



A Winning Partnership



Sashi at the EYD launch ceremony in Suva with EU officials

The European Union Pacific Delegation headquartered in Suva won a Communication Award in Brussels this month for publishing an impact story implemented by FRIEND.

"The EU delegation won the second award of a visibility competition, competing with 120 other delegations' stories. Fiji won the prize after publishing FRIEND bee keeping success story," said Xavier CANTON-LAMOUSSE, Attaché, Sugar Programme & Coordinator Economics & Social Sector. "I am sure there will be many more good stories to tell this year."

FRIEND has just completed a three year EU funded project aimed at improving livelihoods in the sugar belt areas through cash crop farming, poultry, apiary, food processing and upskilling of unemployed youths for the job market.

Meanwhile the European Year for Development was officially launched at the EU Pacific Delegation on 21st January as EU collaborates with partners to share stories of its work in the Pacific.



A group of local farmers returning from an Organic Study Tour have hailed their excursion as highly successful.

The tour included visits to a number of farms and facilities incorporating organic practices in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh regions of India.

The farmers were able to observe and learn firsthand, preparing of organic insecticides, fungicides, compost, vermi culture, biogas and water harvesting techniques.

"FRIEND is promoting organic farming and is encouraging use of organic inputs for pest and weed control and sustainable yields. Our farmers had the opportunity to see this in action in India. While organically grown produce is better for health, it is also a more sustainable way of farming and better for the environment," says Founder/Director Sashi Kiran.

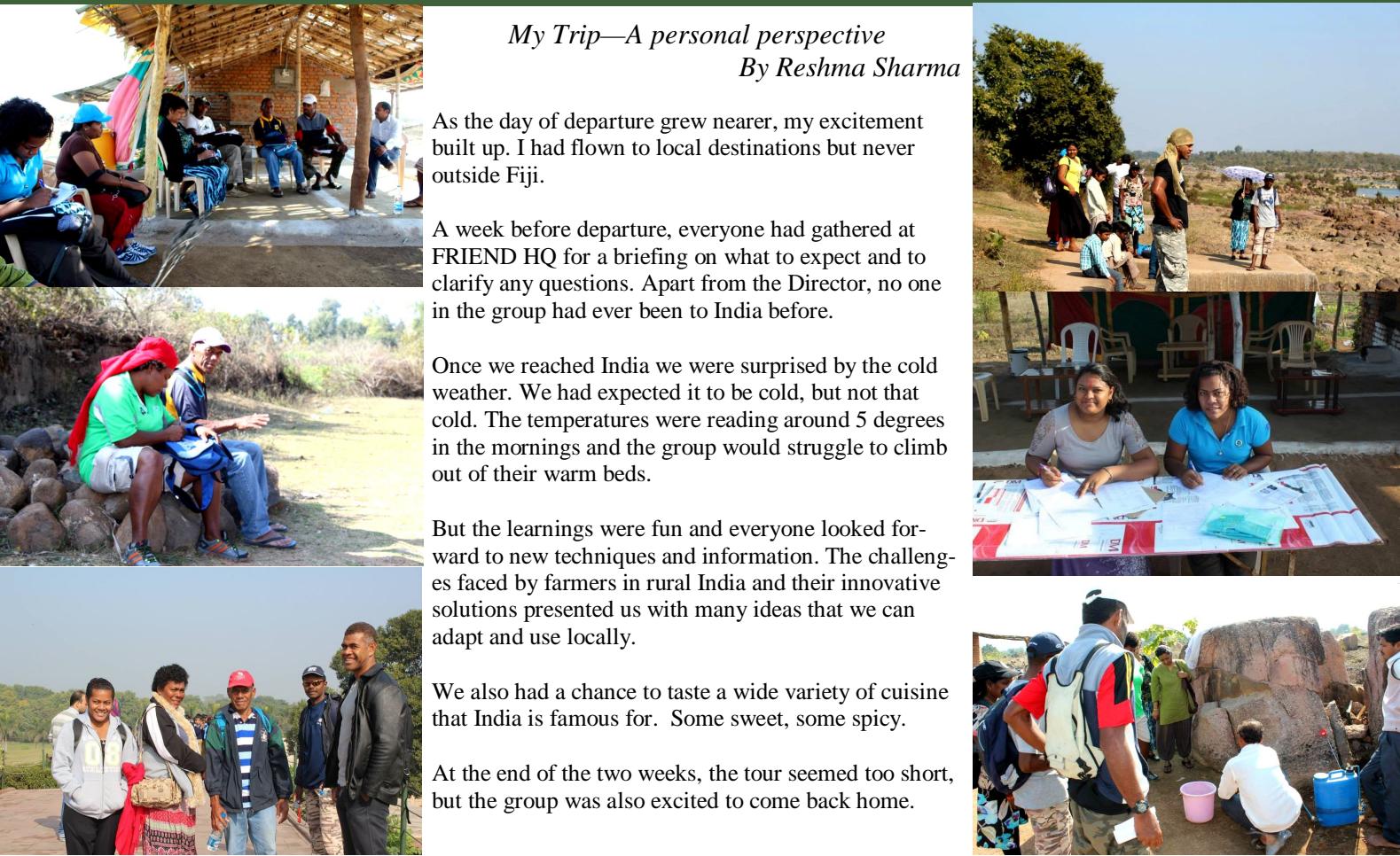
The highlights of the tour included learning of techniques involved in collecting rain water, digging ponds to improve water tables and turning barren lands into farms and orchards using organic manures.

