

IMPACT

Fiji Tourism Development Program in Vanua Levu

Tourism that lifts everyone, benefits all | Newsletter | April -May 2026

6th World Bank Mission Reviews Upcoming Milestones Under Na Vualiku Project



The World Bank and the Na Vualiku Project team conducted a post-works inspection of Labasa Airport's upgraded runway, which now provides safer and more reliable connectivity for Vanua Levu.

2026 is set to see a major leap forward with several key activities under the Na Vualiku Project advancing, with upcoming milestones in MSME and Community-Based Tourism support program, solar power for public buildings, solid waste management, airport planning, and tourism infrastructure design across Vanua Levu and Taveuni. These were highlighted during the 6th World Bank Implementation Support Mission which took place from April 27 to May 8, 2026.

For communities and small businesses, one of the most anticipated areas is the MSME and Community-Based Tourism Support Program. More than 300 applications were received from local businesses, women-led enterprises, and community-based tourism operators. The capacity building program is expected to commence by June 2026, while screening and assessments continue to identify eligible beneficiaries for business support and CBT grant assistance.

Renewable energy work is also moving forward apace. Validation workshops will be held in June and the solar feasibility study for selected public buildings in Labasa and Savusavu, including Savusavu Hospital, is expected to be completed by July 2026. Bids for supply and installation works will go to market by August 2026.

Waste management work is also progressing, following initial stakeholder consultations. This work focuses on practical improvements to existing rubbish disposal sites

and longer-term planning for cleaner, safer waste services across Labasa, Savusavu, and Taveuni. By July 2026, the Project is expected to identify early improvements that can be made at current facilities, with works expected to begin by November 2026. Planning will also continue on longer-term waste management options for the Northern Division.

The Mission also noted continued progress in the area of aviation. Labasa Airport runway strengthening works have been completed, while further planning for Savusavu and Matei airports is on track to support safer, more reliable airport infrastructure and future aviation capacity.

Long-term tourism planning is also gaining momentum.

The Integrated Tourism Master Plan is now moving through tourism baseline analysis, environmental and social assessment integration, spatial modelling, and growth scenarios that will help guide tourism development across the Northern Division over the next 25 years.

As these milestones progress, the focus remains clear: preparing practical, well-informed investments that support jobs, strengthen services, improve infrastructure, protect the environment, and help tourism growth benefit communities across Vanua Levu and Taveuni.

Pg 2 – Local voices, tourism decisions, and MSME demand

ITMP scenarios, Steering Committee progress, and strong demand for MSME support.

Explore Pg 3 – Air connectivity questions answered

this Issue: What's happening at Labasa, Savusavu and Matei, and what the studies mean for the North.

Pg 4 – Power, waste, and resilience

Solar feasibility, stronger services, cleaner communities, and better waste planning.





Advisory Group Looks at Future Pathways

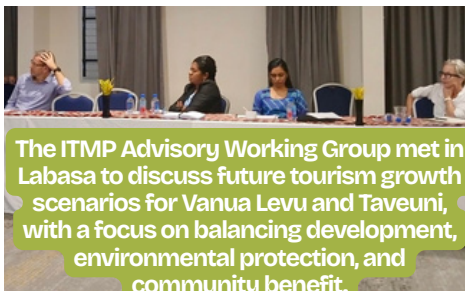
The Integrated Tourism Master Plan (ITMP) Advisory Working Group held its third meeting in Labasa on 24 April 2026, bringing together government partners, the private sector, and local communities to review tourism growth projections and development scenarios for the Northern Division.

The meeting marked an important decision point in shaping the future direction of tourism across Vanua Levu and Taveuni, as the scenarios under review will help determine the scale, location, and model of tourism development over the next 25 years.

The four development scenarios are grounded in extensive stakeholder consultation.

Workshop participants reinforced the importance of environmental management, inclusive job creation, community ownership, and skills development to ensure local people can actively participate in and benefit from tourism growth.

