

FRIEND marks diabetes day | THE JET

By **SANDHYA NARAYAN**

FRIEND's month long Blue Ribbon Awareness campaign against Diabetes has been concluded with various fun filled activities through which communities were sent strong messages in taking appropriate action against management of diabetes.

To mark World diabetes day on 14th November, FRIEND organized a village community sports day in Labasa where medical team screened the participants for the diseases and depicted strong awareness messages while in Lautoka FRIEND conducted awareness by pinning blue ribbon on 150 farmers from Sigatoka to Rakiraki attending Apiary conference at FRIEND and the event is concluding with 20 communities taking part in 'Amazing Race against diabetes' organized at FRIEND headquarters on Saturday 16th November.

"Diabetes like any other public health problem needs to be approached holistically. However in all these approaches at FRIEND we are thinking big but starting small. For example when we try and encourage healthy eating, we start with practical sessions on backyard gardening, what to plant, how to plant best how to improve their existing farms" says Dr Jone Hawea, the associate director.

In the past month community clinics have been combined with community awareness presentations in around 30 communities in the North, West and the Yasawas and to target men and women many of these sessions were conducted in the evenings. "Breaking down the messages to reach the level of their backyards was key effort of FRIEND during the awareness program" says Dr Jone. "During the month we also conducted cooking competitions using local recipes which brought home the messages on local healthy food and the importance of cooking methods."

We cannot overload the public with jargon and expect them to read in between the lines. It is good public is made aware of statistics but 'it is how to curb question that is to be made as locally practicable as possible".

At FRIEND our strength lies in integrated approach and being able to break down key issues to practical programs at community level through various programs of health, income generation and social empowerment. "Our communities love sports so this could be a strong medium to send out key messages".

World Diabetes Day is marked globally on 14th November every year. FRIEND is concerned that around 700 families are at risk of falling into poverty each year burdened with disability due to diabetic amputations. According to Fiji Diabetes Symposium held in June 2012 "1 Diabetic Lower Limb amputation is conducted every 12 hours", that translated into around 700 lower limb amputations.

This figure does not take into account diabetes related renal complications, heart diseases, blood vessel diseases and strokes that have pushed Fiji into NCD crisis. Diabetes related eye diseases

also pose major threat of disability through blindness.

FRIEND Associate Director Dr Jone Hawea says this is a grave situation that can be turned around with increased awareness and holistic approach to health in addition to eating and exercising well.