



# Takitaki

## FRIEND at Showcase 2010



Visit Us at Showcase

The FRIEND stall at Showcase 2010

brings to you once again a range of your favourite Friend's Fiji Style pickles, chutneys and

jams along with its selection of handmade cards for all occasions.

Our new products include cassava flour, dried honey banana, recycled paper writing packs and newly introduced recycled paper handcrafted cards.

Daily made fresh snacks of lakri, nimkis and fried peas can also be found at the stall.

FRIEND products are all locally made by rural and marginalised communities and individuals from the Northern and Western communities that are marketed under the Friend's Fiji Style brandname. So do not forget to pay us a visit, have a look at the quality range of goods and stock your pantries with delicious products at special prices.

## World Day Against Child Labour 12 June 2010

FRIEND does not directly work with children, but it has its own Child Protection Policy in place aimed at protecting children in its communities.

As part of this policy FRIEND suppliers are made aware of the issue of child labour and are required to sign a supplier agreement stating that the supply of goods have not involved the engagement of children under fifteen years.

Hundreds of millions of girls and boys throughout the world are engaged in work that deprives them of adequate education, health, leisure and basic freedom, violating their rights. Of these children, more than half are exposed to the worst forms of child labour such as work in hazardous environments, slavery, or other forms of forced labour, illicit activities such as drug trafficking and prostitution, as well as involvement in armed conflict.

**The International Labour Organization (ILO) launched the first World Day Against Child Labour in 2002** as a way to highlight the plight of these children. This is intended to serve as a catalyst for the growing worldwide movement against child labour.

## Donors visit FRIEND

Acting Australian High Commissioner Ms Sarah Roberts paid a visit to FRIEND this month to see the work done by the organization. She saw the current humble production centres and visited the new home of FRIEND at Tuvu. She talked to staff and took deep interest in the income generation programs being done on site. Nileseshni Sekar, the IGP Manager explained the paper making process while Mohinesh, quality control supervisor discussed challenges in food production process at the current site and the need for expansion and reasoning behind shift to the new site at Tuvu



Ms Roberts with Mohinesh at the FRIEND Kitchen

which will be home to new

office, food and craft production centres.

Ms Roberts saw the fruits being processed and took some time to taste the delights of the kitchen. She was amazed at the scale of work undertaken by FRIEND and its reach to the communities.

Her visit coincided with the visit by the NZ AID team



NZ AID with community ladies

to our communities. Newly appointed NZAID First Secretary Ms Ginny Chapman and Faga Semisi from NZAID visited a FRIEND community on the outskirts of Lautoka to assess the impact of FRIEND programs into the communities.

The team heard that the ladies of the group were only eating vegetables occasionally with their meals before FRIEND talked to them about the importance of proper diets for health and got them

“We would get our vegetables from the market before. We were planting root crops and normally we would just have that with some tea. Now we just go to the garden, take our vegetables and make healthy soups and add vegetables to meat and other dishes.”

The team also heard that apart from the core group of women who participate in FRIEND program, there are numerous others who are taking inspiration from their gardens and planting their own.

“We are eating healthier now and are also able to sell

our surplus and make some additional money for other needs. Most of the ladies were only doing pot plants that we would sell for income once year. Backyard gardens provides us with regular food and income opportunity throughout the year.”

AUSAID and NZ Aid have been the key donors for FRIEND for the last few years contributing towards core-funding of the organisation.



Ms Roberts with Nileseshni at the card workshop



Ms Roberts, Sashi and NZAID First Secretary Ginny Chapman



## Families Get together to Clean Up their Community

On the morning of the 6<sup>th</sup>, Mereani, Paula and I left for the community at 8.45am for the scheduled clean up program., but when we got there to our surprise, every body was already busy in their own compounds cleaning up, piles of rubbish already accumulated on the roadside. According to the program, members of this particular squatter community were asked to assemble under a tree at 9.00am where they were to be distributed the garbage bags and the gloves given by the Lautoka City Council to start off the days program. We also saw six men who had already started weeding and cleaning the side of the creek.

