



Takitaki

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Radini with her soaps

From the North...

Radini and her group began their FRIEND Governance training in April 2010 and almost a year later the group continues to meet, share their skills and ideas with each other.

Radini Milika Curu says she has recently had more financial responsibility with a daughter away studying and a loan that needs to be cleared.

Radini says the training inspired her and her group to use their resources and skills. "After the training we kept meeting together every Monday. We have been teaching each other

our skills in sewing, baking cakes and bread, weaving crafts, making jam and making coconut virgin oil. Those who have ideas share and teach the group. After the training we have done a lot of things. We utilize our skills in the community. The talent is there... it just needs encouragement!"

Radini has especially been working hard since starting her 'Sovi Coconut Soap' home based business. When she heard from a friend about making soap, she was instantly curious and found out the process for making it at home. She made a trial batch of soap in January 2011. Since then she hasn't looked back and has seen the benefits in her sales with an increase of income between \$50 to \$100 per week depending on sales. In her lounge room, she showed FRIEND her nicely packed and labeled products and described how she heard from customers that the soap cleans better than the Supermarket soap and is cheaper.

"We learnt a lot from FRIEND, now we look around and use the resources we have. Radini discussed the other changes she has seen in the group and what she has done as a result of the training. She recalled when she used to cook with a lot of oil, buy unhealthy foods from the supermarket and use 4kg of sugar fortnightly. "Now we are only using about 2 kg of sugar and since the training I have planted 60 plants. We get our food from the garden and use this for our cooking. We have changed our eating habits and we don't use oil and fry foods anymore. There's a lot of boiling now and if we need a little oil we make our own from coconuts." The training has not just impacted the group members but has also been shared with the group member's family and others in the community. When asked if she would recommend the training to others Radini said that she has already been telling her friends and relatives to do the training. "I tell them it will motivate them and let them know they can do something."

Donation from Europe

International Fiji Movement, a not for profit organization based in United Kingdom has sent a donation of \$3000 Fiji dollars (1000 pounds) towards PRISM Health Initiative. The organization comprising mainly of former Fiji citizens and friends of Fiji have been contributing to development in Fiji for more than a decade. In the past ten years IFM has been providing scholarships to the underserved communities through SAHARA in Fiji.

IFM has been very appreciative that PRISM is serving more than 500 patients weekly and have said will further try to fundraise for PRISM Health. Another dear friend of FRIEND Margit Wolfensberg from Vienna has also raised FJD3000 for this initiative.

Margit raised \$8000 dollars for the PRISM pilot last year. Both the donations will be used for purchasing of diabetes and blood pressure medications for the underserved communities.

PRISM Health has been founded by US doctor Dr Animesh Sinha and is currently working in 20 underserved communities in attempt to better manage Non Communicable providing free care and medications to the patients.

Around West...

As a number of communities around Lautoka who had recently finished their Governance Training were rounding up their six month long Community Development Certificate course with FRIEND, they were also prepared for their final assessments by the University of the South Pacific, Lautoka Campus. USP Lautoka Campus Director Dr Pramila Devi took time out to visit these communities in their homes and villages.

FRIEND developed a training manual called Social and Economic Empowerment Training Guide which was launched jointly by the University of the South Pacific Lautoka Campus and FRIEND in March 2010.

Since then FRIEND has been using the training guide to train participants in a number of communities around Lautoka.

USP Lautoka Campus has made a commitment to evaluate the training guide for FRIEND for the first three years. This involves visits to the communities that are benefitting from the training on the individual participants, their families and communities and awarding them with certificates.

The first set of quantitative survey is currently being conducted amongst the participants who have taken part in the training so far.

Dr Pramila Devi says most of the participants are openly sharing their positive experience after the training and we know that the training is making a difference in the communities.

She notes that some of the impacts are quite obvious, such as the presence of gardens around houses, changes in participants eating habits, creation of income generation programs, composts, well maintained drains in communities, proper waste disposal and improvement in health of participants to name a few.

She says the actual impact will be shared once the survey data is released.





