



Investment Plan for Scaling

Mobilising Investments for Scaling up Community Food Production and Health Initiatives: A Response to Fiji's Health Crisis

Aim:

Diversity for food and nutrition security in Fiji so no child sleeps on an empty stomach as families struggle to feed themselves due to unemployment created by the corona virus crisis.

Total Budget needed: **450,000 FJD | 183,000 EUR | 205,000 USD**

Total Budget raised: **182,000 FJD | 74,000 EUR | 83,000 USD**

Looking for: **268,000 FJD | 109,000 EUR | 122,000 USD**

(Details under Financial Appraisal)

Partners:

Lead: The Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprises & Development (FRIEND), Fiji

Tech support: TraSeable Solutions, Fiji

Other partners: University of the South Pacific (USP)

Problem Statement

Fiji was struck by the corona virus outbreak in March when lockdowns and collapse of tourism sector resulted in job losses of more than 120,000 people. The global pandemic has caused food imbalance.

Fiji has a high dependence on food imports (80%) and has been struggling with the crisis of non-communicable diseases (NCDs); approximately 77% of all deaths are attributed to cardiovascular and diabetes.

80% of Fijian children below the age of two and 50% below the age of five as well as almost of half of the population are suffering from anaemia. The immune system of those suffering from poor nutrition is highly compromised. The emerging international COVID-19 crisis and demands for social distancing is putting increased pressure on health and food systems. Such pandemics and the disruptions in global trade could also have a negative impact on national food availability, health and nutritional status. Innovative responses are needed to adequately respond to the food

security, nutrition and income challenges. It is therefore urgent and timely to invest in scaling up local innovations that build resilience in the Fiji agri-food and nutrition system.

It is expected in months to come Fiji will not be able to import all its food needs as exporting countries are prioritising their own internal food security. If imports are available, it will be more costly. With increasing unemployment most families will not be able to access diverse nutritious foods compounding existing health challenges.

Opportunity

Fiji has been facing national nutrition crisis that has exacerbated the NCD crisis. To respond to this FRIEND had developed a strategy to build home gardens with 9x9 crops. [Studies](#) of the program showed positive results. The Ministry of Agriculture has also recognised the importance of home gardens and committed to starting 5000 home gardens this year.

It is crucial that backyard gardens become a feature of each household in Fiji to ensure food security and that no child sleeps on an empty stomach in coming months. It is now nationally recognised that home gardens could be a key to food security and there is a national campaign needed. There is also an urgent need to operationalise the plan for national food security through backyard gardens with the 9x9 model to ensure nutritional diversity.

Involved Parties

The Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprises & Development (FRIEND) Fiji is mobilising public and private partners; TraSeable Solutions (TraSeable Farms App), as well as the University of the South Pacific (USP) to work together to expand their innovative solutions to increase home food production thereby ensuring that households have access to diversified foods and opportunities to earn income or reduce food expenditure.

FRIEND is a recognised partner on Food security and serves on the National Food and Nutrition Cluster and works closely with Ministry of

Agriculture to upscale backyard gardening for health, livelihood and food security in response to COVID 19. FRIENDs model backyard program supported by CTA has been recognised and now there is national recognition or need for National backyard garden program.

FRIEND was one of the civil society organisations (CSOs) that received seed funding from the [Innov4AgPacific](#) project to scale up their community-based agriculture and health interventions to strengthen the link between agriculture-nutrition and income. This home-grown CSO champions an integrated social, health and economic approach to building knowledge and skills of households to manage their own resources and practice organic agriculture and good nutrition. FRIEND-Fiji is a strong advocate of empowering communities for ensuring the sustainability of local nutritious agri-food systems. An assessment of the FRIEND Innov4AgPacific seed-funding project by the University of the South Pacific working in collaboration with the Universities of Cambridge and Exeter and CTA, has shown that dietary diversity of households improved and that community food production initiatives are part of the solution to addressing the high burden of malnutrition including NCDs.

