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2018 Pacific Update

PANEL 3B: PARTNERSHIPS IN URBAN DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

THURSDAY 5TH JULY 2018

Research Paper



TITLE: THE ROLE OF ETHNIC FIJIAN WOMEN IN DISASTER
MANAGEMENT PLANNING AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL: A
CASE STUDY OF NASOLO VILLAGE, BA, FIJI ISLANDS

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Research Questions

Primary Research Question:

What role did ethnic Fijian women play in the formulation and implementation of the 2012 community disaster plan of Nasolo village?

Sub Research Question 1:

Are ethnic Fijian women actively involved in decision making particularly in disaster situations?

Sub Research Question 2:

To what extent does the possession of traditional knowledge about the environment enable ethnic Fijian women to be valuable resources in the community?

Literature Review

Existing Theories Around Women & Disaster

- Women tend to be more at risk in disaster situations but tend to evolve with disasters suggesting that women are resilient (cited in Cottrell 2008) also in Blaikie, Cannon, Davis, & Wisner, 1994; Hewitt,1995; Hewitt, 1997).
- Other theories point towards the lack of consideration of women's contribution in disaster management planning. While other studies have found that their perspectives on disaster planning, preparedness and management processes are rarely considered (Ariyabandu & Wickramasinghe, 2004) and (Enarson, 2004)
- Disasters more often than not sees women take up a transformative role which does not get reported in literature (Alam & Rahman, 2014).
- There have been limited number of studies that tries to understand the role that women play in disaster management planning (Işık et al., 2015). Hence a gap in research and links to the main research question.

Literature Review

South Pacific Context

Participation & Decision Making

- Ethnic Fijian women are unable to participate in decision making due to the traditional roles, that are inscribed within their culture and traditions at the community level (Enarson & Meyreles, 2004 ; Charan, Kaur & Singh, 2016). [Links to Sub Research Question 1](#)

Possession of Traditional Environmental Knowledge

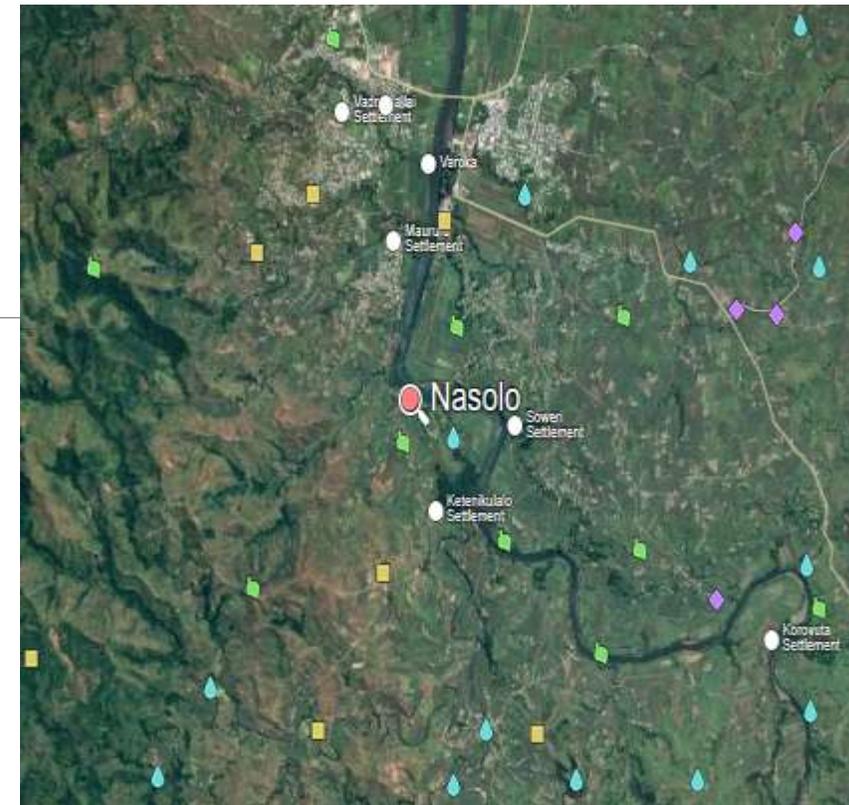
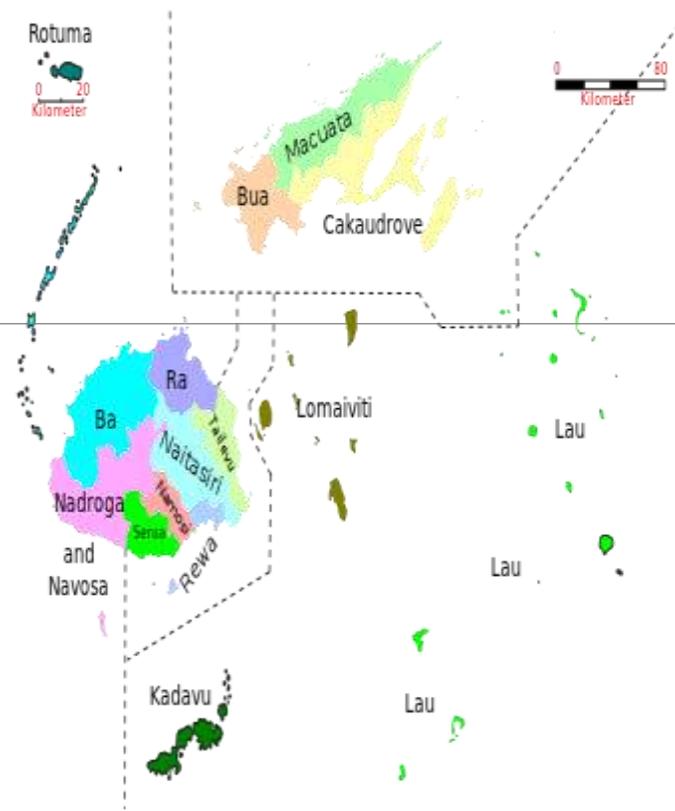
- Disaster stricken communities need the energy and expertise of women, as they are the ones who do know best about their environment (Enarson & Fordham, 2001).
- According to Lane & Mcnaught (2009) research has shown that women in pacific island communities have successfully used the knowledge of their environment to mitigate the effects of disasters for generations. [Links to Sub Research Question 2.](#)

