

TALANOA TOKTOK

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Project to cover carbon footprint



Land of milk and honey the PCC's Lomana Na Vulagi Farm at Lawaki will become a carbon sequestration project

Action, not words

Just off the main Dawasamu Road in Tailevu, Fiji, lies a living, breathing ecosystem of native trees, root crops, an avocado orchard, cattle and pineapples.

On the rolling hillsides are five wooded areas filled with wild pigs on the ground and a myriad of birds and insects in the branches. Just 200 metres from the highway and you wouldn't know there was a world outside. This is Lomana Na Vulagi (Love The Stranger) Farm. It's a project which will see a Retreat Centre, a Youth Eco-School, an operational farm to support the Pacific Conference of Churches' work in the region.

Fruit orchards, a ginger plantation and honey bees will come on-line in the first quarter of 2022. Tavioka, kumala, pineapples and cattle are already producing revenue.

After discussions with the Ministry of Forests, a carbon sequestration forest will take shape on the upper reaches of the farm before the PCC Secretariat closes on December 21 for the Christmas break. An audit of existing trees will be conducted to ascertain the value of the eco-system and to ensure no harmful species are introduced.

Once the farm and forests are fully operational, Lomana Na Vulagi will incorporate indigenous knowledge, scientific advice and common sense working in harmony with the existing ecosystem. The site will provide a practical experience for communities dealing with climate change mitigation or poor farming practices.

Permanent Secretary for Forests, Pene Baleinabuli, said the ministry promoted the Food Forestry Concept, which utilised the forest ecosystem structure in designing gardens & farms.

"We would also be happy to share and establish that with you, if you're interested," he said. Further discussions will be held with the ministry to discuss a collaboration on the Food Forestry Concept for possible implementation.

Lomana Na Vulagi is supported by the Presbyterian Church of the United States with a cash grant for 2022 and employs two farm staff from the neighbouring cillage.



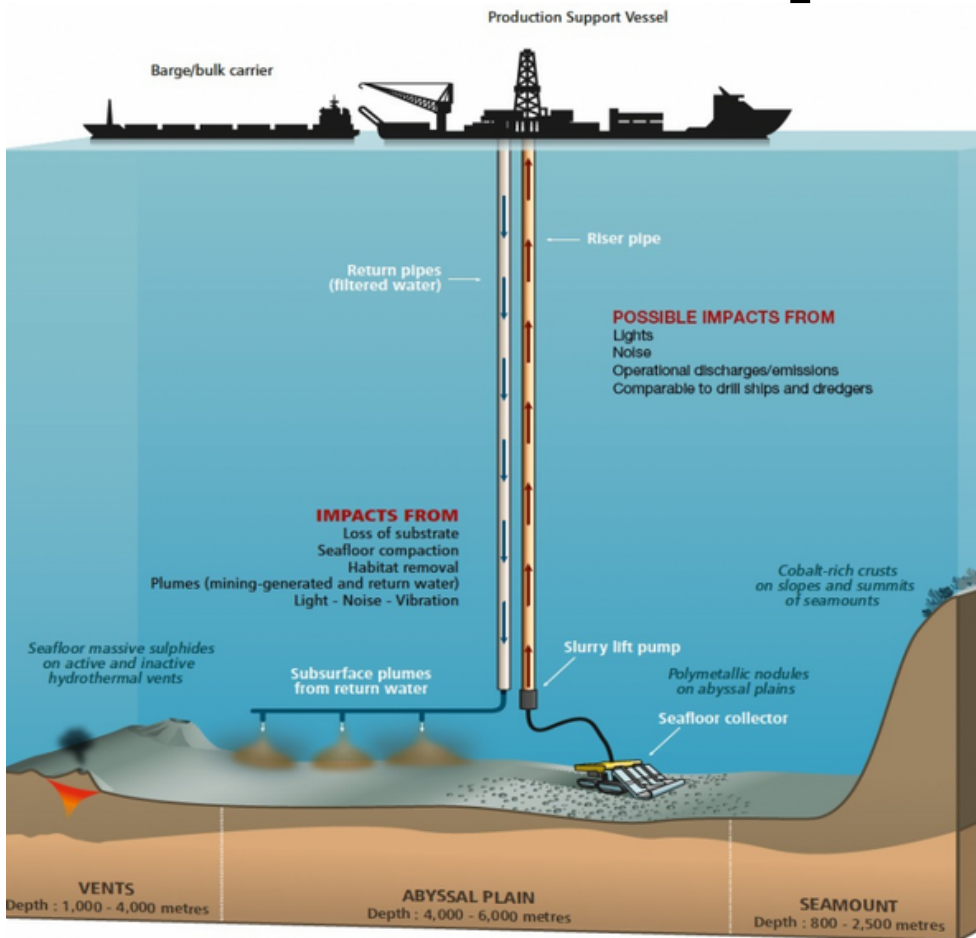
Payback time

In the last quarter of 2021, three of our staff members have covered thousands of kilometres to attend meetings in Europe. To offset the amount of fossil fuels they have used, we will plant 20 trees on the Lomana Na Vulagi Farm at Lawaki, Tailevu.

Where possible, the PCC conducts meetings virtually but there are some events we just cannot escape. The new farm allows us to pay for the damage we cause by planting trees - all native varieties, some with medicinal properties.

We'll be glad to offset your carbon footprint when you next choose to fly. It's time to pay for the damage we cause the environment.

MPs bid to stop mining



Pacific members of parliament have joined forces in an effort to stop Deep Sea Mining in the region.

The 14 MPs from nine countries will meet virtually on December 13. This follows Nauru's decision have the International Seabed Authority fast-track processes to commence mining in the Area by 2023..