The clean up exercise followed an awareness program about the importance of maintaining a hygienic environment for a healthy community. This is a large community of more than 400 people living in approximately 46 households. Most of the families living in this area have moved to the settlement for better income and education opportunities associated with the urban center, from the outer islands and inner areas of the mainland. One of the major challenges for the community has been the unavailability of a garbage collection service as it is deemed an illegal settlement. This had been resulting in all kinds of rubbish being thrown into the creek running next to the settlement further polluting the environment....the same creek on whose water source many residents rely on for their bath and washing needs.

## Onion Paper—a new range in our recycled paper products



“Can everyone bring in onion peelings from their homes?” Nileshni asked office staff one afternoon. While the IGP coordinator got some weird looks, our sales person was quick to volunteer that he can organize bag loads of onion Peelings from supermarkets. And true to his word, he brought in two bag loads one day as he came back from his run of the market.

The cycled paper making team got busy soon after to process the bags of onion peelings, resulting in beautifully orange hued recycled paper. The card makers got excited by its beautiful texture and got down to immediately creating beautiful cards out of this that they specialize in.

*Friend's Fiji Style* © handcrafted paper are fine enough to be put through printers for your letters, certificates, business cards and any creative work with a difference.



But looking at the community initiative to clean up their own area, even the Lautoka City Council has offered to pitch in and offer a garbage collection service for a nominal fee.

*By Vive Liutaki*

## Family Day FRIEND Community

Smiles still play on the lips of the ladies who challenged a group of village men from around Lautoka to a tug of war and won. Earlier the men had beaten a group of youths and were still celebrating their win when they received a challenge from this unexpected quarter of the community. The ladies beat the team of men, who were by then melted by the brown drink to claim the championship title of the day. The World Family Day was celebrated globally on the 15th of May this year. To mark the occasion FRIEND organised a day of fun and games to promote active lifestyle in one of its communities.

“Let’s make the world a better place to live by putting our HEALTH first. Let’s eat healthy foods and save our environment” was the message from the Chief Guest of the Day, Dr Animesh Sinha, founder / director PRISM Health initiative.

Dr Sinha stressed the importance of getting regular medical checks, and taking responsibility for ones own health. Turaga-ni-koro, Jiuta Delaibatiki also spoke on the changes in his life since the implementa-

tion of FRIEND Community Development Program in his community. The invited guests included a number of turaga-ni-koros from neighboring communities where FRIEND works in. Games organised for the day included sack race, apple eating, musical chairs, tug of war, volleyball, marble in spoon race.



The winning team of ladies who beat the men at the ages old pulling race.



## Modelling Clay Gardens

The programs team proudly display a colorful selection of posters in the FRIEND training room. These posters are based on the themes of Backyard Gardens and Hanging Gardens and are a result of creative work by the participants of the FRIEND Community Development Program.

“Every Thursdays the Governance team goes to this community just outside Lautoka to facilitate different trainings from our recently launched manual. Currently food security module is being conducted and we have different groups doing practical and theoretical sessions.

Community members are so much into the training that they prepare well in advance

for the next session and use creative art to make their presentations interesting. One group used play dough to make model gardens as part of their action plans identifying long term and short term plants that they wished to plant. It was so encouraging to see that they are taking so much interest in community development. The interesting part is that even the older women join the youths to use arts for their presentations.”

Meanwhile the Community Development Module is being implemented in a total of seven Lautoka communities simultaneously. The participants will be assessed by the University of the South Pacific Lautoka Campus before being awarded their certificates upon completion of all the modules.



*By Aarti Mala*





## New Product!!! Hot Chili Pickle

FRIEND Kitchen has developed a new Hot Chili Pickle in

response to demands by chili lovers for a hotter version of the Friend's Fiji Style Chili Pickle. The Hot Chili Pickle has proved a hit with our official tasters and staff at Lautoka Office.

The recipe has been adopted from the kitchens of the Sekar household. Nileshni, who is one of the original volunteers of FRIEND and now a senior manager, says her mother-in-law has been using the recipe for years now and is a family favorite.

