Banaban Rural Social Worker

Editorial—Happy new year! As we enter the new year, it is critical that we have a throwback of 2021 and take stock of what it has been an enriching 'personal' and 'professional' journey of 8 months to reconnect with families on Rabi and new colleagues at the Rabi Council of Leaders in my capacity as a voluntary community practitioner after returning from Aotearoa New Zealand in the beginning of the year. The opinions expressed in this annual report are my own personal opinions and does not reflect any organization I'm affiliated to. Tekeraoi te wareware!



LIFE AS A BANABAN RURAL SOCIAL WORKER...

"Its certainly not an easy life, but a life worth living"

I began my rural Social Work journey in March 2021 after returning from Auckland, New Zealand where I was studying towards my Bachelor of Social Work. In my fourth year of study, The initial findings of the study indi-I pursued different research topics in cated socio-economic disparities for the areas of domestic violence, youth the Banabans in two states. Coupled development, mental health, immi- with an aging legislation that is outgration, community development, and dated and not fit for the current conself-determination. As part of the text and rampant changing society, training, I also worked for different the Banabans are very far behind in organizations in New Zealand sup- terms of development, protection and porting and contributing to the en- inherit deficit wellbeing indicators hancement of Pacific family wellbeing since their displacement in 1945. as well as creating community projects to support Pacific connections to their identity and languages giving me the experience in diverse environment and settings.

per argues that you cannot rehabili- ment....

tate the physical landscape of Banaba which was ruined by over 80 years of mining without rehabilitating the people. Any forms of rehabilitation has to begin with the people mentally, spiritually, and culturally.

Transitioning to a new environment on Rabi, constraint by its remoteness, poor connectivity, poor public policies, aging legislation and the dissolution of their government in 2013 enacted In 2019, I embarked on a personal in the Banaban Settlement Act of research which looked at Rehabilita- 1970 poses a lot of challenges and tion of the Banaban people. The pa- restrictions to community develop-



Pictures—[Picture 1]A picture of the Rabi Council of Leaders taken from the lagoon side [Picture 2] A picture of my home office at Uma Village and [Picture 3] A picture taken at Rakentai on the beach classroom

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Acknowledgement

There a number of people and organizations that are to be sincerely acknowledged for their support to my work on Rabi in 2021. I couldn't have done the work on Rabi in a voluntarily capacity without your support:

Special thanks to the following individuals: and organizations:

Pelenise Alofa, Tokanuka Kareo (Acting ED) and staffs of the RCL on Rabi and in Suva, Tawana Alofa, Angeline Mckay, Tane Turaga, Aroiti Kabiriera, Aree Fomu, Tauraoi Kirite, Bainteiti Taneriwe, Erietera Fiti, Erin Thomas (Policy Analyst, ICAAD), Teari Tekebo, Siale Ilolahia (ED PIANGO) and staffs of PIANGO, Katerina Teaiwa, Fiery Canoe Foundation, Rosanna Ball of Warkworth, Aotearoa Uma Community, US Banaban Community and last but not least the supportive community members of Rabi from all the four villages—Tabwewa, Uma, Tabiang and Buakonikai.

Thank you all for your financial support, in-kind support and your prayers!



Bíography



BA Social Work (Hons, Massey University, current), Cert Project Management (KIT) 2013 - Dip Business Accounting (FNU) 2009 – Her Majesty the Queen 2018 Point of Light Award for youth voluntary service

Rae is of Banaban and Kiribati origins who Rae has extensive background in Local Govwas raised and educated in Fiji throughout ernment and NGOs. He is a passionate comhis childhood years. Like nearly everyone munity and youth worker. His interests are in else, his grandparents were forced to relocate vouth, communities, mental health, domestic to Rabi, in Fiji from Kiribati in 1945 because violence, and social justice. Rae founded varithe British mined it so badly and extensively ous youth and community NGOs in Kiribati for phosphate that they could not live there and New Zealand and currently serves as anymore. His environment social justice work member of Pacific, Regional and International is linked to the histories of his people and the boards. Rae now runs his own consultancy extent of environmental degradation caused firm supporting the Kiribati and Banaban by mining that have made their sacred land CSOs in areas of good governance, social uninhabitable.

work, and policy.



