Fiji Cyclone Recovery Program Evaluation

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Abbreviations

AHC	Australian High Commission
AUD	Australian dollars
CRP	Cyclone Recovery Program
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DFA	Direct funding arrangement
DFAT	The Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DRP	Disaster Resilience Program
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
EOI	Expression of interest
EOPO	End-of-program outcomes
FJD	Fiji dollars
FPSF	Fiji Program Support Facility
GEDSI	Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion
ImO	Immediate Outcomes
IO	Intermediate Outcomes
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
OPD	Organisations for People with Disability
PBS	Pacific Building Solutions
PFM	Public Financial Management
PMU	Program management unit
PS	Permanent Secretary
PSC	Program steering committee
SMC	School Management Committee
The Facility	The Fiji Program Support Facility
VfM	Value for Money
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene

Executive Summary

The Australian Government's Cyclone Recovery Program (CRP) was a highly successful initiative aimed at supporting Fiji's recovery from Tropical Cyclone (TC) Yasa. The program focused on rehabilitating schools in Vanua Levu and was funded through a Direct Funding Agreement (DFA) with the Government of Fiji. This independent evaluation, conducted in the first quarter of 2025, assesses the program's performance, identifies best practices and provides recommendations for future programs. The evaluation involved a review of documents, site visits, stakeholder interviews, focus group discussions and student surveys.

CRP provided the construction or refurbishment of nine classroom buildings (totalling twenty-five classrooms), sixteen toilet blocks, six administration buildings with sickbays, six canteens, five dormitories and three dining halls with kitchens. Additionally, CRP provided sixteen staff quarters, a library and computer lab and an early learning centre. The program also included the construction of covered walkways and footpaths connecting all the buildings. School reconstruction included solar panels and rainwater harvesting. Each school had at least one new building rated category 5 cyclone resistant for use as an evacuation centre. In total, the completion of the nine schools provided a safe learning environments for 1,469 students which included 703 (48%) girls and four students with disability.

The CRP had several unique features that contributed to the success of the program. This included the design and implementation of the CRP which represented a mix of disaster relief and development programming. The CRP featured widespread consultation with a range of stakeholders and included extensive community meetings, both at the initial design and as an ongoing process during its implementation. The significant localisation component of the CRP likewise contributed to its success. Localisation was linked to the consultation process and was a key feature of the CRP that led to a high level of community involvement and ownership.

The considerable extent to which GEDSI and safeguards were integrated enhanced the CRP success. Furthermore, the flexible design and implementation meant the program was able to adjust to changing circumstances and accommodate school and community feedback. Flexibility was particular important immediately after COVID-19 which created a number of difficulties, including significantly increasing costs and problems with supply lines. Worth also mentioning is the strong leadership by DFAT that contributed to successful outcomes. Finally, the Fiji Program Support Facility (FPSF) provided good management, despite at one point some unevenness in leadership.

It was obvious that the CRP was appreciated by all stakeholders. The program had a notable and measurable positive impact on the quality of education and learning environment for students. School attendance improved and there was evidence that student academic results had also improved. At a bilateral level, the CRP was clearly appreciated by the Government of Fiji and enhanced the Australia-Fiji relationship and the Vuvale Partnership. The Ministry of Finance appreciated the efficient delivery mechanism, and the Ministry of Education clearly acknowledged the quality of infrastructure delivered, with Labasa Northern Division Head of the Ministry of Education saying the new schools were “like walking into a luxury hotel”.

Local communities appreciated the provision of clean water and improved education facilities. Similarly, communities appreciated the significant process of localisation, which allowed for participation, ownership and income generating opportunities. School boards and heads of school

appreciated the new classrooms, whiteboards, WASH facilities and teacher housing. Teachers and students particularly appreciated the covered walkways, spacious, airy classrooms and greater safety provided in case of another cyclone.

The evaluation found the CRP to be highly relevant to the needs of cyclone-affected communities and aligned with the priorities of the Fijian Government and the Australian Government. The program effectively addressed the urgent needs for the rehabilitation of the nine schools and contributed to longer-term disaster resilience. The focus on "building back better" principles was evident in the improved quality and resilience of the new facilities.

The CRP demonstrated significant effectiveness in achieving its intended EOPO outcomes and intermediate outcomes. All three EOPO of better educational facilities, better WASH facilities and high visibility with maximum local partner involvement were achieved. Despite this success the CRP was not without some difficulties in achieving effective delivery. Bidding was limited to national Fijian companies, which supported local employment, with 342 local workers hired. However, contractors encountered challenges such as rising material prices, logistical issues in reaching remote locations and difficulties in finding and retaining skilled workers. There was also some difficulty in achieving effectiveness in the delivery of infrastructure, including lack of an external review of architect drawings, problems with school septic tanks and overengineered footings.

The efficiency of the CRP was examined in terms of resource utilization and timely delivery of outputs. The Value for Money analysis suggests that the program generally delivered good value, considering the scale and complexity of the recovery efforts. While the CRP model offered considerable flexibility, it did not sufficiently consider a role for the Government of Fiji—reflecting not a lack of interest, but rather a pragmatic response to the extraordinary pressures of the time, including the COVID-19 pandemic, a severe fiscal crisis, and the aftermath of a Category 5 cyclone. At the government's request, the program was designed to minimize administrative burden and avoid further straining already stretched national systems. While this may be appropriate for emergency aid which was needed immediately after TC Yasa, the CRP had significant long term development components which could perhaps have included a more substantial role for the Government of Fiji, while noting The Government of Fiji's reluctance for such a role. The CRP demonstrates a strong commitment to sustainability. The focus on social procurement and a community-centric approach helped support sustainability. The community involvement, coupled with consultations to align the work with local needs and priorities, laid a solid foundation for long-term care of the rebuilt infrastructure. Several cross-cutting themes were also considered throughout the evaluation, including gender equality and safeguards. The program made a significant effort to integrate GEDSI into the CRP with strong safeguards. Despite these efforts some challenges persisted, with reports indicating that some women experienced marginalization during consultation processes where school boards and head teachers dominated.

The evaluation identified several key lessons learned from the implementation of the CRP. These lessons relate to project management, community engagement, localisation strategies, sustainability considerations and the integration of cross-cutting themes. Based on these lessons, the report provides a set of recommendations aimed at enhancing the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of future disaster recovery initiatives in Fiji and other similar contexts. The recommendations are primarily for consideration by DFAT but may be of interest to the Government of Fiji and other relevant stakeholders involved in disaster preparedness and response.

Introduction

The following is DFAT's required end of program independent evaluation for the Schools Component of the Cyclone Recovery Program (CRP). The key audience for this evaluation is DFAT (Suva Post Management and Social Infrastructure Team). The secondary users are the Government of Fiji, specifically the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance.

The evaluation was carried out in the first quarter of 2025 by a Team consisting of one national and two international consultants. The evaluation included 12 days field visit to seven of the schools in the CRP, as well as meetings with a range of key stakeholders across government, private sector and community groups (see Annex C). The Team was supported and would like to acknowledge the assistance provided by DFAT Post during the process of the evaluation. The Evaluation Team is solely responsible for the evaluation findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

Background

Category 5 Tropical Cyclone (TC) Yasa made landfall across Fiji's northern island of Vanua Levu on 17 December 2020. With wind gusts of up to 280km/hour, it was the strongest tropical cyclone to make landfall in Fiji since TC Winston in 2016, and the fourth most intense cyclone on record in the Southern Pacific Basin at the time. Following TC Yasa, six weeks later, on 31 January 2021, category 2 TC Ana caused intense rainfall and extensive flooding, compounding the damage done by TC Yasa. Many schools sustained heavy damages to their classrooms and other school facilities. As a result, the schools had to set-up temporary learning spaces, utilising tents, community halls and dormitories.

With Australia's strong focus on education in Fiji, on 15 March 2021, the Foreign Minister approved an initial package of A$12.5 million over April 2021 to June 2024 for the CRP, to support education recovery, and rehabilitating damaged or destroyed schools. Australia incrementally increased its commitment to a total of A$37,396,000, including the rehabilitation of two sub-national hospitals, and extended the time for delivery to 4.75 years with expected completion by December 2025. As of August 2024, the CRP had completed the rehabilitation of nine schools and is expected to deliver infrastructure upgrades at the Taveuni and Kadavu hospitals by end of program.

The program was funded via a Direct Funding Agreement which was signed with the Fiji Government's Ministry of Finance on 11 June 2021 and has had five amendments since then to absorb additional funds and extend the timeframe. The program is sole funded and led by DFAT and is implemented through the Fiji Program Support Facility (FPSF).

The initial iteration of the CRP took place in the immediate aftermath of the COVID-19 Pandemic making the program more difficult and expensive to implement. TC Yasa Cyclone occurred in December 2020, the same year as COVID-19 spread quickly worldwide. The CRP initial funding arrangement was signed in June 2021, at a time when early COVID-19 vaccinations campaigns were being rolled out in many parts of the world. By 2022, when construction started on the school buildings, scarcity of inputs and inflation had significantly increased costs.

Objective of the Evaluation

The objective of this evaluation is to provide an independent evaluation of the school component of the Fiji CRP. The independent evaluation assesses the overall performance of the CRP's school rehabilitation component against the end of program outcomes; and identifies best practices, areas for improvement, and recommendations that may be applied to the Fiji Social Infrastructure Program

and other similar programs in the region. The CRP's end of program outcomes (EOPO) and intermediate outcomes (IO and ImO) are outlined in Annex A.

The evaluation was guided by DFAT's ToR also set out in Annex A. The ToR are based on the OECD-DAC criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability, and a list of key evaluation questions and sub-questions for each criterion. The initial set of DFAT questions was reviewed by the Evaluation Team and slightly modified but remained substantially the same and are provided as Annex B.[1] The evaluation questions in Annex B and the ToR were used by the Evaluation Team to carry out a review of documents, inform the Team's fieldwork, data collection and analysis, as well as to inform the structure of this report.

Methodology

The CRP evaluation was informed by DFAT's Design and Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Standards (September 2023). The methodology required the collection of quantitative and qualitative data to address each of the key evaluation questions and sub-questions in Annex B. The methodology was designed to be flexible in addressing changing circumstances and responding to information collected during fieldwork and the collection of secondary data.

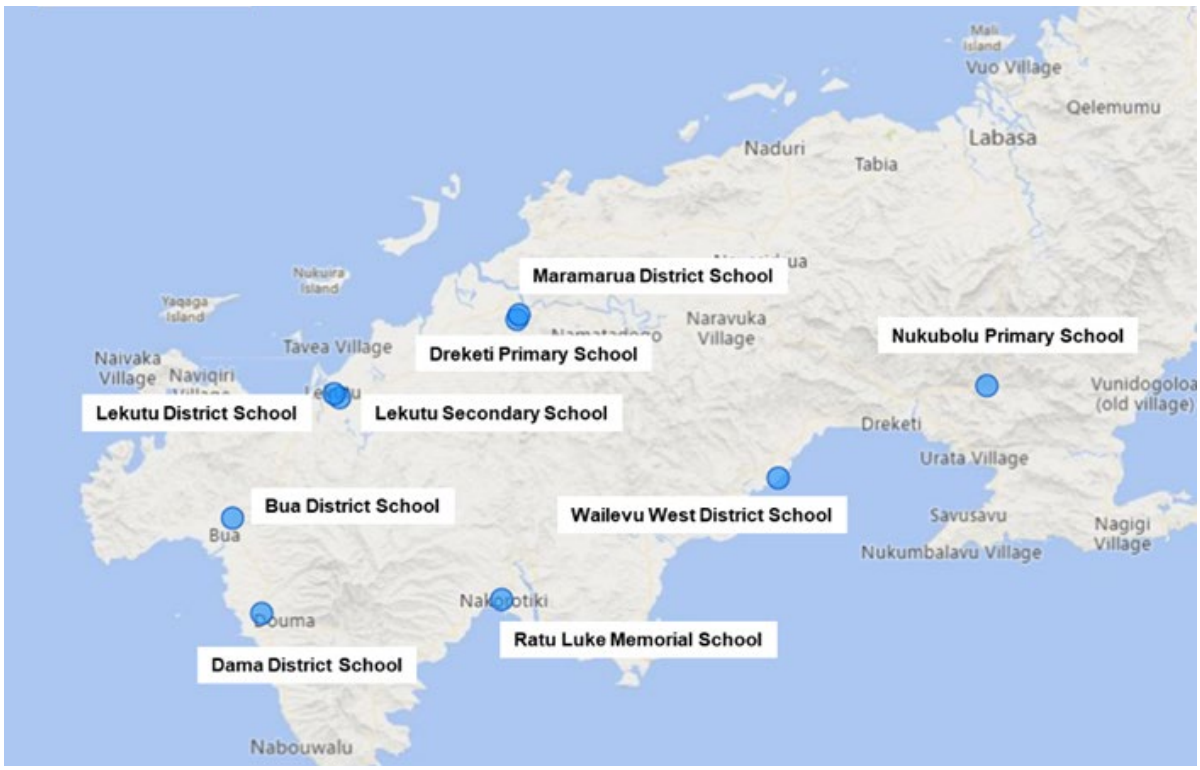
A mixed-method approach was used to meet the objectives of the evaluation. The mixed-method approach included a review of secondary and primary documents, data analysis, as well as interviews and discussions with key stakeholders, including program beneficiaries, program sponsor (DFAT), CRP managers, program partners including contractors and key stakeholders in the Government of Fiji.