Research Design & Scope

- This is a purely qualitative research and a case study research design has been applied to this paper.
- A case study tends to generate intensive examination that creates opportunities for critical analysis (Bryman, 2016, p.64).
- However, one common criticism for a case study design approach is that the findings cannot be generalized and this is accepted for the purpose of this research.

Case Study

- Nasolo Village is located in the province of Ba in (blue).
- The first village in Fiji to have a community based disaster management plan in 2012
- Made possible through the JICA donor agency and Ba district office.



Population & Families	Number
No. of Families	23
Total Population	106
No. of Women	44 (42%)
No. of Men	62 (58%)
No. of Children: 0-4 yrs	14 (13%)
No. of Elderly: over 60 yrs	6 (6%)
No. of people with special needs: disabled	2 (2%)

Type of Event	When	Scope & Scale of Impact
Flooding	2009	All the houses were under water. Villagers went to the community hall in the village and moved to higher ground.
Flooding	Jan, Mar 2012	All the houses were under water. This was flash food. Some villagers walked in the flooded water from their houses to the community hall with the rope.

Methods

Focus Groups

- The Focus group method is the primary method of data collection for this research.
- Between 4-6 women had been randomly selected through the snow balling technique over 2 focus group sessions.
- The basic requirement for selection was that they be residents of the village.
- Ideally the selection of participants varied in terms of age. The age range was set between 18 years to 50+ years. This was done to ensure that women who were part of the formulation and implementation of the plan are included as well those who were not part of the planning process. This ensured a representative sample.
- Each focus group session lasted about an hour.

Justification For Focus Group Methodology

- Interviewing participants individually would have taken a lot of time and would have required transcribing close to 24 individual interviews which was not ideal! given the turn around time for this paper.

Methods

Semi Structured Interviews

Three semi structured Interviews were also carried to support the secondary method:

1. Turaga Ni Koro (Village Headman)- interviewed to flash out his perceptions about the participation of women in the planning and decision making process.
2. Ba District Officers (Past/Current)- The office had played an instrumental role through facilitation of discussions between JICA and the community for the successful formulation and implementation of the plan. Important insights in relation to the involvement of women in the formulation and implementation stages and obtaining background details about the village were the main reasons for interviewing them.

Justification For Semi Structured Interviews:

- It provided the opportunity to enrich data through different perspectives and given that only 3 people were interviewed was an ideal method which could be done relatively easily in a timely manner.