Water Vs Fizzies—The healthier choice

I did not drink water before. I did not like the taste of water. Plus I used to work in restaurants so had easy access to bottled juice (fizzy drinks). Whenever I felt thirsty I would drink juice. And if not juice then I will make tea and drink that (sweetened of course). At that time I did not realise how much sugar I was taking. But then I participated in the community Development

Course conducted by FRIEND. I was shocked when I realised how much of 'junk' I was taking into my body. I made a resolution to

start drinking water. Now it's all I drink. I don't take fizzy drink at all and have even left tea. I believe in water now. And I have realised that I like the taste of water too. Plus I have lost so much weight. Some time back I went to the hospital for my check-up and I was told that I have high cholesterol and that I will be put on medication I was not able to bring it down. I used to weigh about 84-85kg. Now that I am not taking junk, eating more fresh vegetables and also exercising, last I went on scale, I had dropped more than 10kg. I believe I have lost some more since then too. Unfortunately my kids, daughters in law and grandkids, they are still into bottled juice. I do tell them that it is not a good thing.

- Bhargavi—Lawaki

Bhargavi's reuses fizzy juice bottles for creative gardening.

Hanging Gardens survive the rains

62 year old Vijay says her hanging gardens continue to excite her as she is constantly amazed at how plants can grow so well upside down. Vijay says she has already had so many eggplants from her upside plant she put in last year and it is still giving her fruit. She says this is exciting as the wet weather spell did not affect her hanging plant while many plants in the ground seemed to have died from too much water. Vijay says she has always been planting gardens, but with FRIEND Governance team, last year for the first time she learnt about the concept of planting garden upside down.

She says this planting style has also been helpful to her as she does not have much land around her house, and with hanging plants, as well as her square foot gardens, she has been able to get even more vegetables.



The Power of Positive

There was much excitement as two community governance groups decided to come together to mark International women's day. Drasa Seaside hosted Raviravi governance team as the ladies of the two neighboring communities took time out to get together for a screening of a documentary on positive thinking.

Both the groups have recently completed the Community governance Course in their communities. Mala agreed to play host to the ladies for the day.

The tv room was set up with seats to accommodate all the expected participants comfortably. After the introductions and tea got underway, the ladies all watched the documentary intently in their efforts to grasp all that was being told in the

The Secret—a documentary film on how to attract health, wealth and relationships. While the ladies enjoyed their day out, and their film to mark the International Women's Day 2011, one of the highlights proved to be the

Ladies Sports Day

To mark the International Women's Day this year the women of one of our communities decided to organize a get together for all women in the village on the 11th of March. The rains all throughout the week, did little to dampen the spirit of the ladies.

Our facilitators were pleasantly surprised with the enthusiasm of the group who were determined to have fun with the various sporting activities.

With the drizzling continuing on the outside, the ladies started off the day inside the village hall with a few words of encouragement from their main guest for the day, Radini Vakatawa, Ekari Burenikadi who spoke about the importance of a woman in a family. The day involved apple eating race, bun eating race, spoon and marble, sack race and much more.

As the weather cleared in the afternoon, the ladies boldly took to the grounds with games of volleyball—an event that I will not be able to forget in a hurry as I nursed a sprained ankle from the game for close to three weeks.



A pose for the camera



The spread on the table



A stroll to the seaside



Bobbing buns



A tug of war for stretches



Our oldest participant for the day

By Sandhya Narayan

By Vive Liutaki

Lunch Hour Sales

By Kimberly Melissa

“Have you roasted this in the sand?” asked a connoisseur as he munched on his freshly shelled peanuts.”This is good.”

The lunch hour sale outing at CAAFI this month was a going good.

I was pleasantly surprised at the brisk sale as well as the warm hearted comments directed towards the products on display. The best seller for the two hour sale was our ever popular Tamarind Lollies.

“This is nice, good for chaser,” someone commented.

Chutneys and pickles also received a lot of attention as the purchasers tried to find out the stories behind the products.

The sales outings to the corporate or salutatory bodies are also a great opportunity for FRIEND to create awareness on its efforts of poverty alleviation through social and economic empowerment.

Almost always we hear comments that someone or the other had not realised the extent of work or the range of products marketed under the Friend’s Fiji Style® range.

FRIEND sales team have been conducting lunch hour sales in various organisations upon invitation. The recent outings include William & Goslings -Lautoka, FIRCA-Lautoka, Air Pacific - Nadi , ANZ-Suva and Westpac-Suva

**Please contact Sandhya Narayan—
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Or 9950627**

**should you wish to host a lunch hour
sale at your workplace.
Thank you for your support in our poverty
alleviation initiative**

Guavas from afar....

It was getting on to Friday lunch hour when the bus stopped outside the FRIEND gates. As we watched from the bure where we had just rounded up the programs debrief session, we saw a dozen sacks being offloaded. Someone was waving crazily from the bus which we interpreted as that they needed help in getting the sacks up to FRIEND. So a wheel barrow was dispatched.



