



# THE FORESTER

In support of the 30 Million Trees in 15 Years, a Fiji Government Initiative



*iTaukei Land, Our Heritage, Our Future*

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Urban Forest, Healthy Cities



Head Office and Central Eastern regional staff with the CEO Mr Tevita Kuruvakadua (standing first from the right) during the tree planting initiative in Kiuva, Tailevu

## Tree initiative progressing well for TLTB

According to the Ministry of Forestry, nearly 10 million trees have been planted since the launch of the 30 million trees in 15 years initiative by the Ministry of Forestry.

The Ministry is very happy with the public responses, indicating that at the current tree planting rate, Fiji will certainly meet its target of having planted 30 million trees in 15 years.

In expressing his gratitude to the iTaukei Land Trust Board staff, on Saturday the

23rd of April, the Department of Forestry Officer - Moape Drikalu, said that TLTB is one of the organisations, or probably; the organisation that has planted the most trees.

This is a very good manifestation of the Board's role as a land management body. The tree-planting initiative comes as a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and a way of giving back to the communities, in alignment with the Board's core role(s).

Yet, it speaks volumes of the dedication and commitment of the staff to its

stakeholders, particularly the landowners. Through this avenue, the staff of TLTB understand what it is like to be sustainable and are promoting the same to the surrounding communities.

The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Forestry - Mr. Pene Baleinabuli, said that there will be a National Forest Inventory exercise that will be completed by the end of the year. Its main objective is to help drive strategic policies that will uphold sustainability. ■

# Planting trees for the future generation



CEO Tevita Kuruvakadua plants a tree

An additional 1,040 native and fruit trees including some 200 mangrove plants were planted in Nadroga (Mataqali Nabukavutu, Cuvu), Tailevu (Mataqali Mataivuga, Kiuva), Macuata (Mataqali Raranimeke, Galoa) and Ra (Navuniivi) by the iTaukei Land Trust Board (TLTB) staff and family members as part of its corporate social responsibility (CSR) for 2022.

TLTB has been contributing to the Government 15 Million Trees in 15 Years tree planting Programme and as such has been encouraging landowning units to lease their own land to support the Government in this climate mitigation initiative since 2015.

At present there are 70,476 native and fruit trees planted by TLTB with the support of various landowning units in the country. In addition, there are about 8, 815 mangroves planted as well.

The Saturday event was made possible through the Boards partnership with Ministry of Forests and respective iTaukei landowning units together with the support of the District Officers and Provincial Offices in Macuata, Ra, Tailevu and Nadroga. ■



Head Office and Central Eastern Regional staff at the coastline of Kiuva, Tailevu



Northern Regional staff including Savusavu and Labasa offices joined hands together to plant trees in Galoa, Macuata

## Early bird catches the worm

**E**arly Bird catches the worm, they always say. That was exactly how the staff in the North had set out on that early Saturday morning of April 23rd.

Considering the fact, that the heat and humidity in the North, especially in Labasa, are sometimes somewhat unbearable, the staff decided to meet at the office at 5:00am in the morning. They started with God - a morning devotion. Praise God for this kind of programme.

After their devotion, then the Business Excellence committee members distributed their T-shirts. They quickly changed and headed straight to the Car park to board the vehicles and headed straight for the tree planting site.

This time, the Northern TLTB staff took to Galoa, in the Labasa district, in the province of Macuata. It is not too far from Labasa town as it had taken them approximately 20 minutes to get to the tree planting site.

Quickly, they gathered around as there was another briefing by the Forestry Officials. Because they were trying to avoid the scorching heat from the Labasa burning sun, they quickly went about planting the 500 Fruit and native trees that were their target for the day.

In no time, they were done. By 11:00am they had completed the task and headed back to the office for lunch. At the office, the staff also presented a Yaqona of Vakavinavinaka to the Department of Forestry for their support and assistance during the day.

The Labasa team could not have completed their task early, without the help of their children, and for this, they are truly grateful. It was another fun-filled activity, though it was more physical and tough for some; especially the ladies.

