# 2020-21 FIJI Development Program Progress Report



## CONTEXT

Australia and Fiji share a strong and enduring bilateral relationship underpinned by the *Fiji-Australia Vuvale Partnership.* Australia’s development program supports our shared ambition to build a Pacific region that is secure strategically, stable socially and economically, and sovereign politically.In 2020-21, Fiji faced its worst fiscal crisis since independence due to ongoing border closures and a lack of tourism revenues. Since April 2021, Fiji has been battling a second wave of COVID-19 infections, following almost one year without community transmission. **Fiji also contended with two Tropical Cyclones** which caused hundreds of millions of dollars in damage to infrastructure and livelihoods.

The Government of Fiji has been responding to a surging outbreak of the COVID-19 Delta variant since April 2021. It was quick to implement response measures including increasing testing and tracing capabilities, isolating positive cases and close contacts, restricting international and inter-island passenger travel and imposing containment zones, curfews and localised lockdowns. Transmission was initially contained to the main population centres on Viti Levu, however community transmission became increasingly widespread, with **per capita transmission rates in July and August 2021 amongst the highest in the world**. According to Government of Fiji reporting, as of 1 August 2021, Fiji had recorded 31,443 cases during the outbreak since April 2021 and according to the World Health Organisation a cumulative total of 41,830 COVID‑19 cases since March 2020.

Rolling out the COVID-19 vaccine has been a Government of Fiji priority, while managing risks and reducing (rather than eliminating) transmission rates. Fiji’s national vaccination program commenced on 10 March 2021 and has been enabled in large part by Australia’s delivery of vaccines. We committed to supply one million doses and, **as of 31 August, had supplied 861,000 doses to Fiji.** As of 31 August, 95.9 per cent of Fiji’s eligible population had been vaccinated with one dose of COVID-19 vaccine while 47.6 per cent had been fully vaccinated.

Fiji’s tourism-dependent economy continues to be one of the hardest hit economies globally. **After shrinking 15.7 per cent in 2020,** the Asian Development Bank (ADB) forecasts a further GDP contraction of five per cent for 2021. In April 2021, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) forecasted a fiscal deficit of 14.6 per cent of GDP (while Fiji’s budget estimates released in July show a net deficit of 16.2 per cent of GDP). Fiji’s budget anticipates the start of a slow economic recovery based on the assumption that tourism will increase significantly in 2022. If this does not occur as expected, Fiji’s economic recovery will be significantly hampered.

## AUSTRALIA’S RESPONSE and PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Australia’s development program has played a critical role supporting health, education and skills, and private sector recovery programs, as well as disaster relief in the wake of tropical cyclones and direct budget support to bolster social protection schemes for the most vulnerable Fijians. Despite a difficult operating environment, most investments were able to adapt their activities to suit the COVID-19 context, while still making progress towards expected outcomes.

### Health Security

**Australia is Fiji’s largest public health partner** and has responded to Fiji’s most acute health needs and priorities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our support has built institutional capacity, strengthened the health system, helped improve patient care (especially maternal, new-born and child health), improved water, sanitation and hygiene, and supplied critical vaccines.

In the reporting period and in response to a request from the Government of Fiji, **Australia deployed three Australian Medical Assistance teams** with embedded New Zealand health specialists to support Fiji's emergency health response to the COVID‑19 outbreak. Teams worked alongside Fiji’s Ministry of Health and Medical Services staff and frontline health workers, with a focus on infection prevention and control, training and public health support. Australia also supported Fiji’s Centre for Disease Control to enhance and strengthen testing and tracing capabilities, including through the recruitment of laboratory staff, and procurement of personal protective equipment and medical supplies.

Australia has committed $16.9 million over three years (2020-23) for COVID-19 vaccine access in Fiji, including delivery support and vaccine procurement, drawing on Australia’s **Regional COVID-19 Vaccine Access and Health Security Initiative (VAHSI). Through VAHSI, Australia is supporting Fiji and other Pacific island countries to achieve comprehensive vaccine coverage**. Australia has committed to share one million COVID-19 vaccine doses and associated consumables with Fiji. This is in addition to Australia’s support for the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) Advance Market Commitment totalling $130 million. As at 30 June, this mechanism had delivered 60,000
COVID-19 vaccine doses to Fiji.

