

How Fiji Is Using the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) Process to Scale Up Ecosystem-Based Adaptation (EbA)

Country Brief

1. Introduction

Global momentum has been growing for Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) approaches—which are a type of Nature-based Solution (NbS) for adaptation. For national governments seeking to broaden the uptake of EbA, the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) process can be an effective mechanism and driver for mainstreaming and scaling up EbA (Terton & Greenwalt, 2020).

Fiji was among the first developing countries to prepare a NAP and was the 12th developing country to formally communicate its NAP to the United Nations Framework Convention on

Climate Change (UNFCCC) on December 12, 2018. Fiji has since begun implementing the adaptation measures prioritized through its NAP process, notably EbA measures such as expanding the cultivation of vetiver grass (see Box 3). This can largely be attributed to Fiji's efforts to make EbA a strategic priority and using its national adaptation planning process to scale up EbA.

This briefing note will provide an overview of how the Fijian government approached this task and share lessons for other countries seeking to use the NAP process to scale up EbA.



Box 1. What are EbA and NbS?

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) defines **Ecosystem-Based Adaptation (EbA)** as “the use of biodiversity and ecosystem services as part of an overall adaptation strategy to help people to adapt to the adverse effects of climate change. It aims to maintain and increase the resilience and reduce the vulnerability of ecosystems and people in the face of the adverse effects of climate change” (CBD, 2009).

Nature-based Solution (NbS) is an umbrella concept for various ecosystem-related approaches. It covers actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits (Cohen-Shacham et al., 2016). EbA represents just one approach under the NbS umbrella. This means all EbA solutions are NbS, but not all NbS are EbA.

2. Overview Of Fiji's NAP Process

Fiji is an archipelagic small island developing state situated in the South Pacific. The total population is approximately 900,000, most of whom live on the two largest islands, Viti Levu and Vanua Levu. Approximately 90% of the population lives in coastal areas—more than half in urban areas, a figure that is steadily growing. Fiji is a middle-income country, with a per capita income of approximately USD 10,000, although large income disparities exist, particularly across rural and urban areas (Government of Fiji, 2018).

Fiji is highly vulnerable to climate change due to its geographical position, the location of much of its population and assets in coastal areas, and the importance of natural resources to its main economic sectors (including agriculture and tourism). Natural hazards and climate change pose major challenges to the achievement of its National Development Plan. Fiji is especially vulnerable to floods and tropical cyclones, which already have

significant impacts on the economy and society (Government of Fiji, 2018).

In response to international commitments and national needs to adapt in the face of climate change, beginning in 2017, Fiji undertook an 18-month process to develop its NAP.

An initial step in Fiji's NAP process was the development of a NAP Framework to provide an overarching vision and structure for the NAP process and articulate its added value (Fenton, 2017; Government of Fiji, 2017b; Hammill et al., 2019). The NAP Framework is a relatively short 18-page document that describes the mandate, objectives, principles, and overall approach of the NAP process, with proposals for how to align the NAP with the existing policy landscape in Fiji.¹ EbA was one of four “approaches underpinning the NAP process” that the NAP Framework emphasized, noting the opportunity to generate social, economic, and environmental co-benefits through EbA and opportunities for alignment with national sustainable development efforts (Government of Fiji, 2017b).

¹ The NAP Framework sought to align the NAP with Fiji's National Climate Change Policy, Green Growth Framework, and National Development Plan, as well as policies that were in review or development, namely, the National Climate Change Policy, Disaster Risk Reduction Policy, and an enhanced Nationally Determined Contribution.

