

## *YEN Youths on work attachments.*

As we face global financial crisis, the number of available jobs is scarce, and the ability to provide for one's basic needs is increasingly difficult. Over period of time during our outreach programs young people raise the issue of lack of experience as a hindrance to gaining employment. It is possible for a young person in Fiji to complete their education right through to university level without actually experiencing any form of paid or unpaid work unlike other countries that mandate students to undertake work experience with organizations of their choice during their senior years. Because of this lack of work experience, even educated youth are finding it difficult to secure a job.

During an interactive, two week, Youth Employment Network training (YEN), seventeen youth were given the opportunity to gain practical skills. The workshops focused on goal setting, decision making, effective communication, work ethics, curriculum vitae and application letter writing, and interviewing.

After completing the two week training, participants were attached at local businesses to gain practical work experience. Lautoka City Council, Eddie Hin, Nestle, Red Cross Lautoka, and FRIEND all accepted attachés in their workplaces.

Since the completion of the training, FRIEND has seen an influx of youth dropping in at the Lautoka office to gain assistance finding job openings, editing application letters, and report on the progress

they are making towards their set goals. It is our hope that this would be an ongoing process and that FRIEND remains a safe place for youth to access support and resources.



*Taking a break from the training room*



*Fun @ FRIEND*

## *FRIEND opens its doors in Labasa*

After orientation and subsequent training in Lautoka, we secured what we believe is an appropriate base pretty much down-town. Scrubbing the driveway, walls and windows and mopping the entire inside of this new acquisition - our new home - was hard work., but lo and behold, given Mala had a whip in hand from 8am to 5pm, and with much team effort, the beginning of FRIEND in Labasa was established. Farmer Shalendra was the backbone of this team and remains an inspiration. Jane is the consummate detail orientated tailor and our drapes on the windows have received many accolades from almost everyone who visits the FRIEND office. Rashida made sure we spent sensibly on our new inventory and now ensures that we all keep the office spick and span. Being the senior member of this team, I simply have to mop each day! Now the ball is in our court, so to speak. Service delivery is the buzz word for the team.

This first month we have established contact with major stakeholders within the greater Northern area. Where do we go from here given the support and or acceptance of FRIEND by stakeholders? This next month(s) is extremely critical. The team must lock down at the very least, five farmers into sustainable farming with products that will not only be very marketable but of better value for the same.

***The official opening of FRIEND Labasa  
Office will be held at a later date***

*By Victor Kissun  
Manager North*





# Takitaki



Regional participants with the guests at the opening of the Summit

With FRIEND being a new player on encouraging planting through its program GROW for Home, Health & Commerce participation in the 2nd Pacific Extension Summit was timely. The Summit heard about challenges of the experienced from Fiji and around the region in the field of agriculture.

The five day summit in Nadi looked at the way forward for efficient extension practices.

FRIEND was asked to present on the topic of NGO based extension approaches in Trade. FRIEND presentation was well received from the floor prompting a lively discussion on the lack of support and resources for the communities in need. →

### Exploring International Partnership



Sashi with Vijay Madhwan, Founder of Basix

FRIEND is exploring partnership with BASIX India as it embarks on projects with rural farmers and BASIX has been doing rural development work for last 12 years very sustainably. I travelled to BASIX headquarters in Hyderabad India in April and met senior management on possibilities of partnership. BASIX is willing to assist in the agricultural development of farmers and provide technical assistance needed as they have similar soils, weather and are able to produce agricultural crops all year around. Most farmers we visited have small holder farms yet are able to sustain their families. BASIX has also offered its first international fellowship to FRIEND. The founder Mr Vijay Madhwan has personally offered that they are willing to provide training to FRIEND staff for over period of time to help build institutional capacity of the organisation. Very sincere thanks to Dr Lex Thompson and SPC FACT for covering my flight cost to India. This was a very worthwhile visit and has helped me review FRIEND closely, its strengths and the areas we will work upon for sustainability.

