



**OCEANIA
PRIDE**
Celebrating Diversity

THE GREEN RAINBOW

**Centring Queer Youth Fijian Voices
in Climate Justice Movements**

Research Report

Eh dua na mataqali, e dua na vanua, Fijian proverb



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fiji is one of the world's most visible advocates for climate justice. It is also a country where a queer person may be a recognised first responder in their own village and still be turned away from the evacuation centre that village runs. This report, commissioned by Oceania Pride, is about that gap, the distance between Fiji's legal and rhetorical commitments to inclusion and the lived experience of young queer Fijians facing cyclones, floods, and displacement.

Drawing on talanoa, community workshops, focus group discussions and an online survey with 111 people across Fiji, including iTaukei and Indo-Fijian participants, people with disabilities, and people living in urban and rural areas, this research documents how ethnicity, disability, gender identity and geography combine to shape climate vulnerability in ways that Fiji's current climate and disaster policy does not see. It also documents what queer Fijians are already doing about it, largely without recognition or support.

The findings show that:

- **Evacuation centres are unsafe.** Queer and trans participants described denial of entry, harassment, pressure to hide their identities, or separation from chosen family. Several said they would rather face a cyclone directly than face a shelter. This is exacerbated for young queer people.
- **Ethnicity and queerness intersect to shape vulnerability.** Indo-Fijian queer youth face land insecurity and family rejection and often turn to informal economies for survival. iTaukei queer people may hold customary land rights while still being excluded from the social and ceremonial roles attached to that land.

- **Disability compounds exclusion.** Among the (small number of) participants with a disability, most said both their queer identity and their ethnicity shaped their access to disaster support, and that accessible early warning systems and inclusive shelters remain hard to find.
- **Tokenism persists in climate spaces.** Sixty per cent of survey respondents are personally engaged in climate work, but only 28% feel their voice actually influences climate decisions. Young people in particular feel their expertise isn't taken seriously.
- **Policy has not caught up.** 88% of respondents are aware of Fiji's climate laws. No one believes those laws meet the needs of LGBTQIA+ people.

And despite all of this, the research also documents real resilience: chosen families, informal evacuation centres run out of queer people's own homes, intergenerational knowledge-sharing, and spaces like Chai & Chat that hold both healing and political solidarity for Indo-Fijian queer communities.

Climate justice in Fiji cannot be complete while queer Fijians, especially young people are, in the words of one framework this research draws on, hypervisible as targets of discrimination and invisible as rights-holders. The recommendations in this report, grounded directly in what participants said they need, set out what it would actually take to close that gap.

This report places particular emphasis on the experiences of LGBTQIA+ Youth – those aged between 18 to 35 who represent the majority of the participants, and their voices are too often treated as “too young” or “not ready” in climate and disaster spaces, even as they lead much of the community-based resilience documented here.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research was commissioned and undertaken by Oceania Pride, a Fiji-based organisation working for the rights, safety and wellbeing of people of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC). It was made possible through the support of ROOTS and their microgrants for youth-led and focused projects. We gratefully acknowledge their commitment and trust in Oceania Pride in carrying out this community-centred research.

The project was led by Jasbant (Jasmine) Kaur, with Oceania Pride's Board and Staff providing research coordination and technical oversight. We also thank Dr. Romitesh Kant for their independent review of the draft, which strengthened both the analysis and the recommendations.

The research draws inspiration from the work of Jasbant Kaur (2025) in *Fiji's Queer Activists in Search of True Allies*. Kaur's documentation of queer Fijian experiences in civil society was the starting point for asking how those experiences connect to the struggle for climate justice.

We are grateful to the community-based organisations, queer networks and individuals who helped us reach participants across Fiji, often at short notice and through relationships built over many years. Our thanks also go to everyone who helped host and run the community workshops in Suva and Lautoka.

The drawings in this report were made by participants during those workshops. They say what words often could not, and we thank the artists for allowing their work to be shared.

Above all, our deepest thanks go to the 111 people who gave their time, their stories and, in many cases, their trauma to this project. For their safety, their names do not appear here, but this report belongs to them. It exists because they were willing to talk.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Jasbant Kaur is an early-career researcher with a focus on mental health, queer cultures, Indo-Fijian experiences, gender, disability and social inclusion. Committed to social justice and decolonisation and

the politics of othering versus belonging, Jasbant's work aims to highlight and address intersectional invisibilities and the complexities of marginalised identities.

Jasbant is currently pursuing a Master of Arts in Social Policy and Administration through research and holds a Post Graduate Diploma in Social Policy and Administration, a Postgraduate Certificate in Gender Studies, and a Diploma in Leadership, Good Governance, and Human Rights. These educational qualifications have equipped Jasbant with a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted issues impacting policy and lived experiences.

A notable achievement in Jasbant's career is the publication of the co-authored paper titled 'Behind the Mask: Intersectional (In) Visibility of Indo-Fijian Queer Experiences' (Calabrò et al. 2022). This research explores the nuanced layers of gender visibility and erasure within the Indo-Fijian queer community, contributing valuable insights into lived realities of Indo-Fijian LGBTIQ people who aren't regular subjects of inquiry in research.

Beyond academic pursuits, Jasbant finds inspiration and reflection through writing poetry and delving into autobiographies and memoirs.

INTRODUCTION

Fiji, an archipelago of over 300 islands, is not merely threatened by climate change; it is already living it. Rising seas, saltwater inundation and intensifying cyclones are reshaping daily life (Jordy, 2018), while ocean acidification threatens the marine biodiversity on which much of the country's food security and economy depend (Singh et al., 2011). Fiji's special advisor on climate change has said the country will need to relocate 676 communities because of rising seas, extreme rainfall and landslides (Rabonu, 2025). Tropical cyclones and floods already cost Fiji more than F\$500 million a year, over 5% of GDP (Government of the Republic of Fiji, 2017, p. 21), and push an estimated 25,700 people into poverty every year through the same route. Sea level at Suva has risen 29cm over the past thirty years and is projected to rise a further 18cm over the next thirty (NASA Sea Level Change Team, 2024). Cyclone Winston alone caused an estimated F\$2 billion in damage (Mansur, Doyle and Ivaschenko, 2018).

In response, Fiji has become one of the world's most visible advocates for climate action, the Climate Change Act 2021, a national climate change policy, and a series of climate vulnerability assessments, much of it framed through the culturally central concept of the Vanua: land, people and their spiritual connection, held together (Bryant-Tokalau, 2018; Government of the Republic of Fiji, 2017). The young queer Fijians in this research are not just the future of Fiji's climate movement- they are it's present frontline, and the voices this report most centrally amplifies.

What that framework does not yet do is see queer Fijians, especially young queer people. Fiji's legal record on SOGIESC rights is, by regional standards, progressive: the courts struck down its colonial-era sodomy law in 2005 (McCoskar v The State [2005] FJHC 500), consensual same-sex relationships were formally decriminalised in 2010 (UN Aids, 2010), and the Constitution now includes a non-discrimination clause covering sexual orientation and gender identity. But as

Pacific scholars and activists have long pointed out, legal reform does not, on its own, produce social acceptance (George, 2012). Family rejection, workplace and healthcare discrimination, and a social conservatism drawn from Christianity, Hinduism and Islam alike continue to shape queer Fijians' daily lives. Dugenia (2024) captures the resulting condition as one of hypervisibility and invisibility at once: queer people are highly visible as targets of discrimination, and simultaneously invisible as rights-holders in the policy areas, disaster response, land use, and climate adaptation that most directly determine whether they survive the next cyclone.

This report is about that gap and about what closing it would require. It examines how queer Fijians, especially young people, experience climate vulnerability, what they already contribute to climate resilience, and how traditional systems and state policy alike include or exclude them. It is also about why that gap falls heaviest on young queer Fijians- those navigating the transition to adulthood, often without family support, while simultaneously facing the intensifying impacts of cyclones and sea-level rise. Its central argument is straightforward: queer Fijian perspectives are not an optional addition to climate justice in Fiji. Without them, "climate resilience" describes only part of the population and treats the rest as an afterthought.

A FRAMEWORK BUILT FOR MORE THAN ONE AXIS OF DIFFERENCE

Major climate policy and research, in Fiji and well beyond it, tend to treat "the community" as a single, undifferentiated group, which obscures exactly the socioeconomic and political inequalities that climate change deepens (Kaijser and Kronsell, 2014). This report instead uses intersectionality, Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1989) framework for understanding how systems of power (racism, patriarchy, colonialism, heteronormativity, class) combine to produce distinct forms of disadvantage, and now widely used in climate justice research and participatory

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methods more broadly (Rigon, 2025), to ask not just how “an iTaukei person” or “a young person” experiences a cyclone, but how an iTaukei queer young person’s experience is shaped by the intersection of age, ethnicity and sexuality at once.