Jam making—Batch # 1-R-11078 in the pot

The two ladies from the hills of Ba had come to sell their guavas to FRIEND. Someone had told them that FRIEND was buying guavas. So the ladies collected more than a 100kg amongst them and found their way to FRIEND. So far this sounds fine, doesn’t it?

But when the ladies arrived it caused a mini chaos. The production team were rounding up their production for the week. Saturday was the maintenance day for the production center which involved outside contractors to fix a few things. The production team had not taken into account the arrival of unexpected raw goods in their production planning. It is always advised that anyone intending to bring in raw materials to FRIEND has to inform the production team in advance due to limitations in production capacity.

While the team juggled around to accommodate the processing of guavas, the panic lessened quickly as upon sorting it was found that only 25kg of the 100kg or so of guavas brought in were usable. The rest were found to be overripe and were thus rejected. The fruits on top were found to be of fine quality while further down the sacks the fruits were of compromised quality. So in order not to disappoint the ladies we bought the good fruits but we hope the process is not repeated in future.

By Sandhya Narayan

3 C. Flour
1 C. Sugar
1 T. Baking Powder
1 Egg
1/2 t. Salt
1 t. Vanilla
1 1/2 C Milk
1 C. Toasted Grated Coconut of friend’s fijistyle desiccated coconut.

Heat oven to 350 degrees.

Butter and flour a loaf pan.

Sift flour, baking powder, and salt together. Stir in coconut.

Beat egg until foamy. Add milk and vanilla to egg. Stir into dry ingredients. Mix well without beating.

Pour into loaf pan and bake 1 hour. Terrific breakfast treat sliced and toasted.

Recipe Corner—Quick Coconut Bread



"Alleviating poverty through social & economical empowerment"



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Relocation of Suva Shop 62 Pratt Street Central Suva

Friend's Fiji Style Suva Shop has been relocated from Garden City Raiwai, to a new address in Central Suva for added shopping convenience of our customers.

The new Shop in Suva is at 72 Pratt Street, across from the Cathedral next

to the Reserve Bank Building.

The official opening of the new shop will be held in the first week of April.

Along with the ever growing variety of Friend's Fiji Style food and craft products we will also have ready to eat local treats like dried fruit medleys, murku, nimkis etc and herbal teas for the discerning consumers.

The new Tamarind Drink in Town

With the re launch of Friend's Fiji Style® Shop in Suva, Friend's Fiji Style® Tamarind Quench has proved a popular drink with the revelers.

Many say they can't imagine what a tamarind juice will taste like, but as the bottles are opened and the quencher goes down the throats, any doubts regarding its tastes or benefits fly out the window.

Apart from Tamarind Quench, you would be able to find the traditional fresh lemon juice mix, Salted Lemon Quench and Fresh as well as bottled fresh Bu or coconut juice.

UNIFEM Director Elizabeth Cox with her fresh purchase of a range of thirst quenchers.



Youth Employment Network

March has been an exciting month so far for FRIEND's Youth Employment Network (YEN) and it is only expected to get better. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have encouraged us and helped us get so far, so quickly. With our 20 final participants eager to start training on Monday, the team is energized.



Richard Donaldson

This month has seen us focus largely on liaising with businesses from all backgrounds for the post-training attachments and mentorship period. Richard Donaldson, Youth Coordinator, noted, "The feedback that we have been receiving is incredible. Companies are so positive and receptive to what we are doing and really see the value in participating in this program." He went on to explain that more than half of the confirmed organizations have requested to take on more than one attaché. "One of the most encouraging things we have seen throughout our time" explains Donaldson "is the passion and generosity of our mentor partners". Though we advise our youths that attachments will be on a voluntary basis, with the aim of hands-on learning, we have seen nearly all of our mentors initiate discussions regarding providing an allowance.

Furthermore, some organizations that have requested immediate attachés with on-the-job training being provided to our participating youths, who will be released for YEN training. This was the case for a young woman from Naviyago village who had to lose her big dreams, after becoming orphaned during her secondary school. A local business in Lautoka has taken her on to give her some much-needed experience.

The Youth team will be working hard during the next few weeks and we look forward to updating everyone on the progress of our freshly trained youths in April's Takitaki. Until then, if any organizations – big or small – are interested in participating in our second YEN of this year, please contact Richard Donaldson on programs@fijifriend.com or 666 3181. Be a part of Fiji's future.

By Tamsin Lysons