The event provided a good opportunity for the staff to mingle with each other and get to know other family members. It was also a good time to get to meet and know the landowners, as well as our friends from Forestry. The staff has always enjoyed and appreciated the tree planting activities organised by the Board. ■



North West Regional staff including Lautoka, Ba and Rakiraki offices planted 669 mangrove plants at the coastline of Navuniivi, Ra

## First time tree planting in Navuniivi

On Saturday, the 23rd of April, the staff from the North West regional office traveled all the way to Navuniivi village in the district of Nalawa, in the Ra province to plant mangrove seedlings.

This is the first time, for the employees from Rakiraki, Ba, and Lautoka offices to carry out a tree planting activity on this coastline. This site had come as a recommendation from the Ra Provincial office, in consultation with Conservation International.

The staff of TLTB normally plant trees at the end of every quarter, at various designated sites. In recent years, the staff of North West has planted trees in Naikabula, Teidamu, Navolau, Vitawa, and Vunitogoloa. This year they have decided to go all the way to Navuniivi to plant mangrove seedlings.

Located along the Navitilevu Bay, the tree planting exercise was thought of by Conservation International as part of the rehabilitation of Marine resources in the western region. They managed to plant a total of 669 plants, of which, 200 seedlings were provided by the Ministry of Forestry while the other 469 seedlings were supplied from the village nursery.

As the sun was slowly winking its rays out of the skies on that Saturday morning, the staff and their families disembarked at Navuniivi village to present their *isevusevu* to Tui Navitilevu - Ratu Epele Niudamu. They had arrived at 8:00am and straight away received a tough welcome - the coconut bowl, filled to the brim with - you know what.

From all the tree planting activities they have attended, Navuniivi seemed a little different. They started with the *grog* session, then had their lunch before they headed out to the planting site. It was because they had to wait for the low tide at 1:00pm.

Surprisingly, the whole programme was hosted and coordinated by the village youth group. They had prepared breakfast and also lunch. They even assisted the staff in planting trees.

In his closing remarks, the Tui Navitilevu could not contain his emotions. He thanked the Board, the staff of the North West region and their families; for making the time and putting in their effort in activities such as the CSR. For them to visit a remote place like Navuniivi is commendable.

Ratu Niudamu added, "the Blue coloured T-Shirts is the colour of the sky, where the God Almighty reigns. It means that God is in favour of your commitment to the iTaukei communities, especially to the landowners. Blue is also the colour of the Navitilevu bay seas when the weather is calm. In the same manner the people of Ra convey their gratitude and blessings to the Board, to the management and to all the staff of TLTB. The district of Nalawa is open to CSR activities in the future". ■

# Mataqali Nabukavutu Appreciates tree planting at Hanahana

The South West region, which is inclusive of the Nadi office, Tourism office and the Sigatoka office planted trees in Navovo, Cuvu, in Nadroga on Saturday the 23rd of April. The land on which the trees were planted, belonged to Mataqali Nabukavutu of Hanahana village, just outside Sigatoka town, as you head towards Nadi.

TLTB has been conducting tree planting activities in recent years as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and giving back to the communities. However, this tree planting at Hanahana was more than just a CSR. The initiative was also part of reserving their mataqali land for the use and maintenance of their future generation.

Mataqali Nabukavutu could not be happier. They could not contain their excitement on the day, which was evident in their presence and support throughout the day. The men and even the children accompanied the staff to the planting site, while the ladies had hosted them to breakfast.

In his excitement, Turaga ni Mataqali, Peceli Loyawa, said, "we cannot thank TLTB enough for this day. The Board has shown another level of support to us - the landowners; and for that, we are truly grateful. We also express our gratitude to the Forestry staff for providing the seedlings and for helping out with the planting".

Appreciation also goes out to the Nadroga Provincial Administrators, together with the staff from the District office for joining the TLTB staff on the day. Everyone had a good time, not only bonding within the TLTB team but also networking and building relationships with other stakeholders.

