



Card Project To Get a New Home

This month sees another exiting project take off at FRIEND. A new beautiful wooden building is taking shape at Tuvu. This building will house the card and craft workshop for 20 card and craft makers who are operating out of the open back porch area at FRIEND at the moment.

IGP Coordinator Nilesni Sekar says, "The past year has been really challenging, especially since we have had a lot of wet weather days. Whenever it rains the card-makers have to gather their material and squeeze into the main FRIEND building which can get really overcrowded when the whole team is in the office."

Sekar says "We have also been struggling with storage space issues. The new workshop will take care of that too."

The workshop building is partly funded by the Canada Fund. The Canada Fund has supported FRIEND's income generation initiatives by providing small grants and equipments over the recent years.

The workshop is another step towards the FRIEND Village dream project at Tuvu.



Canada Fund's Leonie Smiley lays the foundation

Racing for "The World We Want in 2015"

And what a great fun filled day it was. 16 teams participated enthusiastically in the FRIEND annual Race Against Poverty Event held on November 26.

Each four member team cracked clues to reach their next destination. They also answered questions on Millennium Development goals along the way.

Wearing this year's GCAP slogan '**The World We Want in 2015**' the youths raced towards pit-stops overcoming challenges, tackling tasks, answering quizzes and working on clues through trekking forest, scaling down grapevines, crossing creeks, running through rough terrain and mountainous slopes. Such was the intensity of the local style 'Amazing Race'. Community women also took part in the event this year. Teams came from Ba and Lautoka communities.

The annual Race Against Poverty is a FRIEND initiative to join the Global Call for Action Against Poverty. A loose coalition of NGO's around the world organize various events in the month of October to encourage citizens and their leaders to make the commitment to achievement of MDGs by 2015 a reality. These NGOs came together in



Women and youth from FRIEND communities converge in Tuvu to have fun and learn about the MDG's

2005 to call on world leaders to live up to their promises in the fight against poverty. In September 2000 Fiji was one of the 189 United Nations member states that agreed to adopt 8 Millennium Development Goals to be achieved by the year 2015.

Chief Guest of the Day, the youth UN MDG Ambassador West, Renne Duguivalu said she was excited to see the innovative way of creating awareness on MDGs. She said "When you think about the meaning of the word "development", we think about progress, advancement, extension, growth,

we think about the future and the future is of course, us. Young people like you and I. So the MDG's does not only become the responsibility of the governments or the United Nations only but has become the responsibility of each and every one of us, to be aware of them, the progress and most importantly our individual input and active efforts in progressing towards these goals".

The winners in each category won cash prizes for first, second and third places. Each participating member received consolation prize.

Race organizing team acknowledges the support of the sponsors for the event- General Machinery, Makans Drugs Tappoos and Goodman Fielder who with their generous contributions added color to the day.

Sharing the learning A fast learner turns into a facilitator

A first time community trainer—that's a major achievement for a governance training participant from Qalitu in Lautoka. Roselyn Sangeeta was one of the participants of the skills training organized in Qalitu in August this year.

She caught the weaving skills within the 3 days and has shaped her own vases and trays using the technique. She brought her samples for display at the DESI conference in August. Her garlic/ onion holder attracted the most attention during the DESI conference and there were requests for more training to be organized in the communities. We requested Roselyn to conduct community workshops, though a little nervous she agreed.

Roselyn conducted her first three day skills training session in Vakabuli with 10 women early this month. She taught the art of weaving using sasa sticks and raffia.

Roselyn says she has been busy experimenting with baskets of different shapes and is getting good feedback from her friends and relatives



Roselyn explains the weaving technique to Anileshni while Irene and Vani concentrate on their baskets

Bilos boosting incomes Identifying resources for potential income



Mereani surrounded by workshop participants as they discuss the use of resources around them for potential income.

“We had never imagined that we could make money from the coconut shells that we had been throwing away over the years. And now we are unable to keep up with the orders that we are receiving for our bilos,” says Unaisi Ratulevu.

The Namara youth attended a one day training program on sustainable livelihoods for peri-urban youths conducted at Labasa office earlier this month.

At the end of the session the group of ten participant got into pairs to work on their Income Generation Projects. They identified their resources and skills and came up with various ideas. Unaisi and Rati worked in a pair and are now working on making bilos and supplying them directly into homes and offices around Labasa. “The team has even gone to the level of expanding their services to meet the demands of the customers. They are stitching and selling pieces of “grog cloth” for a \$1.00 each” says Mereani Lomavere, the course facilitator.

“This is really exciting in terms of impact”, says Mereani. “Just a few hours of interaction has made such a difference in the lives of the participants. I believe the story captures the gist of what FRIEND is trying to do in communities, getting them to realize their potential, available resources and utilizing them to improve their livelihoods.”

FRIEND in the field

Mereani Lomavere in Labasa

The Field officer of FRIEND in the Northern Division, Mereani Lomavere thinks nothing of hopping on a bus for the hour and half ride that takes her into a picturesque village across a river she has to cross on foot.

“It is always a pleasure to see the welcoming faces of our participants. They are always ready and waiting for the sessions to begin when I get there,“ says Mereani. Filled with training materials for her session of the day, Mereani lifts the cloth bag onto her shoulders as she gets ready to leave the FRIEND office based in Labasa. She has already sought permission to enter the village and has presented the services of the organization to the community. The village women have not only invited her to start training in their community but are always there on time.

“There are at least four mothers in the group with very small babies, but they too ensure that they have their work wrapped up for the day and come to the session carrying their babies with them.”

