



A Big Day for Rural Graduates

A total of 150 men, women and youths completed community level development studies and implemented practical tasks around active citizenship, healthy living, disaster management, community development, income generation projects and participatory budgeting over a period of 6



A participant is overcome by emotions as she accepts her certificate from Dr Pramila Devi of USP, while FRIEND Governance Officer Vive Liutaki looks on.

Tears of joy and achievement flowed openly as participants of various communities involved in FRIEND Governance Social and Economic Empowerment Training received their joint USP/FRIEND **Certificate in Community Development** in a special graduation ceremony organized in Lautoka on the 17th of October.

The ceremony also commemorated the International Day of Fight against Poverty as certificates were presented upon the completion of six months of Social and Economic Empowerment Training conducted by Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprises & Development (FRIEND), resulting in more than 150 backyard gardens, 100 composts and around 70 income generation programs supporting livelihoods have been established in six rural communities over that period.

In her opening address USP's Dean for Faculty of Art, Law and Education Dr Akanisi Kedrayate commended FRIEND and USP

Lautoka Campus for their efforts and commitment towards community development. She also congratulated the graduates from the rural communities on their achievement and urged them to continue to make good use of the skills and lessons they were taught in the course of training if they were to enjoy the benefits of their hard work in the long run.

In his keynote address EU Team Leader West, Mr Andrew Winter-Taylor told the graduates that the wonderful opportunity that they had been given, to take part in the FRIEND Governance programme, should not be wasted. "Now you must turn your learning into ACTION," he said.

USP Director Lautoka Campus, Dr Pramila Devi said she was pleased to observe the huge impact of this training in the rural communities such as the increase in backyard and hanging gardens, difference noted in waste management and other positive changes. She says the training manual is a

holistic model of community development and very relevant to the Pacific communities.

The Social and Economic Empowerment Training Guide manual for Pacific Communities was developed by FRIEND and launched jointly with USP Lautoka Campus in March 2010. Since then FRIEND has been using the training guide to train participants in a number of communities.

USP Lautoka campus joined FRIEND to help evaluate the program and assess the work done in the communities.

The communities participating in Governance Training this year included Natalecake Village, Vakabuli Village, Vakabuli/Paipai Settlements, Ba Senior Centre, Qalitu/Buabua Settlements and Neimasi/Bila settlements.

FRIEND Director/Founder Sashi Kiran warmly thanked the families for enabling the participants to be part of the training programme. She said the primary focus of all FRIEND's work was poverty alleviation and sustainable livelihoods and a key area of focus was on food security through this training. She says FRIEND hoped to see more vegetable and crop farming in people's backyards thus a change in their diet from processed and junk food to include freshly grown produce in their daily meals. She says the results were quite impressive so far but pointed out that still a lot more could be done.

FRIEND Governance Training will continue with new communities in the coming year with ongoing assessments of those who have graduated since 2010 to date.



Jahara Sheikh 29,
Paipai Community

“I first heard about the FRIEND training from the flyers that were circulated about the program in my village. With each session I found myself looking forward to what the next session will bring. I never missed a

single session even though it takes me one hour to walk each time from my home to Vakabuli Primary School. To attend this training I had to bring my 4-year old daughter with me as there was no one else to look after her. On the days of the ‘class’ I used to wake up early to wrap up my housework before leaving home at 9am each morning . Class used to start at 10 am. and walking all the way.

I had never dreamed about graduating from USP and am very pleased with this achievement as well as from various learning's that has led to improvement of my family's livelihood. “



Litea Naulivou, 23
Vakabuli Koro

At my age I had never dreamed of engaging in the development of my community and used to rely on majority of older women in my community for this. Being a young mother it is difficult as I carry my one year old son about 1km each way to attend the Community Development sessions at Vakabuli Village Hall. The training has enabled me to save money as I no longer buy my vegetables from the market. Anytime I want to have fresh vegetables, I just go to my garden and take what I need. I have my own compost and use this compost manure for my garden. Taking part in this training, we have formed a committee to work on development of the village even after this workshop is over. We realize it is for us to take the initiative if we want to see any real changes in our lives and our village. We have to think of the developments of our community as it will affect us in some way or the other.

