

A Way Out of Poverty

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After a failed marriage, which produced three children, life was getting harder and complicated for Setaita Tinai.

With her precious children — two daughters and a son — to look after, Tinai had to find a way to support the family.

Necessity, they say, is the mother of invention.

"Being divorced and having to care for my children is what motivated me to get into business," said Tinai, who hails from Naibita in Tailevu but who was born and raised in Lautoka.

"I didn't have permanent work at the time and I thought, why not start a small business to help me support myself."

After attending a course organised by the South Pacific Business Development Microfinance (Fiji) Ltd from which she received a certificate, Tinai was empowered and confident enough to venture into the business world.

Initially it wasn't a walk in the park, as she tried getting into businesses that seemed profitable at first. Tinai tried her hand at selling DVDs along Terry Walk but this venture didn't become fruitful after the issue of copyright emerged.

"When the copyright law was gazetted I decided to abandon the business in search of something else."

People normally bank on their natural skills in situations like this and this is exactly what the doting mother did when she had nowhere else to turn to.

Tinai had spent time in Lawai Village in Sigatoka where she acquired some skills working with clay pottery.

Lawai is one of a number of villages in Fiji that make traditional Fijian pottery.



Setaita Tinai at her jewelry stall along Nubukalou Creek in Suva.

She drew from this experience to start making pottery jewelry that included necklaces, earrings and small trinkets like clay turtles.

"I opened my stall in 2011 and I have been running it ever since.

"I like this business because I am my own boss. Sometimes it can be slack but not all the time."

Business picks up whenever a large cruise vessel is in port and like other vendors in the Suva area this is a time they all keenly anticipate.

I found Tinai sitting patiently at her stall beside Nubukalou Creek, polishing her wares and waiting for customers with a smile on her face.

Tinai said whenever large orders for jewelry like earrings and necklaces came in, her daughters normally helped her with the work at home, making this business a true family affair.

I left Tinai musing over what she told me earlier — "Whatever goals you set in life — go for it".