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**Prime Minister and Minister for Civil Service, Strategic Planning, National  
Development and Statistics & Youth and Sports**

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### **Oral Question – 49/2026**

Hon. Vijay Nath to ask the Prime Minister, and Minister for Civil Service and Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics – **Can the Minister inform Parliament on how many rural families have been lifted out of poverty since the Government took office.**

Parliament of Fiji  
Government Buildings, Suva

Thur 30 Apr 2026  
0930 Hours

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### **Salutations**

- Honorable Speaker Sir,
- Honorable Ministers and Assistant Ministers,
- Honorable Leader of Opposition,
- Honorable Members of Parliament, and
- Ladies & Gentlemen

Ni sa bula vina'a and a very good afternoon to you all.

1. Mister Speaker Sir, I rise to respond to the question and I thank the Honourable Vijay Nath for this important matter.

### **Data Integrity and Measurement**

2. Mister Speaker Sir, poverty reduction, particularly in our rural and maritime communities remains a central priority of this Coalition Government, guided by the National Development Plan 2025–2029 and Vision 2050, with a clear objective to reduce poverty and strengthen social protection.
3. However, the question of how many rural families have been lifted out of poverty must be

addressed with statistical rigor and evidence-based reporting.

4. The official measurement of poverty is derived from the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) conducted by the Fiji Bureau of Statistics. At present, the most recent comprehensive dataset remains the 2019–2020 HIES, with a new survey currently underway.
5. It would therefore be premature and methodologically unsound to provide a definitive figure on the number of rural families lifted out of poverty since 2023 until updated data is finalised and validated.

### **Baseline Poverty Context**

6. Mister Speaker Sir, the 2019–2020 HIES presents a sobering baseline:

- i. **29.9 percent of Fijians**, or approximately 258,000 individuals across 45,724 households, were living below the Basic Needs Poverty Line of \$41.91 per adult equivalent per week;
- ii. **Multidimensional poverty rate in rural areas is 38 percent**, compared to 23 percent in urban areas;
- iii. **Over 62 percent of those living in poverty reside in rural communities**, underscoring the geographic concentration of vulnerability; and
- iv. **The poverty gap stood at 7 percent**, reflecting not only the incidence of poverty but also its depth and severity.

7. These figures clearly demonstrate that rural poverty is both widespread and structural, requiring sustained and targeted Government intervention.

### **Government Action: Rural Empowerment and Service Delivery**

8. Mister Speaker Sir, while updated figures are pending, Government has taken decisive and targeted action to improve rural livelihoods and address the underlying drivers of rural poverty.

9. Our approach is comprehensive, focused on raising incomes, improving access to services and expanding economic participation.

10. Key interventions include but not limited to:

- i. Significant investments in rural infrastructure, including roads,

- electrification, and water and sanitation systems, reducing isolation and cost burdens;
- ii. Strengthened agriculture and fisheries programmes, improving productivity, food security, and market access for rural households;
  - iii. Expansion of social protection schemes, targeting the most vulnerable families;
  - iv. Scaling up youth empowerment, skills training, and community-based enterprise programmes; and
  - v. Improved access to essential services such as healthcare, education, and housing in rural and maritime areas.
11. These interventions are already contributing to enhanced income-generating opportunities that improves service delivery and quality of life and

allow for greater resilience to economic and climate-related shocks

## **Targeted Grassroots Impact – Development Grant**

12. Mister Speaker Sir, complementing the broader interventions delivered across Government Ministries, the Office of the Prime Minister administers the Development Grant as a targeted instrument to address grassroots needs in rural, maritime, and peri-urban communities—particularly those that face structural barriers in accessing larger national programmes. The Grant is strategically positioned as a catalyst to unlock inclusive growth, expand equitable access to essential services, and accelerate community-level development outcomes.

13. From 2023 to 2026, a total of FJD\$5 million has been deployed to support **164 rural community-based projects** across all four divisions and directly benefiting over **24,600 Fijians**.

14. These interventions are practical, targeted, and impact-driven, addressing immediate livelihood needs while strengthening long-term resilience.

For example:

- **Economic empowerment:** Support to community cooperatives, such as Tikina Sawau Fisheries Cooperative in Beqa, has enabled improved access to markets, strengthened collective bargaining power with consumers and exporters, and increased household incomes for its 127 members;

- **Infrastructure development:** Targeted investments in rural infrastructure including access roads, crossings, and evacuation facilities, have significantly strengthened connectivity, safety, and service access. For instance, the culvert crossing in Dakuniba Village in the Northern Division has improved mobility and reliability of transport, directly benefiting approximately 175 residents and enhancing their access to essential government services;
- **Social services:** Strategic water infrastructure initiatives in rural communities, including the 75 households from Nakalawaca Village and Naloto District School, have expanded access to safe and treated water for households and students alike. These interventions have delivered tangible public health benefits,

improved living standards, and reduced vulnerability to water-related risks. Water projects in rural communities such as the Nakalawaca Village and schools such as the 114 students from Naloto District School, now have improved access to safe and treated water, directly enhancing public health outcomes and reducing vulnerability.

15. Mister Speaker Sir, these are not isolated interventions—they are part of a deliberate strategy to ensure that development reaches the last mile, empowering communities to participate more fully in the national economy.

### **Partnerships for Rural Development**

16. Mister Speaker Sir, Government's efforts are further strengthened through strategic partnerships with development partners.

17. Through these partnerships, we are:

- i. Supporting rural livelihoods and enterprise development;
- ii. Expanding access to finance, innovation, and technical assistance;
- iii. Strengthening community-based development initiatives; and
- iv. Enabling rural communities to integrate more effectively into national and regional economies.

18. These collaborations are essential in ensuring that rural communities are not only supported but are empowered to actively contribute to nation building and economic growth.

## **Strategic Direction under the National Development Plan**

19. Mister Speaker Sir, the National Development Plan 2025–2029 adopts a multidimensional approach to poverty reduction, recognising that poverty extends beyond income to include access, opportunity, and resilience.
20. For the first time, the Plan includes a dedicated focus on **Rural and Outer Island Development**, which will:
- a) Improve coordination through the Integrated Rural Development Framework
  - b) Expand equitable access to infrastructure and services; and
  - c) Strengthen data systems to better track rural poverty dynamics.

21. Government is also prioritising plans and strategies on modernisation of agriculture and value chains, participation in higher-value sectors, including agro-processing and tourism and expansion into the digital economy.
22. These efforts are aimed at transitioning rural households from subsistence-based livelihoods to sustainable economic participation.

### **Resilience and Sustainability**

23. Honourable Speaker Sir, we recognise that rural poverty is closely linked to vulnerability to climate change and external shocks.
24. Government is therefore strengthening climate-resilient infrastructure, community-based adaptation initiatives and social protection

systems, to ensure that gains made in poverty reduction are sustained over the long term.

## **Conclusion and Forward Outlook**

25. Mister Speaker Sir, while we await updated official data, the Government's direction is clear—to systematically reduce rural poverty through sustained investment, empowerment, and inclusive development.

26. Once the new HIES results are released, I will report back to this Honourable House with:

- i. Verified national and rural poverty trends;  
and
- ii. The number of households that have transitioned above the poverty line.

27. In conclusion, this Government remains firmly committed to ensuring that no rural Fijian is left behind, by improving access to services, expanding economic opportunities, and strengthening resilience for all communities.

28. Vinaka, dhanyavaad, and thank you.

[END]