Annex C provides an outline of the fieldwork program. Fieldwork included one-on-one interviews, community focus group discussions and student surveys. Where appropriate and feasible, the evaluation also collected case studies to highlight and illustrate key findings. During fieldwork, the Team visited seven of the nine schools that were built/rebuilt as part of the CRP. See Figure 1 for a map of all nine schools covered by the CRP and below, the names of the seven schools visited.

1. Dreketi Primary School
2. Maramarua District School
3. Lekutu District School
4. Lekutu Secondary School
5. Ratu Luke Memorial School
6. Wailevu West District School
7. Nukubolu Primary School

[1] Annex B shows the additions or changes to questions as text that is underlined.

Figure 1: *Map Showing Nine CRP Schools, Vanua Levu, Fiji*



Focus group discussions were considered important for obtaining a more comprehensive community view of the CRP. This was especially important for understanding women's perspectives. At each of the schools visited the Team held focus group discussions with local community members and social clubs/groups (Mother's Club, Parent Committees, etc.). During the Teams school visits, the focus group meetings were held in community halls at each location. The Team's national consultant led the focus groups and used an interactive, modified and most significant change approach. See Annex D for an outline of the focus group approach and results from each of the seven schools. The focus groups had a duration of 60-90 minutes. This length was considered appropriate by the Teram as many of the participants would be unable to stay beyond this time.

Student surveys were also carried out and were considered important to ensure that students, as well as other key stakeholders were consulted. The student surveys provided direct feedback on how students were affected by the new facilities and whether it had met their educational needs and supported their learning environment.

For the school visits, principals of each school were notified before the visit. The schools facilitated one-on-one interviews, focus group meetings and student surveys. At each school students from one of the more senior classes were surveyed with the help of their class teacher. Only at Maramarua District School was a survey not carried out because the rehabilitation work had focussed on the building of staff quarters, not student classrooms

The Cyclone Recovery Program

Before presenting the findings of the evaluation, we briefly present here the outputs of the Program. This provides context and informs our understanding of the results as presented in the following sections on relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. Outputs are sometimes seen as results, however, the following description of outputs does not necessarily tell us if they delivered the CRP's end of program outcomes (EOPO) and intermediate outcomes (IO and ImO) as intended by DFAT.

In June 2021, Australia and Fiji signed the initial CRP agreement for the construction of seven schools affected by TC Yasa. Then in June 2023, DFAT committed an additional AUD 10 million, allowing work to start on two additional schools. The additional funds also enabled a range of supplementary works, including canteens at six schools (Maramarua, Dreketi, the two Lekutu schools, Ratu Luke Memorial and Wailevu West), upgrades to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities, a dormitory upgrade (at Ratu Luke Memorial) and repurposing of an existing toilet building into an early childhood education building (Nukubolu Primary School).

In total, CRP provided the construction or refurbishment of nine buildings (totalling twenty-five classrooms), sixteen toilet blocks, six administration buildings with sickbays, six canteens, five dormitories, and three dining halls with kitchens. Additionally, CRP provided sixteen staff quarters, a library and computer lab, and an early learning centre. The program also included the construction of covered walkways and footpaths connecting all the buildings.

Notably, all school buildings are designed for cyclone resilience. Six new classroom buildings are category 5 cyclone resistant, featuring robust concrete footings, extensive roof truss strapping, and heavy-duty window protection. One classroom building was refurbished to category 3 cyclone standards. These resilient buildings also incorporate resource management systems, including solar panels and rainwater harvesting. Each school has at least one cyclone-resistant building for use as an evacuation centre.

Passive energy design elements, such as insulation, natural lighting, cross ventilation and strategic orientation, were integrated to minimize energy consumption and maintain cooler classroom temperatures. In total, the completion of the nine schools provided a safe learning environment for 1,469 students which included 703 (48%) girls and four students with disability. Annex F provides a summary of outputs for all nine schools.

Findings and Analysis: Relevance

The CRP demonstrated significant relevance to the policy priorities of Australia and the Government of Fiji and has effectively addressed beneficiary needs. The CRP's success is evidenced by the positive feedback from a wide range of stakeholders, including the Government of Fiji, specifically the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance. Teachers, students, school boards, heads of school, and local communities all indicated the CRP addressed their needs and was highly relevant. The Government of Fiji specifically acknowledged Australia's leadership and responsiveness in the timely delivery of the CRP.

The new facilities constructed under the CRP align strongly with the priorities of the Government of Fiji. The Ministry of Education's Labasa Northern Division Head described the new classrooms as being "like walking into a hotel," highlighting the quality of the infrastructure. The facilities, including covered walkways, spacious and airy classrooms, whiteboards, WASH facilities, and teacher housing, directly address the educational needs identified by the Fiji Government. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance acknowledged the efficient delivery mechanism of the CRP.

The CRP was and continues to be relevant to Australian Government priorities, particularly within the context of the Vuvale Partnership. The program's focus on disaster recovery and resilience-building aligns with Australia's broader foreign policy objectives in the Pacific region. By providing timely and effective assistance following TC Yasa, the CRP has strengthened the Vuvale Partnership and reinforced Australia's commitment to supporting Fiji's development.

Specifically, the CRP has enhanced the relationship between the Government of Fiji and the Australian Government. DFAT's ability to respond quickly to the request for assistance after TC Yasa, the financing arrangement created for the program, and importantly, the flexibility of the program to work in partnership with local communities all helped to further enhance Australia as partner of choice.

Australia demonstrated significant visibility in its support for Fiji following TC Yasa, particularly in its efforts to rebuild schools in Vanua Levu. Immediately after the category five cyclone struck, Australia responded swiftly by providing a $4.5 million humanitarian relief package, which included education supplies to enable children to return to school. Notably, HMAS Adelaide was deployed to Fiji for three weeks, with Australian Army engineers from the 6th Engineering Support Regiment assisting Fijian authorities in clearing debris and repairing critical infrastructure, including schools such as Galoa Primary School, allowing students and teachers to return to a reconstructed classroom by mid-January 2021. This collaborative approach and tangible support highlighted Australia's commitment to its "vuvale" (family) partnership with Fiji in times of crisis.

Fiji's media extensively highlighted Australia's support in rebuilding of nine schools in Vanua Levu following the devastation of TC Yasa. Outlets such as FBC News, the Fiji Times and Fijivillage prominently featured the progress and completion of reconstruction efforts. For example, ReliefWeb noted on July 26, 2024, that Prime Minister Rabuka attended the opening and commissioned the new school buildings at Lekutu District School. Media reports often showcased the before-and-after visuals, emphasizing the transformation from cyclone-damaged structures to resilient, newly built or refurbished classrooms. The media coverage emphasised the collaborative partnership between the Australian and the Fiji Government and local communities in ensuring effective rebuilding of community schools. The reopening ceremonies of these schools were frequently featured in the media, symbolizing the tangible impact of Australia's commitment to Fiji's long-term recovery and educational resilience.

Boarding School at Lekutu District School

At Lekutu District School students from three communities had to travel for several hours to reach the school. Some students had to travel by boat and then land transport before they could reach the school. Furthermore, the Lekutu District, including the school, was not connected by electricity (EFL Power), thus the community, teachers and students relied on limited available solar power.

About 40 students are currently boarders at the school in the two newly built dormitories - one for girls and one for boys. The new dormitories mean that the 40 students now do not have to travel several hours each day before reaching the school and can fully concentrate on studies during the week. On weekends the students travel back to their homes to spend time with family. The dormitories are looked after by a committee responsible for managing boarding fees, food for boarders and payment for the cooks.

In addition to the dormitories, the facilities include a dining hall with accommodation facilities for the cook, showers and washrooms for student boarders and easy access to toilets and to hand washing facilities.

The new dormitories have reduced the travel time for children from Tavea and other villages that had to come by boat and then walk to school. This has reduced student's stress and exhaustion in travelling to school. Students now have more time to study and participate in school activities.

The boarders are well organised, including instructions on what to wear at different school functions, and the homework they are required to complete after school. The boarding facilities have also helped with discipline among students. Since the new dorms were provided, parents from other remote communities have now also requested boarding facilities for their children.

The new facilities have overwhelmingly met or exceeded the educational needs of school administrators, teachers, and students. Stakeholders consistently reported that the improved infrastructure has created a more conducive learning environment. Teachers and students frequently mentioned the benefits of covered walkways, spacious classrooms, availability of whiteboards and enhanced safety. School boards and heads of school appreciated the provision of essential resources like whiteboards, WASH facilities and teacher housing.

The CRP has also been instrumental in enabling and increasing community support for education and development. In various locations, including Dreketi Primary School, Lekutu Secondary School, Lekutu District School, Ratu Luke Memorial School, Wailevu West District School and Nukubolu Primary School, the new facilities have fostered greater community engagement.

Discussions with several school representative groups made clear the CRP program had fostered greater community involvement. Consultations included the School Committee in Dreketi Primary School, the School Board and Community representatives in both Lekutu Secondary School and Lekutu District School, representatives of the School Mothers Club and School Manager in Ratu Luke Memorial School, women's groups in Wailevu West District School and parents and teachers of Nukubolu Primary School. They all referred to how the CRP had fostered greater community support and involvement (see Annex D for details).

The construction of Category 5 standard school buildings, which can serve as evacuation centres further enhanced community resilience and built confidence. Community engagement, including consultations, trainings and visits to traditional leaders, as well as local employment opportunities that were created, provided key components of the CRP and therefore improved the rehabilitation work. In all seven schools visited, the design and structure of the rebuilt schools, the modern finishings, furniture and classroom facilities, all exceeded the expectations of students, parents and communities.

Findings and Analysis: Effectiveness

Effectiveness measures the extent to which the CRP achieved its objectives, taking into consideration the relative importance of the different EOPO, IO and ImO as outlined in Annex A and interpreted in the ToR as a specific set of questions (see Annex B) related to analysing the outputs, outcomes and the timeliness of results. The analysis in this section also considers any unintended effects and differential results across various groups, with the intention of providing a deeper understanding of objectives achieved. To facilitate the narrative, we have divided effectiveness into several sub-themes aligned with the questions asked in the ToR.

Construction

Following discussions with architects, builders and other relevant informants, the CRP resulted in the construction and use of school facilities that met and exceeded the Government of Fiji standards. The Government of Fiji requires schools to be climate proof to cyclone standard 3, while most of the buildings under CRP were constructed to Category 5, thus well exceeding government requirements. The new CRP school buildings also served as local evacuation centres in case of future cyclone events.

Examining the process of building the schools and the relationship between the builders, DFAT, the Fiji Program Support Facility (FPSF) as well as with local communities and the Government of Fiji provides several insights. The process of building the schools went beyond the process of construction and had several unique aspects that made it more complex but also improved outcomes.

Initially, bidding on the CRP work was limited to national Fijian companies. The CRP employed 342 local workers, with 129 workers employed from nearby school communities. The contractors regarded the design as relatively easy to build but the remote locations and the impact of COVID-19 created several problems. In addition to facing rising prices of raw material, difficulties also included getting

material to remote locations and finding and retaining skilled workers in remote locations. An example included access to Nukubolu Primary School which required three hours to get to and included a river crossing where at least one contractor lost a three-ton truck in the river crossing.

The role of FPSF in the delivery of the CRP supported DFAT with additional expertise and processes that enhanced the effectiveness of the program. However, using a facility such as FPSF creates its own challenges. The relationship and trust between DFAT and the FPSF were critical for successful delivery of CRP. There was a period when staff turnover at FPSF led to some tension in the CRP delivery.

School communities and school heads were widely consulted and shown the relevant architectural plans and drawings. All community leaders and school heads that were interviewed mentioned that they were extensively consulted on a range of aspects of the school buildings. Moreover, where possible their input led to additions or improvements in construction. However, some school and community leaders did not always consult with their respective constituency. Class teachers at some schools had not seen plans and had not been consulted. It was also observed that not all those consulted where able to visualise the architectural drawings and therefore could not give effective feedback.

