used the Telecommunications Fiji Limited mobile service.
 - Electricity was only available at the Government Station in Ahau. Some communities had their own generators that operated for a few hours in the evenings.
 - Some districts had public transportation trucks which transported children and workers back and forth to schools and places of work.

In the first session participants were divided into two circles consisting of approximately 40 members. Each was asked to focus on two interrelated questions: "What is my dream for my district?", and "What do we need to start doing together to achieve that dream?" The process was an emotional experience for many of the participants who were engaging in such open sharing for the first time. Thematic discussions included:

- leadership by informed, responsive, accountable and caring leaders
- creating sound, safe and enabling environments
- quality infrastructures and facilities
- creating a happier, healthier, and more united society, where everyone and their contributions were valued.

A second dialogue tool focused on "reconciliation-truth, mercy, justice and peace" to help participants understand the concept of reconciliation from the perspective of the four elements. Participants were divided into four groups, each group assigned with one element of reconciliation. Discussions were held on the meaning and concept of their assigned topics, as well as the social conditions necessary to support them. A representative from each group then shared with all what was required to realise that element of reconciliation, whom they could or could not work with together, and why. The session emphasised the need for the four elements to be present in any reconciliation process if peace was to be sustainable.

The session on cross-generational dialogue, the finale of the three-phase dialogue process, resulted in critical breakthroughs in two areas: peace and reconciliation and developmental initiatives:

- i) *Reconciliation of district chiefs:* A headway was made for peace for the district of Noa'tau at the end of the cross generational dialogue. After the passing away of its district chief in 2014, its three mosegas – family units who are eligible to assume the chiefly title– were unable to come to an agreement on the election of a new chief. Two of the claimants resided in Rotuma and one in Fiji. The two claimants from Noa'tau were not in speaking terms. The SCEFI dialogue provided the opportunity for the two to face each other and engage in a public discussion in front of their community leaders and elders. There had been initial skepticism about this face-to-face meeting from other participants. A senior police officer from a neighbouring district, for example, cautioned facilitators about members of a particular district engaging with each other since there had been violent conflict amongst themselves in the past on the issue of leadership. He was assured that the very reason of conducting the training and dialogue was for the resolution of such conflicts. The meeting ultimately facilitated a successful exchange between the two claimants. It ended with voluntary handshakes between the two chiefs and district members, indicating their willingness to find a way forward. This demonstration of remorse and reconciliation was a source of renewed hope for the district members who witnessed the exchange. It sowed the seeds towards the selection of a new district chief in Noa'tau, and was an achievement for peace and reconciliation efforts for the whole of Rotuma.
- ii) *District Plan of Action:* Another step forward achieved at the cross-generational dialogue was the formation of district plans of action for development in Rotuma. Each district chief, their sub-chiefs and community leaders developed a plan of action to address their respective district's immediate needs through a collaborative approach. The plans were to be implemented in the districts and followed-up with assessment of results and impacts.
 - Itu'tiu District identified poor communications among its district chief, sub-chiefs, community leaders and members as an area of weakness. It was decided that the SCEFI facilitation team would work with the chief before district meetings to prepare the venue and agenda, and communicate with community members four days in advance. This would ensure that everyone was informed about the meeting so they could come prepared.

