

Project Compassion helps Manaini grow a healthier future for her family

In rural northern Fiji, 44-year-old mother Manaini has spent years struggling to support her children on an income that barely covered daily essentials. But with support from Project Compassion and Caritas Australia's local partner, FRIEND (Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprises and Development), she is now growing a safer, healthier, and more sustainable future for her family.

Almost one quarter of Fiji's population lives in poverty, with rates even higher in remote villages. For families like Manaini's, every dollar counts.

"The things I worry about the most is my kids' education. The requirements that need to be met are hard for me to achieve with my daily income," said Manaini.

Low income also meant the family relied on what they could grow producing plain, limited meals that lacked nutrition, as store-bought food was too expensive. These challenges are part of a wider health crisis across Fiji. Many low-income families are forced to buy cheap, high-calorie foods, contributing to soaring rates of diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, and cancer. Four out of five deaths in Fiji are now linked to these preventable illnesses.

At night, the village was also in darkness, leaving children and elderly residents unsafe.

Thanks to the support of Project Compassion, things began to change for Manaini and her community. Through FRIEND's food processing training, she learnt to make flour from cassava, taro and breadfruit, turning leftover crops into nutritious meals and reducing household expenses.

She received seeds to diversify her home garden and learnt to make organic fertiliser and pesticides from local plants. With her women's group, she now bakes cakes and pies from root-crop flour to sell at a roadside stall, creating new income to support her children's education.

The program also supplied solar lights for the village, ending unsafe nights lit only by kerosene lamps. Now, children can play safely, and community members can move around freely after dark.

"The project as a whole has a lot of value in my life as it totally changed the life of my family and even the community," Manaini said.

Along with your generous support, this program is also supported by the Australian Government, through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).

Find out more about Manaini and watch her story here: [Manaini's Story](#)

Those wanting to support Project Compassion, download resources or fundraise can visit <https://www.caritas.org.au/project-compassion>

To donate, look for the Project Compassion donation boxes, visit the website, or call 1800 024 413 toll free.

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Media contact: Tara Harvey 0484 002 021 tara.harvey@caritas.org.au or caritasmedia@caritas.org.au