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Australian Centre
for Pacific Islands
Research

Drivers of change for food security, diets and non-communicable disease risk factors amongst women in peripheral Fijian communities

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The Problem

A Non-Communicable Disease crisis (NCDs).

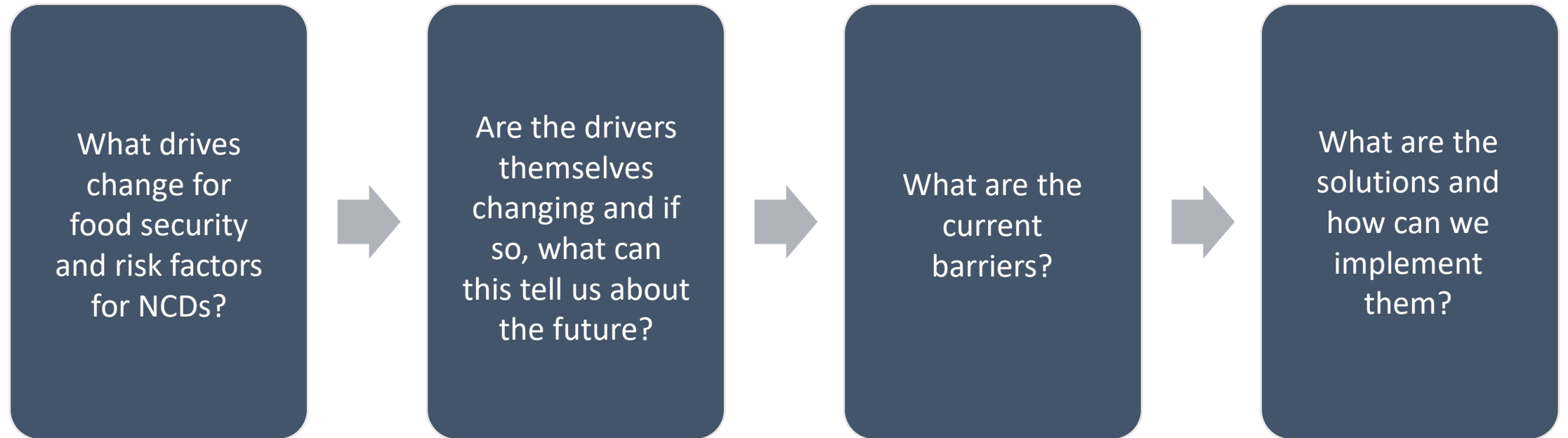
Increasing NCDs are linked to a nutrition transition. But what is driving it?

Despite healthcare-based initiatives, NCD rates continue to rise.

Food and nutritional security is threatened by climate change.

Pandemic exposed existing vulnerabilities in food and health systems

The Questions



The Approach?



- A reflexive thematic analysis
- Talanoa methodology
- Focus groups and semi-structured interviews
- 83 participants, 5 communities
- Bua Province of Vanua Levu Island, Fiji in 2024.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2012). *Thematic analysis* (Vol. APA handbook of research methods in psychology). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1037/13620-004>



