

Fijian Stories from the Heart of Communities

Asia Pacific Area Vice President Visits Fiji, Inspiring Collaboration and Strengthening Processes



Area Vice President Liz Satow (Middle) at the Habitat Fiji office

A warm Fijian welcome awaited Habitat for Humanity's Asia Pacific Area Vice President, Elizabeth 'Liz' Satow, during her recent visit to Fiji. Liz's visit marked a significant opportunity for the Habitat for Humanity Fiji team to engage in insightful discussions, reflect on shared achievements, and explore ways to address challenges. Drawing from her experiences responding to devastating earthquakes, Liz shared valuable insights on finding strength in difficult times. She posed a thought-provoking question to the team: "Where do we go when things get rough?"

"When there's a big storm, the fish go deep because in the deep, it is still and quiet. Find your deep," she advised, encouraging the team to stay grounded during challenges. Her reflections served as a powerful reminder of Habitat's mission to build resilience and hope, even when the road gets tough. Liz also introduced Habitat's 50 for 50 strategy – aimed at improving housing, strengthening communities, and expanding Habitat's global impact.

A visit to our communities provided Liz with a glimpse of the housing challenges faced by many Fijian communities. It reinforced the importance of working hand-in-hand with the Government and key stakeholders to develop sustainable solutions for vulnerable families. Back at the office, the Habitat Fiji team engaged in discussions with Liz on enhancing internal systems and processes, addressing operational challenges, and celebrating milestones.



Area Vice President Liz Satow with Habitat Fiji staff

The conversations centered on improving the quality of service and ensuring that communities continue to receive the best possible support. As Liz's visit came to a close, her words and wisdom left a lasting impression on the team. The inspiration and renewed focus she shared will continue to guide Habitat Fiji's efforts in building homes, communities, and hope across the nation.

Empowering Future Builders in Lau: Vocational Training for Carpentry Success



Training participants assembling the house frame

In the remote villages of Salia and Narocivo in Nayau, Lau, 20 aspiring builders have taken a significant step towards creating a brighter future. After successfully completing a 7-week vocational training, facilitated by Fiji National University (FNU) in collaboration with Habitat for Humanity Fiji, they are now equipped with practical carpentry skills and a deeper understanding of safe construction practices. This initiative provided participants with hands-on training, culminating in a Level II Certification that enhances their employability and prepares them to take on future building projects with confidence. The program aimed to address critical labour shortages in Fiji's construction sector by building a growing pool of qualified carpenters capable of strengthening the local construction workforce.

With this certification, participants are now well-positioned to contribute to community-led projects, playing a crucial role in the development of safer, more resilient homes. Their newly acquired skills will help them improve their livelihoods and also contribute to fostering self-reliant and empowered communities in Lau and beyond.

The enthusiasm was evident as participants proudly received their completion certificates, marking a key milestone in their personal and professional journeys. This achievement reflects the power of collaboration and the positive impact that skills development programs can have in rural communities.

Through initiatives like these, Habitat for Humanity Fiji continues to build capacity at the community level, ensuring that individuals have the tools, training, and opportunities to shape their own futures.

"I am very fortunate to be part of this vocational training. It has equipped me with essential skills and knowledge for building a sturdy home, from the foundation to the roof, including joint reinforcements through

strapping, bolting, and proper spacing for windows and room partitions. I am deeply grateful to FNU and Habitat for Humanity Fiji for bringing this free course to us. This training has provided us with valuable knowledge and skills that can drive progress in our communities, especially since much of the traditional building knowledge from our elders was not passed down. I am now motivated to pursue further studies to achieve Certificates Level 3, 2, and 1. I believe these qualifications will not only make me an asset to my village but also provide a sustainable source of income for me and my family," Joseva Draunidalo- Vocational Participant- Salia Village.



Ongoing construction works

Collaborating for Change: Insights from the Housing Roundtable

The Inclusive Housing and Climate Resilience Roundtable held earlier this year brought together 25 key stakeholders to discuss pressing challenges and opportunities in Fiji's housing sector. Representatives from government agencies, non-profit organizations, private sector partners, and community leaders engaged in meaningful dialogue on affordable housing, climate resilience, and policy innovation.

The roundtable commenced with an address by Elizabeth Satow, Habitat for Humanity's Asia Pacific Area Vice President, who introduced the new strategic framework guiding Habitat's work across the region to build more and better homes.

The roundtable was also a valuable platform for community members to share the challenges faced in their communities and their experiences with working with Habitat Fiji. They also highlighted goals they are striving to achieve within their communities, along with the support they need from the government and other stakeholders present at the event.

Adequate housing is a foundational element that intersects with and supports improving health and wellbeing, strengthening livelihoods, enhancing education outcomes, ensuring access to clean water and sanitation, and promoting climate resilience. Habitat for Humanity Fiji was able to effectively highlight these interconnections to stakeholders, initiating a dialogue on how housing can complement their own priorities. By aligning efforts, we explored opportunities to maximize impact and resource efficiency through strengthened collaboration. The roundtable concluded with a shared recognition that addressing Fiji's housing challenges requires a coordinated, inclusive, and multi-sectoral approach. Stakeholders acknowledged the vital role that adequate, resilient housing plays in advancing broader development goals and committed to exploring pathways for stronger collaboration. Moving forward, Habitat for Humanity Fiji remains committed to working alongside partners to drive sustainable, community-centered solutions that build resilience, promote equity, and ensure that every Fijian has access to a safe and decent place to call home.

The Housing Roundtable was proudly supported by Habitat for Humanity New Zealand.



Community representatives part of the Housing Roundtable



Ongoing discussion with stakeholders present at the Housing Roundtable



“Whatever you become in the future, you will always start from a home.”