Sashi Kiran

A major stumbling block for FRIEND work in its GROW Program remains the availability of seeds and planting material.

While FRIEND has made some valuable offshore contacts in seeking 'seed' support, it is attempting to start its own seedling centers and needs technical and financial assistance from willing partners.

One of these partners is the SPC FACT program headed by Dr Lex Thompson that focuses on Facilitating Agricultural Commodity Trade.

The Summit was organized by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community Land Resources Division.

And gathering of the experienced from around the region has made it even clearer with its message to grow more keeping an eye on the market, that FRIEND is on the right path in terms of ensuring Food Security in Fiji in our quest for alleviating poverty through planting for home, health and commerce.

By Sandhya Narayan

### Join US

**YES!** I want to support the  
*Foundation for Rural Integrated  
Enterprises N Development*



### Annual Fee

Individual \$5.00    Corporate \$50  
Families \$10.00    Community Groups \$20.00

Name .....  
Address.....  
Phone Number.....  
Email.....

# Takitaki

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## A trip to Leqaeqa



Mere, Arti & Karishma

Staff from FRIEND visited Legalega Research Station to have a better look at the Agriculture research practices.

The team was impressed with the use of Marco-ting and Grafting techniques which provide quick yields. In most cases trees that would normally take upto five years to bear fruit, start fruiting in two years.

The team witnessed work on a project of preparing a thousand breadfruit seedlings using marco-ting to be distributed to farmers who want to have breadfruit plantations for export of breadfruits. The team came back excited from the trip with their purchases of grafted fruit trees, cinnamon plants and a ‘new’ fruit called mangosteen to be tasted by every-

one. Now hands up everyone who have never heard of this fruit before! I for one would be part of the group. But with a little research of my own am now trying to educate my folks on this new wonder fruit. It is a native of Asian countries and the researchers believe that the conditions in Fiji are ideal for this tree. Historically mangosteen has been used as traditional remedies for many health benefits, but it is only recently that’s its benefits have become ‘known’ in developed countries. Local agricultural experts believe that if Fiji can ensure a good supply of mangosteen, it may be one of the future export commodities bringing more foreign exchange into the country.

Mangosteen on trial at Leqaeqa



## Poverty Workshop May 22nd @ USP Center Lautoka

Several FRIEND staff had the opportunity to attend a workshops on “Fostering Gender Equality in Employment and Incomes,” and “The Incidence of poverty and Implications for National Poverty Alleviation Policies facilitated by Prof Wadan Narsey. These workshops were geared towards addressing the UNDP Millenium Development Goals for eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, and promoting gender equality.

The workshop reiterated poverty as the “inequality of opportunities and capabilities.” In Fiji, 79% of those falling below the poverty line live in rural communities. The province of Ba contains the largest number of individuals fitting this definition, some of which can be attributed to its high population concentration. Given that the number of those living in poverty will increase due to the current global economic crisis, and the current situation in Fiji including the devaluation of the dollar and an increase in the price of food. Prof Narsey emphasized the need for programs into the rural areas even though it may be difficult.

## Recipe Corner

### SATWA—roasted delight of 7 grains



**Ingredients :** Friend’s Fiji Style Satwa Pack, I cup milk, Sugar Or Friend’s Fiji Style Honey.

**Method:** Take half a cereal bowl of Satwa. Add sugar or honey to taste. Pour in milk to mix into a thickish paste. Dig in with a spoon to enjoy the taste of freshly roasted grains.