A related issue was the designs were not externally reviewed. While there were no major architectural defects in the design, there were potentially minor changes that may have been identified in an external review process. More specifically, there were two issues identified – overengineered footings and doors opening outwards resulting in blocking half of the covered walkways. While Category 5 standards require doors to swing outwards, it may have been possible to have the doors designed to swing out and flat against the outer wall. Given the issues identified fall outside our area of expertise, we are not advocating for those changes but rather recommending that an external review process should be adopted as a quality control measure to provide greater confidence in the final design.

Localisation

The CRP placed a strong emphasis on localisation, a strategy that directly contributed to the success of the program. This approach involved communities, school management boards and landowners in the planning and execution of the rebuilding process. For instance, consultations were held with school management boards to understand their specific needs and priorities for reconstruction, ensuring the new facilities were fit-for-purpose and aligned with the educational requirements of the students and teachers. Similarly, when workers' accommodation was necessary, or homes were rented to accommodate project personnel, landowners were directly engaged in negotiations and agreements, generally fostering positive relationships and contributing to the local economy. This intentional inclusion of stakeholders not only ensured the project's responsiveness to local contexts but also empowered communities by giving them a voice in their own recovery.

Localisation took several forms and included involvement of community members in various stages of the rebuilding process, including participation in construction activities. A significant aspect of the rebuilding was the requirement for local labour hire as part of CRP social procurement strategy. Contractors were required to commit to employing local labour from the surrounding communities, with one contractor pledging to recruit a minimum of 25% of their entire workforce locally. The focus on local labour not only provided income opportunities for community members but also aimed to foster skills development and a sense of ownership in the project.

Employing local labour presented specific challenges. Despite raising local expectations, most local labourers were unskilled and had little exposure to the construction industry and some were not able to work more than three days a week. For example, in one of the schools there were 20 applicants but only seven passed the basic skills test. Nevertheless, one construction company has since taken six locally recruited staff back to Viti Levu and now employs them on long-term contracts. Overall, the local labour requirement has led to positive outcomes. Employing non-local labourers was not without its difficulties as well. Cultural expectations relating to local communities visiting "foreign workers" employed on their land, while well intended, in some cases lead to cultural tension and difficulties in interpreting GEDSI and safety guidelines.

For example, in Ratu Luke Memorial School only a few local villagers were employed in the reconstruction of the school and most of the workers were either from Viti Levu or other areas of Vanua Levu. It is customary for the local community to welcome 'foreign workers' and in some cases, this means a welcoming event with food and kava. This was denied as it contravened CRP guidelines relating to the socialising of the workforce with local villagers and in particular, women and children. This in turn caused some resentment on the part of both the local communities denied their customary tradition and of foreign workers feeling isolated and unwelcome to this community.

Of note, localisation also included a unique initiative that highlighted the skills and contributions of local women through the procurement of traditional pandanus mats. CRP collaborated with women's organisations to engage women from local school communities in crafting mats. The woven mats were then used to decorate the ceilings of the newly built and refurbished classrooms (see case study which follows in the report). This not only added a local identity and character to the school buildings but also provided a significant economic opportunity for the women involved. At all the schools visited, it was noted that there has been a notable increase of women participating in school committees. Women and other community members were also involved in providing food for workers. Participation by women in the initiative was not uniform across the nine schools and in one case there was some discussion by the women whether payments were made in a timely manner, highlighting the possible need for closer monitoring. Despite this, the mats and food preparation provided both income and economic empowerment for women within local communities.

The process of localisation was supported by construction companies' Community Engagement and Liaison Officers, and/or by FPSF employed staff. These people were the main links to communities and provided or facilitated engagement and training for workers. Regular and frequent meetings between FPSF, the construction companies, school management and sometimes DFAT provided a mechanism to monitor progress, ensuring work was carried out on time whilst dealing with any developing issues.

Communication mechanisms among stakeholders at the local level seemed to generally work well but was not uniform across the seven schools visited. The coordinated Community Engagement Strategies were a good initiative, with specific targeted trainings and consultations held. There was, however, reservations from construction companies and community engagement liaison people on some aspects of Community Engagement and Safeguarding policies, as these related to prescriptive rules that were not contextualised. This included the ban on kava drinking during village functions, for example during village ceremonies such as those related to funerals. In one extreme case (Lekutu Secondary School) as part of the safeguards in place, women were prevented from contributing to food catering for workers. This excluded them from the arrangement where women cooked food and received income from the construction companies.

While acknowledging that the CRP was rated as high risk for social safeguards future similar programs may nevertheless want to consider how social safeguards/GEDSI measures could be better contextualised to be appropriate for local communities and cultural traditions. Any future contextualisation should ensure a balanced approach that ensures no harm is done to communities, especially women and children, while also acknowledging local customs and cultural practices

School Women Groups Mat Weaving

Mats made by the school women's groups from the provinces of Macuata, Bua and Cakaudrove were used for the ceilings. For the women, the use of the mats signified inclusion of their traditional artifacts, preserving identity and culture and was a testament to their participation in the re-building of their schools.

Following TC Yasa, DFAT adopted a well-developed approach for engaging with communities in targeted rural areas. Coupled with the humanitarian work of rebuilding schools that were badly damaged, there was a concerted effort to ensure communities who owned the schools had a degree of ownership of the rehabilitation and development work undertaken.

The engagement of women in various income earning initiatives also included selling food for construction workers and working in canteens in all schools that were rebuilt.

Mats shown here are from Ratu Luke Memorial School in Wainunu, Bua Province and Wailevu West Primary School, Cakaudove Province.

WASH Facilities

All nine schools under the CRP received new WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) facilities. Primarily this took the form of new toilet blocks for all nine schools and refurbishment of existing WASH facilities in five of the nine schools. For example, Ratu Luke Memorial School received a new toilet block, and the existing dormitory and toilets were also refurbished (see Annex F). The designs for the toilet blocks aligned with the Fiji Government building standards, as did all the school buildings under the CRP. The new and refurbished toilet blocks all met the international SPHERE handbook standards for WASH facilities.[2] CRP WASH facilities were designed to be accessible by people with disabilities and incorporates safety features such as locks, appropriate lighting, handrails and doors meeting minimum width standards.

According to teachers and students in the schools visited, there was strong consensus and clear examples of increased understanding and awareness of health and hygiene processes among students due to the new WASH facilities. This was due to a combination of follow up education and training from teachers, together with facilities that are more conducive to cleanliness and hygiene. Students who were surveyed across the six schools, rated their new WASH facilities very highly in relation to what they liked the most, some commenting that there had been no hand basins, proper taps or mirrors for them in their old school (see next section on Student Surveys).

Overall, the new school WASH facilities allowed for safety and disability inclusion with all facilities having access ramps, allowing for persons with disabilities. Other than one moderately sight impaired female student at Dreketi Primary School, the consulting Team did not meet any physically disabled students during the consultation. During the field visit to seven of the nine schools, WASH facilities were well used. Students used the water taps to collect drinking water, and the students seem to have good awareness of washing hands and general hygiene.

During the Teams short visit, there was evidence that in some of the schools, soap or toilet paper was not readily available in toilet blocks. At one school the Team was informed that students needed to request those items from their class teacher. A few teachers commented, however, that there were often shortages of these items and that some students would still not take the trouble to ask for soap.

Materials used for toilet blocks were modern and met Australian standards. Mostly, the new WASH facilities used fittings that could not be readily found locally. For example, the Head Teacher in Lekutu District School stated that one of the challenges for him was finding replacement fittings for repairing WASH facilities.

Problems with septic tanks were identified in some of the schools during the field visits. This included Dreketi Primary School having problems with drainage and surface flooding during heavy rainfall. Maramarua District School had a similar problem during heavy rain and noted the septic tank and run off smelled. Lekutu Secondary School and Wailevu West District School also had problems with septic tank overflow during heavy rains. A number of these complaints were followed up on by contractors and septic tank leaks were rectified by the insertion of bund walls, however the problem of sewage leakage and the related odour, persisted in a few schools and was raised with the evaluation Team.

[2] he Sphere Handbook: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response sets minimum standards in humanitarian aid and is published by the Sphere Association. See: https://handbook.spherestandards.org/en/sphere/#ch001

Dreketi Primary School WASH Facilities

Deputy Prime Minister of Fiji, Hon Professor Biman Prasad, who was raised in the Dreketi area, proudly opened the school as shown opposite. 70% of students at the primary school said that the toilets and WASH facilities were one of the best features of their new school. Teachers liked the use of stainless steel, the use of louvres for better air flow and the self-closing taps commenting on easier access for students and better hygiene.

The wet area of ablution blocks included tiling and installation of fittings completed to plumbing certificate standards in Fiji and in addition, included a toilet for people with a disability.

The only issue of concern raised by teachers at Dreketi was the septic tank design. Teachers noted after heavy down pours of rain, the tank would flood and leak sewage. Efforts were being made to rectify this in the future.

Student Survey

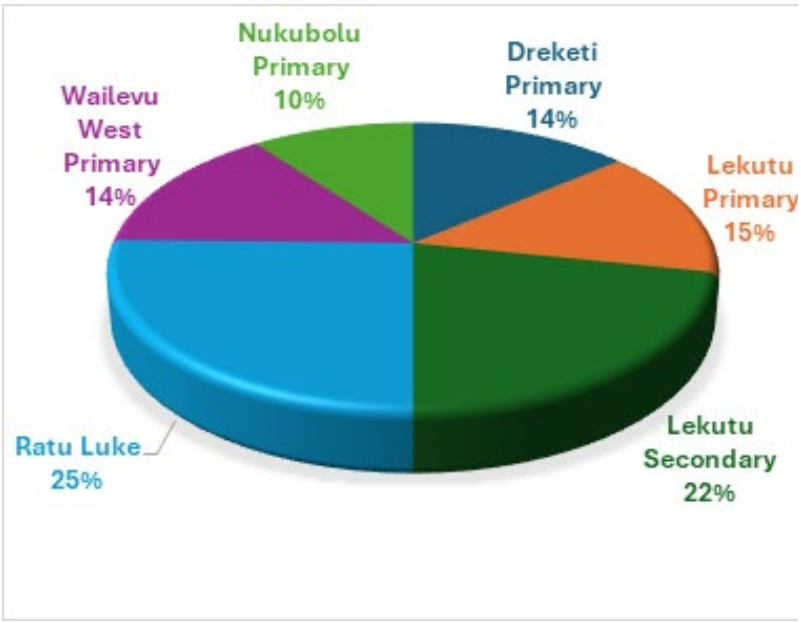
At six of the seven schools visited student surveys were carried out. The surveys, in conjunction with interviews of teachers and community focus groups, were used to gauge student satisfaction with the new school buildings and the impact they had on their learning. At all six schools surveyed, students were offered the survey form in both Itaukei and English, with a number of classes selecting a mix of both.[3] The class teacher and the Team member were present to assist students as necessary in understanding the questions. It was clearly explained to the students that the survey was a voluntary exercise and confidential. Students were not required to put their names on the survey form. The survey sought feedback on the following four key areas:

1. How students rated their new school from 0-10? (10 being optimal)
2. What they liked most about their new school?
3. Did they feel safer if another cyclone were to hit?
4. What else could have been done to assist with their new school learning environment?

[3] See Annex E for the English version of the Student Survey

From the 142 students invited to undertake the survey only 4 individual students chose not to participate. Most however, were keen to complete the survey and a total of 138 students responded, with Figure 2 showing the proportion of students surveyed by their respective school in percentage.

Figure 2: *Proportion of students surveyed by their respective school (%)*



The survey results for question 1 shows the majority of students rated their new school facilities at 10 out of 10, with only a few rating their school facilities 8 or 9. The three top reasons given by each school for their high ratings are shown in Figure 3 below, with all schools rating the new WASH facilities highly in relation to what students liked the most. The new classrooms themselves were also ranked highly by many students reflecting their view that the classrooms were larger and provided new furniture. A number of students also mentioning how much they liked the use of locally made mats in the classroom ceiling design.

