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CHILD POVERTY AND WELL–BEING: A CASE STUDY OF NAMARA SQUATTER SETTLEMENT, LABASA, VANUA LEVU, FIJI ISLANDS.

by

Anawaite Vuevata Matadradra–Dolavale

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Development Studies.

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2013
DECLARATION

Statement by Author

I, Anawaite Vuevata Matadradra-Dolavale declare that this thesis is my work, except for those sections explicitly acknowledged, and that the main content of the thesis has not been previously submitted for a degree at any other university.

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Statement by Supervisors

We supervised Anawaite Vuevata Matadradra-Dolavale’s thesis and to our knowledge it is her own work.

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Abstract

The number of Pacific children being affected by escalating socioeconomic problems is rising. In Fiji, as elsewhere, these problems include increasing inequalities, growing relative and absolute poverty, deteriorating environments and the impact of civil or political unrest. The growth in squatter settlements has been labeled alarming as people establish informal homes near urban areas where there are better services and opportunities. As a result, growing issue of poverty and hardship are entrenched. Access to cash income is not the only measure of poverty: people may be poor in cash, but rich in land or poor in access to education but rich in life experience. The links between poverty, poor living conditions and ill health are most evident with children though they are still rarely mentioned in social research. In Fiji, children in poor households are vulnerable to many forms of deprivation and often must go without necessities such as food, school fees, medical care and adequate accommodation. This research sought to study the effects of poverty on children’s welfare and well-being in Namara squatter settlement near Labasa in Vanua Levu. Vanua Levu (referred to as the “North”) in a broader sense is an overlooked part of the Fiji economy (until recently) in terms of policies of economic development and growth. A number of important earlier studies of poverty in Fiji have been carried out but this research focuses specifically on poverty and welfare of children in squatter settlements, a neglected topic in academic research on poverty in Fiji. This research identifies the social and emotional environment in which children are raised, the housing quality and living conditions, physical health, food and nutrition, family support, physical infrastructure, stereotypes of children, and challenges encountered among urban neighbours, school and work. Research done on children, which correlates with health, income, education and other indicators, will help in assessing the extent not only of child poverty but also of child welfare. In finding out more about child poverty in Fiji the research hopes to explore ways for the betterment of living conditions for children. It also hopes to contribute to discussions to help lift children in Fiji out of a life of poverty due to social, economic and political conditions, with the hope of breaking the cycle of inter-generational poverty. It seeks to raise awareness of child poverty among political and economic decision makers and advocate for policy changes.
Abbreviations

AusAID- Australian Agency for International Development
BNP- Basic Need Poverty
CCF- Consumer Council of Fiji
CCF- Christian Children Fund
CFI- Child Fund International
CHIP- The Childhood Poverty Research & Policy Center
CPA- Child Protection Allowance
CRC- Convention on the Rights of the Child
ECREA- Ecumenical Centre for Research, Education and Advocacy
FAS- Family Assistance Scheme
FBoS- Fiji Bureau of Statistic
FENC Fiji- Foundation for the Education of Needy Children in Fiji
FSC- Fiji Sugar Corporation
HA- Housing Authority
HIES- Household Income and Expenditure Survey
GOF- Government of Fiji
NCCC- National Coordinating Committee on Children
NFNC- National Food and Nutrition Center
NGO- Non-Government Organization
NLTB- Native Land Tenure Board
MDG- Millennium Development Goal
PBS- Poverty Benefit Scheme
PCN- People’s Community Network
PIC- Pacific Island Countries
Project HEAVEN- Project Hearing and Vision Enhancement
PWD- Public Works Department
SC Fiji- Save the Children Fiji
UDHR- Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN- United Nations
UNICEF- United Nations Children’s Fund
UNDP- United Nations Development Programme
UNESCAP- United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNESCO- United Nations Economic and Social Council
UNFPA- United Nations Population Fund
USP- University of the South Pacific
WHO- World Health Organization
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Chapter 1 Introduction

“We are guilty of many errors and many faults, but our worst crime is abandoning the children, neglecting the foundation of life. Many of the things we need can wait. The child cannot. Right now is the time his bones are being formed, his blood is being made and his senses are being developed. To him we cannot answer “Tomorrow”. His name is “Today”
-Gabriela Mistral, 1948 (WHO 2012)

1.1 Introduction

The potentially devastating impact of poverty and other forms of socioeconomic disadvantage have underscored the emotional, physical and intellectual development of children and youths. ‘An Atlas of Social Indicators of Children in Fiji’ compiled by UNICEF showed that Fiji has a relatively young population with children 0–18 constituting nearly 40 per cent of the entire population (UNICEF 2011, p.2). Since the 1990s, Fiji has experienced economic downturn; this has seriously affected marginal households and services for children and communities already on the edge of poverty. The coups in Fiji together with the decline of the sugar, garment and tourism industries have caused job losses, land tenure insecurities and increasing social inequalities. In the 1980s there were housing shortages, increased numbers of squatters, unemployment and underemployment and widespread poverty (Gilbert & Gugler 1984, p.34). The apparent lack of income earning opportunities in rural areas is also causing more and more families to move to urban areas. Natural disasters such as cyclones, floods and drought causing food and water shortages affect subsistence agriculture and also result in the loss of income for farmers and casual workers. As a result, a large number of disadvantaged families are pushed into urban squatter settlements.

1 Gabriela Mishra is a Chilean poet, educator, diplomat, and feminist who was the first Latin American (and, so far, the only Latin American woman) to win the Nobel Prize in Literature, in 1945. Throughout her early years she was never far from poverty
2 There have been four coups in Fiji, Rabuka led two coups in 1987, a third coup was staged in 2000. The first 3 coups were ethnic based; the fourth coup in 2006 was to iron out corruption. Many also regard the abrogation of the Constitution in April 2009 as the fifth coup.
Defining poverty is a major analytical problem and definitions vary widely. Most accept that there are two principal definitions of poverty. The first relates to bare subsistence level and is sometimes referred to as absolute poverty; the second relates to the relative nature of poverty in society and is referred to as relative poverty (Barr 1990, p.29). Both absolute and relative poverty exist in Fiji. There is a huge gap between the rich and poor in Fiji with the top 20% taking more than 40% of income and the bottom 20% less than 10%. Those that can be categorized under the absolute poverty category fall 35% below the poverty line or the Basic needs poverty (BNP) (Fiji Poverty Report 1997, p.31). People that fall under this category are those that are unable to obtain sufficient amounts of food, water, shelter, clothing, education and health care to meet their basic needs. Those in the relative poverty category are comparatively deprived and are close to the BNP poverty line. They may be able to obtain the basic necessities but are unable to maintain the standard of living that is considered normal or decent in society. Income level determines their ability to participate in the way of life of the wider community (Barr 1990, p.30). Both definitions obviously lead to different estimates of the number of people in poverty.

The concentration of Fiji’s urban poor in squatter settlements arises not solely because of housing shortage, but because reasonable priced housing is not available. There are households, which do not have enough food and clean water, or access to a well-constructed house or to basic education. The poor, however, is not the only group that inhabits the squatter settlements. People live in squatter settlements for reasons such as loss of land lease or to utilize free available land while saving for a better future. The poor of Fiji are not necessarily the subsistence villagers, the unemployed or the lazy. For example, “squatters [may hold] good jobs such as bus driving or civil servants” (Bryant 1992, p.4). Most poor households have someone in paid employment, but the jobs they have do, do not pay enough to keep them out of poverty. Many
households do not have access to land and sea resources, and even for those that do, subsistence does not provide a good livelihood. Approximately 35 per cent of Fiji’s population is in poverty with Fiji being off track in achieving a number of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), including deterioration in poverty reduction and maternal and child health indicators (AUSAID 2011).

The UNICEF Atlas of Social Indicators of Children in Fiji indicates that more than 180 squatter or informal settlements are estimated to be home to about 15 percent of Fiji’s population (UNICEF 2011, p.4/ CCF Video 2007). The sharp growth in the number of people living in squatter settlement in Fiji has been labeled alarming (Mohanty 2006, p.76). The “common perceptions of squatter settlements are that people are lazy, do not contribute to the economy, are thieves living illegally on other peoples land. Squatter settlements are an eyesore and they do not pay rates and taxes. However, most people are forced into squatting because previous governments have failed in their obligations to the people” (Barr 2007, p.12). A squatter has been defined as “a person who is in illegal occupation of state, freehold or native land or without any form of security of tenure or without any consent from the landowner” (Lingam 2005, p.52). Rapid urbanization, growing poverty, population growth, rural-urban migration, land insecurity, and housing crises are the root causes of growth of squatters (Mohanty 2006, p.76). The increase in squatter settlement, poverty and hardship will demand greater resources than what towns and cities, can muster. Squatter settlements lack even the basic amenities of clean water, electricity, sewerage and garbage disposal.

“Sociologist have come to accept that poverty is a structural or systemic problem. It is a direct result of political and economic policies both at the national and international levels. It is about the unequal distribution of a society’s resources and about the political structures and economic policies which are making some people rich and others poor and marginalized” (Barr 2007, p.33).
Poverty affects children’s health, development, achievement and behavior. Poverty has a great influence on children, both in and out of school and it is these factors that can determine the long-term life chances of children. It is not measured only by assessing access to cash income. People may be poor in cash, but rich in land, or poor in access to education but rich in life experience. The links between poverty, poor living conditions and ill health are most evident among children. For instance, “poor economic circumstances have the potential to impact children’s lives in a number of ways, for example on their family relationships and circumstances, schooling and educational achievements, access to developmental, and recreational opportunities, and on their health” (Finch & Saunders, 2001, p.231; Duncan et al. 1998, p.104). Improving the educational attainment of children who grow up in poverty is important for the individual child, to ensure that they do not grow up in poverty themselves. There is considerable evidence that education in childhood and youth improves one’s chances in adulthood.

The Household Income Expenditure Survey (HIES) done by the Fiji Bureau of Statistics (FBoS) in 2010 indicated that the decline in the sugar industry and declining proportions and amounts of loans to agriculture could have contributed to declining income opportunities available to families thus placing children at risk of discontinued education leading to diminished opportunities in life. The poverty map below (Figure 1), produced by the World Bank and the Fiji Bureau of Statistics through AusAID’s support for social protection, shows poverty is concentrated in the North-eastern part of Vanua Levu and the interior and North of Viti Levu.
According to the Ministry of Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics (2012) the Northern Division or Vanua Levu is the poorest with 54% of its population living below the Basic Need Poverty Line. However, Vanua Levu has only 15% of Fiji’s population. This was recently confirmed by statistics provided by Former Permanent Secretary for Social Welfare, Women and Poverty Alleviation Govind Sami at a seminar on ‘The Challenges of Poverty to the Constitution’ held at the University of the South Pacific which indicated that "the overall poverty reduction is regionally driven while rural poverty remains virtually unchanged" (Fiji Times 2012). Highest rate of poverty is among agricultural workers and construction, tourism and finance workers (FBoS: Fiji Facts and Figures 2011, p.12). The high percent of households in poverty has complications for children in Fiji.
The United Nations has since 1948 adopted many legally binding international human rights instruments (UNCRC 1989/1990). These treaties are used as a framework for discussing and applying human rights. Understanding this framework is important to promoting, protecting and realizing children’s rights because the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the rights and duties contained in it are part of the framework (UNCRC 1989/1990). Children’s rights are therefore important in establishing a theoretical framework for child development. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) defines children as ‘all those under 18 years of age’ but the term ‘child’ covers a wide range of categories of children. In acknowledging International Conventions and other instruments concerning children, Fiji ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child [CRC] on 13th August 1993; adopted the Stockholm Agenda for Action in 1996; signed the Optional Protocol to the CRC in November 2005; signed the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction [28] in October 1980 Government of Fiji Parliamentary Paper 2006, p. 44. In 1993, the Fiji Cabinet endorsed the establishment of a National Coordinating Committee on Children [NCCC] to oversee the implementation of the Convention. Key issues that have been the focus of NCCC include Health, Legal Protection, Education and Family (Ibid 2006, p. 44). Critical concerns are the prevention of child abuse, neglect and exploitation, children being made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS, child trafficking, internal migration and the disaffiliation of children from their families, as well as the reporting requirements to the International Committee on the Rights of the Child. Strengthening protective environments for children at government, community and family levels is a key strategy to address the above concerns (Ibid 2006, p. 44). This includes awareness rising at community level, development of life skills education for children, review of legislations affecting children, and provision of child friendly services and participation of children in decision making.

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3 Human rights are those rights, which are essential to live as human beings. These are basic standards without which people cannot survive and develop in dignity. They are inherent to the human person, inalienable and universal (UNCRC 1989/1990).
4 Section VI of the Millennium Declaration specifies the protection of the vulnerable, in particular, children
5 Membership of the Committee comprises of government agencies, non-government organisations and civil society organisations. The Ministry of Women, Social Welfare & Housing is the current chair and secretariat of the NCCC.
making, migration and the disaffiliation of children from their families, as well as the reporting requirements to the International Committee on the Rights of the Child. This study follows the UNICEF CRC definition of children.

A child can be defined as someone who needs adult protection for physical, psychological and intellectual development until able to become independently integrated into the adult world (Ali & Shukla 2006, p.212). The Convention on the Rights of a Child states in its preamble: “the family, as the fundamental group in society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community” (1990, p.3). The UN General Assembly has recognized the special nature of poverty for children, stating clearly that child poverty ‘is about more than just a lack of money, and can only be understood as the denial of a range of rights laid out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child’ (United Nations Convention for the Rights of Children 1989/1990). Children’s well-being relies in large part on the availability and quality of basic services and an environment for play and leisure. Access to these does not always depend on family income but on the priorities and investments of the state. Growing numbers of children are trapped in the inhumane poverty circle. The poorest of the poor are the most severely disadvantaged, they are the most vulnerable and the weakest in the society.

Over 10% of Fiji's children of age 5-14 years do not attend school (FBoS: Education Statistics 2011, p.5). Only 49% of all children in Fiji complete secondary education (ibid). The biggest constraint to education enrolment has been the cost of school fees and associated costs. However there are significant

---

6 In other Pacific Island Countries (PIC’s), Vanuatu in particular, basic education is not compulsory in and enrolments and attendance are among the lowest in the Pacific. The net primary school attendance ratio is just over 80 per cent, reducing to 46 per cent for junior secondary school and decreasing to only around 10 per cent for senior secondary school. Less than 90 per cent of children who commence primary school reach Class 6.
additional constraints, including location and travel, socio-cultural constraints to school enrolment, such as children’s contribution to subsistence agriculture, and parents who question the utility of school and its curriculum. A lack of qualified teachers, and poor school infrastructure and facilities also contribute to poor outcomes. Low income is a strong predictor of low educational performance. Children from different backgrounds have contrasting experiences at school. Children in poor households are vulnerable to many forms of deprivation and often must go without necessities such as proper meals, water, school stationeries, school fees, medical care and adequate accommodation (UNDP 1997, p.56). Less advantaged children are more likely to feel a lack of control over their learning, and to become reluctant recipients of the taught curriculum. This influences the development of different attitudes to education at primary school that shape their future.

Child Poverty is defined as “children living in poverty experience deprivation of the material, spiritual, and emotional resources needed to survive, develop and thrive, leaving them unable to enjoy their rights, achieve their full potential or participate as full and equal members of society” (The State of the World’s Children, UNICEF, 2005, p.95). It has been said that, “child poverty overall is of special policy relevance, both because children suffer disproportionately more poverty than other adults and because the scars of this experience can carry into adult life” (Ali & Shukla 2006, p.200). Moreover, investing in children is the best way to break the cycle of poverty. This is because children are essential actors both in their development and in the development of their society. There are a number of earlier studies of poverty generally in Fiji but my research focuses specifically on poverty and welfare of children in squatter settlements.

There has not been any academic research on children in squatter settlements. A review of literature suggested that there is lack of data on child poverty and on

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7 Issues of underweight or malnourished children, stunted growth, poor mental development because they are incapable of fending for themselves.
the social, economic and physical environment in which a squatter settlement child is raised. While squatter issues have drawn much media, government and public attention and remain topical there is no real in-depth study of the link between income, wellbeing and child health and maturation. Squatter settlements in Viti Levu have been exposed to some short-term research but Namara Squatter has not been thoroughly studied. This study therefore aims to address the research gap regarding children and contributes to an understanding of poverty’s impact on children. The data will help in assessing the extent not only of child poverty but also on the provision of child welfare. It hopes to contribute to discussions on child poverty in Fiji and ways to increase children’s well-being. It seeks to raise awareness of child poverty among political and economic decision makers and to advocate policy changes.

Figure 2: Map of Fiji Islands and the Satellite Area of Study: Namara squatter settlement, Labasa, Vanua Levu, Fiji (not to scale).

Source: Google Map– Labasa, Vanua Levu. Fiji Islands

ECREA, UNICEF, PCN, FBoS, UNESCAP, USP and some NGO’s have done short-term research on squatter settlements in Viti Levu ie. Nanuku Settlement, Wailea Settlement, Baini Ose Settlement, Jitu Estate.
This study sought to conduct a holistic and in-depth study of children residing in Namara squatter settlement, Labasa, Vanua Levu. Namara settlement also known as “Namara Tiri” (Namara mangrove swamp) is the largest known squatter settlement in Vanua Levu, located nearly 2.6 km from Labasa town, in a marginal land that borders the Qawa River next to a band of mangrove swamps (See Figure 2 above, p.8). Most houses are built on stilts and on high tide the watermarks reach the houses. The settlement has a mixture of Indo-Fijian and iTaukei residents. A report by the Ministry of Health in Labasa (2006, p.12) confirmed that a number of settlers at Namara area formally approached the Chief of Labasa (the 'Tui Naseakula') and presented a request for land to settle; to be near schools and because agricultural land leases were expiring. Others simply heard that “free land” was available in Namara, prompting their move to the settlement, while some settled next to relatives already inhabiting the area. The Namara Sewerage Plant and the rubbish dump for Labasa is nearby and many squatter children scavenge from the dump, and collect scrap metal and cans to sell and support their families.

1.2 Study Background

Primarily, I was compelled to undertake research in the area of child rights and especially child poverty because, I believe, we as a society are only just beginning to comprehend our obligations towards children. Children have a weak voice in our society. Adult interests tend to dominate the socio, economic and political agenda. Child poverty often is one of the most pressing issues of our times and any research that can contribute to our understanding of its extent and consequences is a worthwhile endeavor. Child poverty is the phenomenon of children living in poverty. This applies to children that come from poor families, children of dysfunctional families, street children, abused children, or orphans.

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9 Indigenous Fijians are now called the iTaukei while the Fiji-Indians are called the Indo-Fijians. Everyone in Fiji is called Fijians.
10 In June 1980, the first 3 families to settle in Namara squatter settlement approached the Tui Labasa to request for land.
11 There are 3 provinces in Vanua Levu, Cakaudrove, Bua and Macuata. The 'Tui Naseakula', is the District Chief of Labasa, in the Macuata province.
being raised with limited, or in some cases absent, state resources. Children that fail to meet the minimum acceptable standard of life for the nation where that child lives are said to be poor. In developing countries these standards are lower and when combined with the increased number of orphans the effects are more extreme (Childfund 1999, p.89). The problem of street kids has been a topical issue in Fiji with increasing number of children living in the streets. There have been reports of children being used for labour rather than being in school\textsuperscript{12}. There are children in Fiji who come from very poor family backgrounds and are facing problems in schools or are not attending school at all. In some areas, problems of unemployment of parents have given rise to the poor status of families.