- Pepjei District decided to conduct a leadership workshop based on a series of discussions, including on the current leadership challenges in the district. The villagers would be trained by a five member team who participated at the SCEFI leadership training and dialogue. This included the district chief, the sub-chief, a retired secondary school principal and the head girl of the school. They would monitor participation at the leadership workshop, and use group evaluation techniques to assess the training at the end.
- Itu'muta District had an existing initiative to raise funds for a truck that would be used for district activities such as transporting students to schools or transporting copra and cargo from Oinafa wharf. The truck would also be leased as an income-generating initiative for community members. At the leadership training, the district team planned to adopt different fundraising strategies towards this endeavour, including catering for events (such as the dinner hosted on the final day of the SCEFI training). The fees received would go towards raising funds for the truck.
- Malha'a District decided that district leaders should meet prior to district meetings on a Thursday every month to work more effectively together. Participants would include the chief, sub-chiefs and community leaders including women, youth, and church representatives. They would monitor attendance to district meetings and evaluate themselves on the basis of factors such as completion of district projects and division of labour, roles and responsibilities amongst themselves.
- Oinafa District proposed to remove societal barriers amongst themselves – negative attitudes, lack of communication, gossiping, disrespect – through a process of individual reconciliation, ho'aga reconciliation, and district level reconciliation.
- Juju District decided to work on a presentation on lessons learnt from the leadership training for feedback to the community, and to seek approval of the chief to raise awareness of good leadership in the district. The team decided to target community leaders and the chief and sub-chiefs who did not attend the training. They would follow up by monitoring the chiefs and community leaders' willingness to participate in awareness raising sessions in the district.
- No'atau village, Itu'tiu District decided to focus on reconciling broken relationships through dialogue, targeting leaders and

community people. Following the SCEFI training, the team would go from village to village covering the district's six villages. The success of this initiative would be assessed by attendance rates at dialogue sessions and people's willingness to participate at the district level.

3. FOLLOW-UP ON LEADERSHIP TRAINING AND DIALOGUE AND ROTUMA YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME

SCEFI's initiative in Rotuma consisted of a second phase as a follow-up to the February training and dialogue. The phase aimed at building upon the outcomes of the February meeting and in a capacity building programme for the youth of Rotuma. It consisted of:

- a two-day follow up to the Leadership Training and Dialogue for Chiefs and Community Leaders
- a three-day Youth Empowerment Training for 50 Rotuma youth
- a one-day cross generational dialogue involving district chiefs, community leaders, women and youth
- community consultations and dialogue
- workshop on conflict resolution for teachers and parents at the Malha'a Primary School
- support to the establishment of the Chiefs' Wives Association of Rotuma (see Box 3).



Some Rotuman Youths who attended the Leadership Training at Rotuma High School

Box 3: The Chiefs' Wives Meeting

In recognition of women in leadership roles in Rotuma the wives of the seven district chiefs came together in a historical meeting on June 30, 2015 to form a new body. The objective of the meeting was for participants to meet face-to-face, build relationships, and discuss the way forward. The group conducted serious discussions on the following:

- Clarity about their role of their group as the highest women's body on the Island
- The recognition of their group by cultural, provincial, religious and socio-political structures in Rotuma
- The difference the group could potentially make to the current structures involving women
- Influence of the group on the current chiefly system
- The role of the group in strengthening the recognition, participation and inclusion of women leadership in Rotuma (could Rotuma accept the installation of a woman district chief or sub-chief?).

As a newly established body with potential to bring about structural changes in Rotuman society, the women leaders recognised that they needed support and capacity building in the areas of transformational leadership, good governance, decision making and conflict resolution. This meeting took place after a high level team, consisting of representatives from UNDP, EU and Government Ministries, met with Rotuman women as part of SCEFI's follow-up to the initiative in February. The women expressed their thanks to the high level team which had influenced the formation of the group.

3.i. Follow-up to the February Training and Dialogue for Chiefs and Community Leaders

The follow-up focused evaluating the District Plans of Action, decided in February, to assess their successes, challenges, and opportunities. The assessment also aimed to identify changes that may have resulted because of the participatory and inclusive approaches adopted during the implementation of the plans. Participants evaluated their plans based on the following guidelines:

- review the vision of the district formulated at the leadership training in February 2015
- review goals of the district plans and the specific activities implemented to fulfill the goals
- assessment of each activity carried out on the basis of what was done or not done, including processes and time frame taken to achieve the activity, people and material resources involved to complete them
- description of results (outcomes) achieved from the implementation of the activities
- documentation of changes (impacts) that occurred or were occurring as a result of the activities
- documentation of challenges encountered and opportunities created prior, during and post implementation.

