

# GLOBAL SALES FOR LOCAL ARTISANS

BY CARMEL PILOTTI | PHOTOGRAPHS: SUPPLIED BY REAL IMPACT

New life is being breathed into Papua New Guinean art and craft with local artisans selling their work worldwide, thanks to a campaign called Thousand Tribes.

The campaign is a partnership between USAID and REAL Impact. USAID is an international development agency and REAL Impact is a 'profit-for-purpose' company that partners, nurtures and grows SMEs into commercial success.

The campaign offers product development assistance for international markets, access to essential business resources, including capital, sustainable PNG certification, inclusion on an international e-commerce site and international tradeshow market access.

It's a business model that is financially empowering PNG communities by reimagining and aligning their production with global supply chains and fashion trends.

The business model also leverages the new awareness of consumers around the world that



their purchases have the potential to positively impact developing communities.

Among the artists involved with the campaign is Marjorie Toyamina from Pacific Primitive Arts in the Trobriand Islands.

She works with weavers from her community to produce deep-fringed cushions, made from a combination of pandanus and coconut fibre, that perfectly capture the relaxed feeling of Pacific Island life.

The product appealed to high-end designers and retailers when showed at the SHOPPE OBJECT trade fair in New York and was bought by designer Michelle Farmer, who has four retail outlets across New York and Florida.

REAL Impact CEO, Virginia Bruce, says: "The finished products, which connect centuries-old techniques with contemporary style, transport the end buyer on a journey to this remote corner of the world."

Port Moresby-based designer Ian Jiji is another artisan involved with the campaign. Jiji specialises in screen printing and is the community leader of four women's artisan groups in Oro Province.

REAL Impact has worked with Jiji for two years, initially developing a cushion range using original *tapa* cloth artworks.

The cushion range was also taken to SHOPPE OBJECT, with all samples sold.

Jiji and REAL Impact are now working on new colour approaches for the cushions, such as a simple black and natural palette, to appeal to the international market, while being respectful of the origins of the work.

Jiji says: "Seeing our *tapa* cloth turned into contemporary homewares empowers our community and instils great pride in the women creators."

From over 550 applicants, the Thousand Tribes program is working with 29 SMEs in Madang, East Sepik, Southern Highlands, Enga, Milne Bay and NCD.

**Papua New Guinean consumers can access the exciting new items at Brian Bell outlets.**



Top: A 'hippy chair' by weavers in Ialibu is among the products being marketed overseas.

Left: Ian Jiji's *tapa* cushions were sold out at an international trade fair in New York.



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# PNG BUSINESS AT A GLANCE

BY GABRIELLA MUNOZ & DAVID JAMES



## Economy on the mend

There are signs of optimism in the Papua New Guinea business community, according to a survey of market conditions by the **Business Council of Papua New Guinea** (BCPNG). It suggests that, while the pandemic has exacted a severe financial toll, businesses have now settled and are navigating the challenges of the new environment.

The BCPNG's survey found that, despite a continued trend of financial decline, business leaders in PNG are showing a hint of optimism when it comes to their short-term business prospects.

Although 60 per cent of businesses did not meet their projected results in the last quarter of 2020, 44 per cent are expecting revenue growth in the next six months, while only 25

per cent are expecting revenue decline.

"This is a significant improvement from the previous quarter when only nine per cent anticipated revenue growth in the next six months and 74 per cent anticipated a revenue decrease," the survey says.

The survey detected signs of optimism amongst business leaders, with 32 per cent expecting their companies to grow this year and 70 per cent of respondents saying they will be able to operate in the current environment for at least a year.

The survey says that reduced consumption and market demand are the top challenges that businesses face. The lack of foreign currency and the inability to get the right skills



Loi Bakani has forecast a recovery of 2.5 per cent for the country's economy

in-country at the right time are also consistently nominated as obstacles.

Meanwhile, the Governor of the **Bank of Papua New Guinea**, Loi Bakani, has forecast a recovery for the country's economy of 2.5 per cent after the sharp contraction of 2020. But he says the national budget and PNG's foreign exchange reserves will remain under pressure.

## A PNG first in e-commerce

Papua New Guinean entrepreneur Vani Nades has launched **Shopsmart PNG** (shopsmartpng.com), the country's first e-commerce marketplace.

The site makes it possible for SMEs and informal markets to connect to a wider customer base nationally and globally.

Nades and her team liaise with business owners to help them register as vendors. She says registration is a simple process and that the site is for businesses of all sizes.

