



Pacific Horticultural
& Agricultural Market
Access Plus Program

Supported by Australia & New Zealand



Inclusive Agriculture Value Chains

PHAMA Plus Performance Story



Inclusive Agriculture Value Chains - PHAMA Plus Performance Story

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Quality Information

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Summary

PHAMA Plus contributed to inclusive and sustainable economic growth in Pacific Island countries by strengthening agricultural value chains that are commercially viable, resilient, and inclusive. This performance story demonstrates how PHAMA Plus operationalised its gender equality, disability equity and rights and social inclusion (GEDSI) strategy to address structural barriers that limit participation, productivity, and market access.

Across Pacific agriculture, gender inequality, disability exclusion, unsafe workplaces, and restrictive social norms shape who participates in value chains and who benefits from growth. These constraints, heavily rooted in gender and cultural norms, are not only social challenges but they also directly undermine supply consistency, labour availability, workforce retention, and business competitiveness.

PHAMA Plus addressed these constraints through an Inclusive Value Chain Roadmap anchored in 4 GEDSI drivers of empowerment:

- agency and decision-making,
- access to assets, skills, and services,
- changing business practices to build safe, equitable and accessible workplaces, and
- voice, leadership and market participation.

By applying these drivers at different stages of the value chain – from household production through to processing, employment, and market access – PHAMA Plus has strengthened planning and productivity at farm-level, improved job quality and workforce stability, built agency and access to assets, and expanded market participation for women, people with disabilities, and youth. From awareness and sensitisation, through to the development and adoption of inclusive workplace policies and practices, PHAMA Plus has supported Pacific Island businesses to work differently.

The evidence presented shows that inclusive value chain interventions have delivered tangible economic outcomes, including increased and diversified incomes, improved supply reliability for exporters, addressed labour constraints and productivity challenges, strengthened women-led enterprises, and enhanced resilience of farming households and agribusinesses. Together, these outcomes demonstrate the benefit of inclusive value chains and PHAMA Plus's contribution to sustainable, equitable economic growth.

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Acronyms

ACIAR	Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research
ACTIV	Alternative Communities Trade in Vanuatu
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
ESG	Environmental, Social, and Governance
FAMA-OMONEA	Community group that partnered with PHAMA Plus (Samoa)
FCLC	Fiji Crop and Livestock Council
FFT	Family Farm Teams
FGD	focus group discussion
FJD	Fiji dollar
GBV	gender-based violence
GEDSI	Gender Equality, Disability Equity and Rights and Social Inclusion
GWIBDT	Gizo Women in Business Development Trust
HACCP	Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points
ILO C190	International Labour Organization Convention 190 on Violence and Harassment
MAFLB	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Livestock and Biosecurity (Vanuatu)
MoAW	Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways (Fiji)
MAWG	Market Access Working Group
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MRM	Monitoring, Results and Measurement
NCD	Non-communicable disease
NUS	National University of Samoa
OLA	Ornamental Lovers Association (Samoa)
OPD	Organisation of Persons with Disabilities
OPSP	Overarching Productive Sector Policy
PFR	Plant and Food Research New Zealand (now the Bioeconomy Science Institute)
PHAMA Plus	Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access Plus Program
PDF	Pacific Disability Forum
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PSEAH	Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment
PWP	Positive Workplace Policy
SBH	Samoa Business Hub
SWC	Single Women’s Course
ToT	Training of Trainers
TRTC	Tutu Rural Training Centre
USP	University of the South Pacific
VPPA	Vanuatu Primary Producers Authority
WST	Western Samoa tala

1 Introduction

PHAMA Plus has worked across 10 Pacific Island countries (Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Niue, Papua New Guinea¹, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu) to support inclusive and sustainable economic growth through improved agricultural market access. A central pillar of the program was ensuring that economic benefits extend to women, people with disabilities, youth, and those living in remote communities.

This performance story presents how PHAMA Plus has driven inclusion across different stages of agricultural value chains, aligned to its gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) drivers of empowerment (Figure 1, with activities mapped against the drivers in Figure 2) and Inclusive Value Chain Roadmap (Figure 3).

1.1 Context: Unequal Market Systems

Women, men, youth, and people with disabilities all contribute to Pacific agriculture, but not on equal terms. Women often carry the bulk of unpaid care and subsistence farming labour while men dominate market engagement and income decisions. People with disabilities face physical, social, and institutional barriers to participation. Gender-based violence and unsafe workplaces further constrain women's engagement, particularly beyond the farm gate. Women-led businesses face more barriers to accessing support and building assets because of less developed business networks, limited access to land or commercial finance, socio-cultural gender norms and discrimination.

Labour mobility has intensified these challenges. As young men pursue overseas work, farms are experiencing labour shortages, reduced productivity, and inconsistent supply, undermining both household livelihoods and exporter confidence.

Most Pacific Island countries rely heavily on imported food, posing risks to food security in the region. Import-dependence, often on processed food, leads to reduced food security and resilience. Traditional, largely subsistence farming practices focusing on a few main crops continue, with farmers extremely sensitive to price fluctuations and vulnerable to pest and diseases. Farming is rarely planned, and farms are seen as providing family nutrition rather than as businesses. Agro-processing and exporting businesses that often employ more women than men report high rates of worker absenteeism and staff turnover, especially due to incidents of domestic or gender-based violence, inclement weather or other family circumstances that require women to stay home and care for their families. This directly impacts their productivity and profitability and constrains their ability to grow, even where the market demands exceed supply. Growth is further constrained by a lack of consistent, high-quality supply needed to meet export requirements and client expectations.

¹ Until June 2024, PHAMA Plus also worked in Papua New Guinea. Ongoing activities and partnerships were transitioned to the Australia – Papua New Guinea Economic Partnership.

1.2 PHAMA Plus Approach

PHAMA Plus applied an evidence-informed, twin-track approach to GEDSI:

- **Mainstreaming inclusion** across all partnerships and value chain investments, and
- **Targeted GEDSI initiatives** where structural barriers require focused action.

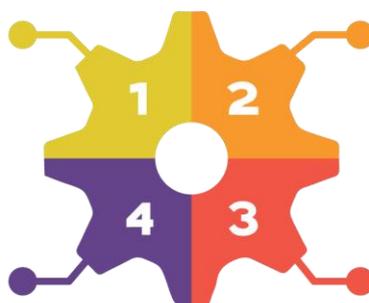
Four GEDSI drivers underpin this approach. These drivers are a key part of PHAMA Plus’s analysis and have informed sector selection, partner engagement, activity design, and monitoring.

Figure 1 below presents the PHAMA Plus drivers of empowerment, and Figure 2 identifies key activities aligned to these drivers.

Figure 1. PHAMA Plus GEDSI Drivers of Empowerment

Addressing adverse social norms which dictate the roles people play in agricultural production and their opportunities for empowerment.

Building assets and improving access to them (such as training, support, information, services, land and other assets), for women, persons with disabilities, youth and remote communities in agricultural value chains.



Strengthening the visibility, voice and representation of women, persons with disabilities, youth and remote communities in decision-making.

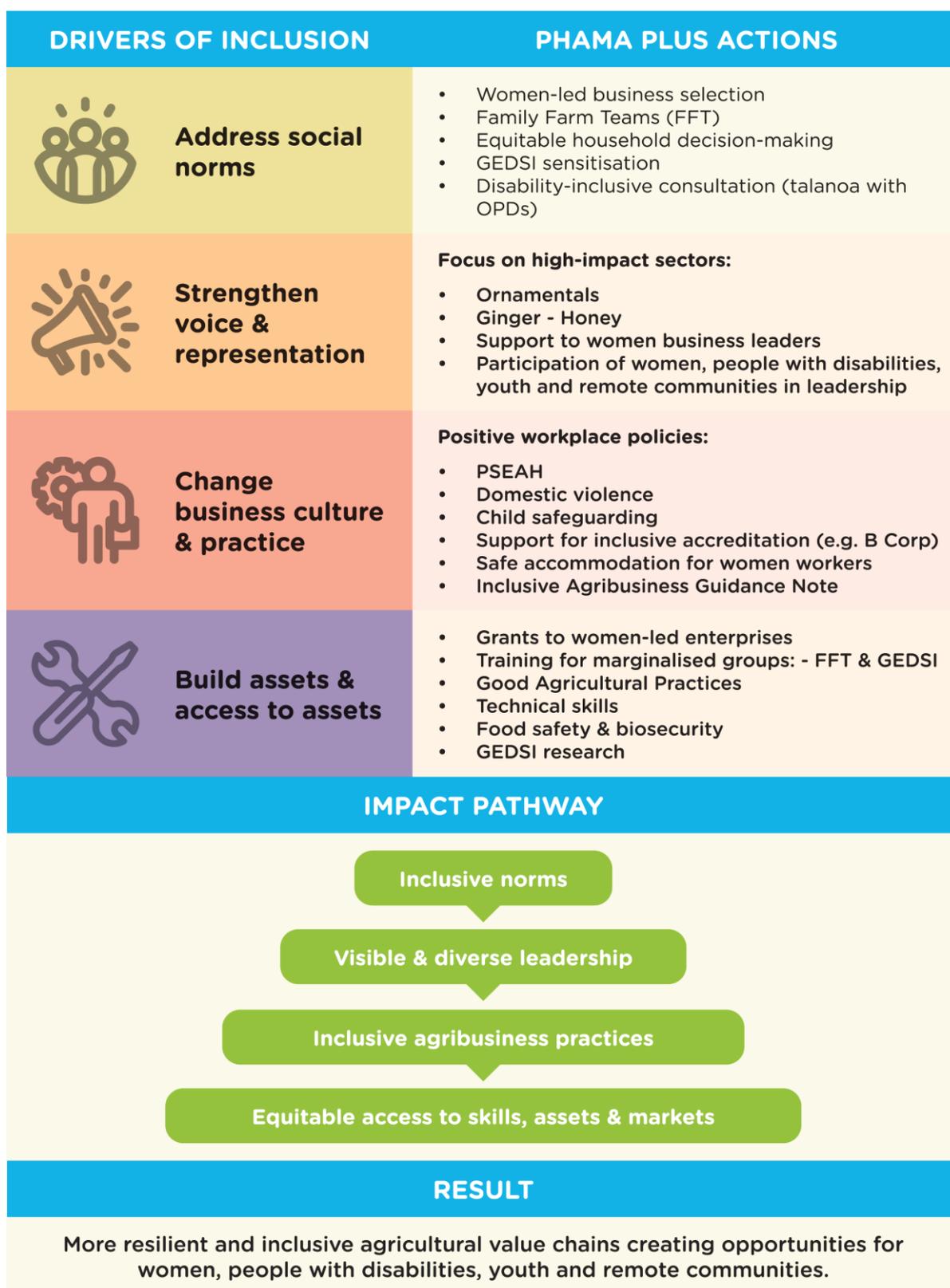
Changing business culture and practices to be more inclusive of women, persons with disabilities, youth and remote communities.



Lami Kava staff celebrate International Women’s Day

Figure 2. PHAMA Plus Actions and Theory of Change Against GEDSI Drivers

PHAMA Plus: Driving Inclusive Value Chains



1.3 Inclusion Across the Value Chain

PHAMA Plus recognises that inclusive outcomes require looking beyond just processing and export. Value chains that are inclusive at *all stages* are more effective, more productive, more resilient and more innovative. They are better able to adapt and respond to changing conditions and contexts. PHAMA Plus worked across the full value chain:

- **Production:** household decision-making, labour allocation, crop planning, access to inputs, increased production, income and resilience.
- **Targeted sectors:** provide women, youth and people with disabilities with opportunities for empowerment through increased market access.
- **Aggregation and processing:** skills, infrastructure, safe employment and positive workplaces.
- **Market access:** compliance, consistency, certification and commercial relationships.

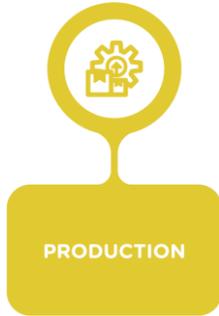
The following sections present evidence from different stages of the value chain, demonstrating how PHAMA Plus's GEDSI drivers were applied in practice.

Figure 3 shows PHAMA Plus's work across the value chain, which is detailed through the case studies included in this performance story.

Figure 3. PHAMA Plus Inclusion Support Across Agricultural Value Chain



2 Inclusive Production: Family Farm Teams as the Foundation



2.1 Why Inclusion Starts with Production

Value chain inclusion begins at the production level. Across the Pacific, farming families continue to rely on traditional, semi-subsistence practices, often with limited planning or forward-looking decision-making. Despite diverse environmental and cultural contexts, Pacific countries face common agricultural challenges that affect food security, market access, women's empowerment, youth engagement, and broader inclusion across value chains. These constraints limit productivity, growth, and resilience.

Family Farm Teams (FFT) offers a practical, production-level model to address these challenges through the adoption of sustainable, inclusive, and climate-resilient agricultural practices. FFT supports smallholder farming households to think and work as a team, set short, medium and long-term goals, and develop clear plans to achieve them. In doing so, FFT lays the foundations for more commercially oriented and resilient agriculture. The approach encourages entrepreneurial thinking, strengthens food security and nutrition outcomes, promotes savings, and supports shared decision-making within households.

This case study presents the approach used by PHAMA Plus and its partners to trial FFT. It shares reflections from trainers and farmers and presents early indications of impact and change, with a particular focus on Fiji, drawing on interviews conducted in March and September 2025.

2.2 What is a Family Farm Team?

FFT was developed by the University of Canberra in partnership with the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR). First trialled with smallholder cocoa and coffee farmers in Papua New Guinea, FFT has since been adapted across different crops, cultures and Pacific Island country contexts.

FFT supports smallholder farming families to **think and work as a team** and to **run their farm as a business**. It promotes more inclusive and equitable decision-making, fairer division of labour, and constructive household communication. It also supports stronger agricultural productivity, enabling a transition from household to semi-commercial production.

