

Fiji returns to barter system as Covid-19 hits economy

Level 1 • Pre-intermediate / Intermediate

1 Warmer

Which of these things would you most like to have? Look up any words you don't know. Rank them from 1 to 10.

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| a professional photography session | vegetable plants | homemade pies |
| two piglets | a kayak | online tutoring |
| prayers | someone to clean your backyard | an old carpet |

2 Key words

Match the key words with the definitions. Then find them in the article to read them in context. The paragraph numbers will help you.

- | | | | | |
|------|---------|--------|----------|-------|
| save | borders | barter | economic | trade |
|------|---------|--------|----------|-------|

- exchange things or services for other things or services without using money _____ (para 2)
- the exchange of one thing for another, usually of the same value _____ (para 2)
- keep something so that you can use it in the future _____ (para 3)
- about money as well as business and industry _____ (para 4)
- the official lines that separate countries _____ (para 6)

- | | | | | |
|--------|-----------|---------|------------------------------|----------|
| pastor | groceries | sharing | GDP (gross domestic product) | outbreak |
|--------|-----------|---------|------------------------------|----------|

- the sudden start of a disease or illness _____ (para 6)
- the money than a country makes ever year _____ (para 6)
- a priest or minister in some Christian churches _____ (para 7)
- food and other things for the home that you buy regularly _____ (para 8)
- giving something to someone else so that they can use it _____ (para 10)

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Two piglets for a kayak: Fiji returns to barter system as Covid-19 hits economy

Talei Tora

8 May, 2020

- 1 Two piglets for a kayak, cakes for online tutoring, an old carpet for a professional photography session, vegetable plants for homemade pies and someone to clean your backyard in exchange for prayers.
- 2 These are just some of the hundreds of barter trades that are taking place on Fiji on a Facebook group called Barter for Better Fiji. The barter group was created to help people who have lost their jobs because of coronavirus. The group now has more than 100,000 members, in a country of just under 900,000 people.
- 3 For many people in Fiji, it is not easy to get money now. The idea is to help people get things they need or want without spending money. That will allow them to save their cash for electricity, gas, transport and other things.
- 4 The barter system is becoming popular again across the Pacific island nations because of the economic difficulties that Covid-19 has caused. There are similar Facebook groups in Tonga (Barter for Change), two in Samoa (Barter for Better Samoa and Le Barter Samoa), and one in Vanuatu (Barter for Nambawan Life Vanuatu).
- 5 At the end of April, 2020, there had only been 260 cases of Covid-19 and seven deaths in six of the Pacific countries and territories – Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam and New Caledonia.
- 6 But most Pacific nations closed their borders because of coronavirus. In Fiji, more than 40,000 people – nearly 5% of the country – have lost their jobs, mainly in the tourism industry, since the coronavirus outbreak began. Tourism, particularly from Australia and New Zealand, makes up 34% of the country's GDP.
- 7 Maca T Tabuya, a church pastor in Nadi, Fiji, has done nine barter trades to help families that have money problems because of the Covid-19 crisis.
- 8 "I barter to help other people. There are many families that need groceries because they have lost their jobs and they don't have much to trade. I offer them groceries for whatever they are able to trade because I want to help them."
- 9 Vasiti Masi lost her job as a waitress because of coronavirus, but she has used the Barter for Better Fiji group to keep her start-up flower business open. She traded cakes for things she needs for her business.
- 10 "I lost my job during Covid-19 and Barter for Better Fiji has helped me," Vasiti said. "This group has given me hope and made me think about what I can do differently to keep my business open. It's like a big community of sharing, and I love it," Vasiti added.
- 11 The Facebook page is a modern version of a very old barter tradition. Many years ago, the coastal people of Fiji made salt. They took it to their relatives up in the highlands and exchanged salt from the sea for lovely wild pigs from that area.

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First published in *The Guardian*, 08/05/20

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3 Comprehension check

Are the statements true (T) or false (F) according to the article? Correct any that are false.

1. The Barter for Better Fiji page was started by Facebook.
2. More than 10% of the population of Fiji are members of the bartering group.
3. The bartering page allows the people of Fiji to save their cash for important things like electricity and gas.
4. Many people on the Pacific islands have died from Covid-19.
5. Most of the foreign visitors to the Pacific islands come from the USA and Europe.
6. Many Pacific nations get a lot of their money from tourism.
7. The barter systems have helped small businesses as well as families.
8. Bartering systems are new in the Pacific islands.

4 Using the key words

a. Use some of the key words from task 2 to complete these sentences.

1. Germany has _____ with nine other European countries.
2. I need to get some more _____ for the weekend.
3. There was an _____ of food poisoning before the restaurant closed.
4. We should _____ some money for next year's holiday.
5. I'd be happy to _____ my old car for your scooter.

b. Write a sentence of your own for each new word.

5 Discussion

- Have you ever tried exchanging items or services with someone?
 - o What items did you exchange?
 - o Who did you exchange with?
- Would you prefer to barter with a stranger online or in person with someone you know? Why?

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6 Bartering

a. Make notes in the boxes.

skills or items that you have and would be willing to exchange for something else
e.g. a toy car / cut some someone's lawn

items you need and things you would like help with
e.g. a chainsaw for cutting wood / walking the dog

b. Read the example advertisements. Then write one of your own. Say what you want and what you can offer in return.

I have a used red toy car for a child (for 2–6 year olds). I need help making some curtains for my living room.

I can drive you to the supermarket and help with your grocery shopping. Can you water my houseplants next week?

I can teach you to make online video calls. Can you teach me to bake a cake?

I'm looking for a second-hand table. I can help you with your tax in return.

c. Pin your advertisement up on the wall. Read your friends' advertisements. Ask for more details and try to make an exchange.