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The Fijian Ethos and Dawasamu Miraculous Healing Water: A Study of Delakado and Natadradave Villagers' Response to God's Gift

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Visitors at the *Okanasei* healing water site with attendants wearing bright yellow vests. Source: <http://kaulga.blogspot.com/2016/10/fiji-government-authorities-confirm.html>

Abstract

In the immediate aftermath of the extremely destructive Tropical Cyclone Winston, miraculous healing water was discovered flowing on land belonging to Naboro mataqali in close proximity to Natadradave and Delakado villages in Dawasamu, Tailevu. This discovery led to the arrival of thousands of people from all over Fiji and beyond at a time when the villagers of Dawasamu, Tailevu were themselves recovering from the catastrophic cyclone. A year on, visitors albeit in smaller numbers continue to bath in, drink and take away the healing water.

The working paper reports on the research project and its findings on why the indigenous Fijian villagers (peasants) eschewed the unique opportunity for windfall cash income from the sale of the miracle water at a time of unprecedented hardship. This too, in the context of a lucrative bottled water industry in the country.

Keywords: development; TC Winston; Fiji; bottled water industry; Pacific Island Countries

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Glossary

<i>Bhaini</i>	sister, a term for an Indo-Fijian woman
<i>Bhaia</i>	brother, a term for an Indo-Fijian man
<i>Bose</i>	Meeting
<i>Dautali ibe</i>	referred to a person who weaves mats
<i>Dauculacula</i>	referred to a person who sews clothes etc.
<i>Dau sere idini</i>	engineer or mechanic
<i>iTaukei</i>	Indigenous people of Fiji
<i>Kai</i>	term used to refer to someone from the same province or area
<i>Koti ni co</i>	cutting of grass (or used to refer to a grass cutter)
<i>Lotu</i>	Religion and or church
<i>Liuliu</i>	Head of the iTaukei clan and/or landowning unit
<i>Luve ni Qase</i>	Child of the eldest member of the family
<i>Luvena</i>	One's child
<i>Matai</i>	carpenter
<i>Mataqali</i>	iTaukei clan or landowning unit
<i>Momo</i>	Uncle
<i>Motoka ni veilakoyaki</i>	Mode of transport (car, carrier etc)
<i>Nasi ni Koro</i>	Village nurse
<i>Nei</i>	Aunty
<i>Sevusevu</i>	ceremonial offering to the host
<i>Soqosoqo ni Marama</i>	Women's group or congregation
<i>Tabacakacaka</i>	Circuit in the Methodist Church
<i>Tacina</i>	Brother or sister
<i>Talanoa</i>	conversing in conversation
<i>Talatala</i>	Priest
<i>Tavako</i>	Tobacco
<i>Teitei</i>	Planting or have a plantation

<i>Tikina</i>	District
<i>Tuirara</i>	serves as a steward in the Methodist Church
<i>Turaga ni vanua</i>	Village chief
<i>Turaga ni Koro</i>	Village headman
<i>Vakavanua</i>	the way of the land or in the customary manner
<i>Vakavinavinaka</i>	an act of appreciation or conveying of gratitude
<i>Vanua</i>	the land, the people and customs
<i>Vasu</i>	Mother's village
<i>Veilomani</i>	caring for and respecting others
<i>Veikauwaitaki</i>	showing compassion towards others
<i>Vulagi</i>	Guests or visitors
<i>Vuvale</i>	Family
<i>Yaqona</i>	iTaukei traditional drink, also known as 'kava' or grog
<i>Yasana</i>	Province
<i>Yavusa</i>	Tribe

Introduction

Over 12 months beginning in March 2016, thousands of people visited two villages in the Dawasamu district in the province of Tailevu located more than 80 kilometres from Fiji's capital, Suva. They were drawn by the miraculous healing water that flows through the land owned by the Naboro mataqali of Delakado village. In the wake of media reports about the water, strangers from all over Fiji and countries abroad began arriving on the doorsteps of the villagers either out of curiosity or in the belief that their ailments will be healed by the miracle water. These visitors came in their scores, then in their hundreds and thousands. Intriguingly, the water has been made available to Fijians from diverse backgrounds, as well as visitors from other countries entirely free of charge.

Their sheer numbers would have caused serious challenges for most communities under normal circumstances. However, for Delakado and Natadradave villages trying to cope with the aftermath of the extremely destructive Category 5, Tropical Cyclone Winston (T C Winston) the challenges were almost overwhelming. In the initial weeks and months, it was reported that there was stench of rotting garbage, urine and excreta along the feeder road leading to the villages and the water streams which gave rise to concerns about sanitation, and health for both the locals and visitors alike. Quite remarkably these challenges were met and overcome in the subsequent months. There are many stories to be told about the miracle water and its healing powers, and from many stand points. This research seeks to provide an understanding on the Delakado and Natadradave healing water by gaining insight into villagers' and visitors' perspectives about the reasons behind the no charge, 'non-market' and not-for-profit policy adopted by the customary owners of the water.

In the capitalist world system, and the peripheral capitalistic Fijian society where the core motivation is to generate income from economic activities (Nickolas, 2015)¹, it appears somewhat odd that the villagers have not sought to commodify the miracle water. This is especially so in the midst of the lucrative bottled water business in Fiji. There could have been a ready market for the Dawasamu water. Here was a unique opportunity for windfall revenue

¹ *What is the difference between a capitalist system and a free-market system?* Retrieved November, 9 2016 from: <http://www.investopedia.com/ask/answers/042215/what-difference-between-capitalist-system-and-free-market-system.asp>

from the ‘miracle water’ at a time of unprecedented hardship but this opportunity was deliberately set aside.²

This working paper begins with a discussion of the study’s research methodology and methods, followed by a synopsis of some literature on world’s healing waters, and a discussion of the healing water located in Delakado and Natadradave. A very brief account of the local bottled water industry, particularly the internationally renowned, ‘Fiji Water’, follows. The impacts of TC Winston and challenges faced by the villagers are outlined. This is followed by the findings of the research. Significant aspects of the research are brought together in the conclusion of the working paper.

Research Methodology and data collection

The approach taken in this study was positive appreciation and social constructivist. This denoted embracing existing facilities and social relationships without apriori stereo-typing. It assumed that there were existing social relationships, and ways of forming relationships between the villagers (locals), and the visitors. The approach accepted the existing social organization in the villages, and followed the necessary protocols to gain access to informants who were both locals and visitors. Qualitative methods of data collection such as participant observation, in-depth interviews (with 20 key customary owners³, 105 visitors⁴) and focus group discussions with women from Delakado and Natadradave villages were undertaken. *Vanua* norms and values were respected, the interviews conducted used ‘*talanoa*’ informal discussion based on the semi-structured questionnaire as the primary mode of data collection. Upon arrival in Delakado and Natadradave; a *sevusevu*⁵ was presented to the area chief (*Turaga ni Vanua*), village headman (*Turaga ni Koro*) and elders in accordance with *iTaukei* customs.

Field Research

The field work was conducted, from the 25th of January to the 1st of February and the 27th of April and 2nd of May, 2017. A semi-structured questionnaire was used for key person interviews. The data collected covered demography (age, gender and household size), number of children in the households, educational attainment, housing type, religious backgrounds,

² The rationale for the project is to seek explanation for the ‘free of charge’ policy –why in this day and age, in the midst of an apparently lucrative bottled water industry, the leaders and people of Delakado and Natadradave villages have chosen not to profit from the highly-in-demand ‘miracle water’.

³ 7 key informants from Natadradave and 13 from Delakado villages respectively. The questions were also discussed and distributed to 13 village households in Natadradave village.

⁴ 3 visitors in Delakado, 1 in Natadradave and 101 in ‘*Okanasei*’ healing water site

⁵ Presentation of *yaqona* to village heads and/or key persons in the respective villages

livelihoods and sources of income, social relationships and village unity, benefits and community support and the challenges faced by the villagers. Another questionnaire was designed for the survey among visitors related to the purpose of their visit, sources of knowledge about the healing water, number of visits and demographic information (age, gender, ethnicity and religion). The language used for villager key informant survey was Bauan Fijian⁶; while English was the language of communication⁷ with the visitors.

World's Healing Waters

With amplification of the news about the healing attributes of the Dawasamu water, parallels began to be drawn with other places where 'miracle water' had been found. Much has been written regarding the world's healing waters including Lourdes located in the grotto of Massabielle in France which is associated with 50 official miracles.

It is claimed that since May 1991, the miracle water of Maitreye in Tlacote, Mexico has been curing just about every ailment, including AIDS and cancer. The well is visited by around 10,000 people per day⁸. Then there are the thermal waters of Pamukkale, Turkey that is rich in calcium oxide and hydrogen sulfide, which are said to be especially powerful in healing numerous afflictions.⁹. The healing spring water in Nordenau, Germany is reported to have cured blindness and high blood pressure¹⁰. There is also the Tubewell in Nadana, India, said to have healed skin diseases and cured polio. Local entrepreneurs have offered large sums of money to purchase the area but the town's mayor refused to sell the well, saying that it is for the people not for business¹¹. Another remarkable site is the 'fountain of youth' in Liaoning, China¹².