During the evaluation process, participants were introduced to the theory of the four levels of change in conflict transformation to assess changes that may have occurred as a result of their participation in the February training and dialogue sessions. The theory helped them identify changes at four different levels:

- the first level targeted changes in perceptions, attitudes and behaviours in individuals
- the second level focused on relationships among people, and the manner in which people changed the way they related to each other
- the third level involved changes of cultural beliefs, practices and approaches
- the fourth level occurred at the structural level of policies, rules and regulations. These changes defined expectations and limitations of norms, roles, responsibilities and relationships within a given context.

3.i.a. Implementation and Impact of the District Action Plans

Almost all districts, with the exception of two (Juju and Malha'a) implemented their plans of action as formulated at the SCEFI leadership training. There

were common obstacles which posed challenges to the implementation of the district plans and to development in general (see Box 4). Despite them, however, many districts reported changes across all four levels in varying degrees.

Box 4: Obstacles to the Implementation of Development Initiatives in Rotuma

A number of factors posed as obstacles in the implementation of district action plans and to development initiatives in general. The following highlights common obstacles across Rotuma.

- Aspects of Rotuman community life, such as the excessive consumption of kava at social gatherings, generally led to low productivity.
- Rumours and gossip created unnecessary social divisions and tensions, affecting businesses, relationships at different levels, and leading to increased mistrust in communities. Negative attitudes affected collaboration efforts in the districts on development initiatives.
- Lack of business knowledge and skills, good communication channels and programming skills were a drawback to the progress of community businesses.
- Absence of leaders and chiefs in community activities and decision making processes caused delays in the implementation development activities.
- There was lack of proper consultation or regular village meetings in many districts.

Personal Level: The information received at the February leadership training had clearly helped chiefs and community leaders to change their perception of and practice of leadership. Reported changes in the leadership styles of district chiefs included improvement in their ability to listen, to involve other people in decision making processes, and in the interest they demonstrated about the welfare of their communities.

- Itu'muta district saw marked improvement in its district chief's interest in and attendance of community meetings and activities. Community leaders reported that their chief's approach in community meetings had become more welcoming. Itu'muta also saw positive significant change in the improved recognition of women and youth in decision making processes and community activities. The district reported a stronger sense of unity between community members and the chiefs.
- Noa'tau district reported significant changes in the attitudes of the chiefs towards each other. They collaborated and consulted with each other about issues that affect their people. This was a motivating factor for community members, and led to an overall improvement in building mutual trust, confidence and social cohesion.

- Pepjei district saw improved communications among community members. They were more conscious of the need to communicate information clearly, resulting in better understanding and willingness to participate in community activities.
- Malha'a district experienced a change from a general 'do not care' attitude to one of concern for the welfare of district. Such a change was demonstrated by the building of a community dump site, the clean-up of the secondary road, and a 100 per cent participation in the traditional welcome ceremony ("Mamasa") during a high level delegation visit from Suva comprising of Government Ministers, UNDP and EU representatives. The district also saw increased attendance at community meetings and functions by inactive members.

Relational Level: Relationships at the family, community and district levels had strengthened in many Rotuma districts as a result of implementing the district plans as well as learning from the February SCEFI training and dialogue programme.

- Oinafa and Noa'tau districts conducted reconciliation sessions, starting with families, and followed by community members and eventually the district as a whole. This initiative resulted in increased trust among district members, and improved their ability to collaborate on activities aimed at initiating change.
- Noa'tau district also experienced improved relationship between the chiefs and community members. The improvement in the relationship between the chiefs who were in conflict over the chiefly title positively affected the confidence of community members in their leaders.
- Oinafa observed greater collaboration and working relationship among community members in church and community activities. Members reported a greater sense of appreciation for working together for the district's welfare.
- Itu'tiu district reported improved trust in leadership which positively affected the unity of community members and lead to some significant achievements for the district, such as higher attendance of members in community activities.
- Regular meetings were held to discuss community, church and ho'aga issues in Malha'a district which resulted in increased social cohesion and unity.

