



# Takitaki

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## THE NEW YEAR: A TIME TO REFLECT

The start of a every new year warrants some reflection on the one that has just ended. It is a good practice to take stock of how the previous year began and see what was accomplished (or not!)

Looking back to the beginning of 2006 at FRIEND, we were faced with new hopes as well as new challenges. Hope stemmed from the desire to see growth in our programs and an increase in our capacity to reach out to communities. In this respect our hopes became realities. 2006 saw the introduction of two new programs for FRIEND, Community Re-entry and Youth Development. These programs have allowed FRIEND to increase our range of services and work with two segments of the community in ways that are targeted to their needs.

Challenges came in the face of our continued efforts toward sustainability and accessing resources to meet growing demands. We were supported to meet these challenges in the form of funding for our strategic planning process. The strategic plan that will result from this process will assist FRIEND in securing additional funding, ensure that our programs are focused and reflect our vision and values, and provide clear direction for the future of the organization.

As we begin 2007, despite the uncertainty in the country, we again have high hopes for the work we will do, the communities we will serve, and the people we will assist. We look forward to facing the challenges that come, with the knowledge that they are temporary obstacles to our overall aim: alleviating poverty in Fiji's underserved communities.



## HOLIDAY HIGHLIGHT OF 2006

The Community Re-entry Program planned a special treat for all the program participants in Prison and those who were at home for Christmas of 2006. The program bought gifts for them, their wives and children. There were also gifts donated for the children from the members of the St. Christopher's Anglican Church in Namaka, Nadi. A Christmas party that was to be held for the Ex-offenders and their families, had to be cancelled due to the instability of the country on the 5<sup>th</sup> of December, though the party for six participants in the prison went ahead. Despite the change in plans, the holiday spirit prevailed: the staff wrapped up gifts and Christmas cakes and distributed them to the participants families on the 14<sup>th</sup> of December. It was an experience for the program staff to serve the thirteen families and share with them the true spirit of Christmas. Most of them expressed that they were touched by this holiday gesture from FRIEND.



*Isoa and Nai wrap gifts for the Community Re-entry Program participants*

## COMMUNITY RADIO GIVES VOICE TO RURAL WOMEN



In the Save Scheme communities the FRIEND field officer visits, many women struggle to make ends meet—for them trying to save \$2 a week is hard. Though these women believe that it is okay to work hard to meet their families' needs for everyday life, periods such as the beginning of the year when they try their best to meet their children's school obligations, are often difficult times.

What these communities face was not widely known until femLINKpacific partnered with FRIEND to highlight their issues and concerns. The FRIEND Save Scheme officer was chosen to be the Western Division correspondent for the women's community media initiative.

FemLINKpacific exists to empower women and communities by giving them a voice to fully participate in decision making for equality, development and peace. FemLINK recently held a one-week consultation at the community media centre (CMC) in Suva which community correspondents attended. FemLINK's regional partner, Vois Blong Mere Solomon (VBMS) was also represented at the consultation. Dr Vanessa Griffen facilitated for the group with the help of Sharon Bhagwan-Rolls, Coordinator of femLINK.

This consultation brought to light the fact that issues being faced by women of Fiji are also being faced by women in other pacific countries. It is a privilege for FRIEND to be associated with femLINKpacific community media to offer the rural women of the West in Ba, Nadi, Tavua and Lautoka the opportunity to give voice to their issues and concerns.

**STUDENTS STOP BY FRIEND**

*University of Wisconsin students enjoy refreshments at FRIEND*

A group of students from the University of Wisconsin were hosted by the University of the South Pacific on a visit to Fiji. The 38 students, their group leader and an escort from USP traveled around the country on a cultural exchange. The group stopped in at FRIEND one morning recently. Though suffering a bit from the heat, the students enjoyed learning about the work we do at FRIEND.

After a welcome and a brief introduction to the organization, they went on a tour of our facilities. They had the opportunity to get information about our Income Generating Program while touring the Lautoka Kitchen and the card production space. They also had a presentation from FRIEND staff about the Save Scheme, Governance and Community Re-entry programs. They then took refuge from the heat of the day at the back of the FRIEND compound. They enjoyed some "meet and greet" time with staff while enjoying refreshments in the shade of the marquis set up for the occasion. The break also gave the shoppers among the group time to browse and purchase some of our IGP products. The large tour bus parked outside of the FRIEND office signaled it was time for our guests to make their exit, hopefully taking a positive impression of FRIEND with them.

**Come visit us at**

*FRIEND's*  
*Fiji Style™*  
**Shop**

**154 Toorak Road  
Suva**

Choose from our  
*Friend's Fiji*  
*Style™*  
products including:

Chutneys  
Pickles  
Handmade Cards  
Coconut Jewelry  
Saris, Sarongs,  
Scarves  
Calico bags...  
and more!

**A GOOD YEAR FOR HANDMADE CARDS**

*Friend's Fiji Style™* Handmade cards enjoyed healthy year of sales in 2006. The volume of Christmas cards sold made them our bestseller, followed by Fiji Islands masi cards. General quill designs and Diwali cards were also popular last year.

To meet the demand for our Christmas cards, production was in full swing before and during the holiday season. We were fortunate to receive many large, custom orders from business houses in addition to regular orders from retail outlets. It's exciting to see so many corporate bodies choosing FRIEND cards to express the joy and good wishes of the season to their clients and partners.

After a short break to bring in the new year, production is back up to accommodate the anticipated demand for Valentine's Day cards. This year, designs of love will be back on our attractive cards for this special occasion. We are hopeful that brisk card sales for Valentine's Day will begin a year of healthy sales that equals, then surpasses, our overall sales for 2006. Continued demand for the cards will ensure that the Deaf Youths who create them continue to benefit by earning regular income.



*Two beautiful designs from our line of handmade Valentine's Day cards*

**FRIEND STAFF SAILS ON THE SHIP FOR THE WORLD'S YOUTH**

Every year, the Japanese government provides an opportunity for groups of youths from different countries to participate in a two month adventure. The youths call a cruise ship home for the duration of the trip, as it sails the world. Fiji was one of the thirteen countries selected for the 2007 voyage, which is the 19th year for "Ship for the World's Youth".

Activities planned for the youths' during their time on the ship include seminars, workshops, discussions and institutional visits at various ports-of-call. This trip allows youths to share ideas, acquire an understanding of different cultures and develop new friendships. A FRIEND staff member, Program Officer Devina Devi, is one of the eleven youths chosen to represent Fiji. She leaves for Japan on the 15<sup>th</sup> of January.

The participants were selected for the voyage on the basis of the work they do with youth in their communities. The Ministry of Youth asked FRIEND to apply for the program specifically, due to the various program activities we carry out with the youth of Lautoka. Devina was chosen to sail on the Ship for the World's Youth from the 100 youths that applied for the program.



*Devina ties up loose ends before her voyage*