Local Healing Water

The *Turaga ni Vanua* of Natadradave village, Waisake Laulaba mentioned that the villagers first discovered the water's healing powers in March 2016 shortly after TC Winston when a young boy suffering from hernia was healed by bathing in the water. A young man from

⁶ Bauan Fijian is the lingua franca for iTaukei or Indigenous Fijians

⁷ The interview questionnaire was initially formulated in English and translated to Fijian taking into account village key informants language preferences

⁸ Erman, A. (June 23, 2013). *6 of the World's Greatest Healing Waters*. Retrieved November 8, 2016 from: <http://ecosalon.com/6-of-the-worlds-greatest-healing-waters/>

⁹ ibid

¹⁰ ibid

¹¹ ibid

¹² ibid

Burerua village¹³ who having suffered a stroke leaving him speech impaired and with mobility difficulties was able to speak and walk after bathing regularly (Chong, 2016). On Fiji television, images of queues of cars and people, and of an individual being pushed along in a wheel chair, and walking back from his bath, caught the attention of viewers.¹⁴

Huge logistical difficulties emerged for the villagers as they faced the challenges of recovering from the destruction caused by TC Winston and responding to the scores of visitors at the healing water sites. Natadradave village headman *Turaga ni Koro* Tomasi Naisoso stated that young men from the villages of Vorovoro, Natadradave, Delakado and Driti¹⁵ worked 24 hour shifts to cater for people visiting the site; many visitors brought empty containers to fill with water to take home. They were requested to share it but not to sell it (Cava & Qounadovu, 2016).

It was believed that the water would lose its ‘manna’ and healing properties if it were to be sold¹⁶. Among the very first to reflect on why the water ought not to be sold was the Catholic Archbishop of Fiji, Peter Loy Chong. In an article in the Fiji Times, he stated that the healing water should to be given freely as it was a gift from God. He said that in this regard the Bible and Catholic social teaching had four vital messages namely; (i) moral responsibility for the water and the environment; (ii) all development works must serve the good of mankind and planet rather than the interests of a few; (iii) the water is to be shared in unity with others and not treated as a commodity and (iv) to care for “mother earth” (November 6, 2016)¹⁷. The extent to which this theology applied to Dawasamu people is not clear as they are mainly Methodists.

The researchers hypothesized that Christian values together with *iTaukei* ethos may have informed the villagers thinking on not seeking monetary recompense. Traditional values relating to reciprocity and the stewardship of natural resources may have overlapped with the Archbishop’s explanation. The idea that one should know and recognize other people and form putative kinship or other social links with them is an essential element of the *iTaukei* value system which allows visitors access into a community without impediment (Ravuvu, 1987, 1990). Also, rather than receiving monetary reward, the principle of reciprocity in the *iTaukei*

¹³ Another village in the Tailevu province, located about 45-60minutes drive from Natadradave and close to 15minutes drive from Korovou Town.

¹⁴ Fijian News (2016) “*Healing Water*” a source of hope for the sick. Retrieved November 7, 2016 from <http://www.tawakilagi.com/2016/10/06/healing-water-a-source-of-hope-for-the-sick/>

¹⁵ Vorovoro and Driti are nearby villages in Dawasamu

¹⁶ Miraculous food and/or powers in Biblical terms.

¹⁷ Retrieved November 7, 2016 from: <http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?ref=archive&id=377454>

community entails an act of social service with no immediate affirmation of a return (Veitayaki, 2001; 2005). Goods and services are exchanged *vakavanua* including as first fruit presentations, in ceremonies relating to births, marriages, deaths, installation of chiefly title holders, community projects, receiving visitors, for *lotu* purposes and so on. Villagers are self-sufficient and practice intricate exchange arrangements thereby sharing with relatives and/or outsiders ensuring that the resources are used efficiently and people are well catered for in times of need (Veitayaki, 2005).

The *mataqali* or sublineage is a significant grouping among *iTaukei* as it is the entity that owns customary land and natural resource rights. Often the head of the *mataqali* is a chiefly title holder in the hierarchy of chiefs that characterize the *vanua*. Veitayaki (2005) affirms that traditional knowledge and values are still appropriate for sustainable development strategies and resource management. There is recognition of the value and benefits of traditional knowledge regarding farming, medicine, and marine resource management. However, pressure to earn cash incomes is also prevalent.

The pressure to obtain cash income among land owners has led to concerns regarding rental payments on customary land leaseholds. There have been demands for increasing rents on these leases, and since the mid-1990s the dispute regarding the formula for calculating payments for leases, and duration of the leases under the Agricultural Landlord and Tenant Act (ALTA) has resulted in non-renewal of sugar cane farm leases (Naidu and Reddy, 2002). There have been disputes over land used for the Nadi International Airport, and the Nausori Airport. Very interestingly, in the province of Tailevu on the Suva side of Korovou township, a major dispute between landowners and the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) Church has led to the closure of the Fulton College.

Since 1940 this iconic Pacific regional education institution trained teachers in Fiji and other Pacific island countries. News reports said that the *Yavusa Salatu* which owns the 100 acres of land issued an eviction notice to the management of Fulton College. The land owners claimed that the Native Lands Trust Board (NLTB)¹⁸ and college management failed to engage in further discussions regarding the issue of a 75 year lease, and their compensation claims worth

¹⁸ Now known as the iTaukei Lands Trust Board (ITLB) which offers land management services to *iTaukei* landowners. Accessed on 9th May, 2017 from: <https://www.tltb.com.fj/vision-mission/>

millions of dollars¹⁹. The SDA has relocated Fulton College, renamed ‘Fulton, A University College’ along Sabeto Road, in Nadi on the western division of Viti Levu.

Lessees of customary land, and others perceive land owners as rent seekers who continuously demand more payments for the use of the land and natural resources. This clearly is not the case regarding access and use of the healing water of Dawasamu, Taillevu. This is especially noteworthy in the context of the growth of the bottled water market in Fiji.

Local Bottled Water Industry

Since the mid-1990s bottled water companies in Fiji have grown in number, and in size. They include Fiji Water²⁰, AquaSafe and VaiWai²¹, Aqua Pacific²², Island Chill²³, Vitiblu²⁴ and Ka-Viti²⁵. The very first bottled water for export company, Natural Waters of Viti Limited which began selling Fiji Water – particularly to the United States market by all accounts has been extremely successful. A Sustainability Report by the University of Vermont found that the water company’s website claimed that by producing 95% of it’s packaging on site, it reduced emissions associated with transport of raw materials and packaging. However, the report revealed that this is misleading; the Fiji Water plastic comes from a plant in China, which gets materials from other places to create the plastic. Although it was true that the Fiji plant fabricated signature bottles on site, the company had not reduced transportation related emissions (Lynch et.al, 2010).

¹⁹ Accessed on 9th May, 2017 from: <http://stuckinfiijimud.blogspot.com/search/label/Fulton%20College>

²⁰ Fiji Water was started by a Canadian, David Gilmour in 1996. His company was Natural Waters of Viti Ltd. The company’s headquarters are in Los Angeles, California. Fiji Water is source form an artesian aquifer in the Yaqara Valley on Viti Levu. It is now owned by Lynda and Stewart Resnick, Southern California billionaires. Retrieved on 23 March, 2017 from: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/earth/earthnews/8585182/Fiji-Water-accused-of-environmentally-misleading-claims.html>

²¹ Pleass Global is the bottler of AquaSafe. Its source is deep beneath the Namosi mountains, in Fiji. The company started in 1998 bottling 15 litre refillable polycarbonate “cooler bottles”. VaiWai® is a key element of Pleass Global Limited (PGL) development on the international market. Retrieved on 23 March, 2017 from: <http://pleass.com/aquasafe-natural-artesian-water/>

²² Founded in 2005 by Mr. Altaaf Jamal who is also the owner of Frezco Beverages – a local beverage company. The source of water is from the aquifer in the remote mountains of the Nadi highlands. Retrieved on 23 March, 2017 from: <http://www.aquapacific.com>

²³ Dayals (FIJI) Artesian Waters Ltd based in Yalalevu, Ba on the island of Viti Levu, Fiji owns Island Chill product and the production facility that is certified by all regulating states of USA. Retrieved on 23 March, 2017 from: <http://www.islandchill.com/>

²⁴ Vitiblu is bottled at source in the high mountains of Drasa, Lautoka, Fiji Islands. Retrieved on 23 March, 2017 from: <http://www.vitiblu.com>

²⁵ Founded by Irshad and Paul, two friends from the United States (the former originally from Fiji); Ka-Viti water is extracted from an underground aquifer on the island of Viti Levu in Fiji. Retrieved on 23 March, 2017 from: <https://www.ka-vitiwater.com/>

Also, according to Gleick (2010), the brand was a symbol of both the good and bad in the world of bottled water. It was labelled ‘bad’ as there was great energy cost and plastic waste produced by shipment of bottles to the US and across the globe; and the association with then post-2006 coup military government. Mother Jones, the investigative journal published an article by Anna Lenzer in September 2009 unveiling the corruption and ruthless business practices behind the Fiji Water brand. The company seized the word “Fiji” for its brand, and was off bounds for everyone else (such as Aqua Pacific water – which was denied the right to use the name ‘Fiji’). In addition, the increase in production of filled water bottles daily with a 99year lease on land over a 17 mile-long aquifer contradicts the company’s motto of a ‘Fiji Green’ to save the environment in the fight against climate change. Lenzer also questioned Fiji Water’s exports which makes millions while local people suffer from a lack of potable water. Water supply in the area is unreliable and outbreaks of typhoid and parasitic infections have occurred as a result (Lenzer, 2009). In her Master of Development Studies thesis, *‘Weaving Niche Production into Pacific Economies: The Social, Economic and Environmental Impacts of Fiji Water’* (2011) at Victoria University of Wellington, Catherine Jones maintained that Natural the company has engaged in ‘green washing’ its environmental impacts, and ‘aid washing’ its corporate social responsibility to the local community and country as a whole.