Cultural Level: Some districts saw a shift in gender roles and expectations, particularly in the manner in which women and youth took on responsibilities traditionally held by older males. They became more engaged in decision-making processes.

- In districts such as Pepjei, female and male youth took on key roles in district business committees. A breakaway from the cultural norm in Pepjei was that other community members, other than the chief who traditionally had been the sole decision maker, began taking on leadership roles. The district chief came to be considered more of an advisor, to give advice and mentor committees responsible for different aspect of Pepjei community life.
- Two youth members were elected sub-chiefs and given key responsibilities in their communities in Pepjei and Malha'a districts. The youth sub-chief from Pepjei district became an active decision maker in the business arm of the community.

Structural Level: Important changes could be observed at the structural level in some districts. Overall there was greater recognition of the importance of inclusiveness in decision making processes, such as the recognition of the need for women and youth participation in community activities.

- In the district of Malha'a, for example, chiefs, sub-chiefs, community leaders, church leaders, youth and women came together to discuss issues pertaining to community development and improvement in the standard of life. In Itu'muta district women were actively involvement in implementing the district plan of action and in business committees.
- Pepjei's business arm established a new peace and development model which added a new dimension to understanding roles and responsibilities in communal living, such as those mentioned in the context changes at the cultural level. As a result, new guidelines were set in place.
- An important structural change occurred in Noa'tau district in the area of peacebuilding when a new district chief was installed, bringing an end to a long-standing conflict amongst three claimants to the title. With this resolution came an end to mistrust and divisions among families, communities and the district as a whole. The closure gave hope to the whole district for peace and progress.

3.ii. Rotuma Youth Empowerment Programme: Response to the current and future needs of youth (June 24-26, 2015)

At the February SCEFI Training and Dialogue, a lack of youth initiative, motivation and apathy to civic engagement and was clearly identified as major challenges to effective and forward looking leadership in Rotuma. These challenges could be attributed to a wide range of factors that were cultural, social, economic and political in nature.

As a society, Rotuma was known to be protective of its culture and traditions. Respect was a cultural value that Rotumans held in high regard as the guiding principle on how relationships and participation in society was to be practiced. It was seen as a mark of respect that the youth did not publicly challenging decisions or the leadership of their chiefs or elders. Young people in Rotuman society were pressured to conform to such traditional norms and expectations, which stood in the way of youth lending their voices in decision making processes. This contributed to their lack of interest since they considered their participation as subject to approval by elders or decision makers.

In recent years young people in Rotuma challenged culturally-accepted norms more openly which resulted in social conflict and tension. The leaders and chiefs at the SCEFI training believed that such a situation contributed further to the breakdown of trust and cooperation in Rotuman society.

Rotuman youth also faced a lack of employment opportunities in sustainable commercial and business ventures. While land and sea resources were abundantly available in Rotuma, commercial farming and fishing were not popular occupations. Trading with Fiji and Tuvalu happened occasionally with very strict biosecurity regulations, and business opportunities were at an all-time low on the Island. Young people frequently left for Fiji and other countries seeking better paid employment opportunities. Often, however, their lack of skills and qualifications forced them to return. Many youth in Rotum are sorted to unproductive social activities such as excessive kava and alcohol consumption which led to criminal activities and irresponsible behaviour, and resulted in disinterest and disengagement in the affairs of the community.

Against this backdrop, as part of the follow-up phase, SCEFI initiated a sustainable Rotuma Youth Empowerment Programme (RYEP) training and dialogue to respond to the current and future needs of school youth in Rotuma. RYEP was initiated to:

- strengthen the capacity and confidence of Rotuma youth through training and dialogue on participatory development, responsible citizenry, youth rights and responsibilities
- strengthen the capacity of the Rotuma Youth Council through ongoing dialogue, mentoring and coaching
- create safe spaces for sustained dialogue on youth issues among leaders, youth, community groups, the church and government stakeholders
- explore possibilities of youth engagement in community, district and national decision making processes
- explore opportunities for youth engagement in commercial activities in Rotuma.

