

# PRESS RELEASE

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## **Community saved by coconut entrepreneur**

**When 28-year-old farmer Basilio Pita first heard of the MORDI (Mainstreaming of Rural Development Innovations) business and management training, he thought of it as a good way to develop his skills. Since the dalo and yaqona crops growing on his land only sold for little money, he had been looking for new ideas to improve his farming business. Little did he know that only a few weeks after attending the training course, his life, and that of so many living in his community, would change forever.**

In June 2010, Basilio enrolled in the business and management training course in Nadave, facilitated by local NGO Partners in Community Development (PCDF), and learnt about an array of simple business models that can be implemented by any motivated member of the community. The MORDI training supports vulnerable communities predominantly living in detached rural areas of Fiji.

After completing the training, Basilio returned to his village of Kilaka, where prospects are bleak and many of the elder community members suffer from diabetes, cancer, high blood pressure and strokes. He was bustling with ideas; eager to implement the theories he had learnt on the course and to improve not only his own business, but also the lives of other community members.

From the media Basilio had learnt that many European countries use virgin coconut oil to cure heart and blood diseases, so when he assessed the resources in his village, he was struck by the wealth of coconut and pine trees.

Only a week after leaving the training, Basilio had made up his mind and decided to start up a business producing virgin coconut oil. After speaking to experts in the field and collecting key concepts, he was ready to put the idea into action.

In a true community effort, Basilio gathered his siblings and friends to assist him with the collection, cooking and sieving of the coconuts. After only two days, Basilio was able to package the oil into 350ml bottles, which he now sells for 10 FJD each. Coconut oil has become his main source of income.

Since then the business has saved many lives in the community, diseases are being treated and often cured. Individuals are also spared the heavy

expenses of having to travel to the closest health centers and hospitals in Labasa or Savusavu. The medicine is so successful that members from nearby communities reach out to Basilio to buy his virgin coconut oil to treat their diseases.

Basilio has now gained confidence in generating new ideas to gage customers and market products. He says he was 'very fortunate to attend the training by PCDF (MORDI) and CATD' to progress his farming ideas into a successful business model that also serves his community.

Basilio's project provides inspiration for the youth of the district of Bua. To them it demonstrates how enthusiasm and available resources can be used for business ventures on a large scale and serves the dual purpose of community development.

**ENDS**

**Notes to editors:** For more information, interviews or images please call Annie Madden on: Tel.: 3300 392 or email: [admin@pcdf.org.fj](mailto:admin@pcdf.org.fj).