The Cook Islands has called for foreign investment to explore its EEZ. Organised by the Pacific Blue Line - a coalition of civil society - the MPs are expected to offer warnings on the effect of Deep Sea Mining and revenue alternatives for regional nations affected by the financial stresses of COVID-19.

Word of Top notch panel meets caution

When Pacific parliamentarians discussed Deep Sea Mining in June, they noted the absence of regional technical and political guidance.

And they called for caution. The need for political leadership and unity across the region on an international ban on deep sea mining within and beyond national jurisdictions was also noted.

That led to the convening of a second round of talks.

This time discussions will lead MPs towards a parliamentary led process to determine a global DSM position - possibly a ban or moratorium.

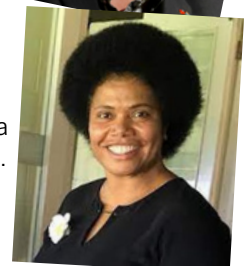
At the end of the meeting the MPs will deliver a joint statement likely to call for a global deep sea mining moratorium in 2023.



The push by regional governments for deep sea mining on an industrial scale as soon as possible in Oceania presents.

As identified by the Pacific Network on Globalisation, these challenges may be grouped into two categories - the onset of a new era of frontier extractive industry and territorial acquisition posing as green economic development; and the absence of a unified moral voice that could rally an effective regional response. Some Pacific parliamentarians who will speak on the issue are, clockwise from top left:

Ralph Regenvanu (Vanuatu), Tarita Holm (Palau), Simon Kofe (Tuvalu), Lenora Qereqeretabua (Fiji), Gary Juffa (PNG) and Debbie Ngarewa-Packer (NZ)





Prime mover ... Iosefo with timber for shutters at 23 Charlton Avenue

Cyclone season prep

The end of 2021 has seen a rush to complete hurricane preparations for our investment properties. With five commercial and four residential properties, it's important that the PCC prepares by installing shutters, clearing the gutters and making other necessary repairs ahead of the Cyclone Season. The team has completed work and all buildings have current insurance protection.

Urgent need to protect kids

In 2022, the Pacific Conference of Churches Children's Desk will train church leaders and practitioners in the Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands, and Fiji. These trainings will inform and update a PCC Regional Resource that has been developed with Biblical and Theological messaging on children as well as "Prevention, Intervention, and Reporting" processes that will help strengthen Safe Church Policies. The training is the culmination of research in three countries prior to COVID-18.

It will ensure that churches are safe places for children and that church workers have clear guidelines on how to interact with younger members of society.

The Church has always involved children in its mission through Sunday School programmes and activities. But rapid changes within Pacific communities - including advancing technology, the impacts of climate change and the Covid pandemic on families - have impacted the lives of children.

These impacts have even found their way into the churches. With increasing reports of child abuse across the Pacific, Church leaders have called for the urgent need to protect the physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional wellbeing of children who are considered God's precious gifts.

In three of the Gospels, Jesus says, "Let the children come to me and do not stop them."

Pacific Church Leaders have put these timeless words to action by committing themselves towards learning about the importance of protecting children from violence and finding ways to have their young voices heard through the mission of the Church.

The PCC, in conjunction with partner organisations, earlier launched a television and radio campaign to protect women and children from violence during the Christmas season. Campaigns are active in Fiji and Samoa.



Kids' time ... a child takes part in village consultations at Tukuraki, Ba, Fiji

Make a place for all

Children are often present but not heard at community training events. How hard is it to explain simply to the children what the adults are discussing?

After that, all it takes is some paper and markers for the children to put their ideas into pictures. You'll be amazed at the results. The PCC has had some success with this method at the end of 2021 and it brings a richness to community participation that largely goes unrecognised.

The PCC Children's Desk is grateful for the support and guidance of Church Leaders in the mission to support churches in becoming the safest institution for children in the Pacific through safeguarding policies, Christian resource activities, and training programmes in communities and Theological Schools.



One voice ... members of the disabled community at their church service in Suva, Fiji

Support for special needs

A regional survey on churches and people with disabilities will take place in 2023.

The survey will set a baseline for future work by churches with disabled people. This is a partnership between the Pacific Disability Forum, the Pacific Conference of Churches and the World Council of Churches. It is expected that future engagement will

include accessibility to churches and inclusive forms of worship.

"It is time we bring our brothers and sisters of different abilities into the mainstream church activities," said PCC General Secretary, Reverend James Bhagwan.

Once a baseline is established, programmes will be drawn up and circulated.

All one in Christ

Leaders of People Living with Disabilities were reaffirmed in a special church service last week.

PCC General Secretary, Reverend James Bhagwan, shared a devotion based on Psalm 139 on God's use of people with disabilities called to lead and witness in the Bible and in the world.

Bhagwan and his family participated in an ecumenical service organised by Horeb Disability Christian Fellowship and the Fiji Disabled People Association to celebrate International Day for People with Disabilities, witnessing moving acts of worship and testimonies and Eucharistic celebration. It was the family's first public worship in eight months, after the implementation of COVID-19 restrictions in Fiji.

Leaders discuss region's woes



The last Pacific Church Leaders Meeting for 2021 focused on matters of immediate concern in the Pacific. Of major concern was the political unrest in Kanaky (New Caledonia), the Solomon Islands and West Papua.

Leaders resolved to write to the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and the United Nations to express concern and seek support for further self-determination, reconciliation and peace-building activities. In all these efforts, leaders will be guided by the wisdom and desires of local churches.

The PCLM heard from the Pacific Theological College and the South Pacific Association of Theological Schools on their plans for 2021.

Leaders were briefed on plans for the Pacific attendance of the World Council of Churches assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany. A delegation of Pacific youth is expected to take part in the WCC assembly if travel is allowed.

There was also a presentation at the meeting by the PTC on its plans to transition into a university of Pacific philosophy in 2024.

