



Takitaki

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RATU JONI CELEBRATES FRIEND ON OUR BIRTHDAY

On the occasion of FRIEND's 3rd birthday, Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi, Vice President of Fiji, spoke in praise of FRIEND's work on behalf of poor and marginalized communities. The partnerships that FRIEND has built with the business community have had a direct bearing on the numbers of communities, families and individuals that FRIEND has touched with its work. Ratu Joni also emphasized the responsibility individuals have to participate in improving the circumstances of the underserved. The Vice President recognized that FRIEND has done well to face the many obstacles it has encountered in its short history and survive. He said, "FRIEND has made a great start and it has overcome great odds to be still here." He closed by wishing FRIEND "a very happy birthday."



Ratu Joni speaks at the FRIEND Open Day in celebration of our 3rd birthday on August 29, 2005.



Laisani Watituraga

SAVE SCHEME GROUP LEADER COMES A LONG WAY

Laisani Watituraga, a grandmother from Kaleli settlement, has seen the benefits of being a part of FRIEND's Save Scheme. In her role as group leader, she was the driving force in encouraging the settlers to save money for their families' needs and wants.

"Saving is good, especially in programmes like this. Believe me, it's not easy to save at home because you'll end up using it. Saving for a purpose is what I urge people to do. Without any purpose, then there will be no reason for saving."

Since 2003, when FRIEND's Save Scheme was first introduced to the settlement, the number of those in the Kaleli group has grown from 12 to 28. However, they have also lost savers from the group: some families re-settled elsewhere, while others decided to take a break from saving.

"Many people don't realize how saving can be very helpful. Many regret that they should have saved more, because at the end of the year we reap the reward by withdrawing nearly the whole lump sum that we've saved."

Laisani will be moving to a village in Tailevu soon, so her time as a group leader is coming to an end. But she has never regretted being a part of FRIEND's Save Scheme. She has become a saver and plans to continue the good habit she started with FRIEND, wherever her life takes her.

PUNJAS AND FRIEND: PARTNERS IN POVERTY ALLEVIATION

It's unusual to see civil society and the corporate sector form a partnership, so when they form one that benefits the poor, we should all take a lesson. Fortunately for many communities living in poverty, the partnership between FRIEND and Punjas formed against the odds. This alliance was built on good business sense and a mutual sense of responsibility to alleviate poverty.

As a new and struggling organization, FRIEND was poised to make a difference in communities affected by poverty. What was missing at the time was a way to market and distribute the products created through their programs. They went to Punjas in search of assistance. In addition to seeing vision and determination in the founders of FRIEND, Punjas management saw an opportunity to offer support for the fight against poverty, an issue that was a part of the company's history.

The founder of Punjas, Punja Kara, came to Fiji from India to escape poverty. After some time, he was able to break the cycle of poverty in his own life and open a small store. With years of hard work, that store has grown into the Punjas & Sons Ltd of today.

The story of Punja Kara is like many of the stories heard in the communities that FRIEND serves—people looking for an opportunity to work to end the poverty in their lives. A shared sense of responsibility toward the eradication of poverty gave these two organizations common ground on which to form the partnership that they enjoy today. For three years the partnership has flourished. Punjas proudly distributes Friend's Fiji Style™ products and contributes to the livelihood of the communities that FRIEND serves.



Partnership is key to the success of Friend's Fiji Style™ Chutneys.

WHITE BAND DAY

The White Band Action, a key component of the Global Call to Action Against Poverty, was launched in Fiji at the FRIEND offices as part of our recent 3rd Birthday celebration. On Saturday, 10 September, Fiji took part in White Band Day II. On this day, around the world, people wore white bands to raise awareness and show their support for the global effort to end poverty. In Fiji, FRIEND promoted White Band Day in Shirley Park in Lautoka. We distributed free White Bands to the public and also encouraged people to speak to their communities and leaders about poverty alleviation to find out what's being done about it in Fiji. It's all of our responsibility to take part in the fight against poverty, and on White Band Day, the public answered the call to action.



Left: Children get in the spirit of White Band Day. Right: Honored guests visiting FRIEND's booth in Shirley Park.



RUKSHANA: AN IGP SUCCESS STORY

Rukshana worked in the garment industry before taking two years to stay at home raising her family. When the firm her husband worked for fell on hard times, Rukshana went back to the garment industry to look for work. But by then, all of the businesses had closed. With the rent due and not knowing where to turn, Rukshana and her mother happened by the FRIEND office. Her mother knew that FRIEND made chutneys, so they stopped in to see if there was work for Rukshana.

Rukshana spoke with the FRIEND coordinator, who told her that they might need some kitchen help soon. She was so desperate, she returned the next day. The kitchen work still wasn't available, but Rukshana talked about her skills and her last job in the garment industry. Hearing this, the coordinator suggested that Rukshana start making cushion covers as an IGP. Rukshana has worked with FRIEND from that day. She's moved from making the cushion covers to creating beautiful saris and scarves made with traditional Fijian accents, like seashells and magi magi. Her work with FRIEND allowed Rukshana to get her family out of a dire situation. Eventually, she even saved enough money to purchase her own sewing machine. Rukshana is proud of the work she does. Now, she can feed her family and even give her children a little treat from time to time.



Left and above right: Beautiful saris made by Rukshana.



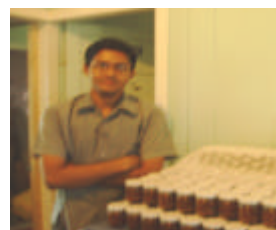
What's Happening?

- October 1**
International Day of Older Persons
- October 10**
Fiji Day
- October 15**
World Food Day
- October 16**
World Rural Women's Day
- October 17**
International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

STAFF PROFILE MOHINESH REDDY: QUALITY IS HIS BUSINESS

Mohinesh Reddy holds the critical position of Quality Control Officer at FRIEND. He studied hotel management, majoring in food and beverage, and for him working for FRIEND has been a real testing ground for all the theories he learned during his studies. Though his job is a bit of a deviation from his chosen coursework, he finds his studies very relevant to the work he is doing now.

Mohinesh ensures that Friend's Fiji Style™ food products meet our high standards. He coordinates the development of new products, in addition to providing training in proper food preparation and safety techniques for the communities who handle production. "We focus on the quality of the products," says Mohinesh, "and we guide them through the production process." This helps FRIEND maintain the consistent quality of our products that consumers expect. Mohinesh has learned a lot at FRIEND and has benefited from the "hands-on" nature of his work. Though it can sometimes be very challenging, what motivates him is the fact that what he does supports a community in lifting themselves out of poverty.



Mohinesh Reddy