The [Innov4AgPacific](#) project has invested in innovative ICT4Ag solutions and strengthening farmer organisations to also support value chain development. For example, TraSeable Solutions, Fiji received grant funding and developed the TraSeableFarms App, which allows farmers to track produce from the field to the plate thereby increasing market access. Intense focus group discussions helped to guide the design of the app in the most user-friendly way. TraSeable Solutions has also worked with Nature's Way Cooperative (NWC) on enhancing fresh fruit and vegetables export through developing a digital traceability system that links grower information with treatment data. USP and the National Food and Nutrition Centre (NFNC), have expanded the MyKana app, to include a backyard garden component to promote healthy eating. 109 medical personnel and ministerial staff have received 'train the trainers' coaching, 440 families have been trained to use the MyKana app and 70 gardens have been newly established.

Evidence of successful public-private partnerships can be used to convince government agencies, donors, development partners and the business and finance community to increase funding to support the stakeholders **to take the lead** in scaling-up actions that have a direct impact on agri-business and value chain development, incomes, health and nutrition. The Partners have agreed to adopt a proactive approach that triggers behavioural change to transform the agri-food system with the active engagement and commitment of Fijians themselves.

Credibility factors - Scaling-Up of existing solutions

FRIEND 9x9 garden model has been evaluated and is available in CTA technical brief '[Building the Evidence Base on Community Food Production Initiatives in Pacific Island Countries](#)' that has provided credibility to the model.

The program was also awarded a best practice award by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

FRIEND has been able to partner with TraSeable Farm apps and has built a credible data system that has attracted private sector interest. Ministry of Agriculture has rolled out its seeds distribution nationwide and committed to providing 12 varieties of seeds for upscaling the program to 5000 households and contributing to increased dietary diversity and better nutrition. The proposal for upscaling has received media support – 5 radio stations (including vernacular, web news, national TV and farmer apps will be using materials produced by FRIEND for education to reach out to maximum number of households. FRIEND has started running zoom training programs for 450 youths that has attracted the interest of UNDP to invest in the program and expand its reach to Atoll countries in the Pacific. Corporate Leadership through Fiji Leadership Alumni has engaged in discussions to invest in the project.

FRIEND was able to mobilise key partnerships with private sector organisations to scale up backyard gardens for food security as a COVID response. FRIEND partnered with TraSeable to develop a database for all FRIEND food security initiatives. [Leadership Fiji](#) Alumni came together with

private sector senior executives in lead roles who offer to support and help raise funds for the upscaling.

[Business Media Fiji](#) joined and has been working with successful models to generate advocacy platforms. [Communications Fiji Ltd](#) with four vernacular and two English radio channels and web-based news channel Fiji Village has requested for a partnership where the [Traseable platform](#) will be shared with news channels. FRIEND has also been able to speak with [TISI Sangam](#) (socio-economic, cultural and educational organisation) to start rural backyard gardens at 28 schools where families will be able to source seeds and vegetables.

The Ministry of Agriculture has embraced the web of partnerships and is facilitating nationwide home garden seeds. The [Youth Alliance for Future Generations](#) has started receiving online training on backyard gardening enabling 450 youths to be part of the upscaling program.

FRIEND and the Innov4AgPacific project partners are ready to work together to bring together their experiences in community nutrition and the latest Agri-ICT solutions developed in Fiji to develop a scale-able model that will also work in crisis times.

FRIEND has prepared educational materials for online training sessions and educational videos on diversification of crops in backyard gardens based on the 9x9 model as well as healthy ingredients and cooking methods for diversified and nutritious diets that support a healthy immune system. This has been upscaled and are being used through national TV and radio stations to reach maximum viewership.

Through the online trainings UNDP has come forward and is discussing sharing of these materials for Atolls for food security.

On a producer level, the **TraSeable Farms App** connects farmers and buyers of locally grown foods to develop a value chain for food security and livelihoods. The App has built an operational data base of rural producers with land type and types of local crops grown in the area. TraSeable Farms allows farmer groups to access information shared by their members, gain insights and assess their level of productivity. This can help Fiji to identify

production gaps and better inform decisions on where assistance to increase their productivity, profitability and sustainability is needed.

Through a buy and sell feature, users can then connect with farmers to purchase produce. To minimise contact an online payment system is put in place. FRIEND is developing stronger value chain to ensure farmers who used to sell to the tourism sector are able to find alternative livelihood options.



