



## Inclusive Housing in Action

Everyone deserves a decent place to live, and with this vision at the heart of our work, 2026 has begun with strong momentum for Habitat for Humanity Fiji.

In partnership with Housing Assistance Relief Trust (HART) Homes, we are advancing practical, scalable solutions to respond to the evolving housing and care needs of Fiji's ageing population. The 2017 national census recorded over 80,000 people aged 60 and above, highlighting the growing importance of ensuring that housing is safe, accessible, and responsive to later life. For many older persons, home environments are not designed to accommodate changing physical needs, increasing the risk of injury and limiting independence.

Through this collaboration, Habitat Fiji is providing technical expertise and construction support to upgrade and revitalise the Valelevu HART Home for its residents.

This initiative demonstrates how existing housing infrastructure can be adapted to meet the specific needs of older persons. Building on HART Homes' long-standing commitment to vulnerable communities, the project will deliver upgrades that improve safety, comfort, and accessibility. Apartment units will incorporate universal design elements, including wider doorways, low-height counters, grab bars, and safer bathroom configurations aimed at supporting mobility, reducing risk, and enabling residents to live with dignity and independence.

This partnership reflects a shared commitment to building homes, communities, and hope while strengthening community and household-level resilience for those who need it most.



Demolition and assessments carried out by Habitat Fiji



Representatives from Habitat Fiji with representatives from HART Homes

# Access to Decent Housing - Why It Matters for Women

Access to decent housing is more than just having a roof over your head. For women, a safe home brings security, stability, and a foundation to build a better future. Without decent housing, women and their families face stress, health risks, and fewer opportunities to thrive.

At Habitat for Humanity Fiji, we intentionally put women at the center of our programming and strategy. Last year, our programs directly supported approximately 350 women, reinforcing their leadership, safety, and participation

in building stronger, more resilient communities. The impact of this support extends beyond these women, creating positive ripple effects across their families, neighborhoods, and entire communities. Children, neighbors, and local groups benefit when women gain confidence, skills, and leadership roles in managing their homes and communities.

Our housing solutions go beyond shelter to include essential services like access to clean water, and we prioritise equipping women with the skills and tools to protect, maintain, and sustain these vital resources. A key part of our approach is

upskilling and empowering women. Through our programmes, women gain practical skills in basic plumbing, building back safer, and strengthening community preparedness for climate risks.

Marica who is from Cawaro Village in Macuata – her journey is one example of how this approach creates lasting change. At just 22 years old, she participated in Habitat for Humanity Fiji’s vocational training programme and began applying her new skills alongside her father, harvesting timber and contributing to village development projects. What began as learning soon transformed into action. Marica successfully extended her family’s kitchen, completed all the plumbing work herself, and stepped confidently into the role of carpenter to help another household extend theirs.

Her experience reflects the purpose behind initiatives such as our She Fixes It campaign, which equips women with the confidence, technical knowledge, and practical skills to take an active role in household and community water management. When women are empowered to manage and maintain safe water systems, families benefit from improved health and stronger resilience.

Beyond our programs, we advocate for women’s inclusion in housing policy, planning, and community development. We work to increase their role in house design, improve access to housing information, and support access to home financing. Every home built and skill shared advances equality, opportunity, and resilience.

Looking ahead, we plan to increase our support for women significantly, reaching more communities and ensuring that decent housing with basic services becomes a reality for more women. By intentionally putting women at the heart of our work and advocating for their inclusion, we are helping them build stronger families, stronger communities, and a stronger Fiji. Each woman we support is not only transforming her own life but also inspiring and empowering her community, creating lasting change that extends far beyond the walls of a home.



Marica with her father

# Fixing Water, Shifting Roles: Women Leading Change on Serua Island

A three-day training is reshaping perceptions of leadership in the chiefly village of Serua.