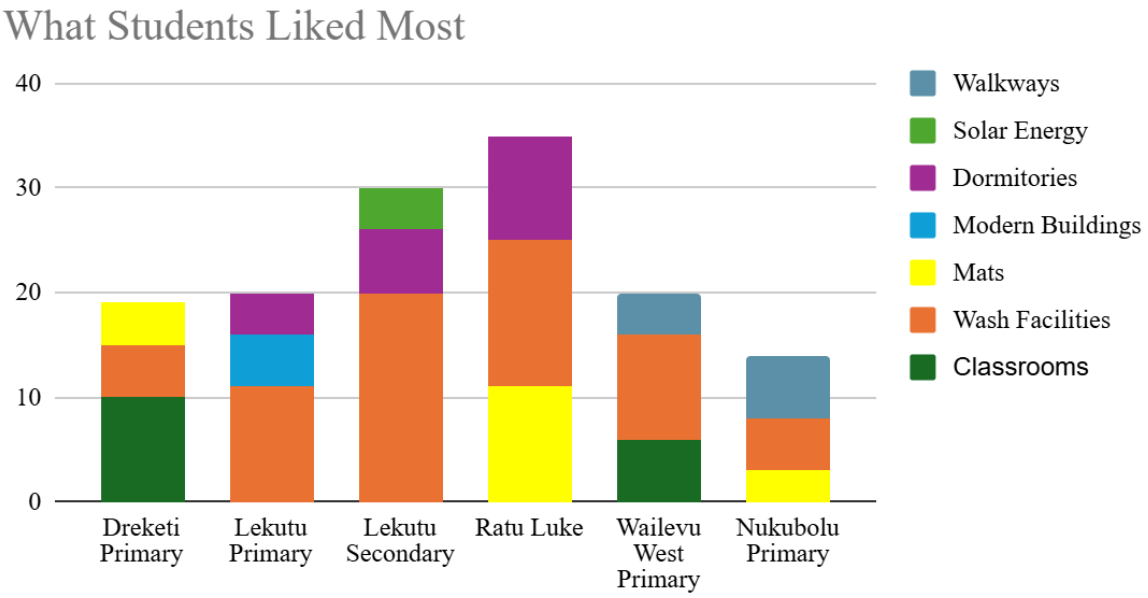
Students noted that their new classrooms were slightly cooler than their previous classrooms. This survey result was backed by evidence from the FPSF completion report[4], where it stated that on average the new classrooms were 2.1 degrees Celsius cooler compared to the temperature outside. The new dormitories at the Lekutu schools and Ratu Luke were also ranked very positively, while other top ranked reasons across all schools surveyed included the new modern buildings powered by solar energy and the new solidly built covered walkways. (see Figure 3)

With respect to question 3 in the survey (see Annex E), all students surveyed indicated a sense of greater safety and security in the event of a future cyclone, based on what they saw as stronger, more resilient buildings and the covered walkways as a safer escape route to school evacuation centres.

On the final question, as to what else could have been done to assist with their new school learning environment, most students offered some useful suggestions for how their learning environment may have been further enhanced through the CRP process. Figure 4 shows the top prioritised suggestions for improving the learning environment for each school.

[4] Fiji Program Support Facility (FPSF) Completion Report, Final Results Framework, 2017-2024, pp 4

Figure 3: *Top Reasons Students Liked their New School and Facilities*



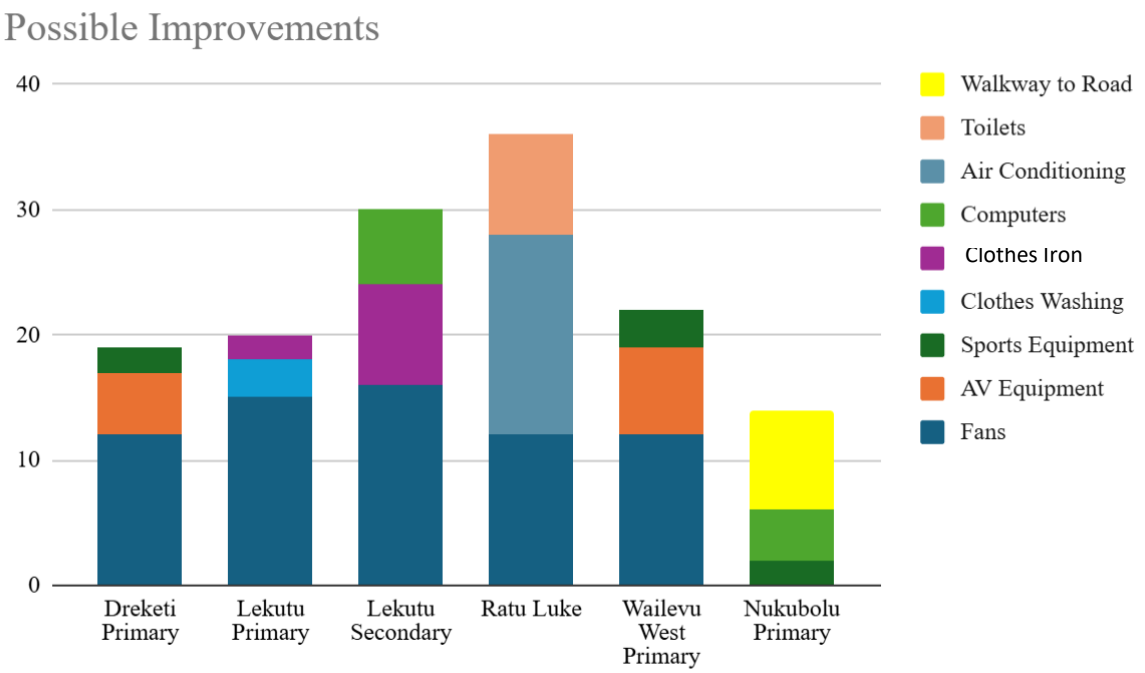
In most schools, there was consensus among students that ceiling fans were still required in the classrooms. Whilst as noted earlier, the classrooms were cooler than before, given the hot and humid conditions that prevail for much of the year, ceiling fans would have been useful addition for their learning environment. Some schools expressed the ongoing need for audio-visual equipment and computers, reflecting the longer-term need in most Fijian schools to develop IT and technical skills for future learning needs. Three of the schools surveyed also prioritised the need for more sporting equipment for girls and boys. Boarders at Lekutu Secondary School in particular, raised the issue of finding a suitable place to hang out clothes to dry and the need for a clothes iron for dresses and school uniforms.

In Lekutu Secondary School, where boarding facilities were built, there was concern for more toilets to service the population of boarders, some stating that three cubicles for the 40 students were insufficient. A small number of boarders in schools also identified the need for a place to more easily wash their clothes. Schools generally varied as to other suggestions, pending actual facilities available. Nukubolu Primary School, while strongly appreciative of the new covered walkways in general, emphasised the need for a sheltered walkway down to the adjacent road for easier access.

The FPSF Completion Report showed that in 2019 prior to the TC Yasa there were 1,538 student enrolments, whereas in 2024 there were 1,469 students enrolled.[5] This demonstrated that the number of students at present is very close to pre-cyclone levels. The Ministry of Education in Fiji also noted significant improvements in students' academic achievement stating that none of the CRP schools were below the 50% pass rate in recent exam results. The outcome is extremely favourable, especially considering the need to balance speedy construction with community consultation and local workforce participation as well as manage the impact of COVID-19.

[5] Fiji Program Support Facility (FPSF) Completion Report, Final Results Framework, 2017-2024, pp 6.

Figure 4: *Suggestions for Improving School Learning Environment*



Overall, the student survey results indicate a high degree of satisfaction for the newly built CRP facilities across all schools with some good suggestions for what else might have been considered in the initial design for the final facilities. Student suggestions in some cases, raise the issue of budgetary limitations and reflect the tension between a relief program as distinct from a longer-term development program.

It was clear from the student surveys as well as discussions with teachers and communities that the learning environment of students had significantly improved. Attendance had improved and students were enjoying learning in their new classrooms. Some evidence showed student academic results had also improved. The CRP met the immediate educational needs of students, whilst also improving the learning environment with accessible, more resilient and safer educational facilities for students. The results indicate the high degree of satisfaction and pride that students have for their new school facilities.

Nukubolu Primary School Student Survey

In Nukubolu Primary School the school principal introduced one of the Evaluation Team members to the 14 students in the year 8 class who were invited to participate in the short survey. They all enthusiastically agreed to complete the survey and most asked to do the survey in English.

The students unanimously rated their new school as 10 out of 10, highlighting their new modern buildings, updated furniture and the locally made mats fitted to the ceiling. WASH facilities also featured prominently as examples of why they liked their new school. A few students mentioned the importance of the new solar power infrastructure and the new water tanks in servicing their school needs and agreed they felt a little safer from future cyclone activity.

The main priority suggested to improve their school environment was that the walkway down to the road remained uncovered. In the event of heavy downpours at the start of school or if being picked up after school, students were exposed to the elements. Other minor suggestions included the possibility of more computer equipment and more toilets, but overall, the students were very positive about their new school and its contribution to an improved learning environment.

Findings and Analysis: Efficiency

The implementation of the CRP was efficiently undertaken however it proved costly and included a model that, at the request of the Fiji Government, largely minimised their role in the implementation process. Construction work was generally delivered on time, especially when considering the change in scope that included additional work at some of the schools. Several construction companies and other contracted services raised concerns about bureaucratic hurdles impeding their direct access to DFAT through FPSF. While the design and implementation of the system did incorporate multiple reporting layers, which could have made swift engagement with DFAT challenging for contracted services, it wasn't definitively established that this created an overly burdensome system. Nevertheless, future initiatives with similar designs should carefully consider the number and impact of bureaucratic layers.

In regard to efficiency, the program was generally well managed and made efficient use of resources. Fortnightly meetings meant there was good monitoring of the program and an effective relationship between FPSF, who managed the implementation of the CRP, and DFAT who had overall responsibility. This meant the program was, by and large, efficiently implemented.

The CRP MEL component was well designed, appropriately adjusted and implemented. Regular meetings were held, including six monthly reflection reports and adjustments made as required and actions taken on findings from monitoring activities. At one point during implementation, efficiency was affected by changes in project management when a facility manager left, and the replacement performed poorly. However, the replacement and current project manager continues the efficient

working relationship with DFAT. As with all programs, when going through all the various MEL reports and other related documents, there were a range of administrative and managerial issues identified, but these appeared to have generally been dealt with as they occurred and there were no major or unforeseen impediments to the CRP.

Value for Money

When applying DFAT's Value for Money (VfM) Principles, the analysis demonstrates that the CRP offered good value for money. As we noted at the beginning of this section, the program proved expensive for what it delivered, if measured only by the number of school buildings it built. The high cost per classroom was largely driven by the significant social procurement program. However, when measured more comprehensively using VfM criteria, the CRP showed good VfM.

DFAT's VfM Principles are a set of guidelines designed to ensure that investments achieve the greatest possible impact. DFAT measures VfM using eight Principles which apply to all DFAT's investments, including the CRP. DFAT's VfM emphasize cost-consciousness, competition, evidence-based decision-making, proportionality, performance and risk management, results focus, experimentation and innovation, and accountability and transparency. By applying these principles to the CRP and its EOPO it demonstrated that the CRP achieved efficient delivery and VfM.

The social procurement element of the CRP included a significant emphasis on localisation, which consisted of widespread stakeholder consultation, local contractors, local labour hire, and women's economic participation. The design further included extensive risk management through safeguard policies and capacity building, as well as GEDSI integration throughout the program. All these elements, as well as the impact of COVID-19, increased the cost per classroom delivered. However, in line with VfM principle of cost consciousness, it considered the programming costs throughout the investment lifecycle and adhered to the principle of encouraging competition.

The delivery of CRP also shows elements of DFAT's VfM principles of results focus, innovation and transparency. While not made explicit, DFAT's CRP response to TC Yasa appeared to have learned from DFAT's assistance provided after TC Winston caused widespread damage in Fiji in February 2016. While the relief provided by DFAT after TC Winston is not directly comparable to that of the CRP, there were nevertheless some salient lessons to be learned. The TC Winston evaluation, for example, noted that "Emergency responses tend to work most effectively when they are phased and linked to long-term development programs and outcomes." The TC Winston evaluation also noted that while "the evaluation found that the response was timely effective and appropriate in the immediate term, there was declining effectiveness over a one-year timeframe as needs evolved. What were intended to be temporary solutions to immediate needs were still being used a year on from TC Winston when schools were in need of a more permanent solution."[6] The CRP appears to have made an effort to take account of the lessons learned from TC Winston and therefore our analysis of VfM, using DFAT's principles, suggests that while the CRP was costly on a per classroom basis, it nevertheless delivered good VfM.

CRP Model

The CRP implementation model had two main features. First, as the FPSF Completion Report noted (page 39), the CRP applied a funding modality whereby funds were disbursed from the Australian

[6] For the evaluation see: https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/tropical-cyclone-winston-education-response-evaluation.pdf#page=29&zoom=100,72,677.

Government to Fiji's Ministry of Finance through a Direct Funding Arrangement (DFA), before being provided to the Fiji Program Support Facility (FPSF). The FPSF invoices were reviewed and endorsed by DFAT and paid by MOF.