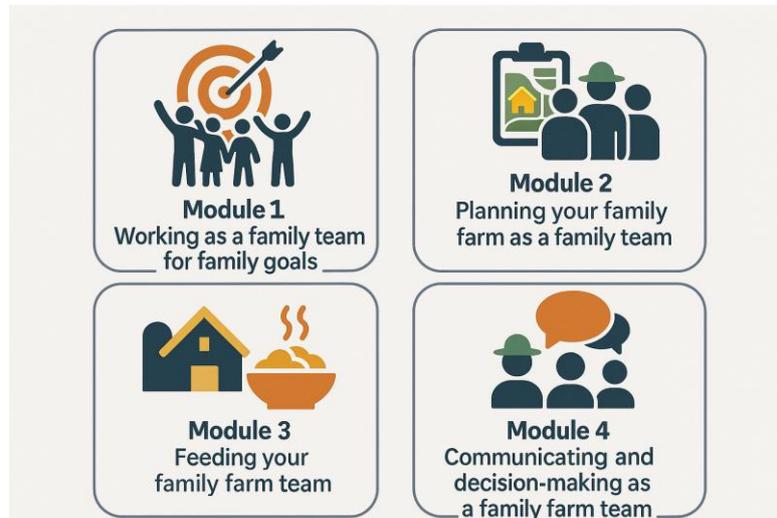
Evidence from PHAMA Plus data collection and analysis indicates that FFT can be **transformational**, particularly for women. Women reported increased participation in farm decision-making and improved sharing of domestic responsibilities.



Asinate Mow, trained in FFT in Navunisole village, Fiji

FFT consists of **4 distinct but interrelated modules** (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Family Farm Team Modules



The FFT model is **highly flexible and easily adapted** to different contexts, crops and priorities. Modules can be delivered together or as short, stand-alone lessons. FFT can also be strengthened by complementary extension support and additional modules, such as soil management, climate-resilient agriculture, financial literacy, entrepreneurship, and commercial contract farming - supporting farming families to grow sustainable and profitable businesses.

2.3 Why Family Farm Teams?

Agriculture is the lifeblood of Pacific communities, sustaining livelihoods, cultures and identities. With fertile soils and rich natural environments, the region has strong potential for agricultural growth. Yet most farmers continue to rely on traditional, subsistence practices – producing primarily for household consumption and selling only surplus produce. As a result, incomes are uncertain and highly exposed to price fluctuations, with many families dependent on a narrow range of cash crops, such as taro, kava and cocoa.

Although export markets offer higher returns for quality produce, export growth is limited by poor access to inputs, services and infrastructure. Even when equipment may be upgraded, exporters often remain reluctant to expand contracts due to inconsistent supply. Labour shortages further constrain production as young men migrate overseas for work, leaving farms understaffed or unattended.

Gender norms also shape agricultural outcomes. Women play a critical role in planting and harvesting, yet often face barriers to land ownership, finance and decision-making. Alongside heavy domestic and community responsibilities, many women have limited control over farm income.

Despite the region’s agricultural potential, much of the food consumed in the Pacific – including in the tourism sector – is imported. Families frequently divert produce to meet social and community obligations, reinforcing cycles of subsistence. Climate change and shocks such as rising sea levels, cyclones and pests, including Kava Dieback Disease, place additional pressure on farming livelihoods. In order to thrive, farming families need resilience - clear goals, diversified production and forward planning. FFT offers a proven pathway by enabling households to plan together, share responsibilities and adopt planned farming practices that strengthen nutrition, savings and farm productivity.

2.4 Alignment with Regional Priorities and Plans

FFT aligns strongly with national and regional priorities for agriculture and economic development and has been recognised by Pacific leaders as a practical tool for building resilience.

Speaking at the PHAMA Plus Program Coordinating Committee Meeting in Fiji in October 2024, Mr Timothy Tumukon, Director General of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry and Biosecurity (MALFB) in Vanuatu, stated that “all farming families in the Pacific should be provided with FFT training.”

Mr Tumukon reflected that he was initially sceptical, questioning how the training could add value and assuming FFT focused only on gender equality, not farming outcomes. This perception shifted in 2022 when he observed the training first-hand. Over just a few days, FFT changed how farming families thought, worked and made decisions, across generations. He described the experience as “turning a light bulb on” for farmers and their households.

Witnessing these changes led Mr Tumukon to recognise FFT’s potential to strengthen agricultural productivity while simultaneously delivering social and economic benefits for rural communities in Vanuatu. With ministerial support, FFT has since been incorporated into the MALFB strategy and 2026 workplan and budget, with a long-term vision to progressively roll out the training to all farming households nationwide.

Similar endorsement has been expressed in Fiji. Ms Jiu Daunivalu, CEO of the Fiji Crop and Livestock Council (FCLC), which represents and advocates for approximately 60,000 farmers, describes FFT as “101% relevant to agriculture in Fiji”. She notes that the model directly addresses the structural and social barriers limiting agricultural growth and resilience, priority areas for Fiji’s Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways Strategic Plan 2024–2028. Based on the demonstration effect of PHAMA Plus, Family Farm Team approaches have now been formally integrated into extension activities offered by a range of public and private sector partners in Fiji, including the Fiji Crop and Livestock Council, Tutu Regional Training Centre, Nature’s Way Cooperative, Winsome Farms and agricultural programs being implemented by MoAW in partnership with the Bioeconomy Science Institute (formerly Plant and Food Research).



We need to make sure that benefits and opportunities from agricultural growth can flow to everyone. Our collective vision for a prosperous and stable Fiji can only be achieved if we empower all of our people.

Dr Andrew Tukana,
Permanent Secretary for Agriculture
and Waterways,
Fiji Knowledge Forum 2025

2.5 PHAMA Plus and Family Farm Teams

In 2021–22, PHAMA Plus introduced FFT to promote more inclusive farming systems and to strengthen consistent, reliable supply chains for export partners, in partnership with the University of Canberra. Over a 6-month period, during COVID-19 travel restrictions, PHAMA Plus supported a hybrid program of online and, where possible, in-person FFT Training of Trainers (ToT) across Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu. The objective of the ToT was to establish a network of accredited FFT trainers across the PHAMA Plus portfolio, enabling FFT to be delivered at the household level and supporting farmers to adopt more commercial and forward-looking practices.

Following the initial round of the ToT, follow-on support was offered in different countries to the extent that COVID-19 constraints would allow. Additional programs were delivered to crop-specific partners in the coffee and cacao sectors in PNG. An FFT Manual was developed for Vanuatu and translated into Bislama, ensuring that the examples and activities were culturally and contextually relevant. Training was also delivered to cacao farmers in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu and in 2 villages in Fiji.

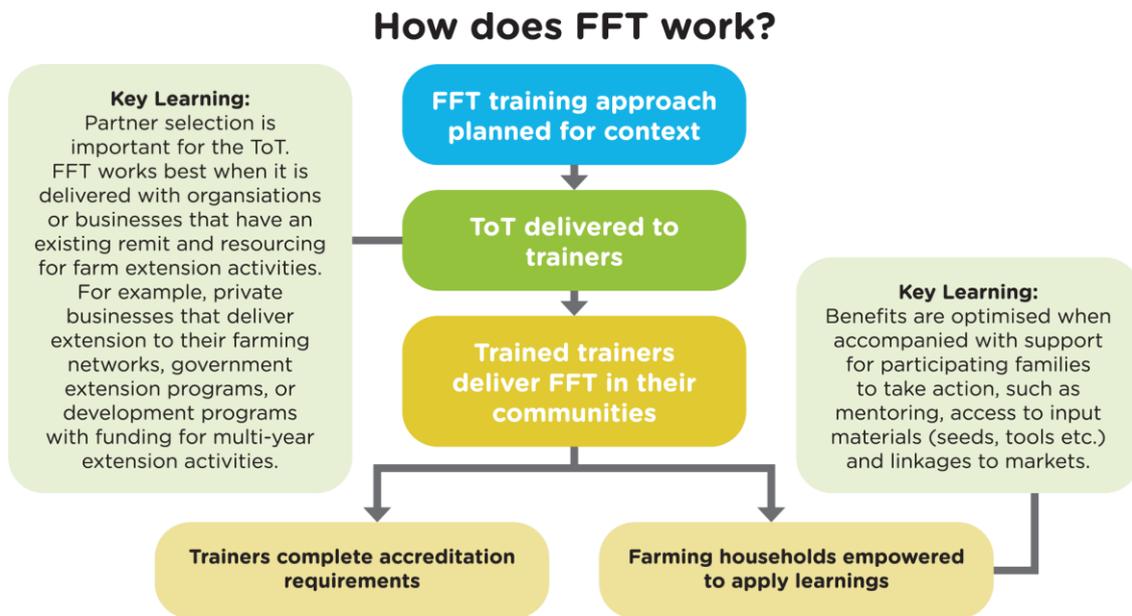
The extent to which the ToT cohort subsequently rolled out community-level FFT training varied across countries and partners, reflecting differences in organisational mandates, capacity, and priorities. However, a stocktake in 2023 indicated around 1,200 farming households had been involved in FFT training in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu from PHAMA Plus-trained trainers. Anecdotal feedback from trainers during the stocktake suggested that they had observed genuine improvements in farming families and production levels after participating in FFT training.

In early 2025, PHAMA Plus revitalised FFT and undertook a purposeful trial to better understand and share the transformational potential of the approach. This included a rapid assessment of the 2022 training delivered in Delasui and Navunisole Villages, Viti Levu, Fiji, to gather insights and identify how their experiences could inform a subsequent ToT program in April 2025. The new ToT sessions responded to trainers' requests for in-person refresher training in Fiji, as the previous training had been delivered online, limiting opportunities for group work and peer exchange.

The rapid evaluation in Fiji assessed the extent of FFT rollout and examined whether participation in the training had led to changes in household attitudes and practices. The evaluation found that rollout to farmers was uneven. Many partners reported that the timing of the FFT ToT coincided with efforts by farmers and agribusinesses to recover from the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, while others noted that increases in pests and diseases required a shift in focus away from training towards immediate response efforts. Despite these challenges, by early 2025 more than 1,000 farming households in Fiji had participated in FFT training. Key informant interviews with participants from 2 villages highlighted positive outcomes, including increased production and income, greater crop diversification, the establishment of family businesses and bank accounts, positive shifts in attitudes and behaviours towards all family members, and stronger entrepreneurial thinking.

A subsequent round of FFT ToT training was delivered in Fiji in April 2025, involving 40 purposefully selected trainers in Taveuni and Nadi. The participant selection strategy drew on lessons from the rapid evaluation and from other countries' experiences and prioritised male and female teams with a clear mandate to deliver training or support farming households within their organisations or networks. The sustainability of FFT as an agricultural development approach depends on its delivery by actors within the system rather than ongoing donor funding, making the selection of trainers with both the mandate and capacity to train farmers critical to its long-term success. Following the training, participants are required to deliver FFT in their communities to complete their accreditation.

Figure 5. How the FFT approach works

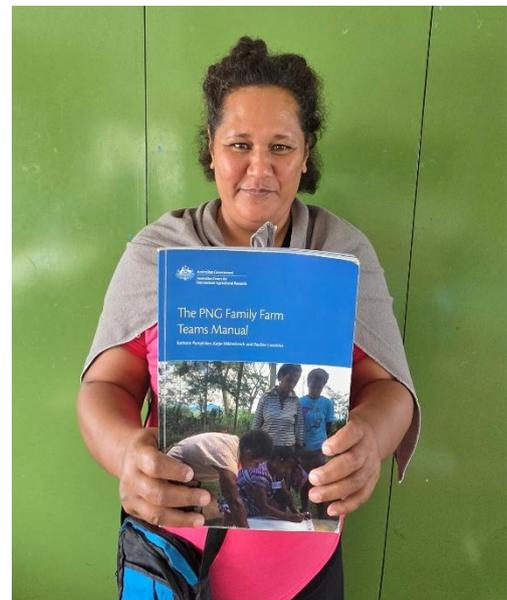


Since the in-person training, the teams have adapted the program to suit the specific needs of farmers in their networks, achieving varying levels of progress. Only a few months after the ToT, early results are emerging. Across Fiji, FFT is contributing to improved livelihoods and building resilience for farming families. This performance story highlights what has been learned, how families are changing, and what this could mean for the future of agriculture in Fiji.

2.5 Linking Households to Markets

FFT is most effective when it is part of a broader package that addresses challenges along the value chain. Farmers will only grow crops they can eat or sell – and price fluctuations can strongly incentivise or discourage production. These uncertainties undermine farmer confidence and pose risks for processors and exporters. For farmers to diversify their activities, or to plan increased production, they must be confident they will be able to sell their produce for profit. They need to know that there is demand for the produce and that they can reach the market.

In 2024, taro prices in Taveuni dropped sharply, falling from FJD 4 to FJD 1 per kilogram almost overnight. At that price, farmers reported it wasn't even worth harvesting. This fluctuation followed supply and demand: Taveuni's year-round climate allows 2 taro crops per year, while farmers on Viti Levu, Fiji's main island, can only grow one. When high taro prices incentivised more planting in Taveuni, the Viti Levu harvest coincided with the Taveuni season, reducing demand and leaving crops to rot –effectively wiping out 6 months' income for many farmers.



FFT participant holding up the FFT Manual

Through FFT, farmers are learning the value of diversifying crops and incomes. By supporting them from planning to market in a structured, considered way, FFT is supporting families to manage risks, make informed decisions, and build more resilient livelihoods.

A New Model for Farming Success: Winsome Farms

Winsome Farms on the Island of Taveuni operates an innovative model. Workers on the farm are provided with accommodation and family plots within the Ura Estate, and in return for working on the company farm a few days a week, they can cultivate their own plots. Many of these farmers are marginalised or vulnerable, including ex-prisoners and landless families from other islands. Historically, they grew only kava and taro, which Winsome Farms would purchase, taking a small deduction for operating costs. Winsome Farms heard about PHAMA Plus's plans for an FFT trial in Taveuni and saw it as an opportunity to improve the livelihoods of farming families living on the estate, increasing their incomes and building their resilience.

Since participating in FFT training, farmers have diversified their crops to include short term crops such as cabbage, chilli, and eggplant. These new crops have already brought tangible benefits, with some families purchasing solar panels, generators, second-hand vehicles, and refrigerators from their additional incomes.

