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Through the lens of peripherality: climate-driven changes to ecosystem services for communities in Bua, western Vanua Levu Island (Fiji)

Abstract:

Located in one of the less-accessible parts of the Fiji Archipelago, the province of Bua comprises numerous communities that together illustrate the concept of peripherality – the idea that some are more/less globally engaged than others – which affects the ways in which they interact with the ecosystems that sustain them. More remote communities tend to be less globally engaged but then place a higher value on ecosystem services (and their conservation) than those communities with quicker/easier access to government facilities (in towns).

As climate change has been impacting ecosystem services in Bua, especially over the past two decades, so different strategies for managing change have been developed in particular communities depending on their degree of peripherality. More peripheral/marginal communities are often more aware and concerned about climate-induced changes to provisioning services although proposed solutions are often more likely to be inadequate. Less marginal (near-core) communities are more likely to understand the context of climate stress on ecosystem services but often less inclined to consider their adaptation rather than seek alternatives.

Funded by the Asia-Pacific Network for Global Change (APN), this project has to date gathered data from twelve Bua communities including three offshore islands. It is clear that a province-wide response, disseminated and implemented through all its constituent communities, is preferable to any uneven piecemeal response.