

# Tourism, handicrafts, dairy farming – Fijian business women are everywhere

Fiji Economic Empowerment

December 14, 2021

More women in Fiji are running businesses as a result of participating in women-led collectives supported with small grants through the Women's Fund Fiji.

Fund grantee Talanoa Treks is a social enterprise working with three communities to increase women's entrepreneurship through hiking tourism.

'We started by trying to support women to be contracted as guides by their village enterprises and to be involved in the governance and management arrangements of their tourism enterprises,' said Marita Manley, co-founder of Talanoa Treks. '[This] is slowly showing results in terms of increasing numbers of female guides and in ensuring that women are involved in key decisions,' she said.

Up until early 2020, the women's groups working with Talanoa Treks hosted guests and provided meals, accommodation, and guiding services. Each community was earning FJD10,000–16,000 a year in income during regular tourism operations.<sup>1</sup>

Income earned by rural, remote women typically goes back into the community. Rise Beyond the Reef is helping members of its collectives in 10 communities to develop business decision-making skills in ecologically sustainable handicrafts. Their products are now being sold to an international market, with the profits helping families in their villages. One such village is Saioko Village in Ra province.

'We are so happy that Rise Beyond the Reef came to visit us after TC [tropical cyclone] Winston – we're [now] making orders for the Rise Beyond the Reef,' shared Lanieta Tuinakau, the coordinator for Saioko Village. 'We are making tabe [tablecloths] and vau tassels, tassel shells, and we are

making coconuts [for candle shades] .... We are working as a group; we have three groups in Saioko Village.'

Rise Beyond the Reef's strategy during COVID-19 has been to identify supply opportunities within Fiji's aid sector. This is sustaining a steady source of income for its artisans, with 158 women from Ra, Ba, Nairai and Macuata collectively earning more than FJD62,000 during 2020 through the sale of arts and crafts.



With support from Women's Fund Fiji (formerly Fiji Women's Fund). Naitasiri Women in Dairy Group has diversified its offering to include mushroom farming. Photo credit: Women's Fund Fiji / Rob Rickman

Since receiving a grant from the Fund in 2018, membership of the Naitasiri Women in Dairy Group has grown from 26 to about 40 members. The women have also successfully diversified into oyster mushroom farming, earning around FJD120 per six-kilogram harvest. At the request of the Ministry of Agriculture, Naitasiri Women in Dairy Group continues to engage with piggery and horticulture groups in their communities to share best practices from their solesolevaki model – a collective, Fijian way of working. On a rotational basis, each woman receives help from the other group members on an assigned day to assist with her farm.

‘We feel more confident to lead other women and also speak out. We are doing work that men do, running dairy farms,’ said Susan Pocock, the group’s president at the time. ‘I think there is about two per cent of women who are in the dairy industry throughout Fiji and we are happy that the Fiji Women’s Fund has come to help our group.’

The women in the group who owned or managed family-run dairy farms with an average of 10–13 cows have increased their milk production from 80–85 litres per week to 85–100 litres per week.<sup>2</sup> They increased their weekly earnings from FJD577 to FJD679.

This story has been developed for the [Pacific Women Final Report 2012–2021](#), featuring Pacific Women-funded initiatives and partners.

1. Following the impacts of COVID-19 on tourism in Fiji, Talanoa Treks has been supporting the women’s groups to adapt and reach other markets. This includes: upgrading kitchens to use to make jams and chips for local markets; and buying FJD 1,500–3,000 of produce from each community.
2. This data reflects the group’s production before the impacts of COVID-19 on their farm operations. For more, visit: <https://fijiwomensfund.org/naitasiri-women-share-their-covid19-struggles/>