Fiji’s social fabric is itself a product of colonial history. iTaukei communities hold roughly 91% of land under customary title (Sakai, 2023); Indo-Fijians, descendants of indentured labourers brought by the British Empire, mostly live on leased land, with far less security of tenure, which climate displacement intensifies further (Farbotko and Lazrus, 2012; Lal, 2020). That asymmetry shapes climate vulnerability directly: when a cyclone destroys a home, or sea-level rise floods a farm, the legal and cultural consequences differ sharply depending on whether the family holds customary land or a lease that can be revoked. Land ownership does not neatly align with wealth, either; a large share of iTaukei live below the poverty line despite high rates of customary land ownership (Lee, 2023), and 41% of that land is, in any case, leased out, mostly to Indo-Fijian tenants (Sakai, 2023).

A second lens this report draws on is Fresnoza-Flot and Liu-Farrer’s (2022) concept of tangled mobilities: displacement is never only spatial. For a queer Fijian, moving after a disaster also means navigating social mobility (will I be accepted in a new community?), legal mobility (does my relationship carry legal recognition here?), and intimate mobility (can I keep my chosen family with me?) all at once. This helps explain why displacement so often lands harder on queer Fijians, especially young people, than on their neighbours, even when the physical damage is identical.

None of this erases a longer history. As the Pacific Women Lead guidance note states, this research draws on records. People of diverse SOGIESC have always been part of Pacific societies, holding recognised cultural roles

such as vakasalewalewa in Fiji and equivalents across the region (Nabulivou and Prasad, 2026). Colonial-era legal and social systems introduced new regulatory frameworks around gender and sexuality, many of which remain in place today and continue to shape exclusion. Understanding that history matters for a simple reason: it means the goal is not to import an unfamiliar framework into Fijian society, but to restore a recognition that colonisation itself disrupted.

Existing climate and disaster frameworks, however well-intentioned, have largely missed this. Fiji’s Planned Relocation Guidelines (Ministry of Economy, 2018) are, in international terms, a genuinely significant rights-based framework for climate displacement, developed through a consultative process that included LGBTIQ organisations. But sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics are never named in the document, and LGBTIQ people are never identified as a distinct vulnerable group. A call for disaggregated data, without that naming, risks being implemented through a heteronormative and binary lens that erases the very people it should protect, particularly given Fiji’s own longstanding reluctance to collect ethnic data at all, which already leaves climate policy implemented, in effect, with an ethnically blind eye (Kant, 2017). The same gap appears in the international gender-and-climate literature: UN Women’s (2016) expert report on gender-responsive climate action makes no mention of LGBTIQ people at all. Amnesty International’s (2025) recent report on climate displacement from Tuvalu and Kiribati is thorough on the compounding effects of disability, age and poverty, and silent on SOGIESC. The Pacific Islands Forum has itself flagged the same absence at the regional level, calling for LGBTIQ representation in COP processes (Pacific Islands Forum, 2022).

This report is one attempt to close that gap with evidence.

METHODOLOGY

This research follows a feminist, participatory action research (PAR) approach (Hesse-Biber, 2012; Hale, 2001), grounded in talanoa, the Fijian and wider Pacific practice of relationship-building through storytelling (Vaiotele, 2016), and in the principles set out in the Pacific Women Lead guidance note this study draws on throughout: work that is Pacific-led, rights-based, intersectional, and built in partnership with SOGIESC-led organisations (Nabulivou and Prasad, 2026). Its guiding motto, borrowed from that guidance, is “do no harm, but don’t do nothing.” A full discussion of the theoretical basis for this approach, including the Talanoa Framework, decolonial praxis, and tangled mobilities, is provided in Appendix A. Given the short timeframe of the project, talanoa sessions were not held around a kava bowl in the traditional sense, but the underlying principles of relationship-building and storytelling were upheld throughout.

WHO TOOK PART

Purposive and snowball sampling, through community-based organisations, social media, and queer networks across Fiji, reached 111 people in total, across four methods:

- An online survey (via Google Forms) completed by 53 people captured quantitative data on experiences with climate change and justice.
- A focus group discussion with 4 Indo-Fijian participants on climate work, identity negotiation, and navigating services during emergencies.
- Sixteen semi-structured interviews (in person and via Zoom, to include participants the researcher could not travel to).
- Two two-day community consultation workshops, in Suva (20 participants) and Lautoka (18 participants), included participatory drawing exercises that let people communicate experiences that were difficult to put into words.

Sampling deliberately included: ages 18 to the early 40s; the full LGBTQIA+ spectrum of sexual orientation and gender identity; both urban and rural participants; people living with disabilities, including deaf participants; and people across the employment spectrum, including sex workers. Sampling deliberately included young people between the ages of 18 and 35 as the primary cohort, alongside older participants whose intergenerational knowledge was also captured; the full LGBTQIA+ spectrum of sexual orientation and gender identity.

ETHICS AND DATA SOVEREIGNTY

Fiji’s civil society sector is small, and protecting participants was a central concern throughout. Pseudonyms are used for all quotes in this report, even where individuals consented to be named; their real names have been withheld for their safety. All workshop participants received a transport allowance and catering, and interview and focus group participants were compensated for their time.

Consent was collected electronically (survey) and verbally (interviews) after participants were briefed on the study’s purpose, methods and potential impacts. In keeping with decolonial research practice, outputs including digital stories and artwork remain oriented toward benefiting the participating communities, consistent with data sovereignty principles.

ANALYSIS

Interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed and thematically coded against the research objectives, with particular attention to how race, disability, gender identity and geography shaped each account. Drawings from the community workshops were analysed as visual narratives alongside the oral data.

LIMITATIONS

Participation from Fiji’s Northern Division was disproportionately low relative to the West and Central regions, despite efforts to include it. And this research could not capture the experiences of queer Fijians who remain closeted, likely the most excluded group of all, and the hardest to reach through any research method.

RESEARCH PARTICIPATION OVERVIEW

111 PARTICIPANTS ACROSS FIJI

Purposive and snowball sampling through community-based organisations, social media, and queer networks across Fiji.

