



# Takitaki

## We are Moving

Someone once said, "When we are dreaming alone it is only a dream. When we are dreaming with others, it is the beginning of reality".

We would like to share our dream of a FRIEND Village—a place that would be developed as the nerve center for FRIEND's fight against poverty through social and economic empowerment of the marginalized and the underserved communities in Fiji.

FRIEND as an organization had started off as a dream to alleviate poverty a little more than eight years ago.

As a young development worker Sashi Kiran would constantly lament on the missing links between skills and opportunities that could contribute to solving numerous social issues, especially in the poor and under served communities.

Putting aside criticisms and being

edged on with whatever little support she had, FRIEND was launched. The organization was registered December 2001 and open its first office in 2002 August. FRIEND has grown from its initial three member volunteer team to around thirty full time staff with an office, a craft and a food production facility in Lautoka, a branch in Labasa and a specialty shop in Suva.

With the growth of the organization through its many successes and challenges, one of the main limiting factors has been the lack of space— for staff, for suppliers, for full scale production of goods and trialing of new ideas.

In recognition of this, FRIEND paid a deposit for its own piece of land about two years back and started planning for the development.

The FRIEND Village is envisaged to

have all the necessary support structures to help the organization in fulfilling its aims along with profit centers for income generation to increase its financial self sufficiency for new projects and ideas.

The profit centers will include a restaurant featuring local delicacies for food lovers on its menu.

The dream project is now under way with FRIEND expected to receive its keys to the first building later this month. The other structures of the development village will eventuate over the next few years as we secure financial assistance for the infrastructure.

Meantime the core operations of FRIEND is now ready to shift to the new home site in Tuvu on King's road and the official opening will coincide with FRIEND's birthday in August.

## A glimpse into our new home



If there are communication disruptions during our move you can contact us on phone 9993181

## FRIEND at Microfinance Expo Ba

The FRIEND stall at the first ever Microfinance Expo organized in Ba drew its fair share of attention with its high quality products on display. Reserve Bank Governor Mr Sada Reddy commended Friend's Fiji Style Products saying few local development products reach the quality it has achieved.

On display were the signature food products from the Friend's Fiji Style

range as well as a selection of Handmade cards and recycled paper made from kava, flower petals and onion peelings.

*Sashi discussing finer points of quality control with Governor Reddy, while Special Administrator Ba Mr Arun Prasad looks on*



## WALK for Health

More than sixty staff, volunteers and community members gave up the comfort of their warm beds and turned up for an early morning walk for life event organized by the Ministry of Health. on 26th June from 5.30am. The early morning walkers were treated to a light breakfast courtesy of FRIEND/Ministry of Health before dispersing for the day. The event is organized last Saturday of every month, you are welcome to and come join us.



## New Designs!!!



Cards for all Occasions!!! Our card makers continue to delight the handmade card lovers with new designs and techniques adding on from the original quill designs. Many new designs coming out of the workshop reflect the creativity of the card makers at work.

Friend's Fiji Style Handmade Card project was initiated with a group of Deaf youths in 2004 as a means of Income Generation opportunity for them. While many from the original group have moved on to other ventures, some continue on the project and are joined by other creative and underserved youths and individuals.

Friend's Fiji Style Handmade Cards can be purchased from Friend's Lautoka Office, Friend's Fiji Style Shop in Suva and many leading retail outlets around the country.

## Nadi Council of Women Visit FRIEND

"I have seen the progress and growth of FRIEND, within few years you have come so far. Congratulations for the new venture. Its impressive to see the range of things you are doing to support poverty alleviation, our ladies really appreciated the visit." These were the words of a prominent Nadi Social Worker Mrs Sushila Rameshwar who brought along sixty women from various women's clubs in Nadi for a visit to FRIEND, taking the opportunity of the Councils day out, to show some of the innovative IGP practices at FRIEND. The women were given a brief history of organization as well as a glimpse into its future plans. The women saw recycled paper making in action, a group of youth working on handmade cards and a team in the food production center working on a batch of guava jam that was in production for the day. A number of women made several purchases of the locally produced quality goods supporting the quest for poverty alleviation in the country and promising to come back for a visit to the organizations new home.



## Planting for Food Security

As the world celebrated World Environment Day on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June, FRIEND took the initiative of taking action, involving communities from around Lautoka and the Lautoka City Council to start off its Planting Campaign aimed at increasing Food security in its communities. The Campaign saw a start on the 3<sup>th</sup> of June as a team from FRIEND, along with 15 youths participated in a beautification project of the Lautoka City Council. The exercise was also part of an initiative on increasing civic pride of the city



dwellers. The following day saw the teams going out into various communities to implement its Food Security Planting Campaign. The team has so far collected more than 800 participants from around seven underserved communities who have signed up to be part of the program. By signing up the members have undertaken to identify an appropriate fruit tree that they can plant in their community and look after it. The plants being volunteered for the campaign include guava, mango, breadfruit, lime, lemon and many other long term fruiting trees. FRIEND Planting Program will contribute to the Ministry of Environment's Project of 1 million trees by 2011.

