Quick facts

• Joseph Afa from Samoa and Lise Niheme from Vanuatu have combined their traditional knowledge with their new skills learnt at APTC to train people to preserve and propagate bananas.

• Joseph and Lise have developed training manuals and programs to rejuvenate and share traditional knowledge across Pacific countries to ensure food security and potentially save lives after a disaster.

• Traditional knowledge is the term used for ancient practices, such as farming and medicine, used by Pacific communities for many thousands of years. Sometimes traditional knowledge is sacred and people are discouraged from sharing it across tribes or cultures.

• Bananas are rated the fourth most important food crop in the world, and possibly the most important food crop in the Pacific.

• The Launani technique is a practice of rapid banana propagation that enables local farmers to use a single banana shoot to grow up to 15 new planting sprouts. This means that communities can more quickly recover food sources after a natural disaster.

• The Masa technique of banana preservation which involves burying unripe bananas underground for up to two years, ready to be dug up and eaten when crops are decimated after a cyclone.

• The ability to rapidly grow more banana trees is also creating employment and income for people in Vanuatu.

Impact Case Study

Preserving and Propagating Bananas
In Vanuatu, about 75 per cent of the population live in regional and remote areas, with the majority of people relying on subsistence farming to grow enough food for their family’s survival.

For many, bananas are a critical food source that is highly susceptible to damage by strong winds. An inability to replace damaged or destroyed crops can be life-threatening for some villages.

When natural disaster hits Vanuatu, food and water shortages during the aftermath can be more life-threatening than the ferocious winds and floods during the peak of a cyclone.

Training to preserve and rapidly propagate the Pacific’s most important source of food energy, bananas, has been successfully trialled in Vanuatu by two Australia-Pacific Technical College (APTC) students studying Certificate III in Community Services.

Joseph Afa from Samoa and Iseo Nihmei from Vanuatu have combined their traditional knowledge with their new skills learnt at APTC, to train people to preserve and propagate bananas. This training will help to sustain lives post-cyclone and assist people to better adapt to climate change.

“Climate change is a really big issue now,” says Joseph. “So sharing information from one country to another country is a good idea because everyone needs to survive and everyone needs to know ways to adapt.”

Joseph is using the Samoan Lautafai technique with local people, a practice that has been passed down from generation to generation. Iseo is using the Maori technique of banana preservation. This technique involves burying unripe bananas underground for up to two years.

Both of these techniques have been passed on through the generations for thousands of years, but the advent of westernised living in Vanuatu has seen the erosion of many traditional practices and knowledge.

Chief Johnson Sauriara, from Teocuma Putuna or Lavaro Cultural Village, said people in Vanuatu rely on overseas disaster aid after a cyclone, such as rice and cereals. As the impact of climate change worsens, future generations need to be more self-reliant, just like their ancestors were.

“I remember that at the age of six I had to rely on the preserved banana and breadfruit. When you are in the middle of nowhere you have to know how to survive, and no one would make it without food preservation.”

The Lautafai technique is practised in Samoa and was taught to Joseph by his elders. As part of his APTC studies he developed a manual to teach the method to people in Vanuatu, such as local farmer Yoki.

“Before we could only carry one suckler up the hill to plant, but now I can carry 10 to 15 sucklers from the one plant – yes, it’s 10 times faster,” says Yoki.

“Before we plant to live and now I plant to sell. Before I didn’t have a job and now I can make the garden and also enough food to sell at the market and so now I have a job. The money helps with school fees and farmer’s needs, like tools.”

The Lautafai technique is not only allowing Yoki and others to earn an income for the first time, the technique will also help people to recover quickly from cyclones that often destroy an entire community’s banana plantation.

As well as sharing a passion to help their communities adapt to the devastating effects of natural disasters, Joseph and Iseo have also developed a friendship. In their first class together they were exposed to each other’s cultural information, so Joseph sang his national anthem and danced the traditional Samoan aiva tau dance.

“When I did the dance, Iseo was really interested to learn it and that’s how we started to build a relationship,” explains Joseph.

Joseph and Iseo are just two of the many success stories from APTC as thousands of graduates return to their communities across the Pacific.

Joseph is thankful to APTC for changing his life, and for providing him with the opportunity to help others and to get a good example for his children, who have promised that “they will never quit education”.

Chief Johnson, speaking on behalf of his community and others, explains that what APTC does is invaluable.

“It is very important that APTC comes to our villages and helps our communities. In the world we live in today it is very hard to spread important information about traditional knowledge, and we need somebody to come in and to help get the message through to our young people in the Pacific,” he says.

“Here we are trying to speed up the process of making people understand the value of traditional knowledge and its value for their survival – without APTC it could take another 100 years, but with them it will be faster.”

 Лауфаси - бананова пропагандра

Ляоафи Афа представил лауфаси техниката на Вануату, а со својот метод во местното ни-вануатско билисамо јазико во времето на неговите дело на СПЦ-ГИЗ (Секретариатот на Политичката Комуникација - Друштвено-глобалните односови на Европско Друштво за Интеграција и Способности на Нереди) во Специситетськото Строение на Политичката Комуникација - Друштвено-глобалните односови на Европско Друштво за Интеграција и Способности на Нереди.

Таа техника е ефикасна за брза пропаганда на бананото, што може да помогне на локалните фермери во употребата на билата плодови кај становниците во нереди. Това значи дека селските общности почистват своите земјоделски земји, што значи дека ќе се наслеат со недолга пропаганда на бананото.

“При време на неговите дело на СПЦ-ГИЗ, Ляоафи Афа е Корисен за да внесе една стара бананова иднацата во АПТЦ, како дека таа интеракција ќе внесе нови знанија и уметност во оваа област.”

“АПТЦ е колежата што донесува во Политичката Комуникација, за да помогне на нашата друштвена и географска област, како и на нашиот живот."