This tree planting activity was a little different from the ones held previously. Previously, planting sites would have been cleared and

planting spots identified. But this time, they had to start from polling, then planting the trees. In total, they planted more than 300 trees which consisted of Dawa, Teak, Tavola, Mahogany, and Lauci.

The staff turned out in numbers. They were reminded of the importance of the tree planting initiative. Not only has this become a Board sanctioned activity, but it has also become an empowering initiative for the landowning units and surrounding communities.

While they had a lot of fun, they were also an inspiration to the younger generation. As the saying goes, "Successful people have a social responsibility to make the world a better place and not just take from it" Carrie Underwood. ■



South West regional staff including the Tourism Office braving the sun at Navovo, Cuvu in Nadroga



Central Eastern Regional staff revisiting the site at Colo-i-suva where they had planted 150 trees to which they joined hands to clear the bushes tended to the trees

## Central Eastern Gladiators Fulfill responsibility to the environment

*"To plant Trees is to give body and Life to one's Dreams and better World" - Russell Page*

In line with the Board's Health and wellness weekly calendar, Wednesdays have been set aside for Wellness purposes. But, instead of enjoying the rugged Touch Rugby, eloquent Netball, and strategic volleyball, the Central Eastern (CE) gladiators sacrificed their time and enjoyment of the sport, to carry out a more tedious task - weeding and cleaning the overgrown tree planting site at Colo-i-suva.

With their cane knives and other needed tools, they followed their Social club leader up the cool hills of Colo-i-Suva. When they inquired as to how far they were going, he simply replied "Na qoi, na qoi na" - just here, just here.

To their interestingly, a little annoying surprise, the site was overgrown. The ladies seemed to have given up at first sight. Yet, the humor and energy from the males echoed above and beyond. Instantly, their energy was refueled as they joined hands to clear the bushes, tended to the trees, and gave the place a new, ravishing look.

The gladiators were led by none other than their strong-willed Manager - Ema Samuta. They managed to complete the task they had set out to do. Though, at the end of the day, their legs could not almost carry them. It was a good meet, they had a good laugh, not to mention the burning of fats and a little shakeup to their weary bodies.

It had been a satisfying visit - to see the 150 trees that they had planted, bloom and grow happily and free. Team CE is keen to regularly visit the site and tend to the growing trees as best as they could.

Just as the setting sun was meeting dusk, a team member called out - "Madam, nai qusi ni bunono?" Oh yes, this was the moment they had all looked forward to. A few bowls of the favourite brown label to calm the fatigued bodies, and whisper night chants into the tired souls.

In acknowledgment of the afternoon's hard work, Ms. Samuta thanked all her staff who had availed themselves on that afternoon. It was worth the time, worth the effort, and certainly worth the energy. Thank you very much Team Central Eastern for fulfilling your responsibility toward the environment. Till next time CE Gladiators. ■



# Farming and forestry to be transformed to curb global warming

Protecting forests and altering farming methods could contribute around a quarter of the greenhouse gas cuts needed to avert the worst impacts of climate change, according to the United Nations Climate panel.

“We are in the early stages of climate and agriculture policy development, but we need to start with acknowledging the urgency of the challenge,” said the director of rural strategies and climate change for the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IPCC) - Ben Lillston. “IPCC warns that governments have not been up to the task”.

The report said that about 22% of global greenhouse gas emissions came from agriculture, forestry, and other land-use sectors in 2019, around half of which; were from deforestation. Mitigation measures in these sectors, including protecting forests from clear-cutting, sequestering

carbon in agricultural soils and more sustainable diets, can provide as much as 20-30% of the emission reductions needed to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Landowners, farmers, and communities manage a significant share of global forests and agricultural land. Hence, they play a central role in land-based mitigation options. While the changes required in the agriculture, forestry, and other land-use sectors would not cost much to implement; there is little momentum so far to trigger them.

