

MEDIA RELEASE

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BHAWNA RELISHES THE CHALLENGE

Meet twenty-seven year old Bhawna Sharma, originally from Ba, but after her marriage in 2016, she now calls Vunivau, Labasa home. Sharma is an Instrument Fitter at FSC's Labasa Mill. Prior to this posting, she held a similar position at FSC's Rarawai Mill.

The Instrument department within each mill looks after instrumentation and controls. They monitor the speed, the levels and the electrical controls of equipment as well as carrying out repairs and maintenance.

As an Instrument Fitter, Sharma's job involves servicing of the mill's equipment and machinery prior to the start of the crushing season. This usually involves the cleaning and repairing of mill equipment. During crushing, this shifts to repairs and maintenance during mill stoppages or breakdowns.

Sharma says "sometimes there's grease in equipment that needs to be cleaned out using proper chemicals; and then sometimes equipment needs to be completely replaced, which is quite technical".

Her day is always challenging, definitely not your average office working girl's day. "Here I am in overalls and safety boots and hard hat all day", she says.

FSC is advocating for more women in a predominantly male domain because of their varied skill sets and approach. CEO Graham Clark says "it's good to have a healthier gender-balance in the workforce and this is something FSC is working towards".

Sharma attended at Khalsa College in Ba and furthered her tertiary education at Fiji National University (FNU). After attaining her Trade Certificate in Electrical Engineering from the FNU, she applied and was successful in securing an Instrument Fitter job at FSC's Rarawai Mill, in Ba.



Above: Instrument Fitter Bhawna Sharma at her work station at FSC's Labasa Mill

A normal working day for her would see her starting at 7am and ending around 5pm. However these hours would be extended if the mill encountered a stoppage or breakdown.

In terms of working experience, most of the knowledge she has acquired has been through her formative years at Rarawai. Sharma credits her former bosses for pushing her to succeed in an area that is dominated by men.

She is very grateful to her supportive family especially her husband who is always backing her professional goals. Adding, "I also want to acknowledge my late father and mum; and my elder brother for their contribution towards my studies. I am where I am today because of their hard work and struggles".

Sharma is the second female in her department and although small in number, seems undaunted by the challenges she continuously faces every day. It's something that she feel intrinsically proud of. We are too Bhawna, we are too!

ENDS

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