After completing ToT training with PHAMA Plus in April 2025, a Winsome Farms training team of 4, led by Mr Pio Bosco, delivered FFT to 49 women, men, and adult youth from 20 families over a 6-week period. Training was broken into 2-hour sessions, held one afternoon per week in the estate classrooms – maximising downtime between farmwork and dinner. “Right after completing the first module, we could see attitudinal and behavioural changes in the family,” Pio said. By the second module, there was a clear improvement in communication and division of work: men were helping with childcare and household chores, women were more involved in farm decisions, and children were contributing more actively to household and farm tasks. Families began talking confidently about their future homes, education, and savings goals.



Mr Pio Bosco with members of the Ura community discussing FFT in Taveuni

Following the training, each family developed a Family Farm Team plan, using the new vegetable crops as a practical example. Winsome Farms supports the farmers at every step, providing seeds, equipment, knowledge, and mentoring. Monthly data collection tracks planting, production, and sales,

helping measure the impact of FFT and farm diversification. Winsome Farms also connects families to markets for their new crops, demonstrating how structured support and access to markets can quickly transform livelihoods.

The journey hasn't been without challenges. For Ms Sorrel Fine Tuitoga (Fine), growing vegetables required trial and error. "We thought vegetables would grow like taro and kava, so we planted them far away. Without water every day, they quickly died," she recalled. After their first crop failed, they replanted closer to home and established a regular watering and tending routine. Their efforts have paid off, with healthy crops now ready for market. "Growing vegetables to sell strengthens our business," Fine said. "They provide a regular income and help us withstand market shocks." When taro prices fell to FJD1 per kilo in late 2024, Fine's family lost most of their income. Now, steady vegetable sales cover daily expenses, while taro and kava revenue is being saved for home improvements.



Cabbage Farms, Ura Estate, Taveuni

For Mr Fritz Ryland and his family, the practical, talanoa-based sessions encouraged shared planning, teamwork, and an entrepreneurial approach. "What really stood out was learning how to work as a team. Before, I worked alone on the farm and my wife stayed home with the children. Now we divide all the jobs equally, with mum and dad leading and the children helping. It makes such a difference," he said. Fritz and his family have expanded their farm to include chillis, eggplants, cabbage, bele, and tomatoes. The steady income has brought balance and calm to their household, and with their 7th child on the way, Fritz reflected, "this training has really transformed us. I help my wife at home and with the children, and they all help me on the farm. It's no longer about me working alone. We are a family farm team."

Community-wide changes are also evident. Men have recognised time lost to their evening kava drinking and have committed to limiting consumption to Saturdays, with a 3-year community-wide pause in kava drinking planned from 2026 to observe the impact. "Before, after farming I would drink grog with friends. Now I go home, help with chores, and plan with my wife and children," said Fritz.

"Before the men would go to the farm, and the women stayed home. Now everyone works on the farm and in the home together. The farm has improved, profits have increased, and we are able to buy things for our household. We are even planning for the future." — Woman, Taveuni

Embedding FFT into Agriculture Extension and Training – Tutu Rural Training Centre

Tutu Rural Training Centre (TRTC) in Taveuni, Fiji, has been a pillar of community development since the 1960s. Established by the Catholic Church, the Centre combines a productive farm with hands-on training programs, creating an environment where practical skills, personal growth, and family empowerment come together.

In 2025, TRTC integrated the FFT program into its courses to support semi-subsistence farming families, promoting sustainability, gender equality, teamwork, and family cohesion. Of the 12 staff at TRTC, 5 were trained as FFT facilitators under the PHAMA Plus trial, embedding the methodology across programs for young men, couples, and women.



Miriama Tikoibaravi, a community development trainer at Tutu Rural Training Centre, launches FFT training with kava-farming families - empowering households to work together, boost productivity, and promote gender equity

Participants benefit from access to seeds, dedicated plots, mentorship, and income from crops grown during training, which they retain upon graduation. This system enables families to reinvest in their farms, combining practical experience with financial empowerment.

Early impacts are emerging. Families are planning farm activities strategically and sharing household and farm responsibilities more effectively. Women are growing in confidence and taking leadership roles in decision-making, while young men and women are adopting commercial approaches to farming. By linking training to market opportunities through PHAMA Plus, participants are beginning to transition from subsistence farming towards small-scale enterprises capable of supplying high-value markets.

Father Thomas of TRTC emphasised the value of FFT: “FFT is not just about farming. It teaches families to work together, to plan, and to communicate. It gives them confidence and the ability to shape their future. When families are united, they can build stronger communities and achieve real change.”

A key driver of this transformation is Miriama Tikoibaravi, a long-time TRTC facilitator who participated in PHAMA Plus’s ToT in Taveuni and now shares her knowledge with new farming families. For Miriama, FFT was transformative: “After the FFT program, I have enhanced my knowledge on the importance of families working together. Setting common goals, whether improving farming practices or managing household responsibilities, makes a huge difference in building a strong, sustainable future.”

Miriama teaches families respectful communication, collaboration, and gender equality. She sees women growing in confidence and independence, and couples becoming more united. “The knowledge I’ve gained from FFT is something I now pass on to others, empowering them to take ownership of their farms and futures,” she said. “It’s about giving families the tools they need to succeed and work together – that’s how we’ll build stronger, more sustainable communities.”

TRTC’s holistic model demonstrates that combining skills training, practical farming experience, mentorship, and market linkages can contribute to sustainable change: families are more cohesive, women are empowered, and young farmers are stepping into leadership roles. FFT is helping TRTC establish a blueprint for transforming rural Pacific communities through family-focused, commercially-minded agriculture.

FFT as Foundational Training for Fijian Farming Families

FFT provides valuable foundational learning for all kinds of agriculture training – extension, financial management, commercial farming, organic farming and climate-resilient agriculture practices. It transforms the way families think, supporting them to work together and to plan their farming activities. These skills are integral to adopting changes and learning new behaviours. The Fiji Crop and Livestock Council (FCLC) understands firsthand how important these foundations are for training outcomes.

Launched in 2010, the FCLC represents and advocates for an estimated 60,000 non-sugar farming families across Fiji. FCLC aims to grow the agriculture industry by providing services and training that respond to farmers' needs and reflect the realities of farming in Fiji. The Council is overseen by a board of trustees and comprises commodity associations for pigs, honey, dalo, yaqona (kava), tapioca, grazing livestock, ginger, cocoa, agriculture exporters, rice, coconut, dairy, organics, fruit and vegetables, mushrooms, and newly established associations for pineapple, coffee, and breadfruit. FCLC receives funding from the Government of Fiji and international donors and implements projects for partners including the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (UN FAO).

Jiu Daunivalu, FCLC's CEO, participated in the first FFT training in 2021 and attended the refresher session with staff and representatives in Nadi in 2025. Since completing the ToT in 2021, Jiu has championed FFT as a foundational training requirement for all other FCLC programs, including financial literacy, good agricultural practices, and contract farming management.



It is pointless trying to get farmers to manage their finances, or to think commercially, unless they have first done FFT. Without FFT, we are just wasting our time.

Jiu Daunivalu
Chief Executive Officer
Fiji Crop & Livestock Council

For these programs, FCLC condenses goal setting, farm planning, saving, and communication into a foundational module before delivering business or extension support. They require farmers to bring their spouse, and, where possible, adult children, to ensure learning is shared across the family. Using this model, FCLC delivered FFT to over 800 families in 2024, in partnership with Parametric Insurance and the Fiji Development Bank, supporting farmers to explore and, where appropriate, procure agriculture and climate insurance for their family farms.

FCLC delivers FFT as part of a phased approach to help farmers move from subsistence to semi-commercial farming. Training is held in the afternoons over several weeks, with a one-month break between phases to allow families to absorb and apply new practices:

Phase 1: Family vision and planning, labour and chore divisions, nutrition, market and social obligations

Phase 2: Value chain analysis and market development, including compliance

Phase 3: Financial literacy, agricultural insurance, investment, contract farming, market access, and finance

Following each phase, FCLC monitors behavioural changes in families, using these observations to identify those most ready to progress to the next stage of commercialisation.

In collaboration with FAO, FCLC is supporting a project to return Lau Island to organic status. FFT will again serve as the foundational module, preparing families to adopt good agricultural practices, climate-resilient methods, and achieve organic certification.

Jiu emphasises the importance of planning. Many Fijian farmers, particularly iTaukei, rarely make formal farm plans, following traditional patterns without forward-thinking. FFT helps families set a vision for 5, 10, or 20 years, and map a plan to achieve it. “Training in financial literacy is not enough; farmers also need to understand and adopt commercialisation principles. FFT builds these skills and helps farmers think commercially,” she said. “It is important to simplify the training to meet the needs of smallholders and recognise the different stages of commercialisation.”

For FCLC, FFT is more than training – it is an important foundation for farm business success.



Jiu Daunivalu of FCLC and other participants of FFT training in Nadi, April 2025

Youth and Farm Transformation (Sigatoka Valley)

In the Sigatoka Valley, FFT has inspired youth to take responsibility and actively support their family farms. Plant & Food Research (PFR), New Zealand, in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways (MoAW), is supporting climate-smart agriculture and strengthening connections between farmers and markets. By working with extended family groups farming as clusters, the project encourages diversification, adoption of climate-resilient practices, and sustainable livelihood improvements. The project builds activities around locally identified needs and family priorities.

Four trainers from PFR and MoAW Sigatoka were trained to deliver FFT through PHAMA Plus in April 2025. While only the first 2 modules have been delivered to a cluster of 5 family households, early changes are already evident.

Adult children reported that the “Day in the Life of” activity, which mapped daily responsibilities of all family members, was eye-opening. One youth reflected: “We realised our mothers do a lot around the house, while we spent most of our time relaxing. We slept in, scrolled our phones, and visited friends. We weren’t contributing very much at home or on the farm.”

Since completing the first 2 FFT modules, youth have taken ownership of the seedling process. They constructed a protective shade structure and shifted from planting 4,500 seeds at once in a single seedling pit to using tray cells, planting around 400 seeds at a time. Seeds are now staggered over several weeks, providing a steady supply for progressive transplanting and harvest. This approach has reportedly achieved a 99.9% germination rate and dramatically reduced seed wastage.

The youth’s pride and confidence have grown, with several taking on leadership roles in the community. Families plan to use additional income to purchase household appliances and farm tools.

PFR and MoAW will deliver the final 2 FFT modules using a real-life example: the families have agreed to a contract farming arrangement to supply local exporter Happy Valley with cowpeas next season. Happy Valley will provide seeds and equipment, PFR and MoAW will deliver the last 2 FFT modules and continue mentoring, and the farmers have a guaranteed market and price. This practical application reinforces FFT learnings while providing a pathway to sustainably improve livelihoods and support the embedding of new behaviours over time.



Young women, trained in FFT, from Narata Village, Sigatoka Valley inspecting their cabbage seedlings using seed cell trays with support from PFR, September 2025

2.6 Food and Nutrition Security

Food and nutrition security is fundamental to building household and community resilience. Despite fertile soils and the potential to produce sufficient healthy food, Pacific countries continue to rely heavily on imported food products. Dependence on processed, store-bought foods—such as white rice and instant noodles—has contributed to rising rates of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), with the region recording some of the highest rates of diabetes globally. Building awareness, knowledge, and capability around healthy, local diets can reduce NCD risks and contribute to wellbeing, family stability, and community resilience.

In Taveuni, FFT has supported families to diversify their crops and incomes beyond long-cycle taro and kava, introducing quick-growing vegetables such as cabbage, chilli, and eggplant. It helps them to identify healthy food available locally and to create nutritious meals using seasonal fruits and vegetables. FFT also teaches families to establish purpose-built ‘kustom’ kitchen gardens close to home, providing food for daily meals, community obligations, and church events. Families plan these gardens to add variety and colour to their diets, reduce reliance on store-bought food, and free up time previously used to collect food for family meals for farm work or family activities. Planning also helps ensure that providing food for celebrations or funerals does not impact the amount of produce available for subsistence and sale.

A male respondent at Ura Estate described the benefits: “Now we have dedicated plants for our own food, regular income, and can save more money. We also have better nutrition through healthy, home-grown food. We buy less from the store, saving money for bigger things. If we plant and eat more fresh vegetables, we will build healthier bodies for our family and children.”

Pio and his training team confirmed that the establishment of kitchen gardens has improved nutrition while reducing the time spent collecting food. Families are now working together in the community, growing and trading protein, vegetables and fruit among themselves, reducing reliance on store-bought food – further enhancing food security and household savings.

Over the long term, increasing the variety and frequency of consuming fresh, homegrown vegetables can reduce risk factors for NCDs, ease the associated burdens on families and communities, and decrease reliance on imported, processed foods. FFT therefore contributes not only to economic resilience but also to improved health, nutrition, and wellbeing across Pacific households.



Winsome Farms Trainers receive their formal FFT Trainer certification from Melissa Collins, PHAMA Plus GEDSI Adviser

3 Strategic Sector and Partner Selection – Beyond the Farmgate



STRATEGIC
SECTOR &
PARTNER
SELECTION

3.1 Gender Equality, Disability Equity and Rights and Social Inclusion in Agriculture

Gendered social norms shape how women, youth, and people with disabilities participate in agriculture. The physical demands of cash crop farming - plots located far from home, steep or difficult terrain, and heavy lifting - can limit engagement across the value chain. As a result, these groups often seek economic opportunities in sectors that better align with their domestic, care, and subsistence farming responsibilities, skills, and priorities, in sectors that allow them to work informally and closer to home.

PHAMA Plus selected priority sectors and partners in each country based on comparative advantage, market opportunities, and potential benefits for Pacific exporters and farmers. GEDSI considerations were embedded in this process, with intentional selection of sectors that provided empowerment opportunities for marginalised groups. PHAMA Plus sectors included well-developed priority sectors with immediate export development potential, as well as emerging sectors, or those with specific opportunities for GEDSI outcomes, for example, ornamental horticulture in Samoa, ginger in Fiji and honey in the Solomon Islands.

Once priority sectors were identified, PHAMA Plus undertook a landscaping exercise to identify potential partner organisations. Preference was given to women, youth, or disability-led organisations, or partners with strong potential to advance empowerment and inclusion, with 46% of all exporters supported by PHAMA Plus, led either solely or jointly by women². Deliberately targeting sectors and organisations that provided opportunity for GEDSI outcomes and economic empowerment for traditionally marginalised groups, provided them with access to resources, support, networks and assets that they otherwise may not have been able to access. Such support can be transformational, providing women entrepreneurs with a much-needed leg up, unlocking innovation and realising their potential.