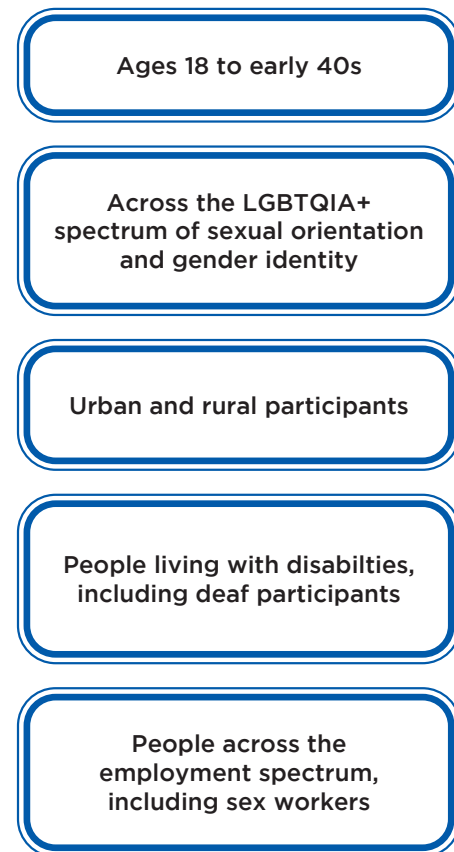
HOW PARTICIPANTS WERE REACHED



RESEARCH METHODS

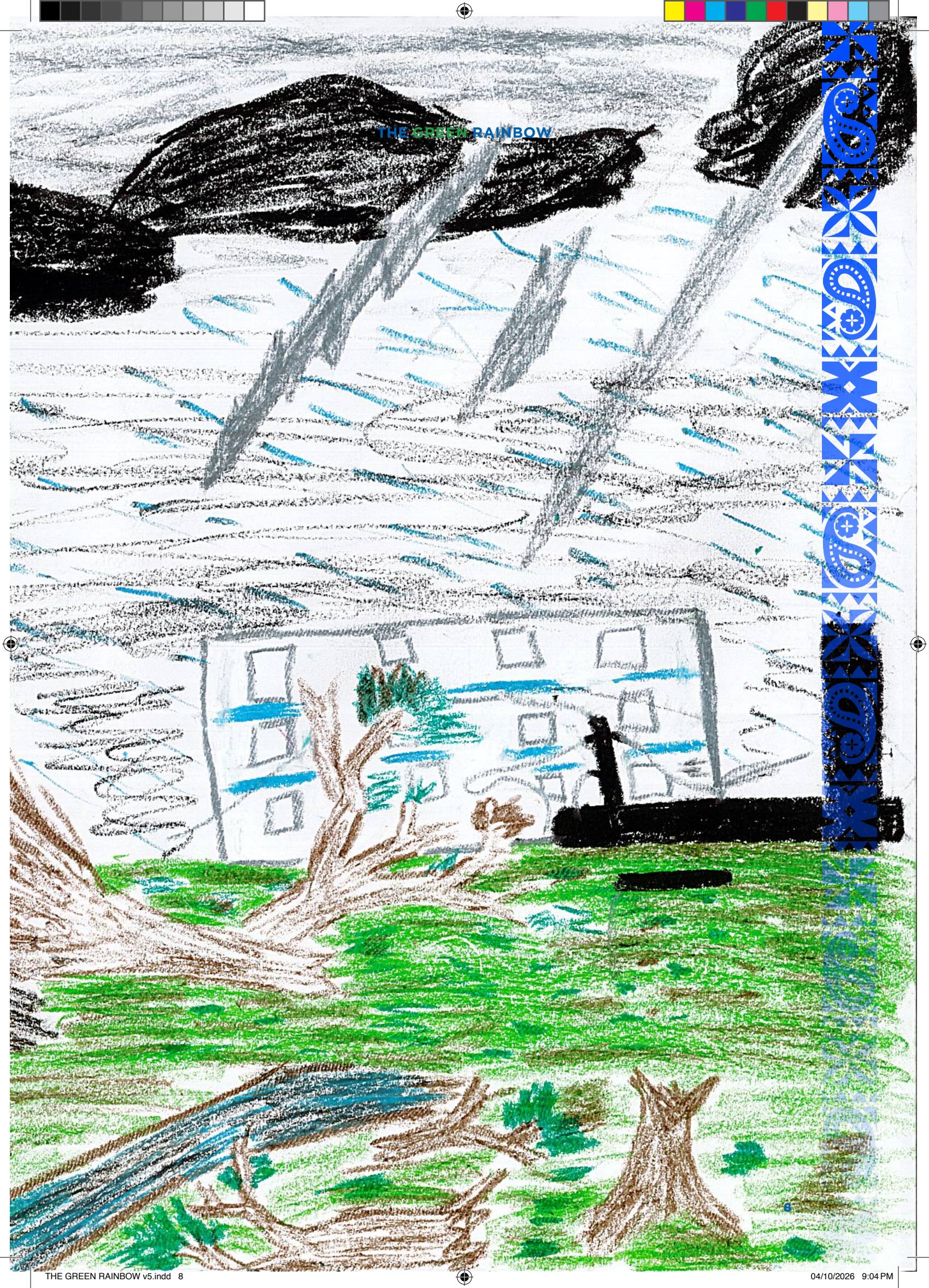


SAMPLING DELIBERATELY INCLUDED



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FINDINGS

Climate change is not an abstraction for the people in this research; it is agriculture, housing, safety, and daily survival. Of the 53 survey respondents, 92% reported personally experiencing climate impacts, cyclones, floods, and sea-level rise, and nearly half described them as severe; 85% reported high levels of concern about climate change. The findings below are organised around four themes that emerged consistently across the data: shelter and safety, land and belonging, disability, and voice.

CLIMATE CHANGE AS AN EVERYDAY REALITY

Before turning to how exclusion operates, it is worth pausing on how directly and specifically participants experience climate change itself, not as a distant scientific abstraction, but as something they can measure against their own memory of a place.

"This [mango tree] is where my grandparents, my parents, my great-grandparents sat, and we had talanoa, drank grog under the tree, and now the tree is gone, destroyed [by a cyclone]." **Participant – transwomen recalls a loss of a tree where her and her ancestors shared stories.**

"When I was a child... the water would never be above the seawall. Now it's encroaching on the church. People walk out of the church straight into the ocean." **Rozanne talks about her experience in the village.**

"Within a span of two years, the seas and our door are one; before, the sea was 200 meters away." **Hosana on sea level rising and claiming their ancestral land.**

"I think by then, you always heard about sea level rise as an abstract idea. I was like, oh, it's rising slowly, just a couple of millimetres. And then I think when I saw that, face to face, just in the span of 4 years, the sea level had come up by so much that in high tide, that scuba shack that's been there for so long is

now unusable because it gets submerged. I was just like, whoa, that's crazy. This is a much bigger threat than I actually thought it was." **Participant recalls visiting a popular tourist spot where the diving spot he has visited with his father as a child and into adulthood.**

"When there's heavy rain, the rising river comes to the point where our house would be halfway submerged." **Mosese, on his village home**

"I would say a 2 to 5 centimetres increase in flooding water." **Mosese**

Temperature shifts were described just as precisely, including patterns that ran directly counter to what participants had always expected from a given season or region.

"Yesterday, when we went out around 8 p.m, I was standing there, standing in Nadi and shivering a little bit because there was a chill which I have never experienced in my life. In Nadi, I always sweat. So for me, that is climate change." **Abdul recalling the temperature change while in thw west to conduct the workshop for the research project**

"It's usually getting colder there [central] at night, which usually is not the case." **Mosese**

"When I see sugar cane trucks coming to FSC (Fiji Sugar Corporation) I know it's going to be a cold night... recently, when I was in Labasa during the cane harvesting season, it was really hot." **Ani on seasonal changes to temperature due to climate change**

"It was shocking because we haven't gone through those kinds of cyclones in our lives, you know, it's traumatising, oh my goodness, it was the strongest wind I've ever seen." **Elizabeth, on the intensity of Cyclone Winston**

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For young participants, these changes are measured against childhood memories- the mango tree that was always there, the seawall that used to hold, the seasons their grandparents taught them to read. That loss is not abstract; it is the backdrop against which they are making decisions about whether they can stay in Fiji at all.

These shifts reach into livelihoods too, in ways participants experience as immediate rather than projected. A hair stylist described the direct professional cost of rising heat and humidity:

"Rise in temperature and humidity makes hair frizzy, dry and prone to breakage. As a stylist, I get the blame and negative remarks."
Participant

"In Taveuni, if you harvest dalo mid-June, you would have a big dalo, but now, when you pull it during the same time, it is small." **Ani**

"There were damages to the house... we had to help repair it on our own. We did not receive any assistance whatsoever from the government." **Shakira**

And in the most severe cases, survival itself became improvised in real time, echoing accounts documented elsewhere in the Pacific, including in Kiribati (Amnesty International, 2025).

"For them to survive, they put themselves in the basin. The big basin of clothes for them to float around. So that's the only way they can move around." **Adrian**



SHELTER AND SAFETY

The single clearest finding of this research is that evacuation centres, the places disaster response is built around, are frequently unsafe for queer and trans Fijians. This is not a new observation: during Cyclone Winston itself, LGBTQIA+ people were documented as being denied entry to shelters that admitted people only by sex assigned at birth, while others who did gain entry faced harassment once inside (Dwyer and Woolf, 2018). Participants in this research described the same pattern as a continuing, everyday reality, not a one-off failure; several said, in different words, that they would rather face a cyclone directly than face a shelter.

"Some of us don't have that network of friends, people that we could actually, people that could check on us, or people we could communicate with when we have, you know, such issues.", **Participant**

Gender-segregated shelters are the most immediate source of harm. Evacuation centres typically operate on a strict male/female binary in bathrooms, sleeping arrangements, and who is asked to do what, which does not accommodate trans and gender-diverse people, and the burden of navigating it falls entirely on them.

"At the [evacuation] centre, there is a female bathroom, and there is a male bathroom... people that come from communities that just don't understand that you're trans, you need to go to a trans or a female bathroom and how you live, your privacy, your dressing.", **Elizabeth**

"They kept reminding me that for the safety of the women and children, and because I was a born male, I had to lodge with the men if I was to stay...", **Bina**

Several participants described having to actively perform a different gender presentation, sometimes for days at a time, in order to be safe inside a shelter.

"I've understood over the years that when I'm entering the space for the first time, I have to express myself in a way that they will be able to understand. And usually that's me in normal boys or men's clothing... The tone of my voice will deepen so that I can infiltrate the space. Others who were cisgender were granted access to spaces that perhaps queer-appearing people may not have access to.", **Bina**

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"I faced not only the danger of the storm, but also stigma because of who I am... I have to wear the boys' clothes to be accepted... During the cyclone... after the cyclone, we were still in the evacuation centre... The women do this. The men do this. And they don't take into account my identity as a trans woman. So I have to wear my boy clothes, take the knife, go out with the men to clear the woods, the debris.", **Participant**

Young trans and gender-diverse participants described this as an exhausting exercise, one they are expected to perform repeatedly, often beginning in their young years and leaving them more vulnerable than older community members who may have established networks of support.

For some, the cost of that performance, or the fear of what would happen if it failed, outweighed the risk of the storm itself.

"The most traumatising was when they tried to take you to the evacuation centre, you'd rather face the wind than be in that centre... because you can feel that you're not welcomed because of your gender.", **Elizabeth**

For youth, this is exacerbated by the fact that they often cannot rely on family support to create an alternative; several participants described being on their own during cyclone season, with no one to check on them.

"When we came back [from the evacuation centre], we made jokes about how we were hiding under the table, LGBT people hiding under the table against the wind. It was scary. Things were flying.", **Elizabeth**

In the most serious cases documented in this research, participants described being turned away from shelters outright, at night, during an active cyclone.

