



# MINISTRY OF WATERWAYS

## Press Release

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### **Seawall Construction Works Commissioned for Veseisei Village**

Efforts to safeguard the Veseisei village from Coastal flooding and Coastal erosion was boosted today following the Ground Breaking Ceremony for the Nature-Based Solution (NBS) Seawall Project for the village.

The construction works for the 500 meter NBS Seawall will protect 150 households and 800 villagers from the effect of rising sea levels and coastal erosion which has threatened many houses in the village.

While commissioning the groundbreaking works at Veseisei village in Lautoka today, Minister for Agriculture, Waterways and Environment Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy said that relocation of houses is the last option for the government.

Dr. Reddy further noted that protecting these coastal communities is significant as not only their households will be safeguarded, but their ancient and traditional land will also be protected from coastal inundation.

"Some several decades ago, our people who settled alongside the coastal areas have established their communities, their heritage, and their culture. Their lifestyle is intertwined with the coastal resources. They derive a source of value from the rivers or the coastal areas," he said.

Minister Reddy further reiterated that those communities are now been threatened by the rising effect of sea-level due to the effect of climate change.

"Unfortunately due to the climate change the reality now is that the very source of their livelihood, their heritage which was established is now threatening them to the extent that some of the villages cannot be protected," said Minister Reddy.

"For our government, relocating communities or villages is the last option, we don't want to relocate because it is not about physical objects that you move from one place to the other. It's about people. It's about people's memories, about people's culture, their heritage, their bonding with the place which their ancestors have been living there," he said.

The village spokesperson for the Veseisei village Mr. Inoke MomoEdonu has expressed his gratitude to the Ministry of Waterways as the villages' land had been constantly and

adversely affected by coastal flooding.

Our forefathers relocated here about 143 years ago and since then we have been living here.

"We have been experiencing the brunt of the high tide where houses near the coastline have been threatened. This is our forefather's land, they have been buried here. And we cannot think about relocating from here," he said

"At times during the high tides, and especially during flood times, some houses here get flooded as seawater enters their houses due to strong waves", he said

We thank the government of the day, the Ministry of Waterways, for the construction of the seawall that will not only protect the village but will also secure our ancient land.

Close to 500 meters of a hybrid sea wall, will be built by the Ministry of Waterways with bouldering work, land reclamation, rows of mangroves (as a first), and vetiver planting (last line of defense) to protect the village coastline.