

# Rugby union driven migration as a means for sustainable livelihoods creation: A case study of *iTaukei*, indigenous Fijians

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## ABSTRACT

Due to their sporting potential, young Fijian rugby athletes have become a highly sought-after sport migrant group. For many Fijian families, rugby-generated remittances are a critical step towards income security and can contribute towards achieving social and economic development goals at the household and community level. Despite the prospect that migrant athletes should be able to dramatically improve their economic positioning and that of their family back home, the promise and opportunities do not seem to be fully realised, especially in the longer term. By drawing on survey findings of 70 Fijian athletes, as well as fieldwork undertaken in Fiji and New Zealand, where 33 in-depth interviews occurred, this paper asks: *What is the potential development impact of rugby-generated remittances for iTaukei, indigenous Fijian families and what are some of the challenges athletes and/or their families face ensuring any gains make a difference in the longer term?* Findings suggest that for many athletes and their families, rugby-generated remittances make a significant contribution, which enables them to meet consumption needs and wants and allows for capital accumulation (tangible and intangible). Thus the *potential* development impact is seen to be substantial. However, cultural expectations and often related high demands from family, poor financial literacy and limited business opportunities at home are some of the things impacting any sustained effect. The uneven playing field and politics of the rugby landscape were also raised as areas of concern when thinking about rugby as a sustainable livelihoods option for *iTaukei*.

## BACKGROUND

Rugby union in Fiji is central to the *vaka i taukei* (indigenous way of life).<sup>1,2</sup> The passion and conviction afforded to rugby in Fiji provides a space for hegemonic masculine expression and aspirational social and economic achievement. Therefore many Fijian men see rugby as a possible means of livelihood, encouraging them to strive towards the 'rugby dream.'<sup>1</sup> With many indigenous Fijians living below the poverty line<sup>ii</sup> and the fact that rugby in Fiji is not bound by class<sup>iii</sup> where even the poorest can participate, further incentive for viewing rugby as a livelihood option can be seen. Recent work undertaken by Kanemasu and Molnar illustrates the various socio-economic and emotional challenges Pacific Island athletes can face post-career.<sup>2</sup> Authors such as Besnier<sup>3</sup> have also considered their experiences from post-colonial and transnational perspectives and in terms of mobility debates. To date no research has been undertaken investigating the way rugby union is used as a livelihood strategy. This exploratory study aims to better understand rugby as a livelihood choice by asking broadly: What is the potential development impact of rugby-generated remittances for *iTaukei*, indigenous Fijians families? More specifically we ask:

Research Question 1: How do remittances contribute to growing capitals and what types of capitals are being grown?

Research Question 2: How do remittances contribute to creating choices and opportunities and what types of

choices and opportunities are being created - now and in the longer term?

Research Question 3: What are some of the challenges athletes and families face when using rugby as means of livelihoods creation, which influences any sustained impact?

### Conceptualising Livelihoods and Capitals

Livelihoods theory and practice emerged from the rural and agricultural sector and dates back to the work of Robert Chambers.<sup>9,10</sup> Founded on the premise that people living in poverty have abilities and assets that can be drawn upon to manage and improve their lives,<sup>9-11</sup> livelihoods thinking also advocates taking a participatory approach to understanding the lives of people experiencing poverty and disadvantage. Many development agencies working in the Global South have sought to adopt livelihood concepts so as to better understand the means by which poor people make a living, specifically the ‘combination of resources used and the activities undertaken in order to live’.<sup>9-11</sup>

Scoones observes ‘livelihoods’ to be a mobile and flexible term, in that livelihoods can be attached to a plethora of words to construct whole fields of enquiry and practice. These relate to locales (e.g., rural or urban livelihoods), occupations (e.g., farming, pastoral or fishing livelihoods), social difference (e.g., gendered, age-defined livelihoods), directions (e.g., livelihood pathways, trajectories), dynamic patterns (e.g., sustainable or resilient livelihoods) and many more.<sup>12</sup>

It is recognized that poorer communities and households face greater challenges, so building resiliency is considered vital. Households are resilient when they can grow their capital and have diverse options. The term ‘capitals’ refers to the assets households and families have which enables them to build a livelihood strategy so as to sustain their lives.<sup>9,11</sup> Capitals are thus the various resources that can be acquired, consumed, developed, improved and transferred across generations. The literature demonstrates broad agreement in terms of capital types, such as financial, human, social, personal, or physical. Some authors have included natural capital,<sup>9,11</sup> political capital,<sup>12</sup> or cultural capital.<sup>13</sup> More nuanced asset categories have also been identified, for example, aspirational, psychological and productive with a relationship between capitals and rights being argued.<sup>10,14,15</sup>

For the purpose of this paper a “livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets/capital (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stress and shocks and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation, which contributes net benefits to other livelihoods in the short and the long term.”<sup>11</sup> In taking a livelihoods approach we place people at the centre of analysis, emphasising what people have as oppose to what they lack. In using this approach we are concerned with strengths as opposed to deficit thinking. Great weight is placed on working with existing capabilities, making the most of what people can do and can be.<sup>9-15</sup> We are therefore interested in the way rugby is used to build assets (from here on referred to as capitals), enhance capabilities, and ultimately make the most of what athletes and families can be now and in the future. In taking a livelihoods approach we also look beyond athlete migration as merely a perpetuation of colonial relationships between core (First World) and periphery (Third World), because this diminishes the complexities of the context in which people live their lives.<sup>3</sup>

### Importance of This Study

This research is important for three main reasons: Firstly, widespread access to international migration opportunities and ensuing remittances are an important contributor to the national income of Pacific Island nations such as Fiji.<sup>16-20</sup> Rugby athletes, alongside health professionals such as doctors, nurses, peacekeepers and participants in the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) schemes, constitute categories of labour migrants who remit. Sport labour migrants as a specific type of highly skilled migrants are, however, unique compared to other skilled migrants. Even though sport labor migrants are specialists in their fields, they do not have the security of employment and rights that other skilled migrants often enjoy. Careers can be short, unpredictable and precarious.<sup>1-3</sup> Success is dependent on the body’s ability to perform.<sup>1-3</sup> Careers can end abruptly because “athletes’ bodies are inherently fragile and the sport industry fickle”.<sup>3</sup> (p.849) While athletes can potentially be well paid, more often they are not. One significant way sport migrants also differ from other economic migrants relates to size of earnings if successful, and therefore the size of remittances that can be sent back to kin at home and in diasporic nodes. Migrant athletes, especially those from poorer communities, often face a multitude of expectations, demands, and hopes from those at home.<sup>21-25</sup> Kin, villages,

i The “rugby dream” is a phrase used by many authors and refers broadly to the idea that young Fijian men secure overseas professional rugby contracts and/or find economic success, fulfilment and prestige in their lives by represent Fiji in rugby.<sup>14</sup>

ii While the World Bank categorises Fiji to be an upper middle-income country, it is widely recognised that the country has significant levels of poverty and an unequal distribution of wealth and opportunity. Narsey emphasises the importance of seeing poverty in Fiji to be complex and politicised.<sup>5, 6</sup>

iii Rugby in the Pacific Islands is not about social class - unlike England, where for example, the great split of 1895, which resulted in two different versions of rugby (union and league), was essentially about social class. In England the game of union was, and perhaps still is, argued to be representative of middle-class principles.<sup>7, 8</sup>

congregations and states partake in the dream of ‘making it’, and the burden of providing for relatives and communities can erode whatever earnings they have managed to secure in a very short time. Globally little is known about the management and impact of sport-generated remittances and what the challenges might be.<sup>26, 27</sup>

