

## **INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF FOREST-2011**

### **'FORESTS FOR PEOPLE – REFLECTING YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY'**

Many forest conservation projects seek to preserve biodiversity by protecting habitats from exploitation or degradation. Although such efforts motivated by global concern, habitat protection also yields domestic benefits. Fiji has a land mass of 1, 800,000 hectares of which 935,000 hectares (52%) are covered by forest. Forest plays a significant role in the lives of pacific islanders – economically, socially, culturally and environmentally .This essay is about how my local community benefits from forest actions through which forest are destroyed and ways by which forest can be protected.

Forest are a source of food, medicine, fuel wood and clean water .It is seen as a natural pharmacy as it provides plant which are used as traditional herbal medicines. Trees provide wood which we use for building houses, boat and making furniture. Forestry is growing industry in Fiji and it plays an important role in the development of the nation. It contributes \$40 million to foreign exchanges earning and \$35 million to the gross domestic product through exporting timber, plywood veneer, furniture, pine chips and pine timber. It also creates employment to about 2,000 people in Fiji. Forest provides shelters for people and a home for plants and animals. It plays a vital role in maintaining a stable global climate and environment .Moreover, forest provides water –catchment protection; they produce water for agriculture; and they are place for social recreation. Tropical forests provide all sorts of other benefits that people all over the world rely on. They play major role in regulating rainfall and providing water to millions of people around the world. The bulk of terrestrial genetic biodiversity is located in forest and knowing that genetic resources constitute the wealth of a country, our forest play a vital role in protecting this wealth, the role of trees and forest is rapidly changing from that of mainly providers of timber to a much broader role, with social, environmental economical and cultural dimensions. From my community about 25 people have been employed by logging industries.

Today tropical rainforests are disappearing from the face of the globe .Despite growing international concern, rainforests continue to be destroyed at a pace exceeding 80,000 acres (32, 000 hectares) per day. Much of this remaining area has been impacted by human activities and no longer retains its full original biodiversity. Deforestation of tropical rainforests has a global impact through species extinction, the loss of important ecosystem services and renewable resources, and the reduction of carbon sinks. However, this destruction can be slowed, stopped, and in some cases even reversed. Economic, political, and social pressures will not allow rainforests to persist if they completely closed off from use and development. The solution must be based on what is feasible, not overly idealistic and depends on developing a new conservation policy built on the principle of sustainable use and development of rainforests. Beyond the responsible development of rainforest , efforts to rehabilitate and restore degraded forest lands along with the establishment of protected areas are keys to securing rainforest for the long term benefits they can provide mankind. A climate change is a global issue and in order to address climate changes, we need a global solution that addresses all major sources of emissions. Deforestation is a major source of emissions- it contributes more emissions than all the cars, train planes and boats in the world forest play a dual role in climate change. When forest is destroyed, carbon

dioxide is released to the atmosphere, contributing to climate. But when forest are planted or allowed to regenerate naturally, the tree pull carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it in their trunks and branches as they grow. This is an important service that trees provide to mitigate climate change. By planting new forest and restoring degraded forest, we can actually pull significant amount of carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere, while also providing critical habitat for important species and ecosystem services that people rely on .The main causes of rainforest destruction or deforestation are humans. Humans are cutting down rainforests for many reason ,including :wood for both timber and wood for making fires, agriculture for both small and larger farms; land poor farmers who don't have anywhere else to live; grazing land for cattle; and road construction. The main causes of total clearances are agriculture for farmers in Labasa as it is their only sources of income and in drier areas, fuel wood collection and logging .mining, industrial development and large dams also have serious impact. The heavy machinery used to penetrate the forest and build road causes extensive damage. Trees are felled and soil is compacted by heavy machinery, decreasing the chance for regeneration. The felling of one 'selected' tree, tears down with its climbers, vines, epiphytes and lianas. A large hole is left in the canopy and complete regeneration takes hundreds of years. Removing a felled tree from the forest causes even further destruction, especially when it is carried out carelessly. The tracks made by heavy machinery and the clearings left behind by loggers in Suweni, Korotari in Labasa due to indiscriminate logging the sites of extreme soil disturbances which begin to erode in heavy rain. This has caused siltation to the Korotari River and during rainy seasons it gets flooded easily. Due to the delicate nature of rainforest soil and destructive nature of present day agricultural practices, the productivity of cash crops grown on rainforest soil declines rapidly after a few years. Furthermore the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that '1.5billion of the 2 billion people worldwide who rely on fuel wood for cooking and heating are overcutting forest ; this problem is worst in drier regions of the tropics.

In order to conserve our forest from further destruction, we need to take immediate action and preventative measures. One of the first initiatives that need to be considered in order to save the forest is to stop the clear cutting of forest s. These are situations in which larger areas of forest are cut down all at once. Often, this offers when logging company needs to have a large amount of wood at once, but this causes the forest to have a harder time trying to rebound from this loss. When you can remove the trees in smaller sections, animals that might be displaced will still be able to find homes in the areas, as opposed to having to be moved a further distances as they might be when entire forest are cut down. Simply being aware of the animal and wildlife in the area can help to ensure that the forest ecosystems are protected and maintained. Protecting the forest is not an overnight process, to be sure, but it is process which can help the world begin to help itself. Simply banning the timber trade or establishing reserves will not be enough to salvage the world's remaining tropical rainforest. In order for the forest to be preserved, the underlying social, economic, and political reasons for deforestation must be recognized and addressed. If it is decided that rainforests must be saved, then the creation of multi – use reserves that promote sustainable development and education of local people would be a good place to start. Government should create awareness programs and organize workshops especially in rural areas so that people can understand the impacts of their actions on the environment. If possible,

reforestation and restoration project should be encouraged if we, humanity, hope to come out of this situation without serious, long-term consequences.

To conclude, it can be said that trees and forest are among the new things that hold the key to our survival and the survival of many other forms of life, and therefore it is fitting that their multiple roles are recognized. Forests not only protect natural biodiversity but also the sustainability of all other product and services that are provided by them. All our action has consequences. We can help prevent negative consequences by becoming more knowledgeable about the impacts of our action. Finding solutions is not always easy so we need to become better informed and develop the ability to think creativity in order to reduce our ecological footprint

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