A highlight of RYEP was a visit by a high level team – comprising of the UNDP Resident Representative and the Senior Peace and Development Advisor, EU Head of Delegation for the Pacific, the then Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations, and the Assistant Ministers for Youth and Sports, and for the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forests, Maritime Development and National Disaster Management – to engage with Rotuman youth.

Youth participants brainstormed in advance about the issues they wanted to raise with the delegates and the manner in which they would present them. During the interaction youth participants asked key questions regarding their physical, emotional, social and educational needs. Members of the high level team provided technical information on how development assistance for young people could be accessed, as well as the proper procedures to be followed while accessing the assistance. RYEP also included an additional day of joint dialogue process where district chiefs, community leaders, church leaders, and government representatives participated in a discussion on the way forward for youth in Rotuma. RYEP by followed by a peacebuilding session for students and teachers at the Rotuma High School (see Box 5).

Box 5: Peace Education at the Rotuma High School

The Principal of the Rotuma High School first approached the SCEFI facilitator in February 2015 to conduct a training session on peace education for students and teachers. This session was conducted in June 2015 by the facilitator as part of SCEFI's follow-up programme.

The facilitation team made presentations to raise awareness among and motivate the students. Discussions with students particularly focused on peace: "What would a peaceful Rotuma look like for them, and how could they contribute to achieving that vision?" The discussions helped students understand that while they could dream for a peaceful Rotuma, it was also important to understand that their own role in realising that vision. Four 50-minute sessions on peace were carried out for combined classes (Years 9-10, Years 11-12, Years 13 and Vocational Students), as well as a separate session for primary and secondary school teachers. The students were divided into groups, each of which created images in drawings of a peaceful Rotuma, including their own contributions. The following lists the students' vision of for a peaceful Rotuma:

- quality educational facilities in schools
- tertiary education institutions or centres
- proper school buses
- better hospital services
- improved land, sea and sky transportation systems, recreational parks
- safer communities and environments
- plenty of employment opportunities
- happier people who were involved, consulted, heard and valued in decision making processes particularly on issues that affected them directly or indirectly.

During the session with teachers, participants analysed the images drawn by their students. They assessed how their students' visions of Rotuma could be captured in the current curriculum and syllabus, teaching methods and approaches. Suggestions from teachers included: proper counselling services for students, school supplementary documentaries as lessons, using international and local events to teach values, and understanding their students' backgrounds in order to teach them more effectively.

3.ii.a. Rotuma Youth: Critical Issues and Self Analysis

Participants of RYEP identified the following as a summary of the critical issues that affected youth in Rotuma:

- General lack of understanding of good leadership skills and approaches
- Bad decision making
- Urban drift
- General lack of motivation and commitment
- Lack of employment opportunities
- Poor facilities for youth programmes
- Low participation of youth in decision making processes
- Poor planning and programming
- Unclear expectations
- Excessive consumption of kava
- Communication breakdown

They also conducted a SWOT analysis – assessing their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats – to better understand their current situation (Table 1).

Table 1:SWOT Analysis Of and By Rotuman Youth

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Energy – full of energy. Could be mobilized to bring about positive change• Mobility – move around very easily• Creativity – creative and full of exuberance• Confidence in young people who currently hold significant positions and leadership roles. A couple are currently sub-chiefs• Natural ability to excel in sports and artistic activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• General lack of good leadership skills• Lower level of education and high dropout rates• Low self-esteem and over reliance on adults• Lack of good decision-making knowledge and skills• Over consumption and abuse of kava• General lack of motivation