Secondly, rugby union is showing considerable growth and is now played by 5 million people in 117 countries.<sup>28</sup> With the rise of professional sport, particularly rugby union and league, Pacific Island athletes as top level performers have become a highly-valued global commodity.<sup>29-32</sup> Fijians can be found in all levels of rugby from the top tiers (France, Britain and New Zealand) to lower tiers (USA, Romania and Japan).<sup>29</sup> Kanemasu and Molnar estimate that up to 500 Fijian athletes hold professional contracts in foreign competitions.<sup>2</sup> In France the number of professional Pacific Island athletes has increased 179% over a 7 year period. More than 50 Fijian rugby athletes are currently playing in the two top divisions of French Rugby.<sup>26, 27, 33</sup> In 2006 rugby-generated remittances sent to Fiji were estimated to be F\$18.54 million or 11% of total workers remittances sent that year.<sup>2</sup>

Thirdly, ‘Pacific rugby [despite many recent publications still remains] an academic *terra nova*’.<sup>23</sup> There is a plethora of research exploring Pacific Island migration<sup>16-20, 39-41</sup> and an emerging body of knowledge that investigates Pacific sport-labour migration, most of which focuses on the socio-cultural experiences of Pacific Island professional and semi-professional rugby athletes.<sup>1, 2, 34-37</sup> There is a significant research gap regarding livelihoods. As shown recently by Schulenkorf, Sherry and Rowe<sup>38</sup> despite a burgeoning number of sport-for-development (SFD) projects and related academic research, both empirical and theoretical, there is a notable livelihoods gaps in the SFD literature. This article speaks to this gap.<sup>iv</sup> The following section outlines, in relation to Fiji, the importance of migration as a livelihood strategy alongside its presence and value attributed to rugby.

### Migration as a Livelihood Strategy

Migration and ensuing remittances are on the rise globally<sup>42, 43</sup> and are an effective mechanism for increasing the income of the poor,<sup>44</sup> particularly in the absence of state-provided social protection and a fully developed cash economy.<sup>18</sup> Key multilateral lending institutions and development agencies, such as the World Bank, International Labour Organisation, the Asian Development Bank, Asia Pacific

Economic Cooperation group and the International Monetary Fund, together with a range of bilateral aid providers now see migration and remittances to be a viable livelihoods option for many Pacific countries.<sup>39, 40, 44</sup> Indeed international migration has become a ‘safety-valve’ for Pacific countries’ governments under increasing pressure to provide employment opportunities and welfare services in a context of poor domestic economic growth.<sup>19</sup> This is of particular importance in the Pacific Islands where young and aging populations are high, and formal employment opportunities are limited.<sup>45</sup>

Fijians have widespread opportunities to migrate to economically developed countries and the ensuing remittances are an important contributor to the national income of Fiji.<sup>18, 19, 39-43</sup> Remittances were shown to be in the range of 5.4% of GDP in 2010 to 4.8% of GDP (equivalent to US\$206 million) in 2014. The amounts from some host countries are increasing. For example between 2010 and 2014, Australia increased from US\$53 million to US\$69 million; USA increased from US\$39 million to US\$48 million and New Zealand increased from US\$34 million to US\$51 million.<sup>43</sup> Official records, however, do not account for unauthorised migrants who may send money back to Fiji and also excludes in-kind transfers and remittances sent via informal channels. To elaborate further, some remittance senders choose to remit by providing family members in Fiji with New Zealand, European or Australian credit or debit cards. Expenditures are therefore classified as ‘out of country’ or tourist spending, as opposed to expenditure by locals. Remittance senders also remit by posting or shipping consumer goods especially when exchange rates are not favourable. The market in Nuku’alofa, Tonga on a Saturday morning is a clear example of goods sent from overseas for the purpose of on-selling. This brings money to local households.<sup>26, 27</sup> Under-estimation of actual remittances is therefore very probable.<sup>27, 39, 43</sup> Globally, the World Bank has approximated that remittance payments made through informal and unrecorded channels could be at least another half of those made through formally recorded channels.<sup>43</sup>

As mentioned earlier, Kanemasu and Molnar report athlete remittances to be in order of F\$18.54 million, which is 11% of total remittances sent.<sup>2</sup> With respect to sport-generated remittances in the Pacific, there are various anecdotal claims. For example:

The financial estimates of earnings by Polynesian professional athletes are \$200m for NFL; \$100m for rugby union; \$60m for rugby league; and \$55m for Sevens. That

<sup>iv</sup> Natural capital refers to the resources and ecosystem services of the natural world. Natural capital is very important in terms of poverty reduction. The definition of sustainable livelihood when including natural capital also speaks to the idea that a livelihood is sustainable when it can cope and recover now and in the future while not undermining the natural resource base or environment.<sup>11</sup>

is an estimated total of \$415 million, and growing... Even if only 20% of those earnings flow back to the 'homeland', that is about \$83 million.<sup>46</sup>

In terms of evidence-based calculations, recent work undertaken by Stewart-Withers, Richardson and Sewabu found that Pacific athletes send a total and conservative estimate of NZD\$21.7 million per year, which constitutes 5% of all remittances.<sup>26, 27</sup> Per-capita, Pacific athletes remit between 6.8 and 13.6 times more than the average migrant. However, there is uncertainty about what percentage of remittances to the Pacific region can be attributed to sport and/or rugby. As highlighted by Stewart-Withers, Richardson and Sewabu there are various complexities that need to be considered when trying to estimate the contribution of sport/rugby-generated remittances to the wider Pacific and Fiji.<sup>26</sup> For example, while remittance data is collected by banks and the Central/Reserve Banks, the employment status of the sender (e.g., professional rugby player) remains unknown.

Finally, understanding the impact of sport-generated remittances should also include the non-professional athlete's contribution. Non-professional athletes may leverage their athletic talents into non-sport employment. This non-sport employment provides the basis for the remittances. Many athletes see themselves as semi-professional, and even though playing in a second tier competition in New Zealand may not provide them with a professional-level salary, it can still be an entry point into opportunities in France; for example, semi-professional athletes can sometimes go on to receive a full-time sports salary. Thus we argue that it is important to not underestimate the importance of semi-professional athletes who also remit.<sup>26, 27</sup> Of the 70 Fijian responses to our survey, almost half the athletes identified themselves as semi-professional, which meant that they were working part- or full-time as well as earning a salary playing sports. These athletes will thus be likely to earn (and remit) more than a migrant with a non-sport related full-time job (e.g., someone involved in the RSE scheme).

Regardless of the unknowns surrounding the true value of remittances sent, it is clear that Fijian families see sports like rugby to be a feasible avenue for men to gain future financial security for themselves and the wider family.<sup>22-23</sup> Hence Fijians see rugby as a livelihoods option. The next section outlines the presence and importance of rugby in Fiji.