*Check out our redesigned website on*  
**[www.fijifriend.com](http://www.fijifriend.com)**

## A chance to catch up again with Vijay Mahajan

"I feel rejuvenated after meeting him." says Sashi after meeting with Mr Vijay Mahajan. "It remotivates you to meet such a humble great leader who has worked tirelessly for the under served." . Mr Mahajan is an Indian social entrepreneur and chairman of BASIX, an institution devoted solely to promoting rural livelihoods. BASIX goes beyond micro-credit to offer a range of services including savings and insurance, agricultural, livestock and non-farm enterprise development, and institutional development to rural producers and their groups. Mr Mahajan was on short trip to Fiji this month engaging with various players in the field of microfinance and rural development. Sashi had undertaken a trip to India to see various aspects of rural development enterprises of BASIX where she had initially met with Mr Mahajan in 2008. She says there are a number of lessons from BASIX that can assist with rural development in Fiji. FRIEND has been offered the first international fellowship with BASIX.



**Sashi with Vijay Mahajan  
in Hyderabad, India 2008**

## APTC – Health & Community Welfare Diploma

FRIEND Programs Team Leader Mereani Lomavere has completed her 18 months training stint with the Australian Pacific Technical College (APTC), being one of the first graduates of this pilot program.

"The course reemphasized that culture, beliefs and ethnicity play important roles as we try to blend the information a community worker needs to be equipped with." The Australia-Pacific Technical College (APTC) is an Australian Government initiative designed as a centre of training excellence, to help pacific islanders gain Australian-standard skills and qualifications for a wide range of vocational careers throughout the Pacific – careers where skilled employees are in high demand. Mereani says together with community work she is looking forward to working towards her Masters studies now.



**Mereani with a regional  
participant, Liz at APTC**



## New Product!!! Friend's Fiji Style® Desiccated Coconut

Fiji could easily be called the land of the coconuts, after all how hard it is for one to find coconuts in this land? And yet when it comes to desiccated coconut, would you believe that all the desiccated coconut on our supermarket shelves are imported?

In its continued efforts towards making use of available resources for poverty alleviation and import substitution, the Income Generation Programs team have yet again successfully trialed and

produced this exciting new product. Fresh matured coconuts are dehusked and deshelled manually using hand tools. Finely grated coconut meat is then dried to perfection using the sun driers. The finished product is checked for quality

before being packed in polythene pouches. Friend's Fiji Style® Desiccated Coconut is suitable for all your baking and confectionary needs. Buy one and try it our today! Available from Friend's Fiji Style Shop at Garden City in Raiwai, Suva. Available in 100g and 200g packs.



42 year old Laisa Baleikasavu started off with a square foot garden early this year. She now boasts a total of 14 plot gardens that she says is her pride and joy



"After going through the sessions and starting my own backyard garden and compost I felt very good. I started to eat healthier and I also quit smoking after being a smoker for the last 22 years. FRIEND brought WAC theater group who performed a play on NCDs in my community, the play had a great impact on me as I realized how smoking could damage my health. After seeing the play I was able to quit smoking. I heard that Navutu had great back yard gardens through Fiji One, I wanted to go and see their gardens for myself. The day that I had gone for the visit FRIEND was having a session and I was filled with admiration to see the community involved in the training. Not only women but men along with the Turaga-Ni-Koro and his wife is involved which was very inspiring. I was also given the opportunity to speak at the training by the Turaga-Ni-Koro. Later I visited the gardens with some of the participants. I was truly amazed by the creativity. There were upside down tomato plants hanging around in buckets near the houses. Also the very beautiful and clean gardens tagged nicely in different plots containing different items like garlic, onions, lettuce, cabbage and cucumber encouraged me to spend more time in my garden. To see the people of Navutu taking effort even though they do not have enough space and are near to the sea was really inspiring. After the visit I have really started to give more time to my gardens and currently I have 14 plot gardens in which I grow a variety of vegetables like cabbage, raddish, cucumber, chillies, okra, pumpkin, dhanian, carrots, tomatoes, cow peas, long beans, capsicum and bele."

## Smokeless Stoves



There was much fun and laughter as youths from FRIEND communities participated in a hands on workshop to build smokeless stoves.

The workshop was facilitated by a US based Volunteers Cailab and Skylar from NGO called Help International (USA), who have been working alongside FRIEND to reach out to the underserved communities.

The smokeless stove, also known as adobe stoves, is made of locally sourced red clay, sand and coconut husks. Banana stalks are used to form channels for directing the heat of the fire. The mixed clay is set into place with the help of bricks to form the outside, which are removed once it is dried. The stove is ready for use in about four weeks.

