



### Graduation Day for Community Governance



*Happy smiles on a life changing achievement  
Sisilia, Vasemaca & Ateca of Naviago*

The youngest graduate of the Governance Graduation held early this march was aged 16 while the eldest participant is recorded at 62 years.

The graduates include high school drop outs, stay at home moms as well as some who

have never been to school, and yet can now boast having a certificate from the University of the South Pacific to call their own.

FRIEND has partnered with USP Lautoka Campus to reach out to underserved communities for a sustainable community development program through its "Social & Economic Empowerment Training Guide for Pacific Communities.

The course looks at various modules aimed at getting the communities to look at their issues, identify their skills and resources and make action plans for improving their lifestyles.



*Garlanding—Dr Pramila Devi—USP, Rebecca McClean of AUSAID and Sashi Kiran-FRIEND*

The course developed by FRIEND was jointly launched with USP Lautoka Campus in March 2010. A total of 144 community graduates have received their certificates to empower them on the path of self development.



*Reshmi, Farzana & Rita of Drasa No 1 Road*

### Suva Shop Relocates to 62 Pratt Street



*Acting Head of Mission NZ High Commission  
Mr Phillip Taula opens the door of the shop*

"This is yet another special occasion for us as we have been able to shift our little shop of Fiji grown items closer to CBD hoping for better recognition of local products and increase in the market share. FRIEND will complete its ninth birthday this year, still a very young organization and we are still far from achieving all

our objectives. However we made an attempt to set up a shop for Fiji grown products in 2006 in Suva. Cheapest place we could get was in Toorak, then we shifted to Garden City but could not get business going so we have attempted to come closer to town as we cant afford rent in the city. Many

people have told us that they have been thinking of doing what we have been trying but I can see why no one starts.... Its not easy You cant make profit from local products the way we have been trying to do it... and not every thing we do always make business

sense as we try and get entrepreneurs started with their enterprises and find a market. We have established the shop so that we have a steady ready market for home grown products. Many people know how to make nice home made things we took for granted as children and they could develop these as business ideas however packaging and market-



*Garlanding Mr William Parkinson of CFL & Mr Phillip Taula*

ing has been a challenge for them as well establishing business practices, budgeting etc so FRIEND has been trying to fill that service gap to support families and communities step out of poverty."



*A glimpse of guests who graced the function  
on the day*

*(an excerpt from Sashi's speech)*



## Graduates Speak

As Governance Participants stepped forward to take their certificates their representatives took the podium to share their thoughts and experiences of the FRIEND/USP Social and Economic Empowerment Training:-



**Sainiana McGoon—Nasoata**

“In March 2010, I was invited by my neighbour to attend a workshop conducted by FRIEND. On the first day of the workshop, Active Citizenship was discussed.

I realized that I could be a good leader myself, as I could see various issues faced by the community but little being done to address them. From the very first day, I found the training very interesting and enjoyed every moment of it.

When it came to the second module of the training which was on Healthy Living and required each participant to make their own backyard gardens. At first I said to myself, “Oh, I do not want to do any planting.

But then I planted my first plot, and found it interesting to see all the small changes that were taking place. This increased my interest in gardening and now I use various techniques learnt from the training to utilise the land around my home to get my gardens going.”

Sainana who lives in a squatter settlement outside Lautoka says said that being a cardiac patient from birth did not stop her from actively participating in the course as she had faith that God had brought her this far and He had plans for her.

She acknowledges that FRIEND helped to broaden her knowledge and brought many changes into her life, like having her own garden, getting into regular exercise, living a healthy life, mini-

mizing household waste by using the 3 R's (Recycle, Reduce and Reuse), preparation for Disasters, learning how to preserve food and above all, budgeting.

She says she is now better able to use her skills and knowledge to save for her children's education and other needs. She also stated that without the assistance of FRIEND, she would be still lost and is grateful that with the training conducted by FRIEND, she and her community realize the



**Anita Raj—Drasa # 1 Road**

“The training has taught the ladies in my community to talk openly, teach others on matters such as clean environment, health hygiene, how to coordinate during natural disasters, guide people towards safety and security, budgeting and village community development. The backyard gardening and keeping the compounds clean is top of the agenda for these ladies. In real life the ladies get married, become housewives, then turn into mothers and later become cooks and cleaners of the house. There are many more names for them. Most of them have not worked outside as income earners but do have lots of hidden talents. In many cases these talents are neither recognised or seen. We call it hidden talents. Whatever they had learnt in schools, it was stored in their minds, but not fully utilised. Therefore through this refresher course, guidance and assistance from FRIEND and USP, each of them has turned into a good leader.