Feedback has consistently pointed to a strong preference for a low-volume, high-value tourism model that protects the environment, maintains cultural authenticity, and delivers real benefits to local communities.



The ITMP Advisory Working Group met in Labasa to discuss future tourism growth scenarios for Vanua Levu and Taveuni, with a focus on balancing development, environmental protection, and community benefit.

The scenarios translate these priorities into spatial plans and forecasts for population growth, employment, visitor arrivals, demand for hotel rooms, and supporting infrastructure such as roads, water supply, sanitation, solid waste management, energy systems, and airport capacity.

The Advisory Working Group plays a key role in testing assumptions, considering trade-offs between growth and sustainability, and guiding the selection of a preferred development pathway that is ambitious, practical, and aligned with the aspirations of the people of Vanua Levu and Taveuni.

Expected to be finalised by January 2027, the ITMP will provide a 25-year development framework, supported by detailed five-year implementation plans for priority areas including Savusavu, the Natewa Peninsula and Bay, Labasa, and Taveuni.

It will serve as the blueprint for coordinated, sustainable, and inclusive tourism development in the North.

Steering Committee Reviews Progress

The Project convened its 4th Project Steering Committee Meeting, bringing together government agencies and implementing partners to strengthen coordination, review progress, and align priorities for the next stage of delivery.

The meeting highlighted the increasing scale of implementation, with 42 contracts signed to date, with a total value of USD 18.8 million.

Ten contracts are currently under implementation, valued at USD 14.1 million.

As activities move from planning into delivery, strong coordination is even more essential across aviation, waste management, sanitation, solar energy, tourism planning, MSME support, and



The 4th Project Steering Committee meeting was held on 21 April 2026 at the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation.

The Project Steering Committee continues to provide strategic oversight, support timely decision-making, and help ensure that investments are well coordinated and practical.

This also assures alignment of the Project with other Government initiatives and the broader goal of supporting sustainable tourism development across Vanua Levu and Taveuni.

Strong Demand for MSME Support Program

Out of a total of 315 applications received under the MSME and Community-Based Tourism (CBT) Support Program, around 30% were for the Community-Based Tourism Grant component, while about 70% were for the Capacity Building component.

The strong response reflects the deep interest and demand among local businesses, women-led enterprises, and community-based tourism operators who participated in outreach sessions and completed the application process.

It also points to clear need for both community-based tourism support and broader business development assistance to improve products, services, systems, and market readiness.

Improving Air Connectivity for Vanua Levu & Taveuni



The team at the Savusavu Airport seawall, where resilience works are planned.



The team at Labasa Airport during a post-works inspection of the runway pavement strengthening works.

Air connectivity remains a key focus under the Na Vualiku Project, with completed works, technical assessments, and long-term planning supporting safer and better-planned air access across Vanua Levu and Taveuni.

Labasa Airport is expected to become the South Pacific's first airport to host a remote tower Aerodrome Flight Information Service, known as AFIS. The system will use cameras and other equipment to transmit real-time flight information from Labasa to the Nadi Control Centre, supporting safer and more modern flight information services. Installation work is expected to begin soon.

Labasa Airport is a certified aerodrome that mainly supports aircraft up to ATR-42. While larger ATR-72 aircraft operate at Labasa Airport, they do so only under an approved safety case. This means every ATR-72 flight must operate within specific safety limits.

These limits take into account the runway length, runway strength, aircraft weight, passenger numbers, cargo load, weather conditions, surrounding terrain, and other safety requirements.

In simple terms, ATR-72 flights to/from Labasa must carefully balance passenger numbers, cargo, fuel, and weather conditions to remain within approved safety limits.

Following the completion of emergency runway strengthening works, the additional pavement-related restriction introduced in 2025 has been lifted. ATR-72 operations have resumed within the approved safety case that was in place before the pavement issue, while ATR-42 operations have resumed at full capacity.

