

Fijian Stories from the Heart of Communities

Build Back Safer in Tonga

The Kingdom of Tonga is a Polynesian country located south of Samoa, southeast of Fiji, and northeast of New Zealand. Its archipelago consists of 176 islands, 36 of which are inhabited by a population of approximately 106,000 individuals.

Last month, Habitat for Humanity Fiji, in partnership with Habitat for Humanity New Zealand successfully conducted a Build Back Safer Training of Trainers for Live & Learn Tonga. A total of 20 individuals were part of the training which included members of the community as well.

This training has equipped the members of the Popua Settlement in Tongatapu with essential skills

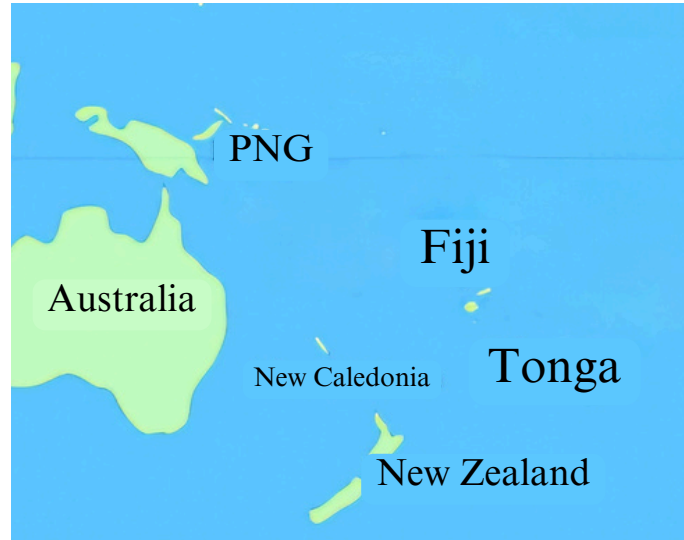


Image: Google Maps



Participants engaged in the Build

to build and rebuild safer, stronger homes after disasters, strengthening their resilience to the impacts of climate change. “I’ve been doing maintenance for past few years, but this training has given me a fair understanding on how important it is to learn about other elements of construction work such as profiling, wall structure, bracing, and roofing” says 25 year old Lopeti Hopoate, who works for a local construction company.

“I will go back to my community and share these skills”, he adds.


Members of Live and Learn Tonga were also able to learn valuable skills to provide the Build Back Safer training in other communities.

Aligned with our vision to build resilience, reduce risk, and enhance disaster response and recovery across the Pacific, this initiative marks another step towards creating safer and more prepared communities.

Habitat Fiji will continue to provide remote support to Live & Learn for their upcoming community trainings.



Build nearing completion

Vinaka & Thank you 
Habitat NZ for supporting this

Women at the Heart of Vunuku's Growth



Karalaini sitting at the village entrance

Vunuku village in Fiji's Rewa Province serves as an example of how inclusive planning and community participation can promote sustainable development and resilience. Karalaini Qalita, 45, is one of the dedicated members of the village driving forward the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Master Plan (2021-2031) initiatives. Originally from the island of Bau, Karalaini now resides in Vunuku with her husband and in-laws after marrying into the village.

Following the training provided by Habitat Fiji, she joined the Village Development Committee, where she represents women and persons with disabilities to ensure their needs are prioritized. The committee convenes monthly to monitor the progress of activities outlined in the DRR Master Plan and to set priorities for the upcoming weeks. Developed in collaboration with the community through PASSA training, the Master Plan serves as a roadmap for addressing key challenges, including disability inclusion and income generation.

The community includes five persons with disabilities and 17 elderly members. Through the training sessions, Karalaini together with the community developed an evacuation plan that prioritizes their safety, ensuring they are the first to be evacuated from their homes during emergencies. Karalaini has played a leading role in securing the Housing Grant for Persons with Special Needs, equating to \$5000 per person. This enabled the community to construct ramps, handrails, and accessible toilets. Karalaini's efforts have ensured that people with disabilities and the elderly are not left behind.