### Rugby as *Vaka I Taukei* (the Fijian Way of Life)

The history of rugby is well documented.<sup>7, 8</sup> In former British colonies like Fiji, rugby was used by the colonials as a "prominent part in educational ideology, which strongly relied on the character-forming properties of religion, athleticism and team sports (muscular Christianity) to form young men."<sup>47</sup> (p.25) In Fiji, rugby was first introduced to the Ba province with games played between European and Fijian policeman and soldiers of the Armed Constabulary, developing along segregated lines based on ethnicity. Consequently, the founding of the Suva-based Fiji Rugby Football Union by New Zealand expatriates occurred and in 1914 a Native rugby competition was established across Fiji. In 1945 the two separate unions merged and in 1963 this organisation became the Fiji Rugby Union (FRU).<sup>48</sup> In 1986, the FRU became a member of the International Rugby Board (IRB), due to pressure from the IRB, which is now known as World Rugby. In 2001 the FRU turned professional.<sup>29</sup> The FRU is responsible for developing and promoting rugby across 14 provinces through its 36 affiliated unions and 600 local rugby clubs.<sup>48</sup> FRU (2017) states that "rugby is the leading sport in the country." Currently there are 36,030<sup>v</sup> registered athletes, which is 4.3% of the population. Unofficially, however, there are an estimated 80,000 athletes (60,000 senior athletes and 20,000 children).<sup>48</sup> The FRU also reports that:

Fiji has the highest player-population ratio of any rugby playing nation; a recent survey by the World Rugby showed Fiji had more post-schools rugby players than New Zealand and only slightly less than Australia.<sup>48</sup>

The professionalisation of rugby has led to a growing number of elite Fijian athletes, many of whom are based overseas, and serves as a further incentive for Fijian rugby athletes because of the limited in-country opportunities for young men to succeed socially and economically.<sup>3</sup>

In the last few years, Fijian's passion for rugby and the emergence of the Fijian rugby athlete on the global stage has attracted growing scholarly and media attention.<sup>1, 2, 4, 29-37, 49-52</sup> Rugby is "deeply implicated in the interests and discourses of colonialism, ethno-nationalism, masculinities and militarism"<sup>35</sup> (p.2 and 49) However, while "ethnicised and gendered"<sup>35</sup> (p.2), rugby is a unifying force in this plural society. Rugby is also followed by the Indo-Fijian population<sup>24, 36, 47, 52</sup> Rugby is argued to be a medium for nation building where athletes are warriors of the entire nation, which is consequently promoted.<sup>1, 47, 52</sup>

Rugby is hence deeply embedded in the national psyche,<sup>1, 2, 35, 47</sup> central to *vaka i taukei* (the indigenous Fijian way of life),<sup>1, 2, 47</sup> and explicitly unified with the chiefly system, churches, military and the police.<sup>49, 50</sup> The 2006 military coup was said to have been postponed due to the Ratu Sukuna Bowl, a national sporting event where the police and army teams compete. Fred Wesley Editor-in-Chief of the Fiji Times wrote that it is: “Only in Fiji that a coup could be put on hold for a rugby match”.<sup>47 (p.24)</sup> Rugby is as important to Fiji as “its UN peace-keeping services for gaining national prestige internationally”.<sup>49 (p.213)</sup> Indeed Fijians do not see their rugby driven migration to be simply equating it to ‘black-birding’ or as some sport mobilities theorists and media sources have argued, ‘brawn drain’ or ‘muscle trade’. Rather, they see the experience to be a source of pride, a space whereby they can demonstrate to the world what Fijians are able to be and achieve.<sup>43</sup>

### Success on the Field

The game of rugby union and the sevens form of rugby has positioned Fiji well on the international sporting stage. Fijian rugby “stands tall on the international rugby scene and produces some of the finest players for other nations”.<sup>1 (p.1121)</sup> Fiji has a particular affinity with the sevens form of rugby.<sup>52</sup> The Fijian team has been one of the dominant forces in the sevens with victories in the annual Hong Kong Sevens tournament (fourteen times since the event’s inception in 1976, the most of any country), the quadrennial Rugby World Cup Sevens tournaments (the only country to win the event twice) and also the annual IRB Sevens World Series title (once in 2005/2006).<sup>2, 35, 36, 52</sup> Fiji has also been runners up in the Hong Kong Sevens ten times, in the IRB Sevens World Series five times since its inception in the 1999/2000 season, and beaten semi-finalists twice in the Rugby World Cup Sevens tournament. Both men and women’s sevens teams were included in the debut of sevens at the Rio 2016 Olympics, where the men’s team won a Gold medal and the women’s team made it to the quarter finals.<sup>29</sup> Fiji’s record in the 15-man game has been less successful than the shortened form of the game, but they have twice reached the quarter-final stages of the Rugby World Cup.<sup>29, 35, 36</sup>

Off field, however, Fijian rugby has been riddled by conflict between the FRU and various stakeholders, with accusations of financial mismanagement and poor governance.<sup>29</sup> This conflict is also located within the various periods of political turmoil seen throughout the country, which will be expanded on below. The paper will now outline the fieldwork context and procedures drawn

upon while investigating rugby union as a sustainable livelihoods option for *iTaukei*, or indigenous Fijians.

## METHODS

### Fieldwork Context

Fiji is a developing nation located in the Pacific Region. Fiji was a British colony from 1874 to 1970 when independence was gained. Consequently, Fiji has inherited many British traditions, including rugby. With a population of approximately 874,000 people, Fiji is a plural society consisting of those who identify themselves to be *iTaukei*, indigenous Fijians who comprise approximately 57% of the population and Indo-Fijians, who are often referred to as simply Fijians or Indians, and constitute 38% of the population. Other ethnic groups are recorded to be 5%.<sup>54</sup> The Indo-Fijian population are primarily descendants of indentured Indian labourers who were brought to Fiji to work in the sugar cane plantations by the British.

Fiji has a chiefly system that draws on Ratuism ideology, which is the belief that Fijian chiefs are the legitimate divine rulers. Fiji has had a number of periods of political instability with two coups d’état in 1987, and again in 2000 and 2006. Consequently, the country was overseen by a military government from December 2006 until September 2014.<sup>55</sup>

Fiji is ranked 90 out of 188 countries in the world rankings of human development. Poverty remains a significant concern in Fiji, with 31% of the population said to live below the national poverty line despite the overall level of development and moderately high average incomes. Narsey argues the importance of understanding poverty in Fiji in terms of all of its characteristics such as locality, gender, and ethnicity, for example. He suggests some poverty is more visible, for example, poverty in the urban/peri-urban areas is more condensed so stands out comparative to rural poverty which is in fact greater. He stresses that incorrect assumptions are also made that *iTaukei* (the indigenous Fijian people) always have access to communal land.<sup>5, 6</sup>

Hence forty-two percent of Fiji’s labour force is struggling to gain formal employment work in the informal sector. In terms of economic development Fiji relies heavily on international resort-based tourism, sugar exports and remittances.<sup>54, 55</sup> Like many countries in the Pacific Fiji also has burgeoning youth population and carries a high proportion of young men without purpose.<sup>45</sup> Consequently the rugby trajectory appeals to countless young men.<sup>2</sup>

## Data Collection and Analysis

Fieldwork occurred in Fiji and New Zealand. Data collection relied heavily on the use of semi-structured interviews. Ten interviews were conducted with athletes, and 16 with key informants – those with rugby or financial expertise. A focus group with fringe athletes (i.e., those athletes who do not have professional contracts yet but are on the verge of signing) and focus groups with five families

were also conducted. Interviews with athletes, family and Fijian based key informants were conducted mostly in Fijian, underpinned by the notion that a richer understanding comes from participants using their own vernacular. The approach to recruiting participants for the semi-structured one-on-one and focus group interviews was purposive snowballing. Table 1 summarises the individual and focus group participants. Table 2 outlines the types of questions asked to individuals and focus group participants.

