

FOR THE LOVE OF HER DAUGHTER



Sera Dikoila (right) and her daughter Alacia Dereki

“My daughter’s ambition to become a civil engineer motivated me to ensure she realized all that she had always dreamt of.”

This sums up a mother’s love for her daughter who has ambitious plans to be a part of a male dominated field, the story of a mother and daughter coupling in the village of Namuavoivoi in Bua.

Sera Dikoila lives with her 13-year-old daughter, Alacia Dereki and the two only have each other to lean on following the passing of their husband and father. “My husband has left us to be with the Lord and

it was him that we always depended on for our livelihood and the education of our daughter,” she said.

The family owned a yaqona farm from which they derived their livelihood and it was during their time of loss that Sera unfortunately had to gather the reigns from.

“I saw what we had left, and my daughter’s yearning to become successful in life kept me moving during that difficult time and was also the reason I kept planting yaqona, which will be for her future.” Depending on others and relatives was

not an option for the family of two as Sera soldiered on, on her daughters behalf. This perseverance bore fruition in September 2017 as the duo planted their 200 yaqona plants and have been phase planting ever since, slowly and surely trudging along.

“We do not employ anyone and because there are no men to assist us, we often carry the harvest on our own backs from our farm,” she said.

“The struggle of being a single mother and residing in the village is a challenge and I have seen the good that farming can bring,” said Sera. “It has provided for us and is now, our source of income.”

Ms Dikoila has instilled in her daughter the virtues of a woman of courage and will to face adversity in light of numerous obstacles; “Since it is just the two of us, I always remind my daughter of the need for us to keep moving, although at a slower pace, but the important thing is that we continue to grow.

Weekends are always set aside for their yaqona farm and is a norm which Alacia has happily accepted.

“I have seen us develop from farming and I also know that farming will cater for my tuition and that is why I am always keen to assist my mother,” said Alacia.

“My mother will not always be strong, and I often notice weariness and tiredness in her, that is why I gladly assist her invest in something beneficial to the both of us,” added the young woman.

To add to their struggles, Sera is partially blind but that has not dampened her iron will to provide the best for her daughter as they have both managed to work around it.

“I would remind her not to be weary as the yaqona we go and visit every week is the same yaqona that will pay for her tuition and that constant reminder brings us through. Sometimes it would be an emotional farm day for us as we reflect on things we cannot achieve and the hardships we face in bringing our produce down either on our shoulders or on our backs,” said Sera.

Their continuous stride for excellence has also led to them operating a canteen

in the village, something which they have gradually worked towards as they develop their small micro enterprise and farm simultaneously.

“We opened our canteen in 2018 from the revenue our yaqona brought in and from the mere collection of sweets we sold from our window years ago, the villagers now have a wide variety of items to choose from,” she said.

“Farming has not only fed us but has greatly assisted in our canteen, the education of my daughter, village and church commitments and also the extension of our home.”

Sera embodies the spirit of a woman determined to meet the needs of her family,

one she is currently excelling at through her farming venture all the while instilling the discipline in her daughter to be an independent woman.

“For those who are lucky enough to still have partners, try and do something useful for your unexpected days and for those who are also struggling alone, uphold the independence, stop waiting for assistance and work hard to succeed,” she said.

“We received no assistance from anybody but managed to continue, we achieved what we have achieved from farming and through farming, I have sown the seeds of my daughters dream.



The canteen set up from farming

MINISTER REDDY DELIVERS ASIA-PACIFIC REGIONS STATEMENT AT UNCCD COP 14



Minister for Agriculture, Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy and Fiji’s High Commissioner to India H.E. Yogesh Punja (left) with Senior Research Officer Solomon Nagaunavu (middle)

The Asia-Pacific region’s stance for more urgency to be placed on advancing sustainable land management on a global scale was highlighted during the 14th Session of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) Conference of Parties (COP 14).

While delivering the Asia-Pacific regions statement during the UNCCD COP 14 opening session of High-Level Segment Meeting in New Delhi, India, Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development, Waterways and Environment Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy said bold steps needed to be taken to implement outcomes from the Convention.

“As a region, the Asia-Pacific acknowledges the immense effort by UNCCD in the advancement of sustainable land management (SLM) to rehabilitate, restore and reverse land degradation.

“The end goal, of course, is to protect our land, from overuse and drought, so its physical capacity can sustain the steady provision of basic human necessities of which are food, water, and energy,” said Minister Reddy.

Minister Reddy elaborated that as the world became more fragile against the effects of a changing climate, transformative change was crucial.

“The Convention must grow and so must the efforts of Parties to increase and renew their commitment to good land

stewardship that helps people, communities and countries create wealth, grow economies and secure sufficient food, clean water, and energy by ensuring land users an enabling environment for SLM.

“Desertification, land degradation and drought is a result of various factors including climatic variations and human activities, and while climate change affects the whole world, it is the poorest that suffer the most of which the majority and our region is believed to be homed to the majority of these most affected and deprived populations of basic necessities in life,” said Minister Reddy.

“The farmers, particularly in marginalized dryland in arid and semi-arid regions of Asia as well as affected countries by land degradation in Small Island Developing States (SIDS), have been experiencing for years the threat of desertification, land degradation, drought and climate change to their lives,” he added.

He said Asia-Pacific acknowledged that to address these challenges, the key was to implement integrated land use planning respecting connectivity of Nature and to optimize land use and interventions to avoid, reduce and reverse the degraded land.

“Asia-Pacific highlights the key role of value chains based on land restoration and partnership building with private sectors for sustaining a stabilized ecosystem

services with an improved livelihood.

Minister Reddy also stated that the region was satisfied that further scientific support to drought effects mitigation and land degradation neutrality implementation had both been included in the science and policy interface work programme.

“We welcome the momentum created around the discussion on enabling policies related to drought, sand and dust storms, migration, land tenure, and Gender. However, we must re-emphasize that policies are to enable implementation and support actions.

“They need to adapt to different national circumstance, especially in the movement of next UN decades for ecosystem restoration for achieving a land degradation neutrality world,” he said.

The UNCCD COP 14 will address critical gaps in land management and planning as well as practical actions to ensure countries achieve Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) by delivering tools and resources that are fit for purpose.

The Conference was held from 02nd-06th September 2019, followed by the High-Level Segment two-day meeting where more than 100 Ministers are in attendance to be rounded up by the Ministerial Level Round Table Discussion.