



## MY HOBBY FEEDS ME – LINGAM



Mr. Gyan Lingam at his home in Nadera in front of his home garden.

Taking pleasure in an activity that helps one's relaxation is known as a hobby and is usually done during one's own time.

There are many types of hobbies that people choose to keep themselves occupied with, but for 57-year-old Gyan Lingam, who is originally from Batinikama in Labasa, his hobby has helped to feed him and his family.

The Lingam family, who had relocated to Nadera in 2011 share a passion for toiling the land. Before moving to Nadera, they planted sugarcane on the outskirts of Labasa and have always had a close relationship with the land.

For Mr. Lingam, his hobby is planting. He genuinely loves keeping active on his garden, and on his cassava patch which is just behind

their family home in Ratu Dovi Road, Nadera. He beams from ear to ear every opportunity he gets to check on his labour of love.

On their ¼ acre residential lot, they've made the most out of the available land that is available to them. There are hanging containers planted with vegetable seeds and some potted plants which are ready to be transplanted to their garden.

The Lingam's have put their time to good use immediately following receipt of their Home Gardening seed packages, which were distributed to them courtesy of the Ministry of Agriculture.

"First of all, thank you to the Ministry of Agriculture, they helped me to get my hands on some seeds and because I was not doing anything

and with most of my land here being left idle, I decided to put it to good use straight after I received the seeds, that's when I started to plant the vegetables here at home."

He shared that after planting the seeds, he received interest from his neighbours who were interested in buying some of his mature vegetables to which he gladly obliged them.

"When I planted the vegetables, the interest came and with that, I knew I can make some extra money," he smiled.

He is also attentive to his health and that of his family's, choosing to view his farming and gardening activity as bouts of much needed physical exercise; "I took it as my physical training and I have involved my wife too, plus I also get to have fresh vegetables from my gardens for my family's meals so I don't

have to go out, especially in this crisis, to buy our vegetables from the market."

He has lauded the continuous efforts of the Ministry of Agriculture in attempting to lessen the impact of COVID-19 on families in affected areas, particularly on Viti Levu.

"What the Ministry of Agriculture is doing is good, all I can say is that it is great and I commend their effort and I give my blessings to the Ministry. It is great that during this crisis, the Ministry of Agriculture has not stopped working, and I am saying this from my heart, thank you very much for supporting the whole of Viti Levu in all that you do," said Mr. Lingam.

He has made a plea to his fellow Fijian, to stay home as much as possible and to turn to the land, "Do some gardening to help you save money, whatever you used to spend on the vegetables in the market, you can redirect that money elsewhere, use the land to plant your own food and you can

also sell the excess and make money from the comfort of your own homes.

"Planting is my hobby, I have always loved getting my hands dirty because, for me, the land is my life. I feed myself through my hobby, and my hobby feeds me," said Mr. Lingam.

"I want to tell people to use all available land around their house to plant your food and vegetables, you will feel happy eating from your own garden.

Mr. Lingam also occasionally does his own research into the types of agricultural asexual reproduction and plant propagation that he can do. He has successfully budded and grafted a number of fruit trees around his home, like his lemon tree and guava tree.

He grows an assortment of vegetables on his vegetable garden, ranging from Chinese cabbages, okra, eggplants, capsicum, tomatoes, maize and bitter melon.



Mr. Gyan Lingam with his vegetable seed bed.

## LIVE AND LEARN ASSIST LOCKED DOWN FAMILIES



Ministry staff assisting Live and Learn Fiji in distributing the food packs and home gardening seeds.

About 1,400 families in the Suva-Nausori lockdown area were assisted under Suva NGO, Live and Learn Fiji's Food Security Program in the past few weeks.

Humanitarian, Disaster, Response and Preparedness Coordinator,

Kolosa Mateibalavu said it was the organization's second response for the second wave of COVID-19.

The response was in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Health and Medical Services, the Republic of the Fiji Military Forces,

Empower Pacific and the Fiji Disabled Peoples Federation.

The coordination humanitarian support was funded by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) through Live and Learn Fiji.

"Providing food ration assistance to households that tested positive for COVID-19 by the Ministry of Health and those who were also primary and secondary contacts," Mr Mateibalavu said.

"For the identification of beneficiaries we worked with our partners.

"We did not enter any premises without permission. We worked with the Ministry of Health who provided the data of those that in self-isolation as a result of their positive status," he said.

He explained the criteria for the food pack distribution was mainly according to the number of family members. If a household had less than seven members they then qualified for one food ration pack. However, if there was more than seven family members, than they would receive two packs.

Mr. Mateibalavu said referrals

of the food ration recipients were also identified through their Food Cluster which included the Ministry of Agriculture and the vulnerable.

The Live and Learn assistance included food rations, backyard seedlings for food security, and WASH and hygiene kits for public health.

"In terms of food security, we are trying to ensure that we are not just supporting them with the food that can last for a week but also try to encourage nutritious food through the Ministry of Agriculture support of backyard gardening seedlings," he said.

"The seeds that are given is something they can plant in their backyard and if it is open pollinated than it is something they can raise again.

"In addition, the booklets handed out, will provide the knowledge, techniques, and skills on how they can raise their seedlings in their backyard."

Lami recipient, Maria Miller thanked Live and Learn Fiji for the timely assistance and reaching out to communities.

"We are grateful for the assistance as we were beginning to worry about

our next meal and this has lifted a weight off our shoulders. Not only were we not allowed to go to town because of being in isolation but we have been without work and this assistance has brought some relief to us."

Another recipient, Adi Kacaraini Vakarewakobau-Nuku of Taro, Bau, Tailevu expressed similar sentiments adding, that the gesture was deeply appreciated given they had to isolate as one of the family members tested positive.

"There are ten members in our family, and we were glad to receive two food packs. We became primary contacts because one of my family member tested positive. This assistance will certainly go a long way for us. On behalf of my family I want to sincerely thank Live and Learn, and Ministry of Agriculture for this help. Vinaka Vakalevu!"

Mr. Mateibalavu explained in the first response for this second wave of COVID-19, Live and Learn Fiji assisted 600 households with food packs only.