The use of a DFA worked well for the CRP. Additionally, it reflects good development practice and the strength of Australia-Fiji relationship. The DFA also worked because Fiji has a robust Public Financial Management (PFM) System. The use of the DFA reduced transaction costs, increased efficiency and provided flexibility. Invoices associated with program management and physical works were submitted by the FPSF for certification by DFAT and then presented to the Fiji Ministry of Economy (now Ministry of Finance) for payment. However, at one point, there was some confusion with the Ministry of Finance regarding the financing mechanism for CRP. Up to the end of December 2022 the government had signed off on invoices with no questions asked. This perhaps doesn't reflect good practice or a strong sense of ownership. Nevertheless, based on discussions with the Ministry of Finance, when the new Fiji Government came into office in December 2022, the new administration identified issues with some of the invoices, but didn't follow up immediately with questions and instead delayed payment. Neither practice of signing off without question or withholding payments without following up reflect good development practice or use of an DFA. These issues were soon resolved, and there is no longer confusion over the processes of certification and invoicing with the Ministry of Finance.

The second interesting feature of the CRP model was the request by the Fiji Government that DFAT retain the direct implementation responsibility for the project. At the time of the request, it reflected the capacity constraints in the Fiji Government systems. While the CRP had a Steering Committee that provided oversight, the CRP largely observed the Fiji Government's request. The implementation responsibility remained with DFAT, and implementation delegated to the FPSF. The responsibility for construction management oversight, quality assurance and subcontracting of building works was delivered by the existing FPSF through service order between DFAT and the managing contractor following a scoping/feasibility report and detailed damage assessment conducted by the Australian Defence Force. Throughout the CRP delivery, DFAT maintained close involvement, contributing significantly to the project's successful outcomes.

The overall assessment of the CRP Model arrangement as described above is that it worked well. As previously noted, there was a high level of satisfaction with the CRP outputs at the school and community level as well as at senior levels of the Fiji Government. The success was in part due to the CRP Modality and the management by DFAT of the CRP Model.

It is clearly acknowledged that the CRP modality responded appropriately to the request from the Fiji Government for DFAT to take responsibility for the implementation of the project to help them cope with the immediate humanitarian emergency, with the lack of local capacity and in the context of the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this context, the CRP was effective and necessary. However, the strengths and weaknesses of the model should be thought through before being adapted in other development contexts.

Findings and Analysis: Sustainability

The CRP approach to rebuilding and renovation of community-owned schools demonstrates a strong commitment to sustainability. A significant feature of sustainability was the CRP transition from immediate humanitarian relief to development work, including the support for livelihoods through

initiatives such as women's income-generating activities (i.e. school canteens). This and other activities enhanced the community's capacity to support the schools in the future. The construction of school buildings designed to serve as evacuation centres also provided a tangible and lasting benefit.

The focus on social procurement and a community-centric approach also helped support sustainability. By focusing on community ownership and actively engaging local people in construction and women in catering and other activities, the project fostered a sense of ownership. The community involvement, coupled with consultations to align the work with local needs and priorities, laid a solid foundation for long-term care of the rebuilt infrastructure.

Through the work undertaken, community cohesion and networking with NGOs and other stakeholders was encouraged. The Fiji Federation for People with Disabilities, the Women's Crisis Centre, Empower Pacific were among the NGOs involved in training and community awareness work. There were also consultations with the provincial offices and local traditional governance systems (through the Community Engagement Officer and the Community Liaison Officer). All of these helped with social cohesion and strengthening community ownership for long term sustainability.

However, a notable challenge in the long-term sustainability of the CRP lies in the financial burden of maintenance. Already a range of minor building defects were noticeable, and it was not clear how all of them would be addressed in the future. While the initial rebuilding was successful, the reliance on community fundraising for ongoing maintenance after the defects liability period poses a significant challenge. Across the nine schools benefiting from the CRP, the ability to raise funds varied. The high cost of materials and limited government grants for maintenance create ongoing uncertainty about some if not all the nine schools' ability to adequately maintain the new facilities. Most basic maintenance could be handled locally, however specialized repairs may require external expertise and material, which were difficult and costly to secure in rural areas. The financial constraint of long-term maintenance, if not addressed through consistent support and strategic planning, could undermine the long-term benefits of the CRP.

Despite this financial vulnerability, the CRP has incorporated elements that will help to mitigate the challenge of ongoing and long-term maintenance. The provision of operations and maintenance manuals, detailed construction drawings and handover training provided for equipment such as solar panels represented a proactive step towards empowering the schools with the knowledge and resources for basic upkeep. The focus on social inclusion and livelihoods initiatives also indirectly contributes to sustainability by strengthening the economic capacity of the community.

Ultimately, while the strong community ownership and resilient infrastructure offer a significant advantage, the long-term sustainability of the new school buildings will depend heavily on securing consistent financial support and implementing strategic maintenance plans.

The CRP design and approach to implementation provides several lessons for similar future programs in Fiji and the region. Primarily is the lesson of taking a holistic approach to rebuilding and renovating schools after a disaster. This includes providing a coordinated approach that transitions from immediate humanitarian relief to development work and includes strong component of localisation, wide consultation and fostering ownership.

Findings and Analysis: Cross Cutting Themes

In relation to effectiveness, the evaluation was asked to answer questions related to cross cutting theme of GEDSI and safeguards (see Annex B). These questions are examined here, specifically the following three questions:

- To what extent has disability inclusion and safety considerations been integrated in the new school facilities?
- How effective were CRP's approaches to gender equality and disability inclusion?
- To what extent did CRP meaningfully engage women, girls and people with disabilities in program design, decision making and implementation, and take steps to increase their participation in the program?

GEDSI and safeguards were a key feature of the CRP and played an important role in the program's success. The integration of GEDSI along with health and safety safeguards highlight DFAT's strong commitment to these priorities. Given the CRP worked in remote located schools the risk assessment done by DFAT judged the CRP to be high risk and accordingly placed strong emphasis on safeguards. Regarding GEDSI, Australia's new international development policy reinforces support for Pacific partnerships and placed a strong emphasis on GEDSI. For many in the construction industry, the significant emphasis on safeguards and GEDSI was new. As part of the tender process for the construction work, all bidders had to address their approach to GEDSI and safeguards. FPSF, which managed the tender process, had a tender process that included GEDSI and safeguard considerations. At all schools and before implementation, GEDSI assessments were done before work started. Furthermore, GEDSI and safeguard training was required at all school locations.

GEDSI training and inclusion of Child Protection Policies for community groups, and construction companies was managed by FPSF and the companies' community liaison officers. This was generally an efficient process. After some initial hesitation, the companies welcomed and learned from the inclusion of these social issues in the work they carried out.

To a significant extent disability inclusion and safety considerations were integrated into the new school facilities. GEDSI personnel were actively involved in the initial assessments conducted by the design Team at each school. This resulted in all WASH facilities having disability access through appropriately designed bathroom amenities and access ramps, in addition to the covered walkways provided. GEDSI and safeguard training included early consultations with school management and representatives of the communities. For example, in Lekutu District School, based on GEDSI and safeguard discussions, teaches quarters were built near to the dormitories to ensure safety for boarders. The CRP also included collaboration with a disability group in Labasa, demonstrating a targeted effort to incorporate disability-specific perspectives into the planning and implementation phases.

Covered Walkways at Ratu Luke Memorial School

The new covered walkways made of solid timber, provide shelter from the rain and hot sun whilst also providing for easier mobility between classrooms.

Walkways enable the movement of any student with a physical disability and requiring wheelchair access. Walkways also allowed for ease of access to other facilities such as the staff office, canteen, sick room and evacuation centres.

The CRP's approaches to gender equality and disability inclusion demonstrated significant strengths of the design and its implementation. Nevertheless, as previously mentioned, at times strict adherence to safeguards resulted in tension with traditional cultural practices. The GEDSI, social safeguards and child protection training created a significant awareness amongst construction companies, school committees and others involved in the rebuilding of schools. The effectiveness of GEDSI, Child Protection and other Social Safeguards was evident. The CRP maintained a consistent GEDSI-inclusive approach to participation. However, the success of these approaches varied across schools, influenced by factors such as the quality of local participation and school leadership, as well as the degree of community cohesion and the specific community engagement strategies employed by construction companies. For future similar engagement other strategies might be considered to improve cultural awareness and strengthen uptake. This could include training of trainers for local teachers and women leaders to take the lead on GEDSI in their own communities.

Overall, the CRP undertook various efforts to meaningfully engage women, girls, and people with disabilities. This included in program design, decision-making and implementation. As previously highlighted, localization strategies were adopted to create opportunities for women's involvement, such as in catering, cooking and mat weaving. Recognizing the initial underrepresentation of women, specific requests were directed to communities to ensure women's inclusion in consultations, which subsequently led to greater women's participation in school committees. The CRP also actively involved a disability group from Labasa in school visits. Community feedback sessions were also organized, achieving substantial participation from women. Despite these efforts, challenges persisted, with reports indicating that some women experienced marginalization during consultation processes where school boards and head teachers were predominantly males.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Lessons learned and findings from the evaluation of the CRP need to be viewed in the context of a highly effective program. The CRP effectively delivered the EOPOs with strong local community engagement and good prospects for sustainability. The CRP was highly regarded by senior Government of Fiji officials and strengthened the Australia-Fiji Government relationship. In general, the CRP reflected good development practice that aligned with Australian strategic interest and reinforced Australia's international development policy of building Pacific partnerships, addressing climate resilience, GEDSI and local ownership. In this context, the lessons learned, and recommendations should be viewed.

Recommendation 1: **Prior to tendering, architectural and engineering designs should be externally reviewed to comply with best practice.**

First, there were several lessons related to the role of FPSF as the implementing agency responsible for program management and the contracting by them of NRW Macallan as project manager for the infrastructure development project. NRW Macallan took the role of oversight, that is usually done by the architect and provided FPSF and DFAT with full-time physical presence on-site.

A general comment by the contractors and others delivering the school infrastructure, was that there were too many levels of bureaucracy and that this slowed down communication. Contractors especially wanted to deal directly with DFAT that were the ultimate decision makers. Instead, they had to deal with NRW Macallan and FPSF before being able to reach DFAT. Contractors also found the weekly meetings in the field during construction work onerous.

While acknowledging the contractors and others frustration with the layers of reporting, it was not necessarily clear that there was a more efficient process, especially given the high-risk nature of the CRP and ultimately the successful outcome vindicated the process.

What was clear, that prior to tendering, the architectural and engineering designs should have been externally reviewed to comply with best practice. This may have identified a few issues such as doors opening outwards and blocking half of the veranda, footings too large for what was required and septic tanks that would overflow during wet weather.

Recommendation 2: DFAT platforms or facilities tendering out infrastructure projects to national contractors in similar setting as those in Fiji should develop and provide a Social Procurement Manual, setting out GEDSI and safeguards and how these can be implemented in infrastructure projects.

Regarding GEDSI, none of the national contractors had any real understanding of GEDSI and safeguard requirements. While FPSF included GEDSI and safeguard requirements in their tender process and contractors addressed these in their tenders, it was a steep learning curve for all the contractors. Contractors ultimately appreciated this and some now include GEDSI in their other construction work. In support of this, in future tenders FPSF or similar facilities should consider producing a Social Procurement Manual, setting out GEDSI and safeguards and how these can be implemented by contractors in infrastructure projects.

Recommendation 3: Development programs that extend well beyond immediate disaster relief, should, generally follow good development practice and include recipient governments in the delivery process, including supporting capacity building aspects that improve sustainability.

Australia's initial response to TC Yasa was to deploy HMAS Adelaide to Fiji for three weeks, with Australian Army engineers from the 6th Engineering Support Regiment assisting Fijian authorities in clearing debris and repairing critical infrastructure. The school rebuilding program (CRP) built on this early work. From the initial investment design to the completion of the project, spanned approximately three years, with several expansion and changes in scope. The extended duration required to complete the program reflects both the constraints imposed by COVID-19 restrictions and the Government of Fiji's strategic decision to adopt enhanced, higher-quality school design standards. The design and CRP delivery modality reflected the Government of Fiji's request for Australia to take responsibility for implementation, nevertheless, stronger consideration should have been given to capacity building aspects in the design and delivery.

Recognising that in Fiji schools are community-owned and not directly owned by the Ministry of Education, some consideration could still have been given to capacity building in this area. The

Ministry of Education itself could benefit from capacity building that assists with the streamlining of governance and communication processes as well as on the provision of school grants for maintenance. This capacity building may not necessarily have been a specific separate component of CRP but could have been a requirement to link CRP with other capacity building components of Australia's aid program.