The success of Natural Waters of Viti Ltd triggered a number of other business ventures in the bottled water industry including Aqua Pacific as noted above. Given the ubiquity of bottled water and those supplied as part of the humanitarian assistance to the district of Dawasamu, it is noteworthy that the Delakado and Natadradave villagers have been steadfast in not selling their healing water.

Geography of Delakado and Natadradave Villages

Location of the Two Villages

Delakado and Natadradave villages are located in the District (*Tikina*) of Dawasamu and Province (*Yasana*) of Tailevu on the eastern coast of Viti Levu, Fiji (See Figure 1). Delakado and Natadradave villages are about an hour’s drive along the Lodon road from Korovou Town – past Ratu Kadavulevu School, Natovi Jetty, Queen Victoria School towards Nasinu village and at the border of the provinces of Tailevu and Ra. It is accessible via a feeder road turning

left before the Dawasamu Bridge. The villages are located about five kilometres' from each other²⁶.

Figure 1: Location of Dawasamu Villages on the eastern coast of Viti Levu, Fiji



Source: Braun (2008, p. 14)

When passing the Dawasamu Bridge, Delakado village is located on the right²⁷. A quarry and camp site run by a Chinese company known as Golden Rock is located in between the two villages; a few minutes' drive from here is Natadradave village. The 'miracle working water' runs via a tap system located on the left side of the village upon entry. Villagers and visitors alike use the healing water mainly for drinking and bathing. The main water source which is used for cooking, washing and other activities flows from the dam located just a few minutes outside the village²⁸.

²⁶ One kilometre from the Delakado junction to Natadradave village; a total of four kilometres to drive into and out of Delakado village from the main Naboro Coacoa Road (two kilometres upon entry and two kilometres upon exit).

²⁷ Approximately five to ten minutes' drive to reach Delakado.

²⁸ Also note, not all households in the village have access to the main water source hence they fetch water from the closest house with a running tap water system.

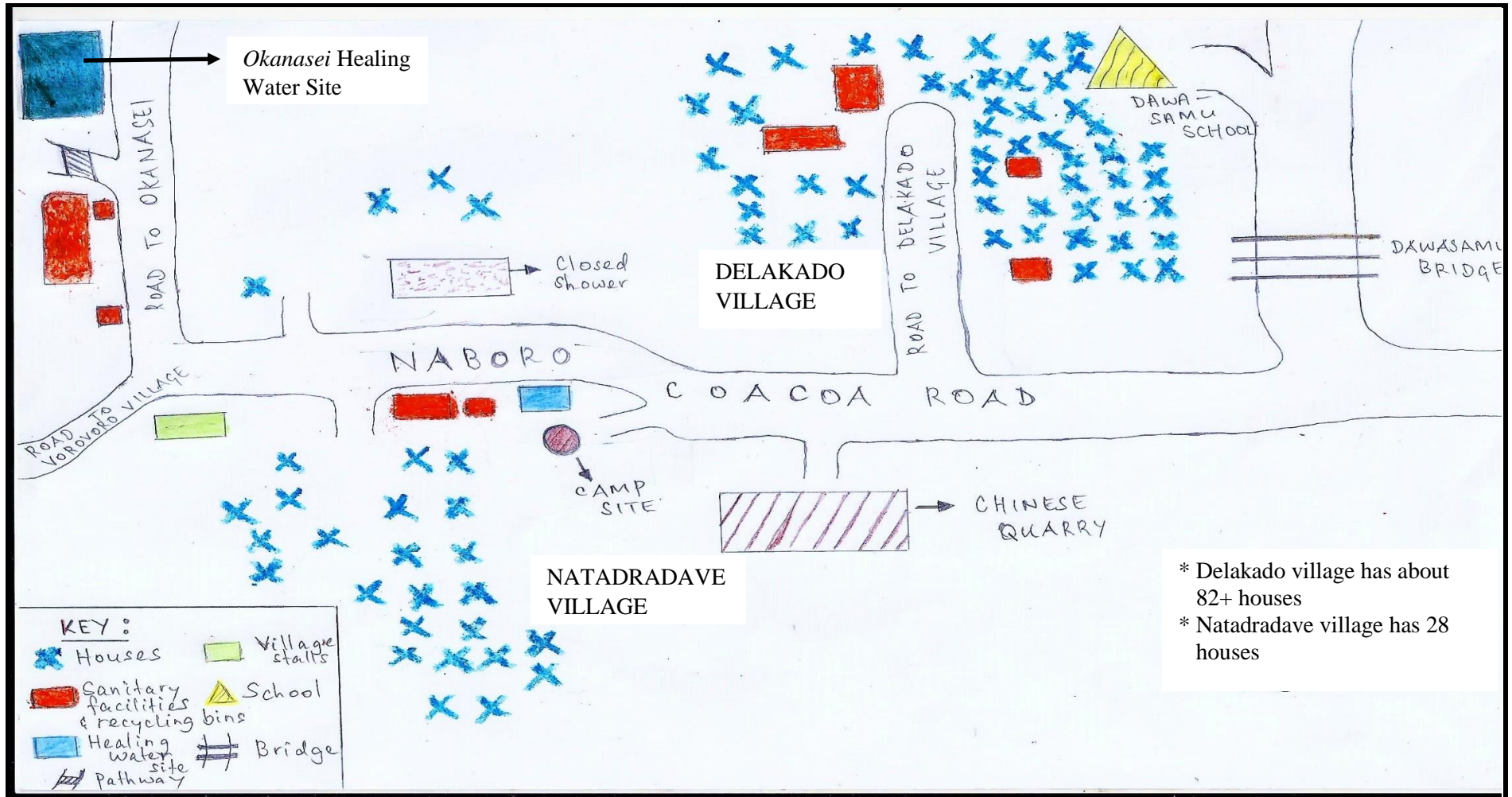
In Delakado village there is piped water to village houses. There are temporary stalls where villagers sell their produce along the Naboro Coacoa road²⁹. The main healing water source is from Nakoroni (ancient ancestral site) where the *Okanasei*³⁰ creek near Natadradave is located. This is where visitors go to bathe, receive body massages and collect water for personal consumption. It is approximately 5-7minutes drive from Natadradave village following a steep terrain. (See Figure 2). Visitors are requested to bring their vehicles when traveling to the site as walking on foot is prohibited³¹.

²⁹ The village stall located at the intersection of the roads leading to Vorovoro village and ‘Okanasei’ is run by villagers of Delakado. The Naboro Coacoa Road is the road leading to Natadradave which also services Delakado and Vorovoro villages.

³⁰ Although Okanasei is situated close to Natadradave village, the land on which it lies is owned by the Mataqali of ‘Naboro’ in Delakado village.

³¹ According to the land owners– this is for safety and security reasons as walking would take extra time and given the steep terrain, accidents and other incidents can be avoided.

Figure 2: Sketch Map of Naboro Cocoa Road, Delakado and Natadradave villages, and Okanasei



Not to scale

The people of Delakado and Natadradave Villages

The inhabitants of the two villages are indigenous Fijians, *iTaukei*, and belong to the *Vanua of Tailevu*. The *Turaga ni vanua* in Delakado village is Aisea Toto and *Turaga ni Koro* is Levi Vere. The village consists of three mataqalis' namely 'Navuniyasi' whose Head (*Liuliu*) is Waisea Liunavuna; 'Naboro' whose *Liuliu* is Wakuila Cika and; 'Wailevu' whose *Liuliu* is Netani Madu. The population in Delakado village is 340. On the other hand, the *Turaga ni vanua* in Natadradave village is Waisake Laulaba³² and *Turaga ni Koro* is Tomasi Naisoso. The village consists of one mataqali 'Navuniyasi' whose *Liuliu* resides in the neighbouring village of Delakado. The inhabitants of Natadradave village number about 120. In the villages there are slightly more women than men. Male members of the village have the final say in the selection of the head of each mataqali.

According to Niukula (1994) for the *iTaukei* people, three traditional pillars of society include – the Church (*lotu*), the way of the *iTaukei* community (*vanua*) and the Government (*matanitu*). The term *vanua* encompasses three dimensions in the *iTaukei* way of life. These include the land, people and the social, cultural knowledge or practices and physical environment (Seruvakula, 2000; Nainoca, 2011). As part of the village community, each household is obligated to the *vanua* and must uphold responsibilities and tasks when required. According to the elders in both the villages, there are many responsibilities and certain expectations required of them regarding the *vanua*, *lotu* and meeting the needs of their own families.

Key Informants

Twenty key informants responded to the questionnaire survey from the two villages (13 from Delakado and 7 from Natadradave respectively). Copies of the semi-structured questionnaires were also distributed to 13 households in Natadradave village. Upon initial analysis of the information gathered from respondents, it was found that only 4 women (2 from each village) had responded to the survey³³. As most of the heads of households were males, they responded to survey questions on behalf of their families. The researchers therefore returned at a later date to *talanoa* with women regarding their experiences since the discovery of the healing water (See Figure 4). A total of 9 women (4 from Delakado and 5 from Natadradave) who are members of the Women's Group or *Soqosoqo ni Marama* participated in the focus group discussions.