Karalaini is also spearheading the mushroom farming project, which generates a steady income of \$400 per month. Additionally, she collaborates with other women to organize fundraising activities where food is sold for \$2 a plate, raising an additional \$400 each month. She also actively supports the Vunuku Women's Disability Group that creates handicrafts that are sold during the Women's Expo held regularly. The funds generated are used to sustain the group's income-generating activities and support members' financial obligations to their families and the Village DRR Master Plan.

Guided by the DRR Master Plan, Karalaini's relentless pursuit to improve access to shelter and WASH facilities, secure income-generating projects, and provide ongoing training for members to continue with these initiatives has fostered a more resilient and self-sufficient community in Vunuku, empowering its residents to address their own needs and challenges effectively.

The development of the DRR Masterplan was supported by Habitat Australia.



Preparing the mushroom substrate



Karalaini weaving a bag using plant materials

Habitat Fiji at ACFID Conference



At Australian Council for International Development Conference 2024, Habitat Fiji's Head of Regional Development, Sangita Kumar, shared insights using a case from Fiji on 'Achieving Effective Climate Resilience in the Pacific through Integrated 'Multi-sectoral' Development/Humanitarian Approaches' with representatives from Habitat Australia, University of Technology Sydney and the Humanitarian Advisory Group.

By combining strengths and sharing local knowledge, we're building more than homes – we're creating resilient, community-centered solutions that tackle housing, climate, and development challenges holistically.

Pictured Left to right: Sangita Kumar, Head of Regional Development, Habitat Fiji; Nicole Stanmore, CEO, Habitat Australia; Chris Govers, Head of International Programs, Habitat Australia

2024: A Year of Dedication, Growth, and Support

By Losalini Nalawa - 06/11/24

As 2024 draws to a close, I reflect on an incredible year of personal and professional accomplishments. This journey has been one of intense dedication, resilience, and growth, and I am grateful to share these milestones with the community that has supported me along the way.

In October, I proudly graduated from the Leadership Fiji 2024 program. The eight-month experience was transformative, and I was honored to be elected class president by my 29 fellow cohort members. Leadership Fiji has been a journey that pushed me to new heights and connected me with driven individuals passionate about making a difference. This journey was made possible by the unwavering support of Habitat for Humanity Fiji, who selected and funded my participation. For that, I am deeply

grateful. Working with Habitat for Humanity Fiji has been a rewarding experience, presenting numerous opportunities to grow. This year, I was entrusted with the role of Project Manager for a Climate Change project, a significant responsibility that I embraced alongside my other commitments. During a time of many internal changes, I also adapted to a new strategic vision and framework within the organization, which brought in new people, processes, and positive shifts. I saw these adjustments as invaluable opportunities to learn and grow, and I am thankful to Habitat for Humanity Fiji for believing in me and supporting my development.

In addition to these milestones, I achieved two major professional certifications this year. In March, I graduated from the University of South Pacific with a Certificate III in Professional Training and Assessment, becoming a certified Trainer. This was followed by my Certificate III in Fitness from FIT College in September, making me a certified personal trainer. Both achievements required tremendous dedication and perseverance, especially in balancing work and study, but I was driven by my commitment to my future and my family.

None of this would have been possible without my supportive family. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to my mother and my children, who have been my greatest cheerleaders. Their encouragement has been my foundation, as has my faith in God, who has guided me through every challenge.

Here's to 2024 – a year of growth, hard work, faith, and gratitude – and to a bright future ahead. Thank you to Habitat for Humanity Fiji for their continued support and belief in me!



Losalini Nalawa at the Leadership Fiji 2024 Graduation



VINAKA & THANK YOU



- Habitat for Humanity of Greater LA
- Williamson-Maury HFH
- Sisters HFH
- Ulster County HFH
- HFH of Lenawee County
- Columbia Gorge HFH
- Livingston County HFH
- Hawaii HFH Association
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