The following section outlines PHAMA Plus's approach to targeting sectors and partners, and presents evidence-informed case studies and examples from the ornamental horticulture sector in Samoa, the honey industry in Solomon Islands, an entrepreneur in Fiji, and a trailblazing root crop exporter from Tonga.

3.2 Strengthening Samoa's Ornamental Horticulture Sector for Women's Economic Empowerment

Context and Rationale

The ornamental horticulture sector holds significant cultural and economic importance in Samoa. Flowers, foliage, and tropical plants are central to Samoan life, from church and family events to community ceremonies, hotel landscaping, and tourism experiences. Despite high domestic demand, the sector remains largely informal and underdeveloped, with inconsistent supply, limited market information, scarce quality planting material, and insufficient business skills. Available plants often lack variety in species and colour – with growers unable to meet demand for more exotic plants, which were typically imported at high cost and with limited sustainability.

² This figure excludes de-identified data for exporters involved in PHAMA Plus's review of the Commercial Kava Pilot.

Traditionally viewed as a woman's domain, ornamental horticulture presents a unique opportunity to empower women, youth, and other vulnerable groups, including in remote and rural areas. Samoan farming is dominated by smallholder plots, often less than 5 acres, while urban ornamental businesses typically operate on less than one acre. Many ornamental plants can be grown with minimal land and basic equipment, making the sector accessible to people with small plots, single parents, caregivers, older women, and others who face mobility or employment barriers and need to remain close to home. Exotic orchids, for example, thrive in hanging gardens, pots, or greenhouse environments, providing a high-value crop suitable for small-plot horticulture.

Several constraints have limited the sector's growth:

- Inconsistent product quality and supply
- Limited access to diverse species and propagation materials
- Gaps in propagation knowledge and business skills (pricing, financial literacy, branding, marketing)
- Weak supplier networks, limited market access, and scarce market information
- Challenges sourcing affordable inputs (pots, steel posts, greenhouse materials, plant food)
- Limited outreach and business support services
- Limited understanding of biosecurity requirements for safe plant movement.

Recognising these challenges, PHAMA Plus identified ornamental horticulture as a promising pathway for inclusive economic participation, with strong potential to support women-led micro-enterprises and strengthen local value chains. PHAMA Plus began with a rapid market and export assessment to identify viable pathways, before investing in expanding plant diversity and building propagation knowledge and business capacity.

Cultivating a new industry in Samoa

In 2023, PHAMA Plus partnered with local organisations FAMA and OMONEA, 2 community groups that had formed an alliance to develop Samoa's ornamental sector. The aim was ambitious – to test how imported tropical ornamentals could generate income for women and build a sustainable, profitable market for ornamental horticulture.

The program began with the import of orchids from Thailand, providing a foundation for growers. Support included propagation training, mulchers, promotional materials, and technical advice. A follow-on phase targeted the most committed growers, helping them expand and professionalise operations through access to additional orchid varieties and other exotic plants, such as anthuriums. A simplified, more manageable import process was trialled, establishing a sustainable pathway for ongoing business growth.

The growers, mostly women, supported by PHAMA Plus are now leading the development of ornamental horticulture as a credible agribusiness sector in Samoa. Over nearly 3 years, PHAMA Plus support has included:

- Establishing import pathways for orchids and anthuriums, testing soil-based quarantine versus soil-free fumigation methods. This has enabled growers to import stock easily and engage directly with international suppliers. As one grower noted, a single orchid costing USD1.50 to import can sell in Samoa for USD50 or more (WST4 to WST150 or more).
- Sector scoping and opportunity analysis to map key actors, market trends, export potential, and entry points for women, including longer-term export opportunities to American Samoa and New Zealand.
- Technical production support, including improved propagation, plant health management, biosecurity guidance, and locally adapted solutions. Growers have even developed a sustainable exotic plant food using kitchen waste to reduce input costs.
- Business capability development, covering pricing, customer engagement, record-keeping, branding, marketing, and product presentation.

- Strengthening supply linkages, connecting growers to event organisers, businesses, and government to create predictable income streams.
- Biosecurity and compliance guidance to reduce the risk of pests and diseases during imports.
- Visibility and networking, enabling women-led businesses to participate in sector discussions and peer learning.

PHAMA Plus intentionally prioritised women-owned and family-based enterprises, helping participants to grow their confidence, capability, and income. Initially implemented in urban Apia, the model has potential to support women and other marginalised groups in remote areas, including through Samoan Government initiatives such as the District Development Program.

Emerging Outcomes

The sector is already delivering tangible benefits:

- Women and vulnerable groups are generating income through home-based production and floristry services.
- Consistent supply and product quality are enabling women entrepreneurs to expand into plant rental services for churches, government, and businesses.
- A collaborative community of growers has emerged, sharing knowledge and problem-solving together. For example, when fumigated orchids at Agnes Florist showed signs of stress, peer advice enabled recovery and wider learning.
- Quality and consistency of plants have improved, boosting customer satisfaction and demand. Several businesses now import directly, diversify offerings, and develop new models such as rental plants.

Sector leadership is also growing. The Ornamental Lovers Association (OLA) has been established to coordinate growers and strengthen the industry. Florists and nursery owners collaborate through an informal network and in 2025, for the first time, the Samoa Bureau of Statistics included ornamental horticulture as a priority sector in the National Agriculture Survey, providing a baseline for monitoring and supporting government recognition and investment.

These achievements directly align with the Australian and New Zealand Governments’ commitments to gender equality, inclusive economic growth, and private sector development, and with PHAMA Plus’s GEDSI strategy, which identifies key drivers for inclusion. The ornamental horticulture sector now represents a sustainable pathway for women-led micro-enterprises and inclusive economic development in Samoa.

Table 1 presents a snapshot of the impact of PHAMA Plus’s support to ornamental horticulture.

Table 1. PHAMA Plus Impact Snapshot

Outcome	Results
Women-owned businesses supported	5 leading nurseries, 70+ women growers initially engaged
New plants introduced	Over 5,000 orchids and 250 anthuriums imported; many now propagated locally
Incomes increased	Women reporting 2x–5x income growth; some now covering full household costs
New businesses formed	OLA established to sustain and scale the sector
Policy impact	Ornamentals recognised in 2025 Agriculture Census for the first time
Innovation	Homemade organic orchid food formulas, composting micro-businesses, and rental models emerging

Partner Profiles – Samoa’s Blooming Ornamental Horticulture Businesses

In Samoa, flowers are far more than decoration – they are integral to daily life, ceremony, and culture. Yet until recently, ornamental horticulture was neither recognised as part of the agriculture sector nor widely seen as a viable livelihood for women. That is now changing.

Agnes Florist & Tropical Plants is a family-run business that has been part of Samoa’s flower industry for more than 40 years. With support from PHAMA Plus, Agnes and her daughter Melanie received 400 new orchid plants, a mulcher, and promotional materials. While some losses occurred due to fumigation, the orchids quickly recovered and thrived, with the family increasing their stock from 400 to more than 500 plants through propagation.



Ornamental Plants and Orchids at Agnes Florist & Tropical Plants

“Before, we used to buy flowers from others for arrangements. Now we grow our own, the new varieties have created more opportunities,” says Agnes.

The mulcher has also enabled a new income stream. Compost previously purchased at WST48 per bag is now produced in-house, reducing costs and generating additional income through sales. The business now supports 3 generations, with Melanie’s husband and son involved in marketing and garden care, strengthening the family enterprise.



PHAMA Plus staff with Agnes (second from left) and Flo (third from left) at Flonior's expanded nursery, October 2025

At **Flonior's** Nursery, owner Flo has tripled her greenhouse space and increased her income 3 to 5-fold since joining the project. Starting with just 40 orchids, she now manages more than 500 propagated plants and earns between WST1,000 and WST2,000 per week, up from WST300–400 before PHAMA Plus support.

“Because of PHAMA Plus, I’m paying all the household expenses now,” says Flo. “My husband pays the mortgage; I pay everything else for our household of 10. He loves my flower business now!”



Orchids growing in Flonior's Nursery

Flo's business model combines plant sales with rentals. Each week she rents 15–30 plants to local churches and sells plants at markets on weekends. With growing confidence and capability, she is now importing her own plants from Thailand and aims to expand her stock to 2,000 plants in 2026.



New signage at Mama's Orchid Nursery developed with PHAMA Plus support

At **Mama's Nursery**, Matania and her elderly mother have added ornamentals to their vegetable seedlings business. With 550 orchids and 50 anthuriums provided through PHAMA Plus, and through diligent propagation, their collection of ornamentals has grown to over 700 plants.

“Selling just one orchid can bring the same income as 20 trays of vegetable seedlings,” says Matania. They now rent plants to churches and sell flower spikes for funerals, supplementing household income while teaching the next generation to care for and propagate orchids.

Euphrates Nursery is an ornamental horticulture business based at the former FAMA-OMONEA headquarters. Euphrates and her husband Tapuloloa have played a key role in pioneering Samoa's exotic ornamental plant sector. PHAMA Plus support in 2023 enabled the first successful, community-focused import of orchids, testing biosecurity, propagation, and market viability.

Building on this foundation, Euphrates has since independently imported orchids and other exotic plants from Thailand and Indonesia, expanded greenhouse infrastructure, and developed low-cost organic plant feed to improve propagation. "Imported plants cost around USD1.50 and sell locally for USD50–110", Euphrates said, demonstrating the sector's strong commercial potential.

Euphrates has contributed to sector leadership and learning, leading the initial trial and now establishing the Ornamental Lovers Association (OLA). Selling their flowers on site at a monthly market, Euphrates is looking to expand into ecotourism, turning an onsite office building into tourist accommodation, where the tourists can enjoy the peace, serenity and beauty of the nursery gardens. The business exemplifies how targeted support can unlock economic participation and catalyse the emergence of a new, inclusive agriculture sub-sector in Samoa.



Tapuloloa of Euphrates Nursery stands proudly in front of his growing nursery collection of exotic ornamental plants, October 2025

Mama Grace's Ornamentals and Plant Hire has also found a profitable niche in plant rental. Grace rents ornamentals to churches and government offices earning around WST2,000 a month in steady income. Her business became a lifeline after her husband's recent limb amputation and illness, providing an income and allowing her to work from home while also caring for her husband. "Without this business, we'd depend on our children overseas," she said. "Now we can manage on our own."

Grace has needed to be innovative to overcome local barriers such as limited availability of orchid food. She overcame this through trial and error, developing a high-quality homemade organic orchid food from banana water, eggshells, and vinegar, a formula shared among growers through peer learning.

Strengthening collective potential

The experience of Euphrates Nursery, a lead partner in the former FAMA-OMONEA alliance, demonstrates both the potential for and lessons of industry coordination in Samoa's emerging ornamental horticulture sector. Through PHAMA Plus-supported imports, growers built practical capability in quarantine compliance, propagation, and market engagement.

The initiative helped catalyse the formation of the Ornamental Lovers Association, bringing together motivated growers to coordinate sector growth and expand livelihood opportunities for rural women. As the Euphrates Nursery owner noted, "PHAMA Plus was like a springboard for the sector. We learned how to run a business, and now there is real demand for our plants."

Since initial support, several of the businesses have independently imported ornamental plants multiple times, expanded greenhouse infrastructure, and introduced beehives to support pollination. The inclusion of ornamentals in Samoa's national agriculture survey marks an important milestone in formal sector recognition and future policy and extension support.

Challenges and next steps

While the sector is gaining momentum, growers continue to face constraints. These include the cost and availability of pots, orchid feed and greenhouse materials; labour and land shortages; limited access to specialised training; and high freight costs. Fumigation requirements, while essential for biosecurity compliance and enabling decentralised import without requiring quarantine, have at times damaged imported stock, highlighting the need to refine import protocols and post-import plant care. Growers are already responding by testing improved post-import treatments and sharing lessons to reduce future losses.

There is also strong potential to strengthen collective marketing, establish regular urban markets, expand digital and online sales, and build linkages with hotels and tourism operators. With such strong domestic demand and market prices, these are considered critical next steps before considering higher-risk export pathways.

Through PHAMA Plus support, women across Samoa are transforming their creativity and love of plants into viable livelihoods. What began as a pilot has become the foundation of a new agricultural subsector, one that has the potential to enhance community wellbeing, diversify local economies, and position women as confident business leaders. As Agnes reflected, surrounded by orchids in full bloom:

"These flowers are our future. They make life beautiful, and they help us live."



Ornamental Plants and Orchids at Agnes Florist & Tropical Plants

Flonior's Nursery: Growing a Future, One Orchid at a Time



Orchids on display at the FAMA-OMONEA variety launch.

When visitors step through the gate of Flonior's Nursery in Samoa, they often pause, drawn in by the soft glow of orchid petals, the glossy red of Anthuriums, and the unmistakable sense that this small greenhouse is *alive* with possibility. For Flo, the woman behind this flourishing business, the journey to this moment began with a simple gift for nurturing plants, support from PHAMA Plus and a great deal of trust.

Flo had always loved plants. She knew how to find them, nurture them, and sell them, but exotic orchids and other ornamentals were usually far beyond her reach. Importing blooms was an unknown, perceived as expensive, and starting a collection big enough to grow a sustainable, profitable business felt impossible. That changed when she joined FAMA-OMONEA and received her first 40 orchids through PHAMA Plus's earliest support to the emerging ornamental horticulture sector.

Although her initial stock was small, she was dedicated and could clearly see her efforts would pay off. She sold some, propagated many, and learned quickly. Training from FAMA-OMONEA helped, but it was Flo's discipline and curiosity that truly set her apart. She fed each orchid carefully, monitored each new shoot, and soon began to see real potential.

When PHAMA Plus narrowed its focus to the most committed growers for further support under Phase 2, Flo stood out. Many of the early recipients had simply sold their plants or kept them for their homes, without building a business plan. Flo was different. She understood propagation, reinvestment, and the power of scaling, and believed she could grow a prosperous and rewarding business doing what she loved – growing flowers.

In the second phase, she received 330 additional orchids, 50 Anthuriums, and the materials she needed to grow properly: 8 greenhouse poles. With these, Flo expanded her greenhouse not once, but twice, tripling her growing space and turning her backyard into a thriving enterprise. The results have been remarkable.