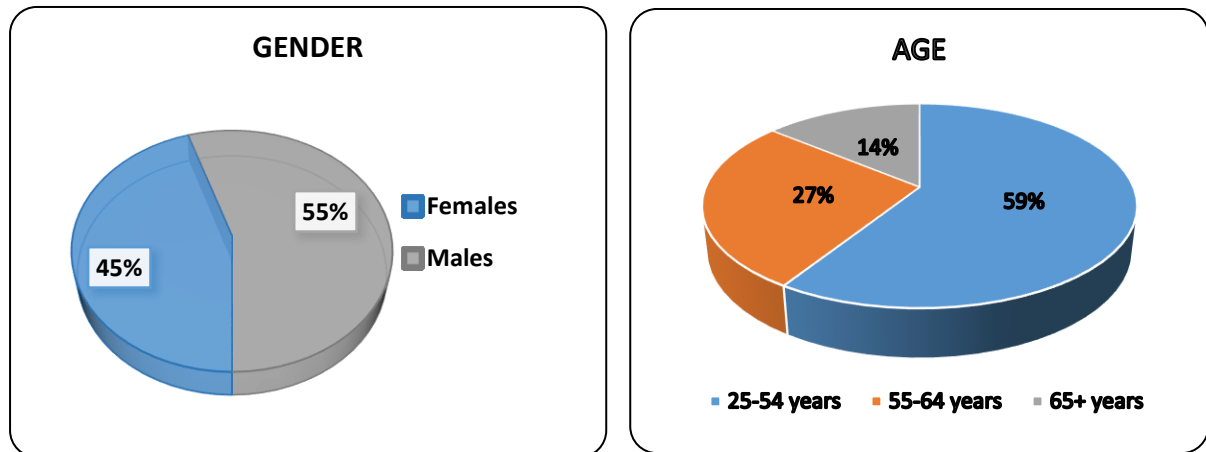
³² Waisake Laulaba is a *vasu* (*Mother's village*) of Delakado

³³ These women included the head of the Women's group or '*Soqosoqo ni Marama*' and village nurse (*Nasi ni Koro*).

Gender and Age

As shown in Figure 3 below, of the 29 key respondents, females constituted 45% (13 out of the 29 key informants) whilst males comprised 55% (16 out of the 29 participants).

Figure 3: Gender and Age Distribution



In terms of age distribution of the 29 respondents, 59% (17 out of the 29 participants) were in the 25-54 age group; 27% (8 out of 29) in the 55-64 age group; and 14% (4 out of the 29) in the 65 years and over age group. Overall, the majority of respondents were in the 25-54 age category.

Social and Economic Characteristics

The research gathered information about demographic and socio-economic characteristics, including head of household, house type, number of persons and their gender in each household, age range, level of education attained, source(s) of income and assets of the 42 respondents' households in the two villages (See Table 1)³⁴. According to the *Turaga ni Koro* Mr. Naisoso, there are approximately 28 households in Natadradave village whereas Delakado village, according to Mr Evereti Moceciri comprises 82 households³⁵.

³⁴ It is noteworthy that **Table 1** only takes into account the 42 respondents households information and not the entire population in the two villages. Hence, this study outlines a sample and brief synopsis of the social and economic attributes in the villages.

³⁵ Mr. Moceciri is the Chairman of the *Mataqali Naboro* of Delakado village (which owns the land where *Okanasei* is located)

Figure 4: Pictures taken after talanoa sessions



Top: *Turaga ni vanua* of Natadradave village, Waisake Laulaba and his wife, Litiana
Bottom left: Women of Natadradave village **Right:** Women of Delakado village

Table 1: Summary of Socio-economic Characteristics of Households

Village	Household Head (M/F)	Type of house	No. of persons in household	Age range and no. in each household	Education	Source of income/assets
1. Natadradave	23 (Males) 2 (Females)	Wooden (5) Corrugated iron (15) Concrete (3) Lean-to shed (2)	Ranges from 3-9 persons in each house	0-15yrs: 43 16-34yrs: 35 35-54yrs: 22 55-69yrs: 5 >70yrs: 2	Primary: 30 Secondary: 26 Tertiary: 13 Vocational: 5 Others (Working)³⁶: 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All 25 respondents indicated that their main source of income is farming (<i>teitei</i>) and selling their produce (<i>basa</i>) at the local markets - Livestock (cows, horses) - Remittances (from family residing in local towns/cities and overseas) - 10 respondents had bank accounts and savings - Small business e.g. sale of yaqona, tobacco with the help of the small business micro-enterprise scheme - Social Welfare recipients (at least 2 households were part of this scheme) - Employed family members - Land ownership and leasing
2. Delakado	17 (Males)	Corrugated iron (14) Wooden (3)	Ranges from 2-8 persons in each house	0-15yrs: 13 16-34yrs: 11 35-54yrs: 14 55-69yrs: 4 >70yrs: 2	Primary: 15 Secondary: 22 Tertiary: 10 Vocational: 3 Others (Working): 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All 17 respondents indicated that their main source of income is farming (<i>teitei</i>) - Livestock (cows, horses) - Remittances (from family members working in towns or cities, and overseas) - A few respondents (8) had bank accounts and savings - Small business micro-enterprise scheme - Social Welfare and Poverty Benefit Scheme recipients (3 households) - Land ownership, land lease
TOTAL: 42 respondents³⁷	40 (Males) 2 (Females)	Wooden (8) Corrugated iron (29) Concrete (3) Lean-to sheds (2)	Ranges from 2-9 persons in each house	0-15yrs: 56 16-34yrs: 46 35-54yrs: 36 55-69yrs: 9 >70yrs: 4	Primary: 45 Secondary: 48 Tertiary: 23 Vocational: 8 Others (Working): 8	- All 42 respondents indicated that <i>teitei</i> and <i>basa</i> is main source of income

³⁶ Respondents indicated working family members are nurses, teachers a security officers with nearby Chinese-owned quarry.

³⁷ 29 key informants and 13 household respondents in Natadradave village

Of the 42 respondents in both the villages, 2 females³⁸ were heads of their households compared to 40 males. Housing structures included 8 wood, 29 corrugated iron, 3 concrete and 2 lean-to sheds³⁹. These houses generally had one to three bedrooms with kitchens and toilet/bathrooms located separately. Some houses used parts of their living rooms as bedrooms (this may be separated by a partition of cloth/materials)⁴⁰. The number of people in each household ranged from 2 to 9 persons.

The villages mostly comprise a young population as shown in Table 1 with 0-15 year old infants and children and 16-34 year old teenagers and younger adults making up most of the household numbers. In terms of religion, 41 of the respondents said that they were members of the Methodist church⁴¹ while only 1 respondent in Delakado village belonged to the Pentecostal church. Most children and youths are still in primary (45), secondary (48) and tertiary level (23) educational institutions; and a further 8 persons in vocational institutes who were employed. Most of the children attend the Dawasamu Primary and Secondary Schools,⁴² and travel by the ‘carrier’, the 3 ton truck (also known as the ‘school bus’) as their main mode of transport to the schools⁴³. The schools are located approximately 6 kilometres from Delakado village.

In terms of livelihoods the respondents stated that they planted root crops, vegetables and other food crops (*teitei*) for their own consumption. Surplus crop is sold at the Korovou or Suva market. However, as noted earlier with the number of visitors flocking to the healing water sites, villagers have been able to sell their produce from nearby stalls. Other sources of income and assets include remittances⁴⁴, livestock, land including leaseholds, and saving bank accounts. Two respondents indicated that they were employed as security guards at the nearby Chinese-owned quarry. A few respondents said that their children were working in towns and cities such as Suva, Lautoka, Nadi and Nausori. At least 3 respondents in each village explained

³⁸ Female heads in these households were widowed and were the primary bread earners.

³⁹ Lean-to sheds are temporary houses supported at one side by trees or posts and having an inclined roof.

⁴⁰ In Natadradave, only 3 houses consisted of one bedroom while the remaining houses used parts of their living rooms as bedrooms.

⁴¹ There is a *Talatala* (priest) who is based in Namena village, Tailevu under the circuit (*Tabacakakaka*) of Dawasamu. A *Tuirara* (*steward*) is present in each one of the villages.

⁴² There are 8 teachers at the school.

⁴³ Should they miss the ‘carrier’, they either walk or catch the next available bus.

⁴⁴ *Turaga ni Vanua*, Waisake Laulaba of Natadradave village and his wife have a daughter who works as a nurse in the Cook Islands and has been of great assistance to her parents.

that they are part of the Poverty Benefit⁴⁵ and Social Welfare Scheme⁴⁶, and receive \$50 allowance and \$30 food voucher per month. Assistance is also given for bus and taxi fares with 50% concession for the elderly. A few other respondents indicated that they are part of the small business scheme which includes the sale of handicrafts, mats, food stuff⁴⁷.

It is noteworthy that according to the *Turaga ni Koro Report* (2015) for iTaukei Affairs Board, other sources of income for the villagers included running of canteen businesses, sale of grog (*yaqona*) and tobacco (*tavako*), brush cutting (*koti ni co*), providing transport by taxi/carriers (*motoka ni veilakoyaki*), weaving of mats (*dautali ibe*), sewing of clothes (*dauculacula*), carpenters (*matai ni tara vale*) and mechanics/engineers (*dua sere idini*). Due to the drastic effects of TC Winston, most of the above sources of income were diminished.

