



Informal Economies Recovery Project

A project jointly implemented by the International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)



UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund

#RecoverBetterTogether

Matin Karimli

Director ILO Office for Pacific Island Countries

My arrival in Fiji in early February 2020 to take up my post coincided with the outbreak of the global pandemic reaching the Pacific.

For all Pacific countries, the tourism industry, that provided a life-line to many businesses including those in the informal sector, was the first to go. As early as 30th March 2020, the Fiji Hotel and Tourism Association (FHTA) announced that 279 members had closed due to zero booking for next few months, 30 were operating in reduced scale and about 20,000 workers had been sent home.

A year and seven months on, Fiji is in the midst of its second wave COVID-19 emergency. Many businesses are straining under the prolonged stress of closure, reduced operating hours and significantly fewer customers. A recent survey conducted by the restaurant and café business community highlighted a massive revenue drop of 75% - 99% among the majority of members; while 25% of members indicated that they were considering closing down immediately.

On 10th June 2021 I had the privilege of joining the consultation with Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME). Organized by ILO, MSME Fiji (Government), Fiji Commerce & Employers Federation (FCEF) and UNDP. This also included representatives from the informal sector, that have been hard hit and without support. While the representatives presented many challenges -and solutions - it was very clear that the mounting operational costs against limited or no income was leading many to close down places of business and employment.

On 25th June 2021, I wrote to Fiji's Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Trade, Tourism and Transport (MCTTT) attaching a summary of key MSME challenges and proposed solutions, and requesting to consider them for the national budget. This is the second national budget of government, in response to COVID-19. Compared to the last budget, we can see a more targeted focus on supporting and sustaining MSMEs. [Read more](#)



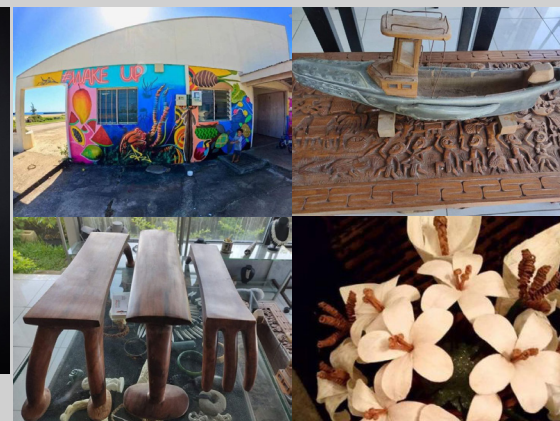
FEATURE STORY

Diary of a Project Coordinator

Katrina Ma'u Fatiaki's Observations from the COVID-Free Kingdom of Tonga



Katrina Ma'u Fatiaki



Katrina has put down some of her interesting observations in the form of a diary entry, to give us a snapshot of what the Informal Economies Recovery Project is doing on the ground in Tonga, and what life is looking like at the moment, as COVID remains safely locked out of the Island Kingdom.

Katrina Ma'u Fatiaki is Country coordinator for the UNESCO project in Tonga, and has more than 15 years of experience in research, evaluation and program management

experience in the Pacific. She is currently the owner and lead consultant for Tapuaki Mei Langi Consultancy based in Tonga with core services in human rights and gender project design and delivery support. Katrina describes herself as a certified trainer, coach and speaker in the field of leadership and human rights, with advanced communication skills in negotiating and advocating for the realization of human rights, good governance and gender equality. [Read more](#)

ENTREPRENEURS JOURNEY

Cainton Milroy - One Tech-Savvy Entrepreneur's Mission to Digitalize Vanuatu

This month we sat down with Informal Economies Recovery Project partner, Cainton Milroy - an ambitious young software engineer, entrepreneur and self-confessed coffee addict from Vanuatu. He spoke to us about his role in organizing Vanuatu's first ever e-commerce symposium; why digitalization is the future of small business success, and what his hopes are for his country - the most disaster-prone nation on the planet. [Read more](#)



Project Activities and Stories

Informal sector workers in Vanuatu to have a voice

An initiative led by the Vanuatu Association of Public Employees Trade Union (VAPSE) and the Vanuatu National Workers Union (VNWU), aims to formalise existing informal sector associations, particularly those in the creative and agriculture sectors, on Santo and the Northern Provinces of Vanuatu. [Read More](#)

One voice: supporting Fijian visual artists influence national covid-19 recovery

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed and magnified the creative industries' pre-existing volatility. Due to the complex nature of their work, artists and cultural professionals are particularly affected and lockdown measures around the world directly impact the entire creative value chain – creation, production, distribution and access. [Read More](#)

Leave no one behind! Making covid-safe business recovery protocol inclusive

ILO and UNDP facilitated a consultation between government partners across the Fijian Ministry of Commerce, Trade, Tourism and Transport [MCTTT] and the Fiji Commerce and Employers Federation [FCEF], with Micro and Small Business Enterprises [MSME's] representatives – to allow MSME's to provide feedback on and influence COVID-safe business operation protocols before they were enacted into law. [Read More](#)

Targeted support to MSME's during Fiji's COVID emergency

In response to the Fiji COVID emergency, the ILO is working with the Fiji Ministry of Commerce, Trade, Tourism and Transport (MCTTT) and the Fiji Commerce & Employers Federation (FCEF) to support Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), including the informal sector. [Read More](#)

Strengthening & Promoting Business Development Services (BDS) for COVID-19 Recovery in Tonga

The Tongan Ministry of Trade and Economic Development (MTED) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), allowing for mutual participation in the planning and implementation of the activities that will enable micro and small enterprise, particularly the informal sector to access business training, advisory services and mentoring. [Read More](#)

Tonga's first ever tapa trade show to commence in August

The newly-formed Tonga National Tapa-making Workers' Association [TNTWA] plans to inaugurate the association with the country's first-ever Tapa Trade Show. Organized in partnership with the Tonga Public Service Association, TNTWA was formed through the support of the UN's Informal Economies Recovery Project. [Read More](#)

19 local business trainers introduced to ILO's Community Based Enterprise Development (C-BED) tools

In an effort to strengthen Business Development Services (BDS) in Fiji, the ILO organised and delivered a Training of Facilitators (ToF) on 1st June 2021. [Read More](#)

Partner Spotlight

Feeding the future of Tonga

Through the Informal Economies Recovery Project, IFAD is supporting a range of agricultural development activities across Tonga, including supporting the investment in seedlings for homestead gardens to improve food security. [Read More](#)



MORDITT trainers prepare to teach locals in 'Eua how to create vegetable seedbeds for their home garden

Meet the Team

Dr. Jorge Bouchot

Project Consultant Vanuatu – ILO

Jorge is a labour economist based in Vanuatu since 2018. He is an ODI fellow (fellowship at the Overseas Development Institute) currently working at the Department of Labour and Employment Services as a Labour Market Research Coordinator. He spent his first two years as an ODI Fellow in Vanuatu at the Prime Minister's Office, where he contributed to development of the Vanuatu Recovery Strategy 2020-2023 and on the implementation of the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment for TC Harold and COVID-19. Jorge obtained his PhD in Economics at the University of Birmingham. His doctoral dissertation on the implications of a minimum wage rise in Mexico was awarded with two National prizes in Mexico. Before obtaining his PhD, he worked for the Ministry of Finance in Mexico.



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