

Takitaki

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Situation at a glance



Infrastructure damage

The recent floods affecting the two main economic centers in the West, Ba and Nadi and Labasa in the North have had a significant effect in these areas. These include the damages to infrastructure, farms, effects on businesses and loss of jobs, especially in the tourism and service industries. The recent events add to compounding the effects of the pre existing factors of slowdown of economy due to the expiry of leases and the eminent collapse of the sugar industry, closure of numerous shoe and garment factories that provided a source of livelihood for thousands for more than a decade and rising squatter populations, economic slow down due to the events of 2006 and the international economic financial crisis. This seems to have majorly affected families ability to provide basic healthy food, water, education and health to their members.

Health is emerging as one of the major concerns of these communities. Many affected households are reporting that the 'man' of the family is unable to go out to work to provide for their families due to poor health (largely mismanagement of lifestyle diseases). Women are unable to prioritize their health issues in face of other important needs. Amputations resulting from uncontrolled diabetes and other sicknesses continue to aggravate the poverty situation in affected communities as the medical centers continue to report shortage of basic medication needed to address the lifestyle diseases which continue to rise despite ongoing awareness measures on preventative health. The issue of health is directly related to how people are living and what they are eating. Diet in Fiji is heavily dependent on processed and imported products, be it rice, flour or lentils. Locally grown products that are far healthier are more expensive to buy. This does not mean that Fiji cannot grow its own as soil in Fiji is one of the most fertile anywhere in the world and there are no reasons why Fiji cannot grow enough and more for its own consumption as well as for wider markets.

Over the years we have seen a growth in demand for our services. Largely we see people asking for charity for health, food and schooling needs, this year the demand seems to have grown four fold due to recent national and international crisis. Closure of shops in Ba and Nadi, Closure of mines in Vatukoula and reduction in cane production all seem to be contributing

Damaged belongings



factors of the crisis. With Income Generation Programs, our experience over the years has shown that it is not enough to provide start up capital. People seem to be broken in esteem, more so now with hardships, and a lot more

time and effort is needed in motivating people to get involved and continue income generation programs. To ensure sustainability of any project one needs to ensure that apart from initial training in skill building, continuous support is required to see that the quality is maintained and the markets are serviced regularly.

We also believe that agricultural potential in the country is underutilized and developing this sector is one of the ways to build a prosperous Fiji where healthy food is readily available to everyone. This in turn will also reduce the demand on the health budget along with ensuring a dynamic and productive workforce for the country. This will also provide employment opportunities associated with the growing sector.

It is alarming to note that many still do not have access to basics of health service, while most that do are left to fend on their own for medications that are supposedly readily available in terms of those dealing with lifestyle diseases. We have come across numerous people who say they are unable to access these basic drugs in their home towns and are forced to travel to nearby bigger centers to stock up.

Destruction post flood



With the products resulting from cottage industries, it is important to do market assessment and have an idea of potential markets before encouraging production. FRIEND believes and continues to look at developing partnerships with the corporate sector to ensure markets for its Income Generation Programs.

We could expect the situation to improve itself in time if there are concerted efforts for change. Currently while a lot of time is being spent on analyzing the situation and mapping out strategies the abyss seems to be growing. The sad fact for Fiji is by the time any data is collected and analyzed for productive purpose it is outdated by a decade. FRIEND has had to rely on its observations on the ground in order to plan and has worked on its strategic plan taking the global financial crisis and food security seriously and has incorporated that in the programs for the next three years. The organization is seeking funds to be able to accomplish these strategies and is very hopeful that these strategies will provide solutions for larger community around the

By Sandhya Narayan

Holi @ FRIEND



Thursday 12th celebrated Holi for all Hindus around the country. As our little team sat in the training room to mark the day with a cup of tea and some gulgula, we heard the sound of holi songs flying in our windows. A group of Indo Fijian men were celebrating Holi in the street and we immediately sent out an invitation to them to join us.

And then it started! The sound of the drums, the tambourines, cymbals and the harmonium rose to a level, allowing their voices singing together in a rhythm, hands clapping. Slowly I closed my eyes and took in what there is to hear. I remained in a trance trying to follow the beat and trying to understand the familiar tones of the language and hearing a melody of male voices rising over to the ceilings and out through the window.

Colorful paints were used to express the joy of the festival of colors and merrily bringing out the child in a man. Pink was sort of a favorite color for the day. I got the opportunity on dabbing it on everyone's face—the whole staff team and the celebrant group.

It impacted on me that many of our citizens do not know what other cultures hold and how interesting it would be if you just sit for a while during these ceremonies or celebrations, then you will realize the importance of it all.

And when I had gone to town to fetch lunch. I was left bewildered at the shock and surprise on other peoples faces when I they saw my face painted with the holi dye. I could not believe what I was hearing. Being a native Fijian and appreciating someone else's culture was unacceptable for some. Racism definitely is an issue to confront with here in

this country .



