CONCEPT NOTE

To establish a Bamboo Centre in Fiji to serve as a focal point for bamboo-related activities and revive the bamboo industry in the Pacific.
PROJECT TITLE: Fiji Bamboo Centre

DURATION: 2 years
FUNDING COMMITMENT: USD 2 million

PROJECT GOAL:
To establish a bamboo centre in Fiji to help young rural entrepreneurs in bamboo propagation and application.

Overall objective:
Enhanced bamboo product development and utilization capacity contributes to rural poverty alleviation, economic growth and climate change adaptation capacity

Outcomes:
- Facilities for regional bamboo capacity building established
- Capacity enhanced for producing sustainable and affordable bamboo materials for local construction

POTENTIAL PARTNERS:
- The Governments and Education institutions of Fiji;
- The International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR);
- The Pacific Islands Association of Non-Government Organisations (PIANGO);
- The Pacific Islands Private Sector Organisation (PIPSO); and
- The Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) - Pacific Agribusiness Research for Development Initiative Phase 2 (PARDI2).

BACKGROUND & PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Pacific Islands Development Forum was established in 2013 (its Charter adopted in 2015) with the intention of promoting the blue green economy with particular focus on leadership, innovation and partnership. A regional organisation, PIDF enjoys the membership of a number of Pacific Island countries, which currently includes Fiji, Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. It also enjoys the membership of two regional umbrella organisations, the Pacific Islands Association of Non-Government Organisations (PIANGO) representing Civil Society and the Pacific Islands Private Sector Organisation (PIPSO) representing the Private Sector.

Structured in such a way as to be inclusive of government, civil society and the private sector, PIDF ensures a whole-of-Society and multi-stakeholder approach to development. PIDF has established National Sustainable Development Boards in each of its member countries, a multi-stakeholder committee that will be involved in the planning and implementation of PIDF activities at the national level.

PIDF works at the policy level ensuring that countries are equipped to turn their economies in such a way as to empower their people and protect their environment in accord with Green Economy/Sustainable Development principles. PIDF assists member countries in ensuring that their policy respects these principles and that the implementation of these policies contributes towards the greening of the economy and benefits the people and environment.

The project will initially work in Fiji, the largest of the PIDF member countries and therefore with the biggest propagation and application potential. However other centres could be established in other PIDF members with bamboo potential.
The Pacific Islands Development Forum considers Bamboo as an incredible resource in the Green Economy in par in importance with seaweed in the Blue Economy. Bamboo is potentially an important component of the Green Economy transformation. Its presence in a number of Pacific island countries and its versatility could offer Pacific people sustainable solutions to their needs. It could also become an important source of employment and income for communities that are currently under employed.

In those Pacific islands where water is not scarce, bamboo thrives. With a three to five year growth period (depending on the species) it is certainly one of the most sustainable non-timber groups of plants growing on the islands with building potential. Without a doubt bamboo does form part of Pacific culture when one considers the panpipes and other Bamboo instruments produced and skilfully used in Solomon Islands, the Bilibili (mbilimbili), a raft used mostly in rivers in Fiji, and also in the building of traditional huts and fishing traps in a number of Pacific island countries.
But much more can be done with this important resource. We do need to first raise its profile. There have been a few attempts in the Pacific in bamboo related activities but many have not been followed through with. There have been a number of trainings provided in relation to bamboo in both propagation and utilisation but although this kind of skill training is important, it is not enough. These skills need to be coupled with other trainings, such as simple business principles or financial management.

It is essential to establish a support system to provide those trained with assistance when they are faced with problems in their endeavours. The establishment of national Bamboo Centres in those Pacific island countries where bamboo production and utilisation offers promising prospects, proposes to do just that.

The Pacific has a good variety of bamboo and enough diversity to suit a number of applications. For example Fiji has some 20 species of bamboo, (of which only one, *Schizostachyum glaucifolium* is indigenous) including species that grow extremely long and are strong enough for use in the building industry, particularly for their properties which make them ideal for use in cyclone resistant buildings. For most of the introduced species there is a lack of planting materials and this has been what has stalled development of local bamboo industry.

The PIDF feels that this is the right time, in the Pacific’s desire for green economies, to take up bamboo propagation and utilisation seriously. This needs to go beyond ad hoc activities or time-bound projects. The Pacific needs to look at a long term engagement in this area by establishing national bamboo centres that would support these efforts and the efforts of individuals that want to take this work seriously.

The Fiji Bamboo Centre will serve as a national focal point for bamboo related activities including botanical and agricultural research, mapping of bamboo habitats around the Pacific, advocacy work, research in innovative applications (such as paper making and cloth making for example), training in propagation and also in the skills required in its many applications, and establishing policy that is conducive for the growth of the industry. The Centre itself will be built entirely of locally grown and treated bamboo and all interiors and furnishings will also be produced from bamboo, gradually built by the students. The centre will itself serve as a model of what could be attained through the use of bamboo as a building material.
It will also have a bamboo garden with all local bamboo species as well as some introduced species, also establishing nurseries at the centre to supply seedlings to growers and to students who want to establish their own nurseries. The Pacific Islands Development Forum, with partners such as INBAR, will support Fiji’s efforts in establishing this Bamboo centre and its efforts at methodically building an industry out of a resource that is terribly under-utilised. This centre will become the focal point of all things bamboo in the country. PIDF will also serve as a regional hub to eventually link such centres in other Pacific island countries through a dedicated portal. It will also endeavor to link these to other centers around the world through the INBAR network.