According to the report: a lack of institutional and financial support, uncertainty over long-term tradeoffs of how land is managed, and the dispersed nature of private landholdings have hindered implementation. Land provides us with so much - food, nature, and our livelihoods. Therefore, these other competing demands need to be carefully managed. ■



Staff from all regional offices around Vitilevu joined hands together for a good cause

# Sustainable forest use helps tackle the climate crisis and achieve the SDGs

*International Day of Forests - March 21*

**F**rom drinking a glass of water to building a house, forests are precious resources for people's lives and are key to solving many global challenges, including the climate crisis and poverty.

In this year's celebration of the International Day of Forests, which is usually celebrated on March 21, it was suggested that wood-based innovations pave the way for the use of forest products in ways that decrease environmental impact and waste generation.

Currently, 75% of global material consumption is based on non-renewable resources, since the extraction, transport, processing and disposal of these resources implies an enormous impact on the environment, climate and biodiversity.

Wood-based products can therefore assist with climate change mitigation by storing carbon, while also helping to avoid or reduce the greenhouse gas emissions associated with the materials they substitute for such as concrete, steel, plastic and synthetic fibres.

Our future is unthinkable without the goods and services produced by forests. Forests cover about one third of the Earth's surface and provide clean

water, air, timber, fuel, and food amongst others. Forests can play a critical role in achieving more sustainable production and consumption.

This includes improving livelihoods, contributing to healthy landscapes and cities, and reducing the world's carbon and material footprint. Forests also underpin sustainable agricultural practices and sustainable food production.

However, the global area of forests has been shrinking in the last decades and Fiji is no exception. Since TLTB is custodian of the higher percentage of Fiji's land mass, the Board believes that Tree Planting -with the involvement of all stakeholders and across disciplines and sectors is an effective solution to restoring our forests in Fiji.

Hence the collaboration with land owning units (LOUs) to lease their lands for the tree planting purpose, for conservation purpose and also for the purpose of carbon footprint. Tree planting is an initiative to offset carbon emission and protect our biodiversity. For this this reason, the staff of TLTB usually go out in full force, at the end of every quarter to fulfill this wish. ■



Head Office and Central Eastern Regional staff with reps from the Ministry of Forestry enjoying their tree planting activities in Kiuvu, Tailevu





## Fiji Pine Group contributes more than 80% of Fiji's log production

**P**rime Minister and TLTB Board Chairman have revealed that Fiji Pine Group currently contributes more than 80% to Fiji's log production and export of wood products. He revealed this during the International Day of Forests at the Ministry of Forests, Timber Utilisation Division in Nasinu.

The Prime Minister said that Fiji Hardwood Corporation Ltd and the Mahogany sector are making strong contributions to the economy and

showing great potential. In the past year alone, the mahogany log production improved by 75% and the export of mahogany products grew by 60%.

He added that Fiji has established plantations of pine and mahogany as part of the government's long-term strategy to support the timber trade while also protecting and conserving the remaining natural forests. Mr. Bainimarama confirmed, that to date, more than 8 million trees have been planted

under the 30 million trees in 15 years campaign.

To commemorate the International Day of Forests 2022, he launched the Forestry Harvesting Licensing Online System; and also planted a commemorative tree to mark the celebration. ■

# Landowners urged to include Youth in Farming

(Article extracted from FBC Online News- <https://www.fbcnews.com.fj/news/landowners-urged-to-include-youth-in-farming/>)

**A**griculture Minister, Dr. Mahendra Reddy is urging landowners to allow youths to undertake commercial farming on communal land.

Speaking in Tukavesi, Saqani, Cakaudrove on February 27, Dr. Reddy said this will benefit the Mataqali in terms of cash returns including Food Security. He added that this way, the land will also be utilised best and will contribute to the export market.

“We want landowners to open up and think positively about their resources. We are urging landowners to open up and be willing to use their land. Tell us, which pieces of land are lying idle and can be used for agricultural purposes. There are people who are knocking on our doors to seek land so that they can get to Agriculture”.

Dr. Reddy said, once the land is utilised, growth can be expected in rural agriculture which will allow for positive economic growth. The Agriculture Ministry and the government are supporting farmers who are expanding into large-scale farming. ■





## Renewed MOU with Live & Learn

The iTaukei Land Trust Board (TLTB) has just renewed the Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) with Live & Learn on Thursday the 3rd of March.