She says if the recipe proves to be a hit and sees success in the market, the production will be turned over to an interested community group who may want to involve themselves in an income generation project.

FRIEND communities are always encouraged to come up with their own recipes with potential to be developed into a source of income for them.

To date FRIEND has launched a total of nine food products in the market with ongoing trials on many more. While the launched products are available for consumers through various stores and supermarkets, other products from Friend's Fiji Style range can be purchased from the Lautoka Office front desk and Friend's Fiji Style shop in Garden City, Suva.

## A New Youth Volunteer at FRIEND Labasa



Paula at the FRIEND training room with AYAD In-Country Manager Daniel Taufaga

Paula Dunne from Brisbane has joined Labasa Team for the next one year through the Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development. AYAD is an Australian Government initiative that provides skilled

young Australians the opportunity to volunteer overseas in Asia, the Pacific and Africa. Paula comes with experience in youth work and will assist in developing programs in Labasa. She is planning on organizing youth stakeholder consultations to assess the needs of the youths before working on the projects that the youths are interested in for their social and economic empowerment.

## Community Gardens attract visitors

It was great to be amongst the group of women who had their first harvest of radish and cucumber at one of the communities we work in. On the 27<sup>th</sup> of April the participants decided to pull out some of their vegetables from their gardens. Ladies were very excited at their first harvest. After a food security session with FRIEND, they decided to clear land around their houses and plant something for their homes. It's amazing to see the changes within each person and their surroundings every time we visit. To make a difference in people's lives gives us a new level of energy to work a little bit more.



FRIEND's backyard gardening stories are attracting a lot of attention from the media as well as other NGO's and even government bodies. This month saw a joint visit to FRIEND from the National Food and Nutrition Centre and SPC. NFNC's Food Security Officer Ms. Dhana Raghuwaiya, SPC entomologist Shareen Prasad and a laboratory assistant Mr. Nitesh Nand requested a visit to sight the community gardens after reading an article in one of the dailies about square foot and hanging gardens.

The communities had a planting session planned but at short notice showed their visitors their crops and creative gardens. Visitors were very impressed with the work put into the initiative by the communities.

*"It is so encouraging to see that communities are being empowered by FRIEND and they are taking so much initiative in their own development. I'm so impressed to see their neat little gardens and hanging plants."*

said Mr Nitesh Nand. Ms. Raghuwaiya informed FRIEND that their visit comes as the NFNC/SPC team is getting ready to implement their own food security program around the country and is studying the different models being used. She said FRIEND initiative is very inspiring and agencies could learn valuable lessons from this project.

The FRIEND backyard gardens are geared towards encouraging communities to plant and eat healthy and to move away from their dependence on heavily processed foods that put a strain on their pockets as well as their health. - Vive Liutaki



## Recipe Corner: Sweet & Sour Marmalade Tofu

(Meat lovers can replace tofu with chicken)

**Ingredients:** A block of tofu, two cloves garlic, two tablespoons olive oil, three tablespoons soy sauce, ½ cup orange juice, ¼ cup Friend's Fiji Style Marmalade, ½ teaspoon fresh ginger. Sesame seeds for garnish

**Method:** Mince the garlic and ginger. Slice tofu into bite size pieces. Heat olive oil in a medium size pan for four minutes to five minutes. Sauté garlic and add the tofu. Cook for three minutes. Add the orange juice, soy sauce, ginger and rice vinegar. Stir and make sure that main ingredient is coated with the sauce. Heat the dish for five minutes. For those who would like a bit at the heat factor to the dish, you can add a teaspoon or two of Friend's Fiji Style Chili Chutney or Chili Garlic Paste to the dish as it cooks. Serve hot.



Log on to [www.fijifriend.com](http://www.fijifriend.com) for a selection of more Friend's Fiji Style Recipes.

With Sandhya Narayan



## FARMERS LEARN BUSINESS

A regional training workshop was held for farmer organizations involved in agribusiness in Nadi early this month.

And with FRIEND increasingly being recognized as an organization working with farmers it was an opportunity to network and share with others in the sector.