The Drasa ladies who had attended the course have learnt so much that they have taken a project which they had in mind to do during the training session. A few of them went to the stage of seeking support of a bus company and with the Director to operate a bus on the Drasa # 1 Road. For the first time in the history of the area, the bus service is in operation now. Others could not do it.

Another issue that the ladies have taken to heart and are continuing with is the lessons of the module on healthy living and hygiene. We can see the afternoon walks happening on a regular basis. Our ladies have also activated a pressure group for greater safety, security and communications in our area.

These are interesting changes for us and I hope that the graduates continue with the same vitality in future good for their families, neighbours, community and the country at large.” - Anita Raj



**Marlin Tokasa Katarina - Lauwaki**

“When FRIEND came to Lauwaki in 2010, we were excited. A number of ladies from my community got together every week to attend these trainings that were conducted in simple everyday language that we could understand.

With FRIEND we learnt a number of new things as well as daily things, things that we maybe knew about but were ignoring that we put into action to improve our lifestyles.

These were basic things that each of us must value and which are important, for example, how we can become a valuable member of the community, how to realise goals using our values, how we can achieve a better environment and reduce crime and unemployment issues in our community.

FRIEND assisted us in identifying and using the natural resources and skills that we had to make products for income generating projects for our families.

We were encouraged to save, to grow different vegetables in a square foot garden and taught how to recycle, reuse and reduce waste.

With the training we also realised the importance of building good relations within our own community.”

Marlin says that even though it was a challenging experience, she personally has achieved a lot through the training with her newfound confidence. She shared that the training has definitely improved her living standard as she no longer buys vegetables from the market, but grows her own. And apart from having fresh vegetables for her table, she can save money, as well as sell surplus to her community. She acknowledged that with the support and training provided by FRIEND, she has seen attitudinal changes in her family for the better and says she would like to encourage people from other communities to make use of whatever resources were available to help alleviate poverty.



## VCO PRESS ARRIVES

Following successful trials of Desiccated Coconut Production in the North using basic equipment, a much awaited gadget has finally arrived at FRIEND. The Canada Fund funded Desiccated Coconut Project under DESI (Developing Enterprises for Sustainable Income) program for Labasa received delivery of the equipment from New Zealand this month. FRIEND IGP Manager Nilesni Sekar says the Desiccated Coconut project is aimed at providing income generation opportunities for marginalized communities and people living in the peri-urban and rural areas around Labasa. Sekar says majority of desiccated coconut available in the local market is currently imported, when Fiji has the capacity to make and supply the much sought after ingredient of confectioners any day.

Sekar says the product trials have been successful and sample can be brought from Friend's Fiji Style Shop at 62 Pratt Street Suva. The VCO press is anticipated to increase the efficacy of production and lowering the production costs.

Over the years Canada Fund has provided funding for various Income Generation Project activities at FRIEND. FRIEND is thankful to Canada Fund for its ongoing support in the Poverty Alleviation Initiatives of FRIEND.



## Recipe Corner—Banana Curry



### Ingredients:

Plantain (Raw banana) - 1 big or 2 medium  
Friend's Fiji Style® Tamarind Paste - 1/4 tsp  
Curry Powder 1.5 tsp  
Grated Coconut - half a tablespoon (optional)  
Salt to taste

### For seasoning :

Red Chilli - 1 broken into 2 pieces  
Hing (asafoetida) - a pinch  
Curry leaves - 5,  
Mustard - 1 tsp- 3 tsp

### Method:

- 1) Chop the plantain into small cubes, boil with a little water and cook covered till half done. Add the tamarind paste and salt and cook till done. It should retain its shape and not become mushy.
- 2) Heat oil, add the dal for seasoning. When they turn light brown, add the mustard and red chilli. When the mustard pops, add hing and curry leaves.
- 3) Add the cooked plantain. Sprinkle the curry powder, coconut and fry together for 2 min
- 4) Serve with Roti or Rice.

## Northern Seed Bank established as AYAD Volunteer PAULA DUNNE wraps up her term at FRIEND



*Paula takes a moment to pose in front of the greenhouse*

It's so hard to believe that the end of my assignment is here and that after a year with FRIEND in Labasa I'm returning home to Australia. A little over a year ago I was interested in working overseas and when I read about FRIEND and the job description for a Youth Development Officer in Labasa I was really inspired. So with that to go on, I applied for the Australian Youth Ambassador for Development Program, a program funded by AUSAid. Now having completed my assignment, I

can say that it has been one of the most rewarding experiences! It's really difficult to summarise a whole year and list all the highlights. But what has been truly amazing is getting to know the people of Fiji and having Labasa as my home.

