



Takitaki

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RURAL WOMENS' DAY IN LABASA



Participants at the Labasa Women's conference

Executive Director of FRIEND, Sashi Kiran, addressed 300 rural women in Labasa on October 15th marking the World Rural Women's day. She was invited to talk about the work of FRIEND and was requested by the women at the forum to set up office in Labasa to support their efforts out of poverty. Ms Kiran explained that they have plans for a office in the North but are awaiting resources. She reiterated that if FRIEND sets up their office in the North, they will need enough resources to ensure they can genuinely help and walk their talk in poverty alleviation. Many women raised their concerns on different issues and brought their craft to show their potential. Towards the end, the women performed traditional dances, skits and dramas depicting their issues. FRIEND intends to open a hub centre in the Northern division as soon as it can secure funds to do so.

FRIEND AGM

Fifty people from different communities FRIEND works with attended the Special General meeting of FRIEND on 22nd September in Lautoka. They heard of the many achievements and challenges faced by the organization in the last two years and were given the copies of FRIEND's biennial report. They were also presented with FRIEND's audited financial report. Members from Badrau and Nasolo thanked FRIEND for serving their communities and were glad to have the opportunity to be able to meet with other beneficiaries of FRIEND. All the discussion was translated in vernacular for everyone's understanding. The members committed their ongoing support to the organization as FRIEND tries to reach more communities to provide their services.

Meet the Board Members

President: Dr Pramila Devi, Senior lecturer at USP

Vice President- Mr. Esala Nakalevu, Manager Fiji Pine Trust

Treasurer : Mr. Philip Gock, General Manager, Eddie Hin

Committee Members:

Ms Francis Vuibau, Manager West FTIB, John Shannon, General Manager Hongkong Glass and windows, Sharvind Kumar, Manager West IT Services, Williams & Goslings, Ms Sufi Dean, Executive Director – Leadership Fiji, Ms Maimun Singh- ANZ Manger- Lautoka Branch, Ms Litiana Sovasova, Radini Tui Vitogo



Badrau community at FRIEND AGM

CHARITABLE QUEEN



Miss Charity, Sugar Festival 2007

Miss FRIEND, Priya Prasad was ecstatic after being pronounced Miss Charity for the 2007 Sugar Festival. Being crowned as Miss Charity comes as a huge achievement for her. She overcame many personal obstacles least of which was having to compete with *fully able* contestants. Priya has a hearing impairment (deaf). Regaining her composure, Priya thanked, through her interpreter, her sponsors, friends, and supporters who helped raise funds allowing her to win the Miss Charity crown. For Priya, the festive week gave her the opportunity to promote awareness of disability issues for her community. Well done Priya!!

FRIEND FLOAT, SUGAR 2007

FRIEND's effort at putting its message across to the public during the Sugar Festival also saw its float winning the 1st prize in the Charitable category. The float was led by two traditional warriors signifying a clearing of paths for opportunities. Miss FRIEND sat on a 'throne' with large versions of masi and quill cards put together by the deaf. A procession of deaf youths followed Priya with placards of deaf awareness messages. This procession included a display of some of the awards accumulated by Friend in the last few years. Another segment of the float was a group of kids dressed up in fruit costumes waving the launched *FRIEND's Fiji Style*® products made by FRIEND kitchens. This was followed by youths with their messages on Stand Up Against Poverty as part of the global campaign to fight poverty. To view pictures, check out our photo page on www.fijifriend.com.fj.

DEAF SUPPORT



Nilesh (standing left) with friends

Bula, my name is Nilesh. I work at FRIEND creating greeting cards. It is a job opportunity that I never regretted taking as it has given me income and independence. I am deaf and have been since birth. I enjoy my work as I get to create card designs that people seem to like. I have always liked drawing and it is good to be paid for something that I am interested in. During the Sugar Festival, one of my deaf colleagues, Priya Prasad, was entered by FRIEND as a Miss Sugar contestant. She won the Miss Charity title. I was very proud of her because she had every right to take part like all other citizens of this country. As a member of the deaf community, she has shown courage and we were so happy for her. We attended all the judging nights and every other event Priya took part in that week. There was great support from everyone including the Lautoka City Council and it showed us (deaf people) that there are good citizens out there that see us having equal rights like the hearing. This is a good start as there are many challenges we face daily which can be overcome with the help of those who are willing to understand our issues. *Nilesh Pillay*