FRIEND Labasa branch Manager, Sunita Sundar participated in the week long program representing the organisation.

It is well known that Fiji imports large amounts of agricultural products that can be easily grown in Fiji if the support is provided. There is a large export potential as well with various treatment facilities now available in Fiji to meet the requirements for exports.

She said the workshop provided sharing opportunities on various farming methods and innovative work being done in Fiji and the Pacific.

Along with technical exchange the participants got a chance to visit agribusinesses in the Sigatoka Valley. These included Produce Special-

ity Limited, owned by Mr Barry Ladewig that grows and exports papaya and Mahens Exports, which exports a range of vegetables that they grow on their own farm. FRIEND works with farmers encouraging and supporting them into commercial farming ventures. Working toward food security FRIEND encourages planting in small areas for home consumption. When farmers have larger planting area FRIEND encourages planting in a sustainable manner and assures markets for certain crops like lentils, chillies and rosella.



*Sunita Sundar on the field trip with workshop participants in Sigatoka*

## Grassroots Leaders Forum

FRIEND participatory budgeting program involving eight Ba communities over the last two years drew to an end this month with a grand finale of the Grassroots Leaders Forum to allow the community leaders to engage with leaders from the government, the local government and the media.

The delegates from various communities spent the morning recapping on their action plans and progress they had made over time.

Most action plans were well underway, while some were encouraged to continue to pursue the initiatives despite lack of response from the authorities involved.

A long time radio journalist, Rajendra James of Fiji Broadcasting Corporation Limited spoke giving examples of stories and issues where communities worked with media to highlight their issues and seek solutions or more information on matters of interest to them. James encouraged the PB communities to come forward with their issues should they

feel the need for media engagement for their development.

Ba Town Council Special Administrator Mr Arun Prasad talked about services of the council, its responsibilities towards the wider public of Ba, Civic pride or the lack of it, general plans for the Ba township and how communities can contribute, especially on the BTC plans to build a handicraft bureau center in Ba and the income generation opportunity it will create to make local crafts available for purchases.

*The participatory budgeting program was aimed at increasing community understanding of how government makes and implements decisions about budgets at local and national levels.*

*The PB project was funded by AUSAID through the Foundation of the People of the South Pacific International's Regional Governance Program.*



## Isa Lei Collette



*Collette Whitehouse joined FRIEND 3 months ago from UK.*

My time as a volunteer at FRIEND has come to an end, so I have been asked to share a few reflections on the experience and my thoughts on Fiji and FRIEND.

I was feeling rather stale after having spent 11 years working within the publishing industry in London, and so I came to Fiji and FRIEND looking for a completely different and refreshing experience. The volunteer placement at FRIEND took me right out of my comfort zone, offering not only a change of culture and climate, but also a different working sector - working for a not for profit NGO rather than very much for profit private companies. The only familiar element was that I would be using the marketing skills and experience I had gained previously, but applying them in a different environment.

Fiji is a country of enormous natural beauty and the green lushness of the countryside in the wet season was a really pleasant surprise for me. Fiji's people are very friendly and inquisitive, but what I admire most about them is their ability to be content with the lives they have. In the West, the culture has become so driven by acquiring wealth, status and possessions that there is a trend of growing levels of depression, unhappiness and anxiety. One philosopher has coined the term 'status anxiety' to describe this phenomenon of a constant state of worrying about what others think of us and never being content with what we have. Living in Fiji, my life has been much simpler and refreshingly free of status anxiety! FRIEND's strength is in complementing this natural sense of contentment among communities. The team at FRIEND work with people to help them to realise that they can live healthier and more self-sufficient lives, with some guidance to get them on the right track. They are helped towards finding solutions to problematic issues, as well as identifying available skills and resources. I really hope that FRIEND will continue to be successful in this goal and that Fiji will remain a joyful and status anxiety-free country!

The people I have met here at FRIEND have been extremely warm and welcoming and a great pleasure to work with, I hope to stay in touch with the new friends I have made here. I can not say exactly what I was expecting to find when I came here, but the experience has certainly been a hugely positive one that will stay with me forever.