On individual consumer level and for small backyard garden growers, the **MyKana App** shows its users planting seasons, pest control options and healthy food choices, the app will be used to minimise contact and growers will be taught how to download and use the app via telephone consultations. Mykana app is being promoted through all the current channels as a resource for upscaling.



Later there is an option for FRIEND to undertake model farm development in squatters and urban centers with minimal land availability to develop a diverse range of foods. The MyKana App also provides vertical garden solutions to those with less land availability.

Overview product/services

- FRIEND has built on its training materials to be able to offer online trainings during the COVID crisis.
- Basic backyard gardening training is available for youths and other community groups requesting information. Training includes soil preparation, seed/ seedling generation, planting seasons and techniques, organic soil improvement and organic pest management, post-harvest handling.
- Training on food preservation for food security.
- Vernacular local recipes using locally grown crops.

- These training materials are available on news web, social media, traseable app and national TV.

Entry points :

- There is an increase in demand for local foods in supermarkets as imports are dropping.
- Market exists for training materials as various organisations have been requesting for training including youth and women groups.
- Markets for homegrown food are immediate food security for families.
- One company chain is willing to purchase frozen greens if value added. Another exporter is willing to export these products.

Financial Appraisal

Total budget projection: 450,000 FJD | 183,000 EUR | 205,000 USD
to reach national goal

Individual contributions raised: 180,000 FJD | 72,000 EUR | 81,000 USD

- FRIEND is contributing \$50,000 worth of training materials, seedlings, logistics of networking and start-up of food processing and value adding for excess produce grown by the backyard farmers.
- Media partners – Communication Fiji Ltd and Business Media are providing \$50,000 worth of communication needs
- TraSeable App has contributed to \$10,000 for development of App and outreach
- Leadership Alumni Fiji has committed to \$20,000 and has committed to generate additional \$50,000

Remaining funds needed to implement the case:
270,000 FJD | 111,000 EUR | 124,000 USD

*Additional funds would need to be mobilised for USP to conduct a baseline study and a final evaluation of the post-COVID 19 impact of the community-based food production initiatives (CFPIs) on NCD risk factors including Dietary Diversity Scores (DDS), social and economic well-being and the environment using their [developed framework](#): 244,000 FJD | 140,000 EUR | 156,000 USD

Return on Investment/Usage of funding

Expected Impact:

The impact expected is that every household in rural area will have access to information on start-up of backyard gardens and have basic knowledge on generation of seeds, seedlings, soil improvement, pest management and availability of seeds and seedlings in their communities.

The target is 200,000 households who will have an uptake of set of gardens.

- The information generated will be assessed on accessibility as they download from farmer app.
- Seed distribution will be captured on data base.
- Database developed by TraSeable will provide data on growing, volume generated and traded to show impact on food security.
- It is hoped that improved food security will feed into National Nutritional Plan as more people have access to clean and healthy foods.

Minimising Risks

Risk: Extreme weather conditions

Mitigation: This will be mitigated through accessing 3 monthly weather projections and shared through the farmer app. Specific weather-related crop and pest management tools will be shared through media and the apps.

Risk: Seed availability could be a challenge.

Mitigation: Training will be provided on seed/ seedling generated to meet demands.

Various risks will be mitigated through media partners and the app as information on weather, managing crops during drought and floods will be also disseminated to minimise damage.

Implementation

The project is aimed at national peri-urban population. However, the information would be easily accessible for rural communities as well if there is interest. Rural communities have access to land for backyard and there will be communal seed generation. Communal set ups also enable cluster education, support and marketing opportunities.

Timeline

March - April	The advocacy has started
March	Partnership networking and meetings to develop the investment plan
April - May	Training online and materials accessible
June	Data base is developed and operational
July	Seed distribution
August	Food data available
October	First data analysis

Governance

FRIEND coordinated the partners and shares information through the network.

TraSeable manages all data and analysis and provides reporting

Funds managed through FRIEND will be distributed to other partners.

Monthly data availability will help with measuring success and will provide reporting on developed templates.