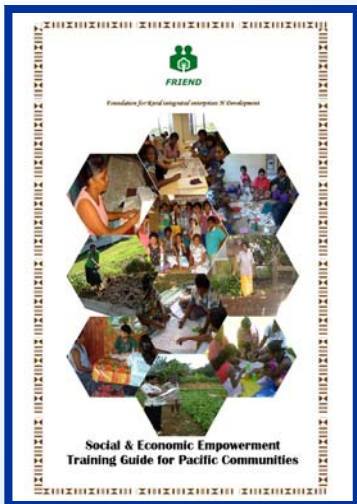


Takitaki

Another Milestone Reached

We are pleased to announce the launch of **FRIEND's Social and Economic Empowerment Training Guide for Pacific Communities**.



Manual cover

FRIEND launched the guide at the University of the South Pacific, Lautoka Campus, on the occasion of International Women's Day, 8th March 2010.

In her speech at the launch, Rajneesh Lata Charan, Chairperson of the USP Lautoka Advisory Board commended FRIEND for sharing its knowledge with the communities of Fiji and the South Pacific as a whole, saying "shared knowledge is power."

FRIEND has developed the holistic manual based on needs assessment after having piloted it in the communities we work with. Rural women around the district have been benefitting from the training in social and economic empowerment initiatives. Some of these women were present on the day to share their stories on how they have benefitted.

Evaluation and monitoring of training in the communities is being undertaken by USP, Lautoka Campus.

The manual was developed after stakeholders from around the Pacific had requested that FRIEND share the resource material being used to empower communities out of poverty. International Women's Day was considered an opportune time for launch as 80% of FRIEND program beneficiaries are women.

It is hoped that the manual will encourage other trainers in the South Pacific to apply these principles in their own communities. The manual can be bought by trainers working to empower underserved communities.



Media coverage



University of the South Pacific Lautoka Campus hosted the launch of the manual

Youth Extend a Helping Hand



Flower planting at Golden Age

With garden forks and shovels in their hands, twenty youths from around Lautoka worked cheerfully under the hot sun to improve the surroundings of the Golden Age Home in Lautoka on Saturday 20th March. The Golden Age Home houses elderly residents who have been left in the care of the state.

This National Youth Day initiative was organized by FRIEND and activities included the creating of gardens and planting of flowers and vegetables.

FRIEND had previously worked with the Golden Age Home in a garden composting project, but for many of the youths this was the first time they had visited the home or had an opportunity to contribute to the surroundings of the residents.

The day served as a lesson in social responsibility for the participating youths. FRIEND hopes that it also helped to demonstrate that youths can contribute positively to society and that it will motivate all of us to care for our senior citizens.

International Women's Day is celebrated in many countries around the world on 8th March. It is a day when women are recognized for their achievements without regards to race, culture, colour or economic background. It is an occasion for looking back on past struggles and accomplishments and, more importantly, looking ahead to the untapped potential that awaits future generations of women.



FRIEND staff and women of Vunato

In Fiji many NGOs and women's groups mark this day by organizing marches, awareness campaigns and enacting drama. FRIEND commemorated International Women's Day by inviting women from different communities to Vunato where women were shown a documentary on "Saving the Planet". It was a feature on how women in Southern India are involved at a community level in composting. FRIEND is currently conducting training within communities on backyard gardening and composting. The participants in the trainings,

who are mostly women, are learning the benefits of composting which incorporates the concept of the 3 'R's (reduce, reuse, recycle). After viewing the video discussions were generated amongst the women as to how it affected them. These were some of the responses:

"I feel encouraged to put in more time for my compost"

"Women are the ones who started the initiative in India and so we can also do it here"

"I feel it's good to use compost in the garden as it reduces chemical fertilizers which are bad for our health"

"Plants produce good, healthy and better fruits with compost than fertilizers"

"We should all work together to reduce waste and keep our environment clean"

"It is the first time for me to be a part of this day and to have a feeling of the difficulties that women go through around the world. We are lucky that there is not much violence in Fiji. I feel encouraged to do more for our planet earth"

FRIEND sees this as the start of something small that will one day make a great impact on our society. The day was a meaningful one for the 16 women who acknowledged the role women play in the family and society. The day ended with prayer and a cup of tea under the tamarind tree.



Ending the day with prayer

Report by: Aarti Mala

Hurricane Tomas Wreaks Havoc in the North

Hurricane Thomas has affected many families in the northern division and FRIEND is collecting food items for distribution to those in need. Items such as canned food, flour, rice, dhal, etc. can be sent to the Labasa office at Lot 3, James Madhavan Street, Labasa.

Most of the residents in the affected settlements are low income earners and casual workers who depend mainly on vegetables and root crops planted in their backyard gardens. Initial checks in these affected areas have revealed that almost all of their crops have been damaged by the hurricane and food rations are urgently needed by these families.