My enthusiasm for this research topic developed in my first year of undergraduate studies when I volunteered and did fieldwork research on children living in the orphanage in Dilkusha, Nausori and how their physical, educational, social and economic needs were provided by the Government and the Methodist Church so that they could enjoy everyday life just like other children\textsuperscript{13}. Being involved with children is really an enriching experience and it made me think of the less fortunate and vulnerable children who are orphaned, living on the streets, forced into child labour and are products of poverty and violence. This motivated me to look more into issues concerning children and reasons why they tend to end up in such situations. Each child is inherently different. They grow, change and mature all the time. Hence it is important to do research on children because they are our future. It is apparent that a large proportion of children in Fiji today are suffering from poverty in terms of lack of nutrition, housing, health and educational opportunities. Global and national crises have adverse effects on the lives and incomes of the poor, causing children to be deprived of their basic necessities.

\textsuperscript{12} Concerns have been raised by some school heads regarding continuous absence of students who, in some cases, have been reported to be used as labourers in the sugar cane areas and metal collection. Parents for economic reasons, prefer their children to work in such circumstances and bring income to the family at the end of the day rather than sending them to school.

\textsuperscript{13} Female Orphans are sheltered, cared, loved, protected and nurtured in Dilkusha Children’s Home (1906) and Saint Christophers Home (1968) in Nausori while the boys are taken care off at the Veilomani Boys Home in Ba (1975).
1.3 Objectives:

This study examined child poverty in Namara squatter settlement and its social dynamics through studying the socio-economic, cultural backgrounds and conditions of children between the ages 6–18. The aim of this research is to record and assess service delivery and opportunities available to the children living in Namara squatter settlement so that evidence based policy can be formulated.

The following questions guided the research observation:
(a) What is the level of child poverty and welfare in the squatter settlement?
(b) What is the current social, environmental and well-being situation of children living in Namara squatter settlement?
(c) What are the major problems that children encounter in the squatter settlement?
(d) Does the settlement provide a positive and peaceful environment for the welfare and protection of children?
(e) What kinds of livelihood strategies are in place for households with children?
(f) How is child poverty in terms of nutrition, housing, education, health, and child welfare and protection monitored?
(g) Are there public policies related to child poverty?
(h) Is there any civil society groups actively engaged in addressing child poverty? Are there community based social support / security / social protection for children?

These were the initial questions that guided the research. Since an ethnographic approach was taken, much of the fieldwork involved open-ended interviews and observation.
1.4 Chapter Outline

The first chapter introduces the topic of research, its aims and objectives, significance of the study and research questions.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the relevant literature, conceptual framework and definitions that helped in the study.

Research methodology and Methods are discussed in Chapter 3. The latter covers sampling, observation and interviews, as well as ethical boundaries and limitations of the study.

Chapter 4 analyses the data gathered in a more detailed way. This chapter is divided into two sections. The first is a brief discussion of Namara squatter settlement’s demography followed by a discussion and analysis of the data gathered from child interviews and observations.

Chapter 5 provides discussion and analysis on data gathered from interviews, agencies and school principals in Labasa.

The thesis concludes with a summary of findings in the light of the literature considered in Chapter Two and considers the implication of the research making recommendation for action and possible further areas of research.
Chapter 2- Looking at the World of Children

2.1: Introduction

As highlighted in Chapter 1, poverty reduction has become a central feature of the international development agenda, with the 21st century starting with vast disparities in terms of income, access to food, water, health, education, housing or employment for families within countries and between countries. The consequences of poverty and inequality are very significant on children. This chapter looks at child poverty and well-being through the eyes of children from global, regional, and national to the local level drawing on recent thinking on the issue of child poverty and inequalities. It provides in detail the capability approach and social constructivist approach, which is required to assess the extent of differences in living standards within households and how it may have social, economic, physical and emotional bearing on a child’s well-being and welfare. In all, this chapter provides the context for the consideration of child poverty and policy, which constitutes the succeeding chapters.

2.2: Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

Childhood is a critical period of development in life. The legal definition of children in most countries is 'persons under the age of eighteen', while biologically the transition from childhood to adulthood is said to occur with the onset of puberty. Culturally defining the end of childhood is more complex, and takes into account factors such as the commencement of work, end of schooling and marriage as well as class, gender and ethnicity. Poverty experienced in childhood can deny a person opportunity that will affect the rest of their life. This may condemn them to a life as well as a childhood in poverty and mean they pass on their poverty to their children (May et.al 2000, p.105). Ben-Arieh & Frones (2007a, p.209) also stated “during this critical stage of life, children are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse and have particular
developmental needs and rights that differ from those of adults”. This is in part because they are still growing physically and are dependent on adults for their wellbeing and security and because they are often powerless (Ben-Arieh & Frones 2007a, p.210). Aristotle argued that happiness for humans is not possible in the absence of reciprocal, affective relationships or friendships (Sherman 1991, p.9). Such relationships for children are only possible in the context of satisfactory attachments, which provide for them a secure base from which to explore their environment (Bowlby 1988, p.89).

A great number of discussions in recent years have been about growing poverty, vulnerability to poverty and heightening inequalities between different groups in Fiji (Barr 1993a, 1993b, Bryant 1993, Bureau of Statistics 2006, Narsey 2006, Kumar & Prasad 2006). Despite Fiji’s assertions about meeting the UN’s Millennium Development Goal targets, the level poverty in Fiji has increased insignificantly (Kumar & Prasad 2000, p.339). Poverty is slightly different in meaning to well-being. For most, the word "poverty" suggests destitution: an inability to provide a family with nutritious food, clothing, and reasonable shelter. Some people describe poverty, as a lack of essential items such as food, clothing, water, and shelter – needed for proper living. At the UN’s World Summit on Social Development, the ‘Copenhagen Declaration’ described poverty as “…a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information” (UNICEF, 1999, p.34). When people are unable to eat, go to school, or have any access to health care, then they can be considered to be in poverty, regardless of their income. Poverty can also be defined as the lack of economic, social, physical, environmental, cultural and political resources that prevent people of all ages from fulfilling their potential needs (May, Page & Brunsdon 2000, p.123). Poverty can also be defined as:

“...denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed and clothe a family, not having a
school or clinic to go to; not having the land on which to grow one’s food or a job to earn one’s living, not having access to credit. It means insecurity, powerlessness and exclusion of individuals, households and communities. It means susceptibility to violence, and it often implies living on marginal or fragile environments, without access to clean water or sanitation” (UNESCO1998, p.13).

The growth of squatter settlements in Fiji reflects back to the socio, economic and political issues encountered in the country. The PIAS-DG Discussion Paper (July 2006) on Enhancing Policy Dialogue around Squatter Settlement in Pacific States noted that “Pessimistically, squatting is an indication of uncontrolled urbanization, socio-economic disparity, poverty, and rural underdevelopment within a country” (PIAS-DG Enhancing Policy dialogue around squatter settlements in Pacific States. Consultation Workshop held at Lagoon Resort, Pacific Harbour 13-14 December: 2005). Kevin Barr identified the major reasons why there is an increase in numbers of people in Fiji living in squatter settlements

“Rural-urban migration whereby people look for better employment and better education and health care for their children, because government, over the years, have not provided an adequate supply of affordable low cost housing, because of poverty, unemployment and low wages and have allowed too many workers to be paid wages well below the poverty line, because too many people have lost land leases and been forced to find some sort of informal housing for themselves and their families, because of the difficulty of obtaining land through proper channels and finally because of the rapid escalation in the price of land, housing and rents in urban areas” (Barr 2007, p.34).

Poverty pervades all communities, Fijian, Indo-Fijian, and Others. According to the 2012 Poverty of Fiji Islands Report by the Fiji Bureau of Statistics, the gap between the rich and the poor is increasing (FBoS 2012). But much could be done to improve the situation with relatively little money, especially in housing. Urban areas in Fiji tend to attract squatter settlements The Bureau of Statistics 2012 report indicated that the poorest in the rural Northern division have migrated out to urban areas in Vanua Levu. A possible explanation of this is because of better access to resources as well as marketing opportunities.
The FoBs Facts and Figures show that almost a quarter of the poor live close to the three biggest urban centres, Suva, Lautoka and Labasa (2012). Labasa stands out as an area with both high poverty rates and a high proportion of the poor. Narsey indicated in the Poverty in Fiji 2012 report that ‘the Northern Division remains the most poor of all divisions in Fiji with some 47% of the occupants below the Basic Needs Poverty Line (Ibid 2012). According to the Children in Fiji: An Atlas of Social Indicators, ‘ongoing research and analysis confirms that impoverished child populations suffer from the highest concentrations of disease, ill health, illiteracy and abuse and face a much higher risk of dying before the age of five (United Nations Children’s Fund 2011, p.3). However, while most focus is on poverty at the national level, children’s access to education, as well as the reduction of infant and child mortality rates, needs focus and concerted action for a better environment for children.

Previous studies undertaken in Fiji have focused on the poverty status of the urban poor (Walsh 1999, Narsey 2007). In view of the fact that household food insecurity is associated with and rises in the context of financial resource constraints, no studies have been conducted to assess household food security in the urban poor (UNDP 1997). Absolute poverty affects the nutrition of children. Low birth weight, protein-energy malnutrition and anaemia, have been alarmingly high (NFNC 2004). Under-nutrition contributes to several other infections and diseases, and therefore strains the health facilities. As the poor households spend larger share of their income on food, due to high food prices, they are highly vulnerable to household food insecurity, (Consumer Council of Fiji, 2009). The current economic crisis and the devaluation, further exacerbate the situation of the urban poor, who entirely depend on supermarket and imported food, because unavailability of land for planting causes food insecurity and hunger. Despite the commitments and efforts made at the international and national levels, food security needs to be explored at
the household level, in order to reduce the burden of food-related ill health and its costs to our people and health services (UNDP 1997).

Researchers have argued that even the wealthiest country in the world has children living in poverty (Lindsey 1994, p.3). According to Lindsey (1994) impoverished families who are unable to meet the needs of their children rely on the child welfare system for help. In some countries, orphanages and child protection systems to both investigate reports of child abuse and rescue children from their misery. Studies in Child Protection (1995, p.89) stated that child abuse was related to “severe or enduring punishment or emotional neglect”. This usually came about due to “quality of parents marriages, their mental health, possible drug misuse, parents own experience of abuse, their age, education, religion, and living condition at the time the children were born” (ibid, p. 21). The literature suggests there is a link between child abuse, poverty and slums and ghettos.

The literature suggests children are “neglected in development planning or seen as special cases and thereby 'tagged' on to the development agenda” (Ross & Roberts 1999, p.15). The implication of poverty and failing to invest in children affects the health, well-being and productivity of future generations and society as a whole. This is because children are the future. Child welfare and protection is an important dimension of any society and nation. Ben-Ariech (2009, p.16) stated “measuring and monitoring children’s well-beings is of growing importance to policymakers and those who strive to improve lives of children”. Similarly, the United Nations Population Fund Contribution to the Goals of the World Summit for Children (2001, p.3) stated, “there is no task more urgent than to improve the current state of the world’s children and to work towards providing them and the generation after them a better future”. The United Nations Population Fund recommended that “what needs to be done is to make the world less harsh, more sensitive and much more humane...at the same time children must have, within their reach, the
knowledge and the tools they need to help each one of us shape the world” (2001, p.3). Therefore understanding children’s rights is important in promoting, protecting and realizing children.

2.3 Implication of Child Poverty definitions

Child poverty is the phenomenon of children living in poverty. Childhood poverty is the poverty experienced during childhood by children and young people. It is defined as “children and young people growing up without access to different types of resources that are vital for their wellbeing and for them to fulfill their potential” (CHIP Briefing 1: Children and Poverty 2010). Child poverty means a “child growing up without an adequate livelihood, growing up without opportunities for human development, growing up without family and community structures that nurture and protect them, and growing up without opportunities for voice” (May et.al 2000, p.123).

Child poverty is a social problem that has become a significant issue in Fiji yet not very well documented. Passing references to children in poor households are made in the Fiji Poverty Report (UNDP 1997) and Save the Children Fund Fiji noted that ‘school dropouts were explicitly high among poor squatter children’ (1998). The causes of child poverty can vary. The causes of adult poverty, such as government policies, lack of education, unemployment, social services, disabilities and discrimination, are also significant in child poverty. Ben-Arieh noted the, “lack of finance is a direct cause of child poverty and lack of parental employment, suitable jobs or qualifications, and sometimes discrimination and racism, can be regarded as an indirect cause of child poverty” (2009, p.39). Low paid jobs, high living costs, and broken family structure, poor housing, ethnicity and low education also play a very significant role in causing high level of child poverty (ibid). Children affected

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14 The UN General Assembly has adopted a powerful definition of child poverty, acknowledging that while poverty harms everyone, children experience poverty differently (UNICEF 2005a).
by economic, social and political unrest are more likely to be deprived of an adequate education (United Nations: The Millennium Development Goals Report 2008, p. 6).

Table 1: Different Key Words in the ‘Child Poverty’ Definition.

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<td>-Deprivation of material, spiritual &amp; emotional resources needed to survive</td>
<td>-Lack of economic, social, cultural, physical, environmental and political resources</td>
<td>-Denial of socio-economic rights, poor living standard, child’s physical, mental, spiritual, moral, and social development, food, security, shelter, water and sanitation</td>
<td>-Place children first</td>
<td>-Deprivation (lack of materialistic conditions/services)</td>
<td>-Deprivation</td>
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<td>-Develop and thrive rights to full potential/participation</td>
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<td>-Invest in children</td>
<td>-Exclusion (lack of social benefits &amp; safety)</td>
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<td>-Leave no child behind</td>
<td>-Vulnerability (when society cannot deal with threats to children)</td>
<td>-Vulnerability</td>
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Source: Adapted by Research from UNICEF\(^\text{15}\), CHIP, UNDP, SC, CIF & CCF

There are various ways to define child poverty as indicated by Table 1 (above). In Table 1, a common description of child poverty is ‘deprivation’. This term is applicable to my research as children are deprived physically, socially and emotionally. Other organizations\(^\text{16}\) also use this multi-dimensional approach to child poverty, defining it as a combination of economic, social, cultural, physical, environmental and emotional factors. These definitions suggest child poverty is multidimensional, relative to their current and changing living conditions and

\(^{15}\) UNICEF works to provide evidence on poverty and vulnerability faced by the Pacific children in order to influence the Pacific Island Countries (PIC) government’s social and economic policies to become more children centered and pro-poor. In 2008, the Pacific for the first time conducted a Child Poverty study using the Global Child Poverty and Disparity methodology (UNICEF: Child Poverty and Vulnerability 2010).

\(^{16}\) This study involved the examination of various Child Poverty and Well Being documents available from the UNICEF, UNDP, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Convention on the Rights of Children by the United Nations, the Rights of Child in Fiji and the State of Children reports. This reports and publications were scrutinized to determine how far Government was committed to the needs of vulnerable children in Fiji.
complex interactions of the body, mind and emotions are involved. Child poverty is quantified by setting an absolute or relative monetary threshold. If a family does not earn above that threshold the children of that family will be considered to live below the poverty line. Absolute poverty thresholds are fixed and generally only updated for price changes, whereas relative poverty thresholds are developed with reference to the actual income of the population and reflect changes in consumption. The absolute poverty threshold is the money needed to purchase a defined quantity of goods and services. While there is no exact standard used to set the threshold, and they vary from country to country, it generally reflects the minimum income needed to acquire the necessities of life.

One of the important implications of defining child poverty is that it has an impact on poverty reduction strategies, as well as the development of indicators for tracking the success of poverty reduction strategies. All the definitions of child poverty reviewed above go beyond the popular one-dimensional monetary approach. Minujin agrees and considered “material deprivation (including basic social services), as well as additional essential factors that enable a child to survive, develop, and participate in society” (2005, pg. 3). The existence of a single child poverty definition would encourage policy makers and organizations to recognize and directly address the special needs of children living in poverty. The implication of a child poverty definition is that it highlights the importance of direct policy interventions that address children’s deprivation, exclusion and vulnerability.

If poverty is understood as more than just income poverty, then responses need to address the broader picture of children’s experience of poverty. Figure 3 (below) shows the non-income dimensions of child poverty used by UNICEF to measure disparities and disparities in East Asia and the Pacific. The non-income dimensions of child poverty measures can be categorized in terms of water, food, health, shelter, education and information. Children have basic needs, such as adequate nutrition and healthcare, that if unmet could result in long-term
consequences, including limitations on their physical and cognitive development, and consequently, on opportunities in adulthood. However, children have no income of their own and the fulfillment of their needs is determined by intra-household dynamics.

Figure 3: The Non-Income Dimensions of Child Poverty

Child well-being measures the quality of children’s lives. However, as simple as the concept sounds, there is no unique, universally accepted way of actually measuring child well-being that emerges from the academic literature. ‘Wellbeing’ describes the quality of childhoods as they are lived (Ben-Arieh 2009, p.110). Child Well-being can be defined and measured in two broad approaches (Ross & Roberts 1999, p.123). According to Ross and Roberts (1999, p.123) the “first approach is to consider well-being as a multi-dimensional concept. Some researchers use this approach by using the determinant dimensions of life, populating it with indicators”. The second approach is to directly ask children how they view their well-being. Pollard and Lee defined child well-being as “a multi-dimensional construct incorporating
psychological, physical and social dimensions” (2003, p.101). This definition, however, does not include child poverty, which is very much important in this study. Simeonsson (1994, p.108) stated that “advanced health care and technology, and the provision of universal education and protective and entitling laws in society would support the assumption that all children will grow up enjoying good health, will receive an appropriate education, and will experience well-being”. More recently, Ben-Arieh and Frones (2007a, p.30) have offered the following definition, whereby “child well-being encompasses quality of life in a broad sense. It refers to a child’s economic conditions, peer relations, political rights, and opportunities for development”. Studies tend to focus on certain aspects of children’s well-being, often emphasizing social and cultural variations.

Children can be born into a single parent home, or they can lose a parent due to death or incarceration. If a child loses both parents and is not adopted or accepted in foster care they are generally raised by either state funded or charitable orphanages. Through a lessening of financial pressure and increased investment the quality of these orphanages has improved in developed countries, although they can still contribute to adverse effects in the child’s development17. However, in developing countries the conditions can be horrendous with most children destined to a life of poverty (UNICEF 2005a, p.89). Financial difficulties may constrain children from achieving academic, social, physical, emotional, and vocational capabilities to their maximum potential. Cannan and Warren (1997, p.79) stated that the individuals within households often do not necessarily have equal access to that family’s or household’s resources. May, Page & Brunson (2000, p.125) on the other hand stated that “children can and do actively contribute to household, community and even wider development from an early age. They are not simply a vulnerable group of powerless individuals who suddenly come of age at 18”. Basically, understanding how the social, political, economic dimensions of

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17 Vulnerability and Child abuse
squatter life poverty affects children is important for helping them, their families and their communities escape poverty. May, Page & Brunsdon argued that, “children need more targeted policies that recognize their needs and rights to survival, protection, development and participation” (2000, p.113). Policy makers or government officials need to look into issues pertaining to the welfare and well-being of children because if they do not do so then a generation may be condemned to poverty.