Shelvin Chand , 20
Buabua Community



After graduating from Fiji National University with a Certificate in Joinery and Furniture Making, I have been working for a furniture making company in Lautoka. I usually work on the night shift from 6pm to 7am . And reach home from work at about 8am. But once I started with FRIEND training, I realized I would need to sacrifice my sleep if I wanted to do this. I would sleep for about an hour after work before making my way to FRIEND class being held at Qalitu Primary School on every Thursday of the week for the past six months. I liked the facilitation of this workshop. It was friendly and easy to understand as we learnt to work out solutions of real life situations with the assistance of my colleagues. The training has helped me make a plan for my future and I have already started saving up money to invest in my own set of power tools so that I can work on my own furniture making projects.”

Shared Stories of Graduates



Sainiana Tinai
Ba Hart

“I was a little disappointed as I could not finish my course. The reason was that I joined the training after the course had already started in Natalecake

when I got to know about this training. However I am working on getting a group of women in my area together to do this course in the new year. This will also allow me to get my Certificate of Completion. This is a good course. We learn a lot of useful things . For example it has allowed me to set up my own compost and backyard garden even though there is hardly any space around my home. I am also assisting my neighbours to set up their gardens. In my whole life, I had never thought I would get a certificate from USP. I would like to thank FRIEND and USP for this opportunity.

Monica Latchman
Namosau Ba

“After my retirement, I was trying my best to keep myself active, however one of the major impacts of attending the FRIEND course has been that I am now more active then ever before in looking after myself. Working in the Health Sector for years I had always known the importance of exercising, but now I never miss my 30 minute walk a day , keep a diary of my workouts to keep myself motivated. I also have been able to encourage five other women friends and get them to join me on my walks as much as possible.

The other day my daughter told me to stop writing in the diary now as the graduation has finished, but I said no, I know FRIEND will come back to check on how we are doing. and if we are continuing with what we have learnt. And I feel the diary helps me too as I don't want to miss my exercises.”



Torika Salusalu.
Neimasi

“I want to share with everyone what the Governance program has done to me and my family.

On the 8th of February, this year, Jone and Vive started the trainings in Neimasi, they sought approval from my husband who was bed ridden at that time. My husband advised me to go and attend the trainings and to also get the youths from the settlement to attend. As the trainings went on, my husband died and during his last days, he would make sure that I go around to all households and advise them about the training every Wednesday. I would also like to say that even though he was sick, he was aware of all the small changes that I was creating in our family's daily lives and to the community as a whole.

I would also like to thank FRIEND, Vive and Jone for allowing us to have a break for 2 weeks after my husband's death before we continued with the program. Today I will receive my Certificate”



To commemorate World Rural Women's Day (Oct 15) and World Food Day (Oct 16) FRIEND organized organic backyard competition in rural communities between Lautoka and Ba. A total of 72 rural women participated and their gardens were judged as part of this competition.

The Garden competition formed part of FRIEND's effort in ensuring food security for families in its fight against poverty. Many of the participants reported this as their very first attempt to start off their own gardens and say they are living examples of how these gardens contribute to healthier family meals and as a form of exercise contributing to better health. All 72 participants also developed their own composts from organic material to strengthen the soil for their gardens.

To honor the role of women and recognize rural women's importance in enhancing agricultural and rural development, improving food security, and eradicating rural poverty, World Rural Women's Day is celebrated on October 15 each year.

In the rural areas, women form the backbone of the agricultural labor force of the developing world. Globally, more than a third of the female workforce is engaged in agriculture.

Women living in the rural areas of a developing country are likely to be poorer than a man, be less educated, and poorer in health.