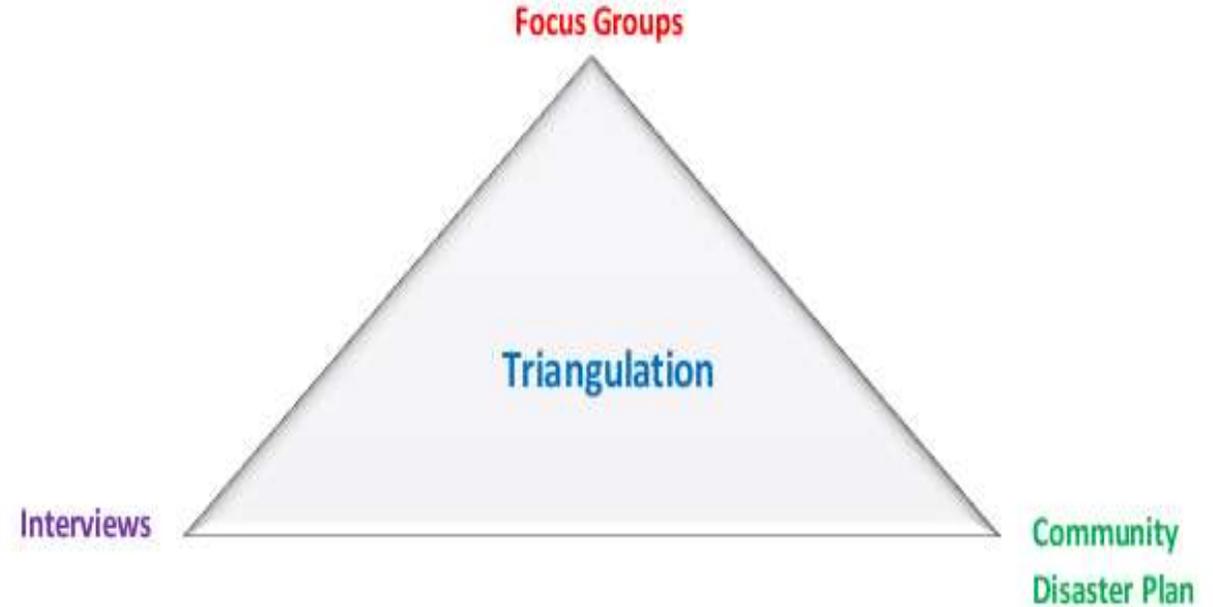
Methods/Analysis

Document Analysis

- The written 2012 CDP was analysed to determine if the prescribed roles correlates with the actual roles that women play in the context of disaster management.

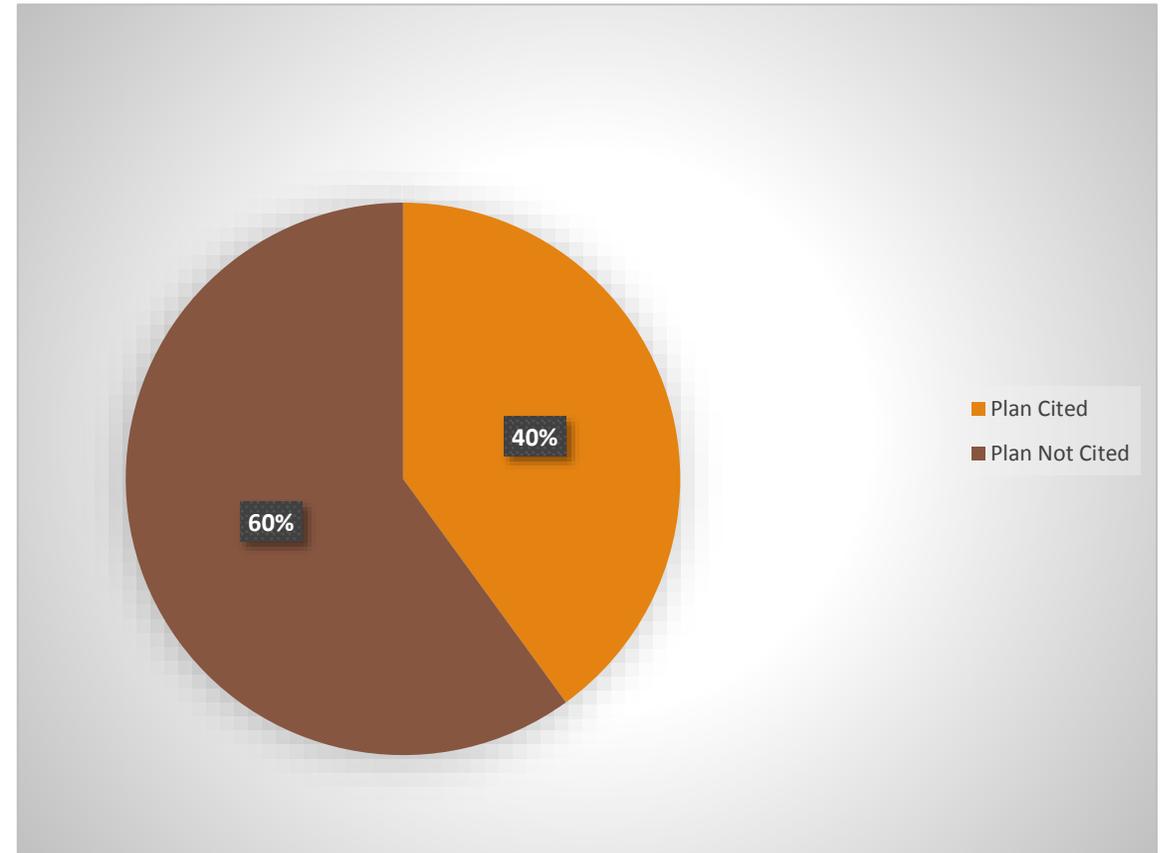
How Was The Data Analysed?