Children are socialized by many people in society whether it is parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousin, friends, teachers, coaches, religious leaders and role models in the media. These agents of socialization use many techniques, which will be discussed to influence children to behave, think and feel according to what is considered worthy. Socialization for children is a very complex process. The more technological and diverse the society, the more the child will have to learn to adapt effectively, the more socializing agents and experiences contribute to the process, and the more time development occurs within a child. The study of human development is a rich and varied subject. We all have personal experience with development, as it is sometimes difficult to understand how and why people grow, learn, and act as they do; theories of child development provide a useful framework for thinking about human growth, development, and learning. Childhood lays the foundations for adult abilities, interests and motivation hence is the keystone for assuring equal opportunities for adults. Yet many questions about childhood poverty are not answered. This research relies on several theories and schools of thought to understand how child development and child poverty in squatter settlements interrelates and affects the future of Fiji.

In the discussions of identifying and measurement of child poverty, there are a number of different suggestions and conceptual approaches used at the individual and household level. Child poverty measures and prevalence varies depending on chosen indicators. Alkire and many other researchers and policy
makers argue that to investigate and analyze child poverty first we need to stipulate what is needed in a specific society for children to survive and grow. Second fundamental steps for the child poverty measurement approach is setting on the choice of definition of child poverty that can play a crucial role on what measures are chosen as indicators of poverty (Alkire S et al. 2008, p.92). Some focus solely on the essential material needs like level of consumption and expenditure relative to the average standard of living while others focus their analysis by considering a rights-based approach. However the most common used indicator to measure child poverty is household income and expenditures. Overall household level income and expenditures are gathered and then simply divided by the number of members in the household to obtain individual values. This assumes that all household members share fortunes and misfortunes equally, which is particularly problematic in the case of analyzing squatter children problems. Chattier (2011, p.14) stated that ‘poverty is multi-dimensional thus limiting the measures of it to income or consumption shortfalls at household level masks the true extent of poverty, particularly for the vulnerable groups, like women and children’.

Allen & Thomas (2000, p.4) provide a relevant insight on the existence of poverty where the world revolves around problems that result in hunger and famine, diseases, unemployment, population, environmental degradation and war. People in low-income countries simply do not have access to the necessary resources to achieve anything approaching ‘a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being’. They also emphasized the importance of identifying and understanding the level of poverty in a society in order to create functions including policy analysis and actions. Allen and Thomas further stated that we have to find modes of analysis that will help in understanding and assessing future experiences and new and unexpected situations. This is because poverty is like heat, you cannot see it but you can only feel it. To know poverty, you have to go through it.

18 In practice it has proved quite possible for development to occur without alleviating poverty.
The capability approach is a broad normative framework for the evaluation and assessment of individual well-being and social arrangements, the design of policies, and proposals about social change in society. It is used to evaluate several aspects of people’s well-being, such as inequality, poverty, the well-being of an individual or the average well-being of the members of a group (Robeyns 2005, p.94). The core characteristic of the capability approach is its focus on what people are effectively able to do and their capabilities. Sen argues that our evaluation and policies should focus on what people are able to do and be, on their quality of life, and on removing obstacles in their lives so that they have more freedom to live the kind of life that, upon reflection, they have reason to value\(^\text{19}\) (Sen, cited in Robeyns 2005, p.94). In the midst of all these endeavours one concern stands out: Sen’s concern for the deprived. This sensitivity connects many areas of economics on which Sen has worked. Through Sen (1980; 1992; 1999) an approach to the quality of life assessment was established. This is called the Capability Approach, used to understand the question of poverty, intra-household relations, and inequality. The capability approach stipulates that an evaluation of individual or social status should focus on people’s real or substantive freedom to lead the lives they find valuable (Sen 1993). The ability to make choices and enjoy real freedom is called the people’s capability. A person’s capability reflects his or her functioning and potential well-being. This achieved well-being refers to being mentally healthy, physically healthy, being sheltered and cared for, being educated, and being part of the community. Narayan et.al argued that, across continents, countries, contexts and types of people a good quality of life includes:

“material well-being, which is often expressed as having enough; bodily well-being which includes being strong, well and looking good; social well-being, including caring for and settling children\(^\text{20}\); having self-respect, peace, good relations in the family and community; having security, including civil peace, a safe and secure environment, personal physical security and confidence in the future; and having

\(^{19}\) An indicative list of the landmark books in these areas include Sen 1960, 1970, 1973, 1985a

\(^{20}\) Settling children meaning rearing children to become matured and independent adults
All capabilities together correspond to the overall freedom to lead the life that a person has reason to value. According to Sen (1993) resources are only the means to enhance people’s well-being and advantage; the concern should be with what matters intrinsically, the people’s ability to convert these resources into capabilities. Moreover, because the capability approach measures well-being in terms of the individual across diversities, acknowledges human diversity such as age, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and geographical location, in evaluations of poverty, deprivation and well-being. This characteristic of the capability approach is important for the child poverty analysis because issues of diversity will help with understanding intra-household inequalities.

According to the capability approach, the ends of well-being, justice and development should be conceptualized in terms of people’s capabilities to function; that is, their effective opportunities to undertake the actions and activities that they want to engage in, and be whom they want to be. These beings and doings, which Sen calls functioning’s, together constituted what makes a life valuable. Functioning’s included working, resting, being literate, being healthy, being part of a community, being respected, and so forth. The distinction between achieved functioning and capabilities is between the realized and the effectively possible; in other words, between achievements on the one hand, and freedoms or valuable options from which one can choose on the other. What is ultimately important is that people have the freedoms or valuable opportunities (capabilities) to lead the kind of lives they want to lead, to do what they want to do and be the person they want to be. Once they effectively have these substantive opportunities, they can choose those options that they value most.
The capability approach evaluates policies according to their impact on people’s capabilities. It asks whether people are being healthy, and whether the means or resources necessary for this capability are present, such as clean water, access to doctors, protection from infections and diseases, and basic knowledge on health issues. It asks whether people are well-nourished, and whether the conditions for this capability, such as having sufficient food supplies and food entitlements, are being met. It asks whether people have access to a high-quality educational system, to real political participation, to community activities that support them to cope with struggles in daily life and that foster real friendships. For some of these capabilities, the main input will be financial resources and economic production, but for others it can also be political practices and institutions, such as the effective guaranteeing and protection of freedom of thought, political participation, social or cultural practices, social structures, social institutions, public goods, social norms, traditions and habits.

Ravallion has indicated that parental self-sacrifice might lead some adults to give part of their resources in favor of their children (1994, p. 239). Alternatively, as a survival strategy, some parents may sacrifice the weakest of their children. However, in most households in Fiji, children are given more priority than others because they are dependent on adult care. The above perspectives imply that poverty analysis at household level might not obviously reflect the poverty burden on children. In order to understand the child poverty situation in a given area at a given point in time we need to have child focused poverty analysis approach. To this end Roelen, Gassmann and Neubourg listed reasons for the importance of a specific child poverty measurement approach. Children are at a higher risk of poverty regardless of place and time. They rely on the distribution of resources by their parents, household or community members. It means children are directly or indirectly dependent on their families or communities resource for their share (Roelen et al. 2009, p.39).

Yanghee adds another dimension to this approach in maintaining that poverty
experienced in childhood is different from experiencing poverty as an adult. The former threatens and undermines all aspects of childhood: physical, intellectual, and socio-emotional development. In addition, it prevents children from enjoying equal opportunities, creates social, economic, and gender disparities that ultimately contribute to the vicious circle of poverty (2008, p.20). These and other related arguments show that the issue of child poverty should be treated in systematic and sensitive way from broader poverty analysis. It is true that childhood poverty is connected to family and community poverty however, it is simply impossible to assume policies that improve the livelihoods and well-being of poor communities will necessarily enable communities and households to meet children’s survival, development and protection needs and guarantee children’s rights.

2.4 Summary:

Years after the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations Convention for the Rights of Children 1989/1990), governments, and the international community are still far from fulfilling children’s rights and creating a world fit for children. The world is falling short of its promise and commitment to ensure that every child enjoys a safe and nurturing childhood. In Fiji, 40% of children live in poverty; this is equivalent to 2 in 5 children (FBoS 2012). In this research, enhancing children’s lives and improving child wellbeing in squatter settlement like Namara squatter settlement is taken as the central objective of children’s policy. Wellbeing draws in the many different factors which affect children’s lives including material conditions; housing and neighborhoods; how children feel and do at school, their health; exposure to dangerous risks; and the quality of family and classmate relationships children develop. Although child poverty is a different concept to wellbeing, poverty influences each aspect of wellbeing and is a

21 Debate today is about development rather than improvement as it is quite impossible for development to occur without alleviating poverty.
major obstacle to delivering better wellbeing. Child poverty focuses on the need of vulnerable children. The UN definition of child poverty was used as it defines “children living in poverty are deprived of nutrition, water and sanitation facilities, access to basic health-care services, shelter, education, participation and protection, and that while a severe lack of goods and services hurts every human being, it is most threatening and harmful to children, leaving them unable to enjoy their rights, to reach their full potential and to participate as full members of the society” (UNICEF 2007). The existence of a child poverty definition should encourage policy makers and organizations to recognize and directly address the special needs of children living in poverty.

This chapter provides an overview of this issue in terms of reviewing the available literature that addresses some for the issues related to the definition, measurement and the approach used to analyse child poverty and well-being. The capability approach as a result covers all dimensions of human well-being. Development, well-being, and justice are regarded in a comprehensive and integrated manner, and much attention is paid to the links between material, mental and social well-being, or to the economic, social, political and cultural dimensions of life. This is discussed through how we define child poverty at the international and regional level. Children experience poverty in an environment that is damaging to their mental, physical, emotional and spiritual development. Therefore, expanding the definition of child poverty beyond traditional conceptualizations, such as low household income or low levels of consumption, is particularly important. And yet, child poverty is rarely differentiated from poverty in general and its special dimensions are seldom recognized. Child poverty is not only a violation of children’s rights; it also leads to adult poverty. The literature suggests that in order to realize children’s rights and to tackle poverty, Fiji’s poverty reduction strategies cannot ignore the special needs of children. The following chapter discusses the methods, methodology and conceptual framework that were used to obtain data needed for this research.
Chapter 3- Speaking to Children

3.1 Introduction:

The success of any social research depends on "the logical and compelling connection between the research question and the choice of methods (Marshall and Rossman, 1989, 46). Having examined the literature relating to the framework of looking at child development, child poverty and the capability approach, this chapter provides detail on the social constructivist approach, which is required to understand and examine the various factors that result in the current social, economic, environmental and well-being of children involved in the primary research of this study. Further research methods are outlined in this chapter to provide how findings were derived and analyzed. These include issues of sampling a selection of participants from Namara squatter settlement (at 3.5), interview and participant observation.

3.2 Social Construction of Reality

The capability approach places particular emphasis on the different dimensions of child development and well-being (as discussed in Chapter 2). In line with this holistic, socially situated conceptualization of context, the 1966 work of Berger and Luckman, entitled ‘The Social Construction of Reality: A treatise in the Sociology of knowledge,’ was employed to guide a methodology aimed at retrieving the social processes linking people, place, and physical activity. This early, seminal work, which viewed human behaviour to be contextually determined and socially constructed, was used to study the reasons for reportedly lower physical activity levels within lower socioeconomic families. In a broader sense, social constructivism refers to the kind of social context that people find themselves in and the kind of world people find and live in since social support is available and something they are reliant on. For instance, ‘this is how things are’ and ‘this is the way things are done’. The Social
Constructivist Approach was used because it is a theoretical orientation that guides research in a different way, in that it focuses on many disciplines as it assumes reality being constructed through a dynamic, cultural, historical and political process. The social constructivist approach is used because social phenomena develop into social context. It focuses on human awareness and consciousness and its place in the world affairs. This is because a social constructivist epistemology can be used to link the reality of development, poverty, and the growth of squatter settlements, to social values and the effectiveness of state housing policies. This link is evident as Fiji’s population is progressively moving from rural villages to urban areas searching for jobs and education. But as, high unemployment, low wages, unavailability of affordable housing and a decline in real income result in an increase in squatter settlements, there is increased pressure on basic services and living space.

Social constructionists no longer aim to study how the world really is but instead assume the existence of multiple social realities, as people have different stories about reality. My study was based on a social constructivist approach that situated Namara settlement in the broader context of squatter settlement and poverty in Fiji. Social constructivism gives us a way of viewing reality as we construct our reality out of our given situations. The defining feature of squatters in Fiji is that they are landless with inadequate security of tenure and that they are among the poorest people in society. Their social circumstances have bearing on life chances of their children. This framework enables a questioning of the concept of context itself, and a treatment of it beyond environmental factors to the processes via which experiences and interactions are made meaningful. This approach makes reference to people’s histories, habituations and dispositions. This framework of thinking is used to generate an empirical focus on the ways in which children and families in Namara squatter settlement interact with various living contexts over time to create a particular construction of physical activity in their lives. A methodological approach suited to this thinking was found in Charmaz’s (1996,
adoption of a social constructivist approach to grounded theory. This approach enabled a focus on people’s own constructions and versions of their experiences through an inductive method, which provided a systematic strategy for identifying patterns in the data. Child poverty has serious consequences for the individuals as well as the wider society. These include loss to the economy through reduced productivity, lower educational attainment and poor health. Taking into consideration children’s views means that qualitative methods are fundamental to this research.

A social constructivist view of a context helps us ascertain the context’s overall scope, definitions and meaning but how behavioral interactions and orders are decided upon and sustained within it. This research project focuses on social aspects of life rather than on an individual basis, looking at not only on how individuals construct their reality but rather at how groups of individuals communicate and negotiate their views and perspectives regarding reality. This is because child poverty has serious consequences for individuals and wider social implications. Social constructivist was identified for the purpose of this study as a useful conceptual tool for bringing into question how norms and a status quo regarding physical activity in Namara squatter settlement have developed over time. The framework is not being used to make the case that poorer people have somehow ‘made up’ a negative relationship to life but rather that complex interactions, economic and circumstantial constraints, and aspects of the environment particular to this demographic have interacted over time to construct health, education, and daily living in a poor light, or as an unattainable goal. Importantly, it allows the researcher to take a ‘ground up’ approach to finding out which aspects of context matter in the construction of child poverty in Namara.
Figure 3: Conceptual Framework of Family Quality of Life

The family quality of life (Figure 6 above) derived from Turnbull (2000, p.187) was used to conceptualize the social constructivist approach. The family quality of life framework links to child development and child poverty theories because families have always been a vital aspect of successful living of children. Families nurture the young in environment conducive to their development, building a safe and healthy home for their children. The importance of positive social environments and relationships between children, parents and siblings results in a good quality of life. For some, this might mean having a lot of money. For others it might mean having a good job, a good education, health and livelihood for them and their children. But for almost all of us, in addition to such things, having a good quality of life also means being happy and fulfilled. Family quality of life is no different in its ingredients than individual quality of life. However it is different in its focus. Family quality of life pertains to the family as a whole and having all categories of the individual
family member’s needs met. The ability of individuals to satisfy these basic needs arises from the opportunities available and taken at the family and individual level.

3.3 Qualitative Data Analysis

Considering the nature and scope of this study, it was decided that a qualitative method would be appropriate to ensure that the relevant information and data are gathered to meet the objectives and aims of this research. Qualitative research was used to gain insight into people's attitudes, behaviour, value systems, concerns, motivations, aspirations, culture or lifestyle (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2004, p.37). The qualitative methodology employed in this research, lies within the ethnographic tradition. This is because my research is a systematic study of a particular group of people and their cultures. I lived with the participants of my research, spoke their language, ate and played with them and was accepted by them. This enabled me to gain insights into their daily lives. The scope of my study on child poverty and its causes was linked and limited to the views, opinions and experience of children in the Namara squatter settlement between the years 6-18 who were involved in the research. This was carried out in terms of semi-structured in-depth interviews and observation abiding with the University of the South Pacific Code of Ethics Guideline.

3.4 Research Methods:

A key aspect of the methodology in researching from children’s perspective has been to involve children as co-constructors of knowledge during the data gathering stage. Acknowledging that children are usually subordinated to adults in social relations, children’s voices may have been silenced on the questions that pertain to their welfare and well-being. This was dealt through individual interviews with children after parental consents.
Through undertaking research for the School of Government, Development and International Affairs at the University of the South Pacific in August 2011 I confronted children in the Namara squatter settlement. This being my first fieldwork research was an enriching and inspirational experience. The fieldwork was an “In-depth study of the Origins, Dynamics and Implications of Namara Squatter Settlement in Labasa”. This fieldwork research was for 5 weeks and the information gathered became a valuable source of data for my research. The information gathered was related to demography (age, household size and membership), number of children in each household, nutrition (daily intake of food and its composition), housing and environmental conditions, ethnicity of residents and religious backgrounds, livelihoods of residents and their incomes/expenditures, social relationship, community based social support, problems faced by the Namara squatters, access to opportunities and services, and cultures in the squatter settlement.

Using this readily available information, I drew up another interview schedule for the children of Namara squatter settlement relating to their health, social, physical environment, emotional well–being, family interaction, and education (Refer to Appendix1).

3.5 Sampling the study participants

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children defines children as “those below the age of 18”. The study participants for this research paper were children between the ages 6-18 years old from Namara squatter settlement. The second fieldwork research for this thesis was for 2 weeks and was carried out within the first two weeks of January, 2012. Relevant information gathered was on child poverty and well–being of children in Namara squatter settlement, Labasa. In August 2011, there were 68 households in Namara squatter settlement. iTaukei household made up 36.76% and Indo-Fijian Household made up 63.23% of the total household population. A
A proportionate sample was drawn from this population as not all households have children less than 18 years. A total of 93 children between the ages 6-18 years old were interviewed, from 40 households.

Table 2: Family Size / Ethnicity in Namara squatter settlement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Nuclear Family</th>
<th>Single Parent Families</th>
<th>Extended Families</th>
<th>Households that Overlap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indo Fijians</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fijians</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Families in Namara squatter settlement generally comprised 4–6 person, 2 adults and 2–4 children. Most families had children. There are 68 families altogether in Namara squatter settlement, however, for this research paper only 40 households with school-aged children between the age 6-18 were surveyed. For the 40 households that were researched, there were 25 Indo-Fijian Households, 13 Fijian Household and 2 Muslim Household (See Table 2 above). In each household there are about 1-8 children. 67.5% of the households have 1-3 children, 27.5% of the Household have 4-6 children while, 5% of the household have 7-8 children.

An interview schedule with topics for open-ended discussions that related to the research objectives was used. Face to face interviews were conducted with children in the Namara squatter settlement. In many cases parents were at home and were randomly interviewed. 60% of the children interviewed from each household were Hindus, 32.5% of the children interviewed were Christians while 7.5% of the children were from Muslim households. In the sample the 6–
13 year olds attended primary school while those who fell in the age range 14–18 years attended secondary school. Establishing contact with the study participants was very important. This was made possible through my knowledge of the Bauan Fijian and a little understanding of the Fiji Hindi language. The average duration of active interview from the first question to the last was 20-30 minutes.