Tropical Cyclone Winston and the Dawasamu Healing Water

On 20 February, 2016 just before news of the ‘miracle working water’ in Dawasamu emerged, the Category 5 Severe TC Winston cut a path of destruction across Fiji. On the main island of Viti Levu, Ra and Tailevu provinces were directly battered. The cyclone’s maximum average wind speeds reached 233km per hour making it one of the most intense cyclones recorded in the Southern Hemisphere. The cyclone killed 44 people. It is also estimated that almost 540,400 people⁴⁸ including 263,000 women were affected. The cyclone damaged 495 schools, 88 health facilities, and destroyed houses, crops and livelihoods. The total damage and losses were estimated at FJD \$1.42 billion, equivalent to 31% of Fiji’s gross domestic product. The assessment also estimated that the province of Tailevu incurred a loss of FJD \$120.7 million⁴⁹.

With the support of other agencies, the government implemented a range of humanitarian and rehabilitation measures. These included food aid, provision of gardening and building tools, and seeds of various kinds, and rebuilding of damaged schools. Social protection programmes included the Help for Homes Initiatives which provided affected families with vouchers for housing rehabilitation and reconstruction (Government of Fiji, 2016), and the existing Poverty Benefit Scheme, Food Voucher Programme. However, there have been setbacks in

⁴⁵ Targeted at families who live below the poverty line and do not have sufficient source of income

⁴⁶ Targeted at persons over 68 years who have no sources of income

⁴⁷ South Pacific Business Development Microfinance Limited (Fiji) Ltd. was launched in November 2010 to make available the benefits of microfinance to the low-income and disadvantaged women in Fiji. Retrieved March 28, 2017 from: <http://www.spbdmicrofinance.com/spbd-network/fiji>

⁴⁸ Approximately 62% of Fiji’s population (approximately 865,611 at the end of 2014)

⁴⁹ \$53.9m in damages and \$66.8m in production losses

humanitarian assistance and rehabilitation efforts. More than a year on, hundreds of families still live in tents and make-shift shelters and thousands of children continue to attend classes in tents.

Immediately following the cyclone, the villagers built temporary shelters, and repaired houses with salvaged wood, tarpaulin and housing materials. At the time of the field research, along the road to Dawasamu, the damage and destruction by TC Winston remained visible. Battered houses, iron roofs and housing materials lay gathered on the road side. Houses were still under construction with tents and make-shift shelters still being used. According to the village headman (*Turaga ni Koro*) in Natadradave, Tomasi Naisoso – all 28 houses in the village were either completely or partly destroyed. More than 20 houses have been re-built with the remaining 8 still under construction. Household members continue to live in make-shift sheds. In Delakado village, the *Turaga ni Koro*, Levi Vere indicated that of the total 82 houses only 6 were left standing but even these were substantially damaged. More than 30 houses had been restored with the remaining households still living in tents, make-shift houses and lean-tos. According to Mr. Vere the supply of building materials and equipment has been rather slow.

Women respondents in both the villages said that seeing the scores of visitors arriving straight after the devastation was quite an overwhelming experience. They arrived at all hours of the day and night. Some turned up at 3am and other's very late into the night. However, they responded to the *vulagi* (visitors) in accordance with indigenous values and norms. They warmly accepted the visitors into their damaged homes, and make-shift shelters. The respondents said that they must be compassionate towards visitors who had travelled from so far just to have a bath, and/ or drink of the water. They repeatedly said that '*era qara bula mai*' meaning they had come to the villages to seek healing.

The respondents reiterated the phrases '*veilomani* and *veikauwaitaki*' meaning compassion and showing generosity towards visitors. With the large influx of the visitors, most of the males in the villages could not do their daily chores including farming (*teitei*). Recovery work had to be put on hold to help visitors. The respondents indicated that it was no easy task to meet the needs of the visitors. The villagers felt that their commitment to serve visitors was worthwhile, knowing that the water could indeed heal and save the lives of those who had faith.

As nearly all their vegetable and root crops had been destroyed, they survived on other staple food items such as rice, flour and canned fish that were distributed as part of the humanitarian assistance of Government and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs). Humanitarian bodies

such as the Red Cross provided items such as clothing and emergency kits. Food ration supplies were only delivered to the villages during the first three months after the cyclone hit Fiji. However, visitors to the healing water site helped fill the gap with the provision of food items such as flour, rice, tea, milk, and canned food and items of clothing. Visitors who were accommodated in village homes adapted to the living conditions of their hosts, meaning they ate any food cooked for them, and slept in the spaces that were provided for them. As there were no available sanitary facilities at the time – holes were dug in the ground for pit latrines.

The respondents indicated that visitors were treated as any other family member. Some visitors stayed on for weeks and months with their village hosts. Women respondents clarified that any visitor who stepped into their house or shelter would be warmly accommodated. In Delakado village, the *Turaga ni Koro*, Levi Vere requested that each household cater for any visitor(s) that entered the village seeking assistance in the use of the healing water. According to the women respondents, when massive numbers of people first arrived, villagers would cater for more than 40 individuals and at least five to eight families per day (each family would consist of around five persons).

Another challenge and concern raised by the *Turaga ni Koro* in Natadradave village, Timoci Naisoso was the amount of rubbish littered by visitors. The garbage included left-over food, and food wrappings, empty plastic bottles and cans, plastic bags and, the long wait in the queue of cars and people, led visitors to relieve themselves in the bushes along the roadside. The gender dimension of the absence of toilet facilities and up to 6-8 hours wait in the queue for women would have been especially difficult. According to the women respondents in Natadradave the female visitors in particular went to households in the village requesting use their toilets.

The *Turaga ni Koro* stressed that apart from looking after visitors, villagers also shared the burden of cleaning up the rubbish⁵⁰. With no proper disposal bins and sanitary facilities in place at the time, Mr. Naisoso requested visitors to collect the rubbish and use village households' sanitary facilities if need be. Along with the littering problem was the stench of rotting food, urine and excreta that could have health and environmental risks.

The Ministry of Health and Medical Services tested samples of the healing water to check if it was safe for consumption. The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Women

⁵⁰ Rubbish include diapers and other odds and ends.

and Poverty Alleviation, Dr. Josefa Koroivueta stated that the test was carried out to verify the quality of the water for drinking purposes. It was determined that the water was safe, however, he said that its healing properties was beyond any scientific measurement (Pratap, 2016). In a separate statement, Dr. Anjeela Jokhan, Dean of the Faculty of Science, Technology and Environment of the University of the South Pacific said that anti-oxidants are an important component found in water, and as there was yet to be a study on the healing water, no explanation could be given on its capability. She indicated that anti-oxidants cannot make the deaf hear or the blind to see. She agreed that there were some things in the world that science could not explain (Qounadovu, 2016).

Although villages worked cohesively to cater for the many visitors at the site, an issue emerged regarding the land on which the healing water was located. The Natadradave village healing water site⁵¹ which belongs to the *Mataqali Naboro* in Delakado village was closed down by the land owners. According to Natadradave village *Turaga ni Vanua*, Waisake Laulaba in the early mornings, children previously used the shower on the site in preparation for school⁵². The disagreement arose in May 2016, amidst claims that media reports paid more attention to the healing water site in Natadradave village with no mention of the rightful owners of the land. The land owners and other village elders in both villages held discussions with representatives from the Ministry of *iTaukei* Affairs in order to resolve the issue. Due to the landowners' grievance there is currently only one open shower accessed by the people of Natadradave, with the other pipe system running straight to the Chinese quarry site. As a result of this restriction, visitors are now directed to *Okanasei*⁵³ which is presently the main healing water site.

News about the Miracle Water

According to a number of respondents, Chinese workers at the nearby quarry used the water for drinking and found that it had healing qualities. Other people were healed including a little boy who had suffered from hernia, a woman who was totally blind from the neighbouring village of Vorovoro had regained her vision, and other people who had skin diseases⁵⁴ were

⁵¹ This was the main healing site when news first broke of the water and where thousands of people flocked each day.

⁵² This shower was located on the right-hand side of the village and was most convenient as it was divided for female and male users and enclosed by corrugated iron and shower curtains.

⁵³ According to the *Turaga ni Vanua*, Waisake Laulaba the term *Okanasei* was the place name used by ancestors from generations ago.

⁵⁴ According to some of the respondents, there were a few cases of people being rushed to the healing water site by ambulance and being healed. Also, there were one or two incidents where visitors died at the Natadradave water site.

cured. A few of the respondents mentioned that, soon after *Na i Lalakai* (*iTaukei* newspaper) and Fiji Times published news of the water's healing powers, other media outlets also covered the story. The buzz about the healing water was at its peak in the months of March to May when most local and some overseas media outlets such as the Fiji Sun, Fiji One News, Fiji Broadcasting Corporation (FBC News), Radio New Zealand (Radio NZ), Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) News, and Papua New Guinea Today (PNG Today) drew attention to the miraculous healings that had taken place. Social media including Facebook also shared some of the miraculous healings as well as scepticism relating to these stories.

Over the first three months thousands of visitors from various ethnic, nationality and religious backgrounds came to the two villages in search of the healing water (See Figures 5 and 6). Informants said that Indo-Fijians were the first to arrive at the healing water site, then slowly *iTaukei* and other visitors from various backgrounds including people who travelled from overseas came to bath in the water. Visitors from Fiji included people from Lau, Naitasiri, Taveuni, Koro, Labasa and abroad from Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Brazil, Singapore and the United States of America. Some of the later had added visits to the healing water sites to their other activities whilst visiting the country.