On Serua Island, access to water has been a daily challenge—until recently. What was seen as men’s work changed when 17 diverse women from Serua Village and Talenaua settlement participated in a practical plumbing training supported by Habitat for Humanity Fiji and Habitat for Humanity Australia. While many had seen pipes and fittings before, few knew their names or how to use them. By day three, the women were confidently identifying fittings, distinguishing between water pressure and waste pipe systems, and applying their knowledge to real-life household repairs.

As part of the training, the women assessed 10 households, identifying and repairing leaking taps, as well as cracked and leaking pipes. The repair work quickly became a highlight of the project, demonstrating how newly acquired skills can lead to immediate, practical impact. Following the repairs, families noticed a significant improvement in water pressure, making showers usable again and restoring convenience to their daily routines. These visible improvements were even celebrated by their Paramount Chief.

With the provision of basic plumbing tools as part of the training package, the women are now equipped not only with knowledge, but with the means to confidently apply their skills during and beyond the project.

A missing tap had left the village’s existing 10,000-litre water tank unusable. Women had to walk nearly 10 minutes to collect

water from a communal rainwater tank. Following the training, the women installed the missing tap, providing quicker access to water for community events.

Beyond technical skills, the training sparked a shift in perceptions of leadership. The village water committee was made up entirely of men. With their newly gained skills and knowledge the women had the confidence to propose their inclusion in the committee in the village meeting. As a result, two women are now part of the water committee.

Village health worker Tavenisa Nadreke shared that “Women are the first to use water in the household. Now, we can respond immediately when there is a problem.”

Enabling women to cater for themselves is transformative. By applying the skills they’ve learned, they gain practical independence, save time and money, and build confidence in solving real-life problems. This not only strengthens women’s role as community leaders but also enhances overall community resilience, ensuring that essential services like water access can be maintained locally. These knowledge, skills and tools are sustainable, allowing women to train others and address challenges immediately, turning knowledge into lasting solutions for everyone.

This International Women’s Day, the women of Serua Island show that when women are equipped with skills, they strengthen households, improve services, and lead community resilience.



Participants carrying out repair works



Participants carrying out repair works

## Advancing Child Wellbeing Across Fiji

Habitat for Humanity Fiji has signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Protection for the construction of a Child Wellbeing Centre that will provide critical support services for children who are street-connected across Fiji's four Divisions.

The Centre will offer a safe, supportive, and rehabilitative environment for children in need of care and protection. It will also serve as a central platform for coordinated interventions, enabling access to social services, psychosocial support, referral pathways, and reintegration programmes that support long-term wellbeing and stability. Habitat for Humanity Fiji's Interim National Director, Ms. Sangita Kumar, highlighted the value of the partnership, stating:

"The strength of this agreement lies in the complementarity of our roles—the Ministry's leadership in policy, coordination, and protection, alongside Habitat's technical experience in inclusive housing, construction, and strengthening household and community resilience."

She added, "We see this initiative not only as a critical intervention, but as a platform for learning and scale. What we develop together has the potential to inform future models of transitional housing, strengthen national systems, and contribute to evidence-based approaches to addressing homelessness in Fiji."

Habitat for Humanity Fiji extends its sincere appreciation to the Honourable Minister and the Permanent Secretary for their trust and commitment to this partnership. We look forward to working closely with the Ministry to translate this agreement into meaningful, lasting impact—improving lives and creating safer, more dignified spaces for children and young people who need them most.



Habitat Fiji Board Member, Setoki Tuiteci signs MOU with Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Women, Children and Social Protection, Selinna Kuruleca



Representatives from Habitat Fiji with representatives from the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Protection

## Pathways to Housing Roundtable

The Pathways to Housing Roundtable brought together key stakeholders across government, civil society, academia, and development partners, reinforcing a shared commitment to advancing Fiji's national housing priorities through stronger coordination and collective action. The dialogue highlighted that while significant contributions are already being made across the sector, progress is often slowed by fragmented systems, high costs, and limited alignment between actors.