### 3.6 Talanoa Session

Talanoa sessions/ interviews with Government officials, community leaders, and school principals were also conducted to supplement the information collated from the children’s interviews. Again mostly unstructured interview questions about perceptions of the Namara settlement as well as issues and future plans were discussed. Such persons included the Commissioner Northern, Labasa Town Council members, Lands Department official in Labasa, nurses and doctors from the Labasa Hospital, Education officers from the Ministry of Education Labasa office, Social Welfare officers, FENC Fiji officer, Fiji Bureau of Statistics Labasa officer and Labasa business and community leaders. School Head teachers from the three nearby primary (Labasa Muslim Primary School, Bethal Primary School and Holy Family Primary School) school and three secondary school Principals (Labasa College High School, Holy Family Secondary School and Labasa Sangam High School) were also interviewed. Questions asked were related to child poverty and the level of child poverty within Labasa. The interview question contained 14 in-depth questions (Refer to Appendix 2).

Respondents were provided with the unstructured interview questionnaire in advance of the interview, as a practice to show openness, to inform them of the questions, allowing them to prepare their responses. Appointments were made at the Head of the Office’s convenience. At the start of each interview,

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22 Talanoa sessions are discussion or story telling sessions. This can be conducted either in English or the iTaukei language.
interviewees were introduced to the researcher, the topic of study and its purpose. To ensure ethical principles were considered, each leader was assured of the confidentiality of their responses with regard to their name and identity. The researcher promised to seek prior approval, if any referenced citations were to be made. All interviews were digitally recorded at the interviewees’ consent, only for the purposes of capturing all the information for transcription, and allowing the researcher to engage fully in and facilitate the dialogue. To facilitate the process, the respondent was provided with a sheet of information, which was referred to during the course of discussion.

The information collected was analyzed under a number of child poverty sub-headings.

3.7 Participant Observation

Given the frequency of human inconsistency, observation can be a powerful check against what people report about themselves during interviews. This research project was based on observing children as they carried on with their daily activities. Generally, I was trying to live life like an insider while remaining an outsider. In a way I was putting myself in their shoes and attempting to experience life the way they experience it. Daily observation was made as children set about their routine each day. I became directly involved with children who were being studied. This was through playing, watching television, eating and fishing with them. Joint activities included helping their mother prepare meals, and eating and conversing with them and later washing and drying dishes with their children. Playing with the kids was more adventurous as we went out in their swampy overgrown grass field to play. Despite the swampy, bumpy, soggy, crab holes and overgrown grass conditions in the playground, seeing the children settlement have fun daily and
enjoying life was very exciting and encouraging. On some occasions I went fishing along the waterways and also went to catch prawns and crabs with their mothers. Observation was also done as children prepared for school and as they returned from school, with chores and homework to do at home. I tried to be observant as possible without upsetting, disrupting or imposing on children as they undertook their daily routine.

Data obtained through participant observation serves as a check against participants’ subjective reporting of what they believe and do (Bandopadhyay 2011, p.1). Participant observation is also useful for gaining an understanding of the physical, social, cultural, and economic contexts in which study participants live; the relationships among and between people, contexts, ideas, norms, and events; and people’s behaviors and activities – what they do, how frequently, and with whom (Ibid 2011, p.1). Through participant observation, researchers can also uncover factors important for a thorough understanding of the research problem was not known when the study was designed. This is the great advantage of the method because, although we may get truthful answers to the research questions we ask, we may not always ask the right questions. Thus, what we learn from participant observation can help us not only to understand data collected through other methods (such as interviews, focus groups, and quantitative research methods), but also to design questions for those methods that will give us the best understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

3.8 Ethics:

The research complied with the University Human Ethics regulations. The information collected was confidential and regarded as anonymous for children. For the purpose of anonymity, I used the letters A, B, C, D, E, and F to identify respondents.

23 Children in most settlements like Namara play in abandon pieces of land. No one really does a good job in leveling the land, providing proper drainage for it.
3.9 Limitations of Study

There were a few impediments faced while undertaking this research. Firstly, my second visit to Labasa was in January, around the cyclone season, there was heavy rain and wind, which hindered the collection of data from the field during the weekdays, so I continued fieldwork when the heavy rain ceased. Towards the end of January, the first term of school had just started and the children at the settlement were in school. However, I think the major limitation to this study was having parents sit around while I interviewed their children, so to some extent they tended to influence their children’s answers. Through parental consent, conversation was made up by spending time alone with children playing, going to the shop, eating and fishing together. Also, another major obstacle while doing research in early January was because it was still the holiday break for many, thus most of the children were away visiting family and friends in villages and other settlements in Labasa. Luckily I was able to stay on for two more weeks before school started; hence I was able to cover the houses I had not visited.

3:10 Relative Focus of the Study on Fiji and Namara Squatter settlement

Fiji’s urban population has increased as much as 12 percentage points over a 20-year period (Fiji Times Online 2007). During the 1986 census, 39 per cent of the total population lived in urban areas. The figure went up to 46 percent in 1996 and 51 percent in 2007. The population in rural areas went from 61 percent in 1986 to 54 percent in 1996 to 49 percent in 2007 (UNSECAP). During the 1996-2007 intercensal periods, urbanization continued. In 2007, the urban population is larger than the rural population. The urban population is now about 51 percent of the total population (UNSECAP). Continuation of present urbanization trends implies that, by 2030, 61 percent of the population will be urban. This has been a constant feature of Fiji’s development with has been due to natural population growth as well as migration from the rural areas.
Increased urbanization has enhanced pressure on existing urban areas particularly in providing adequate housing and infrastructure to all residents. Consequently, many new migrants have resorted to obtaining and building shelter in squatter settlements in Fiji.

This research focused on Namara squatter settlement near Labasa in Vanua Levu. The choice of Namara over numerous and bigger settlements of this nature on the main island of Viti Levu was because the latter have been regularly researched on issues such as poverty, housing, informal economy, social protection, women’s empowerment, tenure, and residents have become tired of being subjects of research. They have been over-researched. Being much smaller than the settlements on Viti Levu, the Namara squatter settlement was more manageable and amenable for a comprehensive in-depth study. Vanua Levu (referred to as the “North”) in a broader sense is in many ways among the least developed parts of Fiji. Poverty levels are highest on this island (Narsey 2012) and the post-2000 coup government has adopted a ‘look north’ policy to stimulate economic development.

3.11: Summary

This chapter discussed the research’s conceptual framework and the research methodology employed. A social constructivist approach was used to generate a theoretical framework of analysis. The element of the theoretical framework from the literature review was used as the point of analysis. For example, where the theoretical framework of family quality of life links to a child’s development by measuring the research data against the framework, considering and evaluating the range of perspectives, motivations and proof of outcomes. The literature review also serves as an important component of the analysis for it serves to provide the building blocks of information that construct categories for assessment. The data collected in the research was enough to examine child poverty issues in Namara squatter settlement and its
social dynamics. Interview questions were assigned to the theoretical elements and questions for analysis were developed to seek answers that provided assessment against the theoretical framework. Further analysis is presented in Chapters 4 and Chapters 5, which discuss in detail the basic problems and challenges and the opportunities available to the children living in Namara squatter settlement.
Chapter 4: Demography of Children and Families at Namara Squatter Settlement

The results and discussion of the research findings are divided into 2 chapters. This chapter seeks to explain further the conditions encountered at the Namara squatter settlement through social, economic and physical aspects of life through children’s perspective using the framework outlined in Chapter 3. Child poverty deprivation measures have been chosen as a domain to explain the findings at that specific time period on those selected children. The first section is a brief description of households in Namara squatter settlement. The second is a discussion of the data gathered from interviewing child and parents. The social aspects of child poverty covered in this chapter will be mainly about education, food and nutrition and health well-being of children in the settlement. The economic aspects will be an overview of issues concerning employment, livelihoods and infrastructure available to the people in the settlement. The physical aspects will be generally on environment in which a child is raised, the emotional development and productivity of a child in terms of family interaction. The conclusion is drawn up on the significance and challenges faced by this children and this will be addressed in Chapter 5.

Section One: Characteristics of Household in Namara Squatter Settlement

4.1 Demography:

Namara squatter settlement was established more than 30 years ago on reclaimed land belonging to the state. A report by the Ministry of Health in Labasa confirmed that a number of settlers at Namara area formally approached the Chief of Labasa (the ‘Tui Naseakula’\textsuperscript{24}) and presented a vakavanua\textsuperscript{25} request for land to settle, to be near schools because “free land”\textsuperscript{26} was available in

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{24} There are 3 provinces in Vanua Levu, Cakaudrove, Bua and Macuata. The ‘Tui Naseakula’, is the District Chief of Labasa, in the Macuata province. The current holder is Adi Salanieta Tuilomaloma Qomate Ritova of the Qomate clan, who has been officially declared by the Native Land and Fisheries Commission (NLC) in Suva, as the rightful holder of the Tui Labasa title.

\textsuperscript{25} This type of residents have been referred to by Walsh as “Vakavanua settlers” depicting Fijian’s usage of traditional practices such as the presentation of tabua (whales tooth) and yaqona (hava, piper mysthesticum) to the leader of the settlement or the local mataqali in the urban area to gain access to a settlement (Walsh 1979)

\textsuperscript{26} Up to the high tidal watermark inclusive all land belongs to the state.
\end{footnotesize}
Namara. Others had agricultural land leases were expiring (this was a post 1990 phenomenon) prompting their move to the settlement, while some settled next to relatives already in the settlement. The population in the settlement increased as people took advantage of freely available land. Information about the availability of land was through word of mouth among friends and relatives, co-workers, and members of religious denominations. Only a few people in the settlement are descendants of, earlier residents of the settlement. The increase in population has meant rising demands for land, consultation with the Labasa town council, the Tui Naseakula, the Late Roko Tui Macuata and the settlement executive committee members.

Families in Namara opted to squat on this free land, reclaiming it for their own use with old tyres buried under the soil. Reclamation of land in Namara began in the 1980s with the first two families who established houses in the swamp, leading up to 70 houses by 2012. Residents do not have legal titles to their house sites. Many of the houses are painted pink, and a number of them have little flower gardens in their frontage, and some have a little garden in the back if there is land above the high water mark. The oldest resident of the settlement mentioned that “we were the third to settle in Namara, this was way back in 1983. We moved into Namara during the time, the land was subdivided. I heard about this during my cane-cutting days. My children grew up here and they have moved to other parts of Fiji to live their lives with their families”. The respondent was one of the Community leaders of the Namara settlement before he stepped down. Another family representative said that they were the second household to settle in Namara in the 1982. She/he recalled “we used to live close to town before we heard about Namara and free land and decided to move into the settlement. Back then there was only one house in the swamp; it belonged to an Indo-Fijian. He has passed away but we know that his children are teachers now and are living in other places in Labasa”. According to the

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27 1980s- Late Ratu Savenaca Erenavonu passed the title to the late Ratu Soso Katonivere (his nephew since he did not have any children). Ratu Soso gave the title to recently deceased Ratu Aisea Katonivere (his son) and currently the titleholder of the Tui Macuata title is Ratu Willy Katonivere.
oldest residents of Namara squatter settlement, “the first people who began the settlement have either died or moved to other suburbs of Labasa or Suva and even abroad”. Some of the current residents of Namara settlement are descendants of the earliest settlers who have chosen to stay on in the settlement.

Later arrivals simply heard that ‘free land’ was available in Namara promoting their move to the settlement. Majority heard from relatives about land availability and chose to build their homes next to relatives already inhabiting the area. The survey data show that 67.5% of the residents have been living in the settlement for more than 8 years, 15% have been living in the settlement for more than 19 years while 17.5% of the residents have been living in the settlement for almost 33 years\(^{28}\). One of the earlier residents reminiscent that in the earliest years of the settlement, “there were only three houses, there was no water and electricity and we used to collect water from better-off neighbours and friends who owned land in Namara. These were difficult times.” The residents of Namara squatter settlement are mostly from the three provinces in Vanua Levu, which are Cakaudrove, Bua and Macuata. The majority were from the Macuata province, which is within the vicinity of Labasa town, where Namara squatter settlement is located\(^{29}\). While the rest of the households were from the other provinces in Vanua Levu, Bua and Cakaudrove in search of a better life and access to available land, services, health care, education and employment opportunities.

As in other informal settlements, the growing population in Namara has led to a degree of overcrowding, unsatisfactory waste disposal, sub-standard housing conditions, increasing social and sanitation problems Government recognized the overall health impact of squatters especially on swampy and water-logged areas like that in Namara. It has responded by providing both water and a road. Namara has a 3-meter wide gravel road through the settlement. The Public Works Department (PWD) maintains the roads leading to the settlement.

\(^{28}\) Most are children of the earlier settlers.

\(^{29}\) See Appendices for the different place of origin within Vanua Levu.
Initially\textsuperscript{30} the area was not serviced by the PWD water supply so residents had to fetch water from a nearby standpipe connected through Sangam College and share the bill with the meter owner, a local resident. Many problems arose whilst the community applied for reticulation after landowners and the drainage board stopped the PWD from pipe laying and digging. Respondents in the settlement said that then Roko Tui Macuata assisted them a lot in ensuring that water was connected to their homes. Today more than 95% of households have connection to water and electricity.

Table 3: Different Family Variation at Namara squatter settlement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Household Structure</th>
<th>Situation of Residents</th>
<th>Situation of Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poorest of the Poor</td>
<td>-No bedroom, open space</td>
<td>-The poorest people with absolute poverty, unemployed or survivors based on social</td>
<td>-Materially deprived and worse off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-House in dilapidated condition</td>
<td>welfare assistance or a pension</td>
<td>-Maltreated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Houses are made of shacks or pieces of wooden materials or corrugate iron.</td>
<td>-Mostly seasonal employers (sugar-cane cutters, fisherman, produce sellers–prawning,</td>
<td>-Stigmatized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Does not have any form of flooring–cardboard &amp; sacking materials used as.</td>
<td>fishing)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-House not furnished at all</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middling</td>
<td>1 –2 bedroom Flush toilet and bathroom</td>
<td>-People with some skills, self-employed largely engaged in informal activities;</td>
<td>-Partially deprived lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Mostly seasonal employers (sugar-cane cutters, fisherman, produce sellers–prawning,</td>
<td>-Some children are malnourished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>fishing)</td>
<td>-Sometimes absent from school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Some children doing very well in school, older siblings in University/ some working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Sometimes stigmatized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well to do</td>
<td>-2-3Bedrooms Flush toilet and bathroom</td>
<td>People with formal employment / salary earners and with relatively higher standard of</td>
<td>- Barely absent from school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Partially Furnished–Motor Vehicle, Motorbike, Television, Radio, Refrigerator,</td>
<td>living</td>
<td>-Nutritionally healthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Settee, Washing Machine, Electric appliances</td>
<td>-Receives remittance from children abroad</td>
<td>-Parental support high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Own farms elsewhere in Labasa</td>
<td>-Do not do exceptionally well as children from the middling category.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled By Researcher (1\textsuperscript{st} May 2012)

Poverty is also a question of life cycle. Table 3 above indicates the different

\textsuperscript{30} In the 1980s however since the mid-1990s the Government started looking into the needs of the people
family variations in Namara squatter settlement including the household structure and situations of residents and children at Namara squatter settlement. These variations in furnishing reveal the inequality among households in the settlements and the extent of poverty among a majority of the families. My observation as a researcher (observing, talking, eating with them and participating in their activities) makes me realize that “not everyone at the squatter settlement is poor and are living in a bad condition.” The well-to-do category of people live in squatter settlements close to urban areas because of the conveniences of not paying city/town rates. The poorest of the poor conditions are not all that different from a good proportion of other people. The disadvantaged people are not necessarily those that live in squatter settlements but also those who live in, low cost housing, HART, villages. These groups of people are extremely poor and struggling like many of the residents in squatter settlement.

**Descriptive Analysis of the Namara Squatter Settlement**

Namara settlement is situated on the Northeastern part of Vanua Levu on a river delta formed by the Wailevu, Labasa and Qawa rivers. Houses in Namara squatter settlement are neatly laid along this swamp. Most houses are built on stilts and at high tide the water reaches underneath the houses. The settlement has a mixture of Indo-Fijian and iTaukei residents. The Namara Sewerage Plant and the rubbish dump for Labasa are located southeast from Namara squatter settlement. A road/track on the top of an embankment in from of the houses provides access to the residents to their homes. This road/rack demarcates the land on which the informal settlement residents live and rice field that separates their settlement from the rest of Namara. The settlement

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31 Children in Namara squatter settlement are all poor kids.
32 Studies by Bryant and Walsh indicate that there is always 20% of people’s incomes in squatter settlement are well above the rest.
33 Indigenous Fijians are now called the iTaukei while the Fiji-Indians are called the Indo-Fijians. Everyone in Fiji are called Fijians.
itself extends over a two kilometres and is divided into two – Stage 1 (the earlier settled locality) and Stage 2.

The Namara area is one of a number of suburbs of the greater Labasa town area. Others are Nawadamu, Nasea, Nasekula, Nakoroutari, Vakamasuamasua Sub-division, Covata housing, Siberia. Namara itself has an Itaukei village (the Namara village) whose residents’ claim immediate ownership of the land on which the squatters reside and middle to high-income residential areas. The settlement is situated close to town, four primary schools and four high schools, three tertiary institutions, the Subrail Park, the Labasa Police Station, the Raman Dayal Hindu temple, the Methodist Church, the Seventh Day Adventist Church and the Mormon Church, the Ice Plant Factory, the Dalomo Timber Mill, the Old Soap Factory, the Water Authority of Fiji Sewerage Treatment Plant, Labasa Rubbish Dump and Pintos Industries (See Figure 4, p.50).

The Government provides water and electricity to the settlement. Namara squatter settlement is the only squatter settlement in Labasa that has water and electricity sourced to the homes. Basic Services like health checks, public amenities and transportation are accessible to the people residing in the settlement. The Labasa Hospital is located about 5 kilometers away from the settlement. To get to the hospital residents either catch two buses, or walk. The Namara bus is operated by the Dalip Bus Company, and provides an hourly service up to the intersection at the edge of the settlement. Due to poor road conditions the bus does not go through the settlement.
Figure 4: Sketch Map of Namara Squatter Settlement

Keys:
- Namara Squatter Houses
- Mangrove Swamps
- Places of Worship
- Schools
- Bridge
- Qawa River
- Roads

Stage 1
Stage 2

Sugar Cane Field
Sugar Cane Field
Playground

Rubbish Dump

Rice Field

Subrail Park

Namara Village

Delware Timber Mill

Market

FNU

USP

Stage 1

Stage 2

Freight Station

Fiji Rail

Raja Lui

TNC

Hospital

Water Authority of Fiji
Section Two: Data Gathered From Interviewing Children.

4.2 Introduction:

The discussion on poverty in Fiji in chapter 2 highlighted that both absolute poverty and relative poverty exist in the country. Official statistics indicate that 35% of households live below the poverty line. It can also be noted that child poverty has not been adequately addressed (See Table 3, p.47). The growing population in Namara squatter settlement with limited space to provide for further housing development would likely encourage overcrowding, poor waste disposal, poor housing conditions, increasing crime rates and sanitation problems. The literature review showed that impoverished children are more likely to be exposed to conditions that harm their health, safety and development. The Namara squatter settlement is home to a number of low-income iTaukei and Indo-Fijian families. Children from the settlement due to social, economic and physical conditions encountered are deprived the necessities for a proper livelihood, a better future, a better tomorrow.