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking on roles and responsibilities traditionally taken on by adults in the communities e.g. chiefly and leadership roles • Networking and collaborating with local and international stakeholders for capacity building and job opportunities • Participating in educational, cultural, sporting and spiritual exchange programmes at the national and international levels for exposure • Exploring assistance for economic opportunities from government, local and international organizations and donor agencies for locally managed youth income generation projects • Actively engaging with youth members of parliament (Assistant Minister for Youth and Sports) to mobilise government attention towards the needs of youth in Rotuma 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer pressure • Lack of job opportunities • Globalization and its impact on young people • Attraction to Western ideologies and way of life • Uncontrolled migration overseas • Excessive control and demand to comply with cultural expectations • Climate change and how its eventual current and futures impacts on Rotuma youth

A problem tree was used as an analytical tool to explore the root causes and effects of the critical issues facing the youth. Participants were divided into small groups and each group was assigned a critical issue to analyse its root cause and effects. The table below presents findings from the group discussions and analyses.

Table 2: Key Causes and Effects of Critical Issues Facing Youth in Rotuma

Critical Issue	Potential Effects	Potential Root Causes
Poor Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor sense of direction • Confusion and misunderstanding • Divisions within the youth • Poor decisions that lead to conflict • Absence of order • Kills youth interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of knowledge and experience in good leadership principles and values

Bad Decision Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chaos and conflict within the youth group and the community • Confusion • Missed opportunities for growth and change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack or poor understanding of good decision making principles, values and skills
Urban Drift	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate labour force • Pressure on the older generation to fulfil cultural, social and religious expectations • Deterioration of residential properties • Unutilized farming lands • Population decrease • Lack of proper skills and knowledge results in unemployment overseas • Good opportunities for employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of job opportunities and better living standards on the island • Attraction to better economic opportunities
Lack of Motivation and Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth plan of action not implemented or incomplete • Lost opportunities for change and growth • Lack of trust and confidence in youth potential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low self-esteem • Lack of proper support, mentoring and coaching for responsible adults • Unclear vision for the future
Lack of Employment Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty • Inability to meet the needs and aspirations • Urban drift 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neglect from national government • Lack of innovation to create income generating initiatives • Lack of knowledge and skills to create job opportunities

Poor Sporting Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resort to other unproductive social activities e.g. excessive kava consumption • Lack of interest to participate in youth activities • Lost opportunities for growth and development • Under-developed skills and talents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negligence from national government • Youth needs and aspirations not prioritized in national, district and community plans
Lack of Youth Participation in Decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discriminatory attitudes towards young people • Trivializing youth concerns • Rebellion from young people towards decisions made by elders • Lack of interest to participate in organized community activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of trust and confidence in youth • Cultural beliefs and expectations about youth and where they need to be in the social structure
Poor Planning and Programming skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor coordination of youth activities • General lack of a clear sense of direction • No progress and growth • Reduced trust and confidence level on young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of proper planning and programming knowledge and skills • Lack of support from adults
Excessive Consumption of Kava	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unproductivity • Loss of opportunity for growth and development • Poor health for young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of a clear sense of direction • Absence of alternative forms of socialization
Communication Breakdown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confusion and conflict within youth group • Loss of opportunities for growth and development • Neglect • Lack of interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor leadership styles

4. CONCLUSION: LONG TERM IMPACT AND THE WAY FORWARD

The impact of the UNDP SCEFI Programme on peace and development efforts in Rotuma has been considerable. There is cause to believe that the SCEFI leadership training and dialogue paved the way to much needed peaceful resolution and healing for Rotuman society.