Programmes & Activities in 2021

Series of project scoping and needs assessment workshops was conducted with the Rabi Council of Leaders (RCL). The exercise was repetitive to include follow up workshops on some of the sessions. The first workshop was conducted with all RCL staffs where a hierarchy of needs were identified followed by sectoral workshops for example with the Women Interest Worker, Village chairman, and the Rabi Fishing Association. 7 Community consultations were conducted with the following communities— Rakentai, Uma Nuka & Maiaki and Motawa. The trainings range from community vulnerability assessments, community entrepreneurship development, human rights, good governance as well as youth and women empowerment. A Covid19 Community Risk workshop was conducted in two communities (Uma Maiaki & Rakentai). The purpose of the workshop was to raise awareness on covid19 and to co-create a community response strategy to mitigate and support community members who may be impacted by the virus. The training was important in breaking negative stereotypical views on the virus. I was invited to be a keynote speaker at the Rabi Youth Volleyball tournament held at Nuku and helped co-funded the event in the amount of \$200. In partnership with the the Aotearoa Uma Communities of New Zealand, we were able to assist the Uma Maiaki and Nuka community get their diesel generator running. \$1,200 was generously donated. Three reports were written in 2021. The Motawa Water Needs Assessment was published while three other reports are in draft—1) Rakentai COVID19 Project Handbook and 2) Uma Maiaki & Nuka report and 3) The Banaban Women Center Strategic Plan. The three reports will be finalized this year. The current work was in response to the requests received by this communities and organizations. In partnership with the International Center Advocates Against Discrimination on the Right to Life With Dignity Project, I was able to conduct 5 consultations with our Banaban elders on Rabi. This project objective is to extract narratives of the displacement that can be used as good practice for future population who may be displaced by Climate Change. The project is on-going and series of reports will be published in 2022. The village leadership is pivotal. Throughout my engagement on Rabi with our communities, I have been fortunate to consult and seek the advise and wisdoms of our four village chairman on Rabi. The consultation were held to inform them of the activities that are happening on Rabi at the community-based.

In 2021, we received two generous donations—1) A printer, supplies or cartridges and A4 papers were donated by Rosanna Ball of Warkworth in response to the request received by the Pre-School teacher of the Uma Kindergarten 2) 2 boxes of PPE supplies were generously donated by our United States Banaban Community.



Three project proposals were submitted in 2021. Two were unsuccessful and one Climate Change project is still being vetted by the project committee of the KIWA Initiative. We are blessed to have opportunities such as this and we still continue to submit project concepts.



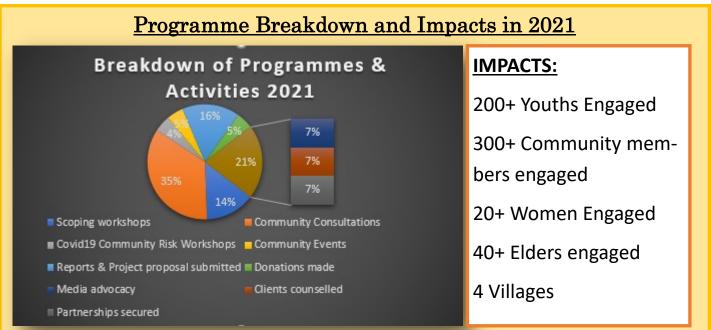
In 2021, we had been engaged actively with the media. We have been contributors to some renowned media outlets advocating on pertinent Banaban issues such as Water among other issues.



Counselled three clients-a domestic violence and child protection case, mental health case and a troubled youth. The three cases progressed positively getting the agreed results and good outcomes. A need to build more programmes on counselling has to be prioritized in 2022.



We have secured genuine partnerships with three organization in 2021 namely with the ICA-AD, PIANGO, Fiery Canoe Foundation and the US Banaban Communities. We hope to continue building rapport with many more partners, organizations and friends of the Banabans in 2022.