Those 50 Anthuriums? Now more than 500. The orchids? Dozens of babies already in pots, with more emerging every week. With her collection multiplying, Flo has become both a caretaker and a guardian. Ornamental plants are high-value, and theft is a constant worry. She keeps her greenhouse locked when she's away and is only now beginning to display plants on trees along her fenced boundary, hoping they'll stay safe.

Sales have skyrocketed. Where she once earned WST300–400 a week, Flo is now making between WST1,000 and WST2,000. On weekends she sells at the Fuloleilei market, posting photos of the week's stock to Facebook each Friday night. On special occasions such as Mother's Day, White Sunday and Valentine's Day business surges.

Flo also rents plants to local churches, earning WST20 per pot each weekend, usually renting out 15–30 pots. The business has grown so much that Flo now covers all household spending food, water, petrol, power and school costs while her husband's salary covers the mortgage. Laughing, she admits: *"He loves my flower business now."*

Her 10-person household is part of this success too. Her son, Nofo, living with a disability and using a prosthetic leg, works beside her every day, replanting, lifting heavy materials and tending to the young orchids. The nursery is not just a business; it is part of their family rhythm.

With growing confidence, Flo is making plans once unimaginable. She is targeting 2,000 plants in her nursery. She now brings in plants from Fiji, New Zealand and Thailand with the proper permits; an ability gained through experience and connections nurtured during the project. Samoa Business Hub (SBH) has expressed interest in supporting her toward future exports to American Samoa. Flo knows that will require continued effort to build a strong domestic supply, and she is determined to get there.

For Flo, this is more than flowers. It is independence. Stability. A future she is shaping with her own hands. Standing between rows of orchids she once thought she couldn't grow, let alone afford, she thinks back to a previous donor program that was reliant on orchid seedling growth that took 3 years to mature, and in the meantime, the project support faded away. This time, she says, everything is different.

This time, she has a business plan. This time, she has momentum. This time, she has a greenhouse full of proof that opportunity, when nurtured, grows.



Nofo Stanley, of Flonior's Tropical Plants & Elei, standing outside his family's ornamentals business in Apia, Samoa

Case Study: Agnes Florist & Tropical Plants

Agnes Florist & Tropical Plants, a well-known florist and tropical plant nursery in Samoa, is run by Agnes and her daughter, Melanie. Their business supplies flowers and tropical plants for weddings, church ceremonies, funerals, cultural events, and hotel decorations. The family has built a loyal following but faced challenges common across the sector including difficulty accessing high-quality ornamental plants and limited knowledge of propagation techniques. They also reported pricing uncertainty amid fluctuating market demand; limited access to quality, affordable inputs such as pots, compost, fertiliser and commercially produced exotic plant food; and constraints in scaling production to reliably and consistently meet event and tourism sector needs.



Heliconia flowers at the Agnes Florist & Tropical Plants nursery.

Through PHAMA Plus support, Agnes and Melanie were able to access new plant and flower varieties and build a sustainable supply for their arrangements and for sale when the plants are blooming. PHAMA Plus support included:

- 450 plants, primarily orchids, through an initial round of 50 orchids imported by PHAMA Plus, quarantined with the Ministry of Agriculture and distributed by FAMA-OMONEA³. The second shipment of 400 plants was fumigated before shipment allowing them to be imported without quarantine and cared for at Agnes Florist & Tropical Plants.
- training in propagation and care of exotic orchids through FAMA-OMONEA and peer learning
- strengthening business skills, including support to develop marketing materials (business cards, social media presences and banners) to promote the business
- exploring new varieties and establishing a pathway and process for future importing of exotic plants.

These changes have begun to transform their operations. Their product quality has improved, they have more variety in their stock, and the plants are all healthy as they have learned how to care for and propagate them. Agnes says that through PHAMA Plus support she has built a consistent supply of flowers and ornamental leaves allowing her to continue to create enchanting floral arrangements. As demand has grown it has also become more specific, with customers wanting exotic plants and flowers in specific colours. Now Agnes can give them what they want. While she still sells plants at times, she is mainly using the supply to propagate and grow her stock or using the flowers in arrangements or selling single stems and keeping the plants. Agnes and Melanie used to rely on flowers and leaves from other growers for their arrangements, now they are growing everything themselves. Through this, Agnes and Melanie have increased their income. The increase in stock, and support from PHAMA Plus has resulted in better returns for effort and improved incomes for Agnes and her family.

Agnes and Melanie's journey demonstrates the potential for the ornamental horticulture sector to grow through small, sustained improvements, especially when women entrepreneurs are supported to lead.

³ FAMA-OMONEA was a member based ornamental grower group established to support the development of the ornamental horticulture sector in Samoa. PHAMA Plus partnered with FAMA-OMONEA to import an initial shipment of ~5,000 orchids from Thailand and trial propagation, growing and market selling. FAMA-OMONEA have subsequently disbanded and a new organisation – OLA (Ornamental Lovers Association) is being established to support the sector.

3.2 Revitalising Solomon Islands' Honey Industry

Gizo Women in Business Development Trust (GWIBDT) is a cooperative network established in Gizo, Western Province, Solomon Islands, to support women and their families through income generation, extension services, value addition, financial literacy, and supported savings schemes. Formed in 2007 and formally registered in 2013, GWIBDT works with 5 women's groups across Western Province: Madegugusu Women Association (Simbo Island), Ghanogga Rekoreko Association (Ranogga Island), Gizo Yellow Saving Club Women (Gizo Island), Dughore Women Association (Kolombangara Island), and Noro Saving Association (New Georgia Island).

GWIBDT has approximately 1,000 women members whose livelihoods depend on producing a wide range of crops and value-added products, including vegetables, peanut butter, virgin coconut oil, honey, soaps, organic fertilisers made from coconut husks, and seedlings for local farmers. The Trust's objective is to improve the socio-economic conditions of its members and their families through income generation, savings, skills development, and job creation.

GWIBDT's first Strategic Plan (2016–2021) focused on establishing an office and governance systems, achieving organisational sustainability, building member capacity, improving market access, supporting organic certification, and strengthening infrastructure. The plan identified sewing, weaving, beekeeping, virgin coconut oil, and fresh produce as priority livelihood opportunities and invested in training and support for women in these areas. A savings club was also established to strengthen financial literacy and encourage women to save and better manage household finances.

At the time the Strategic Plan was developed, beekeeping was a highly profitable and reliable source of income for GWIBDT members, generating employment and enabling value-added production such as beeswax candles, soaps, and lotions. However, in 2020 the arrival of the Asian bee and varroa mite devastated the industry in Western Province, wiping out an estimated 95% of hives almost overnight. This loss had a significant impact on women's incomes and their ability to support their families and pay school fees. As local honey supplies declined, prices increased sharply, with raw honey selling for up to SBD500 per kilogram in Honiara markets.

Despite this setback, GWIBDT recognised the continued potential of honey as a stable, non-perishable income source for its women members and their families, with earnings commonly used for education, clothing, and housing. Beyond honey, women can further increase profitability through value-added products such as beeswax candles, soaps, lip balms, and ointments. GWIBDT's savings clubs also enable members to build capital and financial resilience from their earnings.

In 2023, PHAMA Plus partnered with GWIBDT to revitalise the honey sector as a livelihood and income-generation opportunity for women and their families. PHAMA Plus invested in infrastructure, training, and technical support, including engaging a local technical adviser to deliver best-practice beekeeping training through farmer field schools. Training focused on hive management, pest and disease control, and basic honey processing. This capacity building support was complemented by the provision of hives, tools, equipment, and varroa mite treatments to strengthen local production and processing capacity.

Following a feasibility study that confirmed the business case for honey revitalisation and identified priority locations, training needs, and equipment requirements, a targeted program of support commenced. In 2024, PHAMA Plus reintroduced 20 new bee colonies (nucs) sourced from Ulawa Island in Makira Province and established them in Lengana Village. This close-knit community of around 20 families was strategically selected as it had previously hosted most of the area's hives.

In April 2025, 40 community members - 10 women and 30 men, including youth - received training in hive setup and management, queen grafting and colony splitting, varroa mite identification and integrated pest management, and best-practice harvesting and packaging. Theoretical training was delivered at Centenary Hall in Lengana Village, Simbo, with practical sessions conducted at a nearby apiary. Although the training primarily targeted women members of GWIBDT, socio-cultural norms

about women's participation in community events required many to send their husbands, or sons, to the training and train them in turn.



Participants of the training.

Despite many participants having prior experience in beekeeping, this was the first formal training they had received. Strong interest by women and youth highlights the sector's potential for inclusive economic opportunities. Participants reported increased confidence and technical skills, particularly in queen grafting and mite management, and felt better prepared to expand their hives using PHAMA Plus-supplied colonies. Training delivered in the local dialect removed communication barriers and improved understanding.

Following the training, participants demonstrated the ability to identify bee types (queen, worker, drone), recognise food sources such as nectar and pollen, understand hive components, identify bee life-cycle stages, assess hive entrance activity for early problem detection, and carry out queen grafting.

Mr Betti Lingisasa, a 60-year-old father of 5 is an apiarist from Nusa Simbo, a small island adjacent to Simbo, Western Province. Betti was very sad when the Asian Honeybees arrived in Simbo and started to destroy his hives, killing adult bees, destroying the nucleus and eating all the honey. The impact this had on Betti and his family was so significant, he said it brought tears to his eyes 'before we had honey to enjoy with family and community and income to support our lives, now we want that back'. Betti was relieved when the GWIBDT, which his wife is a member of, invited PHAMA Plus to work with them to revitalise the local honey industry. Through the partnership, Betti has been able to re-establish hives, and has learned how to manage pests and diseases such as the varroa mite. At the launch event of the new hives, the women of Simbo shared their thanks for the support. One woman highlighted what re-establishing the hives and revitalising honey production means, "the honey is helping us to earn money to pay for school fees and family needs."

Early results indicate strong knowledge uptake, renewed motivation, and clear potential to scale honey production sustainably. Ongoing follow-up, technical support, and infrastructure investment will be critical to consolidating these gains and supporting long-term growth as per GWIBDT's strategic plan.



Participants during the practical sessions.

3.3 Targeting Businesses for Empowerment Opportunities

PHAMA Plus deliberately targeted organisations that provided meaningful opportunities for the empowerment of women, youth, and people with disabilities. This included partnering with businesses that were led by women, youth and people with disabilities, as well as those providing significant employment and empowerment opportunities, or those choosing to do things differently from an inclusion perspective. Since the start of PHAMA Plus Phase 2 in 2022, PHAMA Plus has partnered with 24 women-led businesses and 19 businesses led by women and men together, providing them with access to support, resources, expertise and equipment to expand and grow their businesses. In addition, we partnered with 22 businesses that provide significant employment opportunities for women, youth and people with disabilities or have a genuine commitment to building an inclusive workplace.

This section will profile some of our partnerships and the impact they had on traditionally marginalised workers.

Breaking Ground: Mele Sisi and the Business of Tonga's Root Crops



Mele Sisi Finefeuiaki in her taro fields, Kolonga village, Tongatapu, Tonga

Mele Sisi Finefeuiaki is Tonga's only woman officially exporting root crops, leading in a sector long dominated by men, and doing so through years marked by disaster, disruption, and uncertainty. From her base in Kolonga village on Tongatapu, the 46-year-old founder and Chief Executive Officer of Lotopoha Export Trading has spent over a decade developing export pathways for frozen cassava, taro, yam, and breadfruit to New Zealand, Australia, and the United States. Since establishing the business in 2011, she has helped transition root crops from subsistence farming to a source of income for farming households.

The idea took hold while Mele was still working as a public servant. Each overseas trip sharpened her thinking. Back home, she saw good crops left in the ground or consumed through obligation alone. "Nothing was grown for money," she says. "It was for food. But I could see the excess, and I knew there had to be a way to turn that into income."

Lotopoha's first shipment of frozen cassava left for New Zealand in 2011. Australia followed in 2014, and the United States in 2018. What began with one buyer in each country expanded into several, particularly in Australia. Today, Lotopoha exports an average of 28 tonnes of mixed root crops each month, sourced from 18 farmers and loaded into refrigerated containers of up to 14 tonnes.

A key turning point occurred through Lotopoha's partnership with PHAMA Plus, which helped Mele to work directly with 112 farmers, both women and men, individually and in groups. Farmers were allocated 2 to 4 acres, along with support in land preparation, seedlings, and technical advice, and were assured a buyer at harvest.

“It gave farmers confidence,” Mele says. “And it gave me confidence, too.”

Then came a series of shocks. COVID. The Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha’apai volcanic eruption destroyed 80–90% of the planted land. Drought followed. Shipping delays and a shortage of refrigerated containers increased costs and threatened contracts. Labour migration reduced Lotopoha’s workforce from more than 50 to around 35–40.

“We are still recovering,” says Mele.

PHAMA Plus has worked with Mele Sisi to co-finance strategic capital and business planning investments needed for recovery and continued export opportunities.

In November 2025, Lotopoha reached a significant milestone with the opening of its purpose-built Packhouse, supported by PHAMA Plus. The facility offers a modern, food-safe environment for processing and packing root crops, protecting workers from the elements, improving hygiene and quality control, enhancing throughput capacity and strengthening compliance with export standards. With PHAMA Plus support, the Packhouse secured HACCP certification in January 2026.

“This Packhouse changes everything,” Mele says. “It strengthens the whole value chain, from the farm to export.”

Despite ongoing labour challenges, Lotopoha persists in planting, sourcing locally, and planning for growth. In a sector battered by climate shocks and global disruption, Mele Sisi’s leadership is contributing to the wellbeing of Tonga’s root crop sector, supporting its continued recovery and helping to sustain livelihoods. PHAMA Plus has helped to de-risk the investments required to make this happen, building business resilience and providing market certainty.

Her closing words are simple.

“Malo ‘aupito,” she says. “I’m just grateful to have had PHAMA Plus support and the strength to keep true.”



Mele Sisi Finefeuiaki and staff of Lotopoha Export Trading sorting cassava

Coconuts to Ice Cream: A Woman-Built Value Chain

From coconut trees on Rabi Island to supermarket shelves across Fiji, Kylie Daunoco is quietly reshaping how local products move from village to market, and who benefits along the way.