*Table 1 – Summary of Individual and Focus Group Participants*

FIJI	
Position	Organisation
1. High Performance Manager-Coach	UAE - Westfield Babas
2. OSEP Coordinator	Oceania National Olympic Committee
3. Former Fiji Rugby captain Currently Fiji 7s selector	Fiji Rugby Union
4. Development Manager	Fiji Rugby Union
5. Acting CEO	Fiji Rugby Union
6. Permanent Secretary	Ministry of Finance
7. Chairman	Fiji Rugby Union
8. Manager Corporate Communications	Reserve Bank of Fiji
9. Elections Editor	Fiji Sun
10. Pacific Financial Inclusion Programme Financial Education Technical Specialist & Coordinator FinED Fiji	United Nations Capital Development Fund
11. Head Coach	Fiji 7s
12. Financial Systems Analyst	Reserve Bank of Fiji
13. Pro Athlete (NZ/France)	Retired
14. Pro Athlete (Japan/France)	Retired
15. Pro Athlete (Australia/UK)	Retired
16. Pro Athlete (UK/France/Japan)	Retired
17. Family 1	
18. Family 2	
19. Family 3	
20. Family 4	
21. Family 5	
22. Family 6	
NEW ZEALAND	
Position	Organisation
23. Remittance Expert and Economist	Don Abel Consulting
24. Member Services Manager	International Rugby Players Association
25. Player Services Manager	NZ Rugby Players Association
26. Higher Level Management	Pacific Island Players Association
27. NZ 7s Athlete 1	NZ 7s Team
28. NZ 7s Athlete 2	NZ 7s Team
29. ITM <sup>i</sup> Athlete 1	NZ Premier Domestic Competition Team
30. ITM Athlete 2	NZ Premier Domestic Competition Team
31. ITM Athlete 3	NZ Premier Domestic Competition Team
32. ITM Athlete 4	NZ Premier Domestic Competition Team
33. ITM Fringe Players (FG)	NZ Premier Domestic Competition Team

<sup>i</sup> ITM refers Independent Timber Merchants who were the key sponsors in the New Zealand premier domestic rugby competition. As of 2016 this became the Mitre 10 Cup as per the

Table 2 – Outline of Various Questions Asked to Individuals, Focus Group Participants, and Industry Stakeholders

**Exploring Remittance Patterns and Behaviours**

1. **What is the importance of remitting, why is it valued, what are the drivers to remit?** (*What are the cultural values which underpin, such as service, pride, obligations, status, commitment to family, vanua which may drive player patterns and behaviour?*)
2. **Where are remittances ranked within families/communities?** (*For example, if it is the only cash income for a family or community it may be of more importance. We need to therefore locate remittances within people's wider livelihoods patterns/options. Thus, are remittances important to survival or are they just improving quality of life, e.g. now able to buy consumer goods, Western foods, etc.*)
3. **What exactly is being sent?** (*Amounts, frequency, in what forms and how this is done – so what, to who, when, how often, via what means?*)
4. **How are family/individuals, communities using remittances short term - long term – multiplier effect?** (*For occasions - weddings/funerals. For specifics – school fees, church fees. For one-offs – new car, new roof on house. For wider community - contribution to painting village school, For emergency – cyclone, illness*)
5. **What other ways are contributions made? In what forms?** (*Clothing, consumer goods, travel, medical costs*)
6. **Who makes the decisions in terms of remittance demands, spending and investment?** (*Think about gender, chiefs, elders, church, village*)
7. **Do players take an active interest in how the remitted money is spent?** (*If not, why not? If so, in what ways, to what extent? How is this interest played out? Who has the say? Does this change based on the focus or need?*)
8. **As career progression occurs does this change the pattern of remitting?** (*Does the pattern change once married, have children? Does it depend on who they marry? Ethnicity?*)
9. **What has receiving remittances meant for players/family?** (*What has been made easier, harder, changed? How was life different pre –remittances?*)
10. **What do they worry about most regarding the remittances and the career?**
11. **Where do they think they/family will be in 5 years? 10 years?**
12. **Encourage story telling about someone/family they think has been successful? What do they think it worked, why is this?** (*Also ask for unsuccessful, what didn't work*)
13. **What is the key thing they would tell someone/family starting out, that they wish they had known?**

**Exploring career progression and financial literacy**

1. What type of financial knowledge do players and family have/need?
2. What type of financial systems/organisations do players and family access/use/need?
3. What type of financial literacy services do players and family use/need? (Formal or informal?)
4. What are the views held by players/families/agents about the level and quality of support/services they receive and can access?
5. What type of additional support might be needed?
6. What sort of support/activity would be most beneficial? (What would make things better/easier?)

Table 2 (continued) – Outline of Various Questions Asked to Individuals, Focus Group Participants, and Industry Stakeholders

7. Which key stakeholders do players and families interactive with? What is the nature of these interactions?
8. Do clubs provide pastoral care support, including career guidance and financial management training?
9. What support/role do the Pacific Island Rugby Unions play in providing contract negotiation/financial literacy support to up and coming players? What could be done better?
10. Encourage those involved in the industry to talk about the rugby landscape: Challenges faced by players and the game as a whole.

The study utilised a qualitative approach<sup>56</sup> drawing upon culturally relevant understandings and practices related to *vanua* and *talanoa*.<sup>57</sup> *Talanoa* as an embodied expression of the *vanua* concept was used to ensure that respect, humility and traditional Fijian cultural protocols were adhered to in planning and undertaking data collection.<sup>57</sup> This also allowed the researchers to acknowledge kinship and relationships with participants. Vaoleti writes that *tala* means to “inform, relate, or tell” and *noa* to mean “talk about nothing in particular” or [a] personal encounter where people story their issues, their realities and their aspirations”.<sup>58(p.21)</sup> From a Fijian perspective, Nabobo-Baba defines *tala* as ‘to offload’. *Noa* is often used with a prefix ‘*na noa*’ meaning yesterday, so *talanoa* means literally offloading stories of recent events.<sup>59</sup> Otsuka states that “*talanoa* asks researchers to establish a good interpersonal relationship and rapport with ethnic Fijian participants”, adding that “*talanoa* research expects researchers and participants to share not only their time and interests but also emotions”.<sup>60 (p.2)</sup> Hence the relationships established must be trustful if such emotions are to be shared.<sup>57-60</sup> Such an epistemological approach allows for differing world views to be communicated and participant voices to be heard. *Talanoa* creates a space to adhere to cultural processes while also seeking to devolve power to those who are participating.<sup>57</sup>

### Ethics

The University Human Ethics Committee processes rated the research as low-risk status. Of great importance in behaving ethically was the adherence to a cultural process that presented *sevusevu*, which is the accepted and traditional Fijian way to gain permission to situate and temporarily be part of the local environment. In general, *sevusevu* is the presentation of a gift of *kava*<sup>vi</sup> to the local village chief.