"During Cyclone Winston, there was this... queer young person... She went to the evacuation centre provided for the community. But then she got chased out. Because of her

identity. Because to them, you're a man. But she identified as a woman... Why would you chase someone during that time? Midnight? I'm coming to this shelter because it was provided by the government to take care of everyone. But then they chased them away... This queer person became homeless overnight." Participant

"There was a young queer person from Bua, which was heavily affected by the cyclone. She came to the evacuation centre in the community and was chased out because of her identity. Ani

Some participants managed the risk by making themselves useful, or making themselves likeable, rather than by asserting any right to be there.

"I have to be funny to make people accept me because they have to go into evacuation centres. That was their definition of climate change. Whenever there's a disaster, that person has to try extra hard to be accepted by being funny so people can laugh and forget who they are and their sexuality.", **Participant**

Adrian, a masculine lesbian and a first responder from a family that has done that work for generations, described the particular indignity of being treated as unqualified to lead precisely because of that identity, even while being harassed by the people she was helping to evacuate.

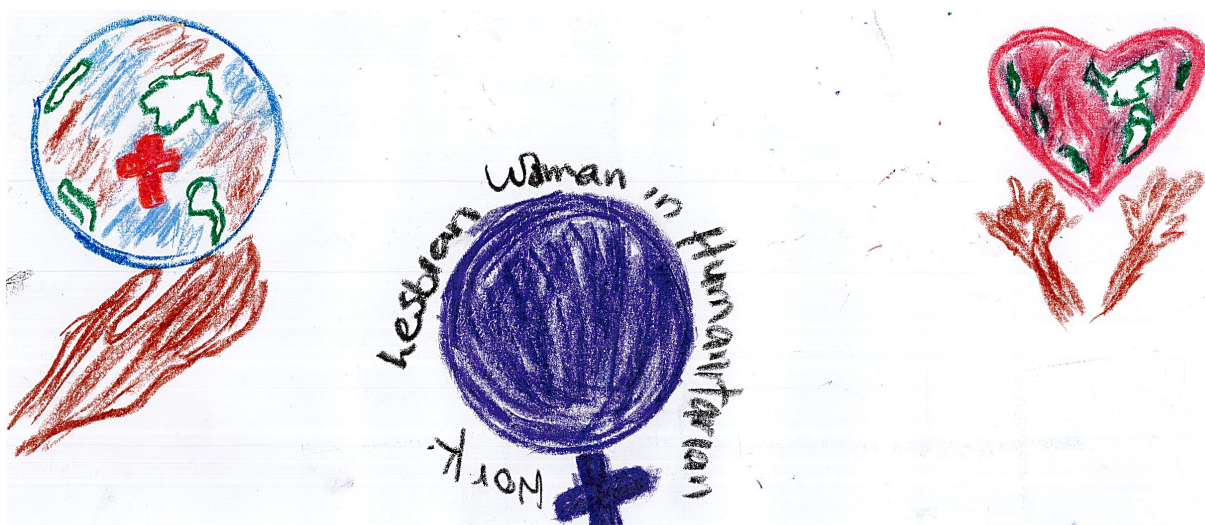
"I was not supposed to make decisions. Who was I to come in there? ... Just because of my identity, as a masculine lesbian.", **Adrian**

"One of the evacuees... was trying to harass me verbally and sexually. Just because of who I am.", **Adrian**

Sera, describing the same pattern of women stepping into first-response roles regardless of how they are gendered, put the underlying claim plainly:

"Women, regardless of your gender identity, we are first responders. It's inbuilt in us... We are resilient women.", **Sera**

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This hostility is not confined to the shelter itself. Several participants described being blamed, in explicitly religious terms, for the disasters they were surviving, including through cyberbullying campaigns following major cyclones.

"Like people said that you're a cause of that disaster because of your sexuality, you're a sinner, you're cursed... that builds anger among most people.", **Elizabeth**

One participant's workshop artwork depicted this directly: people pointing fingers at a queer person, blaming them for the cyclone. This pattern is consistent with the wider Pacific evidence that gender-based violence rises after natural disasters, and that food and income shortages linked to climate change intensify violence specifically against women and LGBTQIA+ people (IWDA, 2022, p.1).

Exclusion continues past the shelter, into how aid itself is distributed. Several participants described a system built around biological, heterosexual households that has no mechanism for recognising a chosen family, a queer-led household, or an estranged individual.

"A few trans masculine and transwomen also encountered difficulties; they lost their houses [to disasters] and couldn't access government assistance [monetary], as well as access to timber and building materials." **Mary**

"When [the government] provides assistance to the village, the queer people are left behind." **Shakira**

"But then you know they are not engaged when there are village meetings... we also got to find out that most of them missed out on receiving government assistance." **Mary**

Fiji's main social protection mechanisms, the Poverty Benefit Scheme, the Care and Protection Allowance, the Social Pension Scheme, the Fiji National Provident Fund, and the Help for Homes Initiative, are all structured around a household unit that, as currently administered, does not recognise queer families as families. In one case documented in this research, a participant's family chose to return to a flooded home rather than risk being separated from an elderly family member at the evacuation centre, a decision that traded physical safety for the ability to stay together.

Discrimination at home is not confined to disasters, either, and shapes how safe participants feel being visibly queer at all, disaster or not.

"When I go to church [in the village], I like to wear the shirt and shorts with a sulu vakataga on top [of the shorts], and then I get the growling, I get beaten up and told to wear a dress.", **Participant**

"At work in the school, the teacher asks me why I wear men's clothes, I can't even tell people about my lesbian identity." **Participant**

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SEX WORK, SURVIVAL, AND THE INFORMAL ECONOMY

For participants engaged in sex work, a livelihood several entered as a direct result of family rejection, climate shocks compound an already precarious income, and safety itself sometimes becomes something to be negotiated rather than assumed.

"You know, because I was a sex worker, so most of my giveaway was what I could offer [sex] to extra food and extra security."

Elizabeth

"Like for us sex workers, it's very hard after disasters because so many things are closed, and since our source of income is sex, you need to find people who have money to give [over competing priorities post disaster]."

Elizabeth

"We are unable to get on the streets, basically, this is because of the weather conditions, changing weather conditions."

Participant

"The number of clients that we get on the streets, basically, this is because of the weather conditions, changes in weather conditions."

Participant

"Like that one week of staying in the shelter, it's torture, it's like the feeling that the cyclone hit you and pulls you in all directions."

Elizabeth

Youth participants in particular described the precarity of these livelihoods – entered as teenagers, maintained without formal protections, and first to disappear when disaster strikes.

Even amid that precarity, participants described sex work as a route to a different kind of belonging, one built through the movement it connected them to, rather than in spite of it.

"I got into sex work to survive and support my kids... then I joined the sex workers movement... Then I got empowered... That's how I involved myself with the movement of LGBTIQ in Fiji."

Participant

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LAND, ETHNICITY AND BELONGING

More than half of survey respondents (54%) said their ethnic background had shaped their climate experience or their access to support, with 23% saying that the impact was significant. Ethnicity did not operate as a separate axis from queerness in participants' accounts; it consistently sharpened it in different directions for iTaukei and Indo-Fijian participants.

The Indo-Fijian Experience

Indo-Fijian queer participants described a double displacement: excluded from full belonging as Indo-Fijians in a land-tenure system that treats them as tenants rather than owners, and excluded again, within their own communities, as queer people.

"Indo-Fijians do not live in a community where they are connected by family members. They mostly live in urban areas alone because, as queer people, it's better to live alone than with a family that does not accept you, especially in the Indo-Fijian community. So they are not as well prepared." **Shakira**

That precarity has a direct history: colonial-era policy entrenched iTaukei land ownership and left Indo-Fijians, descendants of indentured labourers, as tenants whose belonging is conditional and whose leases can be revoked (Leonard, 2019). Rural Indo-Fijians, with less access to communal labour groups and land-based recovery resources than their iTaukei neighbours, have been found to recover more slowly from disasters such as Cyclone Winston (Nakamura and Kanemasu, 2020), and there are documented claims of Indo-Fijian families being overlooked or receiving less disaster relief than their neighbours (Radio New Zealand, 2003).

"So, at evacuation centres, groupings occur, i-taukei people on one side and Indo-Fijians on another, and for food rations, i-taukei people are prioritised because they know each other." **Mosese**

Farming families described the same dynamic in economic terms. A study of Cyclone Harold's impact on small-scale fisheries found Indo-Fijian fishers absorbed an over 30% drop in demand (Mangubhai et al., 2021); without land, and by



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extension without access to qoliqoli (customary fishing grounds), Indo-Fijians are also last in line when access to those resources is scarce after a disaster.