Recommendation 4: Consider having a contingency process in place to provide for essential items after completion that may not have been anticipated at the design stage. An example of this, as mentioned by a range of stakeholders at each school, was the need for the provision of ceiling fans to improve airflow and cooling in classrooms

The successful delivery by the CRP of the classrooms, WASH facilities and other components created its own demand from school leaders, local leaders and teachers for additional outputs, that included, new equipment such as audio-video equipment. Such demand is the price of success and while needing to be dealt with diplomatically, does not necessary require additional expenditure.

However, where the requests are linked directly to aspects overlooked in the original design, faults outside of the contractor's responsibility, or additions needed to achieve the full benefits of the new infrastructure, then it is worthwhile to have some contingency in place to deliver on the request. An example is the request by all the schools for ceiling fans in their new classrooms. While the new classrooms were somewhat cooler than the previous classrooms, most of the old classrooms had ceiling fans which helped in cooling them. The recommendation is not for funding more significant capital works but for minor improvements where design faults, unanticipated work required, or minor adjustments were overlooked, and would if addressed, enhance the utility of the infrastructure delivered.

The proposed recommendation does not refer to the significant retention payment held from contractor for repairs to be made during the first year of the new building. While there was some slowness in contractors returning to repair minor faults, it was assumed such delays were related to the remoteness of the schools, and these minor faults would eventually be addressed in the retention payment period.

Recommendation 5: While the modality is effective and valued in a Fiji context, consideration should be given to ways to strengthen national systems and build capacity within line ministries and strengthen the recipient government's ownership of similar infrastructure development projects in line with "best development practice".

The CRP modality worked well and provided high visibility for Australia. Key Fiji Government officials, including the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minster and other Ministers attended various openings of schools. Key officials from the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Education, including from Vanua Levu, closely followed the program's implementation. The CRP Program Steering Committee, comprised of the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education, the Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Economy and DFAT's Fiji Post Counsellor provided strategic guidance. Nonetheless, the CRP modality of a DFA with the Government of Fiji and a Service Order with the FPSF for program delivery, while working effectively in this case, does not necessarily represent "best practice". However, we note that the CRP was effective and necessary give the circumstances immediately after TC Yasa. A large part of the successful delivery of the CPA was due to exiting good relationships with the Government of Fiji, effective leadership by DFAT and competent and flexible management by the FPSF.

Recommendation 6: Where GEDSI programs are implemented across multiple sites, it is important to have in place mechanisms for monitoring and following up to ensure all women have equal opportunity to participate.

GEDSI socialisation, training and economic empowerment of women were integral part of the CRP. This took various forms, including mat weaving, cooking food for workers, managing canteens and GEDSI training provided more generally to the school, community and outside workers. GEDSI in its various aspects is part of the story why the program was successful and well imbedded in the community. However, the extent to which women participated in the program was not even across all the schools visited. The success of GEDSI approaches varied across schools, influenced by factors such as the quality of local participation and school leadership, as well as the degree of community cohesion and the specific community engagement strategies employed by construction companies. For future similar engagements, additional GEDSI strategies should be considered to improve cultural awareness and strengthen uptake. This could include training of trainers for local teachers or other local women leaders to take the lead on GEDSI in their own communities. Given the unevenness, it is important to be able to monitor this more closely in future similar programs and intervene if and as necessary to ensure all women have equal opportunity to participate.

Recommendation 7: Social safeguards and GEDSI measures should be contextualized and include a degree of flexibility that takes account of the cultural practices and traditions of local communities, while safeguarding women and children.

Given the high-risk nature of the CRP, the evaluation acknowledges the need for strong safeguards to be in place. Nevertheless, there is an argument to be made for greater cultural awareness and flexibility. The Social safeguards/GEDSI measures could have been contextualized to be more appropriate for local communities. Two examples of this were the case of women being prevented from cooking food for men working on the school sites and thereby enabling these women to generate income and second the blanket ban on kava drinking, even during traditional ceremonies and funerals. There should be a balanced approach that ensures no harm is done to communities, especially women and children, whilst taking account of participation in or observance of local cultural and traditional practices and the need for a degree of flexibility.

Annex A: Terms of Reference

Cyclone Recovery Program: Independent Evaluation Terms of Reference

1. Background

1.1. About the Program

Category 5 Tropical Cyclone (TC) Yasa made landfall across Fiji's northern island of Vanua Levu on 17 December 2020. With wind gusts of up to 280km/hour, it was the strongest tropical cyclone to make landfall in Fiji since TC Winston in 2016, and the fourth most intense cyclone on record in the Southern Pacific Basin at the time. Following TC Yasa, six weeks later on 31 January 2021, category 2 TC Ana caused intense rainfall and extensive flooding, compounding the damage done by TC Yasa. Many schools sustained heavy damages to their classrooms and other school facilities. As a result, they had to set-up temporary learning spaces, utilising tents, community halls, and dormitories.

With Australia's strong focus on education in Fiji, on 15 March 2021, the Foreign Minister approved an initial package of A$12.5 million over April 2021 to June 2024 for the Cyclone Recovery Program (CRP), to support education recovery, rehabilitating damaged or destroyed schools. Australia has incrementally increased its commitment to a total of A$37,396,000, included the rehabilitation of two sub-national hospitals, and extended the time for delivery to 4.75 year with expected completion by December 2025. As of August 2024, the CRP has completed the rehabilitation of nine schools and will deliver infrastructure upgrades at the Taveuni and Kadavu hospitals by end of program.

The program is funded via a Direct Funding Agreement which was signed with the Fiji Government's Ministry of Finance on 11 June 2021 and has had five amendments since then to absorb additional funds, and extend the timeframe. The program is sole funded and led by DFAT and is implemented through the Fiji Program Support Facility.

Supporting locally led development has been a core component of this program and local contractors, AAPi Designs, NRW McCallan, Pacific Building Solutions and Capital Construction, have been contracted and utilise local labour and locally sourced materials. Social procurement and women's economic empowerment have also been focus areas in program delivery.

1.2. Program Outcomes

The program has the following end of program outcomes (EOPO) and intermediate outcomes (IO and ImO):

- EOPO1: Girls and boys are being taught in accessible education facilities built to withstand future disasters in priority TC Yasa affected locations.

o IO1: Program constructs accessible education facilities that meet GOF standards, to withstand future disasters.

- EOPO2: Women, men, girls and boys access better WASH facilities in priority TC Yasa affected locations.
    - o IO2: Nine targeted schools meet minimum WASH standards.
    - o IO3: Program constructs appropriate school sanitation facilities (single-sex and hygiene facilities) in nine schools

- EOPO3: Australian assistance is visible, responsive, well coordinated and maximises local partner involvement.
    - IO4: Local contractors build school and WASH facilities to GOF standards.
    - IO5: GoF and community satisfaction with quality and accessibility of infrastructure.
    - ImO1: School committees, under the leadership of Head Teachers, contribute to decision making around the scope of school infrastructure investment.
    - ImO2: Ministry of Education counterparts and community members (women and men) contribute meaningfully to consultations about proposed renovations of school facilities.
    - ImO3: Women and men in priority locations are offered access to income generating opportunities through unskilled labour employment.
    - ImO4: Local contractors are delivering infrastructure that meets contractual terms.
    - ImO5: Visible partnership across GOA, with GOF, communicated through public diplomacy activities.

Note:

IO – Intermediate Outcome where progress is monitored over the first 12-24 months.

ImO – Intermediate Outcome where progress is monitored in the first 24 months.

2. Purpose

The evaluation will assess the overall performance of the CRP's school rehabilitation component against the end of program outcomes; and identify best practices, areas for improvement, and recommendations that can be applied to the Fiji Social Infrastructure Program and other similar programs in the region. The findings from this evaluation will be incorporated in the program's Final Investment Monitoring Report.

The key audience for the evaluation is DFAT (Suva Post Management and Social Infrastructure Team). The secondary users are the GoF specifically the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance.

3. Key Evaluation Questions

The evaluation will focus on the OECD-DAC criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. Key evaluation questions and sub-questions for each criteria is presented in the table below:

Criteria	Evaluation Question	Sub-question(s)
Relevance	1. To what extent has the CRP been relevant to Australia's policy priorities, GoF priorities, and beneficiary needs?	1.1. To what extent do the new facilities meet the GoF priorities? 1.2. To what extend has the CRP been relevant to Australian Government priorities, and the Vuvale partnership? 1.3. To what extent do the new facilities meet the educational needs of the students?

Criteria	Evaluation Question	Sub-question(s)
Effectiveness	2. To what extent has the CRP resulted in the construction and use of school facilities that are accessible, meet GoF standards, and are climate proofed?	2.1 To what extent have the new school facilities constructed by CRP changed the learning environment, attendance and enrolment at the school? 2.2 To what extent has disability inclusion and safety considerations been integrated in the new school facilities? 2.3 To what extent has climate and disaster resilience been integrated in the new school facilities? 2.4 To what extent do the schools built under the program meet or exceed national and regional building standards? 2.5 To what extent are WASH facilities constructed under the program appropriate and meet WASH standards?
Effectiveness	3. To what extent has the CRP provided responsive and well-coordinated support, maximised local partner involvement, and applied gender equality and disability inclusion?	3.1 To what extent have local stakeholders (e.g. GoF counterparts, schools, parents and communities) been engaged in decision-making processes throughout the program? 3.2 To what extent did women and men from surrounding communities have greater access to income generation opportunities during the implementation of the program?
Effectiveness	3. To what extent has the CRP provided responsive and well-coordinated support, maximised local partner involvement, and applied gender equality and disability inclusion?	3.3 To what extent have local businesses benefitted from the program? 3.4 How has local capacity been built through the program? 3.5 How effective were CRP's approaches to gender equality and disability inclusion? 3.6 To what extent did CRP meaningfully engage women, girls and people with disabilities in program design, decision-making and implementation, and take steps to increase their participation in the program?
Efficiency	4. To what extent did the implementation arrangements and systems provide good value for money?	4.1. How efficiently was the budget managed and monitored? 4.2. How efficiently were resources allocated and utilized to achieve the program outcomes? 4.3. How did partnerships and collaborations with other organizations contribute to cost efficiencies? 4.4. How efficient was the program modality of a DFA with the Fiji Government and a Service Order with the Fiji Program Support Facility in delivering the program? 4.5. How efficient were the coordination and communication mechanisms amongst the stakeholders?

Criteria	Evaluation Question	Sub-question(s)
		4.6. Did the MEL system timely, credible information, and was it used for decision-making, learning and accountability purposes?
Sustainability	5. To what extent are the outcomes and benefits of the program likely to continue after the program ends?	5.1. Can the program designs be integrated in other similar settings in the country and region? 5.2. Has appropriate systems been set-up for maintenance and up-keep of the school facilities? 5.3. To what extent will the local community members be able to utilise the capacities built through the program? 5.4. To what extent will surrounding communities members continue to benefit from the school facilities?

Questions on efficiency are given the highest priority followed by effectiveness and then relevance and sustainability. During contract negotiations and development of the Evaluation Plan, the evaluation Team will have the opportunity to refine the evaluation questions in consultation with DFAT to ensure they can be answered with appropriate rigour and will provide the information DFAT needs for decision-making.

4. Expected Methodology

A phone or face-to-face inception meeting will be conducted to discuss the background, issues and priorities for the evaluation with the evaluation Team before the Evaluation Plan is developed.

The selected evaluation Team will be expected to provide a detailed evaluation methodology as part of their evaluation plan. The methodology can include (but not limited to):

i. Document review – review all relevant program documents including the work program, reports, financial information, results frameworks and associated data and other relevant information collected for monitoring, accountability, and reporting purposes.

ii. Interviews – key informant interviews with relevant stakeholders. iii. Focus group discussions – with relevant stakeholders.

iv. Case Studies – in depth analysis of a selected component(s)- as relevant.

v. Site visits – of the schools and the school communities.

vi. Analysis and reporting – use of relevant data analysis methods to interpret and present data in the evaluation report.

5. Timeline

The evaluation is divided into three major components which include:

i. Planning and desk review

ii. Field work and analysis

iii. Draft and final reporting

Table 1: Showing indicative evaluation timeframe.

Evaluation Component	Indicative No. of Days	Indicative Timeframe
Inception meeting	0.5	Early-October
Document Review	6	October
Evaluation Plan (Draft and final)	4	November
Field data collection	16	November/December
Analyze data and draft report	18	January
DFAT feedback on draft report	N/A	February
Finalize Evaluation Report	4	February/March
Total	48.5	N/A

6. Composition of the Team

Bidders can propose a review Team that meets the selection criteria below. The proposal must specify roles and days allocated to each role by task.