Utmost consideration was given to the make-up of our research team. We were a three member team and each of us brought a different level of expertise to the research process and had a unique contribution to offer. We were extremely

cognisant of our positionalities,<sup>57</sup> recognising these to be multiple and fluid. To expand on this, I Rochelle, am non-Pasifika; I hold a PhD in International Development; I have ten plus years researching with Pacific peoples and have undertaken fieldwork in Samoa, Fiji and PNG. My research interests lie with sport-for-development, gender and applications of cultural frameworks. I teach methodology courses, and I am Chair of the Southern B Ethics Committee at Massey University. Prior to academia I was a mental health nurse for 15 plus years. I see myself to understand the concepts such as empathy, relationships, compassion, positive regard and cultural safety well.

I Sam the second member am also non-Pasifika. I hold a PhD in Economics, my area of interest is sport economics, and I have expertise in looking to explore critically the value and economic impact of mega events such as the World Cup Rugby. Of fundamental importance was that our team included an insider<sup>vii</sup> and in this case an emerging indigenous researcher (skilled in language and protocols of the land), who had connectivity to the *vanua* and the connections and relationships, with the world of rugby, and the lived experience of using rugby as a livelihood option and to send remittances.

I Koli have an MBA and I am Fijian. I was raised in Fiji, I speak the language and I am connected to the *vanua*. I played professional rugby for Fiji, with 27 caps. I played in the French Top 14, the UK and Japan before coming to New Zealand for the national competition and retiring in 2008. The third researcher we would argue was the most valuable to our team. Our team has been working together now since about 2012 building a research platform exploring rugby as a livelihoods options and the value and importance of sport generated remittances to the Pacific.

An online survey instrument was developed to capture the experiences of European-based Fiji rugby athletes regarding remittances. Seventy professional and semi-professional rugby athletes responded. The survey was disseminated via private contacts, as well as through the use of social media

vi Kava (Piper methysticum) is a root crop of the Pacific. In Fiji kava or yaqona is integral to Fijian culture and is used for ritual offerings.

vii Smith suggests insiders face different challenges when doing research.<sup>61</sup> As noted by Meo-Sewabu being an insider still poses a risk. “Doing anything that goes against my cultural values, marks me and my family for a lifetime”.<sup>62 (p.345)</sup>

Table 3 – Survey Questions List

- Q 1. Demographics** (age, ethnicity, country of origin, currently living, highest level of education, religious affiliation, marital status, any children as dependents or family residing with you)
- Q 2. Career Details** (years playing rugby as a non/semi-professional/professional, number of contracts signed, length of each contract and who arranged the last one, value of your current contract, specify currency and length, and how many years you are in contract so far, and whether there is an area you would like support with now and in terms retirement)
- Q 3. Finances** (other forms of income you get - i.e., rental property earnings, benefits, subsidised rent, utilities, transport; whether you receive financial advice from anyone - who and what exactly, and whether there is an area you would like support with)
- Q 4. Remittance Information** (who do you support - i.e., family/community/church, and where are they based, why do you send money, how often, do you send, how much, what currency, how do you send it, what have the remittances been used for, whether extra money is ever sent, when and why, whether other things besides cash are given, whether there is an area you would like support with, and whether there anything you find it hard in terms of remittance demands and the sending experience)
- Q 5. What does being a rugby player mean for yourself, for your family and your community?**
- Q 6. Is there anything you wish you had known when you started out on your rugby career, or that your family should have known?**
- Q 7. What challenges do you think Fijian rugby athletes specifically face?**
- Q. 8. What challenges do you think Fijian rugby specifically faces?**

(e.g., Facebook and Twitter). Some respondents chose not to answer all the questions however. Table 3 lists the survey questions and Table 4 summarises the key characteristics of the first eight survey respondents.

Journals were used when spending time with athletes and family. Specifically we looked to document the sorts of livelihoods activities that were occurring and to make notes about the various capitals. Field journals often become a useful place for the ‘scanning’ or ‘first cut’ analysis of data.<sup>56</sup> A review of secondary sources also occurred. Secondary sources included media reports, information published by multilateral and bilateral development agencies, government documents and sporting organisations. Secondary sources were important for a deeper understanding of the development, migration, remittances and sporting context within which Fijian rugby athletes’ lives are located.

An iterative process allowed the researchers to move back and forth between data collection and analysis.<sup>56</sup> Our analysis identified thematic patterns in relation to the research questions stated above, as well as emerging information. This was also useful for sharpening the focus of the fieldwork on subsequent days. Our analysis involved getting intimate with the raw data by spending time reading and re-reading our transcripts, sorting and coding and resorting and re-coding our data.<sup>56</sup> Our main approach to

coding was to think about peoples’ stories in relation to capital types, choices, opportunity changes, decision making processes and challenges faced.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Results 1: Types of Capitals that are Grown due to Rugby-Related Remittances

The types of capitals which have been built due to rugby-generated remittances can be broken down into the financial (i.e., money, credit), physical (i.e., infrastructure and producer goods like housing, livestock, or machinery), human (i.e., skills, education level or health status), social (i.e., networks, organisations and associations which people draw support from), and the cultural spheres (i.e., norms, values, practices that shape identity, social interaction, attachment to place – in this instance the *vanua*). Financial and physical capital can also be grouped further and labelled as produced capital. This speaks to the idea that financial and physical capitals are not always by themselves productive, rather they require the human element. By applying human capital (i.e., skills, knowledge or reputation), productive capacities of an individual or a group better ensure the financial and physical capitals can grow. Table 5 provides a categorised list of examples of the different capitals that are grown due to rugby-related remittances.

Table 4 – Survey Respondents Sample – First Eight to Reply

Code	Age	Marital Status	Location	Status	Contract arranged by	Contract length: Year	Contract amount 000	Supporting at Home	Other income	Remittances data				Would like assistance with	
										Currency	Frequency	Amount	Via		In-kind
R1	25-30	Married	France	Pro	Agent	1	101-150k	Mother, Father, Sisters	Nil	Euro	Demand	1000-5000 Has made various on demand payments	Bank	Clothes	Business/Investment planning
R2	31-35	Married	NZ	Semi-pro	Agent	3	50k	Mother, Father, close family	Wife	NZD	Monthly	1000 monthly	WU	Clothes	Financial management
R3	25-30	Separated	France	Pro	Agent	2	50k	Mother, Sisters, Brothers	Sub Fam	Euro	Monthly	500 monthly	Bank	Clothes	Financial management/ literacy; career guidance; retirement planning; contract help; business investment planning
R4	18-24	Single	France	Pro	Rugby Union	1	50k	Father	Nil	Euro	Monthly	500 monthly	WU	Clothes	Support while away from home
R5	25-30	Married	France	Pro	Player	3	50k	Mother, close family	Wife	Euro	Demand	1000 Has made various on demand payments	WU	Kids clothes	Financial management/ literacy; career guidance; retirement planning; contract help; business investment planning
R6	31-35	Married	France	Pro	Player, Agent	1	50k	Brothers, close family	Wife, Family business	Euro	Monthly	500 monthly	Bank	Clothing	Retirement planning
R7	31-35	Married	France	Pro	Friend, Agent	2	151-200k	Close and extended family	Real estate	Euro	Demand	1000 Has made various on demand payments	WU	Nil	Business/investment planning
R8	25-30	Married	NZ	Pro	Agent	5	300,000+	Mother, close family	Real Estate	Euro	Weekly	5000 has sent up to	WU	Clothing	Retirement planning

