



## **TERMS OF REFERENCE: FIELD RESEARCHER FOR WOMEN'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IMPACT STUDY**

**Location:** Sabeto, Nadi and travelling around communities in Ba and Ra

**Duration:** 9 consulting days

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Rise Beyond the Reef (RBTR), founded to address rural remote Pacific communities' unique development needs. Our focus is improving women and children's lives through ecologically sustainable income-generating projects using traditional skills and materials, while addressing gender inequities, building women leaders, and empowering women and girls facing domestic violence. Our development model begins with qualitative studies, revealing such local concerns as poor roads, inadequate education/training, depopulation as young people leave for wage employment, flooding, landslides, and scarce opportunities. Our programs focus on community needs while addressing global climate change impacts and international sustainable development goals.

Using what we have learned from our household baseline surveys, we develop projects to improve local lives. We focus in particular on the lives of women and children, re-establishing traditional Fijian crafts and crops, and making connections to world markets to foster income and financial independence. These projects empower women, and help Fijian villagers and farmers adapt to the growing impact of climate change on their communities.

Our flagship project is the Traditional Contemporary Arts & Crafts Income-Generating Program. This program provides women with: (a) community liaisons and leadership development opportunities; (b) income development opportunities; (c) skill development and lifelong learning; (d) additional markets via private sector partnership creation; and (e) promotion and preservation of traditional arts and skills. Our efforts also focus on reintroducing traditional crops that simultaneously address both local and global needs, along with emergency preparedness training and facility development. Reintroducing traditional crops, and expanding local farmers' agricultural skills and crops, results in more diverse--and thus more resilient--income sources. Our most recent diversification efforts include introducing vanilla and salvaging storm debris for activated lump charcoal.

Women are empowered, through training and leadership development, to take more control of their lives, and to resist traditional social structure and kinship norms that result in high rates of domestic violence. When rural remote women have an income, that money goes back into the community via their own households.

### **Background and Justification of Research Study**

Global research has shown that personal and economic empowerment makes women and girls less vulnerable to violence. Strengthening women's leadership skills, and providing women and girls with education and sustainable income sources, help bolster women and girl, and give them voices in this historically patrilocal culture. With these tools, women and girls have more freedom to extricate themselves from the extreme poverty that would have otherwise kept them bound to abusive situations. Furthermore, disaster relief efforts often overlook gender-specific considerations, but when women are empowered and feel free to speak up, communities have greater representation in their own recovery

process. Evidence also shows that a substantially higher proportion of women's income returns directly to the community. Finally, economic development mitigates against the impacts of environmental degradation, bolstering the entire community toward an increasingly uncertain future, and benefiting men, women and children alike.

There is some localized research on the negative relationship or linkages between women's economic development programming in the Pacific and its increase on risks for inciting violence for women participants. One such body of research, undertaken between 2014-2016 in the "Do No Harm" study, with primary case studies in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. Economic development and empowerment discussions relating to paid and unpaid work, livelihoods and climate adaptation, and programs addressing gender-based violence are heavily reference throughout strategic plans and funding platforms in the Pacific and globally. Women's economic empowerment (WEE) and development programs are seen as a major priority in achieving global sustainable development targets. Unfortunately, historically there were limited bodies of data to study in the Pacific of successful economic development programs to scale to further explore, learn from, and develop effective programming to support the needs of marginalized women.

Rise Beyond the Reef's (RBTR) economic development program is the largest economic development program for rural remote women in Fiji. We have operated our program for more than three years and program participants have cumulatively earned more than \$300,000 FJD. More than 200 women of the 300 participants are now consistent earners. Our program provides a unique opportunity to further measure the impact of economic development on women's agency within their homes and communities, shifting roles within their homes and communities, and the relationship between WEE and domestic violence.

We feel that it is critical and responsible to embark on our own research process in Fiji. We have developed our program thus far, based on the perspective and feedback of women in our partner communities. We believe much of the discussions around economic development and WEE impacts, especially in the Pacific, lack localized findings and are too vague in their understanding and assessment of WEE activities to be effective in supporting the growth of successful WEE programs that can eventuate into successful platforms for addressing gender norms and gender-based violence in communities. This study puts the perspectives of the actual women named as marginalized and target communities at the forefront -- to hear their perspective on the meaning of such programming according to them and their context.

### **Aims, Objectives for the Study**

We are proposing a research process, to study the impact of women's economic development activities amongst women engaged in economic development programming in rural remote communities who partner with Rise Beyond the Reef. In addition we propose to study these dynamics in a sampling of communities that does not participate in women's economic development activities. The primary focus of the research would be to ascertain the positive and negative effects of women's economic activities with regards to such aspects in private and public spaces:

- (a) Gender roles in the homes
- (b) Extent of sharing of household responsibilities
- (c) Decision-making on one's own health & medical needs
- (d) Safety and protection
- (e) Participation in village committee/Bose va Koro/Bose ni Vanua/district/province etc.
- (f) Participation in religious bodies and ministries/school management,
- (g) Decision making in the mataqali or land owning unit, coastal management (Local Marine Managed Areas for example) and natural resources, access and control

It is proposed that the research is undertaken in four villages in the interior of Ba and seven villages in the coastal parts of Ra. RBTR will work in close consultation with the Field Researcher in undertaking this study in terms of the detailed scope, questionnaire, and support. The outcomes from the research would be used by RBTR to help inform the next stages of its WEE programming to specifically address gender norms and violence against women. The study's findings are also intended to share as a resource to other programs in Fiji and the Pacific.

## **Research Participants**

The research would include a total of eleven villages with approximately 150 women in the research pool. RBTR would work in partnership with an independent research team to develop the research design and RBTR would be responsible for publishing the findings in a format that is shareable and accessible to other organizations and agencies working in this realm.

The research team would also aim to empower local Pacific Women who have worked on a cross-section of issues in community development, economic development in public and private sector spheres, and violence against women.

## **Key Activities & Timeframe**

The Field Researcher will take the lead role in designing the impact study framework and questionnaire, implementing field research and summarizing key findings in dashboard summary report format.

### *Estimated Timeframe for Research Steps*

Ra Field Research	2 days
Ba Field Research	2 days
Design Study	2 days
Analysis of Findings & Report Writing	3 days

## **Deliverables**

- Impact study framework
- Questionnaire/s
- Data findings and analysis in a report format, with both quantitative and qualitative overviews.

## **Skills & Knowledge**

- o Expertise and knowledge in community-based research processes with field experience spanning over five years or greater in Fiji and the Pacific.
- o Ability to speak in iTaukei language
- o Prior knowledge or experience in conducting research in remote Fijian communities
- o Understanding of traditional gender norms and frameworks of traditional iTaukei communities
- o Understanding of human rights framework for gender equality

**All interested applicants should send their resume to [Janet@risebeyondthereef.org](mailto:Janet@risebeyondthereef.org) on or before December 17<sup>th</sup>. Successful candidates will be contacted before January 1<sup>st</sup>.**