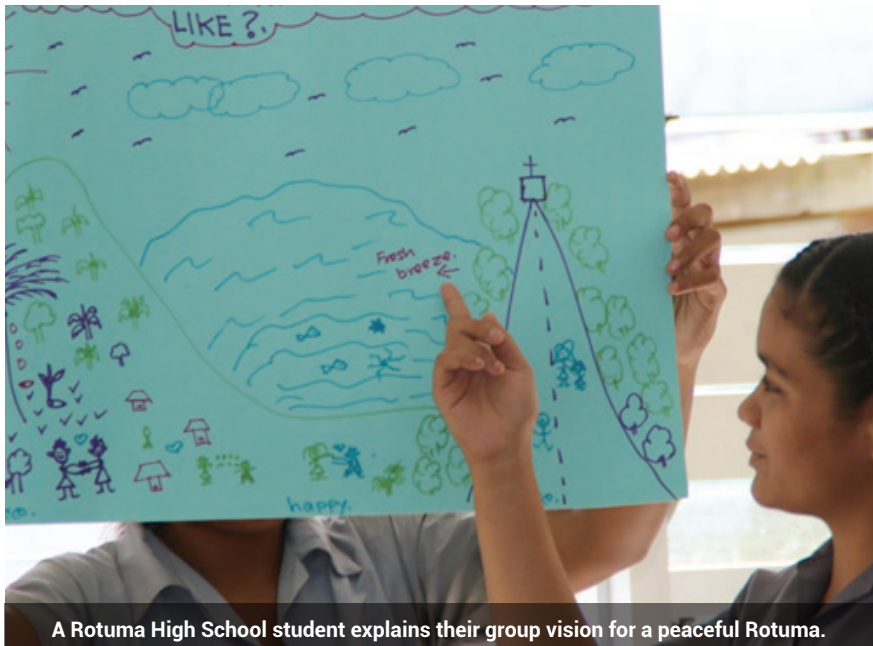
For one, the resolution of the longstanding conflict over the chiefly title of Noa'tau District initiated at the dialogue in February 2015, for example, was the beginning of a longer-term process. The chief and leaders of the district agreed at the meeting that a reconciliation process needed to be convened on a larger scale. Thus reconciliation ceremonies were conducted amongst families and communities in Noa'tau, as a result of which chiefs and community leaders could work effectively together to decide on the succession of a district chief. On February 27, 2015, a new district chief was installed at the Noa'tau district hall, amidst the presence of other district chiefs and sub-chiefs, Rotuma Island Council representatives, church and government representatives.

The turn-around in the political affairs of Noa'tau district demonstrated to the whole of Rotuma that conflicts, when resolved through non-violent means, could contribute to building resiliency in communities. It required however a transformation at the personal level of those involved in the conflict. Training, when well-planned and executed, could also prove to be an effective intervention tool to initiate personal learning and transformation processes(see Annex).

Following the successful reconciliation efforts in Noa'tau district over the chiefly title, and improved social cohesiveness in Oinafa, Itu'muta and Malha'a districts, the district chiefs deliberated on the possibility of initiating a provincial reconciliation for the whole of Rotuma. At a meeting of all district chiefs, participants unanimously agreed that the reconciliation process would begin in the different phases in the months of July and August 2015:

- Phase 1 (1 – 23 July, 2015): Reconciliation to begin in all families and then move to community and district reconciliations
- Phase 2 (24 July, 2015): Provincial reconciliation for all of Rotuma with the churches, government and other stakeholders.
- Phase 3 (August, 2015): Reconciliation in Fiji with the Heads of the Roman Catholic Church, the Methodist Church and the people of Rotuma living overseas.

To date Phases 1 and 2 have been successfully completed. It is expected that Phase 3 will take place in the near future. The spirit is high in Rotuma for the success of this peace and reconciliation initiative. There is strong hope that the significant changes that have occurred in leadership and community life will sustain and shape a peaceful and prosperous future for Rotuma.



A Rotuma High School student explains their group vision for a peaceful Rotuma.

ANNEX: LESSONS LEARNED

A number of key lessons for peace and development were learnt from the SCEFI training and dialogue initiative in Rotuma for chiefs, community leaders, and youth. These lessons could serve as important pointers to inform future Government and stakeholders engagements in Rotuma and other remote parts of Fiji.