90% of the programmes and activities were fully im- villages namely, Tabwewa, Uma, Tabiang and plemented. 35% of the activities was consultation Buakonikai. The programmes and activities were with the community members on pertinent issues funded by donations from families and friends of the related to their community and village development Banabans, the Banaban diaspora in the United priorities. The consultations was conducted in close States and Aotearoa New Zealand. collaboration with the Rabi Council of Leaders Act-

In total there was 43 active programmes in 2021 and ing Director and the village chairman of the four

Key Issues on Rabí—A Community Narratíve

1. Water Issues

Water remains the biggest threat to NCDs is also on the rise on Rabi. family health on Rabi. The Rabi There needs to be a lot of pro-Council of Leaders (RCL) maintains grammes to combat NCDs in the island. There hasn't been major de- needs to be conducted in communivelopment in this sector and water ties and promotion of healthy foods land is common.

2. Domestic Violence

Domestic violence (DV) on Rabi is Diapers and plastics have become soaring. There are no community the most common litter on Rabi. programmes on DV, local police There is no proper landfill on Rabi (RCL) have little or no capacity in to manage waste. There is no rubdealing with DV. DV cases on Rabi bish dump truck for collection of are referred to the Fiji Police. There household wastes. Families have to are no interventions of DV on Rabi.

3. Child Protection

While incidents of child abuses is Flooding, seawater seepage, erosion, also common on Rabi, there are no sea level rise, droughts, inundation intervention programmes to respond are some common impacts of Clito this issue. Children cannot be mate Change experienced on Rabi. uplifted from their homes because Disasters are now more frequent Rabi does not have a safe house.

4. Substance Abuse

The use of marijuana is now a most common talked about issue with the vouths of Rabi. More youth programmes needs to be developed to keep the youths engaged, more community awareness on the health impacts of drugs have to be conducted The mobility of the PWDs on Rabi and more research on the impacts of remains the biggest concern for this marijuana on the youth needs to be vulnerable group. Services need to commissioned on Rabi.

5. Non-Communicable Diseases

(NCDs)

the water system throughout the community. Food Nutrition training contamination incidents on the is- and wellbeing programmes needs to be introduced in villages.

6. Waste Management

burry their waste in a dug hole.

7. Climate Change & Disasters

and have many negative impacts on families. More Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation programmes needs to happen. Emergency shelters needs to be established in villages and in all the communities on Rabi.

8. Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)

respond to the needs of these people, offices, transport and facilities needs

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to be accessible. PWDs have to access most of the services in Savusavu which is about 80kms away from Rabi.

9. Conservation

The current state of Rabi's seascape and landscape has deteriorated. Eighty percent of the water reserves have been farmed, deforested and it's lagoon have been overfished and bleached. Conservation awareness needs to be conducted on Rabi to all the villagers and conservation ordinances needs to be introduced. Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) needs to be developed.

10. Persons with Mental Health

There are no interventions for people living with Mental Health on the island.

11. Access to basic services

Accessing major basic services for example health services is a major issue especially in times of emergency. There is no ambulance on Rabi to deal with emergencies and referrals for serious health issues are referred to Savusavu hospital because the health center on Rabi is not fully equipped.

12. Communication

There is no TV station nor a local radio station to keep the communities informed in the local language. While major mobile networks like Digicel and Vodafone are improving

opment practitioners, a lot of reform needed to be done, eight months work on Rabi with my people. It also propartnership and formulating advocacy plans so that gaps and provides some provoking thoughts for readers changes are made.

and to community practitioners. For community devel- This report provides a comprehensive analysis of my but it has to be done by building networks, creating vides key insights in community development, identify in the lenses of development.

(Continued from page 1)

Rabí Statístics

VILLAGE	# OF SETTLEMENTS	POPULATION	# OF HOUSEHOLDS
TABWEWA	11	1074	228
UMA	8	868	148
TABIANG	6	552	58
BUAKONIKAI	8	470	84
TOTAL	31	5000	565

Extracted from the Rabi Agriculture Report 2020

The population on Rabi has increased dramatically since 1945. The Rabi Agriculture Report published in 2020 recorded a total population of 5,000 in all the 31 settlements on Rabi. The total number of household recorded was 565. The population of Rabi in general is youthful.

Students enrolled

In 2020, there were 415 enrolled at the Banaban Primary School, 119 at Tabiang Primary School, 120 at the Buakonikai Primary School and 169 at Rabi High School.



communication on the island, there are still communities that do not

(Continued from page 5)

have reception on Rabi making it hard to communicate to them in times of disasters. In an age of technology, communication issue is still an issue on Rabi.