Further works are being planned for a new fire station, an upgraded carpark to service the new terminal being developed by Fiji Airports, and limited flood-resilience works.

For Savusavu Airport, planning for a new terminal building, a new fire station, flood-resilience works, and seawall repairs is advancing.

Separately, a Government inter-agency task force is evaluating Savusavu Airport's capacity and operational requirements.

For Taveuni, an air connectivity study and a master plan for Matei Airport is currently being prepared. This will include an assessment of whether the airport could safely and practically support larger aircraft in the future.

The Project is also supporting a feasibility study for a possible new domestic airport in Vanua Levu. A feasibility study is a technical study that assesses whether an idea is practical, safe, affordable, and suitable before any final decision can be made by the Government of Fiji.

This study builds on a 2023 pre-feasibility assessment that shortlisted four possible sites from 19 options. The current study includes technical, engineering, environmental, and social analysis of the shortlisted sites.

Air connectivity is important for tourism, business, essential services and community movement across Labasa, Savusavu, and Taveuni.

Under the Na Vualiku Project, completed works, technical studies and long-term planning are supporting safer and better-planned air access.



Fire station at the Savusavu Airport.

The team conducted a full runway walk-through at Labasa Airport following completion of the pavement strengthening works.



Powering Life-Saving Services at Savusavu Hospital

Powering Life-Saving Services at Savusavu Hospital



Solar power does not only help reduce electricity costs over time. It also strengthens energy resilience for medical essential services. And, such reliability can make the difference between life and death.



For illustration purposes only



Na Vualiku Project | Savusavu, Fiji

Reliable power is not just about keeping the lights on. In a hospital, electricity supports essential care, including nebulizers and oxygen machines for patients with breathing difficulties, defibrillators, patient monitors, vaccine fridges, medical testing equipment, and communication systems used for emergency response and patient care.

As Savusavu continues to grow as a sustainable tourism and adventure destination, strong public services are also part of the foundation for safe and responsible tourism development. This includes essential health services that support local communities and help strengthen emergency preparedness

when accidents, injuries, or medical emergencies occur.

For this reason, Savusavu Hospital has been included as one of the sites being evaluated in a solar feasibility study for public buildings in Labasa and Savusavu. The study is assessing whether rooftop solar PV can safely and practically complement existing back-up power arrangements, reduce electricity costs over time, and strengthen energy resilience for this key sub-divisional health facility.

This work supports cleaner energy, stronger essential services, and more resilient public infrastructure in Vanua Levu.

From Rubbish Dumps to Proper Landfills: Why the Difference Matters

A rubbish dump and a landfill may sound similar, but they are very different in how they protect people, land, water, and the environment.

A rubbish dump is usually an open or poorly controlled site where waste is placed with limited planning, engineering, or environmental protection. Dumps can attract pests, create bad odours, release smoke if waste is burned, and allow polluted liquid from waste to seep into soil, rivers, groundwater, and coastal areas.

A landfill, when properly designed and managed, is an engineered waste management facility. It is planned to control where waste goes, how it is compacted and covered, how rainwater and contaminated liquid are managed, and how nearby communities and the environment are protected.

A proper landfill includes systems for access control, waste sorting, drainage, monitoring, safety, and long-term site management.



Through the Na Vualiku Project, work is underway to support better solid waste management planning for the Northern Division.

This includes technical assessments, site visits, stakeholder discussions, and analysis of practical options for Labasa, Savusavu, Taveuni, and surrounding areas.

The goal is not simply to find more space for waste. It is to plan a safer, cleaner, and more sustainable system that reduces environmental risks, protects communities, and supports the long-term growth of tourism and local development across Vanua Levu and Taveuni.

Better waste management is essential for healthier communities, cleaner towns, protected natural assets, and a stronger tourism future.

Stakeholder engagement and site visits are helping shape practical solid waste management solutions for the North.

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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