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Local community and rangers unite for forest celebration

Despite the rainy weather conditions, the Sigatoka Sand Dunes National Park team and the local community celebrated the International Day of Forests (IDOF) in a remarkable way. The highlight of the event was planting over 800 trees, showing the commitment of the people and the volunteers.



Photo: Participants before the tree planting session on March 21, 2024 Sigatoka Sand Dunes © Sigatoka Sand Dunes National Park



The celebration was held on 21 March, which was also part of the National Trust of Fiji's (NTF) Kiwa Initiative project. NTF's main goal for the project is to boost the climate resilience of the Sigatoka Sand Dunes ecosystem.

This event was made possible thanks to the park rangers. They have been working tirelessly on the NTF Kiwa Initiative project that values the importance of trees with the motto, "I planted a tree today because trees matter."

Former Park Manager for Sigatoka Sand Dunes National Park, Jason Tutani, who was the chief guest, emphasised the importance of local actions with global impacts.

"Today is all about actions, local actions with global implications." He highlighted the significance of forests, mentioning that they cover a third of the Earth's land surface.

Mr. Tutani stated, "We are losing 10 million hectares of forests annually to deforestation." He said that these destructive practices have an impact on climate change and our future.

He also discussed the theme for this year's IDOF, 'Forests and Innovation'. "This year's theme touches on how our innovations and technological advancements should now be put to use in protecting our forests." Mr. Tutani encouraged everyone to participate in tree planting campaigns and use technology to preserve our forests for future generations.

The NTF project, titled "Building coastal resilience—forest restoration, invasive management actions, and the Heritage in Young Hands Programme—of the Sigatoka Sand Dunes ecosystems," is a local project under the Kiwa Initiative. The initiative is funded by the European Union (EU), Agence Française de Développement (AFD), Global Affairs Canada (GAC), the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs (DFAT), and the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT).

The Kiwa Initiative has established partnerships with the Pacific Community (SPC), the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), and the Oceania Regional Office of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).



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