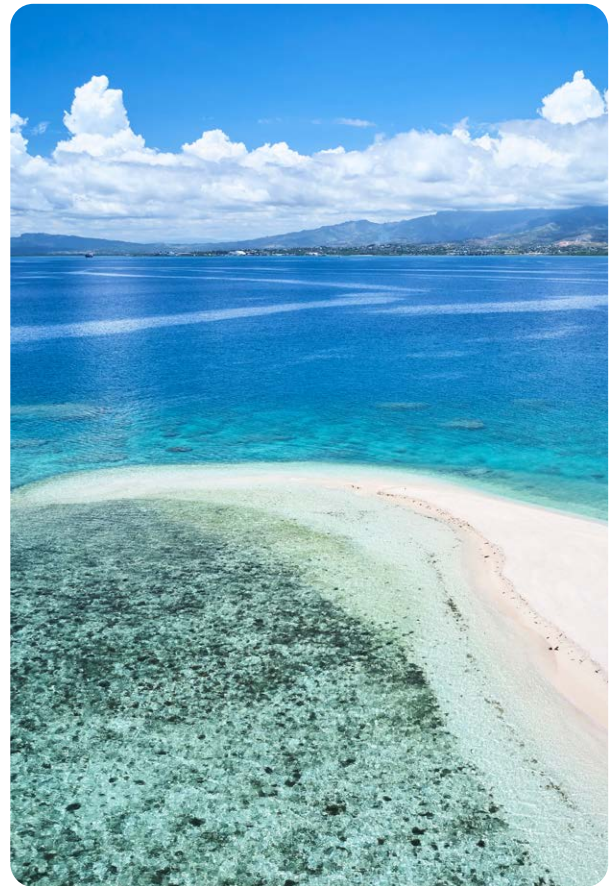
Box 2. Fiji's NAP at a Glance

- Led by the Ministry of Economy
- 160 priority adaptation measures
- 5-year time horizon (2018–2022)
- Five priority themes: climate information services and management; horizontal integration; vertical integration; climate change awareness and knowledge; resource mobilization
- Five priority sectors: food and nutrition security; health; human settlements; infrastructure; biodiversity and the natural environment

Following the publication of the NAP Framework, another important step in Fiji's process to develop the NAP was the preparation of a "NAP catalogue"—a cross-referencing system for national-level climate adaptation actions (Kumar, 2019). The NAP catalogue analyzed existing national policies, frameworks, and plans relevant to climate adaptation planning² in order to provide coherence and coordination to Fiji's adaptation action. Throughout 2018, the Fijian government held a participatory planning process, establishing an interministerial NAP Steering Committee for government coordination to narrow down adaptation actions for inclusion in the National Adaptation Plan. Fiji's NAP document identifies 160 climate adaptation measures in five priority sectors, as well as measures to address "systemic priorities" for the next 5 years and beyond (Government of Fiji, 2018). It recognizes that vulnerability is not only caused by the impacts of climate change but also results from structural barriers that

inhibit adaptation by government, households, communities, and businesses. These measures were identified through a multi-criterion analysis process and validated through a national consultation workshop attended by government representatives, international development partners, civil society, academia, and the private sector (Church & Fenton, 2018).

Fiji's NAP was endorsed by Cabinet in November 2018, was launched internationally at COP 24 in December 2018, and the country has begun implementing its NAP.



² These included the Green Growth Framework (2014), the National Development Plan (2018), the Climate Vulnerability Assessment (2017), the National Climate Change Policy (2012), and the National Adaptation Strategy for Land-Based Resources (2012).

3. EbA in Fiji's NAP Process

Fiji's NAP Framework identifies EbA as one of four “approaches underpinning the NAP process” and highlights the need for resilient ecosystems (Government of Fiji, 2017b). The NAP document itself emphasizes the importance of biodiversity and the natural environment and environment and that efforts to protect, maintain, and restore natural capital underpin society and economic growth will be critical.

Fiji is a world leader in terms of placing ecosystems and EbA at the centre of adaptation during the NAP planning process. To illustrate Fiji's experience to date, the following section identifies the practical actions taken by Fiji along the guiding principles outlined in the [NAP Global Network guidance note on maximizing EbA through NAP processes](#) (Terton & Greenwalt, 2020).

Guiding Principle 1: Emphasize the role of ecosystems in vulnerability reduction for people, their livelihoods, and socioeconomic development

- The **Fijian NAP places people, livelihoods, and socioeconomic development at the centre of its rationale for using the EbA approach**, noting that EbA “serves the long-term capacity of the Government to fulfill the Bill of Rights within the 2013 Constitution of the Republic of Fiji.” EbA “can be especially beneficial for low-income and otherwise disadvantaged groups” to “guarantee the right of all citizens to adequate food and water, health;

and a clean, healthy, and protected environment” (Government of Fiji, 2018). This **provides an important mandate to prioritize EbA solutions** across sectors.

- The NAP emphasizes that healthy and functioning ecosystems are the foundation of society and economic growth.

Guiding Principle 2: Take an ecosystem-level approach to assessing vulnerability and risks using the best available science, as well as Indigenous and Traditional Knowledge.

