



IMPACT

Fiji Tourism Development Program in Vanua Levu

Tourism that lifts all, benefits all | Newsletter | Jan/Feb 2026

Strengthening Tourism and Community Enterprises Across Vanua Levu and Taveuni

Over the past month, the Na Vualiku Project team conducted extensive outreach visits across Vanua Levu and Taveuni to raise awareness about the MSME & Community-Based Tourism (CBT) Capacity Building and Grant Program and to support local operators with applications and information.

In Savusavu and Labasa, consultants delivered awareness sessions and provided hands-on application support for tourism micro and small businesses, women's cultural enterprises, and CBT operators interested in training and grant funding opportunities. The outreach continued in Bua, where community members received guidance on the program's capacity-building components and grant eligibility requirements. In Taveuni, Na Vualiku staff completed a series of support visits from Lavena Village to Navakawau Village, reinforcing information on how tourism enterprises can apply for tailored training and improve their readiness for grant funding.

The MSME & CBT Program responds directly to what local communities identified as key needs during earlier field visits and consultation meetings in 2025. It will offer structured training in business compliance, financial literacy, marketing, and tourism quality standards, alongside competitive grant support to strengthen visitor experiences and sustainable growth at the community level.

Applications for the training and grant funding closed in mid-February, and the Na Vualiku team remains committed to supporting community enterprises as they build resilient, community-led tourism ventures that generate jobs and share economic benefits widely across Vanua Levu and Taveuni.



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• Waisali Forest • Emergency Preparedness

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ITMP team held consultations with Macuata residents.



ITMP Advisory Group Meeting.



Community engagement in Labasa.



Community engagement in Taveuni.



Community engagement in Savusavu.

Integrated Tourism Master Plan (ITMP): Planning for Sustainable Tourism Growth in Vanua Levu and Taveuni

Following the wide consultations held last year, the ITMP team carried out further community engagements across Macuata from 26–30 January 2026. Consultations were well attended, with strong representation from community leaders, including women, youth, and persons with disabilities. Communities are now better informed of the project objectives and phases. The team noted strong buy-in and ownership, alongside the need to balance tourism opportunities with protecting and preserving natural as well as cultural assets since cultural tourism options are being explored. Cultural mapping was used during these sessions to systematically document both tangible and intangible cultural assets, including sites of significance, stories, traditions, and traditional knowledge, as well as potential opportunities for kayaking, surfing, trekking, eco-tourism and backpacker sites. These sessions generated valuable conversations and inputs. In Nadogo District, for example, Kavewa Island Eco Sanctuary has already mapped sites including a turtle nesting site, a Lapita pottery site, and a locally managed marine area. Such information will help strengthen planning, responsible development, and heritage conservation through the ITMP process.

Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA): Protecting Communities, Land, and Livelihoods

Tourism growth should protect the environment, respect culture, and support people's livelihoods. The Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) is a check to make sure future tourism plans under the Integrated Tourism Master Plan are safe for communities and for nature. A draft interim SESA report has been completed, and joint SESA and ITMP consultation meetings are happening end of February 2026. In these sessions, stakeholders will look at the main findings and recommendations, discuss what will work in real community and business settings, and help guide decisions so tourism creates benefits while protecting the natural and cultural places that matter to local people.

Waisali Forest Reserve: Eco-Tourism that Creates Jobs and Protects Nature

In 2026, design work will begin to improve the Waisali Rainforest Reserve and strengthen its role as one of Vanua Levu's most important natural areas. The project will upgrade walking trails and plan a new Visitor Centre where visitors can learn about Waisali's plants, animals, and cultural stories through guided information and displays. The Project will also work with the National Trust of Fiji and the Fiji Roads Authority to improve access, parking, and the arrival area so visits are safer and easier. These upgrades will support eco-tourism, create local job opportunities, and help protect Waisali's biodiversity.

Tourism Emergency Preparedness: Consultants Mobilising in March 2026

Work to improve tourism emergency preparedness will begin this year, with consultants expected to mobilise by March 2026. This work will develop a National Tourism Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan, which will clearly explain who does what, how information is shared, and what the tourism sector should do before, during, and after disasters. A Northern Division Sub-Plan will also be prepared for Vanua Levu and Taveuni, where tourism businesses and communities, including those linked to diving and other nature-based activities, can be exposed to coastal hazards and are spread across many locations. It will include a local risk and vulnerability check, consultations with operators and communities, and practical steps for response and recovery. The work will also identify priority improvements the Project can support, such as better early warning systems, upgraded medical and emergency equipment, training, and stronger coordination among agencies, communities, and tourism operators.

Airports and Aviation: Labasa Closure Travel Arrangements and Savusavu Upgrade Progress



Runway strengthening works at Labasa Airport.



The seawall at the Savusavu airport will be remediated.



Labasa-Savusavu Cross-Island Road stretch near Waisali.



Community engagement in Taveuni.



Community engagement in Bua.

Labasa Airport is temporarily closed from 16 February to 27 March 2026 to allow critical runway strengthening works. This upgrade will improve safety, reliability and increase the runway load-bearing capacity so it can safely accommodate ATR 72 aircraft operations once completed. To reduce disruption for travellers and the business community, Fiji Link is operating 44 additional flights to and from Savusavu Airport during the closure period, and Northern Air is operating two daily flights on the Savusavu route.