Kylie is the co-founder of Marama Niu, a women-led social enterprise that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic. It began simply: making coconut ice cream at home, posting about it online, and selling tubs through driveway pick-ups. What surprised her was how quickly it caught on. People weren't just buying ice cream. They were buying into something local, familiar and yet different.



Marama Niu Co-Founders Jojina Ah Yuk and Kylie Daunoco with a selection of their products

But Marama Niu was never meant to stop at dessert. From the outset, Kylie saw a bigger opportunity: adding value to Pacific agricultural products while creating income for rural communities. At the centre of that idea was coconut nectar, a traditional, low-glycaemic sweetener made from the sap of coconut blossoms.

That thinking led her to Rabi Island, home to Banaban communities, where extracting coconut nectar, or toddy, has long been part of everyday life. It was knowledge passed down through generations but never developed into a commercial product. Working closely with women's groups and, increasingly, with men, Marama Niu helped turn that tradition into a formal supply chain.

"Every bottle tells a story," Kylie says. "Of families harvesting sap, earning income, and using skills they already had to support their households."

As demand grew, so did the challenges. Informal systems could only go so far. Quality, food safety, and consistency became critical not only for customers but also for protecting the communities that supplied the nectar. Through a partnership with PHAMA Plus, supported by Australia and New Zealand, Marama Niu strengthened the handling of coconut nectar from tree to bottle. Together, they developed clear production guidelines, improved bottling, storage, and transport, and laid the foundation for meeting food safety standards.

"The moment nectar is tapped, it starts to ferment," Kylie explains. "So, getting the process right matters, for the suppliers and for the future of the business."

Today, Marama Niu produces vegan ice cream, coconut nectar, virgin coconut oil, and soaps, which are stocked in supermarkets and airport outlets. Sales have grown each year. More importantly, Banaban suppliers now earn a steady income from a product that remains firmly theirs.

For Kylie, innovation isn't about chasing trends. It's about doing something useful and bringing others with you.

"When women lead with purpose," she says, "the benefits travel. From the farm to the business, to the family."

From a driveway to store shelves, Marama Niu shows how tradition, when backed by trust and opportunity, can contribute to lasting livelihoods.

Gaston Chocolat – Where Inclusion Underpins Every Decision



Olivier Fernandez, Gaston Chocolat

Gaston Chocolat, a niche producer of high-quality cacao and chocolate established in Vanuatu in 2017, was founded with the intention to “do things differently.” From the outset, the company committed to employing over 60% of its staff from minority or marginalised groups - including people with disabilities, women, and youth who did not complete their school education. “We wanted to prove that inclusion does not come at the cost of profitability,” said its founder, Olivier Fernandez.

In response to the growing outmigration of ni-Vanuatu through seasonal worker programs, Gaston Chocolat designed its operations to offer meaningful, community-based employment to those often left behind. The founder saw it not just as a business decision, but as a contribution to strengthening Vanuatu’s social and economic outcomes. He believes local businesses have a responsibility to make the country stronger.

Since 2020, PHAMA Plus has been partnering with Gaston Chocolat to support quality improvements in growing and post-harvest management of cacao beans and to support certification required to maintain and access new markets. Through the partnership, PHAMA Plus supported Gaston Chocolat and their dried bean suppliers on Malekula, Santo and Epi to achieve HACCP (food safety) and B-Corporation certification, a third-party standard requiring companies to meet social sustainability and environmental performance standards. Both certifications are supporting Gaston to meet growing overseas demand for high quality Vanuatu cocoa and drive additional revenue for growers.

Today, 77% of Gaston’s employees are from minority groups, and over 370 cacao farmers, including farmers with disabilities, supply beans weekly from across the islands. The company employs people with physical and psychosocial disabilities. Adaptations that the company has made include redesigned fermentation systems, two-wheel wheelbarrows, lightweight harvesting containers, and accessible

ramps. These changes were designed with, and for employees, improving both inclusion and operational efficiency. Workers rotate through harvesting and pruning tasks in teams, reducing fatigue, lifting yields, and creating a stronger sense of value and belonging. Workers are treated equally, whether man, woman, with or without disabilities with a commitment to providing all workers with equal pay for equal work.

“At the very foundation of Gaston Chocolat is a commitment to employing a minimum of 60 percent of women at equal salaries to men,” Olivier added.



Cascading cocoa bean fermentation boxes developed with and for a farmer with physical disabilities to enable him to perform his duties efficiently and effectively. Source: Gaston Chocolat

The workplace reflects Vanuatu’s communal values. Staff bring their children and other family members they are caring for when needed, they work close to home and work hours are flexible. Employees can grow within the business, even becoming shareholders.

Through the B Corp certification process, the team has learned how inclusive practices create lasting impact. “I want our way of doing business to be the norm, not the exception.”

Gaston Chocolat’s advice to other businesses: inclusion isn’t a cost – it’s a foundation for impact, satisfaction, and shared growth. The growing success of Gaston Chocolat and its valued contribution to the community is evident. In 2025, Gaston entered a partnership with the Government of Vanuatu to access a large area of public land to expand cacao farming and production – evidence of the businesses social licence to operate.



4 Positive Workplaces: A New Way of Working

Pacific countries experience some of the highest rates of gender-based violence (GBV) globally, with profound costs not only to victim-survivors and their families, but also to economic security and national stability. Rates of intimate partner violence are consistently reported to be well above global averages – in some countries more than twice as high. Harmful social norms often condone violence against women, particularly where it is perceived as justified, or where a woman transgresses or challenges traditional roles, positioning women and girls as

acceptable targets of abuse. As a result, women face heightened risks to their safety and security at home, in the workplace, at markets, and while travelling.

These risks are especially pronounced in agriculture, a male-dominated sector where work is frequently located far from home, conducted early in the morning or late at night, or takes place in poorly lit environments such as markets, packhouses, and community roads. Concerns about personal safety act as a significant barrier to women’s participation in the labour market, limiting the roles they take up and undermining their economic empowerment. In Vanuatu, for example, women who earn their own income are 150% more likely to experience gender-based violence (ADB 2023), underscoring the complex relationship between economic participation and exposure to harm.

Legal protections against violence and harassment remain inconsistent across the region. Where legislation exists, it does not always extend to the private sector and rarely covers informal workers, who make up a large share of agricultural labour. The economic cost of GBV is substantial, affecting productivity, workforce participation, and intergenerational wellbeing. At the same time, the exclusion of women from economic opportunity continues to constrain growth. The World Bank (2025) estimates that Pacific Island Countries could realise, on average, a 22% increase in GDP - rising to as high as 30% in Fiji - over the longer term if gender parity in labour markets were achieved.

For agribusinesses, recruiting and retaining women workers – who play critical roles in production, harvesting, processing, and exporting Pacific commodities – is significantly easier when workplaces are inclusive, value diversity, and actively promote safety. Formalising these commitments through workplace policies and business practices provides clarity, empowers managers to respond when issues arise, and signals a zero-tolerance approach to violence and harassment. These measures also support compliance with national and international obligations, including ILO Convention 190 on the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work, which has been ratified in Fiji (2019) and Samoa (2024), and is under consideration in PNG and Vanuatu.

International trade is increasingly shaped by environmental, social, and governance (ESG) requirements, with compliance obligations cascading throughout value chains. For example, European importing companies with a turnover exceeding €450 million are required to demonstrate robust ESG performance across their supply chains. This includes gender equality and social inclusion targets such as minimum female representation on supplier boards and evidence that suppliers are taking active measures to prevent violence and harassment, including sexual harassment, in the workplace. Against this backdrop, PHAMA Plus partnered with private sector firms, government agencies, cooperatives, and civil society organisations to raise awareness of GEDSI, and to support the development and adoption of inclusive and safe workplace practices. The following section presents select case studies that illustrate how this work is strengthening value chain performance while advancing safer, more inclusive economic participation.

4.1 Kaiming Agro Processing – Valuing Women Workers

In Fiji, PHAMA Plus worked across 3 priority agriculture sectors: root crops, kava, and spices. Within the spice sector, PHAMA Plus focused on 2 priority commodities, ginger and turmeric, both among Fiji’s most important agricultural exports. Together, spices account for around 20% of Fiji’s total agricultural exports, with turmeric generating the highest export earnings.

Despite strong international demand, the sector faces significant structural challenges. Fiji’s soils are highly favourable for growing high quality ginger and turmeric, but access to high value international markets requires capital-intensive processing capacity. This represents a significant opportunity to unlock market potential through targeted investments.

PHAMA Plus partnered with Kaiming Agro Processing, Fiji’s largest processor of ginger and turmeric for export. Kaiming holds a franchise agreement with The Ginger People Co, one of the world’s largest distributors of ginger and turmeric products. The Ginger People Co is a multinational enterprise producing a wide range of ginger-based products, including candies, chews, beverages, sauces, and supplements. Kaiming produces approximately 40 value-added ginger and turmeric products at its factory in Fiji, which are then exported and distributed globally through The Ginger People Co. Each year, Kaiming procures and processes more than 1,500 metric tonnes of ginger and turmeric from Fijian farmers.

Kaiming employs over 150 workers, the majority of whom are women, with many holding supervisory, management, or technical roles. Most female employees travel daily from villages around Navua or Suva and are often the primary income earners in their households. High transport costs, adverse weather, and safety concerns contribute to absenteeism and staff turnover. Some workers also experience family challenges, including domestic violence, which affects wellbeing, attendance, and retention.



Women workers sorting ginger products at Kaiming Agro Processing

Labour shortages have been exacerbated by increased youth migration, particularly men, to Australia and New Zealand under labour mobility schemes. In 2023 alone, Kaiming lost 20 experienced male workers to the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility Program, replacing them largely with women employees. Kaiming is committed to employing staff that offer attention to detail and strong work ethic, and sought support to improve worker retention, wellbeing, and career progression.

Through the partnership, PHAMA Plus supported Kaiming to increase ginger storage capacity, upgrade existing processing and inspection equipment, procure new machinery, diversify markets through expanded certifications, and ultimately increase business throughput and ongoing growth capability. PHAMA Plus also supported workforce inclusion initiatives, including the construction of safe on-site accommodation for women workers and the adoption of inclusive business practices. This included development of a Workplace Domestic Violence policy and strengthened prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (PSEAH) measures.

4.1.1 Women's Accommodation Facility

The women's accommodation facility houses up to 8 female factory workers, providing safe, affordable accommodation for employees travelling long distances. It also functions as a temporary safe space for workers who are experiencing, or at risk of, domestic violence. Kaiming reports that the facility has improved attendance, performance, and safety, while significantly reducing the burden of daily travel for women employees.

As part of PHAMA Plus's impact assessment, a focus group discussion (FGD) was conducted with women workers residing in the accommodation facility to assess the impact of workforce improvement initiatives, including safety, accommodation, and workforce stability. The discussion also explored awareness and perceptions of workplace policies related to domestic violence and gender equality, disability equity and rights, and social inclusion (GEDSI).

Participants expressed very positive views of the accommodation centre. All 8 places were filled within one week of opening, reflecting strong demand. The facility is primarily used during the workweek and supports shared meal preparation, rest and recovery when unwell, menstrual health management, and peer support.

Before the facility was established, transportation was identified as a major challenge, particularly during heavy rain and flooding, making travel unreliable, costly, and sometimes unsafe. This contributed to stress, absenteeism, and financial pressure.

Key benefits reported by participants included:

- **Economic benefits:** The 8 women collectively save approximately FJD25 per day in transport costs. With accommodation provided free of charge, workers now only share grocery expenses, allowing them to retain more of their income.
- **Safety and security:** Participants reported feeling very safe at the facility, citing the presence of a night security guard and regular patrols. Overall safety was rated 5 out of 5 by participants.
- **Health and wellbeing:** Women reported reduced stress, lower exposure to weather-related travel risks, improved peer relationships, increased self-confidence, and better overall wellbeing. Some also noted improved family relationships, as childcare responsibilities during the workweek are now shared with partners and extended family.
- **Productivity and retention:** While workloads remained unchanged, participants reported improved attendance, reduced lateness, and greater focus at work. Reduced concern about income, transport and accommodation enabled higher productivity. Improved retention also allows Kaiming to build skills progressively rather than repeatedly training new staff.

Participants suggested further improvements, including installation of an on-site washing machine and expanding accommodation capacity. Demand now exceeds available spaces, and any future expansion should apply universal design principles to improve accessibility for persons with disabilities.

Overall, participants reported higher job satisfaction and motivation to remain employed at Kaiming. Secure, cost-free accommodation has reduced stress and improved attendance, particularly during adverse weather. While individual productivity levels remained broadly consistent, improved reliability and continuity of labour were identified as critical gains.

The FGD concluded that the women's accommodation facility, alongside inclusive business practices, has delivered strong social and economic benefits – reducing absenteeism, improving worker wellbeing, and strengthening workforce stability – while contributing to more inclusive and resilient value chains in Fiji's spice sector.

4.1.2 Inclusive Workplace Policies

Domestic and gender-based violence remains pervasive in Fiji, with around two-thirds of women reporting experiencing violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime and almost one in 4 experiencing violence currently. Many women endure repeated abuse, often involving multiple incidents within a single year. For employers like Kaiming, domestic violence directly affects worker wellbeing, attendance, and productivity.

With a predominantly female workforce, Kaiming recognised the need to move beyond ad hoc responses and proactively create a safe, supportive workplace. In partnership with PHAMA Plus, the company developed and adopted a Workplace Domestic Violence and PSEAH Policy that places the rights and safety of victim-survivors at the centre of its approach. The policy commits Kaiming to confidentiality, referral to specialist support services, and access to leave provisions for affected workers. It also adopts a zero-tolerance stance toward perpetrators of domestic violence and toward violence, harassment, and bullying in the workplace.

The policy clearly articulates the many forms domestic violence can take and is supported by practical awareness-raising measures. Posters on preventing violence against women and accessing support services are displayed throughout the processing facility and the women's accommodation centre. Staff and management were actively consulted during policy development, and PHAMA Plus provided targeted training to management and key personnel to support effective implementation.

