

FROM STRUGGLES TO STRENGTH:

A WOMAN'S JOURNEY IN MABE PEARL FARMING

Faka'anaua Lakai
(Owner of Naua Jewels of Vava'u)
President of Vava'u Pearl Association





*“Before, I felt like a failure.
But now, I feel like i can fly”*

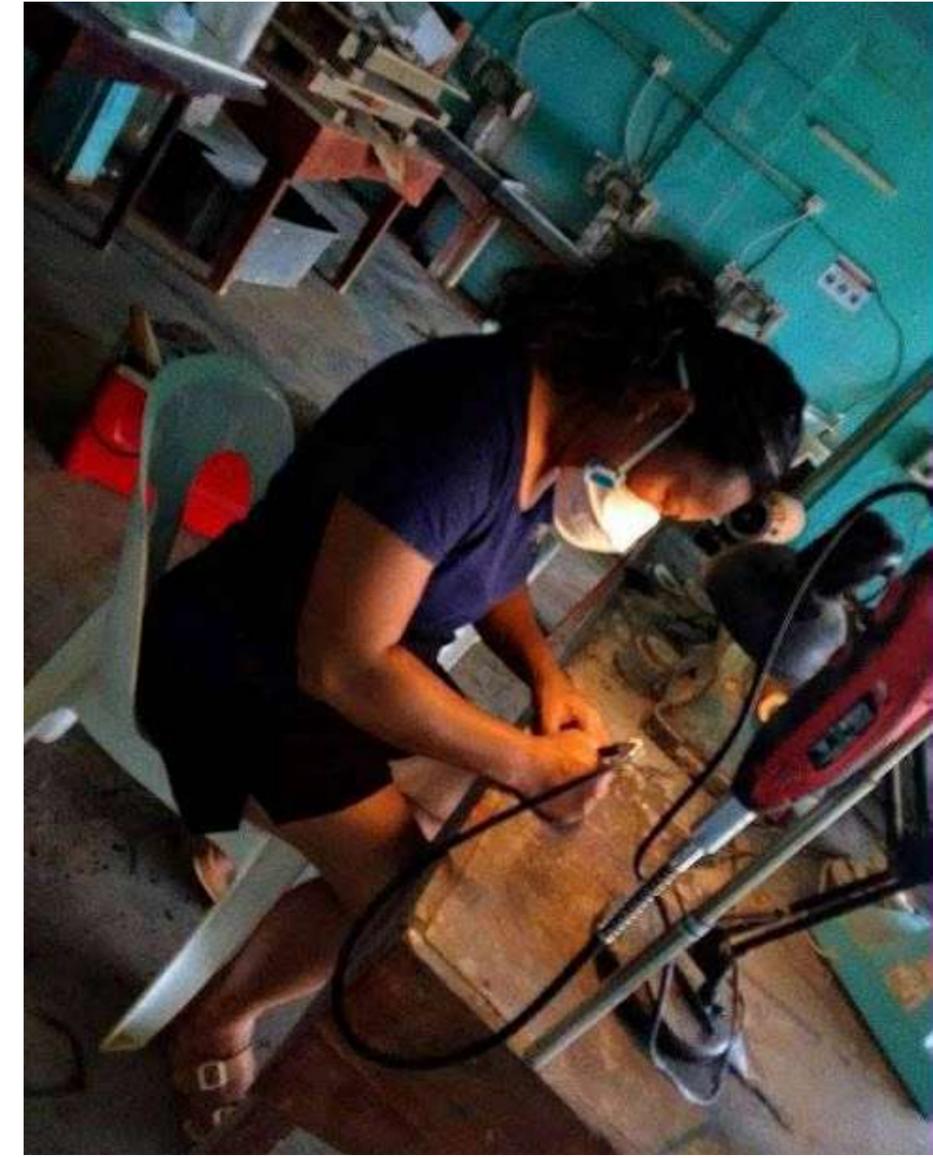
- Single mother of 5,
- searching for hope in Vava’u, Tonga