Healthy Garden Competition brings out a number of budding gardeners

Struggling to combine low-paid work with care for the home, rural women have to often cope with pregnancies and child mortality. They have less chance than men to escape from poverty and more

likely have little or no say in the way the family spends its income. Women and girls in rural areas are also exposed to the food crisis affecting the world. High food prices mean that the poor have to spend a larger proportion of their income on food and will probably buy less food or food that is less nutritious.

Providing rural women with better opportunities to take part in activities in the rural sectors and giving them the confidence to have their say about how things are run will elevate their status within their families and communities, and create an honorable cycle that will increase their prosperity and enhance the well being of rural women. FRIEND works in underserved communities for poverty alleviation through its social and economic empowerment programs.

Winners of the Healthy Garden Competition were announced at the end of the joint FRIEND/USP Community Graduation for Certificate.. Chief Judge Sashi Kiran says there was good effort from participants, but there is always scope to do better. Winners received various gardening accessories to keep them motivated and enthusiastic about expanding their gardens.



Recipe Corner: Coconut/Nut/Date Rolls

Ingredients

- 1 cup pitted dates
- 1 cup roasted/non-salted mixed soft nuts
- 1 cup Friend's Fiji Style Desiccated Coconut

Directions:

1. In large bowl, mash dates with potato masher (make sure to check each date to make sure even the pitted ones are without pit). If mashed dates seem too dry, add just enough hot water to moisten them.
2. Crush mixed soft nuts and mix into the mashed dates. Roll the date/nut mix into balls.
3. Spread out shredded coconut on table and roll the date/nut balls around until sufficiently covered with coconut.



Looking for a healthy treat for Christmas?

Agriculture Meet

It was a chance to find out more about what those involved in Agriculture in the Pacific were doing and I found myself looking forward to this regional meet .

As the European Union funded ACP Agricultural Commodities Program (EU AAACP) support given to farmer organizations in the Pacific Islands draws to an end, a three day workshop was organized in Nadi to look at possible ways forward to keep the involved projects sustainable.

Although FRIEND has not been a beneficiary of this program, I believe our invitation to join the group follows the strong progress FRIEND has been able to make in its work with farmers and utilization of agricultural commodities. The aim of the workshop was to build on lessons learnt from the support given to farmer organizations in the Pacific Islands. 17 regional organizations from 7 Pacific Island countries were represented at the workshop. Sunita Sundar and I represented FRIEND at the workshop and were fortunate



Workshop participants showed much interest in the operations of solar drier at FRIEND

enough to tap into the vast knowledge base available at the workshop from different farmer organization representatives. The workshop ended with participants visiting FRIEND office to have a look at our production facility. Some participants have asked for assistance in packaging and marketing and we were happy to share our knowledge.

By Mohinesh Reddy

A gift from Brisbane

Not too long ago FRIEND received an email from Mr Jay Sharma from Brisbane who was planning a visit to Fiji and was seeking assistance in finding someone who could benefit from a wheel chair he was planning to bring with him.

In his own words, "I would like to assist a paraplegic or a quadriplegic person from any race as long as they have a poor background and my contribution could make a difference to their quality of life, be it in form of a cash donation, equipment or an extension to their homes. The reason



Jay Sharma

I have picked this sort of disability is because my brother was a quadriplegic back in the 70's and we never had any sort of support from anyone and I know how that feels. "

The wheelchair donated by Mr Sharma has found a home with Mr Jai Raj of Field 40

Lautoka. 62 year old Jai Raj is a retired carpenter/joiner who has lost his leg to diabetes a little more than month ago.



Jai Raj



**May the joy,
cheer,
Mirth and merri-
ment
Of this divine festi-
val
Surround you for-
ever.
May the happi-
ness,
That this season
brings
Brighten your life
And, hope the year
Brings you luck
and
Fulfills all your
dearest dreams!**

**Happy
Deepawali**

Rural empowerment at its best—Glimpses from Graduation Day