She notes that recently there has been increased interest from artisans, honey and coffee producers, spice sellers and clothing

vendors wanting to join up.

Shopsmart applies best online practices and has integrated **Kina Bank** and **Bank South Pacific's** internet payment gateways to facilitate payment in PNG and around the world.

It is also working with **PNG Air**, **Post PNG**, **FedEx** and **DHL** to address PNG's logistical challenges and guarantee the delivery of goods door-to-door anywhere in PNG and around the world.

Nades says customers receive a tracking number once their purchases are dispatched and that Shopsmart makes sure customers receive their goods.





## The cloud is coming

The adoption of cloud technology will be the big gamechanger for Papua New Guinea-based businesses, enabling them to reliably store and access data and programs over the internet.

So says Steve Hillyard, whose company **Pronto Software** is a regional ICT provider that helps PNG businesses maintain their computer systems.

He says there is great potential, but at the moment in PNG the technology is “not quite there yet”.

Hillyard believes that PNG businesses are already well-informed about the advantages offered by the technology.

Using the cloud means business can use operating capital rather than have to make large capital expenditures on their own IT systems, he notes.



## Fee-free bank account

**Kina Bank** has introduced a fee-free account, Kina Everyday, which can be opened with a minimum balance of 10 kina.

“We want to take banking back to basics with better customer service and no unnecessary fee gouging. We think this is morally and ethically the right strategy,” says Greg Pawson, Kina Bank’s CEO.

## A cruise blow

One of the hardest hit sectors of the PNG economy has been tourism, which has slowed to a crawl because of COVID-19.

In a further blow to the sector, **P&O Cruises Australia** has cancelled all cruises to PNG and the Solomon Islands for the remainder of the year.



## Cashless payments

**Bank South Pacific** has launched its new service, No Card Just Pay, a cashless payment option that only requires the client’s BSP number and registered mobile number to purchase products and services on any registered BSP pay merchant website.

No Card Just Pay is a first for PNG and the Pacific.



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# AT WORK WITH

## VANESSA KAGENA GRADUATE ARCHITECT

BY ROBERT UPE | PHOTOGRAPH: SUPPLIED BY STEAMSHIPS

**Vanessa Kagena is a graduate architect with Pacific Palms Property, which is the property development arm of the Steamships Trading Company. She recently won a prestigious Steamships award that recognises employees for performing above and beyond their duties and responsibilities.**



Frank Lloyd Wright's famous Fallingwater house in Pennsylvania in the US.

### Vanessa Kagena on ...

**My proudest architectural achievement** was to be given the lead role in the exterior rehabilitation of Burns House into @345. It is a building dear to my heart because it was my dad's office when I was just six years old. Walking through the corridors during my first site visit brought back childhood memories of hide and seek with my older siblings so, yeah, I was honoured to work on it.

**Currently I'm working on** concepts for the refurbishment of Grand Papua Hotel Bar and Restaurant, which is quite exciting because I'm mainly focusing on the interior part of things. I'm also working on a 3D rendition of a local church.

**Winning the Steamships 2020 Managing Director's Excellence Award** made me feel appreciated because I love what I do. When given a task at work, or outside work, I make sure that I do my best. I believe that when I do my best, God will do the rest.

**Growing up**, I always played, as the kids would call it, 'house-house', where I got to build an

imaginary castle with books or something with off-cuts on the mango tree outside. I also loved watching television shows about houses. This sparked an interest and I ended up studying architecture for five years at the PNG University of Technology, graduating in 2019. Architecture, to me, is the art and science of enhancing the human experience.

**I joined Steamships** about two months after graduating when the uni recommended me to Pacific Palms Property (a Steamships company).

**The most important qualities** of an architect are the ability to solve problems, accept criticism and have good communication skills, both verbally and through designs.

**Port Moresby's architecture** is changing, especially in the downtown and Waigani CBD areas. It is evolving and adapting to the modern era. However, architecture in other parts of the city still needs improvement.

**My most admired architectural work** is Frank Lloyd Wright's famous Fallingwater. The reason why I admire this architecture (in Pennsylvania in the US) is because the architect fully enhanced the surrounding nature. It was designed in a way that did not harm or destroy nature, but merged into the natural flow of the river and the trees. This, to me, is special because it represents what I stand for when designing, and that is to 'respond to nature'.



**Answer: The mystery destination on Page 38 is Loloata Island Resort. See [loloataislandresort.com](http://loloataislandresort.com).**



## THE FINEST DINING EXPERIENCE IN PNG

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