In the reporting period, we also supported Fiji to prepare for its national vaccine rollout. Specific activities have included support for the electronic medical record Tamanu which will form part of Fiji’s immunisation register and development of a nation-wide communication strategy to address vaccine hesitancy. In addition, Australia **is providing technical advice to support Fiji’s vaccine rollout** through the National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance and the Therapeutic Goods Administration.

### Stability

Fiji’s tourism shutdown has resulted in wide-spread job losses, leaving around 115,000 Fijians newly unemployed or on reduced hours. A third of these are women. Our support has focussed on strengthening Government of Fiji’s national policies and institutions, including the national social protection system, gender equality and education.

In the reporting period, Australia’s **Pacific Women** program supported the Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre ($1.5 million) to boost counsellingservices available to women facing domestic violence. The Centre saw both an increase in new clients and those seeking repeat counselling sessions. Additionally, the **Pacific Women** program supported the Fiji Women’s Fund ($2.3 million) to provide funding and capacity development support to women’s groups, networks and organisations in Fiji to expand and enhance their work on women’s empowerment and gender equality.

Through Australia’s $25 million **Fiji Education Program** (2017-22), Australia is supporting Fiji’s Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts’ strategic priorities including teacher preparation and development, inclusive education, and civil service reforms in the education sector. In the reporting period, the Australian-supported Establishment Control Panel in the Fiji Education Management Information System (FEMIS) was made fully operational leading to significant improvements in efficiency and accountabilities in Fiji’s system of school grants (88 per cent of secondary schools completing bank reconciliations for grants in FEMIS). With schools closed since April 2021 due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the education program pivoted program resources to respond to remote learning requirements including the development of radio programs.

In addition, we supported the **Australia Pacific Training Coalition**, in partnership with the Fiji Higher Education Commission and Fiji National University to develop a first-of-its-kind guideline on remote training delivery in a crisis for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions in response to the impact of COVID-19 which has now been endorsed and adopted by TVET institutions.

Australia acted quickly to respond to the devastation caused by Tropical Cyclone Yasa (December 2020) which caused an estimated $326 million in damage, and Tropical Cyclone Ana (January 2021) which brought intense rainfall and extensive flooding. Following Tropical Cyclone Yasa, **four Australian Defence Force (ADF) flights delivered humanitarian supplies, and HMAS Adelaide was deployed for four weeks to support the rehabilitation of damaged schools, enabling 32 schools to reopen quickly**. A further three ADF flights delivered humanitarian supplies following Tropical Cyclone Ana. Australia also supported Fijian Government longer-term recovery efforts focused on school reconstruction. In addition to the ODA figures in the Program Budget table on page one, we provided $19.5 million in emergency relief and recovery support in response to tropical cyclones in the reporting period.

Australia’s Department of Home Affairs engaged with Fiji’s border and health agencies on **safe border re-opening**, through workshops; reviewing international airport arrangements; briefing Fijian agencies on airport operations and occupational, health and safety for border officers; and by helping establish online visa processes, including collection of health information. In the reporting period, we supported the establishment of Air and Sea Cargo targeting capabilities through the use of the Pacific Small Craft App to record small craft movements and quarantine status and implemented training in enforcement operations and biosecurity risks.

Australia supported the development of **climate-smart farming practices** for root-crop farmers through PHAMA Plus. Through the Governance for Resilient Development Program we supported the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management to more effectively integrate climate and disaster risk into local community development projects.

### Economic recovery

Australia is committed to supporting Fiji through the economic challenges caused by COVID-19, and we moved quickly to respond and pivot our support to initiatives that directly contributed to Fiji’s economic recovery. **Our support helped to address immediate fiscal needs and promoted private sector recovery**.

In the reporting period, **Australia provided Fiji with $83.5 million in budget support**,$74 million of which was through the **COVID-19 Response Package for the Pacific and Timor-Leste**. This enabled Fiji to maintain expenditure in key areas like health and social protection, and strengthened Fiji’s fiscal position and debt profile, better positioning Fiji’s economy for recovery. We targeted $20 million of this budget support to covering payments to three Government of Fiji social welfare programs: the Poverty Benefit Scheme, Care and Protection Allowance, and Disability Allowance directly benefiting vulnerable Fijians.