Together, the accommodation facility and policy are beginning to address longstanding challenges. Women report feeling safer, more valued, and better supported, while Kaiming is already seeing reduced absenteeism, improved job satisfaction, and stronger staff retention. These initiatives are positioning Kaiming as an employer of choice – demonstrating ethical, socially responsible business practice that strengthens its public reputation and social licence to operate. They also help safeguard Kaiming's access to high-value international markets, including Europe, where compliance with labour, safety, and human rights standards is increasingly critical amid growing geopolitical and trade uncertainty.

Kaiming is not the only agribusiness benefiting from more inclusive workplace environments through partnership with PHAMA Plus. Inclusive facilities have also been made available at Road King Farms in Taveuni (worker accommodation) and Islands Own in Honiara, Solomon Islands (washroom facilities). Workplace policies have been strengthened at Lami Kava and Nature's Way Cooperative in Fiji, and at Quality Solutions, Aisen and LRT in Vanuatu. Across the program, businesses have engaged in GEDSI sensitisation training – challenging social norms and opening up important conversations about the value of more inclusive business cultures.

Empowering Women, Transforming Agri-Workplaces

A new accommodation centre constructed by Kaiming Agro Processing in partnership with PHAMA Plus is providing women workers with safe, secure housing, including controlled access and security systems. For women experiencing personal or family crises, the facility offers critical physical and emotional safety and has become an important factor in recovery and mental wellbeing. It provides a trusted alternative for women who feel unsafe at home or require space and time to recover from domestic violence.



Celebrating the launch of Kaiming's women's accommodation and inclusive policies on International Women's Day 2025.

Beyond physical infrastructure, the accommodation fosters holistic support. Informal peer counselling, shared advice, and opportunities for *talanoa* among residents create a supportive environment where women feel heard and valued. "These activities build a solid platform for our Domestic Violence Policy, ensuring that all women feel acknowledged, safe, and secure," said Sokoveti Dansey, Kaiming's Quality Control Officer.

For 58-year-old Latu Hola, the daily journey to work has long tested her resilience. Each day she travels a 90-kilometre round trip from Suva to Kaiming Agro Processing in Navua, where she works as a ginger cutter. High transport costs and long travel times often strained her limited income. On some days, Latu could afford the bus fare to work but not the fare home, forcing her to find temporary accommodation in Navua until she was paid.

That changed in March, when Latu and her colleague Mereseini Moceyawa (42) moved into the newly opened women's dormitory at Kaiming Agro Processing. The dormitory provides safe, affordable accommodation for women workers during the week, and also functions as a safe house for employees experiencing, or at risk of, domestic violence. The initiative reflects Kaiming's commitment to workplace inclusion, safety, and the prevention of domestic and workplace violence.

"The bus fares to and from work take up a significant portion of my income. I feel appreciated and heard in this workplace," Latu said, reflecting on how the accommodation has eased her daily burden. Her experience is echoed by Mereseini, who previously walked through flooded roads from Nakavu Village during periods of heavy rain to reach work.

Kaiming's Managing Director, Calvin Qiu, highlighted the business case for the initiative. "When ginger cutters are unable to make it to work, it directly affects our production," he said. The accommodation has improved attendance and workforce stability, ensuring continuity in daily processing and production while strengthening worker wellbeing.

"Relieved from the stress of housing insecurity, unsafe home environments, and high transport costs, women can now focus more effectively on their work," explained Sokoveti Dansey. "This has improved productivity, job quality, and overall wellbeing, while reducing sick leave and associated health costs." She added, "Providing safe and affordable accommodation is not simply a welfare measure; it is a strategic investment. It protects vulnerable staff, improves retention, and builds a supportive organisational culture. As a food processing organisation, Kaiming prioritises not only food safety and security, but also the safety and security of our workers."

4.2 Vanuatu Overarching Productive Sector Positive Workplace Policy

The Vanuatu Primary Producers Authority (VPPA) was established in 2018 under the VPPA Act to register productive sector businesses and support collaboration on issues critical to strengthening Vanuatu's primary production sector. VPPA operates under the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Livestock and Biosecurity (MALFB).

In 2023, PHAMA Plus and VPPA partnered to strengthen cacao market linkages, improve access to value-adding technologies, and lift product quality, while also building VPPA's institutional capacity. The partnership supported a range of activities, including trials of a Shared Factory Concept with Alternative Communities Trade in Vanuatu (ACTIV), testing solar drying technologies, establishing a provincial internship program, engagement in regional Codex standards, and strengthening VPPA's internal workplace practices.

Initially focused on developing a Workplace Domestic Violence Policy for VPPA, the collaboration evolved through consultation into a broader Positive Workplace Strategy. This momentum led to the development of a Positive Workplace Policy (PWP) incorporated into the Government of Vanuatu's Overarching Productive Sector Policy (OPSP), extending its reach beyond VPPA to the wider productive sector. A Positive Workplace is defined as one that values all people equally and provides a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment regardless of gender, disability, age, or ethnicity.

The PWP was endorsed by the Minister for Agriculture, Forestry, Livestock and Biosecurity and launched in Port Vila in June 2025 at a stakeholder workshop for government and industry representatives. The launch was supported by media outreach, social media promotion, and a practical briefing pack, including a roadmap for implementation. The policy now applies across the productive sector and sets an important precedent for embedding inclusive, safe workplace standards across government-led economic development initiatives in Vanuatu.



Launch of Positive Workplace Policy in Vanuatu



A thriving workplace starts with safety, respect, and inclusivity. We must build environments that empower, protect, and uplift everyone.

Ian Wilson
Honourable Minister for Agriculture,
Vanuatu.

4.2.1 About the Positive Workplace Policy

The PWP is a new addendum, designed to complement and support the OPSP 2020–2030. The OPSP provides the national framework guiding the development of Vanuatu’s productive sector, including crop, forestry and livestock production for both food and non-food products.

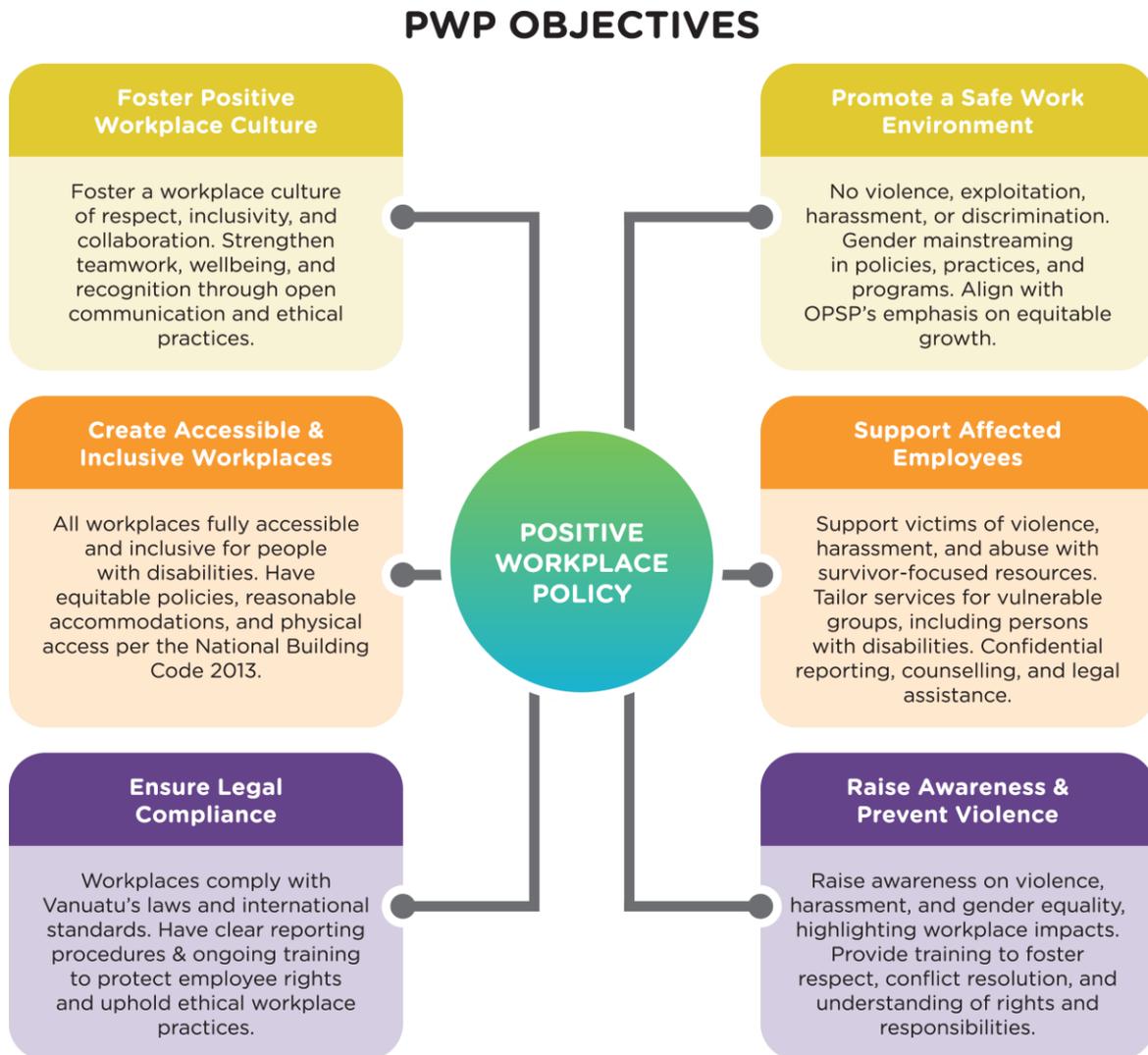
The PWP recognises that the growth and sustainability of the productive sector depends on the people who contribute to it. It establishes a framework to promote positive, inclusive and productive work environments across all sector stakeholders.

The policy is underpinned by 5 guiding principles (see Figure 6): inclusivity and equity; respect and dignity; empowerment and capacity building; health, safety and wellbeing; and accountability and transparency. It emphasises that positive workplaces are everyone’s responsibility, requiring stakeholders to take action within their sphere of influence and to monitor and improve workplace practices over time. The policy seeks to ensure safe and accessible workplaces; prevent and respond to violence and harassment; support affected employees; raise awareness; foster positive workplace cultures; and ensure compliance with relevant legal and regulatory requirements (Figure 7).

Figure 6. The Guiding Principles of the OPSP Positive Workplace Policy



Figure 7. The Objectives of the OPSP Positive Workplace Policy



4.3 Inclusion as a Practical Solution for Pacific Agriculture

Pacific agriculture is under pressure. Across the region, agribusinesses are grappling with labour shortages, fragile supply chains and rising uncertainty. As more people take up overseas work opportunities, farms and processing facilities are left short of hands, while smallholders struggle to maintain consistent production.

According to Setareki Macanawai, one potential solution has been hiding in plain sight.

“Farmers with disabilities are already involved in agriculture,” he says. “What we haven’t done well is remove the barriers that stop them from participating fully.”

That insight forms the basis of the Inclusive Agribusiness Value Chain Guidance Note, developed in 2025 by PHAMA Plus with Strategic Development Group. The Guidance Note is designed to help agribusinesses, farmers with disabilities, Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) and governments work together more effectively. Rather than treating inclusion as a social add-on, the Guidance Note positions it as a practical response to some of the most persistent challenges facing Pacific agriculture.

The Guidance Note was shaped through consultations with more than 100 people, across 5 Pacific countries, drawing on the experiences of farmers with disabilities, business managers with disabilities, agribusinesses and OPDs. Through surveys, interviews and workshops, the process focused on understanding how people with disabilities are already engaging in agriculture and where systems are failing them.

Setareki said what emerged was a consistent picture. Farmers with disabilities are active across production and, in some cases, processing – they farm, they innovate, they manage businesses. Many have a strong interest in expanding their involvement. Agribusinesses, for their part, are often open to inclusion but unsure how to do it well.

‘This is an area we really should be doing more in, but we didn’t know where to start. This process has demystified inclusion and helped us to directly engage with OPDs and to take simple immediate steps.’ - Mele Sisi Finefeuiaki, Root Crop Exporter, Tonga

“There was willingness on both sides,” Setareki explains. “That’s important. It tells us this isn’t about forcing change. It’s about creating clearer pathways.”

Those pathways are increasingly important. Labour shortages linked to labour mobility schemes are affecting production planning and regional growth. Inclusive value chains offer a way to respond, not by lowering standards, but by widening participation.

“People with disabilities make up around 16% of the Pacific population,” Setareki says. “Many are employable, many are interested in agriculture, and many are already contributing. If agribusiness wants stability and resilience, it makes sense to include them.”

Rather than prescribing a single model, the Guidance Note outlines practical preconditions for inclusion. These include accessible facilities, appropriate assistive technology, non-discrimination, community-based inclusive development and meaningful engagement with OPDs. None are presented as complex or high-cost interventions. Instead, they are framed as design choices that allow people to participate properly.

This thinking aligns closely with broader work on inclusive agriculture value chains in the Pacific. Experience shows that value chains are stronger when participation is broader. Inclusion improves labour availability, strengthens resilience and spreads risk, outcomes that matter as much to businesses as they do to households.