The Centre will establish on-line tools both for training and for trading of bamboo products produced by its members. The portal will be run through the PIDF knowledge hub together with PIDF’s other portals, including the Pacific Green Business Centre (PGBC). In fact the Centre’s on-line tools will be seamlessly integrated with those of the PGBC. There will be other links established with PIDF’s other activities including the Pacific Environment and Climate Exchange (where bamboo growing could be supported by the private sector through carbon credits), the Oceania Centre for Sustainable Transport (where bicycle, car and boat parts could be manufactured using bamboo), the promotion of organic farming (bamboo is the perfect organic plant) and the promotion of sustainable tourism (providing bamboo buildings, furniture and finishing).

The Centre will partner with local training institutions to offer training programmes for the propagation and utilization of bamboo. Internationally recognised certification will also be a goal of the centre. It will develop state of the art training rooms, workshops, audio-visual and mechanical equipment and tools, libraries, a permanent exhibit of traditional bamboo artefacts and locally produced modern applications.

The Centre’s responsibilities will not end once its students graduate. The graduates from the centre will be supported by the centre in finding employment related to their studies and skills attained or in establishing their own enterprises.

The centre will continue offering them support related to their endeavours. The centre will also develop a register of bamboo graduates including builders, furniture makers, farmers, trainers, etc. This would ensure ready access to skills as they arise and whenever there is such demand from the public and private sectors.

There are a number of opportunities for graduates that the Centre, together with government institutions responsible for youth and employment, could jointly explore and support. Importantly the students and graduates will form an important component of efforts by the country to provide citizens with low-cost housing by using locally available bamboo material. This would also ensure continued employment of graduates of the Centre.
The tourism industry provides a number of opportunities for bamboo entrepreneurs both in the building of resort outfits and in the souvenir business. Fencing, blinds and other kitchen, bathroom and other home, office and commercial products could also be produced with bamboo subject these could be locally produced at a competitive price. The furniture industry would also benefit from locally produced bamboo furniture, both for the rustic, beach and resort market but also for the modern and office furniture market through the use of bamboo composites. Bamboo composites could also supply local and overseas markets with material for floorings and interiors.

The possibilities are enormous. This Centre could be the focus of an industry that could offer huge economic opportunities to Fiji, employment opportunities to a large number of its youth and reduce imports of products made of materials that do not necessarily fit the green transformation that the Pacific island countries have chosen to pursue and that the Pacific Islands Development Forum has been tasked to support.

An important element is the integration of women in the running of the Centre. Working with the Fiji Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, the Centre would facilitate training of women in cultivation, preservation, craft making, management and administration of the Bamboo Centre.

Through the PIDF membership, the Centre will support other PIDF member countries develop their own bamboo industries, either through the establishment of their own bamboo centres or through provision of training and other services as per the individual countries' requirements.

**Long-term sustainability of the Centre**

Although the Centre will receive the initial support of the Ministry of Forests, PIDF and INBAR through a joint project, it is expected to eventually function independently under the auspices of Ministry of Forest. In order to do so, in its first six months of operation the Centre will develop its own financing plan taking account of potential for generation of funds from its course offerings, sales made from its nurseries and workshops, services that can be offered to government agencies and the private sector, as well as through submission of project proposals to development partners.
Contributions towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

Fiji’s Bamboo Centre would contribute towards the achievement of Fiji’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) particularly SDG 4 Quality education, SDG 5 Gender equality, SDG 8 Decent work and economic growth, SDG 9 Industry innovation and infrastructure, SDG 11 Sustainable cities and communities, SDG 12 Responsible consumption and production, SDG 13 Climate action, SDG 15 Life on land, and SDG 17 Partnerships for the Goals.

It will most probably also contribute to SDG 1 No poverty and SDG 2 Zero hunger.
PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Establishment of training facility
- Identify suitable location of the centre
- Obtain permit for building training centre
- Design and construct training centre
- Procure training and workshop facilities

Capacity Building and Demonstrations
- Conduct training needs assessment
- Design training programme
- Identify and select trainee and suitable trainers
- Conduct training and workshop
- Establish demonstrations of bamboo nursery, plantation, and product processing
- Provide post-training technical back support

Project management
- Recruit project staff
- Set up project management mechanism
- Establish project M&E system

REPORTING AND MONITORING

The Project Manager will produce a monitoring and evaluation plan in the first quarter of the project and will be responsible for internal monitoring of project activities.

The Project Manager will also be responsible for reporting to the PIDF Programme Unit and project partners and the donor/s supporting the project on a quarterly basis in the first three quarters and with the submission of an annual report at the end of the 4th quarter.

Monitoring and evaluation will be the responsibility of PIDF’s Unit for Policy Research & Evaluation with an independent evaluation and financial audit at the end of the project.

The Unit will also be responsible for the conduct of a Mid-Term Review mid-way through the project in view of assessing the project’s progress and recommending directions for the remainder of the project duration.

PERSONNEL:

1. Project Manager (based at PIDF HQ)
2. Project Administrator (based at PIDF HQ)
3. Bamboo Centre Administrator
4. International INBAR Bamboo Advisor
5. Consultants – as needed
6. PIDF’s Team Leaders and Coordinators in Programme Management, Policy Research and M&E, Strategic Communication and Logistics as per requirement.
## BUDGET

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<th>Description</th>
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<td>Project Manager (2 years)</td>
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<td>International INBAR Bamboo Advisor (1.5 years)</td>
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<td>Building of Centre</td>
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<td>Administration costs</td>
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**TOTAL** 2,000,000

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