*Friend’s Fiji Style Satwa is prepared from traditional recipe brought to this land by the indentured labourers from India. The hardworking ‘girmityas’ would use this as a filling, healthy and affordable snack for sustenance while attending to the fields of the colonial masters or doing the back breaking tasks of clearing forests for infrastructure development.*

With Sandhya Narayan





# Takitaki

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## *Our Development Agents*

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of May, the FRIEND training room was full of life, as Development Agents regrouped to discuss the progress they are making. Each identified assets in their communities, and had the chance to brainstorm ways to improve livelihoods using available resources and skills. FRIEND is assisting the Development Agents encourage farmers and the communities to GROW food for Home, Health and Commerce. This initiative stems from concerns that most of what we eat in Fiji is imported. One example is dhal, which is imported in tonnes all the from Malawi and Zimbabwe in Africa.

### *Tavua*

“Mereliki of Malele is a widow, has two sons. Samisoni the older of the two is 22 years of age. He left school after form 6 and is now working on their farm. His younger brother Lekima is in form 4 at Balata high school. According to Samisoni they plant sugar cane, has half acre of cassava, some eggplant and taro for subsistence. They have about 32 acres of land which are all good for farming. This farmer has potential as well as land for farming.”

“Nirmal Singh of Matalevu is a cane farmer, his native land lease will expire in 2011. He plants okra, beans, and cabbage besides sugar cane. According to him this is basically for subsistence. Mr. Singh has a piggery farm and has 20 heads, this he sells as an alternative source of income. His main concern is his lease expiry. When asked if he thinks it will be renewed he said that the farmer next to his didn't have his lease renewed so he said it doest look too positive.” (by Sarwan Kumar, DA Supervisor, Tavua)

### *Lautoka*

“I visited some families in a squatter and saw mostly Fijians are living in this settlement with poor source of income. There is serious overcrowding with upto three families sharing a small house. Even though they can have backyard gardens they still buy food like noodles, tuna and bread from shops. Children look hungry. Broken families, children running away form homes to live off the streets. Some families have no means of income and are resorting to begging. We have started some back yard gardens and composts.

(by Agnes Matafule Change Agent Lautoka)  
“Their toilets are clean, some flush toilets. I visited the rubbish dump, the last house close to the dump has flies all over. I have always claimed that I was born and bred in Lautoka, but ... I was shocked to see people getting food dumped by big trucks from supermarket. They were collecting potatoes and onions etc. I could not believe my eyes, but that's the truth. 9 families have started backyard gardens since I started work and some composts are being worked on”  
(by Vive Liutaki Change Agent Lautoka)

### *Nadi*

“Risks and problems: stealing, no land, flood prone, not much support from Agriculture, high price of fertilizer and not practicing traditional farming methods. These were some of the issues highlighted by farmers and nearby squatter residents. Market is a major issue. Willing to try new crops if assured of market.”

“Simliar issues as last community. Most seem well off farmers. Mostly supplying to Nadi market and nearby resorts and hotels. Concern on fluctuating prices. Willing to plant new crops for trial if assured of market.”

(by K Mani, DA Supervisor, Nadi)

### *Ba*

“Jeke Tikolevu surprised us as we dropped into his farm on the way out of Vatulaulau to town. Married with a month old child, Jeke has just moved in to Ba from Lomaivuna. He is a landowner but still experiences theft as one of his major problems. Though a small creek runs beside the farm he waters his gardens by using buckets of water from the creek. His plants ranges from dalo, cabbage, bananas, vudi, watermelon and also started a livestock piggery farm.”

“The couple had three unemployed sons, all had cassava plantation of their own and sell them to the community and most of it is used by the family. They have access to water and electricity but not to education Unhealthy diets due to financial hardships. They have planted some eggplants, avocado, pumpkin and bele beside the house. Toamato seedlings are also being planted but the ownership of the land which belongs to a Mataqali in Nailaga Village makes it difficult for them to plant since it does not belong to them.”

(by J Nawaikula, DA Supervisor, Ba)

### *Rakiraki*

“This village depends on kava and cash crops. They need more awareness on this to hit bigger scales and margin as raised by the Headman. Health another area due to their drinking water and other needs”

(by Uraia Waqa Development Agent, Rakiraki)