



Takitaki

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TWO PERSPECTIVES ON DEVELOPMENT IN LAUTO KA

The lecture series that is being jointly organized by USP Lautoka Campus and FRIEND continued this month with a seminar on the topic of "Growth and Development in Lautoka". The event was chaired by Mr Joseph Veramu, Director, USP Lautoka Campus. The guest speakers for the evening were Mr Pusp Raj, CEO Lautoka City and Dr Mahendra Reddy, Associate Professor, School of Economics, USP.

Each speaker was introduced in turn to offer their thoughts, knowledge and perspective on economic development in Lautoka. Listening to the speakers was indeed interesting, as their experience has given them very different ideas on the responsibility of city government in moving development forward. Mr Raj expressed the City Council view of its role as supervisor of development and voiced the frustrations that come when there is inadequate funding for development. Dr Reddy clearly articulated his position that the responsibility of the council should go beyond custodial duties to pro-actively seeking new business and to lobbying the national government for funds in proportion to the population that uses the services of the city.

Following their presentations, the speakers took questions from the audience. Both gentlemen offered interesting and valid points for the audience of concerned citizens to consider.



Mr Raj and Dr Reddy

PIA AND PLA AT MORDI



FRIEND staff with their training class at MORDI

Three FRIEND staff members were very fortunate to attend two weeks of training on Participatory Impact Assessment (PIA) and Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) at the Mainstreaming of Rural Development Innovations (MORDI) office in Suva. Their attendance was at the kind invitation of Leonie Smiley, coordinator of the MORDI program at the Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific (FSPI).

The training had both theory and practical sections and it included a fieldtrip to Naulu settlement in Nakasi. It was valuable attending the training because it was facilitated by one of Fiji's best in terms of community development. Ms Wana Sivoi from Partners in Community Development Fiji (PCDF) was the trainer, and she made it possible for FRIEND's staff to participate. This training has greatly enhanced our staff's knowledge of using the PLA and PIA concept, techniques and tools in the community work that they do.

Many thanks to MORDI; Wana, for including FRIEND; and the staff of Live & Learn, PCDF for their encouragement and support. Also, *vinaka vakalevu* Rex Horoi, Executive Director, FSPI Secretariat, for the Certificates of Participation and words of appreciation.

ON THE ROAD: FIJI INDIGENOUS BUSINESS COUNCIL SYMPOSIUM



Honey was a hit at the FIBC

The Fiji Indigenous Business Council (FIBC) Symposium, held at the Shangri-La Fijian Resort last month, was an ideal venue to market and increase awareness of Friends Fiji Style™ products. Having a booth at the event was beneficial for us as many indigenous entrepreneurs were able to learn more about FRIEND.

Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase opened the symposium, which was attended by more than 200 indigenous business owners, guests and media personnel. On day two, Attorney-General Mr Qoriniasi Bale visited our booth and was surprisingly well acquainted with FRIEND products. Many of the attendees were impressed with the packaging of our chutneys and the new Friends Fiji Style™ Pure Honey was quite popular with one enthusiastic buyer, who made off with 12 jars. Besides the dignitaries and business people visiting the booth, workers at the Shangri-La Fijian Resort also expressed great interest and bought chutneys for use at home.

For FRIEND, a short presentation on our organization was the highlight of the symposium. It was an opportunity to explain how we work with communities to alleviate poverty. Only after the presentation were members of the FIBC fully appreciative of how we support people in their efforts to create income for themselves and their families. The goal of participating in this event was to make people aware of the work FRIEND does and to attract potential buyers to our products. By raising awareness and increasing sales, we can assist marginalized communities to earn a living.

PROGRESS REPORT: OFFENDERS COMMUNITY RE-INTEGRATION PROGRAM

The program in the Lautoka prison started on the 16th of March after a series of meetings with the Officer in Charge and the Education Officer of the Lautoka Prison, Mr. Michael Brownjohn of the Australian Law and Justice department—which funds this pilot project—and the staff of FRIEND.

The program began with 3 morning sessions per week (Monday, Tuesday & Thursday) from 9:00 am to 11:30 am in the prison. For the first 3 weeks we introduced relational skills in getting to know each other, building on the offenders' relationships with each other and the facilitators as well as the Officer in Charge. We also did an assessment and a survey, which was conducted in person-to-person interviews using a designed questionnaire.

The first two weeks were a bit tough, as we were trying to crack a few nut shells which were a bit hard. However, I believe at the end of our 4th week, we are making progress by working with a lot of listening and communication skills. It is really exciting and challenging to work in this pilot project and I am looking forward to the days when we will be meeting and working with the families and the communities of the offenders. In conclusion, we are always warmly welcomed and treated with respect by the staff of the Lautoka Prison. Their friendly welcome as soon as we enter the gate of the prison makes the work much easier.

Nai Cokanasiga
Program Officer

SAVE SCHEME'S LITTLEST GROUP LEADERS

Training was recently held in the garage at the FRIEND compound for Save Scheme's newest group leaders. Some of the leaders are mothers who have small children to look after during the day. Fortunately, they didn't let that stop them from participating in this training. The kids came along with them. The moms benefited by getting the information and support they need to be effective group leaders, and the kids got a lesson on the importance of saving—whether they knew it or not! Perhaps this early exposure is creating lifelong savers and our group leaders of tomorrow. Only time will tell.

**What's Happening?****Coming Soon!****The FRIEND Shop**154 Toorak Road
Suva**It's Election time.**

Ask your politicians what concrete plans they have to **alleviate poverty**.

IN CASE OF FIRE

You don't usually think of the Fiji National Fire Authority as the people who *start* fires, but that's just what they did in the FRIEND compound last month. Fire fighters from the FNFA started the blaze in the photo above in order to demonstrate techniques and tools for putting out fires. Our office staff and kitchen workers participated in this training that included useful information and opportunities for hands on practice. Many thanks to the FNFA for sharing their knowledge.

SIGN LANGUAGE CLASSES TAUGHT BY THE DEAF

Sign language is just another language like Spanish or French. The only difference is you don't hear one when they "speak it". It is more important for a person in Fiji to know Sign Language than Spanish as there is a higher chance of having deaf people in our society than Spanish people.

FRIEND saw this need, and now with the help of Serevi from the Suva Deaf Association, deaf youth from our IGP cards program are running Sign Language classes every Saturday from 9 am to 11 am. These are open to the public and will run for 6 months. There are students as young as 10 and as old as 50 in this class. Everyone seems to enjoy the classes. The deaf instructors' presentation and the control they have while they conduct the classes is a testament to their leadership qualities.

For the people who did not know sign language before, now they are able to communicate with the deaf. Even if they do not know how to "speak" at the advance level, at least they are able to finger spell. Each student has a responsibility to go out and teach as many people as they can. Only then can we remove the block in the communication channel between those who can speak and hear and those who cannot.



The sign for "friend"

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