

## 2019 International Day of Forests Theme: “Forests and Education”

The United Nations declared the 21st of March as the International Day of Forests in the year 2012, to raise awareness on the importance of forests in poverty alleviation, sustainable livelihoods, food security, and environment conservation for current and future generations.

This day is celebrated across countries through tree planting programs. The theme for International Day of Forests 2019 is “Forests and Education”. Education promotes Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) and biodiversity conservation, which plays a critical role in enhancing community resilience.

The theme further ensures conformity with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

- Goal 4 - quality education to improve people’s lives and create pathways for sustainable development
- Goal 15 - life on land which is about planting trees for the amelioration of the environment

The key messages of the theme for the 2019 International Day of Forests is to “learn to love forests” through the following actions:

- Considering the rise in human population and associated demands for resources, it is important to improve our understanding of forests and maintain forest health.
- Nature-based education for children, creates a new generation of more informed and responsible citizens and improves approaches towards sustainable management of resources.
- An integrated approach that blends modern and traditional knowledge is critical to sustainably manage forests.
- Investment in forestry education can change the world.
- Forest education should be accessible to all without any disparity on the basis of gender.

The Government of Fiji launched an ambitious tree planting program this year, which involves planting 4 million trees in 4 years, equivalent to a million trees a year. This initiative would encourage people to plant trees, to provide timber and non-timber forest products such as fruits, ornamental and mangrove tree species.

This initiative builds upon the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which calls upon people to conserve forests globally.

The 4 million trees initiative demonstrates the commitment of the Government of Fiji to address climate change, land degradation, biodiversity loss and contribute to building sustainable livelihoods for local communities.

Fiji Minister of Forestry, Mr. Osea Naiqamu, while launching the International Day of Forests in Dratabu, Nadi stated that “by investing in forestry education at all levels, Fiji can help ensure there are scientists, policymakers, foresters and local communities working to halt deforestation and restore degraded landscapes. In turn, healthy forests will help us achieve many of the Sustainable Development Goals”.

The Fiji National University (FNU), including the College of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry (CAFF), is committed towards Government’s tree planting initiative. The Department of Forestry at CAFF is organising a tree planting program today at the Instructional Forestry Farm Complex (IFFC) to commemorate this occasion.

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### Biodata of Dr Shipra Shah



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