- The **NAP describes in detail the anticipated impacts of climate change on ecosystems and the natural resources** they provide. A 2017 Climate Vulnerability Assessment (CVA) prepared by the Government of Fiji (with support from the World Bank and financed by the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery) was a key document informing the development of the NAP. This CVA identified “conserving ecosystems and the local environment to protect valuable development assets” as one of five areas of intervention and outlined the economic case for conserving biodiversity and the natural environment (Government of Fiji, 2017a).
- The NAP's criteria for the prioritization of **adaptation measures included criteria to “promote use of both traditional and scientific knowledge when applicable”** (Government of Fiji, 2018).

Guiding Principle 3: Adopt an integrated approach that considers ecosystems across all sectors in the NAP process.

- Fiji's **NAP positioned EbA as a guiding approach early in the process** through its inclusion in the NAP Framework, allowing it to inform planning and prioritization of adaptation measures as sectors were engaged. This includes incorporating the wealth of knowledge and expertise of diverse national stakeholders in EbA and into development planning and decision making at all levels.
- The NAP underscores the **adoption of a “socioecological system” for development planning** that supports the understanding of the interactions between human activities and their impacts on the whole ecosystem and vice versa (Government of Fiji, 2018).
- It further emphasizes the **need for prioritized actions to at least partially adopt EbA** rather than hard (grey) infrastructure options.



Guiding Principle 4: Embrace global policy alignment by considering synergies with other relevant international commitments that EbA solutions contribute to.

- The Fijian **NAP stresses the benefits of EbA approaches and their co-benefits** for people and livelihoods, but it also notes the strong potential for EbA to contribute to a strategic, well-coordinated approach to international sustainable development commitments. In addition to representing the implementation of commitments under the Paris Agreement, the NAP is also recognized as a **complementary vehicle that can support the implementation of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan** along with its associated targets. It states that EbA can “provide a link between the United Nations Framework Conventions for climate change, biological diversity, and desertification” (Government of Fiji, 2018).
- Fiji sought to create **intentional and strategic integration of its commitments under the UNFCCC, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction** throughout the NAP development. For example, Fiji emphasizes that the NAP operationalizes any adaptation-related component of the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) process, while a specific section of the NAP outlines how the NAP aligns with the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030).

Box 3. Implementing the NAP: EbA through vetiver grass

Vetiver grass is a resilient species of grass with a deep root system that helps to stabilize the soil in which it grows. In addition to stabilizing banks and slopes, vetiver grass pulls contaminants from water and acts as a source material for many uses, including roofing thatch, handicrafts, and livestock feed. It has been in use in Fiji since the 1950s (Truonga & Gawanderb, n.d.), but today Fijians are looking to put it to use as an EbA approach for stabilizing riverbeds and reducing erosion.

The Fijian Ministry of Waterways and Environment (MoWE), which was established in 2019, opened a vetiver grass nursery in July 2020 in Labasa, with financial support from the Republic of Korea. The opening of the vetiver grass nursery (the country's third such nursery) represents an important step forward on implementing the NAP's priority adaptation measure 15.D.4 "Implementation of riverbank protection activities which integrate ecosystem-based approaches with hard infrastructure, in particular the use of riparian buffers" (Government of Fiji, 2018).



Guiding Principle 5: Make use of the participatory and inclusive nature of the NAP process to design the most appropriate and effective EbA solutions.

- Fiji's NAP has been developed through a multistakeholder participatory process that is underpinned by the following values: a) participation and inclusivity of all stakeholders and interests and b) **promotion of "ecosystem-based" and "gender and human-rights-based" approaches to adaptation** (Government of Fiji, 2018).
- The NAP also references the importance of addressing trade-offs between social, economic, and environmental outcomes, **emphasizing the importance of participatory processes** in managing them.
- Placing these values at the centre of the NAP process will increase the likelihood that EbA investments will yield equitable benefits for people of all genders and social groups, including those who are particularly vulnerable.

Guiding Principle 6: Use the NAP process to engage subnational and local-level governments in the design and implementation of regional and local EbA solutions.

- Fiji's NAP recognizes and acknowledges the importance of subnational government engagement and linkages because of the localized nature of adaptation.
- Furthermore, Fiji's **NAP underscores vertical integration as an important opportunity to integrate EbA to adaptation**. It will help deliver ecosystem services equitably and enhance participation in—and the inclusivity of—the decision-making and development planning processes by **linking community-based adaptation to national planning**.

Guiding Principle 7: Adopt a long-term approach and ensure sufficient resources for the implementation of EbA solutions.