WORLD FOOD DAY DELIVERIES

What better way to celebrate World Food Day than to go into needy communities and deliver food packs and clothes. FSPI staff donated money and clothes to ten disadvantaged families from different communities in Ba and I had the wonderful opportunity to visit some of these communities together with FRIEND's Program team. It was an eye-opener for me and I feel that more can be done for them. One of the elderly couples that we visited was living in a house made out of old and rusted tins nailed together and had a dirt floor. It is so sad that most of these people are so old and are neglected by their families. Most of the families survive on monthly welfare assistance but even that is not enough because they also need love and affection. One thing I have noticed is that even though they are poor and have barely enough to eat, they are always smiling and will offer you a cup of tea wholeheartedly. We are so fortunate to be living in big houses and having all the luxuries in life and we often tend to forget about those in need. I am glad that I had a chance to go into the communities and personally it was a very rewarding experience. Thank you FSPI staff for your generosity and kindness shown to those less fortunate than us.



An elderly couple receiving FSPI donations from FRIEND staff.

Aarti Mala

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT NETWORK (YEN)



Youth at a YEN workshop

“We want jobs!” This was a common claim made by youths at a one day workshop organized by FRIEND's Youth Development Program. Participants included youths from Ba and general Lautoka area who were part of the YEN project. This is an ongoing event, where interested youths go through fun activities and action planning. The youths did SWOT and vision map activities, set goals, created action plans and practiced writing job application letters. Somebody said, “when you're in Rome, do as Romans do” so the workshop involved music because young people take interest in things that are fun. They want to get jobs because it's hard for their families to support them. Follow ups are being done to assist participants with the implementation of their action plans. Workshops are run monthly for the youths around Lautoka area and interested employers could always contact our office if they wish employ any youths for long or short-term jobs. FRIEND's YEN project assist youth's by providing them with training in job-search skills and linking them with potential employers.

Devina Devi

PLAYBACK THEATRE

The Playback Theatre Workshop was an event that stretches my knowledge further, in terms of art. It helps me to express feelings in another way. While I naturally express feelings in painting, Play Back Workshop has taught me to express it in music and action. In the workshop we were trained to become conductors, musicians and actors. Personally, it was a very good experience for me. The confidence to speak in front of an audience and also



to speak out about what I believe in, are two things that I gained from this workshop. Play Back Theatre has helped revive my confidence and courage to speak out on issues I believe in.

Kini Naqaravatu

The Playback Theatre Workshop was organized by Women Action for Change (WAC) and FRIEND is grateful to them for allowing three of its staff to attend.

**What's Happening?****November**

16 International Day of Tolerance

20 Universal Children's Day

25 International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

STAFF WELFARE

Three senior staff of FRIEND attended a one day Staff Welfare workshop at the Waterfront Hotel on the 20th of September. This was organized by the Australia/Fiji Community Justice Program. The workshop covered the Staff Welfare Model for organizations within Fiji and had several recommendations for organizations to develop and adapt as strategies to meet the needs of their employees.

It was an informative workshop particularly for small organizations like FRIEND who are still developing staff welfare procedures. Our size however makes it an easier process ensuring policies are formulated and followed through.

Aarti Mala

**FAREWELL LIZ**

ABV Volunteer Liz Atkins

Australian Business Volunteer Liz Atkinson was farewelled by staff last week when her term with FRIEND ended. Liz was contracted by Australian Business Volunteers (ABV) for two months to work at FRIEND. Liz brought with her a vast experience in marketing and applied her knowledge to our sales and marketing department. She guided the department to be able to boost their marketing efforts. Liz helped design questionnaires for product surveys and was out there working with the team. By the end of her assignment she had produced a marketing plan for the organization with her team. She also managed to spend time visiting disadvantaged families with FRIEND's program team.

Liz said that though her stay has been short she has found new friends and had enjoyed the sights and sounds of Fiji.