Reflective Rumblings

FRIEND's Sandhya Narayan shares her reflections on Fiji



The way I see Fiji, we are currently sitting on the border. We can make things better for ourselves. Or we can close our eyes to what is happening and sacrifice our blessings in the name of development.

Living in Fiji, we often grumble about what an underdeveloped country we are. It is true, we could do with better roads, better infrastructures and services and facilities but once one gets a chance to 'go out into the world' for a bit, one is forced to admit that we live in maybe one of the

last 'untouched' pieces of paradise.

While I realise that we are far from 'untouched' as we face issues of littering, climate change, pollution and many other woes, a short visit to any Asian city is enough to show that there is still hope for us. The vastness of the population in these cities magnifies the same issues that we face on a smaller scale.

My two month UNIFEM sponsored internship with ISIS International in Manila, took me to Mysore, Bangalore and Ahmedabad in India as well as the greater area of Quezon City in Philippines. With each step into these crowded cities I was continuously hit with thoughts that the air we breathe in Fiji is still fresher, our skies are cleaner and we are still at a stage where we can drink water straight out of our taps and wells.

But it is also time for action and realisation that we can stand to lose all that we take for granted if we fail to arrest damages done so far, and if we close our eyes and ears to actions that have the potential to make the situation worse. FRIEND's efforts to create awareness in its communities on the importance of sustainable practices, while striving for economic empowerment, is a significant step in this direction. An effort that we hope will continue to grow in impact with the growth of the organisation and its activities.

FRIEND: A Volunteer's Perspective



I am visiting Fiji from the UK and am lucky enough to be spending some time observing the work of FRIEND in Lautoka. I have found the staff to be warm and welcoming and my impressions are of a very committed and hardworking team who are bringing real and visible benefits to the communities they work with.

It has been a great pleasure to go into some of the communities with the programs team and see how their work in Governance training is already having such an effect on the lives of the residents. Meeting members of the communities was wonderful and I particularly enjoyed being shown the backyard gardens created as part of the Governance program. The programs team has a lot of energy and dedication which really comes across in their outreach work.

It has also been fascinating to see the variety of food and craft products produced by community members as part of the DESI project in conjunction with FRIEND. Tasting the new food products in their early stages of development is a very enjoyable insight into product development!



A community member with her backyard garden

I hope that when I leave I will take with me a better understanding of the potential for development in Fiji, as well as the challenges faced by NGOs here. I am sure that I will leave feeling inspired, with a revised perspective and many new ideas.

By Colette Whitehouse

FRIEND's Nileshni Sekar Attends Facilitator's Course

The Regional Facilitators Course was held in Bogor, Indonesia and organized by ASPBAE (Asia South Pacific Basic & Adult Education) and PEKKA, Indonesia (Woman-Headed Household Empowerment).

The course involved the principles and practice of adult education and rights-based approaches to adult and life-long learning, essential skills for facilitating learning, designing training modules, popular education, regional advocacy and research and documentation. All participants are now required to use what they have learnt to run echo workshops in their respective countries.

Nileshni found the experience hugely inspirational and extends her thanks and appreciation to ASPBAE, PEKKA, the facilitators, the participants and FRIEND for giving her this opportunity.



Why Shafil Enjoys His Work

Hi, my name is Shafil Shad Ali. I'm 18 years of age and I live in Simla, Lautoka with my mother and grandfather. I was a student at Sunshine Special School for ten years and now I'm employed with the Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprises N Development, also known as FRIEND. I have been working at FRIEND since 2009.

Here at FRIEND, we try to use bags made out of old newspaper to pack goods bought from either our shop in Suva or at the head office in Lautoka. My job at FRIEND is to make these bags. With the money earned from this, I contribute towards the buying of groceries for my family or put money in the bank. I feel very proud at being able to support my mother in this way. I am enjoying my work here at FRIEND, because this is the first place I have ever worked and the team here is always supportive. I had never had any form of employment in my life until I got this opportunity with FRIEND. I am also trying to learn other skills such as recycled paper making.



Recipe Corner *Chimoni Snack Roll*

(Totally Fiji—adapted from an original recipe by a friend of FRIEND)

Ingredients:

Large puris (Indian style deep fried bread) rolled out to around 8 to 10 cm in diameter

1 fried egg per puri

Salted mashed potatoes—enough to be spread about 1/2cm thick on all the puris

Your pick of either Friend's Fiji Style Tamarind, Chilli or Sweet Mango chutney

Method:

Make the puris and set aside.

Fry the number of eggs according to required number of rolls.

Boil and mash potatoes (or you can use leftover mashed potatoes).

Open the preferred chutney, now you are ready to start putting the rolls together.

Lay a puri out flat and thinly spread on your choice of chutney.

Lay on the mashed potato about half a centimeter thick.

Put a fried egg in the middle and roll it up.

Use a toothpick to hold the roll together.

Make as many as required and enjoy with family or friends.