Figure 5: Visitors at the Healing Water Site in Natadradave village



Source: Water Authority of Fiji (Radio NZ)⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Radio NZ. (October 6, 2016). *Fiji authorities improve access to miracle water site*. Retrieved March 17, 2017 from: <http://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/315023/fiji-authorities-improve-access-to-miracle-water-site>



Source: <http://www.fjitemps.com/images/artpics/373371.jpg>

Figure 6: Visitors at the Healing Water Site in *Okanasei*



Source: <http://kaulga.blogspot.com/2016/10/fiji-government-authorities-confirm.html>



Hosting visitors and village unity

Village life is generally communal. Depending on proximity to urban areas, villagers work together at gardening, house-building, church activities, school maintenance, community and other chores (Niukula, 1994). As the number of visitors to the site grew, the Dawasamu villagers worked cohesively to cater to their needs. In Delakado village the respondents indicated that the *Turaga ni Koro*, Levi Vere requested villagers to accommodate the visitors in their homes. In *iTaukei* terms, the respondents stated '*era sa ciqomi ka maroroi*' meaning the visitors were welcomed and cared for. As the healing water runs through the Delakado village domestic pipe system – most of these visitors had easy access to the water in the homes/shelters that billeted them. Natadradave visitors were also accommodated by the households. As in the Delakado village the visitors who chose to stay for longer periods of time were often those who had come from afar, and/or had ailments that they really wanted healed.

According to *Turaga ni Koro*, Timoci Naisoso – a few days after the massive influx of visitors, he requested household heads to assist visitors to form queues, and temporary sheds were built to cater for those waiting in the queue, especially for the elderly and those who needed support. Men from Delakado, Vorovoro and Driti were also requested to assist in catering to the thousands of people who came to the water sites daily. Male villagers worked in shifts to allow visitors access to the site at any time of the day. For example, some would work from 4am till

10am while others would work from 10am to 4pm⁵⁶. There was no formal roster but an understanding among them. These men communicated with one another and delegated tasks (whoever could not make it during their time slot, another filled in for him) in a flexible way. The respondents would reiterate '*eda sa veilomani ka wasea na cakacaka*' meaning they would share the responsibilities and take care of each other.

More than a year since the discovery of the healing properties of the Dawasamu water, visitors are directed to the water site in *Okanasei* close to Natadradave village (See Figure 7). According to the attendant at the site⁵⁷, about 200 vehicles travel to *Okanasei* per day. The land owners of the *Okanasei* site is the *mataqali* 'Naboro' of Delakado village – male members of this *mataqali* and some Delakado villagers attend to visitors at the site. Here, 4-5 men work in shifts looking after the visitors. They oversee the parking of vehicles on either side of the road; direct visitors to form queues so as to allow all of them quick and easy access to bath, and/ or drink the water, provide body massage to those who request it; and assist visitors by filling their containers, bottles and drums with the water⁵⁸. The village attendants also keep a record about the visitors who travel to the site daily such as residence, number of people in a group, and a vehicle registration number. The study found that at the time of the field research that around 150 vehicles carrying on average 300 people travel to the healing water site per day. The villagers continue to allocate time between serving visitors and completing their own daily chores. The pressure of the 'hordes' of visitors experienced earlier has subsided considerably.

⁵⁶ This was dependent on the availability of male villagers and which time allocation or duration suited those best.

⁵⁷ Male villagers of Delakado village – mainly from the *Mataqali Naboro*

⁵⁸ Body massages are also performed in Delakado village whether in the household shower or via a hose pipe.

Figure 7: Healing Water Site at *Okanasei*



Visitor Respondents

One hundred and twenty (120) questionnaires were administered to visitors at *Okanasei* healing water site. One hundred and five (105) questionnaires were completed. The questions were divided into eight categories in terms of age, ethnicity, religion, residence, number of visits to the site, source of information regarding the site and reasons for visit.

Gender, Age, Religion and Ethnic Distribution of Visitors

Figures 8-11 shows categories of visitor respondents in terms of their gender, age, religion and ethnic background.

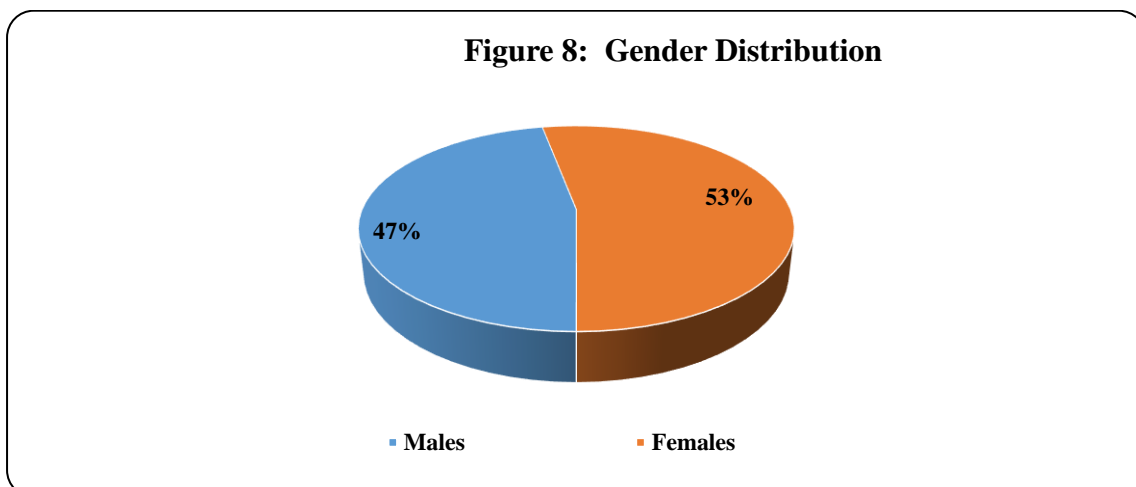
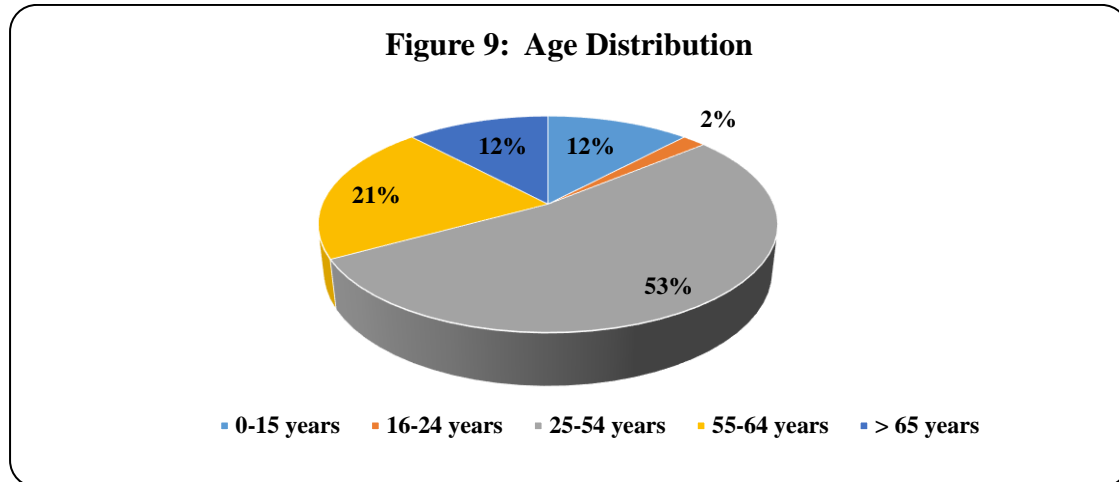
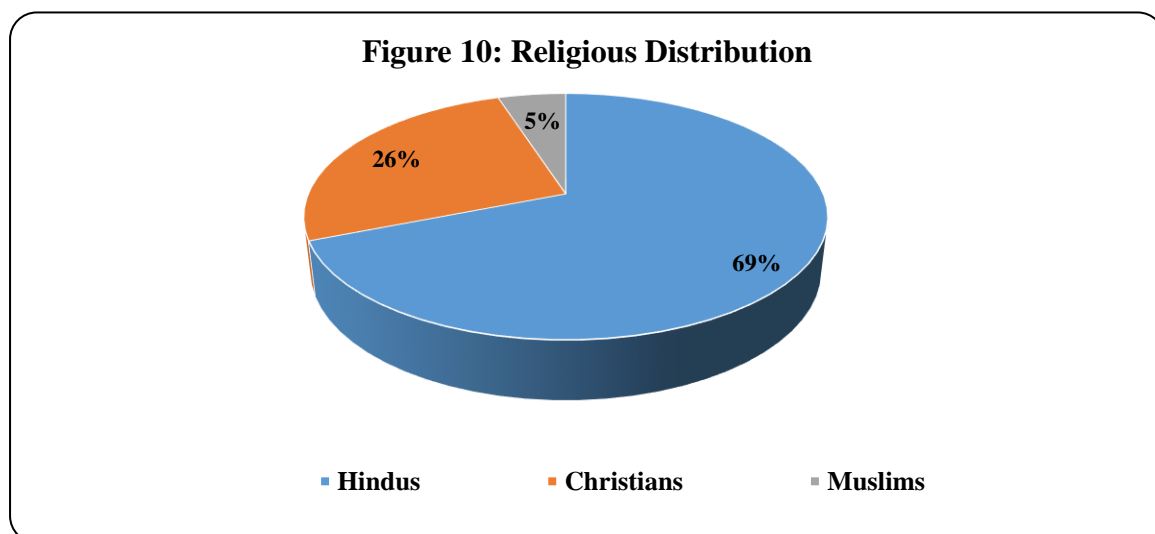


Figure 8 shows that of the 105 respondents who participated, females constituted 53% (56 out of 105 respondents) whilst males comprised 47% (49 out of 105 respondents). Women were marginally more likely to visit the water site and believe in its healing power.