It can cook two pots at any one time and produces less smoke. There will be less firewood being used thus saving a whole amount of wood compared to an open fire. The stove will also minimize the smoke emitted from the fire as it has a chimney connected to the two pot-stoves



## Recipe Corner Peanut Butter Cocoa Balls with Friend's Fiji Style Honey

- 3/4 cup peanut butter
- 1/2 cup Friend's Fiji Style® Honey
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 to 2 tablespoons cocoa powder
- 1 cup rolled oats
- 1 cup Friend's Fiji Style® Desiccated Coconut, plus 1/3 cup extra to coat the balls
- 1 cup chopped nuts



Warm the peanut butter in the microwave up to 1 minute, enough to make it easy to stir. Add in honey, vanilla, and cocoa powder; mix thoroughly. Add remaining ingredients, stir well.

Roll dough into an inch round balls, then use either the extra coconut or chopped nuts to coat balls. Can be chilled or served immediately.

With Sandhya Narayan





## Exercising for Health

"The clothes which were previously tight are starting to fit now. We are also eating healthy after starting the FRIEND session on healthy living" claim the mother-daughter pair in one of the FRIEND communities outside Lautoka.

The motivated ladies are part of their newly formed village sports team that takes to the grounds in the evenings.

"Apart from soccer, we play volleyball and sometimes just do some running and stretching exercises as well."

The two are part of the community governance program where participants are required to fulfill practical assignments set out in the community development modules.

FRIEND Governance Program takes on a holistic development approach that along with Healthy Living explores topics like Active Citizenship, Community Governance, Disaster Management, Income Generation and Participatory Budgeting.

The six module program is running in communities around Lautoka engaging with them for two hours every week.



Meanwhile, one of the squatter communities outside Lautoka looks set to be the first one to finish the program.

The group is onto its last module of Participatory Budgeting in which they are informed about the national budget processes and how they can play an active role in the same.

There is much excitement amongst the participants as they claim that this is the first time in their lives that they have had a chance to sight a (Fiji Government) Budget book and understand the complexity of processes involved in decision-making when it comes to allocation of resources.

Participatory Budgeting takes members through the study of processes involved in household, district and national budgets. 56 year old, Akisi Bale says the whole program has been very empowering and the main lesson is that while good leadership is important for community development, citizens also have a very important role to play by knowing and exercising their responsibilities as well.



## Cakes and Creams for June

While Team FRIEND works hard, the members also take time out to play. And with growing numbers of the staff these days FRIEND is celebrating an average of one birthday a week. In June alone the staff in Lautoka got together to toast six birthday babies this month. The Programs Team had Kunal, Aarti and Jone getting a year wiser. Auntie Mere of the FRIEND Support Staff celebrated yet another milestone turning 63 years and Doctor Animesh Sinha of the PRISM Health Initiative celebrated his 25th birthday (for the 12th time). And Daman of Marketing team also made his birthday wish. As far as celebrations go, it is a quick sharing of a piece of cake and a cuppa before the day gets off to a proper start.

## FRIEND Youth Beat



### Youths learn music

A group of 15 youths are excited to learn finer details of music from US volunteers Rachel and Catherine from Help International. The volunteers are spending their summer reaching out to some of the FRIEND communities mentoring and empowering the community youths. Youths

will go through weekly lesson for four months as they learn the basics of reading music, learning how to play the guitar, ukulele and the organ. Youths go through vocal training as well.

### Duke of Edinburgh Scheme

More than 25 students who are members of the Duke of Edinburgh Awardees from Lautoka Muslim College and Natabua High School usually congregate at FRIEND on Saturdays to work on a community activity. So far students have gone through sessions on food security and how square-foot gardening in their backyards could save a lot of money and eating healthy. Composting is also taught where youths learn to recycle, reuse and reduce, hence creating organic fertilizer for their garden.



### YEN Lautoka

Ekari Raika and Joseva Varani, both have completed their stints with YEN in Lautoka recently. Both the youths are currently serving their attach-

ments with two different organizations. The YEN graduands have both credited their

increased self confidence and esteem to the Training Program. "My interview was so intense, but the lessons from the YEN interview session was a big help", says Joseva. Ekari says while her work at-



attachment is primarily for front office work, there have occasions when she has been asked to accompany field staff into communities as well. 'My impromptu speeches training in YEN has helped me speak out on various issues discussed in the communities.' Applications are now open for the next YEN session to be from the 19th of this month.

### FRIEND Logo

After months of deliberations and discussions the logo has been redefined in time to herald a new era in the life of FRIEND.

The seedling signifies new beginnings and start of development and coming together of two people symbolize partnerships.

The logo is about people working together nurturing the gifts of nature for sustainable development.