The Evaluation Team Leader must be an experienced evaluator, ideally experienced in the delivery of DFAT evaluations. The Team Leader is responsible for the technical quality of the evaluation, liaison with DFAT Suva, directing the preparation of all deliverables including the evaluation plan, presentations on findings, draft and final reports, in line with DFAT MEL standards.

The Evaluation Team should comprise an appropriate balance of relevant technical expertise and experience in evaluation. The team must meet the following essential criteria:

i. Relevant post-graduate tertiary qualifications (particularly in evaluation, social sciences, international development, or a related discipline).
ii. Ten years' experience and strong skills in undertaking evaluations, similar evaluation experience is highly desirable.
iii. In-depth understanding of a wide range of evaluation methodologies and approaches, including demonstrated understanding of DFAT evaluations.
iv. Strong written and analytical skills
v. At-least one evaluation team member to be able to communicate in the main local languages.
vi. all team members should have at least awareness-level knowledge of gender equality and social inclusion in relation to the program's focus areas.
vii. Extensive experience of working on development programs in Fiji or the Pacific.
viii. Excellent interpersonal skills and the ability to adapt communication to different audiences.
ix. Familiarity with applying DFAT Design and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Standards

DFAT has a strong and public commitment to ensuring that local/Pacific team members are included on Evaluation Teams, and it is an expectation that at least one member of the team is a Pacific national.

7. Deliverables

7.1. Evaluation Plan

The evaluation plan will set out the methodology for data collection, analysis and reporting. The review plan should comply with DFAT's Design and MEL Standards (Standard 9). It should prioritise the list of review questions and describe the appropriate methodology to answer the questions, including the sampling strategy and key informant categories. The plan needs to describe the allocation of tasks within the team and how the review will be completed within the allocated timeline and resources.

The plan should also include a draft schedule of meetings and visits. It will identify the list of stakeholders, organisations and individuals that will be consulted. This should include a diverse group of stakeholders.

Ethical considerations for the review should be articulated in the review plan. The plan should consider how to implement a feedback loop on the review findings to participants and other relevant stakeholders. A preliminary findings presentation at the end of the field visit should also be included.

An outline of the Evaluation plan is provided in Annex 1.

7.2. Evaluation Report

The evaluation report should meet the DFAT M&E Standards (Standard 5), address the review questions and be targeted to the needs of intended users. The report should have a succinct executive summary and be written in plain English that can be read as a stand-alone document. Key achievements and challenges should be clearly presented in the executive summary and throughout the report. The conclusions and recommendations should be practical and strategic; evaluative judgements should be clear and evidence based. The report will be reviewed by the review reference group to ensure the findings are reliable and valid.

The final report should be presented incorporating the reference group feedback in two formats, first a detailed report for internal use and second a report meeting DFAT requirements for publication for public access. The final report will be published on the DFAT website.

8. Quality assurance requirements

DFAT will manage the evaluation with a reference group overseeing the evaluation process and quality assuring the evaluation team deliverables. The reference group will comprise of staff from the DFAT Suva Social Infrastructure Team and a representative from the Development Evaluation and Assurance Section. Evaluators are required to outline the quality controls they will put in place to ensure the quality of all deliverables. Bidders should lay out in their proposals how they will ensure independence and manage risk of bias, use of a full range of data, information privacy, etc.

DFAT roles will be involved at key points of the evaluation including, scoping, and planning of the evaluation (to make sure all key stakeholders are met); field work data collection; and finalising a publishable report.

9. Proposed Budget

Up to 50 consultancy days will be available for this assignment, as outlined in Table 1. Proposals should outline the personnel fees, days and expenses involved in conducting this evaluation.

10. Supporting documents and data

The following documents and data sets will be made available to the evaluation team:

- Program design
- Overarching DFAT documents
- CRP MEL Framework and dashboard
- CRP Annual and 6 Monthly reports
- Investment Monitoring Reports
- Financial documents
- Other relevant publications

11. Annex 1

Evaluation Plan Draft Outline:

1. About the Evaluation (Description, Purpose, and Users)
   Summary of evaluation design and methodology
2. Limitations
3. Key Evaluation Questions

Evaluation Question	Priority	Data Collection Method	Stakeholders	Sampling Strategy
A	A	A	A	A
B	B	B	B	B
C	C	C	C	C

4. Data Analysis
5. Ethical Considerations
6. Schedule
7. Team Roles and Responsibilities
8. Quality Assurance
9. Final Report Structure
10. Annex
    - 11.1. Draft interview and survey instruments
    - 11.2. Draft schedule of meetings and visits
    - 11.3. Other relevant materials

Annex B: Key Evaluation Questions and Sub-Questions

The following list of key question used in the evaluation are drawn from the ToR. As required by DFAT (see ToR), they were revised and presented in the Evaluation Plan that was accepted by DFAT.

Criteria	Evaluation Question	Sub-question(s)
Relevance	1. To what extent has the CRP been relevant to Australia's policy priorities, GoF priorities, and beneficiary needs?	1.1. To what extent do the new facilities meet the GoF priorities? 1.2. To what extend has the CRP been relevant to Australian Government priorities, and the Vuvale Partnership? **1.3.** To what extent do the new facilities meet the educational needs of school administrators, teachers and students? **1.4.** To what extent have the new facilities enabled community support for education and development?
Effectiveness	2. To what extent has the CRP resulted in the construction and use of school facilities that are accessible, meet GoF standards, and are climate proofed?	2.1 To what extent have the new school facilities constructed by CRP changed the learning environment, attendance and enrolment at the school? 2.2 To what extent has disability inclusion and safety considerations been integrated in the new school facilities? 2.3 To what extent has climate and disaster resilience been integrated in the new school facilities? 2.4 To what extent do the schools built under the program meet or exceed national and regional building standards? 2.5 To what extent are WASH facilities constructed under the program appropriate and meet WASH standards? 2.6 To what extent have the new school facilities elevated educational awareness/children's needs-e.g. WASH?

Criteria	Evaluation Question	Sub-question(s)
	3. To what extent has the CRP provided responsive and well-coordinated support, maximised local partner involvement, and applied gender equality and disability inclusion?	3.1 To what extent have local stakeholders (e.g. GoF counterparts, schools, parents and communities) been engaged in decision-making processes throughout the program? 3.2 To what extent did women and men from surrounding communities have greater access to income generation opportunities during the implementation of the program? 3.3 To what extent have local businesses participated or benefitted from the program? 3.4 How has local capacity and community togetherness (Solesolevaki) been built through the program? 3.5 How effective were CRP's approaches to gender equality and disability inclusion? 3.6 To what extent did CRP meaningfully engage women, girls and people with disabilities in program design, decision making and implementation, and take steps to increase their participation in the program?

Criteria	Evaluation Question	Sub-question(s)
Efficiency	4. To what extent did the implementation arrangements and systems provide good value for money?	4.1. To what extent was the budget managed efficiently and monitored? 4.2. How efficiently were resources allocated and utilized to achieve the program outcomes? 4.3. How did partnerships and collaborations with other organizations contribute to cost efficiencies? 4.4. How efficient was the program modality of a DFA with the Fiji Government and a Service Order with the Fiji Program Support Facility in delivering the program? 4.5. How efficient were the coordination and communication mechanisms amongst the stakeholders? 4.6. Did the MEL system provide timely, credible information, and was it used for decision-making, learning and accountability purposes?
Sustainability	5. To what extent are the outcomes and benefits of the program likely to continue after the program ends?	5.1. Can the program designs be integrated into other similar settings in the country and region? 5.2. Has appropriate systems been set-up for maintenance and up-keep of the school facilities? 5.3. To what extent will the local community members be able to see/experience/utilise the capacities built through the program? 5.4. To what extent will surrounding communities' members continue to benefit from the school facilities?

Annex C: Fieldwork Program

Feb. Date	Location	Program	Comments
Sat 22	Suva	Evaluation team arrive in Suva	Travel day.
Sun 23	Labasa	Evaluation Team meet and preparation late morning for: • Focus groups • Interviews • Surveys	International and national Team members meet
Mon 24	Suva	• Introduction meeting at AHC	Arrival of third team member
Tues 25	Vanua Levu	• Early Morning Fly to Labassa • Visit Dreketi Primary School • 1 hour 20 minutes • Visit Maramarua District School • Drive time: 1.5 hours each way • Overnight location: Labasa	Dreketi was a large reconstruction and will require time to consult with community. Maramarua, -teachers houses and a WASH facility
Wed 26	Vanua Levu	• Visit Lekutu District School • VisitLekutu Secondary School • Drive time: 1 hour and 34 minutes from Savusavu • Meet Commissioner Northern & DEON • Overnight location: Savusavu	Both large constructions. Same community for both schools, although separate school management committee
Thur 27	Vanua Levu	• Visit Ratu Luke Memorial School- Nakawakawa- Wainunu Bay • (3 hours from Labasa) • Drive time: 2 hours from Savusavu	Overnight location: Labasa
Frid 28	Vanua Levu	• Visit Wailevu West • Drive time: 1 hour to Wailevu	Overnight location: Savusavu
Sat 29	Labasa/Suva	• Fly back to Suva	Overnight location: Suva
Sun 30	Suva	EDS Team workshop results from fieldwork	Process initial fieldwork material.
Mon 31	Suva	• Director - Asset Management Unit. Responsible for the school assets management for all school under MOE. • Former MEL Specialist at at Fiji Program Support Facility. Set-up the CRP MEL Framework and managed the MEL reporting for most of the program lifetime. • Former Team Leader for CRP. Is the former CRP Team Leader who greatly involved in the contracting	Stakeholder meetings

Feb. Date	Location	Program	Comments
		and consultation of the school rehabilitation • Former Team Leader for CRP. Is the former CRP Team Leader who greatly involved in the contracting and consultation of the school rehabilitation. • Former GEDSI Specialist at Fiji Program Support Facility. Setup the GEDSI components of the program, conducted training with contractors, schools, and community members. • Community Engagement Officer, PBS. Managed the social procurement and community engagement for PBS.	
Tues 1	Suva	Stakeholder meetings • Contractors • PS Finance and team • Permanent Secretary for Finance. Government partner from the start of the program and guided on modality and program management structure.	Suva based stakeholders and some video conferences
Wed 2	Suva	• Presentation of aide memoire • Debrief with Post • Any remaining meetings	Final debrief
Thur 3	Suva	International team depart	N/A

Annex D: Focus Group Discussions

As part of the mixed-method approach Community Focus Group Discussions were held at each of the schools visited. Community Focus Group discussions were held with local community members and social clubs/groups (Mother's Club, Parent Committees, etc.). The idea was to carry out in community halls, a focus group at each location during the school visits. The eam's national consultant led the focus group discussions and used an interactive modified most significant change approach. The focus groups were between an hour and an hour and half long. The Team was aware of not taking too long as participants were unlikely to want to be able to stay much beyond an hour. The location for the focus groups were at the schools and in community halls. Where large groups participated, they were divided into smaller group discussions before sharing with the larger meeting.

The following are a set of broad questions used to guide the most significant change Community Group discussions:

1. **School Buildings- What has been the biggest change in new buildings and classrooms?** Facilities for students, accessibility by those who are disabled/etc.
2. **How has improvement in water safety, water facilities, sanitation, improved toilets**- helped students/ parents and guardians? WASH.
3. **What has been the biggest impact of dormitories and other support buildings-built or renovated?** Safety. GESI considerations. How has new /renovated teacher's quarters contributed to students' education?
4. **Level of engagement** by community stakeholders-school Faculty/Committee, community representatives, local social groups like mother groups, organizations of people with disabilities, religious organizations, parents and landowners in preparation work for rehabilitation? How has the construction work, renovation work provided for income generation for women/local communities? Gende and Social Inclusion.
5. **For future cyclones and disasters- how will the new school buildings help communities?** Resilience, help in disaster preparedness, reliable power source, Evacuation centres.
6. **What are some of the most significant changes resulting from the cyclone recovery work?** Safety needs, learning environment, GESI, preparedness, Insufficient classrooms and space in classrooms addressed. to accommodate student numbers, insufficient or inappropriate accommodation for staff improved significantly.
7. **Any additional comments on the Construction companies, those who helped in the recovery work.** Impact on communities of new school buildings, dormitories/etc.