EARLY STRUGGLES



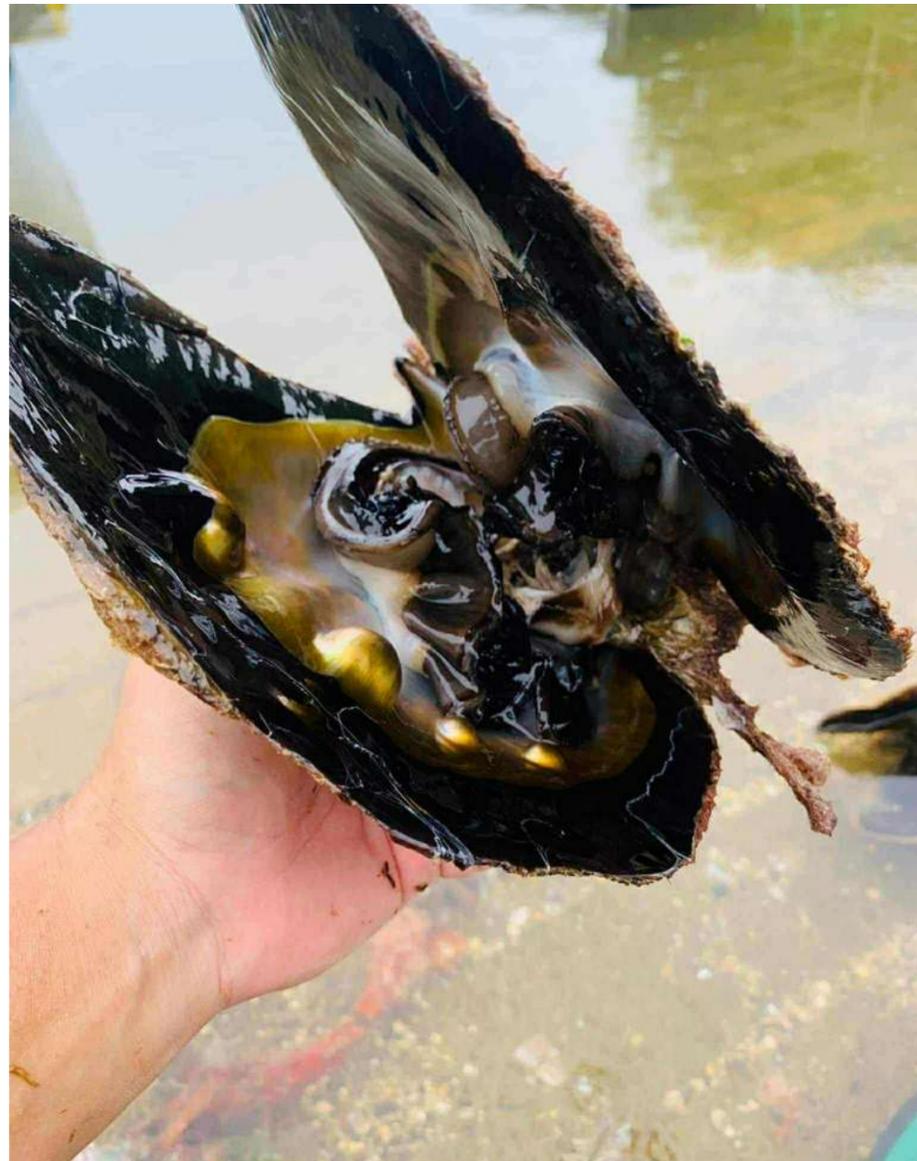
- Raising 5 children as a single mother
- Income from weaving and handicrafts
- Daily worries about food and education

FIRST OPPORTUNITY



- Tonga Skills Program training (pearl shell carving)
- No prior knowledge of pearls
- Discovered a new passion → registered a **Mabe pearl farm**

ACIAR PARTNERSHIP



- 2019 : Became Manager of VAvu Peral Center
 - Training, equipment, and guidance
- Support for farmers, jewellery-making, and marketing

WOMEN'S ROLE



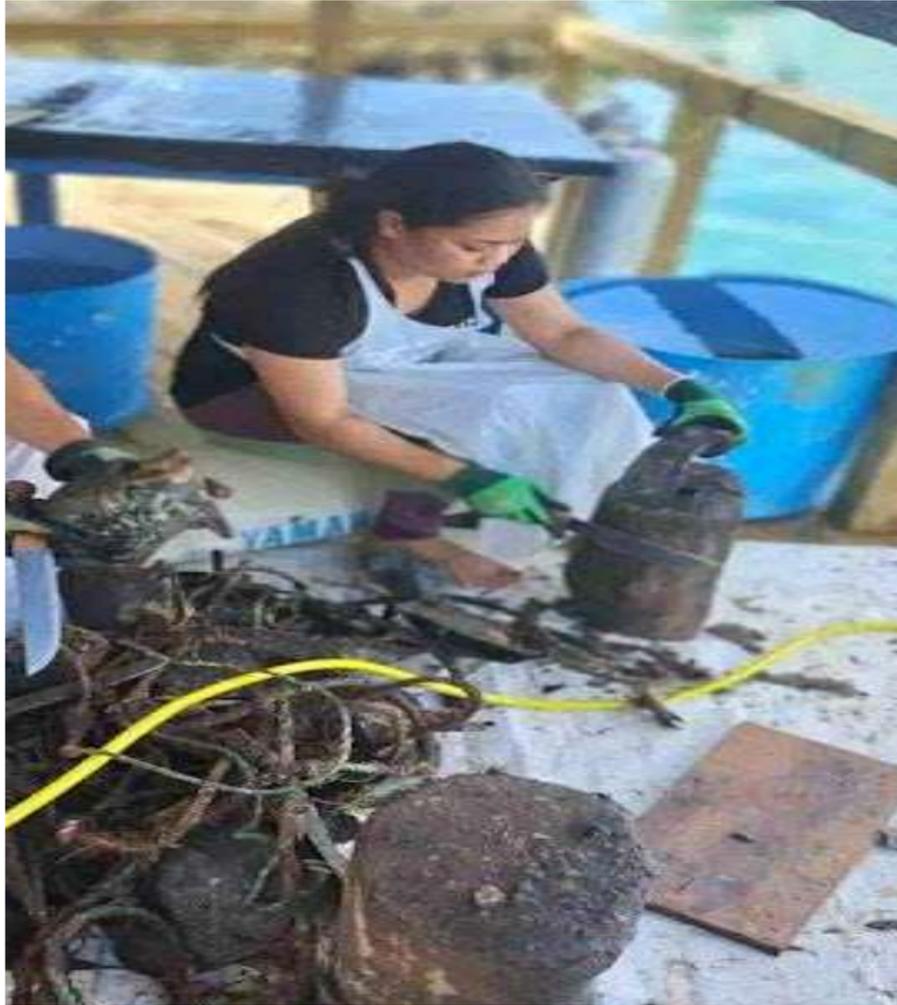
- Women as farmer's , artisas, and marketers
- Turning pearls into jewellery and income
- Strengthening families and the community