Table 5 – Capitals Developed by Rugby Related Remittances

Financial	Produced	Physical	Human	Social	Cultural
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Self-employment opportunities</li> <li>Small/medium business opportunities that can offer employment to others</li> <li>Savings can occur</li> <li>Credit rating is gained; the ability to lend money grows</li> <li>Able to service debt</li> <li>Can develop a rental portfolio</li> <li>Can afford insurances</li> <li>Reduced need to take high interest loans or sell assets/livestock when the unexpected arises (i.e., illness; funerals; natural disaster, crop failure)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can buy private land</li> <li>Can develop communal land and buildings</li> <li>Security of tenure can increase</li> <li>Can undertake home renovations</li> <li>Can buy transport (cars, boats); can maintain vehicles</li> <li>Affords quality clothing</li> <li>Increased food choices</li> <li>Can buy goods for households (washing machine, fridge)</li> <li>Increase access to technology (mobile, internet access)</li> <li>Can afford better and more consistent electricity, water supply</li> <li>Can invest in livestock and maintain livestock</li> <li>Can buy farm machinery</li> <li>Can contribute to feasts and celebrations without depleting asset base</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowledge about the world and in terms of rugby grows due to travel and exposure to various experiences</li> <li>As career progresses earning potential can grow</li> <li>Fitness increases</li> <li>Increased access to various professionals and/or advisors (health, financial)</li> <li>Afford quality food (i.e., meat)</li> <li>Can afford health/dental care family and self</li> <li>Can afford education for family and self</li> <li>New opportunities become available for family and self (i.e., access to education in NZ; able to move from remote villages to towns)</li> <li>Skills grow (technical, leadership, and interpersonal)</li> <li>Access to transport means accessing markets to sell produce increases</li> <li>Reputation grows (personal, family, village, and country)</li> <li>Adds to the growing reputation that Fijian rugby players are of value; increases the chances for others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increases the desire and ability to do service; pay back to others</li> <li>Family village status increases due to contributions made to church, community and cultural events</li> <li>Ability to employ others grows through multiplier effect (e.g., in doing renovations others in the villages may be employed; materials are purchased locally; working in own business may employ others for child care or household duties)</li> <li>Family becomes more mobile (locally, internationally)</li> <li>Increase in bonding, bridging and linking networks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adds to the <i>vamua</i></li> <li>May be offered new cultural opportunities due to doing service and increased status – or leadership roles</li> <li>Puts Fiji rugby on the global stage; reputation of Fiji rugby grows; increase demand for the Fijian player</li> <li>Growing awareness globally of a Fijian type of rugby player and game, Increased pride in being a Fijian player</li> <li>Increased desire to make a career out of rugby</li> <li>More opportunities become available in the sport</li> <li>Growing recognition of other forms of the game</li> <li>Growing recognition of other participants in the game, women, and school girls</li> </ul>	

### Capitals Discussion

Understanding poverty and poor people's livelihoods is an important aspect within international development literature and policy debates. As such the significance of understanding livelihoods has been embraced in various ways and more recently in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG),<sup>63</sup> which is the new global development agenda. SDG 1 promulgates a goal to: End poverty in all its forms everywhere, and more specifically as seen in Target 1.4: By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including micro finance.

Capitals are seen to be the building blocks of a sustainable livelihood; by building capitals the household, and in this instance the family ought to be able to meet their needs on a sustained basis and develop their capacity to cope with any challenges they encounter.<sup>9-15</sup> People are said to have a range of capitals that contribute to livelihood creation and can include those which are non-material or intangible, such as social or kinship networks or access to and/or command over a particular resource or service.<sup>6</sup> People are thus more likely to have a good livelihood when they have various capitals to draw upon both in the short and longer term.<sup>9-15</sup>

It is within this context that this research explored the way that *iTaukei*, indigenous Fijians, are using rugby as a livelihood means by asking: what is the development impact of rugby-generated remittances for their families, and more broadly in terms of their communities. We asked more explicitly whether capitals were being built and if so what types. Then we asked how these capitals were contributing to choices and opportunities today and in the longer term. Thinking about the longer term required us to consider the factors that impede the permanency of the choices and opportunities.

### Results 2: Do Remittances Contribute to Creating Choices and Opportunities and What Types of Choices and Opportunities are Being Created Now and in The Longer Term?

Building the asset portfolio was said to result in enhanced family status by adding to the *vanua*; enabling household livelihoods diversification; and allowing for a reduction in vulnerability. Participants' voices are drawn upon to further discuss these themes.

### Enhanced Family Status

Having a rugby athlete in the family increases family status. Athletes and family members spoke of being looked on with more respect because other relatives and villagers perceived that the family 'had made it'. Owning capitals such as a new car, being able to build a new house or renovate, visibly showed that the family unit is doing well and has more options or choices. One family member participant commented:

*Well apart from being able to pay for school fees, for things in the house, giving support to others in the family, we have a car. So it's great. I can take the kids out on the weekends, and do some things we couldn't have done or afforded before – like shopping, picnics and keeping the kids happy.*

Status is enhanced also if the family is able to contribute more to wider family, village and church commitments and demands, both in a religious and cultural sense. One family member participant remarked:

*We want to help out our family members – like do little things such as helping out with school fees – you know you shouldn't forget your relatives just because we're getting better money aye. Family is very important, if the money is gone or disappears, we still have each other.*

Another family member participant stated:

*They know that my boy is playing overseas so they always call when there is something to be done; we are able to meet some of the demands and obligations from the village. I feel proud that our family can do this.*

Having increased choices or options such as the ability to go overseas gave some participants a sense of accomplishment. One athlete participant commented:

*I feel like things have really got better for us. We went to see my uncle in Auckland. This is the first time we have been to New Zealand. We took my mum. It has been a long time since she has seen her brother.*

Employing others to work less desirable jobs such as cleaning, or heavy plantation work also brought an enhanced sense of dignity and self-worth. One family member participant explained:

*We have a house girl now; she does some of the cleaning, washing, cooking and shopping. I feel like we have help in our house but we are also doing a good thing. She earns*

*money and she brings her little kid with her. I used to hate thinking about doing household stuff while also trying to run this shop. It is a win - win in my mind.*

Another athlete participant reflected:

*I think about my family all the time. I think about being able to be successful. Carving out a good road ahead for others.*

#### *Household Livelihoods Diversification*

Rugby-led migration of both the professional and semi-professional athlete provides a means for household livelihoods diversification. Ensuing remittances meant that family members at home had the capital to establish new businesses, such as setting up small shops, market stalls, or a taxi business. One athlete participant explained:

*I'm thinking maybe to buy a car (taxi) to help us further financially. We also have a stall out the front of the house where we sell baked goods. This is working well.*