Findings

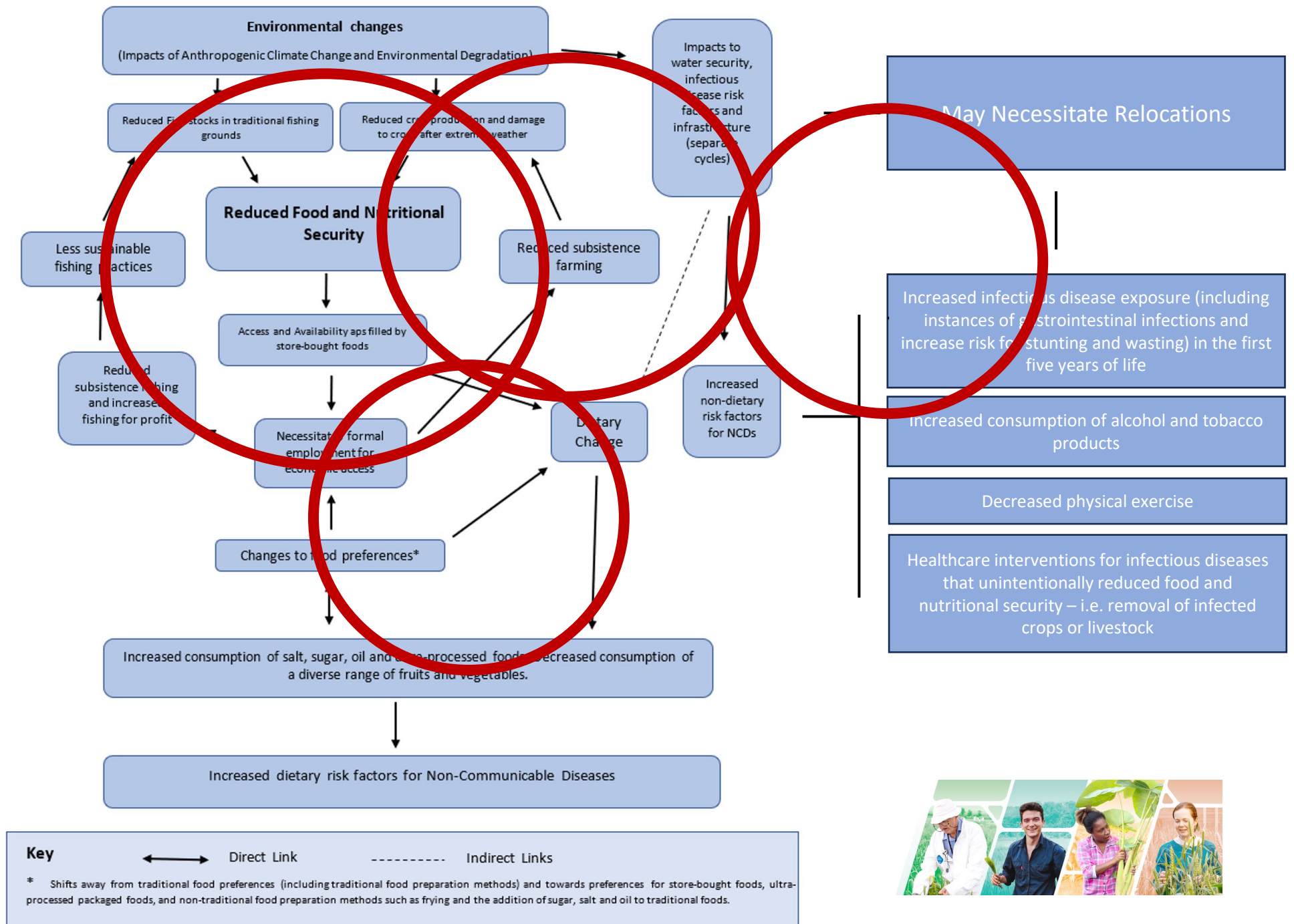
11 Drivers of Change for Food and Nutritional Security

4 Drivers of Dietary Change

6 Overarching Drivers of Change for Food Systems and Health

Drivers of Change Identified Within the Data	Number of coding references per pillar						Accumulative Across all Pillars
	Access	Availability	Stability	Utilisation	Agency	Sustainability	
Subsistence Livelihood Transition	40	37	0	0	0	0	77
Government Initiatives, NGO projects, church programs	25	32	28	0	0	0	85
Environmental Change	21	32	34	0	0	0	87
COVID-19 Pandemic	18	17	21	0	0	0	56
Economic Influences	17	0	0	0	0	0	17
Marine Reserves and Fishing Bans	11	9	0	0	0	0	19
Community Safety Networks and Community Run Initiatives	6	11	13	0	0	0	30
Infrastructure and Development	4	0	0	0	0	0	4
Access to Agricultural Supplies	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Seasonal Availability	0	16	0	0	0	0	16
Utilisation of Traditional Food Preservation and Preparation Methods	0	0	20	24	0	0	44
Generalised Coding References*	31	19	0	3	1	1	55
Total number of references per pillar	175	173	116	27	1	1	Total number of coding references = 493





When we don't understand or consider the connections between food systems and human health, maladaptation can occur right under our noses.