4.3: Environment

The environment in which a child lives in, accounts for a substantial portion of the effects of family income on young children. Families squatting along the Namara mangrove swamp are a deprived lot. They have limited access to basic amenities like housing, proper latrines and sewerage. They are exposed to the ill effects of the environment and the weather. Moreover, they reside in very unhygienic surroundings where the high tide washes up garbage disposed by them and by those living along the Qawa River. Access to flush toilets depends entirely on the local condition, water availability and resources. Of all the houses in the Namara squatter settlement, 75% have separate toilets and bathrooms outside, 20% have theirs located inside, while 5% of Namara squatter residents have no toilets. Of the 95% that have toilets, 65% have water-seal toilets or pit toilets while 15% have flush toilets. For the children of Namara squatter settlement this means waking up in the early hours of morning and asking parents to take them out to the toilet. The children perceive this as very inconvenient. Child respondent A stated “sometimes their parents are too sleepy to
take them out at night so they ask an older sibling to take them out”. Another child respondent mentioned, “we don’t have a bathroom or toilet so we use the mangrove swamp. During high tide the water would come inside our house”. Living in an environment close to the mangrove swamp and the sea is very hazardous. Despite living by the sea, over the past years there has never been an incident of drowning or major accidents in the sea or mangrove swamp. Minor accidents include getting cuts from broken glasses thrown into the sea that are washed inland by the high tides, pieces of corrugated iron sheets and barbed wires have also been the cause of injuries. The children of Namara squatter settlement have grown very close to mother nature as this has been their source of livelihood, hence they believe that ‘nothing will separate them from their love of the sea and nature’.

What do children need in order to thrive? We are accustomed to thinking in terms of the social supports and services that are so important to them, the love and protection of their families, the friendship of their peers, the clear guidance of social norms and values, the health services and education provided within their communities. But children also need supportive physical environments to contribute to their optimal development. A child respondent mentioned, “most of us children in Namara love playing soccer and rugby, sometimes it is difficult playing in unleveled swampy playground. When it rains, it can be really muddy and would take weeks to dry up”. For poor urban children in particular, the physical environment can present major problems, undermining their well-being and their prospects for the future. The availability of decent housing, the provision of water and sanitation, the quality of space for play, the levels of traffic and pollution, these features of urban life, and many others, have more profound impacts on children than on adults.

In the absence of supportive measures from local government and its partners, even the most committed parents can be limited in their capacity to provide appropriate living conditions for their children. But why should children be singled out of attention here? They share their homes and local surroundings with parents and relatives and neighbors. Surely, whatever works for the rest of the community will also work for children? To some degree, this is true. Decent housing and common space, clean air and adequate basic services are important to everyone, and should be addressed within
all urban communities. But it is also true that children have some particular developmental needs that call for attention, such as the need for play. They can also be far more seriously affected than adults by their living environments because of their greater vulnerability to disease and environmental hazards. These realities are frequently ignored. Paying attention to what children really need often means different priorities and different standards for local authorities and their partners.

The main problems with squatter settlements are safety and health hazards. Abandoned properties aren't regularly inspected for safety conditions, and there is little to no public intervention in utilities or toileting facilities. Also, because most residents of Namara squatter settlement and those that live near the banks of the Qawa River\textsuperscript{34} dispose their garbage in the river, this yields sanitary issues and poses greater risks of infection and disease within squatter communities. All environments including learning environments must provide safety for young children to develop into health children and adults. Children must feel secure in order for positive mental processes to develop and for positive feelings and behaviors to dominate their lives. Families provide children with an environment that gives them the basic survival needs like food, clothing, and shelter. However in Namara squatter settlement, most families struggle to provide the best for their children.

4.4: Housing Infrastructure

Social background influences the way children feel about school from an early age. Households in Namara squatter settlement on average have about four children. From observation, most children in Namara squatter settlement do not have rooms for themselves hence are less likely to have space, quietness and privacy in which to do their homework, or to get as much help from parents as children with higher socio-economic status. Poorer children are likely to do less well not just because their parents read to them less, but because of the hardships and challenges they encounter while growing up. The primary characteristic that distinguishes a squatter settlement is

\textsuperscript{34} Namara village is located along the Qawa River together with other settlements. The Qawa River also connects to the FSC Sugar Mill and other industries in town hence industrial pollution is a major problem.
the lack of ownership of the land on which the inhabitants have erected shelter. Often squatters seize vacant government or public land, or unused or abandoned private land. Settlements have also been formed on land that was thought unsuitable for housing, close proximity of mangrove swamps, as done by those in Namara squatter. Squatter settlements do not possess the same infrastructure as settlements that can claim a legal status. With no rights to the land they inhabit, squatters are forced to live either without basic services or below adequate levels of such services. Municipal governments do not provide sanitation, proper roads and drainage to squatter settlements. Squatters are instead forced to devise their own means of accessing utilities, and often use water pipes from neighbors to draw water and dangerous wiring to provide electricity into their homes.

**Photograph 1: Houses in Namara squatter settlement built on swampy grounds.**

![Houses in Namara squatter settlement built on swampy grounds.](image)

Source: Photo taken by Researcher (18th August, 2011)

The growing population in Namara squatter settlement with limited space to provide for further housing development encourages overcrowding, poor waste disposal, poor housing conditions, increasing social problems and sanitation problems. Data gathered from the Ministry of Agriculture in Labasa (August 2011) stated that the Government consented to the provision of water supply and proper road to the area. This indicated
that the Government has recognized the overall health impact of squatters especially on swampy and water–logged areas like that in Namara (Refer to Photograph 1, p.54). Many problems arose whilst the community applied for reticulation after landowners and the drainage board stopped the PWD from pipe laying and digging.

Walsh has pointed out that a majority of houses in Fiji are 1 or 2 bedrooms and made of wood and iron (corrugated tins). In Namara houses are usually built on corrugated iron and are built out of random, discarded materials such as cardboard, aluminum siding and fencing. A child respondent indicated that, “during sunny days it is usually very hot inside our house and at night it can be very cold”. Another child respondent mentioned, “when it rains, our roof leaks and our beddings and our clothes get really wet”. A parent interviewee echoed the same sentiments stating, “during rainy weather, the house leaks and I have to do everything in my might to ensure that our belongings are not soaked”. Houses in Namara settlement are made of corrugated iron roofing, many of which are old rusted and re-used corrugated iron roofing. Some families have leaking roofs and holes on the floors of their houses that provide access to cockroaches, mice and rats. Most wooden houses in Namara are made of waste timber materials or rejects from the Dalomo Timber mill located about ½ kilometre from the settlement (See Figure 4, p.50).

**Photograph 2: Corrugated Houses in Namara squatter settlement.**

![Photograph 2: Corrugated Houses in Namara squatter settlement.](source: Photo taken by Researcher (18th August, 2011))
The dilapidated condition of a few houses in the area is quite evident. Houses in Namara are either corrugate iron, wooden or both wooden and corrugated buildings. Some houses are shacks made from pieces of wooden materials (*Refer to Photograph 2, p.49 & Photograph 3*). Household observations indicated that 80% of the houses in Namara squatter settlement were made of corrugated iron roofing with wooden flooring, with the exception of one house in the settlement that does not have any form of flooring. In this shack, cardboard and sacking materials were used to cover the ground. From the interviews it was found that, 55% of the houses in Namara squatter settlement have no rooms, 25% have 1 bedroom, 15% have 2 bedrooms, while 5% of the households in had 3 bedroom houses (*Refer to Table 3, p.47*).

**Photograph 3: Wooden Houses in the squatter settlement.**

Observation from home visits indicated that, 15% of the houses were fully furnished, 65% of the houses were partially furnished, while 20% was barely furnished (*Refer to Table 3, p.47*). Fully furnished house had furniture, beds & beddings, a television set and radio, fridge, washing machine and other electric appliances. Partially furnished houses do not have so many items as fully furnished houses; they may have a bed, but may have a somewhat mixed no of furniture, and appliances such as chairs, washing machine, fridge, television set and transistor radio. Barely furnished houses on the
other hand, have nothing at all except mats or sacks or even cardboards to lie on. The difference in housing infrastructure depicts the variation of poverty amongst families in the squatter settlement and also provides a categorization of families into a minority of high income earning families, and a majority of low-income earners and those who are barely earning a living wage (Refer to Table 3, p.47). The President of Namara squatter settlement indicated that, “most families in the settlement are more cautious about meeting their family needs than adorning their houses with material things”.

4.5: Education

Education inspires children to achieve beyond their wildest dreams and allows them to emerge out of the devastating clutches of poverty. Lev Vygotsky mentioned that "learning is more than the acquisition of the ability to think; it is the acquisition of many specialized abilities for thinking about a variety of things" (Vygotsky 1978, p.189). There is growing concern over the number of students dropping out of school before they receive education, which would enable them to succeed in society. Many students drop out of school because they have had very little success in school or because of the socio-economic circumstance they are trapped in. A family in Namara squatter settlement have their household head an income-earner imprisoned, due to financial circumstance four children from this family have stopped going to school. Child respondent B indicated, “we would love to go back to school, but our mother doesn’t have enough money to feed and send us to school at the same time”. Parents' perceptions of education can also greatly affect their children's success in school. Improving educational attainment is vital if the goal of eradicating child poverty in a generation is to be met, but children growing up in poverty are rarely asked how this impacts their school life.

The closeness of Namara squatter settlement to Labasa town enables children from the settlement to attend prominent schools within the area. There is a Kindergarten at the entrance of Namara settlement. The children from the settlement attend several primary schools.35 These are Namara Kindergarten for preschoolers and Bethal

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35 Both public and private education is provided in Fiji, but many schools are operated by various religious groups.
Primary School, Labasa Muslim Primary School, Holy Family Primary School and Guru Nanak Primary School for those in primary schools (See Figure 4, pg. 50). For High School, the children from the settlement go to Labasa Arya College, Labasa Sangam SKM College, Holy Family Secondary School, All Saints College or Guru Nanak High School (See Figure 4, pg.50). For tertiary education, they either go to the Fiji National University- Labasa Campus, University of the South Pacific-Labasa or Laucala Campuses or the T.I.S.I Sangam Nursing School in Labasa (See Figure 4, pg.50). From the data gathered, 70% of the children in the Namara squatter settlement attend Primary School, while 27% of the children in the settlement are in High School; the remaining 3% of the children are in Tertiary Schools\textsuperscript{36}. From the 66% that attend primary school, 50% were in Class 6-8, while 20% were in Classes 2-5. For the 34% in High School, 15% were in Junior level\textsuperscript{37} while 12% were in the Senior Level (Refer to Table 4 below).

Table 4: Schools and Number of Attendants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Paid/Free Education</th>
<th>Number of School Attendants:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Namara Kindergarten</td>
<td>Private: Partially Funded by Save the Children's Fund</td>
<td>Paid ($2/week)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labasa Muslim Primary School</td>
<td>Private- Fiji Muslim League</td>
<td>Free Education</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethel Primary School</td>
<td>Private - Gospel Church</td>
<td>Paid</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holy Family Primary School</td>
<td>Private- Catholic Church</td>
<td>Paid</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guru Nanak Primary School</td>
<td>Private- Arya Samaj</td>
<td>Paid</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labasa Arya College</td>
<td>Private- Arya Samaj</td>
<td>Paid</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labasa SKM College</td>
<td>Private- TISI Sangam</td>
<td>Paid</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Saints College</td>
<td>Private- Anglican Church</td>
<td>Paid</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holy Family High School</td>
<td>Private- Catholic Church</td>
<td>Paid</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guru Nanak High School</td>
<td>Private- Arya Samaj</td>
<td>Paid</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Schools:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Schools:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled by Researcher (1st May 2013)

\textsuperscript{36} This figures are equivalent to 50% of the national figures
\textsuperscript{37} Junior level are those in Form 3–4; Senior level are those in Form 5–7
Fee free education in Fiji is not free as families pay for majority of the things. Primary schools in Fiji do not charge tuition but students still need to pay building fund, buy books and school uniforms and that is very expensive for most families especially those with more than 2 children. Labasa Muslim Primary School for instance had more students because there was free education offered and better support (Refer to Table 4, p.58). The children from Namara squatter are not the only socially deprived children that attend school with free education, as there are also poor children from nearby settlements that make up 70% of the materially deprived pupil ratio at Labasa Muslim Primary School. FENC Fiji (see Chapter 5, p. 81) supports a majority number of students that attend Labasa Muslim Primary School. High schools on the other hand, charge tuition, building fund and textbooks depending on the school structure and ownership. Students in schools all over Fiji pay for their own school uniform. For some it is already included with tuition fees, while some buy theirs from Garment Factories, or buy school material colors and have them sewn at a cheaper price since it is very costly to get ready made ones. In Fiji, schooling for children between the ages of 5-18 years is mandatory, however for most families sending their children to school is very expensive hence most children opt to drop out of school as they usually think of the financial status they put their families in. The children in the Namara squatter settlement are often absent from school due to reasons such as no bus fare or lunch, heavy rain, or sickness.

The views of children in Namara settlement on education vary, some love going to school because they get to meet, hang out and play with their friends. Some on the other hand despise going to school because they get bullied in school, they face child stereotype, and the teachers abuse them verbally and emotionally despite the Policy on Child Protection by the Ministry of Education and the supposed “zero tolerance of abuse, neglect and exploitation of children” (2012). Whilst doing an interview in one primary school, I witnessed firsthand how a child from the Namara squatter settlement was emotionally and verbally abused and was told by a school teacher that, “he would be thrown outside through the window for hanging around the office area”. Another child from the squatter settlement mentioned that the teachers blamed them most of the time for causing problems

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38 Some schools give students textbooks, which are recorded under their names are returned at the end of the school term. Failure to return textbooks, will require students to either buy a new textbook replacement or pay the full price of the textbook.

39 Twice or thrice a week

40 The Fiji Government through the Ministry of Education is now providing free education, textbooks, bus vouchers and now eradication of public exams (2012).
in class. We were either called “troublemakers or attention seekers” respondent C stated. Another respondent D stated that, “they sometimes treat us really different really from other children and that is really unfair”. This to some extent causes them to show lack of interest in school due to the way in which they are treated and looked down upon. Children are emotionally abused without their parents and proper authorities knowing what was really happening in schools. This is not only a problem for children in Namara squatter settlement but also a major problem for children who come from poor families (all over Fiji). Another student indicated that, children who live in other areas around Labasa tend to “make fun of them for living in the squatter settlement and being poor”. Based on interviews with teachers and students the children of Namara settlement generally do work hard in school despite setbacks in schools and social problems\textsuperscript{41} faced at home.

Families in many cases are keen for their children to attend school, but increasing fees and food prices result in sacrifices made in the family budgets elsewhere to accommodate for children's schooling. Some parents in the settlement are incapable of meeting the education expenses of their children because of physical unfitness (health problems), rise in food prices and other requirements needed for the survival of the families. Data from the research analysis shows that 80% of the households in Namara squatter settlement are low-income family, with 50% people with seasonal employments\textsuperscript{42} (Refer to Table 3, p.47). Some children have older siblings working in shops and in manufacturing industries\textsuperscript{43} nearby and they assist in providing for the family needs. Thus for many children their parents being out of work is a hindrance to their studies. Respondent E indicated “when my father is out of work, we catch prawns and go fishing and sell it here in the settlement so as to sustain ourselves”. Respondent F also mentioned “my parents would go to houses and look for job while I babysit my younger siblings just so that we can get enough for our meals especially for our school lunch”. A parent at the settlement said that despite the hardships encountered at the settlement, parents always try their very best to make use of the resources available around them\textsuperscript{44}. From the data gathered, 60% of household heads attended primary school, 25% attended high school and 15% did not get any formal education. Despite the illiteracy rate amongst household heads, a parent mentioned that

\textsuperscript{41} Social problems include lack of finances, food insecurity, domestic violence, parental neglect
\textsuperscript{42} Sugar-cane cutting, fishing and rice farming.
\textsuperscript{43} Pintos Industries and Garment Factories.
\textsuperscript{44} The sea or river was the main supply of their food
‘she wants their children to be educated to the highest level and secure a better future for themselves’ The parent stated that he advise his “children to get educated as much as they can, because if they sow the seeds of education now they will reap the harvest in the future”. Living in the squatter settlement is not very promising so the children are advised that they must work and study hard in school because their future depends on being educated.

Additionally, 70% of the parents had indicated that the reason they moved into the settlement was because of the need to educate their children and provide the best for them academically. Parents indicated that schools in the rural areas were far from the villages and to get to school, children had to travel by foot and boat which was very risky. Concerned about the safety of their children, parents from Namara squatter settlement preferred living with their children and seeing them get educated rather than sending them away on long distance or have them attend boarding school. Another, parent indicated that the education services provided at urban centers were of greater quality and ensured that children attend tertiary schools afterwards. Some aspiring students from the squatter settlement have completed high school and are now pursuing their degree studies at the University of the South Pacific. Others are at the Fiji National University pursuing diploma programs.

4.6: Food and Nutrition

The nutritional status of children is a good indicator of the overall well-being of a society and reflects food security as well as existing health-care and environmental conditions. A 2004 report by the Food and Nutrition Committee indicated that over 40% of Fiji's children are malnourished (Fiji National Food and Nutrition 2008, p.13). The situation is rather acute in more disadvantaged areas, particularly in squatter settlements where a lot of people currently reside (Ibid 2008, p.13). Families in Namara are engaged in activities generating low incomes for their livelihood. These activities include fishing, prawning, planting vegetables in old big tins, goat and chicken rearing. Most of the children of such families are malnourished, exhibiting

45 Schools where children are sent are selected according to the academic merits of the school, and the affordability of school fees.
low weight for age in comparison to their counterparts in well-to-do families. A child respondent mentioned, “sometimes I don’t go to school for 2 - 3 days because there is no food at home. All we have at home is rice, to cater for us the whole week”. 30% of the children in low-income families at the settlement with parents working seasonal jobs are underweight, malnourished and suffer from skin diseases or are sickly.

Dietary intake data for children was sampled and observed. According to a mother from Namara squatter settlement, “in some families a two-meal pattern is followed however majority of families follow a three meal pattern. It usually depends on the family income”. A child respondent from the settlement mentioned, “we live close to the sea, and my mother goes fishing or crabbing every day, so every second day of the week we eat fish or crab. I get tired of eating fish sometime but I need to fill my tummy”. Early in the morning, the family members including children had a hot cup of tea or lemon leaves, accompanied with biscuits, rice, roti, pancakes, and homemade bread and bun. For children going to school, packed lunch would usually be cassava and egg, rice and noodles, plain rice, roti and, bean, okra, bele, pumpkin or rourou. If children do not take their lunch to school, the teachers\textsuperscript{46} who cannot finish their packed lunch have it shared to children who did not bring their lunches. Children are always encouraged to bring their lunch from home to discourage borrowing. The main meal in Namara settlement was cooked in the afternoon and it comprised mainly of rice, dhal, vegetables, prawns, crabs and fish\textsuperscript{47}.