The tour group included eight farmers from Viti Levu and Vanua Levu who were recipients of the GROW STAR Awards for best practices in various agricultural activities implemented by FRIEND and funded by the European Union over the last three years.

"The European Union is an important actor in promoting organic farming and sustainable agriculture, both at home and in our partner's countries," says Ambassador Andrew Jacobs, Head of the European Union Delegation for the Pacific.

"Economically, ecologically and socially sustainable agriculture is the future, if the world is to feed its growing population, in particular in developing countries where food production will be required to nearly double by 2050," says Ambassador Jacobs.

"With its specific environment and culture, the Pacific has a high potential for promoting sustainable agriculture and organic farming, producing nutritious and healthy food and, at the same time, protecting the environment for the Pacific."



My Trip—A personal perspective

By Reshma Sharma

As the day of departure grew nearer, my excitement built up. I had flown to local destinations but never outside Fiji.

A week before departure, everyone had gathered at FRIEND HQ for a briefing on what to expect and to clarify any questions. Apart from the Director, no one in the group had ever been to India before.

Once we reached India we were surprised by the cold weather. We had expected it to be cold, but not that cold. The temperatures were reading around 5 degrees in the mornings and the group would struggle to climb out of their warm beds.

But the learnings were fun and everyone looked forward to new techniques and information. The challenges faced by farmers in rural India and their innovative solutions presented us with many ideas that we can adapt and use locally.

We also had a chance to taste a wide variety of cuisine that India is famous for. Some sweet, some spicy.

At the end of the two weeks, the tour seemed too short, but the group was also excited to come back home.



EU Monitors Evaluate End of Project

A Monitoring Team from the European Union visited a range of GROW projects for a final evaluation this month.

Two consultants, Roberto Borlini and Roberto Canessa, met with a number of GROW project beneficiaries to gauge the impact of the three year project.

“They asked questions about beneficiaries were selected, how they benefitted and what they felt about the assistance received from the EU,” says FRIEND Field Officer, Melaia Salacakau.

“The team looked through the project log books kept by the beneficiaries and visited farms, poultry set ups and beekeeping set ups. They also visited a number of YEN beneficiaries who had been upskilled through the project at their workplaces and spoke with them.”

The monitors are to present their final report next month.



Product of the Month—

Friend's Fiji Style®

Mango Leather



It's a natural delight that is bound to please anyone.

Our food processing team turned out beautiful mango leather as they made the most of the fruiting season of the king of fruits.

"We follow the same recipe that we use for banana and pawpaw leather. Choose firm fruits, pulp and puree it into a smooth blend and put it in the solar drier," says FRIEND Production Officer Christina Dimatai. "With good sun the leather is ready in two days."

"Even with mango still being in season, the product was always running off the shelf. That just speaks for itself about the taste and quality of the product."

Take A Pledge

Eat Right, Exercise and Say NO to Smoking

"I don't drink alcohol anymore. I have had to teach myself to say no. Even if my friends are drinking I am able to stick to my pledge and my friends have stopped trying to get me to 'have one.'"

"We used to drink every weekend. I have realized I was not only wasting my money, but wasting my

health."

"I also eat a lot more fruits now. I believe it has also made my skin clearer. It feels better."

"I am only 24. The Pledge campaign has made me realise that I have a long way to go and have to start taking better care of myself now rather than later."

Lemon Grass Success Story

"I harvest around 25kg of lemon grass weekly, and this activity alone is providing me with a regular income," says Ratu Peni Peni Rokoi.

Ratu Peni is a community pastor at Navakuru, in Vanua Levu.

