

## Trouble in paradise: the effects of development on a Fijian village

*Jennifer Gustavsson & Malin Wiskman*

**Cyclone Winston devastated Fiji in 2016. Unexpectedly, this resulted in a drastically increased income to Dravuwalu village. When Dravuwalu's yaqona fields survived the cyclone while most fields in Fiji were destroyed, the sales prices skyrocketed.**

Yaqona is a root with high cultural value in Fiji. It is sold all over Fiji and used both to make a relaxing beverage and as a gift in traditional ceremonies. After cyclone Winston hit Fiji, the village of Dravuwalu increased their profit almost tenfold from selling yaqona - without increasing their production. The master thesis "How is development affecting sustainable livelihoods and disaster risk: A case study of a coastal community in Fiji" investigates in what way this and other recent developments has affected the resilience in Dravuwalu. In other words, how development affects Dravuwalu's ability to resist and recover from disturbances, such as cyclones. This was investigated using the sustainable livelihoods framework. Simplified, the framework states that a sustainable and resilient society is a society where *all* the inhabitants have access to either financial, natural, physical, human or social capital - or preferably a combination of them all.

Let us start from the beginning. Small island developing states such as Fiji are more vulnerable to natural hazards and extreme weather events. These states are also put under exacerbated pressure from climate change. Many of these states share common characteristics that may restrain their development, such as limited land resources, limited funds and high dependency on tourism. At the same time, Fiji is more economically developed than many of its neighbours and the development has shifted societal structures in many Fijian societies. In what way these characteristics affect the society's development and vulnerability to natural disasters, is therefore relevant to investigate.

Dravuwalu is a small village on the island of Kadavu, approximately 7 h by ferry from Fiji's main island Viti Levu. The village is a natural beauty, surrounded by green vegetation and hills, turquoise water and has the friendliest of residents. However, the recent development the past decades has changed its resilience. The key changes discovered in the study is that the access to economic capital has increased while the social capital has decreased.

Although the access to several capitals increased with development - in other words increased the resilience - there were also trends showing a decreased resilience. Like many other societies around the world, the influx of money to Dravuwalu appears to have made people more individualistic. For example, if you don't have a boat you have to pay a boat owner in order to go with them on the boat. This act of requiring money in exchange for helping a fellow villager was unheard of in Dravuwalu only 10 years ago. Similar studies show that when money is introduced into a society, the inequalities increase. As the village has become more dependent on one single uncertain income and through this it has become more dependent on the world outside the village.

This study aids in the understanding of how development affects small states and its overall goal is to be one of many keys in helping societies develop into more resilient societies. This might not only be applicable for small developing societies but could be useful also in a bigger context. Trends that were seen in this study could also be relevant in Sweden. For example, urbanization, more complex societies and more dependence on governmental aid are trends found in almost all developed societies. In conclusion, the goal for societies all over the world should be to increase access the capitals that they lack but at the same time sustain access to other capitals. Also, it is important that the accessibility to capitals is shared among all groups and individuals, so that no one falls behind.