

## Fiji returns to barter system as Covid-19 hits economy

### Level 2 • Upper intermediate

#### 1 Warmer

Read paragraph 1 of the article.

- Are they fair exchanges, do you think?
- Which of the things listed would you want?

#### 2 Key words

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

utilities	suspension	resurgence	practice	pastor	outbreak
limited	groceries	evacuation	equipment	economic	barter

1. exchange products or services for other products or services instead of using money \_\_\_\_\_ (para 2)
2. relating to money as well as business and industry \_\_\_\_\_ (para 3)
3. very small amount of \_\_\_\_\_ (para 4)
4. public services such as gas, water or electricity that are used by everyone \_\_\_\_\_ (para 4)
5. the restarting of something that quickly has a strong influence \_\_\_\_\_ (para 5)
6. the act of officially stopping something for a period of time \_\_\_\_\_ (para 7)
7. the sudden start of war, disease, violence etc \_\_\_\_\_ (para 8)
8. a priest or minister in some Christian churches \_\_\_\_\_ (para 9)
9. food and other products for the home that you buy regularly \_\_\_\_\_ (para 10)
10. relating to the act of removing people from their homes or when people have to leave their homes \_\_\_\_\_ (para 11)
11. the tools, machines or other things that you need for a particular job \_\_\_\_\_ (para 12)
12. a way of doing something, especially as a result of habit, custom or tradition \_\_\_\_\_ (para 14)

## Fiji returns to barter system as Covid-19 hits economy

### Level 2 • Upper intermediate

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

Talei Tora

8 May, 2020

- Two piglets for a second-hand kayak, a taxi ride in exchange for fresh produce, cakes for online tutoring, an old carpet for a professional photography session, vegetable seedlings for homemade pies and offers to have backyards cleaned in exchange for prayers.
- These are just a few examples of the hundreds of barter trades that are taking place across Fiji since a Facebook page, Barter for Better Fiji, was created in response to increased unemployment due to coronavirus. The page now has more than 100,000 members, in a country of just under 900,000 people.
- “The main reason for setting up the Facebook group was to help offer a solution to the current economic situation,” said Marlene Dutta, a business skills development consultant.
- “For many people across the world and Fiji, it is not easy to get money now and even harder to make it last. The idea is to help people get some things they need or want without spending money. That will help a lot and allow them to save their limited cash for bills, utilities, transport and other things.”
- The barter system is experiencing a resurgence across the Pacific with similar Facebook pages in Tonga (Barter for Change), two in Samoa (Barter for Better Samoa and Le Barter Samoa) with just over 1,000 members, and one in Vanuatu (Barter for Nambawan Life Vanuatu) as the island nations experience economic difficulties due to Covid-19.
- At the end of April, 2020, there had only been recorded cases of Covid-19 in six Pacific countries and territories – Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam and New Caledonia – which in total reported 260 cases and seven deaths.
- However, most Pacific nations closed their borders due to coronavirus fears and are feeling the impact of the suspension of international travel. The International Monetary Fund has predicted a 2.7% reduction in growth for the Pacific Island Countries and a 40% reduction in tourism.
- In Fiji, more than 40,000 people – nearly 5% of the country – have lost their jobs, mainly in the tourism industry, since the outbreak began. Tourism, particularly from Australia and New Zealand, makes up 34% of the country’s GDP.
- Maca T Tabuya, a church pastor in Nadi, Fiji, has made her ninth barter trade to help families that are struggling due to the Covid-19 crisis.
- “At first, I bartered out of interest, but now I barter to help other people. I noticed that 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 love helping them.”
- She has also used the bartering system to get groceries for people in the south of the country in an area that was hit by Cyclone Harold on 10 April, 2020. As a result, 6,240 people are staying in evacuation centres.
- Vasiti Masi lost her job as a waitress due to coronavirus, but she has been able to use the Barter for Better Fiji page to keep her start-up flower business open. She has traded brownies and cakes for equipment for her business.
- “I lost my job during Covid-19, and Barter for Better Fiji has helped me trade cakes for flowers and equipment to help with my business,” Vasiti said. “This page has given me hope and made me think about what I can do differently to keep my business alive. It’s like a big community of sharing and I love it,” Vasiti added.
- The Facebook page is a modern version of a traditional practice that began hundreds of years ago, says Alisi Daurewa, who works in people-centred development.
- “Many years ago, indigenous Fijians practised *veisa* (a kind of traditional barter system in the Pacific islands). For example, the coastal people of Nadroga (in the Western part of Viti Levu, Fiji’s main island) could make salt. They would take it to their relatives up in the highlands of Nadroga/Navosa, and those people would exchange salt from the sea for lovely wild pigs from that area,” she said.

© Guardian News and Media 2020

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

## Fiji returns to barter system as Covid-19 hits economy

### Level 2 • Upper intermediate

#### 3 Comprehension check

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

1. The Barter for a Better Fiji page was set up by Facebook.
2. More than 10% of the population of Fiji have joined the bartering page.
3. The bartering page allows the people of Fiji to spend the cash they usually need for utilities on groceries instead.
4. The two bartering pages in Samoa have more members than the one in Fiji.
5. Many of the Pacific islands in the article have had a large number of cases of Covid-19.
6. The majority of overseas visitors to the Pacific islands arrive from the USA and Europe.
7. Many Pacific nations get much of their income from tourism.
8. In Fiji, nearly one in twenty people have lost their jobs.
9. The barter systems have helped small businesses as well as families.
10. Bartering is relatively new in the Pacific islands.

#### 4 Phrases

a. Use the words in the box to complete the phrases from the article. Then match them with their meanings.

feel                      for                      close                      out                      offer                      to

- |                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| 1. in exchange _____  | a. say what could be done to solve a problem  |
| 2. in response _____  | b. because you want to find out the answer and not for any other reason               |
| 3. _____ a solution   | c. notice the effects of something  |
| 4. _____ your borders | d. as a reaction to   |
| 5. _____ the impact   | e. stop people entering from another country or leaving the country                   |
| 6. _____ of interest  | f. give someone something and they give you something else of a similar type or value |

b. Find the phrases in the article to check your answers. Then use the phrases to complete these sentences. You may need to change the form of some words.

1. The café stopped using plastic cups \_\_\_\_\_ customer complaints.
2. Many countries temporarily \_\_\_\_\_ during the coronavirus outbreak.
3. I'd be happy to paint your wall \_\_\_\_\_ a delicious home cooked dinner.
4. Just \_\_\_\_\_, when did you get married?
5. Many employees are \_\_\_\_\_ of the longer working hours.
6. We hope we can \_\_\_\_\_ to your current problems.

## Fiji returns to barter system as Covid-19 hits economy

### Level 2 • Upper intermediate

#### 5 Discussion

- Have you ever tried exchanging items or services with someone?
  - o What items did you exchange?
  - o Who did you exchange with?
  - o Did both you and the other person feel it was a fair exchange?
- Would you prefer to barter with a stranger online or in person with someone you know? Give reasons.

#### 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 children's paddling pool / mowing someone's lawn*

items you need and things you would like help with

*e.g. a chainsaw for cutting wood / walking the dog*

- b. Write an advertisement. Say what you are looking for and what you can offer in return. Remember to include your name. Pin your advertisement up on the wall.
- c. Read your classmates' advertisements. Ask for more details about the items and services they are offering and offer something of yours in exchange.
- d. As a group, talk about the bartering process.
- Was it easy to think of things you could barter?
  - Were any exchanges made?
  - Which of the things on offer were the most popular?
  - Would you be interested in bartering in real life?
  - Can you now think of other things you could barter?