Results from Focus Group Discussions

Dreketi Primary School: 7 villagers and School Manager and Committee members

Most significant changes	Comments	Suggestions
New school buildings, classrooms, facilities have changed the standard of education of children.	For 3 years students studied in tents. In the tents students got sick from the heat and when it rained, became very dark. So many children missed school when it rained.	To have proper drainage around the school

Most significant changes	Comments	Suggestions
New Furniture, and the structure and materials used like the walls, ceilings, white boards have changed the standard of the classroom and school	Design and structure are very modern and has changed the look of the school and perceptions of parents and students. Students were in small tents for 2 years then this changed to larger tents- UNICEF	N/A
New Canteen	Before teaches were selling snacks to students Now there are women selling food to students	N/A
New design and completely equipped. Special toilet for those with disabilities. Now WASH facilities ensure safety of students.	Before no hand basins, no mirrors, no proper taps, not enough taps. There have been problems with septic tanks	Consider better drainage to prevent blockages and surface flooding in school area during heavy rain.
GESI Training and Child Protection Training	This took place but they were not sure about the content of the training/etc. GESI trainings targeted school mothers' clubs and committees.	Could consider training for other community members not involved in mothers' clubs and committees.
Evacuation Centre- The Buildings are Category 5 Standard thus will be used as evacuation centre- thus ensures safety of students and communities.	This also builds the confidence of the people – and contributes to building community and students resilience to disasters.	N/A
Community Engagement- consultations were held	These was one with the School Management Board only. Feedback was that buildings, furniture was appreciated by community members	N/A

Maramarua District School: 4 female teachers and 2 male teachers

Good changes	Comments	Suggestions
Teachers' quarters are great, good for working and planning	Outside area is open and when it is windy and raining not conducive to cooking, not safe.	N/A

Good changes	Comments	Suggestions
	Issues with septic tanks, when it rains heavily, underground water comes up and discharges a bad smell.	
Community Engagement No new school building – only teachers' quarters	No direct feedback from community in this evaluation	Grills for lower windows in staff quarters- would be much appreciated
Women from a village were selling food for children at the new canteen. The women from the different villages take turns selling food -now. Thus, an income generating initiative has been successfully set up for women	This has been discussed and agreed to by the women clubs (School Mothes Clubs)	N/A
Labour- local communities also provided Labor	Total number and how well this worked could not be determined.	N/A

Lekutu District School: Cook and wife plus two other parents and 6 Indo-Fijian students

Significant changes	Comments	Suggestions
New Dorms for students with modern and excellent design. Students loved their new dormitories. Cut down on travel times where children from Tavea/etc had to come by boat, then carrier to school. Cut down on the stress and exhaustion of just making it to school.	A committee that looks after the welfare of Boarding students as been set up. $100 a term per family- this pays for food and pay the couple that cook. Parents visit on Wednesdays Students from 5 villages currently the new dorms. There is an organized system for boarders, what they wear, the work they do after school- and it as formed discipline in students	Suggest window mesh can be changed to smaller sized in dorms- because of mosquitoes. Fans in dorms could also help with the heat at night. Students sleeping on the floor most of the time
WASH facilities-Great and new.	Headteacher- needed advice on where to buy emplacements for damaged pats- and ow to fix this.	Taps to cater for young children. There need to be some taps for the young students- easier to open and close. Wash tubs, water not draining out. HT needed advice on were to buy replacement materials e.g. for wash as most are not available locally
New Dining hall and kitchen for boarding students- walkways	Cooking facilities in the new dining area for the dormitory does not have enough space for cooking on large	Outside kitchen has been built and now they have to carry he huge pits of food up

Significant changes	Comments	Suggestions
	pots- so cooking now done in makeshift kitchens built outside.	the steep ladder. Need kitchen to be fixed if possible.
New Classrooms and computer lab and library Classrooms have completely lifted the standard of the school. New classrooms fitted with modem amenities- that will boost children's learning	Students love the school and new facilities- and there has been a shift in attitude- where children love school Compute labs with no computers at the moment- the school will look at ways to fund that.	N/A
Community Engagement- There were consultations held with communities.	These consultations included discussions on the dorms and students.	N/A
Canteen has opened	This is currently run by 2 teachers	N/A

Lekutu Secondary School: AGM of the school. Attendance: 20 women and 15 men consulted.

Most significant changes	Comments	Suggestions
New classrooms, offices upgrade Walkways constructed has ensued protection from the rain and sun for kids	Facilities are very good, New Buildings are also used as Evacuation Centres	Different companies used to undertake some of the follow up repairs. However, when there is a problem, they blame each other. Where possible, it is better for just the one company to be responsible for follow up maintenance and repairs. Taps and Piping still needed
Girls and boys Dormitories and New dining facilities.	Students now are safe and do not have to endure long travelling hours Great dining facilities	Improvements include addressing the following: • Not enough cubicles in the dorm (40 students) only 3 • Boys' dorms have no place to wash their clothes • Power supply not strong enough
WASH Facilities- students now have access to a high standard of WASH facilities	Access to clean water, good toilets for students, good hygiene with and basins available.	N/A
Staff Quarters	Really great design	Work on septic tanks could be better During heavy rain

Most significant changes	Comments	Suggestions
		there is always overflow of water and ensuing bad smell
Attitudes and perception of school has changed a lot with children now love coming to school, great facilities, and this has motivated students to attend school and study.	Some parents whose children were studying in Labasa have bought their children back	Students from Navakasiga and other communities have requested to have their children also board
Community Engagement- Some men were engaged as labourers Mats were made by women- for ceiling finishing	Income generating components of the community engagement work- met livelihood needs of communities. Ealy discussions and agreement was not fully expected as discussions to have 2 from each village to be labourers did not happen. The same with women, who were supposed to be paid for catering- did not happen. A few only were hired	N/A

Ratu Luke Memorial School, Daria, Wainunu (participants not recorded)

Most significant changes	Comments	Suggestions
School buildings, walkways, floors, furniture	All very high standard	Would like school office that was destroyed rebuilt
WASH Provision of new and modem wash facilities, children have access to excellent facilities	This plus special WASH facilities for those with disabilities	Would suggest improving dormitories- toilets seats, and taps that are easily damaged, drainage also needs to be done.
Canteen	This still has to be set up by women	Women groups wanted help with setting up a canteen. Same as Maramarua District School and Dreketi Primary which had newly built canteens operating.
Facilities, new furniture, white boards, screen	Furniture and Facilities were also of very high standard	N/A
New dormitory and dining hall	Only 17 boarders	Would like to address cooking places which were not big enough, not enough space to move around when cooking for many students- so cooked outside.

Most significant changes	Comments	Suggestions
Community engagement GEDSI and Child protection training was done	With Mothers club, teachers and school management The work promised to men from villages as local labour- ended up with only a few being hired- not from all villages. Women were promised income for supplying food and tea stuff- this did not happen.	N/A
Total change in Attitude for students. Now they are keen to come to school and enjoy the school facilities	This was a common finding in all schools	

Wailevu West District School (participants were women from 3 communities- 25 women and 1 men participated)

Most significant change	Comments	suggestions
School- Completely changed the standard of the school	Specially mentioned were -The Teachers quarters, walkways, sick bay-	Tea room could have been a little bigger
New furniture, white boards, screen, fan, in new school facilities.	Children's attitude to school has completely changed by the conducive environment- the new school buildings and facilities	Septic Tank-overflows during heavy rain could have been done better
New WASH facilities	Bathrooms, toilets, tanks and basins.	Water Pump was not working properly and needs to be fixed
Decoration and (fans) and rooms and ceiling finishing's - using mat	Has raised the standard of commitment to education by parents and teaches.	The making of mats was a good initiative, discussions on these types of engagement need to be through the community engagement team and payment needed to be transparent.
Walkways and footpaths	Protected children from rain and the sun	Covered walkways could have extended to the school driveway
Evacuation Centre	Confidence by people- that they now have a good evacuation centre	Use of school as an evacuation centre- safeguarding policies need to also be considered

Nukubolu Primay School- Savusavu (participants not recorded)

Most significant change	Comments	Suggestions
New school buildings were with standard finishing and **solid** walkways,	Buildings excellent standard. Kindergarten sick bay, staff office were additional buildings	Community Engagement, women would have liked to participate in preparing tea and food for workers- and be paid.
Staff quarters	There was discussion on use of local labourers, but this did not happen as promised	Would have liked local labourers to be hired as discussed
Sick bay, bed	A huge help to the school	N/A
Staff office and facilities	There was none before	N/A
Furniture, white boards, kindergarten with learning materials	New furniture and facilities have pushed up standard of work by students	N/A
Use of mats woven by women for ceiling	Women made mats for the new building, and they are delighted with them	N/A

Annex E: Student Survey

The following is the student survey used by the consultant with the help of classroom teachers for students to fill out.

Student Survey Form

The Australian Government worked with the Government of Fiji, to deliver the 'Cyclone Recovery Program' and help rebuild your schools after Tropical Cyclone Yasa in 2020 caused significant damage.

As a student at the school, we like to know what you think of the new school. Could you please fill in the following survey the best you can (or with the help of your teacher). You don't have to fill it in if you don't want to, but if you agree then your name won't be on it so it will be anonymous, but it will help to make sure your views are heard.

Questions About You

What is the name of your school?

Which class are you in?

Gender (Are you a boy or a girl?)

Now please answer the following FIVE questions

1. Do you like your new school and how do you rate it out of ten? (please circle your answer)
   Yes No
2. What do you like best about your new school? For example, do you think the toilets, bathrooms and access to clean water have improved?
3. Do you feel safer in your school now, if a big storm or cyclone happens again?
4. Is there anything you would you like your new school to have, that would help you with your future learning environment?
5. Thank you for taking the time to complete this short survey about your school. Any information you provide will be confidential.

Vinaka Vakalevu

Annex F: Key Data for CRP Participating Schools

School name	Project start date	Project completion date (original scope)	Project completion date (additional scope)	Official opening date	Accessibility certification date	Summary of original scope	Summary of added scope	Construction contractor	No. of female students*	No. of male students*
Wailevu West District School	16/01/23	23/01/24	7/09/24	14/11/24	30/04/24	• New 5 bay classroom • 3 new staff quarters • New toilet block • Upgrade to covered walkway and new covered walkway	• New admin building with sickbay • New canteen	PBS	114	133
Nukubolu Primary School	16/01/23	23/01/24	N/A	21/02/24	1/05/24	• Refurbishment of 4 bay classroom • Refurbishment of early childhood education classroom • New admin building with sickbay • New toilet block • Covered walkway • Driveway and retaining wall with drainage	• N/A	PBS	26	28
Maramarua District School	16/01/23	19/01/24	21/09/24	20/02/24	7/11/23	• 4 new staff quarters • New toilet block Refurbishment of 2 existing toilet blocks • Upgrade to existing walkways.	• New additional staff quarters • New canteen, • Refurbishment of existing toilet block • New covered walkways	PBS	126	128
Dreketi Primary School	16/01/23	18/01/24	7/09/24	20/02/24	6/11/23	• 2 new 3 bay classrooms • 2 new toilet blocks • New covered walkways and footpath	• New admin building with sickbay • New canteen • Walkway connecti	PBS	82	83

School name	Project start date	Project completion date (original scope)	Project completion date (additional scope)	Official opening date	Accessibility certification date	Summary of original scope	Summary of added scope	Construction contractor	No. of female students*	No. of male students*
							on to admin building			
Lekutu District School	3/07/23	1/07/24	28/09/24	25/07/24	27/05/24	• New girls and boy's dormitory • 2 new staff quarters • New library/computer room, • New toilet block • New dining hall/kitchen • New walkways.	• Refurbishment of existing toilet block • New canteen and connecting walkways	PBS	65	80
Lekutu Secondary School	3/07/23	17/06/24	12/10/24	25/07/24	27/05/24	• New boys' dormitory, Refurbishment to existing girls' dormitory, new toilet block, 5 new staff quarters, new dining hall/kitchen.	• Refurbishment of existing toilet block • New canteen, • Connecting walkways • Refurbishment of admin office • Repair work for existing classroom.	PBS	113	98
Bua District School	30/11/22	16/08/23	20/08/23	3/10/23	7/11/23	• New 1 bay early childhood education classroom • Admin with sick bay and toilet block.	• Refurbishment of existing toilet block.	Capital Construction	30	34
Dama District School	1/12/22	3/11/23	N/A	7/12/23	6/11/23	• New 2 bay classroom with admin and sick bay • New toilet block and walkways.	• N/A	Capital Construction	68	98
Ratu Luke Memo	2/12/22	25/11/23	6/09/24	15/11/24	29/04/24	• New 5 bay classroom	• Refurbishment of	Capital Construction	79	84

School name	Project start date	Project completion date (original scope)	Project completion date (additional scope)	Official opening date	Accessibility certification date	Summary of original scope	Summary of added scope	Construction contractor	No. of female students*	No. of male students*
rial School						• New toilet block and walkways • Refurbishment of dining hall/kitchen.	existing dormitory with toilets • New staff quarters • New canteen • Upgrade of access road			
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Source: Fiji Program Support Facility Completion Report 15 January 2025