As shown in *Figure 9*, the age distribution of the respondents were as follows: 12% (13 out of 105) were in the 0-15 age group; 2% (2 out of 105) in the 16-24 age group; 53% (55 out of 105) in the 25-54 age group; 21% (22 out of 105) in the 55-64 age group and; 12% (13 out of 105) in the 65 years and over age bracket. Overall, the majority of respondents were in the 25-54 age group, and those over the age of 25 constituted 86%. Those below the age of 24, made the remaining 14%. It was observed that there were a number of three generation families – grandparent(s), parents and children. Older children and youth, assisted their parents and/or grandparents to walk down the somewhat steep steps or ramp to the stream, and back afterwards. They also carried the filled water containers.



With regards to religious affiliation (see *Figure 10*), 69% (72 out of 105) of the respondents were Hindus; 26% (27 out of 105) were Christians⁵⁹; and 5% (6 out of 105) were Muslims. Overall, most of the respondents were associated with the Hindu faith.

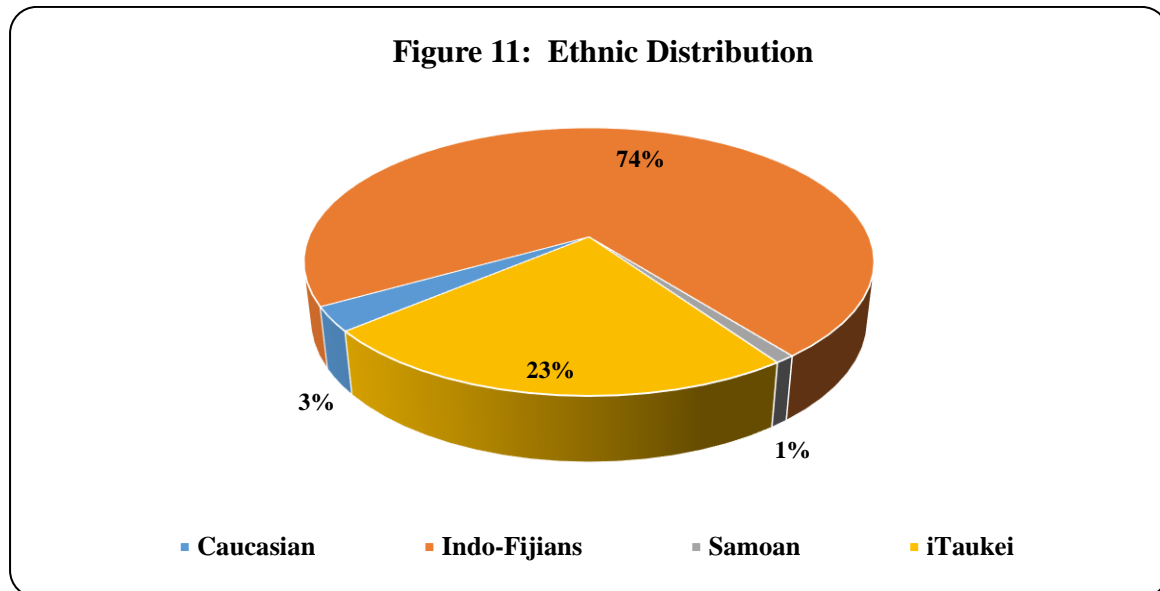


Figure 11 indicates that 74% (78 out of 105) were Indo-Fijians; 23% (24 out of 105) were *iTaukei* people; 3% (3 out of 105) Caucasians (White) and 1% (1 out of 105) Samoan. Indo-Fijians who are mainly Hindus comprised the clear majority among the visitors. Their presence in large numbers reflects their faith in multiple sources of spirituality including the healing powers of the water in Dawasamu, and also their capacity to afford the transportation costs to the healing water site.

⁵⁹ 18% were Methodists (19/105); 3% were Orthodox Christians (3/105); 3% were CMF (3/105); 1% was Seventh - day Adventist (1/105) and 1% was Assemblies of God (1/105).

Figure 12: Place of Residence

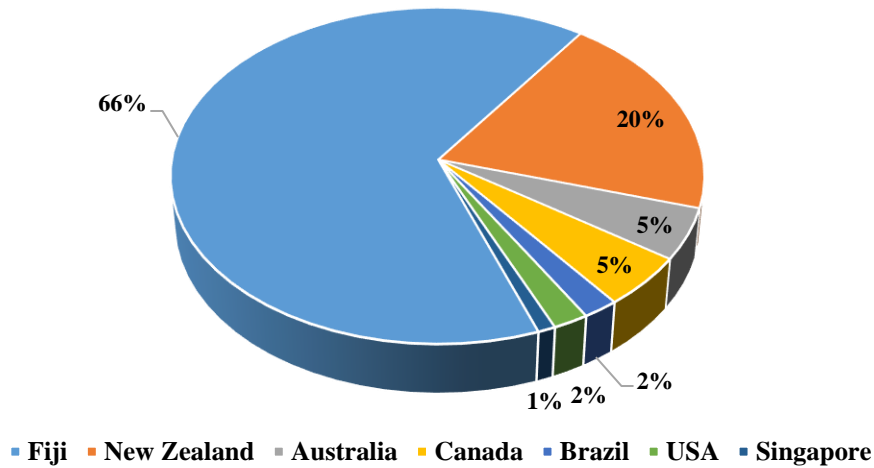
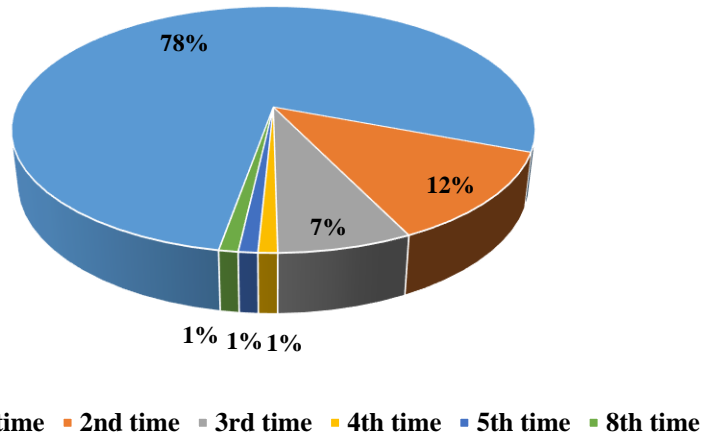


Figure 12 shows that the visitor respondents travelled to the Dawasamu water site from Fiji and six other countries. Out of the 105 respondents, 66% came from across Fiji (69 out of 105)⁶⁰; 20% from New Zealand (21 out of 105); 5% from Australia (5 out of 105); 5% from Canada (5 out of 105); 2% were from Brazil (2 out of 105); 2% from the United States of America (2 out of 105); and 1% from Singapore (1 out of 105). The majority of visitors travelled from across Fiji compared to other groups. All the respondents travelled to the healing water site by rental and private vehicles. It was not unusual that overseas visitors, especially Indo-Fijian residents abroad would be accompanied by their Fiji relatives, sometimes in the vehicles that belonged to the latter or in rental cars hired by the former. These visitors generally came to attend weddings or funerals, and made it a point to bath, and/or drink the water. *Talanoa* with general practitioners in Auckland confirmed that often their patients would be excited about coming to Fiji because of some family event but also to experience the healing water of Dawasamu.

⁶⁰ 2% from Labasa (2/105); 3% from Ba (3/105); 10% from Nadi (10/105); 2% from Tailevu (2/105); 32% from Suva including Wailoku, Nadera and Nasinu (32/105); 5% from Lautoka (5/105); 1% from Rewa (1/105); 7% from Rakiraki (7/105); 3% from Nausori (3/105); 3% from Sigatoka (3/105); and 1% from Lau (1/105).

Figure 13: Number of Visits to Water Site



According to *Figure 13*, respondents who visited the site for the first time comprised 78% (82 out of 105); while those who visited the water site for the second time comprised 12% (13 out of 105); third time comprised of 7% (7 out of 105); fourth, fifth and eighth time visitors all comprised 1% (1 out of 105) each.

It can also be seen from the field study that most of the first time visitors came to the site out of curiosity. It was found that those who have visited the water site more than once claim that they have experienced its healing powers. For example; one of the respondents who had suffered from back pains and skin problems had visited the site for the eighth time, and continues to bring over his family and friends. He believes that the water has had a positive effect on him, and that if people had faith then they too would be cured of their illnesses. Another visitor who had brought his family over for the third time, indicated that his granddaughter had suffered from a bad case of skin contagion on her arms for over three years has been healed.

For visitors who chose to stay for longer periods, the Delakado and Natadradave villagers accommodated some of them (a Samoan couple and *iTaukei* visitors) while others (some Indo-Fijian visitors) opted to stay in nearby hotels namely Tailevu hotel and Takalana Bay Resort⁶¹. According to the visitors, the healing water is likely to have more effect if they were to bathe in the water at least three times as advised by the villagers. Visitors travelling from overseas

⁶¹ Tailevu Hotel is located overlooking the dairy district of Korovou while *Takalana Bay Beach Resort* is 35 km North East of Korovou Town.

