



# Informal Economies Recovery Project

A project jointly implemented by the International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)



**UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund**  
#RecoverBetterTogether

## Global Forum for a Human-centred Recovery

22-24 February 2022

### Let's share our Pacific perspectives at the ILO's Global Forum for a Human-centred Recovery



Matin Karimli  
Director - ILO Office for Pacific Island Countries

It is almost two years since the outbreak of the global pandemic reaching the Pacific. Ironically, it also coincided with my arrival, to take up the post of Director of the ILO Office for Pacific Island Countries. Not to mention 11 Pacific member countries to serve and the pre-existing challenges such as the large geographical spread, limitations to communication with constituents, climatic conditions and a relatively small team. It instantly struck me that this

once in a 100-year global pandemic, would put my first ILO experience to the test.

In the middle of this global disruption, I was 15,000 km away from my home country Azerbaijan, trying to make a new home for my family in the Pacific for the next few years.

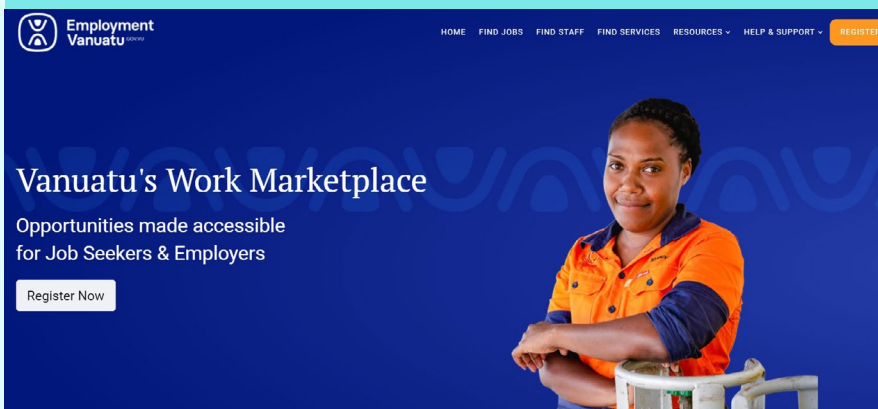
In the initial months, the cover of uncertainty brought by COVID-19 presented many challenges to decision making on ILO's role, type of response and resources we should be planning for, in support of our member countries. It certainly was not the typical Pacific disruption such as a tropical cyclone, where we had carved out our niche and built up our technical expertise. For instance, as early as 30th March 2020, the Fiji Hotel and Tourism Association (FHTA) announced that 279 members had closed due to zero booking for next few months, 30 were operating in reduced scale and about 20,000 workers had been sent home.

To understand the impact of COVID-19 on employment and business, one of my first decisions was to deploy Rapid Assessments (RA) in 7 member countries. The first RA got off the ground in Fiji 2 months from the arrival of COVID-19.

[Read more](#)

## Feature Story

### Digital employment marketplace a game changer for Vanuatu



Employment Vanuatu <https://employmentvanuatu.gov.vu> is the newly launched digital platform that brings together job creators, job providers and job seekers to improve employment opportunities for women and youths.

On January 18th 2022, about 2 months since the launch of the website, the Commissioner of Labour Ms Murielle Metsan Meltenoven confirmed to the ILO that over 1,000 job seekers had registered on the platform. The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Internal Affairs, Honourable Ishmael Kalsakau officiated at the launch and congratulated the Department of Labour for this major achievement.

"I extend my appreciation to the Chair of the Tripartite Labour Advisory Council (TLAC) and its members – Government, Vanuatu Chamber of Commerce & Industries (VCCI) and the Vanuatu Council of Trades Union (VCTU), for their vision and working with the ILO to develop and launch this initiative", said Mr Matin Karimli, the ILO Director for Pacific Island Countries. Mr Karimli further added that the ILO was pleased to support this initiative as it aligned with Vanuatu's COVID-19 Recovery Strategy 2020-23, in particular Recovery Objective 2 – Enhancing lives and livelihoods.