For most of the families, the purchase of most of the food items was on a weekly or monthly basis, depending on when the breadwinners got paid. Small provision stores are located close to or within the Namara squatter settlements. For children in Namara, most of them usually found their way munching fruits that grew around the settlement – eating coconuts, sugarcane, guavas, mandarin, star fruit or any other fruit in season\textsuperscript{48}. As discussed in Chapter 2, the appropriate social protection response to poverty-related food insecurity in Namara is social assistance, linked to ‘livelihood promotion’ measures that enhance incomes. The children of Namara squatter

\textsuperscript{46} In most Primary schools visited by the researcher
\textsuperscript{47} The settlers in Namara have access to prawns, crabs and fish almost everyday because they live close to the sea, these are not available to most people in Fiji and are very expensive to purchase.
\textsuperscript{48} Either after school or during the weekends
settlement daily supply of food are through the environment, the sea and the natural resources available around them together with sources of carbohydrates from the supermarkets like flour, rice, oil or dhal. For many children, fish, crab, and prawns are their main source of protein. If there is enough catch for the day, families sell the surplus to generate income.

To some extent, the closeness of the Labasa rubbish dump to Namara squatter settlement is very hazardous\(^{49}\) to the people due to the unpleasant smell that comes from the dump, and also because a few poor families scavenge from the dump for processed foods and other things they may find there usable. The photograph 4 below was taken by the researcher while visiting the rubbish down to experience and see first-hand what people collect from the dump.

**Photograph 4: Pictures from Labasa Rubbish Dump**

![Photograph 4: Pictures from Labasa Rubbish Dump](image)

Source: Photo taken by Researcher (18\(^{th}\) August, 2011)

For some really poor families, onions and potatoes disposed by supermarkets were collected from the dump washed and dried and, later used for their meals. According to families living close to the rubbish dump, it is busiest with scavengers when trucks from supermarkets come and unload thrown away disposed goods and produce. Observations showed that people from nearby houses as well as those from other informal settlements (Siberia, Nakoroutari, Vakamasuamasua Sub-division) further

\(^{49}\) Also flies, mosquitoes, cockroaches, mice, rats breed in the dump.
afield in Labasa come to collect foodstuff and other items from the rubbish dump. Some rode on their bicycles with big sacks to retrieve usable items. These items include fresh produces such as potatoes and onions; canned products including tinned fish and meat, containers, plastic bags, and sacks.

Observations showed that only 12 percent of families in Namara had kitchen cupboards stocked with food while the other 88% hardly have anything to show. In the latter case adults/children may run to the shop for a litre of kerosene, matches, bread, rice, salt, sugar, onions on a daily basis. The twelve percent of families in Namara have their expenditure on selected basic needs include food, clothing, health service, electricity, cooking gas, kerosene and transport while eighty-eighty percent of families in Namara have their expenditure enough only for food. For example, a few families use cooking gas and not all households have electricity and telephone even when the services are available in their locality. For many households electricity is a privilege and consumption is strictly controlled within the household to avoid large bills. For a majority of the families, food items are purchased on a weekly basis, as most workers are paid on weekly basis. Those that purchase food on weekly basis are families of seasonal workers i.e. the fisherman or the sugar-cane cutters. The difference between these two categories families and times of buying groceries depends on whether they receive money on a weekly or monthly basis. Some families make daily purchases from the small provision stores located one kilometre away from the Namara settlement. These expenditure patterns would provide some idea about the welfare status of these households.

4.7: Health

“No one would tolerate a fragmented education system in which some children went off to school each morning while others stayed home with no place to go. How then, can we tolerate, year after year, a broken system of health care that denies access to millions of our children? After all, health is a prerequisite to education” -Boyer 1990, p.178

Although health is itself an outcome, it can also be viewed as a pathway by which poverty influences other child outcomes, such as cognitive ability and school achievement.
Children are the most vulnerable in society because of their dependency and inability to meet their needs. Children’s health has been the focus of many researchers\(^{50}\). The children in Namara settlement usually suffer from malnutrition, anemia, skin infections and other diseases like stomachache, diarrhea, cold, influenza and cough. The Ministry of Health operates a child immunization program through primary health care clinics\(^{51}\). Nurses from Labasa Health Center come and visit children in the settlement once every two months or when there is an epidemic disease outbreak such as measles, typhoid, diarrhoe, dysentery, dengue fever and skin diseases. A child respondent stated, “we all get sick, fall and cut ourselves, and we get better again”. Children in Namara if sick are taken to the Labasa Hospital depending on the ailment. The public health centers and hospitals are free however public dental clinics charge rates from $5 and above depending on the condition. Children below the age of 14 years are seen for free. If the child is not too sick then home remedies are usually taken\(^{52}\). From observation, a child with sores was treated using an "amoxicillin capsule powder mixed with oil". According to the mother, it heals faster if the child is treated at home because in the hospital there is usually a long line of people waiting and to some extent people who come in the morning get seen in the afternoon\(^{53}\). A parent in the settlement indicated that going to the Labasa Hospital is time consuming hence she just takes her children to the private medical practitioner who charges a rate of $5.00 excluding the medication prescribed. For a few relatively well-to-do families in Namara settlement, seeing the private medical practitioner is more convenient and reliable\(^{54}\).

There are also issues of sanitation with water supply and toilet facilities being inadequate. In Namara majority of the houses own pit latrines, water-seal and squatting toilets \(\textit{Refer to Chapter 4, p.51}\). Diseases therefore escalate from pit latrines especially since all the houses in the squatter settlement are located near the mangrove swamp and high tides tend to wash all waste and disposed rubbish inland \(\textit{Refer to Photograph 1, p.54}\). Thus, there is an urgent need to provide a safe means of excreta disposal so as to avoid diseases. Poorly built latrines can lead to an increase in flies, multiplying the spreading diseases. If the base of a latrine facility is unstable or loosely fixed onto the surface, for instance, the

\(^{50}\) UNICEF, SC Fiji, MoH Labasa
\(^{51}\) School visitations by health nurses are usually free.
\(^{52}\) Living in urban areas does not ensure accessibility to effective health care. This is because there are usually long waiting lines in public health clinics and the dental clinic charges fees to patients.
\(^{53}\) Some families use herbal medicine for healing sickness
\(^{54}\) Private medical practitioners in Labasa charge a lower rate than most private medical centers in Suva.
flooring is not fixed properly; the floor will crack, making the environment increasingly favourable for hookworm transmission. Safe disposal of excreta, so that it does not contaminate the environment, water, food or hands, is essential for ensuring a healthy environment and for protecting personal health for not only children but also the family as a whole. This can be accomplished in many ways, some requiring a sewerage system, others requiring little or none. Regardless of method, the safe disposal of human faeces in Namara settlement is one of the principal ways of breaking the faecal–oral disease transmission cycle. Sanitation is therefore a critical barrier to disease transmission and reducing the health risk of children in Namara squatter settlement.

4.8: Employment

It is apparent from the description relating to household types, and livelihoods of residents that there is considerable variation in their monthly incomes. A majority of the settlement households earn between $100 to less than $40 a week and are categorized as those below the poverty line. This is taking into account cash income and subsistence food/ prawns, crabs and fish together with farm produces from villages. For the majority of families, a large portion of food budget is spent on imported or manufactured food items namely rice, flour, and tinned stuff such as canned fish and mutton. For some families staple food items such as vegetables, taro and cassava are often supplied from family members in the village, while others buy these at the Labasa market. A few families, who have reclaimed their land with old tyres filled with soil, often have a small garden in front of their yards, which are closer towards the roadside where fertile soil is available.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Unskilled labourers, Sugar-cane cutters, fisherman, farmers, seasonal workers, security guards, bus drivers, taxi drivers, industrial workers, cleaners, gardeners, garbage collectors, grass cutters, , street vendors, bottle collectors, priests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>House girls, cleaners, labourers, garment factory workers, sales assistant, retail outlet attendants, domestic workers, tailors, market-vendors, self-employed (selling prawns, fish, crabs, food, snacks or canteen business), sugar cane- cutters, farmers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Namara squatter settlement (See Table 5, p. 66), the great majority (60%) of mothers are housewives, with the rest working as house girls, cleaners, farm labourers, garment factory workers, domestic workers earning $0.80-$2 per hour. The occupations of fathers included daily labour – often seasonal or wage work, security guards, grass cutters, cleaners, gardeners, garbage collectors, street sweepers, cane cutters, fisherman. Table 5 above lists the primary source of cash income for Namara squatter settlement. This table is comparable to Table 6 below looking at low income occupation held by informal residents in the Suva area. A majority of adults of the settlement are casual labourers and may also earn a living through farming and fishing. Most poor households have someone in paid employment, but the jobs they have do, do not pay enough to keep them out of poverty (Barr 2003). The research found that many household heads and some family members were employed either on a full-time or a part-time basis as seasonal or infrastructural workers and hold jobs elsewhere. All of them were in low paid jobs. Table 6 below shows the different types of low status occupation held by informal settlement residents in the Suva area.

**Table 6: Types of low status occupations of Suva informal settlement residents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
<td>Cleaners, gardeners, garbage collectors, grass cutters, unskilled laborers, wheel barrow boys, shoe shine boys, street vendors, bottle collectors, cane-cutters, fisherman, farmers, taxi drivers, bus drivers, security guard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
<td>Garment factory workers, retail outlet attendants, domestic workers, tailors, market-vendors, self-employed (selling prawns, fish, crabs, food, snacks or canteen business) sex workers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Naidu, V, Osbourne, J, Sahib, M & Matadradra, A. 2013, p15

As observed by Walsh (1998) and Bryant (1992), households in informal settlements tend to rely on multiple streams of income or sources of livelihood. High cost living and increasing fuel prices have resulted in many low-income earners being employed in two or three different low-income jobs. The Poverty Benefit Scheme (PBS), which replaced the Family Assistance Program, is for the very poor with no income support. The precise amount of support provided depends on the size of the household. The maximum allowance for a month is $150, which is inclusive of a $30 food voucher. When seen in the
context of the cost of living in urban areas, the PBS support, which ranges from $60 to $150, is rather meager, but for the desperately poor, it is critical.

There are others who supplement their household income by cultivating crops on their land in their rural villages; their farm products are used for consumption as well as for sale in Labasa town. Another lady from the settlement mentioned, “My husband is a security guard. His wages are not enough for the family. I had saved up and bought big pots, which are loaned out to households who had ceremonies and functions like birthday celebration or deaths. I used to run a small canteen before but had to close it since it is not legal to have canteens or shops in squatter settlements such as this”. These are some measures, which families in Namara squatter settlement carry out for the survival of their families. The Fiji 1997 Poverty Report stressed that overcoming poverty was not just a matter of providing more employment; it was a matter of making sure that all those in full-time employment received wages above the poverty line (1997, p.112). As incomes were insufficient to meet their basic needs, thus poor people end up in poverty.

4.9: Family Interaction

Family interaction maintains relationship with siblings, parents and other individuals and resolves threats of harm and makes the child feel secure and loved. Children and parents need to spend time together. This leads to togetherness and mutual understanding in the household. Family interaction varies in each household in Namara. Despite changes, households in Namara squatter settlement still remain the same in terms of togetherness and family co-operation. Life in Namara, because of the close proximity of single room house, this makes people living together more tightly bonded and everything that children and parents do is visible. Activities done both by parents and children are open to be scrutinized, as there is no space for intimacy and privacy in the household. This closely interactive bonding between the parents and children provide the opportunity for families to maintain relationships, enhance well-being, provide families with the opportunity to learn, practice and demonstrate new behaviors and patterns of interaction.
In Namara squatter settlement, majority of the families speak the “Macuata\textsuperscript{55}” dialect while the Indo Fijians speak the Fiji–Hindustani language. In schools, children speak both Vernacular (iTaukei & Hindustani) and English language. When communicating within the settlement or within families, people communicate using the Macuata dialect, Bauan dialect or the Fiji Hindi language. In most families in the squatter settlement, family members share meal times and also sit together to discuss how the children and parents day went and the plans for the next day. For some families, prayer sessions or family devotion is always before or after dinner before bedtime. This is very encouraging because it keeps the family intact\textsuperscript{56}. However, child respondent G stated “sometimes my father always come late from work”. A household head mentioned, “I work during the day in a supermarket and during the weekends I work as a security guard. This way I am trying to supplement income for the family so that I can send my children to school. Family time is always limited and it is quite frustrating. However in the long run it is for the benefit of my family”. Therefore, family interaction is not as perfect in some families. Cultural events like Easter, Diwali and Christmas are usually spent with families either in the squatter settlement or in villages.

Social life in the evenings at Namara squatter settlement is over bowl of kava as is evident from the grog pounding along the only feeder road that links the settlement to the main road. The availability of television is some houses also serves as a form of entertainment. Respondent H indicated that ‘we love watching soap opera series like Shortland Street, Phillipino, Korean and Hindi movies and will never miss an episode’\textsuperscript{57}. Youths moreover have cleared up a patch of grassland in the forefront of their houses to make way for a volleyball court, which is used for volleyball sessions. The grassland area is not utilized other than for a volleyball court. For children in the settlement, there is no proper playground; however, children use the empty rice field near their houses to play sports. Children from all the houses in the squatter settlement come together in the afternoons after school to play. Though these children do not have access to sporting amenities

\textsuperscript{55} Macuata is a province of Vanua Levu

\textsuperscript{56} In urban areas now, even abroad, family time has decreased tremendously. The introduction of fast food, accessibility to Internet and work/shift work for parents makes it children spend less time with their family. Roles played in the family by the mother and the father as a result becomes altered. For example, the time the mother spends making dinner with his or her child is substituted by fast food hence the child learns less. More importantly, there is less time of communication between family members if they are not all dinning together at the dinner table. The parents as a result are unaware of their children’s lives outside the home resulting to social and family bond weakening.

\textsuperscript{57} Most families in Fiji are addicted to Soap Opera Series
available in town, however they usually make do with what is available around them. The physical environment of Namara squatter settlement is not a barrier to how children enjoy life (Refer to Photograph 5).

**Photograph 5: Children of Namara squatter settlement playing after school**

Recreational resources are very much a problem not only in Namara but also in most settlements in Fiji. Most children who love a particular sport do not have the resources for it e.g. rugby and owning a rugby ball. However, those that have the resource always love to share with other children because that way everyone gets involved. Child respondent I stated “I love to share my soccer ball with other children because it is more fun filled than playing alone”. Another child respondent J stated that “we have recently started an

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**Recreational Activities undertaken by Children from Namara include:**

- Rugby Touch Games
- Soccer
- Pani (*Playing with old cans and a tennis ball*)
- Tyre Rolling (*Rolling old worn out tyres towards each other*)
- Playing marbles and sticks
- Swimming in the banks of the river or fishing
- Paddling in their tin boats/ canoes
initiative whereby the older working children are levied fees of $2.00 every month to help pay for soccer balls, rugby balls and goal post and better sporting facilities”. The President of the Namara squatter settlement keeps the money gathered from children; this is later used for recreational activities for the children. Friendship bonds and ties are built mostly among the children in the settlement as they strive for better opportunities together. This may be in terms of sporting, education and job opportunities.

4.10: Significance

UNICEF has defined the areas of a child’s well-being as eight domains which include: education; nutrition; health; shelter; water and sanitation child labor; leisure; social inclusion and protection. They also indicate that if a child is deprived within two or more of the domains, the child would be considered poor. The capability approach evaluates policies according to their impact on people’s capabilities. These are through the availability and conditions of economic, social, emotional, physical and environmental resource coping mechanism. These foundations are important and are interwoven together to fully develop a child to a particular stage where he or she will be finally able to fend for himself. This framework is very appropriate for a study of children in squatter settlements because in a squatter settlement the way in which a child is brought up revolves around culture, tradition and the way in which the community is established.

Education\(^\text{58}\) is the foundation of success. It advances a person’s knowledge and enables them to socialize, interact and survive. Though the children from Namara Squatter settlement maybe overlooked simply\(^\text{59}\) because of their social, cultural and physical background these children can become very successful despite all life’s circumstance. A child from the settlement mentioned, “education is a journey we all endure. You cannot go through life and learn nothing because there is so much to learn and appreciate in life”. The Millennium Development Goals provide a backdrop for education; however access for all is an issue.

Through the environment may largely shape the course of a Namara child’s life, food and

\(^{58}\text{In the broader sense of formal education in Fiji}\)

\(^{59}\text{Sometimes well to do people, teachers, people in authority/ power who are more dominant financially tend to overlook children from poor background}\)
nutrients are very essential to a child’s life. The role of nutritional food cannot be neglected because it helps in the promotion of health and the prevention of disease. Proper nutrition contributes to a child’s growth, physical and intellectual development and will certainly lead to a healthy lifetime and the full development of a healthy child. Nutrition choices that children make today can dramatically affect their health and well–being tomorrow.

4.11: Summary

The aim to address children’s’ need is overwhelming and relates to their present situation and reality. While children do express concern about their futures, their focus is largely on the here and now and on what poverty means for their lives as children. In Namara squatter settlement challenges may come in terms of environmental factors, shelter, education, food and nutrition, health, employment and family interaction. While income approaches indicate that children living in poverty will, on average, experience poorer outcomes than their more affluent peers, not all children who grow up in poverty do poorly. Similarly, not all children growing up in poor neighborhoods’ experience poor outcomes or experience social exclusion. The notion of disadvantaged and disadvantage children is not something limited to squatters. This is because even in squatter settlements there are loving caring parents who love their children and give them occasional hugs, encouraging, give them positive reinforcement, who do not consume alcohol, excessively beat up their children or fight amongst themselves would be better off who to a child above the poverty line but have parents who are always fighting, squabbling, and are not sensitive to the child’s needs.

Poverty should not only be correlated to poor treatment of children because amongst the poor there might be more love than amongst the rich. For some children, the impact of poverty is most keenly felt in their social relationships and capacity to participate socially. Participation in organized social activities or rather the inability to participate in activities is sometimes an obstacle in a Child development. Constraints on their participation affect children’s relationships with others and can lead to isolation and disengagement from community life. A few children of Namara squatter settlement despite hardships and challenges in life have reached good schools, colleges and University through government
scholarships. That is something to be proud of. If this children who are seen as low class and incapable physically, emotionally and financially can go this far then the negative opinions of squatter life may be wrong. Though there maybe stigmatization and discrimination against children from the Namara community, there is however a lot of support from families, friends and schools.
Chapter 5- Behind the Scene: Interventions and Support for Namara Children

5.1 Introduction:

Chapter 4 summarizes the conditions encountered at the Namara squatter settlement through social, economic and physical aspects of life through a child’s perspective. This chapter outlines findings on policy, actions and research on squatter settlements by NGO’s, Government Institutions and other agencies. It also seeks to draw conclusions on the significance of poverty and challenges faced by children of Namara squatter settlement. Chapters 4–5 are closely linked and are important based on ground realities in Namara squatter settlement. This section of the study intends to answer the following research question: Are there any civil society groups actively engaged in addressing child poverty? In this chapter, I will be looking at views from civil societies and how they have assisted children in poverty in Labasa, particularly those from Namara squatter settlement. This will be discussed through the five family quality of life domains as reviewed in Chapter 3.2. The family quality of life framework will be developed to analyze the influences of poverty in Namara squatter settlement using the Non-Income dimensions of child poverty as discussed in Chapter 2. The family quality of life domains are health, government and civil society support, physical environment, emotional well-being and family interaction.