"For Indo-Fijian people, I guess it's a loss of livelihood, a lot of Indo-Fijian people still live in informal housing, and they also make up the farmer class, so as climate and season change, the agricultural cycle does too, and the crops are lost due to disasters." **Participant**

"I was really frustrated with the way the government and the landowners were treating them... For LGBTQ Indo, the land is not theirs. They were told not to plant anything." **Elise**

For queer Indo-Fijian youth, family rejection compounds this precarity earlier and more sharply. Karan described young people displaced from home entering informal economies as nachaniyas, entertaining at weddings and events, from as young as twelve, a livelihood that offers income but carries real risk of exploitation and locks them out of superannuation and the benefits attached to formal employment. For these young people, the pressure is dire: they are navigating early adulthood- finding work, building relationships, forming their identities- with neither the land security of the iTaukei peers nor the family acceptance that might cushion them.

Karan added that this precarity often starts at home: with his own father working informally as a taxi driver rather than in the formal sector, household income was already irregular before any disaster, and became still more so afterwards.

Amid this, participants described Chai & Chat, an intergenerational, interfaith space for queer Indo-Fijians (open to allies for public sessions), as something closer to infrastructure than a social club: a place for healing, and equally a platform for solidarity and political action on human rights issues, domestic and international, where people said they could speak freely without repercussions.

"During Cyclone Yasa... we were together at one of our hairdressers' places. It was quite horrific... but we were together, and we felt safe with each other." **Shakira**

Itaukei Queer Experience: Land, Vanua And Exclusion

For iTaukei participants, the picture inverts: land access is, in principle, more secure, but the social and ceremonial roles tied to that land are not automatically open to queer people, and several participants described real fear of losing land rights entirely if their community learned of their identity. For Young iTaukei people, this fear collides with a desire to belong- to return to their village, their mataqali, their land and the knowledge that doing so may mean living in the closet for years and sometimes decades.

"I think that if the villagers, the mataqali, knew my identity, my sexual preference, definitely the doors and red tapes would become even more stringent for me.", **Mosese**

Mosese also described the risk running through his mother's side: her Adi (chiefly) status and the privileges attached to it could be withdrawn from the family by association.

"I've always seen that when the women's children are trying to access land, the red tape just appears out of nowhere, and that process makes it harder for us to access the land and its security.", **Mosese**

"Rewa as a province is not open about acceptance. I know the acceptance rate of queer people is low, so if the villages knew somebody was queer, they would be excluded... from decision-making processes and bese, and if you are female and queer, you are excluded even further... they are not able to address the issues we face so it's easier to leave us out of it.", **Mosese**

"For indigenous people, regardless of sexual identity, a lot of us would want to go back to the village, but you know, going back to the village is always an added layer of challenge." **Mosese**

"If I were to decide to move to my island... I don't think my island home is a safe space for me... It's just gonna conform me back to the closet.", **Timoci**

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Several participants nonetheless described genuine, if conditional, acceptance within the vanua, acceptance that came with negotiated limits on self-expression rather than its absence altogether.

"I'm being accepted in the Vanua... I belong to the Vanua, and the Vanua is us, but there's a certain limitation you need to dress up in a certain way that still being accepted as who you are, but also at the same time respecting the people and the law that, you know, comes with the Vanua." **Hosana**

"Me, identifying myself as a lesbian woman, I know I have the rights, but I have to be responsible when I'm in the community so that I can be accepted... if there's something or activities held in the village, I have to go and help... because I want them to accept me for who I am.", **Participant**

In one such case, a village's evacuation centre was not gender-segregated at all; everyone stayed together, irrespective of identity, though a trans woman participant still had to use the men's bathroom on site, a reminder that inclusion in one dimension does not automatically extend to every dimension of a space.

Participants were clear that this exclusion sits uneasily against Fiji's own cultural history: recognised gender-diverse roles such as vakasalewalewa in Fiji, and equivalents across the region captured in the MVPFAFF framework, mahu, vakasalewalewa, palopa, fa'afafine, akava'ine, fakaleiti/leiti, and fakaffine, long predate the colonial legal and social structures that now police gender and sexuality (Nabulivou and Prasad, 2026). As Moses put it:

"Why do we identify as indigenous first before sexual preferences? I think understanding the nuances and the intersectionality of these identities will add more value in terms of discussions and conversations.", **Mosese**

"I think more awareness needs to be done in terms of the gender identities that are present in the village... villages need to have that conversation internally on accepting queer people.", **Mosese**

Indigenous Knowledge, and What Climate Change Is Doing To It

For iTaukei participants, land and identity are inseparable; introductions typically include one's vasu, establishing maternal and paternal links before a family name is even given. That connection carries generations of environmental knowledge.

"This knowledge is passed down from generation to generation... it's not discriminatory. My grandfather tells his children, and then my mom or dad tells us.", **Sera**

Participants described a body of traditional forecasting knowledge that is itself now under strain: two breadfruit growing from a single branch, swarms of cockroaches or ants indoors, a frigate bird flying inland, or beehives built low to the ground, all read as warnings of an approaching disaster; being able to see Kadavu from one's house was, for one Indo-Fijian family with an unusual line of ancestral coastal knowledge, itself a storm warning that "actually did happen that way." Several Indo-Fijian participants said this kind of knowledge was fading within their own families, alongside the warning signs it once carried.

The physical record of that history is also being lost. At Vunisavisavi, home of the Tui Cakau, coastal inundation has damaged the yavu, the foundation stones of the chiefly title itself (Chand, 2023). In Yasawa village, Vanua Levu, sea-level rise forced the community to relocate ancestral remains collected from an eroding burial ground (Naviticoko, 2024).

For families whose knowledge is tied to the sea rather than the land, that same uncertainty is arriving directly in their livelihood. One participant's extended family has fished for generations and no longer wants its children to continue the trade, precisely because that ancestral knowledge no longer reliably predicts the weather or the catch.

"We are experiencing warmer waters... fluctuation in marine life... we cannot predict the weather anymore. It might start off as a sunny day but end on a rainy evening. We

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*come from the ancestral line of fishermen. We are very well aware of how the climate is changing very quickly.”, **Shakira***

Biracial and Multi-Ethnic Identities

A smaller number of biracial participants described a distinct form of exclusion: belonging fully to neither ethnic community, and finding it harder, as a result, to locate community through shared identity at all.

*“For me, there’s this line where I’m too Indian for my Pacifica side of the family, and I’m too Pacifica for my Indian side of the family. So there’s always been, like, trying to find that line of, like, where do I fit in? Which is very hard, cause I’m already gay.”, **Shoheb***

Being biracial also produced its own, specific stereotype; one participant recalled being gossiped about, and to an extent excused, for wearing shorts because she was biracial, on the assumption that biracial women are inherently “promiscuous”; a prejudice she noted was compounded further for queer people, since homosexuality is often perceived as external to both Indo-Fijian and indigenous Fijian culture.

Mosese, who holds chiefly status and presents as a cisgender man, noted that this combination gave him access to civic spaces that a feminine-presenting person might not have, while questioning the value of that access on its own terms:

*“Whenever I’m in these spaces [civic spaces], there’s a certain level of respect that the people ascribe to the Ratu status, which I feel is very superficial. If you’re going to give respect based on a title, then it completely eradicates the identity of the person who has the title.”, **Mosese***

DISABILITY AND COMPOUNDED EXCLUSION

Only 12% of survey respondents reported living with a disability, likely an undercount, given how disability disclosure intersects with stigma in Fiji, but within that group the compounding effect of identity was stark: 67% said their queer identity had shaped their climate experience, and 83% said their ethnicity had shaped their access to

disaster support. Both figures describe a small number of people in absolute terms, but they are consistent with the wider pattern in this research: disability does not sit alongside queerness and ethnicity as a separate issue; it multiplies them.

*“I do feel left out in terms of climate change because the assistance that is offered is only because I am involved in activism through RPF. For others who are not involved with RPF, they do not get the access to help as I do.” **Shakira***

One participant, who is deaf, described being entirely dependent on her daughter and other family members for information about approaching disasters, since official warnings were not provided in an accessible format, a dependency that becomes an acute risk for anyone without that family support in place.

Disability-led organisations in Fiji are working to change this. Jay Nasilasila, the Disaster READY Country Committee’s disaster risk reduction focal point for the Fiji Disabled Persons Federation (FDPF) and a wheelchair user from Labasa, frames the goal as leadership, not accommodation:

*“For me, I see it as an opportunity where people with disabilities can also be seen as leaders and seen as people with greater capabilities and capacities in this space.”, **Jay Nasilasila, Australian Humanitarian Partnership (2025)***

That leadership has produced real results: a UNICEF and Fiji Disabled Persons Federation collaboration, with people with disabilities involved at every stage from decision-making to data collection, identified major gaps in accessible water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in schools, community buildings and evacuation centres, and produced materials and guidance still in use across the Pacific. But the same partnership is candid that the work is far from finished: “there is still work to be done on disability inclusion to improve representation and participation” (Tucker and Namela, 2024). The Pacific Disability Forum has separately warned that children with disabilities are especially likely to be left behind or abandoned during emergencies, a risk that inaccessible evacuation centres make worse rather than better.