FRIEND Goes Green

This month, FRIEND staff began a compost initiative in their own backyard in order to better equip themselves for training the communities, as well as to take another step toward ensuring FRIEND is economically friendly and conscious of the environment around it.

Composting is an easy way to help you, your family, and your company take personal responsibility for the preservation of the environment, as well as to provide fertile top soil that is great for gardens. To begin, find a 1.5mx1.5m area of land away from your home or business. Using chicken wire and wooden posts form a square bin in this area. Layer the bottom with brown material such as leaves, sticks, and wood ashes, and old grass clippings. Next, begin adding organic leftovers from your kitchen (i.e. coffee grounds & tea bags, egg shells, vegetable & fruit scraps, rice, seaweed), and continue to layer the kitchen refuse with brown material found in your yard. Do *not* add meat, dairy products, dog droppings, oily or fatty foods, processed foods or coal ashes. Mix your pile every two weeks for the best results. You will know your compost is ready to be used as soil when there are no longer recognizable items in it, and the soil is rich and dark looking.

Leadership Fiji 2009



FRIEND Program Officer J Nawaikula is one of the lucky candidates for this years program.

Leadership Fiji 2009 greeted 28 enthusiastic participants at an Introductory and Welcoming cocktail at JJs on the Park on Friday 13th where guest speaker Mr Sitiveni Rabuka spoke words of encouragement to the future leaders. Mr. Rabuka emphasised on the importance of being a good leader and the dreams to follow.

Leadership Fiji in its 8th year, sees another group of selected candidates undertaking a variety of stimulating programs. Founded in 2000, Leadership Fiji is a specially designed program destined to 'develop and enhance the quality of future leaders through skills development and building relationships characterised by respect, trust and understanding amongst individual leaders representing the diverse elements which make up the Fiji community'

Throughout the year the participants will understand community issues hence enhancing their commitment in developing their community, through facilitating and engagement of emerging leaders while providing a network for personal development and leadership. The program addresses various topics; Tourism, Human Rights and Social welfare , Environmental and Economic Issues to name a few. Leaders in these various areas of concern are lined up to address the class of 2009.

Bats N Birds Rock On

By Jessica S & Jone N



Lovu Hart Hall was abuzz with children and mothers soon after school as the FACE Theatre group got ready to do their first performance. After five weeks of training jittery and nervy team gathered their wits and encouraged each other that this is their big break. And to do that is by facing the music!



The BATS and BIRDS play, is becoming a hit in communities. An out of the classroom workshop, the play uses metaphor to explore some of the local issues of land, values and history affecting our communities. The participatory workshop that follows encourages the audience to come up with some of their own solutions. Since then the group has done a number of performances enjoying positive remarks. This response is reflective of all the work the FACE actors have been doing in not only the theatrical but also the practical side of the project.



In a costume workshop held at FRIEND, the team made *plaster of paris* masks out of surgical plaster. It was the first time for the youths to experiment with this new and challenging medium which is usually used for broken bones! As the plaster is applied wet – the actors needed to wait for the plaster to sun dry.



This required one to sit still with a white face for around 20 minutes. The workshop aimed at encouraging the youths to have ownership over their costumes and their individual characters.

Financial Literacy Training at FSPI 4-6 Mar



Mereani, Sandhya, Jone and Sarwan with Albert, Seta and Tom We



covered three topics of Financial Well-Being, Household Budgeting and Saving. What I appreciated in the training was that the images used were local and that the trainer being a local person was well versed with local ways of thinking and excuses that people in the settlements come up with as excuses for not trying to improve their financial situation. Financial well being in a nutshell is a family's life style. What they possess, the kind of house they live in, their household items, clothing, children's education level, and the actual living standards. It is important for families to set goals to better their living conditions by prioritizing their needs, spending their money wisely and saving no matter how little it may be. This is so that families are better prepared for future challenges.



By Sarwan Kumar

Recipe Corner

Grilled Chicken with Sweet Mango Chutney

Ingredients: 1 tbsp Friends Fiji Style Chilli Chutney, 1 tbsp ground turmeric, 3 boneless skinless chicken breasts, 3 tbspn vegetable oil, a bottle of Friends Fiji Style Sweet Mango Chutney. And fresh yoghurt.

Directions: Heat grill to medium-high. Combine Friends Fiji Style Chilli Chutney, turmeric and oil to make a paste. Rub a thin layer of the paste onto 1 side of each chicken breast. Grill for 3 to 4 minutes on each side or until slightly charred and just cooked through. Remove from the grill, let rest 5 minutes, and cut lengthwise into 1/2-inch thick slices. Serve open face on burger buns/roti wraps with a few dollops of Friends Fiji Style Sweet Mango Chutney and a drizzle of fresh Yoghurt.



With Sandhya Narayan