



## LOVE FOR FLOWERS BIND WOMEN



Members of the Dream Empowers Women's Club (DEWC)

Women forge bonds that unite them for various reasons and usually it's their common interest in a particular area that keeps that knot tight even years' down the line.

For the Dream Empowers Women's Club (DEWC), the bond grew and strengthened over years purely out of their love for flowers.

DEWC was formed in 2019 with the vision to engage in floriculture, expose the women to other opportunities and provided a platform to exchange ideas.

Group leader Mrs Kiran Lal said the 14 member group also acted as a de-stressor for the women.

"I would like to thank the ladies for being a part of this group. The

formation started from a small number and the invitation was extended and today we have an increase in numbers," she said.

"We are all flower lovers and that is all we talk about, every time we meet, or call each other. But we are also members of Suva Orchid and Horticulture of Suva."

Other DEWC group members are Manowar Gounder, Shanti Prasad, Lalita Sudhakar, Susan Lata, Luisa, Titilia, Paulini, Sadhana Lal, Lusiana Dansey, Judy Williams, Keleni Rabuatoka, Asinate and Bernadette Nambiar.

"While we live in different parts of Suva, our common interest which is our love for flowers, that

keeps us drawn to each other and we make it our business to meet despite the distance," she said.

"We are all stay at home ladies and in our group we have the ones who have been in the floriculture industry for years and we have those who are newcomers," said Mrs Lal.

"We want to advocate that as ladies we can be something from the little we plant to beautify our backyards.

"The floriculture group was also formed to assist those who are finding it a struggle to survive during this COVID-19 global pandemic."

"We want to show them that there is money in flowers and there is a market available. It's also a great opportunity to share experiences that will help other women grow."

The women also see flowers as a means for peace and harmony.

"When we are pressured or idle, flowers relieve our stress," she said.

DEWC meets regularly every second Tuesdays of every month.

"This is the special day set aside where we go and mingle with the other ladies, and develop our knowledge on floriculture and assist the beginners.

"The highlights of this meeting also involves sharing of skills amongst women from cooking,

sewing, handicraft (masi making) to flower arrangements.

"What I don't know, I learn from the other ladies, and I teach them what I know. It is exciting and brings out ideas of other ways to earn money," Mrs Lal said.

"We are not all experts in floriculture but as flower lovers, we are eager to learn from one another.

"It also includes the times when our members bring new varieties, again we are excited to share this as well as methods of grafting and marcotting."

DEWC is so active that they have had an excursion tour to the Western Division to visit farms and flourishing floriculturists. The Group was assisted by the Ministry of Agriculture's Women in Agriculture Program previously known as the Cottage Program.

"This program enabled us to receive green-house materials for our flowers. We are grateful for the assistance from Government which has surely boosted our morale to continue developing our passion," Mrs Lal said.

As a result of their maternal instincts, the women treat their flowers with love, just as a mother nurtures her children.

"We treat flowers the exact way we treat our children; with care and love, from the tiniest to the biggest plant," she said.

"They are all living things and fragile. If they are not treated well they can die. So we are very careful with how we treat our flowers."

Mrs Lal advised women who were interested in taking up floriculture to make use of the opportunities available and to establish contacts with other women who shared the same interest as they would assist in their growth.

Other advantages of taking up floriculture was its ability to keep one active and healthy and of course strengthening partnerships with other like-minded women.

Ms Bernadette Nambiar, a group member said being a part of DEWC reignited her passion for flowers.

"I have a keen interest in floriculture. I am glad that I am in this group as most of the ladies are pioneers of floriculture of whom I will be able to learn a lot from," she said.

"The interest was there and at first, I knew only about the common flowers. But having spent some time around these ladies I am able to differentiate other types of flowers. I always feel better when I make new discoveries and it makes me want to know more."

## WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE PROGRAM



### PROJECT OBJECTIVE

The project directly supports the Ministry's National Development Plan under Strategic Priority 2, that supports women and women's groups for active participation in Agriculture Development through;

- Commercializing floriculture for cut flowers and green foliage production and establishment of nurseries.
- Strengthening traditional art through commercializing Voivoi and Masi production.

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

- This program known as Women in Agriculture has been allocated \$150,000 this year to assist women entrepreneurs to start or expand their cottage industries.
- The 2020-2021 program will ensure the planting of 7 acres of voivoi, 7 acres of masi, and flowers.
- A 40% increase in production is anticipated in the year 2021 as a result of the intervention.
- An additional return of \$4million is expected to be generated from these two industries [handicraft and floriculture].

### PROJECT BENEFIT

- A total of 1,200 women farmers, 100 cluster groups, and farming households will benefit from the project.
- 100 suppliers of voivoi/masi/floriculture/spices/herbs will benefit from the sale of planting materials.
- The project will have a social impact on education, health, social and religious obligations.
- Economic benefits include infrastructural development especially on house improvements, footpath, improvements on water systems, etc.
- Environmental benefits through best farming practices are adopted through intercropping and integrated farming systems.

The project is anticipating to achieve 21 hectares of new area planted with masi, voivoi, and floriculture valued at an average \$1.5m by 100 women cluster of 1200 members.

### MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The Farm Management Section of the Ministry of Agriculture will be responsible for the monitoring of all capital programs for the Crop Extension Division biannually [January and July]. The key performance indicators for this program are as follows;

- Number of Masi, Voivoi, and Floriculture farmers trained
- Number of Masi, Voivoi, and floriculture planting materials distributed and planted
- Number of women clusters formed
- Number of women farmers assisted
- Number of floriculture nurseries constructed
- Status of the project before and after an intervention

### HOW TO APPLY?

Cluster groups and women involved in floriculture that need assistance, can register with the Ministry of Agriculture in their respective locality/office.