Employment Vanuatu features resources such as job seekers guides, business advisory materials, information on labour mobility, information on social security and employer guidelines. The platform allows job seekers to register and post their resumes, employers to place job vacancies including search and find talent. [Read more](#)

## Meet our Partners



Kameli Batiweti

Kameli Batiweti is the Chief Executive Officer of the Fiji Commerce & Employers Federation (FCEF). He leads a team of administrative and technical staff as part of the secretariat. FCEF is Fiji's national private sector organisations, under which are 10 industry councils, including Women Entrepreneurs Business Council (WEBC) and the Young Entrepreneurs Council (YEC). FCEF also host the Fiji Enterprise Engine (FEE), which is Fiji's private sector led business accelerator programme. The Fiji Enterprise Engine (FEE) is supporting the delivery of business training, advisory and mentoring for 20 youths from the Fiji Rugby Academy, who are engaged in a Agri-rugby programme. In addition, through a Business Continuity Planning (BCP) Training of Trainers provided by the project, FCEF also deliver's BCP training to MSME's and their membership.

# Project Activities and Stories

## 2nd Dialogue between MSMEs and Government contributes to a major breakthrough

It was jubilation for Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME), particularly those engaged in the creative and entertainment sector when the Fijian government lifted the almost two-year curfew. "From Monday 7 February (2022), which is from midnight tonight, the curfew will be lifted. Not moved. Not shifted. Lifted, completely", announced Mr Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, the Minister for Economy of Fiji. [Read more](#)

## Business Development Service Providers ready for MSME's

With businesses re-opening safely and international tourism arrivals having resumed in Fiji, the high demand for Business Development Services (BDS) by Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) has the International Labour Organization (ILO) partnering with local BDS providers to support the building of skillsets for more MSMEs. [Read more](#)

## Fiji's western artists prepare for potential disruptions from cyclones

While the prolonged effects of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to impact livelihoods of artists and creative entrepreneurs, the number of tropical cyclones predicted this season is prompting artists to take proactive measures to reduce the impact of disruptions to their businesses. [Read more](#)

## Creative associations establish formal partnership with National Private Sector Organization and starts mentoring programme

A major highlight at the Top Executive Conference (TOPEX) 2021 was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Fiji Islands Dance Association (FIDA) and Viti Association of Visual Arts (VAVA) and the Fiji Commerce & Employers Federation (FCEF). [Read more](#)

## Creative-preneurs benefit from Palau market

Thirty four (34) micro business owners had the opportunity to display and sell their products at a Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Environment sponsored fair in partnership with the Palau Chamber of Commerce. The event also included the support from the Belau National Museum and Palau Visitor Authority. [Read more](#)

## Farming tools to assist in post-pandemic recovery

The second wave of COVID19 had a wide-ranging impact in Fiji, with the tourism industry bearing the brunt of the impact. The majority, if not all, hotel employees in the Nadroga-Navosa province were laid off, and farmers who supplied to hotels were placed on hold, forcing them to seek alternative revenue streams. [Read more](#)

## Palau Creative-preneurs complete business programme and graduate.

The Palau Chamber of Commerce wrapped up 2021 with the successful "End of the year networking mixer and graduation of creative-preneurs". It was a very successful event, that celebrated the Creative-preneurs that attended a series of ten workshops on business-related topics offered by PCOC in collaboration with ILO through the Informal Economies Recovery Project. [Read more](#)

## Fiji's market vendor farmers assisted during pandemic restrictions

In September 2021, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) through the Informal Economies Recovery Project collaborated with four Market Vendors Association (MVA) in Nadi, Lautoka, Savusavu and Levuka to assist 150 affected women market vendors. This covered transportation costs from selected villages in Nadi, Lautoka, Savusavu and Levuka to the borders and eventually to municipal markets when border restrictions were lifted. [Read more](#)

## Meet the Team

Ellen Lekka is the Culture Programme Specialist in the UNESCO Office for the Pacific States based in Apia. Through her work at this UNESCO Office she supports cultural programming and the application of the International Conventions in collaboration with national and regional stakeholders. Ellen has worked with UNESCO for 11 years, both at the UNESCO HQ as well as in the Field Offices in East and Central Africa, as well as in the Arab States. Ellen has previously worked as a consultant with organizations active in the field of culture and heritage preservation such as the British Council and private conservation firms. With an educational background in Conservation of Antiquities and Works of Arts, Heritage Studies and Anthropology, Ellen has particular interest in culture as an transversal, intrinsic component in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) in the 2030 Agenda.



Ellen Lekka