Under the**Australia-International Finance Corporation (IFC) Partnership**, Australia supported the Government of Fiji to explore and respond to the economic impacts of COVID-19, chiefly in Fiji’s tourism sector. In July 2020, the IFC delivered a survey of businesses to understand the impact of COVID-19and to determine new business needs for economic recovery. The survey received over 3,500 responses from businesses across Fiji. Its findings shaped practical recommendations for Fijian businesses, government agencies and development partners on how to promote private sector recovery, which helped inform economic policy actions.

The Australian-funded **Market Development Facility** supported Investment Fiji to promote Fijian exports and investment abroad in the post-COVID context. It allowed the Government of Fiji to develop the Fiji Exporters Guide, which provided new and existing exporters access to better information and help understanding what is required to grow and sell produce for export.

## Annex 1: Progress against COVID-19 Response plan results indicators

### Health Security

| **Key Results Indicators** | **Progress/Result** |
| --- | --- |
| New or improved therapeutics, diagnostics, vaccines or additional equipment, to which Australia has contributed, are accessible in Fiji | 377,600 COVID-19 doses were delivered to Fiji, including 57,600 COVAX AstraZeneca (AZ) and 320,000 Australian-produced AZ.Provided information and computer technology equipment, megaphones, radios and rental vehicles for Fiji’s Incident Management team.Supplied equipment to set up 10 COVID-19 isolation centres, including: 25 marquees with flooring, 250 mattresses, 599 sets of sheets, 1,600 masks, 25 thermal guns, 151 stretcher beds, a generator and 5 commercial washers and dryer.Other therapeutics supplied included 2,500 litres of hand sanitiser and disinfectant, 500 thermal guns, 12,000 surgical masks, other personal protective equipment, ambulance costs, and intravenous immunoglobulin (to prevent blood clots).  |
| Strengthened Fijian health system including preparedness for health emergencies at Colonial War Memorial Hospital | Supported training for 200 health workers (160 women) in COVID-19 vaccine procedures, protocols and safety requirements. Support also provided for primary screening and care demonstration training for 52 community organisation and Ministry of Health and Medical Services support staff (45 women) on use of the Tamanu app to conduct digital screening. In response to Tropical Cyclones Yasa and Ana, supported the establishment of three women-friendly health spaces and the deployment of six retired Fijian midwives to severely affected communities.  |
| Increased efficiency of procurement processes to ensure consistent supply of medicines and other health commodities | Supported a range of measures, including: the development of the Fiji National Vaccine Deployment Plan; the procurement of medical supplies and lab consumables for Fiji’s Centre for Disease Control, and personal protective equipment and flu vaccines for frontline health staff; and supply of 120 computer tablets for contact tracing. |
| Women and men, girls and boys are provided with emergency assistance in conflict and crisis situations, such as major cyclones | Supported emergency assistance for 75,329 people (37,074 women and girls) in response to Tropical Cyclones Ana and Yasa and the economic downturn caused by COVID-19. This included food rations and backyard garden support for 5,197 households.Through Empower Pacific program, supported 2,757 people (1,666 women) with counselling and social services, including 73 women and 63 men with disabilities. Supported the provision of water tanks, solar panels, menstrual health management supplies, latrines and latrine houses. This enabled the reopening of schools and benefitted 39,245 students (18,744 girls, and 55 girls and 69 boys with disabilities). |