"I had never thought about farming lemon grass. One day at church I heard some people talking about FRIEND. A week later the organisation was invited to conduct a food processing workshop. This was in June last year."

Ratu Peni was one of the 14 participants to attend the EU funded GROW Food Processing workshop in June at Navakuku in 2013.

"At the workshop we were shown a variety of herbs and fruits that could be dried and sold for income. I had some lemon grass growing in my backyard. I expanded this into a 200 plant farm. For my first trial with lemon grass drying, I produced around 1kg. And since then have never looked back."



Ratu Peni with a box of Fiji Cha Lemon Grass at a Nadi Airport duty free shop while flying out to India



FRIEND Staff with Fiji Cha Herbal Tea Range

Ratu Peni was declared the First Place Awardee for GROW STAR AWARDS for Food Processing Project.

He was also part of the Organic Study Tour Group to visit India this month.

Currently his farm has more than 6,000 plants of lemongrass.

"I plan to expand my farm and do large scale processing as we have a steady market for dried lemongrass" said Ratu Peni.

Recipe Corner — Fresh Pineapple Salsa



Ingredients:

2 cups diced fresh pineapple
1/2 cup fresh herbs, chopped
1/4 cup finely chopped red onion
1 green chilli seeded and chopped
Zest and juice of 1 lime
1/8 teaspoon fine sea salt

Directions:

Mix all ingredients in a bowl and serve chilled with crackers/ grilled meat/fish dishes.

Best prepared half an hour before serving.

Words of the Wise

“When people are determined, they can overcome anything”

Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela

January Birthdays



Sustainable Medicine for Health—High risk for heart attacks and stroke

The medical program for the year started with a healthy turnout at the first clinics held in West and the North this month as communities are screened.

“There is a visible higher risk of dying from a heart attack or a stroke” says FRIEND SMILE Nurse Vatiseva Delai.

A recent study on SMILE communities showed an average of 14.5 % risk of a heart attack and/or a stroke in our communities.

The WHO/ISH Risk assessment chart was used looking at age, gender, diabetes status, Blood Pressure and Smoking.

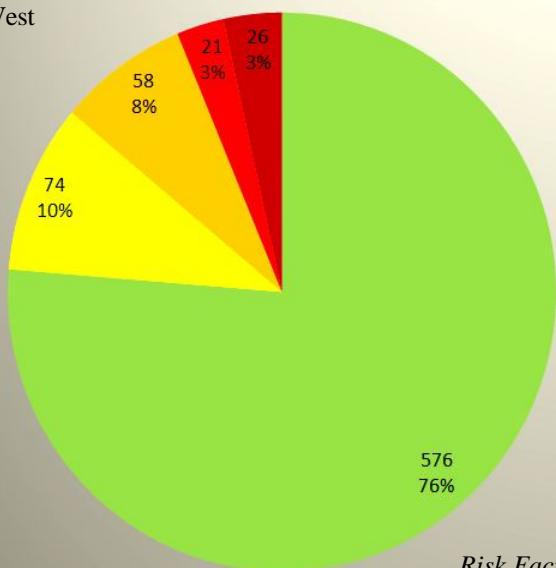
The study was conducted on 755 participants in the West and 251 in the North in our medical communities.

“The actual risk status for each individual could be higher when other factors are considered like existing NCDs and duration. As we are studying our population we are also studying their lifestyle and are trying to implement mitigation of risk factors through healthier habits” says Dr Jone Hawea, Medical Director of SMILE.

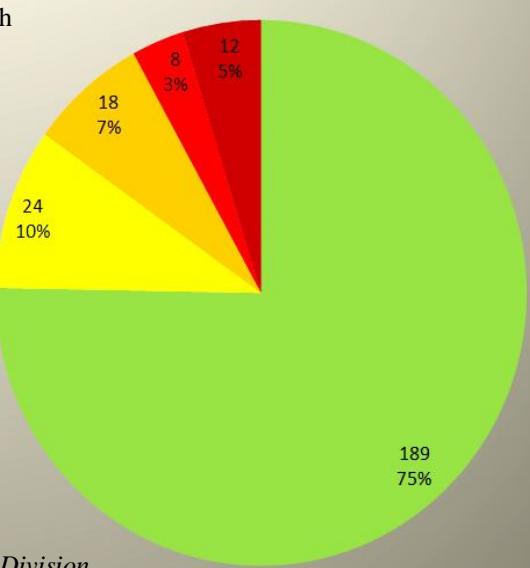
“This study will help us tailor our intervention approaches in each community.”



West



North



Risk Factors by Division