Another family member participant spoke about improving their existing business:

*We have set up another stall at the market for handicrafts. We used to only sell like small fruits and vegetables but we have family in Taveuni and we try and sell some of the things they make like pottery. We have been able to get a better located stall too for the fruits, more up the front of the market. This costs more, but we can do this. You want to sell fruits quickly because these things go off. No point being at the back if you can help it.*

Remittances also enabled people to expand a current business, for example, renting or purchasing extra land to grow more and different crops, purchasing a vehicle to get crops to market, buying new tools, adding to water systems and purchasing better fertilisers. Remittances also gave people a means to buy up-to-date mobile phones; this gave them better access to information such as market prices, and weather forecasts. Having capital also meant families could access further credit via the formal system such as the bank. They could also get themselves out of situations they did not necessarily like. An athlete participant shared this anecdote:

*My sister's husband was very lazy; she would be working hard with her small plantation, doing sewing on the side. He was fishing only small amounts but running up credit at the shop – he would buy beer, yaqona, cigarettes. When they could afford meat curry he would eat lots, take the best parts of the curry. He would only think about himself not the kids or my sister. I helped her set up her sewing business,*

*she has done some training; she even went to a course about business planning, took a loan from the bank to expand. Our family has never had a proper loan. We are business owners now, we are insured too. We have all said goodbye to that lazy husband too.*

#### *Reduced Vulnerability*

Remittances and diversification of livelihoods serve to reduce vulnerability in an immediate sense. One family member participant explained:

*It has helped us with some of the things we need on a daily basis. Times are getting harder and we are blessed to have [our boy] playing rugby and he is able to send us money to support us financially. We used to have times during the year when it was hard – when church donations were due, school fees. We don't panic now.*

There is also a multiplier effect in that benefits accrue to those who do not have a rugby athlete in their family or even receive remittances. A family member participant explained:

*Our son has helped pay for repairs for the school, we have made a big donation as a family, some upgrades on the buildings have occurred because of us. Men in our village were given some payments to do this job. You could say others have benefited [indirectly] from X playing overseas.*

From a longer term perspective, being located overseas provides an opportunity to also bring family overseas or to move family to the urban centres, meaning they have greater opportunities to access education, employment, or health care. One family member participant stated:

*Our whole family has moved into Suva; this has meant the kids can go to a better school. I have a proper job; I get sick leave, holiday pay. Ok I have to pay tax but I am hoping I might have a chance in this job. I would like to be a supervisor one day.*

Another athlete participant stated:

*We have moved mum to Nadi. It is way better for her; she needs to be closer to the hospital with her health problems. The rugby money means we can do this.*

#### *Choices and Opportunities Discussion*

Rugby remittances enabled families to meet immediate consumption needs and wants. Material wellbeing was greatly improved through having access to better and more

consumptive goods (e.g., regular protein in their diets), access to amenities (e.g., regular power, access to better water supplies), or increased ownership of house products (e.g., a fridge or washing machine). This could reduce workloads, particularly for women.<sup>15</sup> The ability to pay for health care and medicine makes an obvious difference to people lives.

Families were better able to protect themselves against potential hardships. Examples of this include making their homes more resilient to tropical storms, having insurance and savings. Remittance recipients were able to take better care of the assets (e.g., livestock or farm machinery). Small plantations were less likely to be over planted, and families spoke of being able to afford fertilisers.

Participants also spoke about engaging in less risky behaviours. For example, some participants no longer needed high interest loans from money lenders or to sell or pawn assets when they needed to meet cultural or church demands (i.e., funeral contributions or donations to a chiefly ceremony). Being able to keep children in school or pay for better schooling was seen to be investing in the future; as was supporting, for example, a family member to establish a small business.

Families spoke of increased connectedness through access to technology. Having a mobile phone to call family, do internet banking or access market information was considered very valuable. Being able to afford transport made getting goods to market easier and that they could travel further. Families had more opportunities for travel, some of whom went overseas to see family for the first time in years. Indirectly there were spin offs for the wider community when local people ended up being employed as part of renovating a house, as a house girl or in terms of a donation made to fix the school roof. These findings very much mirror what is seen in other studies that focus on remittance sending and livelihoods.<sup>39-45</sup> A key difference to note though is that rugby-generated remittances, whilst high yield, do not always endure because as mentioned, prior rugby careers are “fragile and ephemeral”.<sup>1 (p.11)</sup> Thus we argue the importance of understanding what some of the challenges might be in realising this potential.

A livelihoods approach recognises that poverty is more than a lack of income, and that a good livelihood is more than just income received or consumption attained. Thus, we support Bebbington’s<sup>13</sup> argument that capitals give meaning to a person’s world; assets give people the capability to be and act – not only do they allow survival, adaptation and the ability to alleviate poverty but they are the basis of an agent’s power to act, reproduce and challenge.

Having the means to be and act via rugby also gave athletes a sense of accomplishment.<sup>35, 36, 52</sup> Families whose members included a professional rugby player spoke of the immense pride they had in being able to give to the wider community; this was seen as also enhancing the family status.<sup>24</sup> As with most Pacific people, identity as a Fijian and as a Fijian rugby athlete, ongoing connections to one’s land and country remain at the fore. For Pacific people their culture, specifically the *vanua* (i.e., land and all that connects to the land), the extended family are of the essence, and in the case of even those engaged in the sport of rugby, especially when located overseas, these still remain the backbone of support.<sup>65</sup> As mentioned previously, despite the plentiful debates about brawn drain<sup>66-68</sup> and exploitation<sup>66,67</sup> of which are indeed real issues, rugby migration “constitutes a site of both structural subordination and symbolic resistance”.<sup>36 (p.875)</sup> Thus representing the nation of Fiji even if wearing another nation’s jersey is explicitly linked to notions of adding to the *vanua*, of being proud to be a Fijian.<sup>35, 37</sup>

### Results 3: What Are Some of the Challenges Athletes and Families Face When Using Rugby as a Means of Livelihood Creation?

The research identified several challenges that are faced by athletes and families in pursuit of this livelihoods option. Such challenges include the costs of remitting, poor financial literacy, cultural expectations, demands from family, and limited business opportunities.

One player spoke about the high commission rates of sending remittances as well as his own limitations in meeting family expectations:

*My mum used to call me often, saying we need more money, more dollars. Can you please send this today? I would send dollars through Western Union, it costs more but easier to do for them. The money is there straight away. Sometimes I didn't have any money so I would borrow from other players; people understand the pressure when your mum rings and say look we need to pay some money for a funeral or we have to make a donation because [someone who is important] is coming to the village. Sometimes I would have to take an advance in my pay check.*

Players spoke about their inability to manage their finances. The following statement was typical of many players:

*Like I know I was sending lots of money home, we were blowing it fast. Even me when I got home I would think I needed to look the part. So I would buy a car, shout everyone nights out. You're on the big bucks people would say. I was always shelling out the money. Not really*

*thinking about ok, what about next year. My cousins set up some taxi businesses but these didn't play out well. The cars were run down in the end. I also had a rental property but even this didn't work out that well. Family ended up staying there; you can't charge your family to stay, that's just not right.*

Players acknowledged their lack of financial literacy. One athlete participant lamented: "My biggest regret is not having any financial support or advice earlier in my rugby professional career." Finally, there are also many challenges facing the development of Pacific Island rugby, which also seems to hinder those looking to use the game for livelihood purposes. These are summarised in Table 6 below.

