

ITLTB – Fiji’s Customary Land Custodian: a Case Study of Managing Nearly 90% of the Country’s Land

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SUMMARY

Nearly 90% of Fiji’s 18,300 sq km of land is recognised and recorded as Customary Lands, with the remaining lands being Freehold (6%) and State Lands (4%). Customary land is generally communally owned at the mataqali level which is generally a small village unit, but there are some lands owned by smaller family units called tokatoka, or at the higher level of yavusa, and just a few parcels by individuals.

The iTaukei Land Trust Board (iTLTB) was established in the 1940s following the native owner’s ceding their rights to the iTLTB as trustee. Today, iTLTB is responsible for managing virtually all of Fiji’s customary lands. iTLTB’s priority is to ‘reserve’ sufficient land for the customary owners use, and then lease out non-reserve lands for other uses. Most land is leased for agricultural purposes; followed by residential, commercial, and industrial uses. iTLTB also manages special leases such as filming, tourism, forestry, religious, education, government, conservation, mining, sand and gravel extraction, telecommunication, and utility corridor easements.

As part of their responsibilities, iTLTB coordinates the leasing process including preparing leases, land survey, calculation of lease premium and annual rental rate, collecting rent, and distributing rental proceeds to customary landowners.

This paper looks at processes used within iTLTB in managing all these properties for so many different customary owners, and its recent implementation of GIS into that process.

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