A central outcome of the roundtable was a clear call for more structured and inclusive coordination mechanisms. Participants emphasized the need for regular sector working groups, improved data sharing, and more integrated planning across agencies responsible for land, infrastructure, and housing delivery. Strengthening these systems is seen as critical to unlocking more efficient, scalable, and climate-resilient housing solutions.

The session also identified practical, short-term partnership opportunities, including joint training initiatives on inclusive housing, sharing of technical designs to reduce construction costs, and improved collaboration on land identification and spatial planning. These actions aim to better align ongoing efforts with national policy priorities while addressing barriers faced by low- to middle-income households.

A key milestone from the roundtable was the commitment by eleven organizations to establish a Community of Practice. This platform will serve as a space for ongoing dialogue, knowledge exchange, and coordinated action, helping to bridge gaps between policy and implementation while strengthening partnerships across the housing sector.

Overall, the roundtable underscored a collective recognition that achieving safe, affordable, and climate-resilient housing in Fiji will require sustained collaboration, stronger partnerships, and a more integrated, whole-of-sector approach.



Participants of the Pathways to Housing Roundtable

## Melania's New Chapter



Melania with her son and daughter-in-law

At 63 years old, Melania's dream of owning a home has finally become a reality.

After losing her husband in 2018 and facing the rising costs of construction, building a home of her own once felt out of reach.

Through the support of Habitat for Humanity Fiji and [Habitat for Humanity New Zealand](#), Melania was provided with a cyclone-safe home designed to withstand strong winds and severe weather conditions.

Today, Melania is settled into a safe, secure home alongside her son and daughter-in-law — a place filled with comfort, dignity, and peace of mind.

She describes it as a blessing.

Her journey reminds us that it is never too late for hope to find its way home.

## From Skills to Stability: Empowering Communities Through Vocational Training in Lau



Samuela Bulabalavu

In the remote island of Nayau in Fiji's Lau group, vocational training changing lives by strengthening communities and creating new pathways for economic opportunity.

At 37 years old, Samuela Bulabalavu from Naracivo Village reflects on how far he has come. Before attending training delivered by Habitat for Humanity Fiji, his carpentry skills were informally learned by observing village carpenters. While this gave him a foundation, he felt that it lacked the technical precision and standards needed for safe and resilient construction. That changed when he participated in Habitat's vocational training programme. "The training changed everything," Samuela shares. "Now I understand proper

construction methods—from profiling to correct spacing and the use of strapping to strengthen every joint. It has improved the quality, safety, and durability of the homes we build."

Equipped with practical skills, tools, and knowledge aligned with building standards, Samuela has since taken on a leading role in construction projects within his community. From renovating family homes to contributing to major village infrastructure such as bridges, churches, and community halls, he is now among those relied upon to guide and lead building efforts.

Beyond the village, the training has opened up new income-generating opportunities. Samuela has secured paid construction work in urban areas, applying his skills as a block layer and builder, earning an income while gaining further experience working alongside engineers. To date, he has earned over \$1,000 through construction work—an important source of financial stability.

The impact of the training extends beyond individual benefit. With a background in forestry, sawmilling, and timber processing, Samuela now sees an opportunity to give back. As the newly elected president of the village youth committee, he envisions establishing a local training centre focused on joinery, carpentry, and portable sawmilling and creating a space where young people can learn practical skills and build sustainable livelihoods.

"Habitat's training completed the cycle for me," he explains. "Now I want to pass this knowledge on to the youth, so they can also have opportunities."



VINAKA & THANK YOU



VINAKA & THANK YOU TO  
OUR TITHE PARTNERS

- Austin Hfh (Tx)
- Tahlequah Area Hfh (Ok)




**Habitat for Humanity**  
35 YEARS  
Fiji

**Save the Date**  
**PACIFIC HOUSING FORUM**

21<sup>ST</sup> MAY 2026  
HOLIDAY INN, SUVA, FIJI  
(Stay tuned for more details)

Supported by: **Habitat for Humanity**  
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