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VOICE, TOKENISM AND POLICY

Queer Fijians, especially young people, are already doing a disproportionate share of climate justice work: 60% of survey respondents are personally engaged in climate or environmental justice work, and 84% of those bring an explicitly intersectional approach. But only 28% believe their voice actually makes a difference in climate discussions; most describe their influence as only somewhat effective, ineffective, or uncertain. Mosese, reflecting on this gap between participation and influence, argued that it is not incidental:

"I have always noticed that the queer movement, queer people, and gender diverse people have been the loudest voices advocating for climate justice, pushing for state accountability.", Mosese

"[For] the policy to have value, the recommendations have to come from the people, and if the queer people have the policy, only then the policy will have the valued contributions of everyone from society."

Mosese

That gap is echoed in how participants described being included at all. Being present in a room, several said, is treated as sufficient, whether or not that presence translates into influence over what gets decided.

"I got in as a sign of tokenism, because I'm queer.", Shoheb

One participant, reflecting on a multinational-led initiative they took part in, described it plainly as "ticking the box on the number of reps needed in the room", a comment that captures a wider pattern in how queer participation is treated as a diversity credential rather than a source of substantive input. Shoheb made a related point about how identity itself gets sidelined even when young queer people are clearly present in the space:

"We have quite a lot of young queer people who are in the climate justice space. But it's never, like, mentioned, like, the whole aspect of someone's identity is not mentioned, which is kind of a letdown.", Shoheb



Young participants were particularly vocal about this dynamic. Having grown up with Fiji's progressive constitution and legal framework, they expect more than just symbolic inclusion; they want their expertise and lived experience to shape the decisions that affect their futures.

One participant recalled a former prime minister's description of queer people as "rubbish," and asked what could reasonably be expected of ordinary citizens' attitudes if that language comes from national leadership. Karan, reflecting on how visibly queer presentation shapes how people are treated even within queer-friendly spaces, put it this way:

"In the community, people might say a straight-acting person. And that may or may not, that actually did may have an influence on how people perceive me.", **Karan**

Representation gets harder again once the setting moves from domestic to international. Mary, who has represented queer organisations in regional and global climate spaces, described a consistent, quiet resistance from other delegations and the work of managing how she presents herself in response.

"I have seen firsthand the reservation, especially from indigenous Fijian males who are in the government delegation." **Mary**

"You have to approach the room and maybe reframe how position and share... rather than coming out too strong as somebody that comes from diverse communities." **Mary**

"In global spaces [climate change] when you say you are from a queer organisation, you can just feel there's a reservation from their part... It's a very tough space to move into and to effectively engage." **Mary**

"Some spaces you can really feel from their reactions that SOGIESC community issues are really not a priority." **Mary**

Several participants also pointed to a broader credibility problem in the climate movement itself, one they experience as compounding their own exclusion from it. One participant was blunt about the contradiction between climate advocacy's rhetoric and its record: the most recent COP host, Brazil, cleared substantial forest to build infrastructure for the conference itself (Wells, 2025), and Fiji's own Prime Minister,

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Sitiveni Rabuka, defended Fiji's support for Japan's release of treated Fukushima wastewater into the Pacific on scientific grounds, despite Fiji's own stated commitment to ocean protection (Radinibaravi, 2023). For participants, these are not abstract policy debates but evidence that "leadership" on climate can be selective, and that the same selectivity extends to whose exclusion gets addressed.

"For the Pacific, we are at stake, which is unfair because we are not mass producing all this carbon dioxide that's hurting our environment. It's the bigger companies, the bigger countries that are doing these things.", **Shoheb**

Awareness of Fiji's climate laws is high: 88% of survey respondents reported being aware of them. Confidence that those laws serve queer Fijians is not: none of the respondents believed Fiji's climate policies adequately address the needs of LGBTQIA+ people, less than a third felt the policies partially addressed their needs, and 46% said the policies did not address their needs at all.

Several participants connected this policy gap to a wider absence of support services able to respond to the specific trauma queer Fijians carry from disaster and discrimination combined.

"The trauma the community experiences, then there are no professional services that are there for us.", **Mary**

DIVA for Equality's own research has documented a related reluctance among queer Fijians to seek help from non-LGBTIQ service providers at all (Diverse Voices and Action for Equality, 2019), which leaves an already-thin service landscape thinner still for the people who need it most.

Participants also connected this exclusion to Fiji's broader political and legal environment: a perceived rise in religious intolerance, a government focus on other international priorities, and ongoing practical obstacles to formally registering LGBTIQ organisations, all of which make government-partnered, queer-inclusive adaptation programs harder to build. Some participants also drew a link to Fiji's political history, seeing the exclusionary instincts of the 1987 and 2000 coups as part of the same current

that keeps minority political voices, including queer voices, on the margins of formal power, a connection this report notes as participants' own interpretation rather than a settled historical claim.

RESILIENCE AND CARE

None of the exclusions documented above is the whole story. Alongside it, this research found consistent, active resilience, built by queer Fijians themselves, usually without recognition, and often precisely in the spaces where formal systems fail.

STORYTELLING AS SURVIVAL

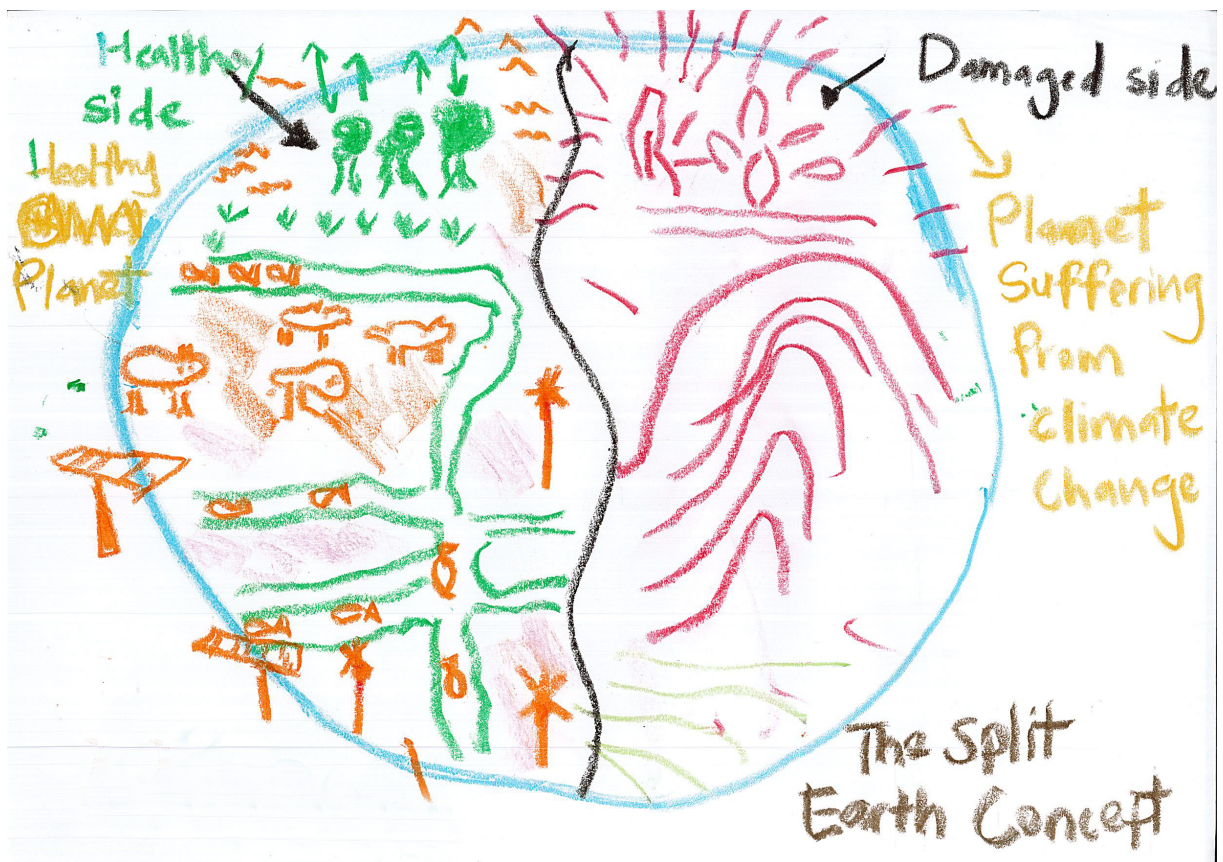
Storytelling emerged repeatedly as a mechanism for connection, identity formation, and intergenerational knowledge transfer within queer Fijian communities; half of survey respondents said they discuss climate change often or very often with family and friends. For young queer Fijians, storytelling is not only a survival mechanism – it is how they learn they are not alone, particularly when family and community have failed them. Many described discovering their own identity not through formal education or family conversation, but through finding older queer people willing to share their experiences.

