

# Indigenous communities protect rainforest in Fiji



The Drawa rainforest contains 26 orchid species including many that are rare or endemic.

**This carbon offset project aims at preventing further deforestation of a globally significant ecosystem. Instead of earning their living by harvesting timber, the local landowners - several Fijian clans - will establish a protected area which generates carbon credits.**



**4**

**tonnes of honey produced**



**8**

**part-time rangers are employed**



**54600**

**tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> have been sequestered**

The local indigenous rainforest communities in Fiji predominantly rely on subsistence agriculture, cash cropping as well as on the extraction of timber and non-timber forest products for domestic use. In the communities without access to commercial agriculture, commercial logging of timber is one of the few reliable income sources. Therefore, deforestation poses a serious threat to the rainforest in the project area. Deforestation contributes to the high percentage of global annual greenhouse gas emissions already caused by rainforest loss.

## Project type:

Land Use and Forestry

## Project location:

Fiji; Vanua Levu (Cakadrove and Macuata provinces)

## Project status:

In operation, credits available

## Annual CO<sub>2</sub> reduction:

18'800t

## Situation without project

Deforestation, loss of biodiversity, increased natural disaster risk

## Project standard



## Impressions



Fijian Ground Frog on stamp - an endangered endemic specie. Source: colnect.com



Marking buffer areas around the protected forest. Chairman of the Forest Cooperative, Mr Peni Masiri (no sleeves), rangers and members of the land management committee.

Moreover, deforestation threatens an especially biodiverse ecosystem that provides habitats for endangered and endemic species such as the Fiji Ground Frog. In addition, the threatened ecosystem plays a key role in protecting the local population from natural disasters such as cyclones, floods and droughts. An intact forest reduces the impact of extreme rainfall events on soil erosion and flooding, and the impacts of droughts on water security.

The project covers 4,120ha of tropical rainforest of 450 indigenous people in three villages in Fiji. Protecting the rainforest will have three important benefits: it will ensure carbon sequestration and conserve biodiversity. Second, it reduces the population's vulnerability to extreme weather events. Third, the project will protect watersheds to maintain a healthy river system and provide high quality drinking water.

In order to generate these benefits, the project will develop alternative income sources for the landowners while at the same time improving the populations' well-being. A Forest Community Cooperative was formed and receives support in management and capacity building. The strengthened community governance allows to establish community businesses such as producing and selling rainforest honey. Women are involved in decision making, and also benefit from the alternative livelihood activities.

Moreover, infrastructure is improved. One example is the construction of a new water source for the village. It replaces the former source which had been destroyed by a flooding during the cyclone Winston. The protected rainforest area will be actively managed according to a conservation plan and monitored to ensure that it remains protected in practice.

The project methodology framework for this programme was developed with European Union and GIZ funds and is managed by a local non-profit organization. It received an award for Excellence in Implementing Island Ecosystem Management Principles. Money from the CO<sub>2</sub> offsetting is used to compensate the landowners for giving up their rights to log timber.

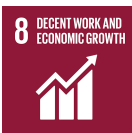
This project contributes to 5 SDGs:



Four tonnes of honey have been produced and sold by the indigenous population thanks to beehive loans.



The main source of drinking water, the catchment and tributaries of the Drawa River are safeguarded.



Eight part-time rangers and one operations manager are employed.



Mrs. Waita Curuval (front, centre) and female cooperative members play an active role in the project.



There is no need for treatment - the water of this small creek is pristine and protected by this project.



54'600 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> have been sequestered since 2012.



A detailed biodiversity survey was conducted in 2018 by the University of South Pacific and recorded 385 plant taxa from 115 families.