- The NAP document emphasizes the need to **support the long-term capacity** of the government to ensure effective implementation of adaptation, including EbA. A specific focus is being put on improving capacity to generate, manage, disseminate, and use climate change information to build and contribute to long-term institutional learning and development.
- In addition, the NAP references the important principle of Fiji's National Climate Change Plan (NCCP) that **"Initiatives and programmes should deliver long-term, positive, ecological, economic and social impacts"** (NCCP, 2012).

- Fiji's NAP recognizes that financing poses a significant potential barrier to the implementation of the NAP, as well as the need for a **comprehensive financing strategy for available sources of finance** (public, private, and international) for adaptation. In working toward this financing strategy, the Fijian government has prepared a costing methodology (Government of Fiji 2020a), including EbA measures.
- The Fijian government recognizes the vital role of the private sector in adaptation and has attempted to incorporate the role and views of the private sector as much as possible. This includes leveraging private sector support by **improving awareness of EbA and the potential of nature-based or hybrid solutions among private sector entities** that are reliant on Fiji's ecosystems, in particular the tourism sector, the sugar industry, forestry, and companies like Fiji Water.

Guiding Principle 8: Ensure accountability and performance by building an evidence base for EbA solutions as part of an overall NAP monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system.

- The NAP document acknowledges that M&E efforts need to be improved and identifies actions to "install robust multi-criteria monitoring and evaluation systems to determine the success of national, sectoral and local adaptation initiatives" (Government of Fiji, 2018).
- It specifically references the need to **establish and enhance the M&E of natural resources and ecosystems**, particularly for national water resources.

- Fiji is currently establishing its NAP M&E system and recognizes EbA among the criteria used to prioritize actions in the NAP, as well as the potential links for reporting on both the NAP and SDGs 13, 14, and 15, the latter two of which are ecosystem-focused.³

4. Lessons Learned

Fiji's approach to EbA in the NAP process provides important opportunities and lessons learned for other practitioners and NAP teams, including:

- **Fiji's NAP establishes an important mandate for EbA to be treated as a cross-sectoral theme by clearly stating that the country's economy—along with the livelihoods and well-being of its people—is embedded in and relies on healthy ecosystems.** It acknowledges the risks ecosystems and natural resources face due to climate change and increasing demand on ecosystems and identifies EbA as a guiding principle that underpins the NAP.
- **Fiji's NAP process embraces the opportunity to advance the protection of biodiversity with climate adaptation goals.** The NAP document draws clear linkages between the country's adaptation plan and biodiversity strategy and the role EbA plays in meeting multiple objectives. This provides an important opportunity to strengthen synergies and linkages between the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plan and NAP in the future and also facilitate the integration of



biodiversity policies into climate change adaptation plans (and vice versa).

- **Fiji's NAP recognizes that EbA solutions have the potential to bring about tangible outcomes across many sectors, including productive sectors that are important for economic growth.** It is doing so by positioning EbA as a guiding approach to inform planning and prioritization of adaptation measures as sectors are engaged, capturing sectors such as infrastructure, health, and tourism.
- **Although Fiji's NAP document provides limited information on a comprehensive M&E system, it clearly indicates the future development of a separate monitoring strategy.** Nonetheless, the existing NAP points to the need for a robust M&E system and the necessity of capturing important data regarding ecosystems and natural resources, with a strong focus on water supply, quality, and quantity.

³ SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts; SDG 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources; SDG 15: Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss.

- **Fiji's NAP makes direct linkages between vulnerable groups and the impact of further ecosystem degradation that would lead to the loss of goods and services vital to their livelihoods.** This is underpinned by the strategy's gender- and human rights-based approach to adaptation that demonstrates a strong commitment to inclusiveness. It also highlights the importance of a participatory approach for effective community-driven EbA implementation.
- **The Government of Fiji through its NAP process recognizes the role of the private sector in supporting EbA and its reliance on intact and healthy ecosystems.** Through the NAP process, the government started to consult directly with the private sector. It also built awareness of the risks of climate change, particularly for the tourism industry, to identify further opportunities for engagement.

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About the NAP Global Network

The NAP Global Network was created in 2014 to support developing countries in advancing their NAP processes, and help accelerate adaptation efforts around the world. To achieve this, the Network facilitates South-South peer learning and exchange, supports national-level action on NAP development and implementation, and develops analysis, communications, and knowledge products. Financial support for the Network has been provided by Austria, Canada, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States. The Secretariat is hosted by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD).

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