

Developing Women's Passions and Marketable Skills

Fiji Economic Empowerment

June 15, 2018

Project Name: Increasing Women's Economic Opportunities through Support to Women's Vocational Training Centre

Project Partner: Fiji Muslim Women's League (through the Fiji Muslim League)

Total Funding: \$163,655

Funding timeframe: 2015-2016

The Fiji Muslim Women's League is a non-government organisation that has been operating the Makoi Women's Vocational Training Centre in Suva since September 2015. Pacific Women funding supported the roll-out of training courses at the Centre to build women's culinary, horticulture, tailoring and computer skills.



Ms Esther Toma at work at the Suva Motor Inn. Photo Source: Esther Toma.

Ms Esther Toma participated in the Makoi Women's Vocational Training Centre's culinary course and has gone on to gain employment as a cook at the Suva Motor Inn. Ms Toma describes how the course enabled her both to follow her passion and to feel empowered at the same time:

'What stood out most for me was the simple dishes that can be prepared with ease and with a professional touch that has the potential to generate revenue if I were to start a business of my own. I saw this course as a platform that will allow me to develop skills which interest me and is also marketable, providing the means [for] any woman to be financially independent.'

The Makoi Women's Vocational Training Centre seeks to train 25 women each semester in each of the four areas. It aims to equip women with the necessary life and business skills to start self-sustaining cottage industries, or find work in their chosen fields.

'Women, especially stay home mothers, are a huge untapped resource that have the potential to directly contribute to the economy', notes Ms Toma. 'Unless they are educated with a skillset that is their identifiable strength, this benefit will not be realised, not only at home but also in the workplace / workforce and in the economy as a whole.'

Ms Toma says her participation in the course has brought bright and positive outcomes into her personal life and that of her family.

'Yes, it does make me feel economically independent. I feel that I am contributing to the economy and bringing satisfaction to the customers I serve ... I have more sense of belonging in my profession and in my area of work. At home my opinions are heard and taken into account. I get to contribute to the financial decisions in my life and also my family. I feel more in control of my life in comparison to life before I took the course.'

*This Story of Change was originally published in the [Pacific Women Annual Progress Report 2016 – 2017](#). All values are consistent with that reporting period. For the most up-to-date value of activities, visit our [interactive map](#).