*Table 6 – Challenges Facing the Game and Faced by Athletes*

<b>Challenges Facing Athletes</b>
<p><i>Knowledge gaps</i></p> <p>There is a lack of knowledge surrounding the globalisation of sports (and operational systems in place). Overseas clubs/agents take advantage of this lack of knowledge, and this is impacting the development of young talent at home. There is also a very clear knowledge gap in terms of managing finances for both athletes and family members.</p>
<p><i>Immigration issues</i></p> <p>Travel sanctions and other visa-related issues can be seen as a deterrent to the development of sports in the islands, acknowledging that these issues are mostly the result of political situations and eligibility statuses and agreements between countries. It can also be about poor planning because athlete travel may only be arranged days prior to a competition since funding has not been secured until the last minute.</p>
<p><i>Contract issues</i></p> <p>Athletes can be approached through informal means (agents/clubs/friends/former athletes) and no proper advice is given to them to ensure that they fully understand the conditions of their contract. This leaves them open to exploitation. There is no ability to earn a living playing for the home team. Contractual obligations also means Pacific players may remain based off shore; are often unable to play for the home team due to having past contracts with 1<sup>st</sup> tier teams. This also hinders development of the team at home.</p>
<p><i>Career planning</i></p> <p>Few athletes have a career plan in place and understand that there is 'life after rugby'. Athletes and their families/advisors are more focused on short-term financial gains rather than long-term sustainable options. Those who have a career plan possess higher levels of formal education.</p>
<p><i>Targeting of very young athletes</i></p> <p>The move from French clubs to establish academies in Fiji are attempts to procure the best young talent from the country to bolster their playing stocks. Athletes are offered what are considered to be lucrative contracts but are likely to be entry-level academy contracts. Contracts can be poor or non-existent, so athletes are vulnerable and at risk of exploitation.</p>
<b>Challenges Facing the Game</b>
<p><i>Governance of Pacific and Fijian Rugby</i></p> <p>There is no regulatory framework to guide, monitor and manage the development of athletes. There is no proper database/system in place to track athlete's profiles/statuses. Athletes report a lack of confidence in home systems and trust in home union.</p>

Table 6 (continued) – Challenges Facing the Game and Faced by Athletes

*Uneven playing field – 1<sup>st</sup> tier teams verses Pacific teams*

Exclusion from regional competition Super 15.

PI nations share only 1 seat on IRB – World Rugby Council amongst self & other members of the Federation of Oceania Rugby Union – this is marginal power in terms of decision making.

Marked differences noted in the types of expertise and money seen in comparison to 1<sup>st</sup> tier teams vs. Pacific teams.

*Unclear Rugby Pathway*

There is no clear alignment/pathway between junior children's rugby, secondary school rugby and club/provincial rugby. More emphasis needs to be placed at provincial rugby/national duties. A proper pathway and structure needs to be implemented from the grassroots level up to national representation.

*Challenges Discussion*

While athletes and families saw the potential development impact to be substantial, having to meet expectations and ensuing high demands that often came from family, poor financial literacy, and limited business opportunities at home were some of the things getting in the way of any sustained effect. The uneven playing field and politics of the game were also raised as major concerns when thinking about rugby as a sustainable livelihoods option for *iTaukei*. By using the term uneven playing field, we are referring to the core periphery relationship between the first-tier international teams such as New Zealand, Australia and the 6 nations teams<sup>vii</sup>, and the Pacific teams.<sup>68</sup> The complexities of this relationship are well documented by various authors.<sup>34,68,70</sup> The reduced competitiveness of Pacific Island nations due to players having to declare eligibility to first-tier nations, which is noted in the World Rugby regulation 'one-country-for life',<sup>69</sup> and limits the development of the game at home. Pacific Island nations also have marginal power in terms of decision making regarding the game and various rules based on current World Rugby Council arrangements and voting rights. Exclusion from various competitions, for example, the Super 15, is a point of contention.<sup>33, 69</sup> However, World Rugby has invested millions into the Pacific, and the issue is argued to be one of poor governance by local unions.<sup>30,66</sup> Regional organisation have been argued to serve national interests rather than the region as a whole.<sup>66</sup>

While professionalism has hindered the development of rugby in Fiji, Fijian rugby players are interconnected agents who creatively negotiate and seek to exert some degree of control over outside structural forces.<sup>65</sup> By listening to the voices of the athletes we argue the potential of rugby regardless of structural forces. While World Rugby might dictate terms and conditions of the game, athletes also show evidence of being competent actors who have agency and

can manoeuvre and manipulate factors in their lives and the game in order to pursue collective and individual interests, in search of status increase and for economic gain.<sup>38, 39</sup> Yes there are constraints especially in times of international competition, but they are starting to develop self-help strategies (PIPA). This very much speaks to Bebbington's<sup>13</sup> argument, as noted above, that capitals give meaning to a person's world; assets give people capability to be and act. Thus, not only do capitals allow survival, adaptation and the ability to alleviate poverty but they are the basis of an agent's power to act, reproduce and challenge.

Recent work undertaken by Stewart-Withers, Richardson and Sewabu<sup>26, 27, 33</sup> as part of the Rugby Max Project addresses some of these issues. The New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade is piloting a sports diplomacy programme 'Rugby Max'. This is a 3 year, pilot project which aims to support professional and semi-professional Fijian rugby union players and their families to access contract support, financial literacy, management training, personal development planning and business development support. The project will be delivered by the Pacific Island Players Association (PIPA) in partnership with the New Zealand Rugby Players Association, leveraging the expertise of New Zealand's world renowned Personal Development Programme and building on the limited support currently provided to players through PIPA. The idea of the project has received much praise from the Fijian and New Zealand Governments and the communities— of both sport and Pacific people.

**CONCLUSION**

Horton writes about the place of rugby in Pacific communities and how and why it has become a zone of potential success, aspiration and social and economic

vii Six nations refers to England, France, Ireland, Italy, Scotland and Wales.

advancement.<sup>22</sup> While livelihoods can be explained in many ways, for the purpose of our enquiry it is understood broadly to comprise households having access to capitals: financial and physical (produced capital); and human, social and cultural capitals with which they can influence their material wellbeing, find meaning in their life and increase their capabilities to use, respond or transform. In this instance the means by which this occurs is rugby, and it can be considered sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and capitals both now and for in the future.

In the context of Fiji there is a consensus that economic migration and ensuing remittances are an important mechanism for social and economic development and thus poverty alleviation. Fijian rugby athletes are a sub-group of economic migrants who work and remit. Rugby union has positioned Fiji well on the international sporting stage, even more so given their recent Olympic success. Findings suggest that for many families, rugby-generated remittances are an extremely important income source that helps them meet consumption needs and wants, and allows for asset accumulation in the short term. However, the costs of remitting, cultural expectations, high demands from family, limited business opportunities at home and poor financial literacy are impacting athletes and their families from maintaining livelihoods goals into the future. The uneven playing field and politics of the game are also major concerns when thinking about growing the game.

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