In this MOU, the parties seek to develop a relationship of mutual respect and collaboration with regard to the development of REDD+ readiness programs, REDD+ policy, and REDD+ projects implementation on iTaukei lands in Fiji. The MOU is also to guide the parties in their conduct and relationship in facilitating the realization of the outcomes desired by the parties.

TLTB together with Live & Learn have agreed to provide and deliver services required of them in a manner that is transparent, accountable, effective, and to be in accordance with applicable laws and policies. Both parties have agreed to commit themselves, their agents, and staff to conduct themselves and manage their relationships in the spirit of cooperation and collaborative manner; for the benefit of the environment, the landowners as well as local communities in Fiji.

The main objective of this MOU is to provide a framework for cooperation and collaboration between the parties in the area of Payment for Environment Services

(PES) including REDD+ in Fiji. The fundamental principles to the successful implementation of this MOU are:

- Mutual respect for the distinctive roles of the organisations
- Recognition of and support for the independence of the organisations and their respective rights
- Respect for accountability requirements
- Supporting active participation and sharing of expertise or resources
- Providing avenues of open, transparent dialogues
- Encouraging cost-effective engagements between the organisations
- Supporting community and technical training and capacity building

For TLTB, it aims to do the following:

- Render assistance in accordance with Fiji's laws and policies at all times when facilitating the leasing of iTaukei land for Conservation purposes.
- Plan for areas to be earmarked for conservation in a holistic approach and partnership through sharing of ideas and information.
- Discuss opportunities whereby landowners could plan and lease conservation sites for the

carbon equity fund. Both parties have agreed to maintain cohesive communication with each other in terms of policy measures and process requirements. They will be responsible for their own costs that may arise and have also agreed to be involved in active participation and sharing of expertise or resources on matters of mutual benefit.

This MOU also supersedes any prior written or oral agreements between TLTB and Live & Learn. All assignments and obligations of both parties will be mutually agreed to and have the prior written consent of the other. Additionally, neither party is authorized to make representations on behalf of the other party. ■



From left: A representative from Live & Learn with the Research Officer Mr Navitalai Uluinaceva representing the Board during the signing of the MOU

# African Tulips - will we ever get rid of them?

**T**he African Tulip tree, also known as the “flame of the forest” is an evergreen tree that belongs to the bignonia family. It originates from the tropical parts of West Africa, but it is now found all over the world, especially here in the interiors of Fiji.

The good news is that the Ministry of Agriculture is looking for a way to eradicate this tree species as it had become quite a mess in some places, spoiling the native and natural forests of the area(s). The main outcome of the African Tulip Eradication program is that a stellar mechanism has been established to eradicate invasive species.

The African tulip tree is a category 3 restricted invasive plant under the Biosecurity Act 2014. It must not be given away, sold, or released into the environment. The Act requires everyone to take all reasonable and practical steps to minimise the risks associated with invasive plants under their control.

Minister for Environment, Dr. Mahendra Reddy, said: “the African Tulip trees, also known as the “Fame of the Forest” can outgrow and outcompete native trees, scorching the native vegetation in the area. And through the Fiji Ridge to Reef (Fiji R2R) project; trial plots and methods have been designed to eradicate African Tulip from native stands”.

In most countries, the African Tulip is listed as a Pest and can no longer be sold or distributed. In Fiji, it is considered one of the fastest invasive trees. It is threatening traditional agriculture and biodiversity conservation in the Waidina and Labasa catchments, and is rapidly increasing in the Ba and Tuva catchments, and also in other areas around Fiji.

The Ministry can now work with and assist communities and land-owning units in Fiji to get rid of this invasive plant species. The Fiji R2R Project, the project is aimed at preserving and sustaining the livelihoods of villages and communities.

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*the African Tulip trees, also known as the “Fame of the Forest” can outgrow and outcompete native trees, scorching the native vegetation in the area.*

