

# No effort at self-help - Fiji Times Online

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A LAXITY in self-help approaches by patients has been one of the key challenges witnessed by the Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprises and Development's (FRIEND Fiji) medical team.

Medical director Dr Jone Vuli Hawea said these were long-term habits and practices.

"People are more accustomed to the health centres where they come and receive medicine" he said.

"No effort is being made to change their dietary habits, there is a dependency on people who provide health care to change things for them, and this is one of the biggest challenges.

"The other challenge is that for a long time the practice has been to avoid certain behaviour and food practices, without alternatives being provided.

"So while people are aware of the fact that they should not be eating certain types of food, they do not provide alternative healthy choices."

Dr Hawea joined the organisation in 2011 and along with a team of health officials, conducted numerous medical consultations and screenings in rural communities from Sigatoka to Rakiraki.

"The situation in urban and rural areas is similar in terms of food. A lot of processed food has found its way into rural kitchens, despite the isolation.

"Initially we do community consultations and let them identify their own issues and prioritise their health needs. They come up with solutions themselves, where we just facilitate them and empower them through education and medication.

"After a screening process to identify cases, we put a schedule of regular clinic follow ups."