STRUGGLES ALONG THE WAY



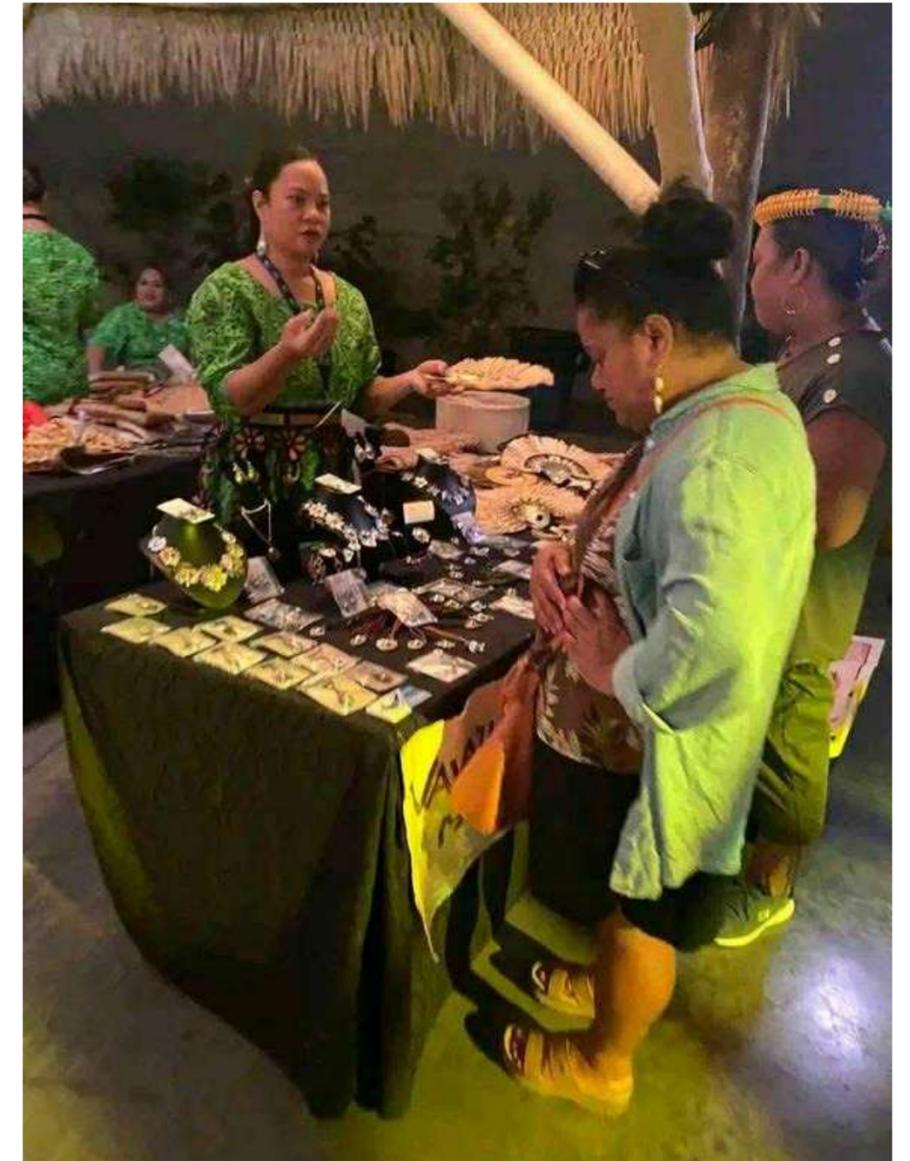
- Hard work: long hours, years of patience
- COVID-19 impact → exports stopped
- Resilience and revival with ACIAR + Fisheries

RECOVERY



- Industry slowly rebuilt
- Shared pearl orders fairly among farmers
- Community success, not individual

WHAT WE GAIN FROM THE SEA



- Financial stability for family
- Professional growth as leader & jeweller
- Emotional healing through pearl - making

LEADERSHIP



- President of Vava'u Pearl Association
- Supporting other farmers
- Building networks & market access

SYMBOLISM OF PEARLS



- Pearls = treasures formed through struggle
- Beauty, resilience, and inclusivity
- Each harvest = hope for families



“Before, I felt like a failure. But now, I feel like i can fly”

- Gratitude to God, ACIAR, and the community
- Pearls are more than jewels - they are transformation