In Savusavu, a Design and Supervision consultant (BECA) has been engaged to progress a coordinated package of airport upgrades. Concept design is underway for a new terminal building and fire station, with the terminal package expected to go to market in April 2026 and construction targeted for Q2 2027, subject to procurement and approvals. A separate civil works package, including the carpark, access road, fencing, stormwater drainage, and seawall remediation, is expected to go to tender in March 2026, with minor works anticipated to be completed by Q4 2026. Runway extension is not included, as a World Bank pre-feasibility study found it was not practical due to environmental concerns.

Labasa-Savusavu Cross-Island Road and Scenic Lookouts: Safer Travel and More Opportunities for Communities

Travel between Labasa and Savusavu will become safer and Cross-Island Road more resilient, creating new opportunities for villages along the route to benefit from increased visitor movement. The upgrades will also enhance the visitor experience with improved scenic roadside lookouts, making the journey more attractive and enjoyable for both residents and tourists alike.

New lookout points and safety improvements along the Saivou-Lomaloma-Urata corridor will encourage travellers to stop, explore, and spend more in local communities.

The engineering team is progressing the detailed design for the road upgrades, rest stops, and the strengthening of a 600-metre coastal section to protect against ongoing erosion. The team is currently awaiting topographical survey results to finalise the design work.

Solid Waste Management: Consultants Mobilising in March 2026

Keeping towns and coastal areas clean is a priority for Vanua Levu's health, environment, and tourism appeal. When waste is not managed properly, it can leak into nearby mangroves and coral reefs, harming marine life and reducing the quality of local living areas and visitor experiences.

Consultants are expected to mobilise by March 2026 to start design work to strengthen solid waste management across the Northern Division. This includes the design of a new Savusavu landfill and the rehabilitation of the existing dump site, as well as work to address waste management needs in Labasa and Taveuni. Once completed, the upgraded system will support public health, protect reefs and coastal waters, and help keep Vanua Levu and Taveuni clean and attractive for residents and visitors.

Sanitation Strategy: Consultants Mobilising in April 2026

Consultants are expected to mobilise by April 2026 to start a new sanitation plan for Savusavu called the Savusavu Participatory Sanitation Master Plan. This plan will look at how to improve sanitation services across Savusavu town and nearby areas.

The plan will cover the full sanitation process, from household toilets and septic systems to safe collection, treatment, and disposal. It will also identify a small number of pilot upgrades the Project can support, including priority infrastructure. This work will help keep Savusavu cleaner and healthier, protect the environment, and support Savusavu as a stronger tourism town.



Site assessments at a key municipal building.



Stakeholder engagement with Energy Fiji Limited.

Solar Power for Public Buildings: Feasibility Underway

A feasibility study is underway to help reduce electricity costs, increase the use of clean energy, and improve community services in Labasa and Savusavu, focusing on key municipal buildings. The team began with early stakeholder meetings in Suva with Energy Fiji Limited (EFL), the Fijian Competition and Consumer Commission (FCCC), and the Department of Environment to align on technical requirements, regulations, and safe grid connection options. In Vanua Levu, the consultants collected data on electricity use and local weather conditions and checked whether the selected buildings have the structural integrity to support solar panels. The feasibility study will provide the technical and financial analysis to inform next steps. Over time, lower electricity bills could free up funds for other essential services, while supporting Fiji's move toward cleaner, more resilient energy systems for public infrastructure.

Labasa and Savusavu Cityscape Improvements: Welcoming, Safer Town Centers

Engagement with local stakeholders is in progress to shape early cityscape upgrades in Savusavu and Labasa. Planned improvements include safer and easier waterfront access, clearer signs and wayfinding, upgraded parks, and stronger coastal protection. Detailed design will be completed first, with construction expected to begin in the second half of 2026. Together, these improvements will make both town centres more welcoming and resilient for everyday community use and future tourism growth.

Capacity Enhancement and Project Management

International Visitor Survey (IVS): Improving Tourism Through Visitor Voices

A six-month pilot phase of the International Visitor Survey (IVS) began in July 2025, with data collection continuing through January 2026. The survey has two components, one focusing on visitor expenditure and the other on visitor experience and satisfaction, allowing for a more detailed understanding of both the economic and experiential aspects of tourism in Fiji.

The survey is designed to provide more accurate and timely information to guide both government planning and business decision-making. The first six-month IVS report from the pilot phase is expected in March 2026, providing valuable insights that will inform strategies to improve visitor experiences and support sustainable growth across Fiji including the Northern Division.



Community engagement at Na Vualiku Project office.

ABOUT NA VUALIKU PROJECT

The Fiji Tourism Development Program in Vanua Levu (Na Vualiku Project) is a flagship government-led initiative financed by the World Bank that aims to transform Vanua Levu into a leading sustainable tourism destination.

Spearheaded by the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation (MTCA), in partnership with Fiji Airports and the Fiji Roads Authority, the Project is anchored in long-term, coordinated investments.

By enhancing infrastructure, boosting local enterprise and safeguarding cultural and natural assets, the Project will empower communities, unlock private sector growth, and deliver authentic, high-quality experiences for visitors.

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