- Triangulation of the methods ensures cross verification and validates the data collected.
- Use of NVivo software for data analysis through themes.



Key Findings

- One of the key findings from this research was that the level of consultation & the construction of the plan seemed to be a formality rather than a genuine attempt to involve the women.
- This in turn affected women's enthusiasm & capacity to know anything about the planning process and to feel connected to the plan.



Key Findings (Cont'd)

- The women were not pleased with only one section of the plan addressing their roles and responsibilities during disasters. The plan did not capture the additional tasks they carry out especially in relation to disaster preparedness such as food storage.
- The women felt that the assigned roles and responsibilities were prescriptive and was not representative of their actual contributions to the community in the context of disaster management. i.e them doing most of the work in both pre and post disasters.

POSITION: (WHO)	ALERT: BLUE Hazard event detected as a Potential Threat	WARNING: YELLOW Hazard event poses an imminent threat within 24 hours	RESPONSE: RED Hazard event has struck and is in progress
Women's Group [Leader] Ms. Vasiti Bolou	-Prepare 'Go Bag' -Call all the children [Ms. Pinaina Narara] -Headcount of females	-Bring 'Go Bag' up to the hill. -Look after children. -Dishing food to evacuees [Ms. Pinaina Narara] -Head count of females	-Look after children not to go outside.

Extract from the Community Response Plan section 2.2 p.11

Takayawa:

'It amazes us that like most of the women were there during the day and only one part there (section 2.2 response plan) is only about women, how come? All of us are unhappy about this'

Peniana:

'The whole document should have reflected the inputs of women, in fact the plan should have revolved around women since we are the ones doing everything in disaster circumstances'

Key Findings (Cont'd)

- The village headman and the Ba district officers believe that involving women in decision making is important.
- However, there was no evidence of this translating in the planning process or the plan.
- Only copy of the plan was given to the village headman and was not distributed to other households. This suggests that discretion in decision making solely rests with the men and not the women.
- This finding ties in well with what's happening in developing countries such as Bangladesh where women at the local level are rarely included in decision making particularly in disaster management planning (Khondker 1996)

Discussion

- The women felt included in the initial 'consultation' phase and thought they were leading the whole process but some were not sure if the project team came to create awareness about disasters or to formulate a community disaster plan. Misconceptions and confusion were some of the reasons why the women couldn't identify their role in formulation and implementation of the plan. The onus was on the project team to clarify, which they didn't.
- The project team did not utilize the opportunity to let the community especially the women to design the plan and decide on the specifics of their roles and responsibilities within the confines of the plan.
- The project team could also have captured some of the traditional knowledge and practises of the women in relation to disaster management which they failed to do so and is now in risk of being lost.

Conclusion

- The limited decision-making capacity of women in Nasolo village was a key factor which compromised the realization of their roles and capabilities in the plan. Their lack of influence in the formulation of the CDP became apparent at the outset as the women pointed out that they were not aware of the objectives of the plan.
- Only a small section highlighted women's roles and responsibilities. As a result, the women did not feel connected to the plan and this became known when the village was affected by Cyclone Winston in 2016. The women did not implement the procedures and responsibilities that were prescribed in the plan at the time of the disaster.

Recommendations

- While this study has tried to contribute to the field of community disaster management planning, there is a need for more studies to be conducted given that a lack of literature on the topic exists in the South Pacific context. This paper proposes further research to focus on ways in which community disaster planning can be improved to make it an inclusionary process that validates the role played by all vulnerable groups within the community such as women, the elderly, and children.
- Implications for donors that fund community disaster management planning. They can incentivise the planning process by conducting workshops and effective consultations right at the beginning but not following up ensuring understanding of plans produced and learning processes for implementation.

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Tropical Cyclone Josie April 2018