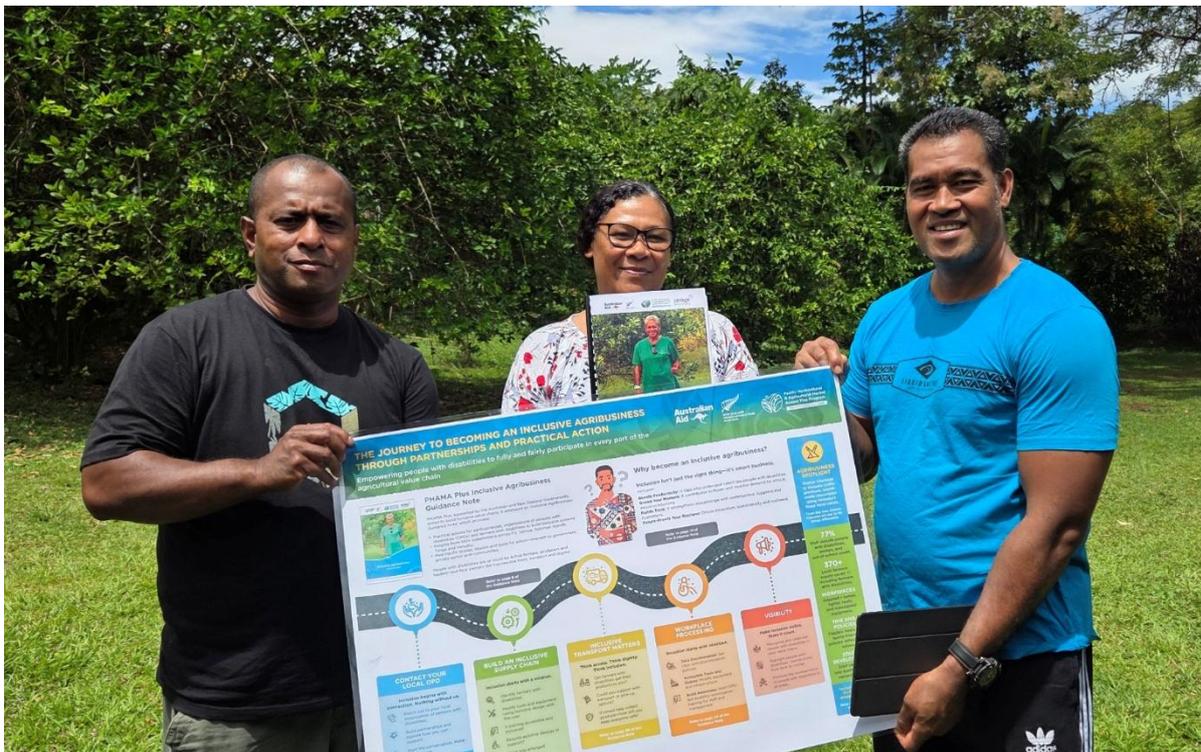
In Fiji, where disability legislation and national policy frameworks are already in place, the opportunity is particularly strong. Government funding for inclusion, combined with established OPD networks, creates an enabling environment for agribusinesses to act more intentionally.

“When agribusiness works with disability organisations, things change,” Setareki says. “You start to see people with disabilities not just as workers, but as suppliers, cooperative members, partners and even employers.”

The Guidance Note is deliberately designed for multiple audiences. It speaks to agribusinesses seeking reliable labour and a consistent supply. It supports farmers with disabilities looking for clearer entry points into markets. It provides governments with a practical way to translate policy commitments into action.

Above all, it challenges a long-held assumption that inclusion is a constraint on productivity. “Inclusive value chains are not about charity,” Setareki says. “They’re about recognising who is already contributing and making the system work better for everyone.”

As Pacific agriculture looks for ways to grow, adapt and remain resilient, that shift in thinking may prove essential, not by changing who agriculture is for, but by acknowledging who it has always depended on.



Tutu Training College staff holding up the Inclusive Agribusiness Guidance Note and poster

5 Lessons, Recommendations and Conclusion

5.1 Lessons and Recommendations

Inclusive value chains work better. They are more resilient to shocks, support food and nutrition security, strengthen livelihoods and build sustainable agricultural practices. Empowering women, people with disabilities and youth to participate at all stages unlocks innovation, increases productivity and creates sustainable livelihood opportunities for all Pacific people. However, inclusion doesn't just happen. Gender and social norms influence the roles people play, the agency and voice they have in decision-making and the recognition of their work. Power imbalances present barriers to full and equal participation and effort is needed to deliberately shift and redress these to grow an inclusive, sustainable and resilient agriculture sector in the Pacific.

1. **Family Farm Teams** has proven a practical and effective model for shifting power dynamics and social norms in farming families. This has not only contributed to improved well-being among families that have completed the training, but is also supporting them to think more commercially, diversify their farming, eat more nutritiously and to increase their incomes. It also offers a critical pathway to support transition from household to semi-commercial agriculture, a critical 'step change' needed for agriculture sector growth in Pacific Island Countries.

Recommendation: FFT should be explored as a core element of future Pacific agriculture programs, and is already being considered as part of future designs. It provides valuable learnings and foundational training for the adoption of new farming practices, including for climate and disaster resilience, and can support the transition from household to semi-commercial farming practices for improved productivity. FFT works best when it is delivered with organisations or businesses that have an existing remit and resourcing for farm extension activities, and is optimal when accompanied with support for participating families including mentoring, access to input materials (seeds, tools etc.) and linkages to markets. Pacific government ministries with responsibility for extension services may wish to consider incorporating the FFT model into their operations.

2. The deliberate **selection of sectors and partners** that provide opportunities for advancing GEDSI, such as the ornamental sector in Samoa, and ginger and coconut nectar in Fiji, and partners that are led by women, people with disabilities or youth, or that provide significant opportunity for employment of marginalised groups, should be prioritised for support. These groups often perform important roles in agriculture value chains, but their work is under recognised and they remain marginalised from decision-making. They tend to have less developed business networks and are often excluded from training, decision-making and control over land. Creating resources and assets through targeted support provides significant opportunity for innovation and growth, building resilient households, communities and nations.

Recommendation: Future donor support to build agricultural value chains should target sectors, and partners, that provide genuine opportunity for the empowerment of traditionally marginalised groups. Training should target diverse participants, engage both men and women where possible, be accessible and inclusive. Targets should be established, monitored and reported.

3. The benefits of FFT are further extended when the base FFT manual and workbook (originally created for PNG) **is contextualised to the national culture and context, and translated** into the national vernacular. PHAMA Plus published the Vanuatu FFT workbook in Bislama (2025). This workbook will support the VPPA when they commence rollout of FFT in 2026, and they have plans to print 10,000 copies of the Workbook for use nationally. PHAMA Plus has also translated the workbook into iTaukei for Fiji (2022).

Recommendation: Work with University of Canberra and local accredited FFT trainers to review, revise and contextualise the base FFT manual and workbooks for the country, culture and language in which training will be delivered.

- 4. Positive Workplace Practices** are supporting the inclusion of women, people with disabilities and other marginalised groups in agriculture value chains. Positive workplaces are those which take deliberate steps to make the workplace more equitable, safe and fair for all people. Sensitisation training, particularly where rights holder movement stakeholders are involved, builds awareness and creates an enabling environment for positive workplaces that address barriers to inclusion making marginalised groups feel welcome and supported. Gender based violence and workplace harassment continue to present barriers to women working in agriculture. Socio-cultural norms often condone violence against women and girls and shifting gendered roles can increase risk as traditional roles change. High rates of family and sexual violence, difficult travel and inclement weather contribute to worker absenteeism impacting productivity. Adopting practices including providing safe accommodation for women workers and developing policies that build inclusive, equitable workplaces increases worker satisfaction, reduces staff turnover and can contribute directly to business productivity. Such practices also help businesses to meet legislative requirements and client ESG requirements and establish businesses as employers of choice, a significant advantage in the context of a constrained labour market.

Recommendation: Quality, productive staff are critical for agribusiness success. However, many businesses need support to understand and address the barriers to inclusion in their workforce. Supporting businesses through training and the development of positive, inclusive workplace practices including safe accommodation and positive workplace policies improve worker satisfaction and retention and contributes directly to business productivity.

5.1 Conclusion: Inclusion as a Driver of Resilient Value Chains

Across the Pacific, PHAMA Plus has demonstrated that inclusion is not an add-on to agricultural development. It is a core driver of performance, resilience and market competitiveness. By intentionally integrating gender equality, disability equity and social inclusion at each stage of value chain development, PHAMA Plus has helped unlock new economic opportunities for marginalised groups while strengthening the systems and institutions that underpin sustainable trade.

From ornamental horticulture in Samoa to spice processing in Fiji and sector-wide policy reform in Vanuatu, PHAMA Plus has shown how targeted sector selection, inclusive partner engagement and practical workplace reforms can translate into tangible outcomes. Women, youth and people with disabilities are increasingly participating in value chains not only as labourers, but as growers, processors, innovators, leaders and decision-makers. At the same time, businesses and institutions are benefiting from more stable workforces, improved productivity, reduced absenteeism, stronger compliance with international market expectations, and enhanced social licence to operate.

The program's approach - grounded in market demand, enabled through partnerships, and reinforced by enabling policies – has delivered results at multiple levels. At the enterprise level, inclusive business practices such as safe accommodation, domestic violence policies and positive workplace strategies have improved worker wellbeing, retention and performance. At the sector level, collective action and industry coordination have catalysed new subsectors, strengthened market linkages and improved recognition of previously informal or undervalued industries. At the systems level, PHAMA Plus has influenced policy and norms, embedding inclusion into national frameworks that will continue to shape the productive sector long after program support concludes.

Crucially, these outcomes are mutually reinforcing. When women feel safe, valued and supported at work, businesses perform better. When marginalised producers can access technology, training and markets, supply becomes more reliable and competitive. When institutions model positive, inclusive

workplaces, they set standards that ripple across entire sectors. PHAMA Plus’s experience confirms that inclusive value chains are more resilient to shocks, better positioned to meet evolving market requirements, and more capable of delivering shared prosperity.

By breaking down barriers and ensuring equal opportunities, women like Flonior, Kylie, Mele Sisi, Latu, and Mereseini are becoming catalysts of change in Pacific agri-businesses and reshaping the agricultural landscape. These changes are improving value chain performance, providing equal opportunities for all and building livelihoods. Inclusion creates innovation by unlocking diverse capabilities and experiences and provides the building blocks for an agricultural sector that is climate resilient, provides food security and underpins prosperity and development for Pacific Island people. As PHAMA Plus’s support to Pacific exporters and institutions comes to an end, these performance stories offer clear evidence that investing in inclusion delivers measurable economic and social returns. By aligning GEDSI objectives with market outcomes, PHAMA Plus has contributed to agricultural value chains that not only grow, but endure, strengthening livelihoods, empowering communities, and building a more inclusive and resilient Pacific.



GEDSI training in Tonga

Annex 1: Evidence Matrix

Key Question	Key Finding	Evidence
<p>Family Farm Teams</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess how training can be best delivered to farming households - i.e. analyse advantages of training representatives of different organisations (exporters, government extension officers, non-government organisations, associations, community representatives, women’s empowerment groups) as trainers of FFT on rollout in communities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compare ToT models, including intensive courses (i.e. 3 days), non-intensive courses (e.g. one day per week), and follow up refreshers (e.g. top-up training on monthly basis) on learning for participants, and ease of coordination. <p>Effectiveness and Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand how FFT contributes to practice change (i.e. increase knowledge, attitudes, skills, aspirations and ultimately changes practices - KASA model) Examine the triple bottom line qualitative impacts of FFT: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Economic: Transitions from subsistence to semi-commercial farming, improved supply reliability for exporters/aggregators, understand impact to farming businesses/households. Social: Nutrition, food security/resilience, GEDSI impacts, co-op benefits, and influence on decision-making in households. Environmental: Soil health, pest/waste management, hygiene, farm planning and sustainable practices. Collect qualitative indicators of early signs of behaviour change and benefits at the household and sector level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FFT is most likely to be implemented where there is an organisational incentive. This might include market opportunities, funded training activities, or export contract opportunities. FFT training works well when delivered as discreet modules over a period of time, for example 6 weeks, with dedicated support such as provision of seeds, tools and ongoing extension support. This approach allows participants to digest the information and apply their learnings progressively. FFT provides learnings in practical, easy to absorb modules. Participants and trainers both reported significant practice and attitudinal changes immediately after completing each module. Farming activities were diversified (including with new vegetable crops), new practices and approaches (e.g. seed trays, irrigation systems and scheduled watering) have been adopted and families reported working and making decisions together, often for the first time. Men are now helping with domestic and care work, women are helping on the farm, and family income and savings have increased. By setting goals, adopting phased planting and planning their farming activities, the lives for many families transformed after completing FFT training. 100% of the Winsome Farm households that participated in FFT training reported improved household and family relationships and productivity. All families had benefited from increased, more consistent income which they have invested in priority items including farm inputs, infrastructure (solar array, new home, household appliances), school supplies and to pay for life celebrations including weddings. Before the training, the farmers stated they followed traditional practices, without much forethought. By establishing joint goals, planning their farming and having regular access to extension support and market, families are now building a pathway to resilience and economic empowerment. 	<p>FFT Mini-Evaluation</p> <p>FFT Feedback</p> <p>Key Informant Interviews and FGDs with FFT graduates.</p> <p>An impact assessment (IA) of the 20 farming households supported by Winsome Farms is scheduled for March 2026. The findings of this will be included in the PHAMA Plus Monitoring and Results Measurement (MRM) update in May 2026.</p> <p>Winsome Farms Data and report provided by Pio Bosco. Focus Group Discussion with farmers in September 2025.</p>

Key Question	Key Finding	Evidence
<p>Inclusive Business Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↳ To what extent has PHAMA Plus supported increased awareness and commitment of partners to GEDSI and inclusive workplace practices? ↳ Assess whether the development of infrastructure (women’s accommodation, sanitation facilities, accessible sites); policies (Workplace and Domestic Violence Policy, Positive Workplace Policy, Child Protection Policies, PSEAH policies) and accreditation (B Corp) has supported improved working conditions and employee satisfaction for women (and other) workers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lessons learned and recommendations for future approaches. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PHAMA Plus has provided GEDSI sensitisation and awareness training to more than 220 participants from 15 partner organisations. Feedback has confirmed the value of this training in raising awareness and building understanding and commitment to GEDSI. • GEDSI sensitisation training works best when it is tailored to the local context and culture. Engaging rights holder organisations, that bring lived experience, is particularly powerful for businesses. • Sensitisation and awareness training builds an authorising environment for GEDSI within businesses. • Connecting businesses and OPDs provides opportunities for Talanoa and demystifies disability inclusion, equity and rights. PHAMA Plus found that consultations for the Disability Inclusive Guidance Note was, in many cases, the first time many business owners had spoken to people with disabilities about their participation. They indicated despite wanting to do more, before the consultation process they didn’t know where to start. By speaking with people with lived experience of disability in the agriculture sector, they were able to start making simple changes to their processes and facilities to be more inclusive. Workers’ attitudes changed through training and sensitisation and stigma and discrimination reduced. 	<p>PHAMA Plus partnership agreements and reports.</p> <p>Training participant feedback.</p> <p>PHAMA Plus PCC 2024 presentations (Gaston Chocolat, VPPA)</p> <p>PHAMA Plus Inclusive Agribusiness Guidance Note Consultation Feedback.</p>