Connections Create Opportunities.

Barrier/ Health issue	Potential Opportunities and Interventions for Food Systems and Health
Climate Change and Extreme Weather	- Regenerative Agriculture and climate sensitive agricultural practices (including education for farmers and youth interested in agri-food systems) - Aquaculture - Community Based Adaptation such as village beautification initiatives - Solesolevaki and other traditional practices that improve food systems stability - Transformational Adaptation - Community Relocations - Better informed foreign aid and investment (via community consultation and research) - Increased mitigation efforts by OECD nations
Environmental Degradation	- Reinforcement of Tabu's – traditional fishing bans and marine reserves - Policy and regulation of logging - More research and caution in the development of freshwater aquaculture and other adaptive strategies for food systems. - Education and support for community leaders to increase the identification, reporting and prevention of environmental degradation. - Education and Awareness amongst youth, farmers and fishers on environmental degradation and alternative sustainable practices. - Waste management infrastructure - Bolstering local economies, food systems and education to provide alternative employment options for illegal fishers.
Economics	- Subsidies, grants, and other economic support mechanisms to breakdown economic barriers to entry for agri-food systems - Improved market access to improve economic prospects, strengthen localised food system's and reduce post-harvest loss.
Water Insecurity	- Investments into water security + broader WASH infrastructure (filters, tanks, urban water systems, wastewater management) - Community relocations - More research to better understand and manage relationships between water security, food systems and CD risk factors in peripheral communities - Waste management infrastructure - Education and awareness aimed at improving community understanding of CD transmission vectors.
Lack of Youth Participation in Agri-food Systems	- Climate sensitive interventions for Agri-food systems to improve food and nutritional security to make farming a viable career path for young people - Subsidies, grants, and other economic support mechanisms to breakdown economic barriers to entry - Improved market access to improve economic prospects, strengthen localised food system's and reduce post-harvest loss.
Dietary risk factors for NCDs	- Interventions for Agri-food systems to improve food and nutritional security - Interventions for agri-food systems (i.e. trade policies, taxes and subsidies) to decrease access and availability of unhealthy imported foods. - Expansion of the HPSP to influence dietary choices during school hours and increase education and awareness. - Increase healthcare access and education and awareness via community outreach programs and CHWs
Education and Awareness does not translate into action/change	- Overcome barriers to Food and Nutritional security, via agrifood systems interventions. - Investigate health literacy to determine if health literacy is sufficient - Increase healthcare access, outreach and health education workshops - Media campaigns to combat misinformation - Harness non-traditional education methods such as television series such as the Pacific Island Food Revolution. - Expansion of the HPSP program
Communicable Diseases	- Increase immunisation coverage via improved healthcare access - WASH education and awareness through community outreach and health promotion program such as the HPSP - Investments into water security infrastructure (filters, tanks, urban water systems, wastewater management) - Education and awareness of disease vectors amongst farmers
Lack of Healthcare Access	- Invest into additional health infrastructure in Bua including the provisions of extra staff accommodation - Increase community outreach programs - Invest in deepened education of CHWs - Training on gender-based violence and coercive control for healthcare workers - Expansion of HPSP to increase monitoring of NCD risk factors amongst children and adolescents.
Perinatal Tobacco use	- Regulation of Suki as a tobacco product - Improving antenatal healthcare access - Education and awareness amongst adolescents - Develop and implement culturally informed care frameworks and encourage delivery by female care providers.



In short:

Multidisciplinary collaboration to develop community grounded initiatives provide the most promising opportunities to positively impact food security, public health and peoples lived experiences.