The five domains of Poverty:

Helping children develop into adults capable of productive social and economic participation in society is of everyone beginning with children and their families. Their future roles as learners, workers, family members, community members and citizens all need to be considered. Sen’s Capability Approach and Functioning (refer to Chapter 2, p.26) show that there are many other outcomes hoped children will achieve\(^60\), the broad goals of social and economic participation may best capture what it means to be a positive contributor to society. Though there are 9 domains of poverty\(^61\) (Turnbull et al., 2000), however only 5 were selected because families in Namara squatter settlement emphasized

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\(^{60}\) Well balanced meals, education, sports, proper shelter

\(^{61}\) The 9 domains of Poverty are health, productivity, physical environment, emotional well-being, family interaction, Government and Civil society support, leisure and recreation and Community support & interaction
these areas in discussing the impacts of poverty on them (See Figure 5: Five domains of Poverty in Namara squatter settlement).

Figure 5: Five domains of Poverty in Namara squatter settlement

5.2 Health

The family quality of life domain of health includes a family's health status, health care, and health impact. The impacts of poverty on health relate to hunger, under nutrition, and limited access to health care. Poverty in Namara squatter settlement puts enormous restraints on the ability of many families to afford a nutritionally adequate diet. In Namara squatter settlement and in other parts of Fiji, the majority of the poor have a lot of carbohydrate in their diet. The carbohydrate choice is mostly rice, flour, dalo, cassava, sweet potatoes, yams & breadfruits (in season). Noodles a harmful form of carbohydrate, has been included in most meals (See 4.6, p.61). Vegetables that are easily accessible like rourou and bele are usually part of their diet. What they however do not eat in large quantities is fresh meat or fish. However for some families, fish, prawns, land crabs are accessible while some
rely more on tin stuff (fish/meat). Insufficient diet and inadequate nutrition in turn impacts family member’s health. Evidence from Namara could be in the form of underweight/malnourished, kwashiorkor, diarrhoe, dysentery or stunted growth (See Chapter 4.7, pg.67).

Children in Namara squatter settlement are sometimes at a disadvantage since they have access to limited health care and recreational opportunities. Financial constraints together with the inability to pay transportation costs often prevent children in the settlement from receiving timely preventive medical attention. However, regular school visits by nurses from Labasa Hospital and some Non-Governmental Organizations in Fiji like the Project Heaven, children from Namara settlement are provided with basic health services. A staff nurse from Labasa Hospital stated, “we provide eye and ear checks, give children their vaccination injections, the dentist visit the children and have their teeth’s checked”. The free medical health checkup provides to children an opportunity to be seen by the medical staff. Poverty therefore affects all Namara family members’ health because of the family’s inability to afford health insurance cost; health services from doctors or dentists, or health supplies, such as prescription drugs or first aid materials.

In Namara there are Civil Society groups that actually address the consequences of poverty on children. Project HEAVEN (Hearing and Vision Enhancement) started in October 1998 and is located at Tamavua Hospital, Suva. Fiji. The project conducts ear and eye screening for students in primary and secondary schools throughout Fiji. Children with vision and hearing impairment are referred to the nearest hospital or health centre for medical intervention. The project also assists in provisions of eye–glasses and hearing aids and has established a network with the Ministry of Education, Fiji and the Ministry of Health. A female officer respondent from Project Heaven stated “through AusAid funding we are able to provide children with hearing aids and spectacles if there is a need. Children from Namara squatter settlement and other settlements on Labasa were treated and now are doing well in the classrooms. Teachers are also taught not to raise their voice out loud but rather enough just so that the children understand and grasp and won’t have their hearing affected”. A head teacher of a primary school indicated “it has helped teachers identify and

62 In Fiji there are 3 terms in a school year.
63 This is standard for Fiji as a whole. Children who cannot make it to the hospital due to financial difficulties are diagnosed and referred to the health centers for appropriate actions.
64 Most families in Fiji do not have health insurance.
be aware of special effects children\textsuperscript{65} have, and has taught them to be more considerate of student needs.

5.3 Government and civil society support

Government and NGOs have identified many policies and practices, which would improve the success of alleviating poverty. These are through micro financing and support for women entrepreneurs and cooperatives, support for small and medium sized farmers, provision of decent work for all and investment in education. Civil society itself cannot achieve poverty eradication; however it must act in partnership with governments and other institution. The discussion in Chapter 4 on education brings to light a picture of Namara children’s school experiences that are shaped by their family background and the area in which they live. The children from the Namara squatter settlement like other urban children attend the schools close to the town vicinity and have access to education made possible through Government and Religious schools and teachers. However, the children’s views demonstrate that the level of disadvantage they face determines their experience at school.

My research study found that Namara children from all types of schools agreed, “education is important”. Younger children were more likely to think that school is fun, while older children were more likely to see school as a way of getting an education in order to get a good job. Namara children demonstrated a desire to be more involved in directing their own learning and to have more ‘learning by doing’. Some children saw education as a way of ensuring a good life as an adult. Some children saw education as a way of avoiding problems in the future. Children from Namara, whatever the school they attended, had relatively high aspirations for their futures. The children from Namara squatter settlement accept that their school experience will be a main determinant for their future. Literature reviewed shows that the better-off children generally had a more positive attitude to education and access to a wider range of after-school activities. In Namara children living in poverty had little access to the out-of-school activities that more advantaged children take for granted. Children in Namara squatter settlement or in any other settlements in Fiji should need the opportunity to utilize out-of-school activities.

\textsuperscript{65} Children with hearing defects and poor visions.
Learning is a journey that begins from birth. Namara children and students continue this journey at many schools; teachers and parents support them on their way. Without a clear end-point or outcome for learning in school, it is difficult for teachers, children, and students to know how to travel and whether they have succeeded in arriving at a destination. Teachers, children and students need to know the learning destinations or outcomes. Teachers support children and students to reach these destinations. When children begin school, they usually come equipped with a variety of experiences, which are used in all learning processes. These experiences are crucial to Namara children's learning because they can either smooth the road to success in school or hinder that road. The socioeconomic status of a Namara family should have no bearing on a child's education, but, unfortunately, it does greatly affect a child's education. The low socioeconomic Namara child is disadvantaged before school begins because of the lack of those experiences, which are vital to learning and especially vital to reading. These are a proper study area and material needed for studying i.e. study room, table, chair, access to books and support from their parents.

Drawing on the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, all economically disadvantaged children have a right to a good education. Since they begin school with limited experiences in many areas compared to not in squatter settlement children, something needs to be done to supply these children with as many experiences as necessary to help them in all areas of school. Teachers cannot do much to change a child's home situation and prior experiences, but teachers should be able to provide their students with experiences, which will broaden their learning. Teachers can open up new avenues of learning for their economically disadvantaged Namara students by providing them with experiences, which many children might take for granted. The school head teacher of Labasa Muslim Primary School stated that “the school provides free education and this attracts a lot of students who suffer from poverty”. However the school tries to provide its best for children in terms of social, physical, emotional and educational support to its students. The head teacher further stated that some children come to school without lunch, books, stationery, and undergarment so the school administration staff tries to see that children needs are accommodated. This support helps children and their parents not only from Namara squatter settlement but also from other settlements that are stigmatized and socially excluded. Photograph 6 below shows a picture of a few children from the settlement at the school, lining up to get free
donations of books and stationeries from FENC Fiji, a non-governmental organization that assists needy children.

**Photograph 6: Students from Labasa Muslim Primary School.**

The Fiji Government Development Fund focuses on the education of children but also on income-generating initiatives to assist Namara squatter settlement. Assistance from the Fiji Government through the social welfare scheme has helped 60% of families in the settlement. Through the Social welfare Assistance scheme, there are family assistance scheme and also care and protection allowance provided. According to an Interview with the Director Social Welfare Labasa, “the Poverty Benefit Scheme (PBS) is a form of supplementary allowance given to families who do not have the means to meet their daily needs due to loss of income earning power either through circumstances related to death of breadwinner, being deserted by spouse, being chronically ill, prisoner dependent, physically disabled, elderly or being a single parent”. The minimum allowance paid per month per household is $60.00 and a maximum of $150 per month inclusive of a $30 food voucher. The food voucher specifies particular food products to be collected from supermarket. Presumably if a family compromises of five children, this means $12/ a week for all the

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66 The $30 food voucher is only for flour, rice, sugar, oil, dhal, blue peas, salt, tin fish, noodles, soap
children. The poor spend 60–70% of disposable income on food while the rich spend 20% on food. The rich have greater digression on their money then the poor. Because of the high cost of living, families in Namara settlement that are dependent on social welfare assistance sometimes struggle with the money they get monthly. A few families mentioned that it “is not enough especially with the rise in food and fuel prices”. However they are managing through the availability of natural resources near the settlement.

**Non-Government Organizations:**

Child poverty as a social problem has become a significant issue in Fiji. The Government and various United Nations institutions are very concerned about this problem\(^67\). It also creates awareness in public, as children are the future of a nation. Apart from assistance from schools and the Government of Fiji Islands, there are various Non-Governmental Organization in Fiji (NGO’s) that assist children who come from poor and needy families. This section will further explain the roles and functions of this NGO’s in Labasa and how they have contributed to the development of children from the Namara squatter settlement.

Save the Children Fiji is a non-governmental organization (SC Fiji) established in 1972. It is affiliated to Save the Children International (SCI) that work together to dramatically improve children’s lives in over 120 countries. For 38 years now SC Fiji, had two main focus on promoting educational development of children and advancing their rights. Save the Children Fund in Labasa assists poor families in many ways. Many families in Namara squatter settlement cannot afford to send their children to kindergartens in town so SC Labasa have established a Kids Link Programme in terms of a mobile play group at the entrance of Namara squatter settlement which offers free education\(^68\). Kids Link Fiji (KLF) encourages child participation and involvement. It is a children’s group under SC Fiji that meets, discuss, and advocates for children’s rights. The view of Kids Link Fiji (KLF) is that they want an end to poverty in Fiji and to create a welfare state in which government

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\(^{67}\)Recently UNICEF, UNDP, SC Fiji, Red Cross have made issues out of children and been conducting research on child poverty and well-being in Fiji and the Pacific Islands.

\(^{68}\) SC Fiji provides Education Assistance – for the children coming from financially challenged family background, SC Fiji provides assistance through text books and stationaries in order to keep every child in school; improve the health standards of schools by refurbishing ablution blocks and also by providing water tanks to ensure children have access to safe drinking water.
provides welfare to all single parents and families with low income, with the belief that ‘no child in Fiji should go hungry’.

Early Childhood education was something that was taken lightly forty years ago but now it has changed. Before you enroll a child into primary school, early childhood education is a requirement. The children at Namara squatter settlement are very fortunate because now education is taken right to their doorsteps. A SC Labasa Officer mentioned “funding comes from donors like Vodafone Foundation and other SC International Agencies through alliance it has with the United Nations”. Application of education assistance for Primary and Secondary education starts in November before school ends. Assistance forms are given out and are processed from December to January together with required documents. SC Labasa assists only in terms of stationery (books, pens, pencils, rubbers). The Ministry of Education provides textbook rentals in schools, bus-fare vouchers and is proposing to provide lunch vouchers as well. The role of an NGO is to facilitate areas where Government lacks.

An SC Officer stated that “Child Poverty is encountered everywhere however when we go into the community to do service delivery, we come across cases, hence we look for ways in which we can assist them, in terms of funding, we look at other organization that provides such assistance and we refer them to those organization for assistance.”. The SC Officer in charge of Early Childhood Education within Labasa stated “they are not only educating children but also parents in terms of backyard farming so that there are other sources of livelihood available for the family”. Another SC Officer indicated “parents are seeking them for advice”. However, because of the limited land availability in Namara squatter settlement, parents are urged to go fishing and catch prawns and crabs then sell in the market. Fish and prawns are a very good source of income and food supply for the family. Families are continuously advised ways in which they can provide for the needs of their families if assistance is delayed.

Another recently formed organization is the Foundation for the Education of Needy Children in Fiji (FENC Fiji) that is trying to provide holistic support and assisting needy children in Labasa. It was formed in 2009 serving as a voluntary, non-political, cause-oriented organization that would provide educational and related support to the children of the poorest of poor families in Fiji. FENC Fiji currently supports 15 children from Namara
squatter settlement (January 2012). Six children are in secondary school, while nine in Primary school. According to FENC Fiji Labasa Coordinator, “over 10 percent of Fiji's children aged 5-14 years do not attend school. More than 50 percent of those completing primary school do not have the opportunity to attend secondary school”. Access to education is not always available. FENC Fiji tries to break this cycle by giving education assistance in terms of scholarships for fees and other education related necessary requirements like transport, nutrition, school levies, textbooks, stationery, shoes, and bags (See Table 7).

Table 7: Expenses Budget for Sponsored Children from Classes 1 to Form 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Category</th>
<th>Maximum Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary School Children</td>
<td>$400/per child per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Class 1-6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form 1-3</td>
<td>$600/per child per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form 4-7</td>
<td>$750/ per child per</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: www.fencfiji.com

Respondent K from Namara squatter settlement indicated that, “I am able to go to school with all the school materials that I need and I do not need to borrow from other children”. FENC Fiji also provides coach, mentor and have tutoring support for these children through volunteers who are University students and retired school teachers. The 2012 Prime Minister of Fiji stated, “children are our future hence supporting education for the poorest child is of outmost importance” (FENC Fiji). The FENC Fiji Labasa Coordinator further mentioned that children are not selected based on their academic performance but rather on the condition and status of their families after investigation and house visitations. The researcher of this paper believes that this is very adequate in addressing the educational needs of a child. The Fiji Government perhaps could also assist poor families who are not supported by NGO’s not only at the tertiary level but beginning at primary school level.

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69 The Budget Includes: School Supplies– payment of school levies, enrolment fees (where applicable), school sandals, stationery, uniforms. For secondary schools, in addition to the above, the following is included: sporting events/outfits, technical requirements, school excursion/ research/ project expenses, other related miscellaneous expenses
5.4 Physical Environment

The third family quality of life domain is the physical environment. The physical surroundings of a family home is the physical environment. This domain includes the neighbors, community culture and other relations to family life as well as the physical factors. These include space, safety, and order of home, work, school, and community environment. A safe and comfortable house is a basic condition for any family life (McLoyd & Wilson, 1991, p.89). This is not only a problem for Namara but it’s a widespread problem in Fiji. Majority of families in the Namara squatter settlement do not have suitable housing, bedrooms, toilets, bathrooms, and kitchen and are more exposed to a cold or hot environment. In many homes as mentioned by a parent from Namara, “the boys sleep in one corner, the girls sleep in another corner and the parents try to squeeze somewhere else”. The upper socio-economic level of society however enjoys the luxury of providing separate rooms for their children. Poor housing quality together with overcrowding can disrupt a child’s ability to rest or do homework and may also contribute to stress and depression in adults. Basically, poverty impacts the home environment and in turn the home environment impacts the productivity, emotional well-being and health of not only the children but also all the family members.

The fact that poor families cannot afford an adequate house implies that these families have little choice about choosing to live in a normal suburban neighborhood. Compared to children from other neighborhoods, children from Namara squatter settlement are often excluded from safer play areas and a positive and safe environment. Through observations (Refer to Chapter 4:7) and through an interview with an official from the Ministry of Health (Labasa Health Office) there were extreme poor practices by some households in disposing of waste. Plastics and other non-decomposable wastes, which are scavenged from the nearby dump, are thrown into the mangrove swamp after perhaps not finding much use. Indiscriminate defecation by residents of Namara squatter settlement is also another cause for concern. It is a real public health problem as studies carried out by many academics state human faeces harbor a number of disease causing microorganisms. An example is Salmonella typhi known to spread typhoid and many other communicable diseases that is of a major concern for health administrators in Fiji. A Public Health respondent stated that “it

70 Walsh’s “Encyclopedia of Fiji” on Housing indicated that most houses in Fiji are one–two wooden corrugated iron houses even in villages.
is important to carry out health awareness issues on these simple, however critical issues”.

Moreover, the likelihood of adverse effects of poor solid and liquid waste disposal from Namara settlement on marine life would be profound given the practices currently being applied by the settlers. The use of easily available mangroves for firewood extends this effect. Studies have shown that non-biodegradable materials such as plastics cause considerable harm to the environment. Settlers have been using tyres to aid in reclaiming wetland but much delay in filling in soil has created potential breeding sites. Plastics deposited in the mangrove forest may hamper normal ecological pattern whereby marine species would be affected. In fact, the environmental problems are not mainly because of the poor but rather about industrial pollution by the Labasa Fiji Sugar Cooperation Mill and other industries close to Namara squatter settlement.

This type of environment is damaging to child development in every way. Poverty in Namara squatter settlement puts enormous restraints on the ability of many families to afford a nutritionally adequate diet for their children. Poor housing and improper sanitation increases the risk of severe ill health and chronic diseases in children. Living in environments like Namara squatter settlement can have effect on a child’s ability to learn, which can have a lasting impact on a child’s chances of succeeding in life. Children who are not immunized or who are malnourished are much more susceptible to the diseases that are spread through poor sanitation, housing. Majority of children from the Namara settlement suffer from sickness like bronchial infections, common cold, diarrhoe, skin diseases, pneumonia and accidents and injuries. Hence, improving an environment in which a child grows up in is important for mental, physical, emotional and spiritual development of a child.

5.5 Emotional Well-Being

The fourth domain of the quality of life domain is emotional well–being. Emotional well–being embraces the emotional aspects of family quality of life such as adaptability, positive thinking, identity, happiness and stress. In chapter 4 it was discussed that limited access to recreation or unpleasant physical environments can be very disturbing. Poverty impacts on
the home environment, and in turn, the home environment impacts on the productivity, emotional well-being, and health of all family members. The high percentage of families with children living in poverty indicates the need for direct actions to raise children’s wellbeing. Children of Namara squatter settlement who are already poor are vulnerable to hunger because they lack the resources to meet their basic needs on a daily basis. Children are also highly vulnerable to even small emotional shocks that will push them closer to destitution, starvation, and even premature mortality.

Financial stress can also add to family conflicts. Low level of education correlates directly to low income and job insecurity. Through the interview it was found that 75% of the parents in Namara squatter settlement had only attended primary school while only 35% managed to finish Form Four or Form Six in High School. As a majority of the breadwinners were low-income earners based on their level of education, financial pressure is believed to have implications on families in Namara like increased marital conflict and problems between parents and children. In families where both parents were income earners, the grandmothers became child caretaker who contributed to most of the development of the child. The other characteristics that are strongly related with children deprivation are the education status of the mother and the education status of the head of the households. More than half of all Namara children (57%) are severely deprived if they have a mother with no education while relatively few (14%) children had a mother with secondary school education. A similar pattern is seen for children based on the education level of the head of the families. It would thus seem that not only is parent education (mothers in particular) critical to children’s wellbeing but education information regarding children’s wellbeing is also critical.