- i. *Importance of pre-mission preparations:* The key to any successful programme lies in good preparation and delivery. To prepare for this mission, the team (consisting of a facilitator, UNDP and Ministry of Youth representatives) had prior face-to-meetings and on-going discussions over emails, which helped lay out the groundwork. As part of the preparatory work, advice was also sought from influential Rotumans in Fiji including contacts with the then Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations, the Prime Minister's office, the Commissioner Eastern and the Rotuma Island Spearhead group in Fiji.
- ii. *On the ground preparations:* It is essential to deploy team members who are familiar with the local context to conduct ground preparations before the programme begins. For remote and hard to access areas like Rotuma people often do not understand the local context, history and traditions from an outsider's perspective. It is therefore critical to involve team members who are familiar with the local context as well as understands the technicality of preparations from the perspective of institutions such as UNDP.
- iii. *Collaboration with the Government:* The presence of a government official in the team from the Ministry of Youth and Sports as the Government representative injected a degree of legitimacy and buy-in. It is good practice to inform and seek participation from local government entities in initiatives driven by non-governmental, local or international development stakeholders, since it is they who are ultimately accountable to the people.
- iv. *Daily briefings, evaluations and debriefs:* Continuous reflection, debriefings and evaluation during the course of the programme is critical for the sustainability of the program. Daily evaluations were encouraged during the implementation of the Rotuma initiative in spite of the difficulty to

hold them due to participants moving back and forth to other parts of the Island. Feedback from participants at informal sessions also helped facilitators and organizers to review parts of the programme and improve them.

- v. *Flexibility:* Continuously being in touch with how events evolve in local communities helps in adapting developmental interventions to make them more relevant to the local context. During this assignment, the team kept its framework intact, but remained flexible with the processes they employed in order to accommodate unforeseen circumstances, viewing them as opportunities to look at other alternative options.
- vi. *Building on community strengths to overcome vulnerabilities:* A good number of Rotumans who previously held key positions in sectors such as government and civil society, and spent part of their working lives in Fiji and other parts of the world, have retired on the Island. Their knowledge, skills and experience have yet to be utilised for the benefit of their communities. A few of them have been actively engaged in community development planning to advance development in their respective communities. Recognizing and engaging these untapped human resources is definitely a must for remote areas like Rotuma.
- vii. *Decision makers interest, presence and participation key to community development progress:* For community development projects to progress and sustain, the buy-in from decision makers is critical. The presence alone of chiefs in community activities is a motivating factor other community members to participate and commit to the development of community life.
- viii. *Keeping a clear line of communication:* The importance of keeping a clear line of communication with both decision makers and community members at large is key to community development.
- ix. *Participation and inclusivity:* Participation by community members in developmental initiatives promotes a sense of ownership and encourages sustainability. People must be involved in the decision making processes and given opportunities to participate in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation aspects of development initiatives in their communities which ultimately impact their lives. Very often in patriarchal societies and communities women and young people's contributions and participation are not considered important. Working towards more just, equal, peaceful and sustainable communities requires recognition of the significant and unique contributions women and youth make to community life.

- x. *Continuous skills training for communities:* A key reason for the failure of community projects and initiatives is the lack of proper technical skills. Sustainability of such projects depends on not only employing people equipped with the right skills but also on their ability to pass on new and learned skills to others.
- xi. *The role of incentives in sustaining community developments:* Motivating members to participate in the development initiatives, especially when many members are adopting a more individualistic way of life, can be a challenge. Ensuring that development activities have a social component can be an incentive to motivate community members. In Rotuma, for example, sharing a bowl of grog together at the end of the hard day's work accompanied by sing along is one way of bringing community members together.
- xiii. *Nurturing and grooming future leaders in transformational leadership and good governance:* In traditional settings like Rotuma the elders have a role in ensuring that their future leaders are well prepared to take up leadership responsibilities when their turn comes. The preparation for leadership today requires specialized training in areas such as transformational leadership and good governance.
- xiv. *Respect for tradition and culture:* The Rotuma experiences have taught key lessons on how respect, trust and confidence can be earned from local communities where there is deep appreciation and respect, on the part of outsiders, of their tradition and culture. The sensitivity of external development workers to the particular way of life local communities, including cultural values and practices, impacts their willingness to participate in development activities.





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