One participant connected ancestral knowledge directly to the research's own findings on customary forecasting:

"The fact that our ancestors kind of had all of this knowledge, like thousands of years ago... it's very intuitive, but you can't really... it's hard to explain... It's kind of hard to... translate that outside of your stories... And feel these like actual science and research that kind of like talk about the exact same thing.", **Anita**

For younger participants, storytelling was also how they came to understand their own identity, often later than they wished.

"Growing up, I never had access to know about the different gender expressions and gender identities that existed. It wasn't until I reached university that I started to learn about these various identities [pansexual] that are currently in existence." **Mosese**



This gap between what young queer Fijians need to know and what they are told is a recurring theme, and one that older generations of queer activists are working to close.

That storytelling is not without cost. One participant's workshop artwork depicted feeling suicidal after not being heard in disaster-planning meetings, a reminder that the mental health toll of this exclusion is real, not rhetorical.

Gender roles inside families also become sharply visible during disasters, sometimes requiring participants to set aside their own gender identity to take on tasks assigned by household expectations.

"It was me doing the heavy lifting, cleaning up the outside, and securing the house, and things like that."

Anita also described cases where parents call on estranged queer children specifically for post-disaster labour, and "chase them away again" once the work is done, support that runs one direction only.

CHOSEN FAMILY AND COMMUNITY-BUILT SHELTER

Where formal shelter fails, queer Fijians have built their own. Several participants described homes, their own or their families', that function as informal evacuation centres for their wider community, across generations, including for people who would otherwise discriminate against them. Young people are often at the centre of these networks, creating mutual aid systems when formal ones fail them.

"During disasters, our house has been sheltering people as an evacuation centre, that's a role we have played since my grandparents. I had to continue with that, helping people out.", **Adrian**

"One thing I'm doing now is building my bridge to my community in the village, and I'm teaching my community how we can build bridges to our mataqali, to our families, despite the circumstances we face.", **Elizabeth**

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"I give clothes, things needed in education and other things to people back in the village, not because they are lacking, but I wanted to show them that trans persons are human beings and trans persons are the same mataqali that exist and can give back to their community."

Elizabeth

One participant described their own path from street-based sex work to a stable trade, made possible entirely by two people from the community who took them in:

"I was a street kid doing sex work as a trans woman for many years, until two people from the community took me in and taught me hairdressing." **Participant**

LIVELIHOODS UNDER PRESSURE

Many queer Fijians, shut out of formal employment, have built livelihoods in hair and beauty, event management, and entertainment, work that is also directly tourism- and event-dependent and therefore climate-exposed. With tourism revenue projected to decline 18% by 2030 (Government of the Republic of Fiji, 2017), and households cutting discretionary spending on hair, makeup, decoration and entertainment first when disaster strikes, this is a livelihood risk specific to how queer Fijians have adapted to being excluded from other kinds of work.

"Give us legal gender recognition... the right to adopt a baby, the right to have our own house, the right to have our own land. We already attend so many livelihood trainings and can utilise the land to make a business." **Elise**

Environmental sustainability practice was, for some participants, already deeply embedded in daily life, though not always by choice.

"We're using biogas, we can just use our animal manure and waste from the kitchen, and we have a tank to store rainwater, plant fruits, crops and vegetables, adhering to seasonal change." **Elizabeth**

Others pushed back on the framing of individual "green" choices altogether, arguing that they describe a cost most people simply cannot absorb.

"Well, if you're from a poor family, that's the only option you have, you don't have access to all this organic stuff, you have whatever you can afford." **Participant**

"Even though the products and methods you may be using contribute towards climate change, you don't have the option to live a green life." **Participant**

"If I consider myself to be proactive in the climate space, that means I'll have to stop using paper straws, plastic bottles, all these things... the whole reason I stay away from it." **Shoheb**

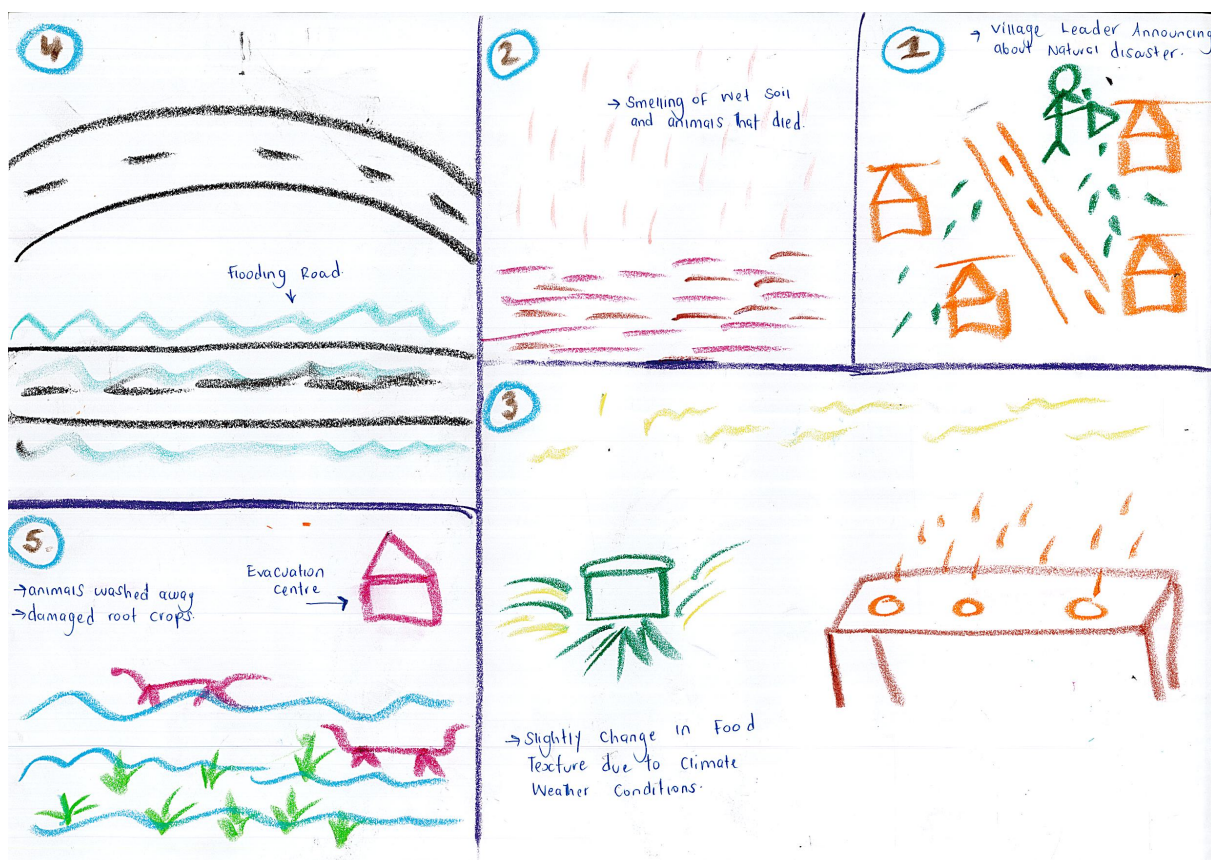
Alongside this, feminist movements and organisations have carved out space for queer activists in policy conversations that would otherwise exclude them entirely, functioning as allies even as the underlying "nothing about us without us" principle remains unmet; queer voices are still filtered through someone else's platform, rather than holding their own.

The scale of what is at stake if this exclusion is not addressed is significant: Fiji's own climate vulnerability assessment estimates that F\$9.3 billion will be needed over the next decade to build national climate resilience (Government of the Republic of Fiji, 2017). Without policies that explicitly recognise LGBTQIA+ communities, diverse families and chosen families, none of that investment is structured to reach the queer Fijians already doing this work. As one participant summarised the case for recognising resilience that already exists, rather than only building new resilience from scratch:

"Climate resilience in Fiji... is just so normalised... We don't realise a lot of times that the things we are doing is in fact climate resilience. It's just so embedded in us." **Salim**

YOUTH AND CLIMATE FUTURES: DECIDING WHETHER TO STAY

For young queer Fijians, climate vulnerability is inseparable from the question of whether they have a future in their own country. Indo-Fijian queer youth described family rejection and land insecurity as forces pushing them to leave. Itaukei youth described a desire to return to their villages and a fear of what that return would cost them in terms of identity and belonging. The decision to stay or to leave is shaped not only by cyclone risk but by whether Fiji is a place where a young queer person can build a life, a family and a livelihood without hiding who they are.



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CONCLUSION

Strip away the percentages, and this report is about a much simpler thing: whether the people who show up to help their neighbours during a cyclone are also the people Fiji's disaster and climate systems are prepared to help back.

By that measure, Fiji is not yet there. A legal framework that decriminalised same-sex relationships in 2010 and enshrined non-discrimination in the Constitution has not translated into evacuation centres that don't force trans women into men's quarters or aid systems that recognise a chosen family as a family. Fiji's own Planned Relocation Guidelines, in most respects a genuinely progressive framework, still do not name SOGIESC communities as a distinct vulnerable group, which means the data, the guidelines, and the shelters built from them do not either. The result is the condition this report has returned to throughout: queer Fijians are hypervisible as targets of discrimination, and invisible as rights-holders in exactly the systems meant to protect them.