5.6 Family Interaction

The fifth quality of family life domain is Family interaction. This is an important component of family life. The indicators of family interaction as discussed earlier include family routines, relationships among family members, roles, emotional, communication, and behavior. For many children from Namara squatter settlement a warm, responsive environment in the family provides them with a sense of security and trust. However to
some extent, poverty limits parents’ capacity for positive interaction. Negative emotional conditions in parents were high whereby parents were inconsistent and unresponsive to their children’s needs and where they exhibit less positive behavior such as hugs, praise, or supportive statements toward their children. This is the case in most Indigenous families and not only in Namara squatter settlement. Child labour was also evident in Namara squatter settlement in the sense that children were sent to the shops to buy cigarette, yaqona bags when they should have been studying. Children in Namara can also be termed as child labourers when they are asked to go to work, fish for the family, sell crabs, fish and prawns in the settlement, collect firewood, and scavenge in the dump for usable items in times when they could be studying.

Parents in Namara showed less sensitivity and satisfaction with parenting and more frequent use of coercive discipline methods. Children in Namara are sometimes punished “kana kuita, moku (Fijian), maro (Hindustani)” and are disciplined by parents if they misbehave as most parents follow the connotation “Spare the rod and spank the child” meaning that it is very important to discipline children now before it is too late. 80% children from the settlement stated that parents use physical discipline methods. This may be in terms of getting belted, slapped or pinched. A parent stated “children nowadays are so advanced in thinking and sometimes tend to look down at us so teaching them through coercive disciplinary methods and just sitting down and talking to them helps”. Parental neglect is also questioned in terms of them not keeping their child clean, not providing enough clothes for keeping warm, not making sure the child attended school, not caring if the child got into trouble in school, not helping with homework, not helping the child do his best, not providing comfort when the child is upset, and not helping when the child had problems. Parents need to have sufficient resources to provide food, shelter and the basic necessities that a child may need. This results in the betterment of a child’s life and also will reduce child poverty. Therefore, a Namara child’s social, economic and physical needs are met if the parents are able provide support and direction enabling a child to grow up in a home environment filled with love, care and affection.
5.6: Summary

The family quality of life refers to the extent to which families’ needs are met, family members enjoy their life together, and family members have a chance to do the things that are important to them. Based on my child poverty and wellbeing research findings in Namara squatter settlement, the five domains of family quality of life that I deemed important were health, productivity, physical environment, emotional well-being and family interaction. These five domains of family quality of life was incorporated and analyzed according to how the children in Namara viewed life. Overall, the Non-Governmental Organizations, Governmental Institutional and other agencies have done a tremendous work in addressing child poverty in squatter settlements. There are various ways in which civil society have come with policies and affirmative actions to assist the needy children in Labasa particularly those in Namara squatter settlement and this has been discussed in this chapter. However there are various ways in which these organizations and the Government of Fiji can improve the lives of people in such situation. This will be discussed in the final chapter of this research paper.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

“Overcoming poverty is not a task of charity; it is an act of justice. Like Slavery and Apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings. Sometimes it falls on a generation to be great. YOU can be that great generation. Let your greatness blossom.” -Nelson Mandela (Global Poverty Quotes)

6.1 Introduction

The research investigated child poverty and its implication in Namara, which is the largest squatter settlement in Labasa, Vanua Levu, Fiji Islands. The literature review showed that child poverty affects a child’s life chances and capabilities, which contributes to increasing growth in national poverty. The social constructivist approach was used to situate Namara squatter settlement in the broader context of squatter settlement and poverty in Fiji. Sen’s capability approach was used to evaluate policies according to how they impacted the capabilities of children in Namara. This was sought through discussions on children’s livelihood and nutrition, their accessibility to resources and services, and their vulnerability to diseases. The Quality of life selected from Turnbull (2000) and discussed were health, government and civil society support, physical environment, emotional well–being and family interaction. These domains were used because of their relevance in discussing the impact of poverty in Namara squatter settlement. The field research entailed in-depth interviews on children, parents, and teachers, governmental departments and NGO workers. Observations were also made on how people lived their daily lives. This was used to provide the detail necessary to make summative findings and analysis.

This thesis sheds light on Namara where the reality lies between extremes of poverty. The focus on the poverty of children as opposed to any other group in the population needs little justification. Children represent a country’s future, an obvious reason for societal concern with child well–being. There are innate feelings of protection by some towards the young and assumptions of their blamelessness for the situation in which they find themselves. Children are unable to take full responsibility for their circumstances and are dependent on others to look after and raise them. Their vulnerability provides a powerful moral imperative
in favour of collective action in general to help them. To implement this requires prior knowledge about the nature of child poverty and its consequences, plus knowledge of the causes. This study’s main objective was to examine child poverty in Namara squatter settlement and its social dynamics through studying the socio-economic, cultural backgrounds and conditions of children between the ages 6-18. While identifying basic problems and challenges, the research aimed to record and assesses service delivery and opportunities available to the children living in Namara squatter settlement so that evidence based policy can be formulated. The study began with a discussion of questions raised in the literature review on child poverty and well-being in the world narrowed down to Fiji. Findings of the field research were discussed in Chapter 4 and 5, which highlighted how children and parents viewed child poverty in Namara and how circumstances have come about due to their social and economic status. Chapter 5 concludes with a discussion on how the Government and Non-Governmental Organizations have assisted children in Namara squatter settlement.

6.2 Key Findings

Research to date on child poverty in Fiji reviewed in Chapter 2 has focused on measuring child poverty and well-being. From existing analysis we are not clear how long children remain in poverty and whether it is a few children for whom poverty has a long-term impact or whether it is a relatively mobile phenomenon with children and their families moving into and out of poverty. Many poor families in Fiji still struggle against multiple challenges caused by poverty. Child poverty affects children on different dimensions. Even though poverty passes through various layers of the society children are the worst hit because they are the most vulnerable. It is important to understand what the word ‘childhood’ actually means. It does not simply mean the time period from when a baby is born to when it becomes an adult. It refers to the quality of life of a child and how those years have helped a child to fully grow and reach his or her potential. Children who are deprived of basic necessities like education, proper sanitation, and a shelter are also robbed of their childhood. Poverty has been considered as a situation where a family is financially unable to satisfy its basic needs of food, clothing and shelter. Though this seems like a satisfactory

71 Stunted growth, intellectual development, physical capabilities
explanation it fails to ignore the various dimensions of poverty and does not focus on the actual problems. Despite the Fiji Governments attempt to reduce poverty, it still has a long way to go.

From the study it was found that circumstances of Namara children can change over time and that these changes may trigger entries into or out of poverty. It is, of course, also possible that a change in poverty status could lead to changes in family circumstances in Namara. Findings are listed:

1. All children of school-going age went to school (Often absent from school because of health reasons i.e. respiratory problems, diarrhoe, cold, environmental problems, nutritional problems). Some have gone as far as attaining scholarships for Degree programs at the University of the South Pacific (completing Bachelor of Science & Bachelor of Commerce degrees), Diploma certificates at Nursing schools and the Fiji National University.

2. Most children were physically active

3. Children had access to health and a few facilities (closeness to town)

4. The physical punishment of children by parents (slap, belting, and whipping with a tweak) is not uncommon72.

5. Government provided assistance like Poverty Benefit allowance, bus fare vouchers, free tuition for some schools etc. – designed to help families while NGO’s also attend to the needs of the children.

6. Children of Namara squatter settlement are not entirely neglected compared to children of other slums in the world. Through Government & NGO’s effort and support, families break out of inter-generation poverty. This also entirely depends on family and parental support and initiative.

7. There are possibilities for a few families. Children have come to realize this. Many people come from poor families in Fiji however despite disadvantages; they are making something out of their lives. Families in Namara squatter settlement have families abroad in

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72 Physical punishment of children is a violation to children’s rights and Save the Children Fiji is trying to put a stop to it.
the USA, Australia, NZ, some are holding highly paid jobs (salary), and some have sent their children to University.

8. A few families together with their children scavenge from the rubbish dump for usable material and food.

9. A safe and comfortable house is a basic condition for any family life. This is not only a problem for Namara but it’s a widespread problem in Fiji. Majority of families in the Namara squatter settlement do not have suitable housing, bedrooms, toilets, bathrooms, and kitchen and are more exposed to a cold or hot environment. Some children live in houses with leaking roofs and holes on the floors of their houses that provide access to cockroaches, mice and rats.

10. The close proximity of easy built house makes people living together more tightly bonded and everything that children and parents do is visible. Activities done both by parents and children are open to be scrutinized, as there is no space for intimacy and privacy in the household. This closely interactive bonding between the parents and children provide the opportunity for families to maintain relationships, enhance well-being, provide families with the opportunity to learn, practice and demonstrate new behaviours and patterns of interaction.

11. The environment in which a Namara squatter settlement child is brought up has limited access to basic amenities like adequate sanitation, or garbage disposal, proper latrines and sewerage. They are exposed to the ill effects of the environment and the weather. Moreover, they reside in very unhygienic surroundings where the high tide washes up garbage disposed by them and by those living along the Qawa River.

6.3 Implication of Study

More needs to be done to alleviate the impact of poverty on Namara children’s lives and policies should be tailored to the particular circumstances of those living in persistent poverty. More knowledge is needed about the barriers, which prevent families taking up opportunities and the extent to which opportunities do not exist for these families. In addition, many Namara adults in persistent poverty households have taken on caring
responsibilities and further investigation of their particular needs and what it would take to lift these families out of poverty is needed. It is clear that without aiming policies and solutions at tackling persistent poverty in Fiji it is unlikely that the government’s targets for the eradication of child poverty will be met. Longitudinal qualitative research is needed to further understand the nature of persistent poverty, poverty resilience and coping strategies. This type of research would enable a better understanding of the extent of available opportunities and the barriers which those living in persistent poverty face, preventing many children and their families escaping poverty.

6.4 Recommendation

Discussions of the conclusions and implications of the study inevitably lead this study to making some recommendations and which are as follows:

With the problems already identified, the increasing population of the Namara area with limited space to provide for further housing developments will cause increasing overcrowding, poor waste disposal, poor housing conditions and sanitation problems. Reforms to the child support system should aim to achieve the maximum impact on child poverty and, to this end; a significantly higher disregard of maintenance income in benefit calculations should be introduced. Fundamentally progressive social change is essential for tackling child poverty. Social discrimination, poor work opportunities and limited citizenship can stop the poorest from improving their circumstances. Frequently poor disadvantaged children do not just need ‘good policies’ they need societies that give them a voice and facilitate their human rights. Achieving this is the most difficult part of the policy and political agenda hence social and cultural relationships and practices are often entrenched. Tackling poverty in childhood requires a specific focus and whilst household improvements are important; they are sufficient to improve children’s life chances and wellbeing. The ‘Look North’ policy in Vanua Levu needs to justify the highest incidence of poverty. The following are 7 specific targets;

1. **Protect jobs.** Parental job loss is a fast track to child poverty, generating immediate stress and long-term damage. The Government must protect existing jobs by investing in people,
as well as institutions. A paid job enables parents to spend cash, thereby boosting community businesses and protecting employment.

2. **Remove barriers to work.** Decently paid jobs can provide a route out of poverty, but not for those who are excluded from the labour market. Unsuitable and expensive playgroups, low skills and discrimination by employers generate tremendous barriers to work. High quality, personally tailored support is needed to enable those unable to access work to acquire the skills they need to do so.

4. **Stop in-work poverty.** More than half of poor children have a parent in paid work. Employment can only provide a route out of poverty when it is decently paid and barriers to working additional hours are tackled. In-work benefits make a huge difference to those in poorly paid jobs.

5. **End the classroom divide.** Children growing up in poverty do not do well at school. Barriers to schooling, such as selection, high costs and stigma, blight children's educational experiences and reduce future opportunities. Increasing per-pupil spending and reducing extra school costs are essential, but a great deal of learning also takes place outside school. Ending child poverty outside the school gates will help reduce educational inequalities in the classroom.

6. **Provide fair public services for those who need them most.** Low-income families rely on public services to provide the sort of educational, health and social support that better-off families take for granted. But the ‘inverse care law’ results in poorer families who need more support getting less out of public services. Tracking patterns of service usage, targeting funding and ensuring that services reflect and meet the needs of poorer communities will help extend valuable support to families and reduce the educational and health divide.

7. **Ensure a decent home for every family.** The quality of the home environment is important to children’s health, socialization and education. The Fiji Islands need more decent and affordable family houses to end overcrowding, reduce housing costs and provide safe,
healthy environments for children and families. Now is the time to invest in a programme of ‘social housing’.

There are 5 recommendations specific to children of Namara squatter settlement:

- Sporting fields to be properly leveled
- Council Youth Officer – too look into issues pertaining to children needs and welfare
- Personal Hygiene program implemented in each household
- Tutorial after school – to help with homework program for children
- Food diet supplement program

The study concludes that, to make further inroads into child poverty, the Government will need to extend its policy of increasing redistribution to low-income families, but that this will not be enough on its own to meet the targets. In addition, this will require parents to fare better in the workplace, with improved pay and opportunities. Long-term policies working in this direction include better education and training for disadvantaged groups, and improved social welfare. Assistance from Non-Governmental organizations will be beneficial.

6.5 Summary

This research specifically looked at how the 6-18 year old children of Namara Squatter settlement were experiencing poverty in their lives basically in lack of material and physical necessities. This material deprivation can be assessed by looking at the responses of children’s own views about experiencing poverty. The child experiences poverty within a households so the study looked at fulfilling child basic needs with specific focus on physical and mental health, education attainment, family housing conditions, and parental breakdown, water and sanitation problems. This paper focused on some specific poverty indicators that were asked by the survey questionnaire. With this end the selection of specific child poverty deprivation indicators has helped to illustrate the extent and depth of child poverty based on those targeted children as perception and their household. Key poverty indicators discussed in this study were health, productivity, physical environment, emotional well–being and family interaction. These sub-sections helped to illustrate the
actual material deprivation of the children. Assumptions behind choosing these indicators are that these indicators could better capture material deprivation of child poverty—reflect targeted children’s living situation.

Actions to alleviate child poverty in Namara is the obligation this generation owes to the next: to hundreds of Labasa children who should not be growing in poverty: children who because of poverty, deprivation and the lack of opportunity have been destined to fail even before their life’s journey has begun, children for whom we know—unless we act—life will never be fair. Children in deprived areas like Namara, need, deserve and must have a government on their side, a government committed to and fighting for social justice. Hence, a child focused poverty analysis can help to design an appropriate framework to address the gap. Therefore, child sensitive poverty approaches are mandatory to tackle the deep-rooted child poverty situation of a country.
7.0 References

General:


managing the transition from village to city: Pacific Urban Agenda. ESCAP/POC, Nadi, 1-4 December.


**Fiji:**


**United Nations Documents:**


UNFPA. New York.


Appendices:


Introduce yourself.
Confidentiality of interview/use of information and purpose of research made clear to respondent. Also indicate that ‘report of research’ will be shared with him/community but only in terms of patterns and without reference to individual families.

Personal Information
- Gender
- Age
- Level of Education
- Place of Birth
- Current Residence- Number of Years
- Employment.
- Level of Education Reached
- Qualification Attained
- Assets-bank a/c, savings, home, car, computer, bicycle, mobile phone

Family Information
- Education level of household head
- Education level of spouse of head of household
- Parents Employment- Average hourly earnings: Contribution to household income
- Number of children
- Children’s education
- Children’s employment/livelihood
- Household Expenditure
- Number of Years at the Namara squatter settlement

Observation
- Location of house
- Materials with which house has been made
- Number of rooms (any dedicated space for children)
- Location of kitchen
- Location of Bathroom and Toilet
- Furnishing
- Source of Water and Electricity

Household Information
- Resources and Assets- Financial Support
- Household Strategies
- Household livelihood security
- Basic Services
- Household Support for children’s learning
- Number of people in the households
- Income levels/ access to land and other assets, financial and other obligation?
- Does your family have or face any difficulties?
- Level of unemployment- Number of years
- Who do you mostly relate to in the community?

Leisure/Entertainment
- Cultural events
- Sports
- Playing card games
- Videos/movies
- Partying –kava, beer (alcohol).
- Talanoa
- Church activities

Difficulties and challenges
- Access to education
- Absenteeism from school (how often)
- Access to health services
- Access to Sporting facilities i.e. playing field
- Access to other public facilities i.e. Transportation
Determinants of Good Health
- Good Food
- Cleanliness, good sanitary conditions
- Job, earnings, money
- Education
- Parent’s loving care, harmony in family
- Affordable and accessible health care
- Regular, scheduled daily activities

Determinants of Poor Health
- Uncleanness, impurity, unhygienic surroundings
- Bad, impure food
- Poverty
- Disease
- High Medical Fees/Expenses
- Coldness of environment

Diseases children may get: (how often – weekly, monthly, every three months, once or twice in the year)
- Skin diseases
- Diarrhoea
- Common Cold/Fever
- Typhoid
- Measles
- Pneumonia
- Vomiting
- Whooping Cough
- Accidents/Injuries

✓ Economic i.e.
  - Income
  - Housing Quality and Conditions
  - Food and nutrition

✓ Environmental Conditions i.e. Health, Playing Fields,
  - Water and sanitation, garbage disposal
  - Latrine
  - Rubbish dump and sewerage plant.

✓ Physical Conditions
  - Physical hazards including floods, very high tides, rubbish dump and sewerage plant.

✓ Emotional Environment
  - Quality of care
  - Discipline, welfare (use of positive and negative sanctions in children’s upbringing)
  - Child abuse (nature of punishment)

✓ Social Conditions ie.
  - Food and nutrition (meals and contents)
  - Education
  - Child stereotype
  - Family support
  - Children’s routine
  - Substance abuse (glue, marijuana, alcohol including home brew)
Appendix 2: “Child Poverty and well-being: A Case Study of Namara squatter settlement, Labasa, Vanua Levu, Fiji Islands”

While squatter issues have drawn much media, government and public attention and remain topical there is no real in-depth study either of a squatter settlement or specifically of children in squatter settlements. This research will examine child poverty in a squatter settlement in Fiji and will provide an in-depth understanding of socio-cultural, economic, environmental and other aspects of child poverty in the squatter settlement. The research seeks to explore ways in which physical and social conditions of children living in squatter settlement can be improved. The overall objective of the research is to obtain an in-depth inter-disciplinary understanding of the history and current social, cultural and economic situation that the children at the Namara Squatter settlement in encounter. It is hoped that this information will be helpful to those concerned about child welfare in Fiji in their deliberations and policy making.

Date: _________________________
School Name: _______________________________________________________

Interview Question:
1. What do you understand by the term child poverty?
2. Does child poverty exist within your school?
3. How many children from Namara squatter settlement go to the school that you head?
5. Overall, what are some problems encountered by students at your school?
6. What are some specific problems encountered by needy children at your school?
7. Is there any help or assistance given to students at the school by the Ministry of Education or School Board?
8. Do you think needy/poor children are able to access opportunities and services available to other children? Please explain
9. What do you think is the level of child poverty in school? Please Explain (This maybe from previous experiences)
10. What are some approaches that have been taken to measure child poverty in school?
11. Do you think there is a positive or peaceful environment being provided for the welfare and protection of children? In terms of community based social support, security and social protection? Please Explain
12. How do you think child poverty is terms of education is being monitored? Please Explain
13. Are there any public policies related to child poverty in schools? Please Explain
14. Are there any civil society group actively engaged in addressing child poverty in schools? Please Explain

Your response towards this questionnaire is very much valuable and informative and will be acknowledged in the research. Thank you very much for your time and effort!