-Advice from Tavite's parents

While working on small projects with his grandfather, Tavite heard about Habitat for Humanity Fiji through a distant relative. He learned about an opportunity for formal carpentry training in partnership with Habitat Fiji and the Fiji National University (FNU) in 2021. Without hesitation, he signed up and complete the course with a Certificate Level II in basic carpentry. He later joined Habitat Fiji and is now working as one of our youngest carpentars.



Learning, Leading, and Overcoming: Reflections from Vaivai

by: Maggie Kuruwale
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Field Diary

Vaivai sits on the outskirts of Lautoka City, nestled among the hills between Abaca, the Saru Quarry, and the Sabeto Sleeping Giant Range. Though just 15 minutes from Fiji's second-largest city, Vaivai remains a rural farming community. This contrast – proximity to an urban center yet facing rural hardships – defines much of the community's experience.

A significant portion of Vaivai's residents struggle with transportation, the absence of streetlights, and limited access to essential utilities like mains water and electricity. Yet, despite these challenges, the community pushes forward with resilience.

From 18 to 29 November, the Participatory Approach to Community Climate Resilience (PACCR) & Financial Literacy Training aimed to build on this resilience. Over 10 days, participants reflected on key events that shaped their community, identified climate-related challenges, and worked toward practical solutions. They dedicated their afternoons – after long hours in the fields or at home – to developing actionable plans focused on addressing the pressing issues they face.

During the training, it was quite evident that men often lead household and community decision-making, but women have been the driving force behind everyday solutions – whether managing homes, tending farms, running small businesses, or stepping up when urgent action is needed.

Encouraging women's participation in trainings has often been a challenge, but in Vaivai, their active engagement was refreshing. Among the 32 participants, women made up over half of the group. Although decision-making spaces are traditionally male-dominated, the PACCR activities demonstrated that when given the platform, women voiced their perspectives.

For me, this experience was a meaningful step forward. While I had limited experience facilitating community trainings, I was well aware of the barriers women face in accessing such opportunities. Stepping into a facilitator's role was unfamiliar but rewarding. Having observed my peers conduct similar sessions, I was eager to take on the challenge myself.



PACCR training group activities

A key highlight of the training was the unwavering support of Advisory Councillor, a dedicated leader committed to securing opportunities and solutions for his community. His full participation over the 10 days reinforced the importance of strong local leadership in driving change.

One particularly memorable moment was experiencing firsthand the challenges of flooding. On the second-to-last day of training, Technical Officer Lemeki Naitini and I found ourselves stranded on the Vaivai side of the Irish Crossing, unable to pass due to rising floodwaters. Fortunately, the waters receded within an hour, allowing us to cross – but for a brief moment, we gained a deeper understanding of the hardships the community faces when flooding persists. It was a stark reminder of the importance of resilience-building efforts like PACCR.

Beyond the training, it was encouraging to see how actively the Vaivai community engages with government authorities to address local challenges. Their willingness to seek solutions and advocate for their needs speaks to their determination to create lasting change.

Facilitating the PACCR & Financial Literacy Training in Vaivai was an invaluable learning experience – one that reinforced the power of community resilience and the importance of stepping outside my comfort zone. This journey has shaped the way I approach new challenges, and I look forward to applying these lessons in the future.

Bringing Water, Building Resilience: A Milestone for Rabi Island Communities



New Zealand High Commissioner Charlotte Darlow at the commissioning of the water systems in Rabi Island.

Access to clean water has become a reality for around 800 residents in four communities on Rabi Island, thanks to a water project led by Habitat for Humanity Fiji, in partnership with the Rabi Council of Leaders and funded by the New Zealand High Commission in Fiji.

Tiburaro, Tabwewa Meang, the SDA community in Tabwewa, and Kesukesu and Nadoi in Uma had long struggled with severe water shortages—some receiving water for only 2–3 hours daily. Families walked long distances to collect water, often from unsafe sources.

With funding support of FJD \$80,000, Habitat Fiji installed a new water system in Tiburaro and upgraded existing ones in the other communities, increasing access to 12–24 hours a day. The project also formed Rabi's first Water Committees—ensuring inclusive decision-making—and delivered financial literacy training to support system maintenance.

“Beyond infrastructure, this project has empowered communities and eased the burden on women and children,” said Sangita Kumar, Head of Regional Development, Habitat Fiji.

Rabi Council Administrator Mr. Iakoba Karutake added, “We’ve seen fewer complaints and greater community ownership since the water committees were formed.”

High Commissioner Charlotte Darlow affirmed New Zealand's commitment to sustainable, safe water access: “Everyone deserves reliable water services that support health and the environment.”

This project marks a significant step forward in building resilience and improving lives on Rabi Island.

Empowering Through Skills: Building Self-Reliance at Daulomani

Safe Home

Home maintenance doesn't have to be a burden—especially when you have the skills to take charge. At Daulomani Safe Home, women are now confidently handling everyday home repairs, thanks to practical training sessions facilitated by Habitat for Humanity Fiji.

With our recent basic plumbing training, residents gained hands-on experience in maintaining and managing essential household systems. This not only reduces the need for external support but also makes home upkeep more cost-effective and less disruptive. As Edwina Byau, Founder of Daulomani Safe Home, proudly shared, “Thank you, Habitat Fiji for the basic plumbing training. The Daulomani ladies are now more skilled and can confidently manage basic plumbing maintenance in the community.”

Skills transfer is more than just knowledge-sharing—it's a step towards self-reliance, empowerment, and dignity. By equipping individuals with tools and know-how, we help communities move from dependence to independence, strengthening their resilience and sense of agency.

With handy tips and training, the Daulomani ladies are now tackling little fixer-uppers with confidence and pride.



Residents of the Daulomani Safe Home fixing their plumbing issues

Some highlights from our first Global Village build this year





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