### Stability

| **Key Results Indicators** | **Progress/Result** |
| --- | --- |
| Numbers reached with new or improved social protection programs, including remote communities | Supported social protection schemes that benefited over 102,000 people. |
| More women and girl survivors of violence in Fiji receive services such as counselling | Supported 1,305 new clients to access counselling services, including over 2,200 repeat counselling sessions. Under the Fiji Women’s Fund supported 32 initiatives that reached over 18,600 people, mostly women and girls. |
| Number of additional girls and boys enrolled in school | Supported 3,029 additional school enrolments (1,474 girls), including 79 students with disabilities.  |
| Number of verified students with disabilities in – Fiji Education Management Information System (FEMIS) | Supported the use of FEMIS to identify 1,419 (511 girls, or 36 per cent) as MEHA-verified students with disabilities. |
| Evidence Australian support has improved border control measures | Supported the training of officers from the Fiji Revenue and Customs Service (FRCS) and Fiji Immigration to improve, in the COVID-19 context, border operations and procedures. This included: training of 30 officers (15 women) on use of the Pacific Small Craft App; participation of 60 officers (30 women) in a COVID-19 workshop; training on operational safety for Immigration Detention and Removal Operations for 10 officers (5 women); and training on document examination and imposter detection for 30 officers.Provided ICT equipment to FRCS to undertake targeting and profiling activities. Support also provided to Fiji Immigration to digitise its processes and support online services.  |
| Evidence of strengthened and effective coordination during disaster responses (including across civil society organisations and Government) | Following Cyclones Yasa and Ana, supported the Fiji National Disaster Management Office to restore emergency communication capabilities. Supported the National Emergency Operations Centre, including to update its standard operating procedures.  |

### Economic Recovery

| **Key Results Indicators** | **Progress/Result** |
| --- | --- |
| Examples of Australian-funded technical advice in stimulus measures and longer-term economic recovery policy and planning, including for infrastructure  | Supported business surveys to assist Fijian businesses, government agencies and development partners on economic recovery and to inform the Fijian Governments economic policy actions. |
| Australian budget support, aligned with other development finance, supports the Government of Fiji to maintain macroeconomic stability and achieve public financial management milestones | By providing $83.5 million in budget support, supported Fiji to meet critical expenditures in a challenging fiscal environment. Despite a major downturn in revenues, this assisted Fiji to maintain expenditure in key sectors like health. Budget support was linked to policy reforms that: encourage private sector-led economic recovery; enhanced climate, disaster and social resilience; and continued strengthening of public financial management. |
| Number of women entrepreneurs provided with financial and/or business development services | Supported 266 women to access financial/business development services. This included: providing financial and business development advice to 218 women entrepreneurs; social media promotion in support for 23 women-run Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs); and support for access to new sales channels for 13 women-led MSMEs. |
| Examples of partnering, with private sector and others, to ensure supply lines are open | Under a pharmaceutical and medical consumables supply chain project, key results included:* a new drug logistics management information system to improve medicines availability at primary health facilities and reduce wastage of expired stock, resulting in improved patient care, cost-savings and environmental benefits; and
* a ‘Tupaia’ survey of 227 health facilities produced previously unknown baseline medicines availability data at national, divisional and individual primary healthcare facility levels.
 |
| Number of Awards in each intake focused on skills supporting health systems and services, economic management and public sector reform | Thirteen Australia Awards (10 women) offered for the 2021 intake in the priority areas of: health system strengthening (9), economic management (1) and public sector reform (3).  |

## Annex 2: Investment Performance ratings

| **Investment Details** | **Year** | **Effectiveness** | **Efficiency** | **Gender Equality** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Fiji Program Support Facility** | 2021 | 4 | 4 | 3 |
| Investment duration: 2016-22; Budget: $84.4m  | 2020 | 4 | 5 | 3 |
| **Pacific Women Fiji Country Plan** | 2021 | 5 | 4 | 5 |
| Investment duration: 2014-22; Budget: $25.0m  | 2020 | 5 | 4 | 5 |
| **Inclusive Economic Growth (Market Development Facility)** | 2021 | 4 | 5 | 5 |
| Investment duration: 2017-22; Budget: $17.5m  | 2020 | 4 | 5 | 5 |
| **Supporting Private Sector Development in Fiji** | 2021 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Investment duration: 2016-21; Budget: $15.1m | 2020 | 5 | 5 | 4 |

**Definitions of rating scale**:

Satisfactory (4, 5 and 6)

6 = Very good; satisfies criteria in all areas.
5 = Good; satisfies criteria in almost all areas.
4 = Adequate; on balance, satisfies criteria; does not fail in any major area.

Less than satisfactory (1, 2 and 3)

3 = Less than adequate; on balance does not satisfy criteria and/or fails in at least one major area.
2 = Poor; does not satisfy criteria in major areas.
1 = Very poor; does not satisfy criteria in any major area.