

VAVA'U PEARL ASSOCIATION

SUCCESS STORY #2



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Vava'u Pearl Farm Association

My love for pearls developed out of my love for my brother. Growing up, I was always close with my brother 'Alani and followed him everywhere, especially when he went out to sea. 'Alani was a construction worker but he was also a fisherman. He made a living through construction work but he loved going out to the sea more. In 2002, 'Alani became a pearl farmer here in Vava'u. When he passed away in 2014, I was devastated and wanted only to see how I could continue his work and legacy and to preserve what he loved most.

I thought hard. I had no construction skills so that was out of the question. As a woman, my fishing capacity was limited, and so, that left me with the only last option which was to carry on his pearl farm. I already loved going out to sea and the work seemed simple enough. At the time, I was running a scuba diving business with my husband called Beluga diving. This would make it so much easier for me to access my pearls.

In 2015, I started collecting the needed tools for my pearl farm. I joined the Vava'u Pearl Farm Association in May 2016. Since then, I became overwhelmed with all the benefits I received as a woman pearl farmer. I joined trainings offered by the Ministry of Fisheries on how to take care of my pearls. I did all I could to learn from 2016 up to 2018. In those 3 years, I focused entirely on developing my pearl farm and did not yet think about making money yet. I was purely motivated to succeed the work that my brother did and during this time, I had not yet come to know how much my pearls were worth. I was not prepared for the outcome when my pearls were finally ready to harvest.

In 2019, I met an Australian volunteer who came to work here in Vava'u and who encouraged me to start selling my products. I started selling from July to October 2019. Within four months, I was able to get enough money to buy a boat from New Zealand to help me monitor my pearl lines. I was also able to buy the equipment needed for me to make my products; a sander, a grinder and a polishing machine, all within the amount I received in just 4 months of sales.

I'm grateful for all the help I have received from the Ministry of Fisheries to maintain and sustain my pearls. The trainings provided are very useful in enriching our knowledge of how to properly take care, seed and market our pearls. I couldn't have done this work without all the skills I learned as a member of the Pear Farm Association. I do encourage anyone, especially women to look into pearl farming as a means of livelihood. If I can do it, you can do it too. This is one of the easiest and fast ways to make good money. I couldn't believe how much I made with only the basic knowledge and skills that I had. I can just imagine what more I can get once I become an expert. Just thinking of it is enough to keep me going every day.



1. Caged and Cage – cages that she has made herself from the experience she's had over the years with her
2. pearls. It is plastic and made in a cylinder shape where her pearl lines can hang where fish cannot eat or other things disturbing the lines. The material is from NZ
3. Box (for packaging) – She thinks that the Ziplock used now does not match the value of what's inside therefore she sees this as an area where help is needed, proper and beautiful boxes where these can be packed and given to the consumer/customer so that the product given matches what it's packed in.
4. Earring hook – Big part of her work involves crafting and producing added value products which includes