



**ARTICLE**  
**24 November 2009**

## **PARTNERS IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FIJI**

### **VANUA LEVU VILLAGERS ARE BEE-ING ON TOP OF THINGS**

It is clear, beekeeping makes sense. There's just something about honey, something that makes it special. It may be the simple fact that such small insects can work so efficiently together to create a beautiful food which is enjoyed by millions of people every year.

Without bees there would be very few flowering crops. Today 60% of our food plants depend on bees especially tree fruit, soft fruit, salad crops and beans. No bees – no healthy diet.

The MORDI\* team arrives at their host village, Nakorovou, in the far western region of Vanua Levu, after a 24-hour journey from Suva. A sea of small faces appears out of the darkness to greet us and after a hearty meal we all retire.

After a much-needed, good nights sleep, the village cockerel welcomes us into the sun-filled morning and we are soon on the move to our first project. We arrive, and in just half an hour the forest canopy floor is transformed by eager machete-clad workshop participants from dense bush into a flat clearing, the new home for a three-hive honey bee colony.

The 13 participants, both male and female, come from eight surrounding villages. They are being encouraged to keep honey bees in order to increase their income, to better their children's futures and to enhance self sufficiency.

Each hive is initially stocked with a swarm of 2000 honey bees consisting of one queen bee, drones (males) and worker bees. In around four months this little section of forest will be home to a colony of 60,000 – ten times larger than its original size.

The hives will also be ready for their first harvest in four months time. Beekeeping is a potential source of rural income that doesn't require a big investment to get started, and once the hives are established, the honey can be harvested four times a year.

One of these hives can bring in \$300 per harvest - totaling \$4800 per year for these three hives. This is good profit considering production of the actual honey itself does not require the input from human beings as the honey bees will take care of this and the safekeeping of the honey – this covers about 95 per cent of all work required!

Like many villages in the area, the people rely mainly on fish, dalo, kasava and an array of fruits. But this verdant rural paradise is the perfect place to keep honey bees. The MORDI beekeeping workshop is just one of three (including cattle farming and poultry farming) to take place during the two days and aims to bring resources, knowledge and motivation to all those who participate. Currently, the villages import chicken but they could easily produce their own meat and eggs. MORDI are introducing alternative farming practices to the villagers to help them become less reliant on what they know so well.

Three trainers from the Ministry of Agriculture were commissioned by MORDI to facilitate the two-day workshop including: Nemani Lutu, who volunteered his time to train the participants on beekeeping. Having been a sugar cane farmer for more than 20 years, Nemani chose to diversify. He moved to beekeeping five years ago and hasn't looked back since. Nemani says: "I believe this is an industry that should be supported because it suits everyone, youths, men,

women and the young or old. Since I started I have become passionate about introducing more colonies to Vanua Levu.

Nemani advises: "If you think beekeeping is something for you then I suggest getting onto one of my workshops – they are designed for any and everybody so come along! All you need is space and dedication. However it is important to know that the installation of the hives is the easy bit, the up-keeping and marketing of the honey is the harder element."

He continues: "I want to continue helping the villages of Vanua Levu to meet the high demand for its honey. I hope to access funding to buy equipment to make my own hives to supply villages like the ones we worked with today. I need \$7000 for the equipment and the villagers can supply their own wood (which makes it cheaper for them). Once this is secured I can help train ten times more villages than I already do."

### **Benefits of beekeeping**

- 1. Getting some exercise.** Sometimes it's hard to find a reason to go out and exercise. In beekeeping, you'll find a great way to get outside, get moving, and get some fresh air!
- 2. Learning about nature.** You can immerse yourself in nature, learning more about it, while still having lots of fun!
- 3. A constructive use of time.** Think of how many hours everyone wastes on basically pointless activities, just to use up their time - watching TV shows, playing video games, surfing the internet, to mention a few. Beekeeping is a perfect way to do use time more constructively.
- 4. The honey!** Imagine bringing in your first harvest of honey. Taking your first taste of fresh honey, giving away jars of "home-made" honey away to friends and family... It's such a rewarding feeling!

Honey bees need a smoke-free, quiet, flood-free, relatively windy, forest-filled and animal-free environment in order to flourish. Fiji is a honey-importing country but it could become self-sufficient in honey production because it has the perfect environment, climate and space to do so. The beekeeping industry is a growing industry in Fiji and holds much promise for the country.

### **MORDI Overview**

The MORDI Fiji program, funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), is in its third year of operation at PCDF. It has been a unique addition to the PCDF work-plan and it has proven itself to be innovative in the ways it deals with its communities.

### **Programme Project Sites:**



MORDI aims to contribute to sustainable, improved livelihoods of vulnerable communities, (especially youth and women) living in remote rural areas of Pacific Island countries, in line with the Millennium Development Goals. This will be achieved through four key components: community empowerment; economic empowerment; learning, sharing and upscaling; and programme management.

**Ends**

### **Editor's Notes:**

\*MORDI - The Mainstreaming of Rural Development Initiatives  
Beekeeping Fiji -

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### **About Partners in Community Development Fiji:**

PCDF holds a 30 year legacy of providing valuable lessons, guidance and most importantly, inspiration for the future. PCDF aims to assist the people of Fiji in all aspects of development; environmental, infrastructural, governmental and social.

Goals:

- ✓ Protect our coral reefs
- ✓ Conserve our fresh water
- ✓ Promote good governance
- ✓ Reduce the stigma attached to mental health issues
- ✓ Support sustainable livelihood initiatives

Partners in Community Development Fiji is one of Fiji's longest established development NGO's and is completely reliant on voluntary donations to continue its work.

**Mission Statement** - Working in partnership with communities to empower and assist with informed decision making for their own future development.

### **Partners in Community Development Fiji**

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**The MORDI Team with participants from the two-day workshop**



**Volunteer beekeeping trainer, Nemani Luvu**



**Trip into the forest of west Vanua Levu**



**Some chickens from the village**



**Men constructing a cattle fence as part of their cattle farming workshop**



**The forest after it was cleared and before the bee hives were introduced**



**Participants listen carefully as the bees surround them**



**The bees are transferred into their new hive**



**Participants prepare to transfer the bees**



**Smoke cuts the communication channels so the bees don't form a swarm**