13. Banking

Rabi Post office operates from Monday—Friday and provides basic money services and bank function on the island. Money can easily run out. There are also local agent for Digicel and Vodafone.



Reflections of 2021

COVID19

Social working amidst the COVID19 is the new normal since the outbreak of the corona virus in 2020. My work on Rabi was subject to the adherence of covid19 protocols and SOP provided by the Rabi Council of Leaders. Many of the programmes were disrupted and meetings deferred but it did not deter us from continuing the work on Rabi.

of Leaders

Since the dissolution of the Rabi What does it mean for the Banabans There were village plans developed Council of Leaders in 2013, many Banaban issues have been pending. The powers of the Rabi Council of Leaders established under the Banaban Settlement Act is pivotal for Banaban issues on Rabi and Banaba. The functions of the council in supporting the welfare of its people, projects, peace and order, Banaban lands among other matters pertinent to Banaban affairs are also critical. This body also have the authority in public policy spaces as well as in Parliament processes in Fiji and Kiribati. The administration of the RCL is now under the Office of the Prime Minister.

What does this mean to our programmes on Rabi?

Most of our community-based programmes will be on hold until the Rabi Council of Leaders is reinstatwaste management to name a few. government responsible for data. The RCL is the only legitimated body that can make and submit amendments in the Banaban Settlement Act.

What impact/s will this have on the Banabans on Banaba in Kiribati?

There will be no representation of Village Development Plans The dissolution of the Rabi Council the Banabans on Rabi in the Kiribati House of Parliament.

on Banaba in Kiribati?

The long-standing issues of water shortage on Banaba caused by drought remains the biggest threat to the people and families. The Rabi Council of Leaders has a responsibility for the affairs of the Banabans on Banaba in Kiribati. Without this body our democratic rights as indigenous people of Banaba are weakened and subsequently our voices on issues affecting livelihoods cannot be amplified.

Policy frameworks

Currently, there are no policy frameworks on contemporary social issues on Rabi.

Challenges with data on Rabi

Data remains the biggest challenge on Rabi because they are not dis-

ed. For example, our work on con- aggregated and are fragmented. A servation of water reserves, Domes- lot of advocacy needs to take place tic Violence and Child Protection, with key ministries of the Fijian

> For community practitioners on Rabi this is another challenge for establishing baseline information on a certain community issues whether it be health, education, unemployment etc.

There are no current village development plans in all the four villages. in the past but has not been evaluated and

Integrated Vulnerability Assessments

There hasn't been any vulnerability assessment conducted on Rabi to understand the scope and needs of the island and the settlements.

GIS Mapping

No GIS Mapping has been conducted on Rabi.

Research

No research has been conducted on social issues on Rabi.

Community Grants on cultural programmes

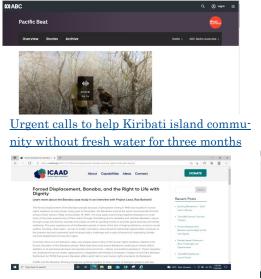
There are no community grants available on Rabi for maintenance and revitalization of the culture.



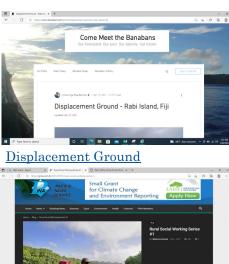
Píctures and medía línks:



Media Links:



Forced Displacement, Banaba, and the



Rural Work series on Rabi



Find us on google....

Support the work in 2022

How you can help support the work?

If you are passionate about community development and have skills in the following areas:

- * Economics
- * Accounting
- * Public Policy
- * Legal
- * Good governance
- * Diplomacy and International relations
- * Child Protection and Domestic Violence laws
- * GIS Mapping
- * Graphic design
- * Advocacy
- * Community Development
- * Community– Based Entrepreneurship
- * Information Technology

Please contact me straight away if you would like to volunteer to help bring the much needed development to our people and island homes.

This report was prepared by <u>Itinterunga Rae Bainteiti</u> Email: raekccn@gmail.com Phone: (679) 7283293 Website: <u>Banaban Rural Social Worker</u>