I have loved working with FRIEND because I have been able to be involved in so many different types of work. It has been inspiring meeting people who have completed the FRIEND training in Labasa and hearing about how they feel empowered. I have enjoyed being a part of the Governance Program and developing the FRIEND Garden and Seedling Bank, which provides an opportunity for young



*Volunteers hard at work getting the Seed Bank Project underway*

people to be trained in backyard gardening, composting and managing a seedling bank as an I.G.P. Through securing a grant through AUSAid, we completed the construction of a Green house for the garden to ensure the seedlings have optimal conditions throughout the year. This was definitely a great achievement and what has made the impact of the garden and green

house seem more 'real' was when I heard that the group who volunteer in the garden have started organising a garden with their church group. I was very happy to hear that the training does inspire young people go out to their communities and do more gardening. And very importantly, that this means that the project has been sustainable and the outcomes will continue!



*Happy gardeners take a camera break*

It has been a great pleasure to work with FRIEND, an NGO that is deter-

mined to make changes in Fiji to eradicate poverty. I have learnt so much since my time with FRIEND and I would like to thank the Labasa team - Mereani, Sunita and Ansoo for all the support they have given me. I would like to thank FRIEND for this opportunity and making my assignment in Fiji possible. I would also like to thank Austraining and AUSAid.



## YOUTH UPDATE



FRIEND's Youth Employment Network (YEN) completed its first two week training for 2011 early this month. 15 young people aged between 16 and 30 years old, living between Lovu, Lautoka and Yalalevu, Ba completed this training course which was conducted at Tavarau Bhartiya School. The group consisted of 5 males and 10 females and came from a diverse range of age, education levels, ethnic and religious backgrounds.

*This is puzzling!  
Teamwork to find solutions*

The training course focused on: motivation for working, values, self-awareness, goal setting, communication skills, job application letter writing, CV preparation, interview skills, work ethics, personal grooming, budgeting and other topics. Participants were given development assignments at the end of each day and were monitored daily on things like presentation, participation and punctuality. Many of these youths concluded that at the end of the training they were more confident about entering the workplace and had clearer career goals than before.

One such young man is Pranesh Chand, of Yalalevu, Ba. He said that the communication skills that he learned help him in a recent recruitment interview with the Canadian company Townline Growers. Pranesh is among the small group selected to go and work for a two year contract in Abbotsford, British Colombia.



Following the course the aim is for youths to be placed in workplace attachments with a mentor who meets with them weekly to discuss their progress, answer questions and help develop them into great workers.

Vasemaca Sanoko is a good example, who having started her attachment in Chilli Tree Cafe Lautoka will be heading for MacDonald's Beach Cottages, Nananu-i-ra as a full-time staff member in May. Of the fifteen certified participants, as of late April, negotiations are being made for only four more youths to have a confirmed workplace attachment.

Thanks must be made to Mr. Rohit Singh of Lautoka City Council who conducted mock interviews as part of the course. Also we appreciate the partnership of Singh's Rentals Restaurant and Photo Studio, Sun Insurance, Tharkolal Pharmacy, Gina's Cake Shop, Subrail's Furniture, Nagan Engineering, Chilli Tree Cafe, MacDonald's Beach Cottages and



*Yen Graduation @ FRIEND Bure —  
Sashi  
addresses the graduates*

Danam Fiji for workplace attachments. Many people say they want to work but what they really mean is that they want money. These young men and women now understand that wages are the reward for the value they bring to the organisation they are working for not what they deserve for just showing up to work each day.

## Healthy Lunches for Healthy Minds

The excitement built to its peak as the entries were brought out to the judging table.

The event turned out to be more than just a Healthy Lunches Competition as the creativity of presentations proved overwhelming even for the organizers.

The aim of the Competition was to get the staff excited about the use of local, readily available food items for their lunch ideas. A total of 15 staff entries at work were judged for the nutritional value, availability of the food items, costing, preparation time, taste and presentation.

On display was a range of salads, sandwiches, soups, curries, fish and other local delicacies like fresh fried fish, wacipoki, baigan chokha etc.

Herbal teas and fresh juices also starred in the entries to complement the healthy meals.

With FRIEND advocating healthy diets out in the communities, we hope to lead by example.

The winning entry by Nileseshni Sekar won the fun prize of a movie pass for 2 at the Village Cinemas.



## APRIL Birthdays

@  
FRIEND

Ansoo



Vengeleen



Basil



Archana