The group of women from this village have so far completed the 2nd module of the 6 Module Social and Economic Empowerment Training. “Following just a few sessions, the group was eager to undertake an activity. They discussed the issue of planting for the school as their first activity toward ‘ contributing towards development as good citizens ‘ and discussed with head teacher of their village school”

“Everyone agreed to bring a fruit tree along as an activity of Building Good Citizens. The Head Teacher responded by providing the garden tools and indicating spots to be planted.”

“A total of 19 fruit trees were planted on the day. These included paw-paw, bread fruit, mandarin and soursop.

Mereani Lomavere is one of the first volunteers who started work with FRIEND as a field officer in 2002. Since then she has progressed as a FRIEND Facilitator and is now looking after building relationships in the North for expansion of FRIEND work in the area .



Mereani crosses the non existent “bridge”



Planting together



Helping hands

Recipe Corner: Pineapple, Tuna, Rice Salad

- 1 can light tuna, drained
- 1 c. chopped pineapple
- 2 c. cooked cold rice
- 3/4 c. cucumber
- 1/4 c. fine chopped green pepper
- 1 finely chopped onion

Mix all ingredients. Chill. Add salt and pepper to taste. Mix and chill again. Better if made day before.

A perfect accompaniment to Christmas Bbq's





Health walk attracts 79 in Ba

As the first rays of the sun broke through the early morning clouds, my heart was already pumping hard, and so were those of the group around me as they jumped and swayed to the music before cooling down for a healthy fruity break fast.

The early morning walk to highlight the importance of exercise in combating the

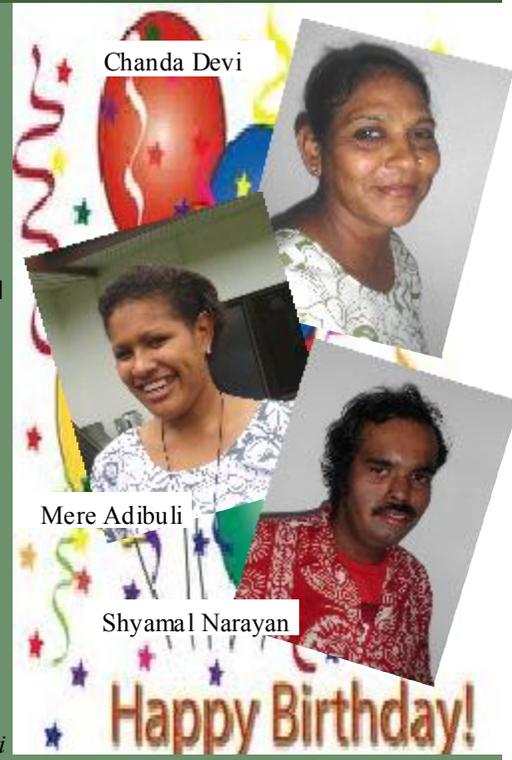
lifestyle diseases worked out well for a number of our Ba communities who took advantage of the opportunity to network with each other and forge new partnerships to implement their various action plans for community development.

While my three colleagues Jone, Mere and Sili stayed overnight at Natalecake, I stayed in Namasau to motivate the residents to join the walk.

The walk also marked the month of November as the Non Communicable Disease month, that had been launched in Tavua by the Government earlier in the month.

A total of 79 participants were recorded for the morning event which also saw representatives from the Ministry of Health coming out to join us.

by Vive Liutaki



Chanda Devi

Mere Adibuli

Shyamal Narayan

Happy Birthday!

Ladies of Action

The Governance participants from Vakabuli/ Paipai, two neighboring rural communities in Lautoka have worked together to provide a facelift to their school kindergarten as part of their community development plan.

The group of 15 was meeting at the school for their weekly Governance training sessions for 4 months. They graduated with Certificate In Community Development last month.

The group discussed the school needs with the head teacher and raised some money through sales of raffle tickets amongst themselves to purchase paint and other painting accessories in a gesture to thank the school for providing venue for the course.

As planned, on a Saturday morning, the team gathered to clean the walls and ceiling before getting down to putting on a fresh coat of paint. All the ladies in the group said they were excited as it was the very first time for them to be handling such a project.

Group spokesperson, Bijma Kumar says that the project provided great motivation and has improved their self confidence as they were able to achieve a planned task.

"In our homes we normally rely on men to handle such tasks, but with this project its been the ladies who have prepared a list of what is required, how much it will cost, where to get the material from , down to actually doing the painting."



Cleaning up



Painting the ceiling



The fresh look

NCD Summit Outcomes thrill PRISM

Dr. Animesh Sinha and his PRISM team have been on the ground tackling NCDs (non-communicable diseases) in the most high-risk, underserved communities of Fiji for the past two years.

Much to their excitement, on September 19th-20th a High Level UN NCD Summit was held in New York to address the critical global impact of NCDs including diabetes, chronic lung disease, heart disease, and most cancers.

By the end of the summit the message was strong and clear: something must be done and something must be done immediately.

Dr. Sinha, the Founder and Medical Director of the PRISM Health Initiative, states "it is reassuring to see NCDs getting the global attention it deserves."

Dr. Sinha acknowledges that it has been frustrating to work in the direction of such a clear-cut problem but not have sufficient funding or resources to expand the work simply because "NCDs have not been one of the buzzwords such as HIV, malaria, women's health, or tuberculosis."

Now however, because of the Summit, Dr. Sinha is pleased that many potential stakeholders have been contacting him including donors. "PRISM's lonely world... all of a sudden... no longer feels so lonely."

Rqce Day Activities—A day of fun and learning