It would be a mistake, though, to read this report only as a record of exclusion. It is equally a record of capacity: chosen families that function as real safety nets, homes that have operated as informal evacuation centres for generations, a first-responder tradition that persists whether or not it is formally recognised, and organising spaces, Chai & Chat chief among them, that hold both healing and political solidarity at once. Queer Fijians are not waiting for permission to build resilience. They are already doing it, mostly without support, and often without even being counted.

That resilience should not be mistaken for the solution, or romanticised as one. The burden of adapting cannot fall only on the people already carrying the most risk. Being invited into a room without being allowed to shape its agenda is not inclusion. A gender-segregated shelter that requires a trans woman to bunk with men is not safe. A climate policy that never names SOGIESC communities is not protection, however good its intentions.

What follows from that is not complicated, even if it is not yet done: queer Fijians need to be recognised as equal citizens with a stake in disaster response, climate adaptation, and land-use decisions, not as an afterthought to be consulted once the frameworks are already built. Safe evacuation spaces, accessible early warning systems, data that actually captures who is affected and how, and genuine partnership with SOGIESC-led organisations are not radical asks. They are the minimum standard for a climate response that can honestly claim to leave no one behind.

As one participant put it, simply:

"Love is the key, through love we can accommodate everyone." **Participant**

For young queer Fijians in particular, the stakes are fundamental; they are deciding now whether they have a future in Fiji, whether they can build families and livelihoods on the land they live on, and whether their country will see them as full citizens or as people to be tolerated only in Private. Fiji has chosen to lead the Pacific and the world on climate. It now has the chance to lead on what that commitment actually requires: making sure the people already doing the work of resilience are seen, heard, and protected by the systems built in its name.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations follow directly from what participants said they need and are grounded in the Pacific Women Lead guidance note's principles: do no harm, but don't do nothing; work that is Pacific-led and context-relevant; an intersectional analysis; explicit recognition of the links between SOGIESC exclusion and climate impacts; and genuine partnership with local SOGIESC-led organisations (Nabulivu and Prasad, 2026). They are also consistent with the International Women's Development Agency's 2022 policy position, which calls for diverse women, trans, non-binary and gender-nonconforming people, including Indigenous people and people with disabilities, to be at the centre of climate, disaster and recovery planning (IWDA, 2022, p.7).

SAFETY AND SHELTER

- Provide safe, affirming evacuation spaces, with a designated area for the queer community where a dedicated LGBTQIA+ shelter isn't possible, so no one is denied entry or has to hide their identity to access shelter.
- Ensure access to aid, including shelter and post-disaster assistance, is non-discriminatory and explicitly recognises chosen and non-biological families as households.

POLICY AND DATA

- Name SOGIESC/LGBTQIA+ people explicitly as a distinct vulnerable group in climate and disaster policy, closing the current gap where they are addressed only implicitly, if at all.
- Collect disaggregated data on the experiences of queer Fijians, recognising that disability, ethnicity, gender identity, race and religion combine to create vulnerabilities that current policy frameworks don't capture.

- Develop early warning and disaster communication systems that are accessible to people with visual and hearing impairments, including sign language interpretation and plain-language materials.

SUPPORT AND CAPACITY-BUILDING

- Expand trauma counselling and safe spaces for queer Fijians to process their experiences during and after disasters.
- Provide training for queer activists on negotiating and advocating within the wider climate change sector, so presence in the room converts more reliably into influence over its agenda.
- Address the conditions- land insecurity, family rejection, lack of legal recognition- that lead Indo-Fijian queer youth in particular to see leaving Fiji as their only path to an authentic life.
- Prioritise youth-led and youth-centred programs that recognise young queer Fijians as leaders, not just beneficiaries, of climate and disaster planning.

PARTNERSHIP

- Build genuine, resourced partnerships with SOGIESC-led organisations in the design and delivery of climate and disaster programs, rather than consulting them after key decisions have already been made.

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Note on this list: a small number of works cited in the original draft of this report, including two sources that were not in fact cited anywhere in its body text, have been left out here because they are not cited in this version. If this report is developed further and draws on that material again, those citations should be reinstated at that point.

APPENDIX A: Extended Theoretical And Methodological Framework

This appendix sets out, in more depth than the Methodology section above, the theoretical and epistemological basis for this research.

The research is grounded in feminist research theory, which recognises and works to address gender differences and the power imbalances attached to them, particularly for women navigating intersecting social inequalities, in service of a broader social justice aim (Hesse-Biber, 2012). It is further shaped by activist research (Hale, 2001), which treats dialogue and collaboration with the community being studied as a condition of legitimate knowledge production, not an optional extra, consistent with this project's use of Participatory Action Research (PAR), which holds that research processes and outcomes should reflect the community under study, and works actively against the extractive research practices that have historically characterised work in Fiji and the wider Pacific.

Talanoa, the practice of sharing culture, wisdom, and traditional knowledge through storytelling, whether in formal sessions or everyday gatherings, is the primary method through which this research was conducted (Vaiotele, 2016). Vaiotele cautions against assuming that Western and Pacific knowledge-production start from the same premises, and argues that data collection and analysis need to be built around the specific context in which they take place. In the Fijian case, that means attending to things a foreign research method would routinely miss: obligations of kinship, the role religion and culture play in shaping people's lives, and a pattern of communal living that often takes priority over the nuclear family. Talanoa is conventionally conducted around a kava bowl; given the short timeframe of this project, kava sessions were not practical, but

the underlying principles of relationship-building and unhurried storytelling were upheld in every interaction.

Alongside talanoa, this research draws on Fresnoza-Flot and Liu-Farrer's (2022) concept of tangled mobilities, "a dynamic, unfolding process in which elements, components and forms of mobility exist alongside, intersect with and overlap one another in complex ways, resulting in stasis and movements across different life dimensions (social, legal, intimate, sexual, digital, and temporal)" (Fresnoza-Flot and Liu-Farrer, 2022, p.4). For queer Fijians facing climate displacement, moving is never only a spatial act: it is entangled with social mobility (or immobility) as people navigate new communities in which they may need to conceal their identity; legal mobility, as relationships and rights receive uneven recognition; and intimate mobility, as family acceptance or rejection shapes the ability to rebuild a life at all. This framework is what allows the analysis in this report to treat displacement as something queer Fijians experience differently, and often more harshly, than people whose identities do not require this kind of ongoing negotiation.

Finally, this research is oriented by decolonial praxis: an insistence on centring Pacific epistemologies and challenging the assumption that Western climate narratives are the default lens through which Pacific climate experience should be understood or analysed. Read together with intersectionality and tangled mobilities, this gives the report three interconnected theoretical anchors, applied consistently across every theme in the Findings section above.

APPENDIX B: Interview Questions

ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS

1. How do you describe your identity, such as ethnicity, gender, or sexuality, in the context of Fiji's climate justice movement?
2. Have you ever felt left out of climate adaptation programs because of your queer identity, Indo-Fijian or iTaukei background, or other reasons? Can you share an example?
3. How has climate change, like cyclones or rising seas, directly affected your life, family, or work?
4. As a queer person, do you or your peers encounter unique challenges in preparing for or recovering from disasters, such as issues with shelters or access to aid?
5. How do Vanua/Vasu, or traditional land systems, include or exclude queer voices in climate decisions?
6. Are there traditional Indigenous or Indo-Fijian practices or knowledge in your family or community that help address climate threats? How does your queer identity connect with these practices?
7. Have you faced discrimination in climate-related spaces, like being excluded from land decisions or facing gendered evacuation policies? How did you respond?
8. Do you notice differences in how iTaukei and Indo-Fijian queer communities experience climate justice? Where do they work together, and where do they clash?
9. If you could change one policy to better support queer people during climate crises, what would it be?
10. What advice would you give to Fiji's leaders about including LGBTIQ+ voices in climate planning?
11. Do you, as a queer person, have access to land via mataqali for farming or other purposes?

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What words come to mind when you think of 'climate justice' as queer people in Fiji?
2. How do ethnicity, such as Indo-Fijian or iTaukei identity, and queerness come together to shape your climate struggles? Provide examples.
3. What are the biggest barriers LGBTIQ+ communities face in Fiji's climate response, such as those related to religion, land laws, or aid distribution?
4. How do queer elders and youth differ in their approaches to climate resilience?
5. If you could design a queer-inclusive climate adaptation program, what would it include?
6. What gives you hope about Fiji's queer climate future?
7. How does the legacy of indenture, like land insecurity, affect your climate vulnerability as a queer person?
8. How do Vanua/Vasu, or traditional land systems, include or exclude queer voices in climate decisions?
9. How do gender-segregated disaster policies affect non-binary and trans people specifically?
10. What queer climate survival knowledge should elders pass on to the next generation?
11. Do you, as a queer person, have access to land via mataqali for farming?