(who were predominantly Indo-Fijians and first-time visitors), indicated that this also prompted them to visit the site as often as they could while they were in the country.

The reasons for seeking the healing water included seeking cure for body aches and pains, back problem, stroke related debilities, pancreas, heart, stomach and kidney problems; paralysis; skin ailments; ligament injuries; speech and visual impairments⁶²; dementia, diabetes and cancer. As noted above the visitors were advised to return at least three times to bath, drink and receive body massage by the village attendants at *Okanasei*⁶². There were about five visitors who were staying in the village homes at the time of the field work. Their ailments were kidney, pancreas, stroke-related problems and a person who was visually impaired. The visitors stayed in the villages for almost a week and expressed deep gratitude and appreciation to their hosts for their hospitality. Some common phrases reiterated by the visitors included *vakavinavinaka*, *dhanvaat*, *sukriya* (thankfulness), *loloma* (kindness and generosity) and *veiciqomi* (act of making one feel welcomed or accepted). More generally, the visitors commended the villagers for opening their homes/shelters, and allowing free access to the healing water despite the problems they had faced as a result of TC Winston.

A majority of the visitors mentioned that they heard about the healing water in Dawasamu through either family, friends, the media such as newspapers, television, radio, internet and social media platforms like, Facebook. Word by mouth became a powerful medium of communication about the healing water both in Fiji and abroad.

All the respondents mentioned that they have taken water from the site for personal consumption and to share with family and friends. Many of the visitors said they would return in the not too distant future. This was especially the case of Indo-Fijians who came from overseas.

Question about ‘no financial charge’ – *iTaukei values and Christian beliefs*

The central research question in this study is about the villagers not charging visitors for the use of the healing water for bathing, drinking and carting away in containers-large and small. The research shows that cultural values and norms of the *vanua* strongly influenced Delakado and Natadradeve villagers’ thinking and behaviour. Christian beliefs and values are integral to *vanua* norms and values. As pointed out by Seruvakula (2000), the *bula vakavanua* means ‘the

⁶² It is assumed that this will be more effective on the body especially for those who do not reside in Fiji.

way of the land, people and their physical environment' lived through two world views: the *vanua* and the Christian (*lotu*) (Nainoca, 2011). Underlying the *bulavakavanua* are the *vanua* values which include *veilomani* (loving one another) and *veikauwaitaki* (caring for one another) (Seruvakula, 2000; Ravuvu, 1983). Biblical teachings emphasize the values of loving one another, sharing and showing respect towards others. Visitors (*vulagi*) whether *iTaukei* or *non-iTaukei* are received and embraced as one of their own, accepted into households, families and communities, and have not been made to feel like foreigners (Niukula, 1994). Such is the case in this study where these values and norms have overridden the notion of financial gain.

The villagers see the 'healing water' as '*na i solisoli ni Kalou*' meaning a gift from God not to be sold or used for profit-making. They believe that if the water were to be sold, it would lose its powers and healing properties. One respondent very eloquently stated that '*e dina ni sega ni saumi na wai, na Kalou sa solia mai na veivakalougatataki tale e so, ka da na veivuke taka na qaravi vakavinaka ko ira na vulagi me vaka ni sa noda i tovo ni bula na taukei kei na tamata lotu*' – meaning, 'although money is not gained, God has provided other blessings and we will continue to serve visitors wholeheartedly as this is the way of the *iTaukei* people and followers of Christ'. The villagers choosing not to profit from the use of the healing water in the midst of the lucrative bottled water industry in Fiji is a testament to upholding these values and beliefs. What is valued most is '*veiwekani*' or kinship and the obligations that must be fulfilled in order to maintain these relationships.

The villagers elaborated on the idea of allowing free access to the water to visitors as an act of kindness (*loloma*), acceptance (*veiciqomi*) and humility (*yalo malua*). The *vanua* and the Methodist church are regarded as inseparable. Hence, when the healing water was discovered, villagers saw this in light of Jesus as 'the source of all life-giving *manua*'. As part of the Christian faith and *iTaukei* values, the respondents believe that it would be disrespectful and selfish behaviour if the water was used for financial gain, and not shared freely out of the sincerity and goodness of one's heart.

Benefits and Support

Although having to cater to the needs of the visitors has been difficult, the attention brought about positive changes in the villages. Prominent persons and even the Prime Minister of Fiji, visited the villages. As indicated earlier, the villagers no longer travel to Suva and Korovou

markets as they have been able to sell their produce on nearby road stalls. As noted earlier, visitors usually brought clothes and food supplies as gifts. Long term relations and bonds have been established between them and the villagers.

The Fiji Roads Authority (and Fulton Hogan Highways), Water Authority of Fiji and the Ministry of Infrastructure have upgraded facilities at the water site in *Okanasei* including walkways, shower, and piping facilities. Toilets and rest rooms for visitors have been built. The gravel road has been widened and improved which has made it more accessible for visitors and villagers alike⁶³. A related benefit of better road conditions, and the influx of visitors has been improved public transportation. Previously, the bus would only drop passengers at the Dawasamu Bridge which is approximately 2km from the junction at Delakado village. This meant that the villagers had to walk and carry their supplies to their homes. The Lodon Transport Limited is now servicing the villages along the Naboro Coacoa Road. The bus goes all the way to Natadradave village.

Solar lights have been installed and wheelchair bound persons are now able to be wheeled to *Okanasei. Turaga ni Vanua* of Natadradave village, Waisake Laulaba said that some visitors have provided waste and recycling bins and have constructed a temporary village hall (*vale ni soqo*) that was damaged by TC Winston. Youth groups from Suva have assisted with improved garbage disposal and have installed signboards requesting visitors to keep the villages clean and dispose rubbish in the bins provided (See Figure 14).

⁶³ Upgrade works were carried out in September to October, 2016. Retrieved from: <http://www.thejetnewspaper.com/2016/10/12/natadradave-village-to-receive-further-assistance>, <http://fijione.tv/road-works-at-natadradave-completed/>

Figure 14: Hygiene and Sanitation - recycling bags, shower facilities and sheds at the Healing Water Sites

*** Facilities at Delakado village**



*** Facilities at Natadradave village**



* *Okanasei* Healing Water Site



Bonds of longer term friendship and putative kinship relationships have been formed with many of the visitors. This is particularly the case with persons who were hosted in village households for longer periods of time and those who have been healed. Most visitors catch glimpses of *iTaukei* customs and traditions and learn to blend in and adapt to the village lifestyle – even learn a few *iTaukei* words and vice-versa. In Delakado village, informants said Indo-Fijian visitors were among the first to arrive – it was an overwhelming scene. The visitors were warmly accepted into the households and treated like family member. Kinship relationships were formed with some villagers and visitors addressing each other as *Momo*, *Nei*, *luvena*, *bhaia*, *bhaini*, *tacina*, *kai*, *aunty* and *uncle*. When visitors leave, the villagers simply say, ‘*eda vakavinavinaka ni sa tiko na sema ni veiwekani*’ meaning they are thankful that there is a bond of kinship relationship that has been formed.

Conclusion

This research sought to find out the underlying reasons of the Delakado and Natadradave villagers in Dawasamu, Tailevu not seeking direct monetary returns for access and use of the healing water flowing through Naboro *mataqali* land at a time of unprecedented crisis. TC Winston had caused extensive damage and destruction to crops and houses in the two villages. When they were in real need for humanitarian assistance themselves, they faced what appeared to be the logistic nightmare of serving multitudes of strangers seeking round the clock access to the miracle water. Many of these visitors littered and polluted areas along the road to the villages, and in the vicinity of the water sources including the *Okanasei* site. This created another set of burdens for the villagers.

The villagers have worked together tirelessly in order to cater to the visitors on a daily basis. Visitors have reciprocated by offering food, amenities such as waste bins, and even construction materials. Meeting the challenges of responding to visitors, the exchanges and relationships have contributed to social cohesion among villagers, and have promoted their empathy towards the visitors and vice versa. A sense of broader inter-ethnic cohesion also emerged.

However, a dispute did arise, as the Naboro *mataqali* owners of the land on which the healing water flows were offended by the media publicity of Natadradave as the place of the healing water. This resulted in the closure of a healing water facility in Natadradave. At present, there is only one accessible tap in the village that provides the healing water. Visitors are now directed to *Okanasei*.

Most people who have used the water feel that they have had positive outcomes, and many people still continue to bath and to take containers of water home. Visitors have requested improvement in changing rooms, and sanitary facilities at *Okanasei*.

The values that inform the 'no financial charge' approach to the use of the healing water by the customary owners are based on religious and *iTaukei* beliefs. All the key informants concurred that '*na i solisoli ni Kalou*' meant to be shared with humanity, and certainly not for monetary gain. The *iTaukei* cultural values of kindness, generosity and hospitality or '*veilomani, veiciqomi kei na veimaroroi*' also guided their thinking and actions. The respondents believe

that should the water be sold or used for monetary profit, it may lose its healing powers or '*manna*'.

The feeling among the villages is that their hospitality towards the visitors have brought them many benefits. These included the provision of improved sanitary facilities, waste bins, water piping systems, better road, food and clothes, housing materials, and most of all the gift of friendship with visitors from various ethnic and nationality backgrounds.

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