



Takitaki

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MEREANI'S FRIEND STORY

I first heard of FRIEND from Mr Emosi Sikuri a neighbor from Tauvegavega in Ba. He invited me to attend training for FRIEND Save Scheme group leaders. I knew nothing about it, but I intended to be there on the training day. I was new to Ba—loneliness was killing me—so I thought going to this workshop would kill the day. I was among twenty other young people there. First, I thought it was boring. As it went on, I realized that these ideas would help those who are poor. We spent two days in training, and the third day was our practical day. On August 29, 2002, I started a Save Scheme group where I lived. To start a group there have to be ten members or more. After a month I started another group at Badrau settlement. In Nov 2002 I was called to see the FRIEND coordinator, Sashi Kiran. I went with Mr Sikuri to meet her and the late Matron Satya Bali. We talked and they asked me if I could be a field Officer. I was speechless, excited, emotional, and a dream came true, as I love serving people. I said yes. I tried to learn as much as I could from Matron Bali about the role of a Field Officer. She taught me everything. The Ba dialect was totally new to me. She also taught me how to communicate, dress, interact, and socialize with Indo-Fijians. Today I still recall her soft-spoken voice with encouraging words, whenever I did anything for FRIEND Save Scheme. With FRIEND I met people from different levels of life. I count myself lucky to have met HRH Prince Charles during his visit to FRIEND in 2005. I met people from other NGOs—I now volunteer for femLINK-pacific as a community correspondent from the Western division. FRIEND brings government departments, NGOs and overseas groups to the community level. Through workshops, eyes are opened, talents discovered and new things are learned and achieved. With their certificates, some got jobs as police officers or hotel workers, some went to other organizations to work as volunteers. Participants who have worked with FRIEND have witnessed the support that FRIEND has offered to various communities. I have witnessed FRIEND fulfilling their vision of working with communities to alleviate poverty.



Mereani Lomavere

TILAK MURAL



The area across from Tilak High School is the latest location for a mural designed and painted by the local area youth who took part in our mural painting workshop. With the permission of the Lautoka City Council, we were able to take the mural painting show on the road and beautify another part of our city.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE WORKSHOP

A two-day workshop on Restorative Justice was conducted by Paulo Bale. It was attended by FRIEND program staff, a representative from Family Support and, three Officers from Lautoka Police Station. The overall objective of the course was to provide critical awareness of the prevailing practice and philosophy of justice including:

- The experiences and needs of victims, offenders and communities
- Restorative justice principles and practices
- Possible "new applications" especially in prison
- Potential problems and pitfalls in the field.

This training provided an excellent introduction into Restorative Justice and will become the basis of the prisoner rehabilitation program. The practical training will enable all participants to review how they work and how they can implement restorative justice principles within their workplace. There will be opportunities for the participants to meet and discuss how they can develop their understanding and implementation of Restorative Justice on an ongoing basis.

SAVE SCHEME GROUP LEADER TRAINING



Last month the Save Scheme group leaders gathered in Ba at the Senior Center to take part in a training facilitated by FRIEND. The participants were posed a series of questions in small groups to start the session. It gave all involved the opportunity to reflect on their experience with Save Scheme, and share their thoughts on why Save Scheme is important to their community, what challenges they face, and what FRIEND can do to work with them more effectively.

The session then changed focus to define and clarify the roles of Group Leaders, Field Officers and Save Scheme office staff. Reviewing everyone's role in the process—and the rules for Savers—helps all involved to understand their responsibilities and the expectations of their positions. Finally, a group discussion was held to talk about some of the issues raised during the feedback session. Some Save Scheme processes were adjusted to promote regular saving and good service.

A NEW ADDITION



Zeenat Aashna
Quality Control Officer
Zeenat is a graduate of USP, holds a Bachelor of Science in Biology and Chemistry, and is currently working on her master's degree. Her first project at FRIEND was to update our Occupational Health and Safety manual.

DEAR FRIEND

It was a wonderful experience to be able at long last get away from the hustle and bustle of the DSAP office and Suva to visit the FRIEND office in Lautoka. I had been planning such a visit for months, after initially meeting Sashi towards the end of 2005. As I walked through the multi-coloured columns of the FRIEND gateway I must say I had a heightened sense of expectation and was not to be disappointed. I was quickly made to feel at home by the general friendliness and openness, everyone had a smile that made me feel positively welcome. Most importantly everyone seemed to enjoy and believe strongly in what they were doing and this seemed to create a vibrant sense of purpose.

It was indeed a real pleasure to experience at first-hand the diverse range of activities that FRIEND miraculously squeeze into their limited accommodation at Valetia Street in Lautoka. Every room, nook and cranny was a hive of activity. As a manager of an agricultural project I was particularly keen to observe and learn about FRIEND's Fiji Style products which make up a large part of their Income Generation Program. I continue to be impressed by the quality and range of products involved and which continue to expand. Here is a real tangible example of a program building on local resources and skills that is truly tackling poverty in rural communities. Combined with the FRIEND Save Scheme this can only enhance that impact further by providing communities with real opportunities to step out of poverty.

To me it is obvious why FRIEND continues to grow and diversify. But such expansion always brings new challenges and issues. I only hope that FRIEND and their partners continue to get the support they deserve in order to continue to meet the very real needs that exist in the communities with which they engage.

To all those at FRIEND you are doing tremendous work with the limited resources and skills at your disposal. Long may you continue to keep up the excellent work.

Dr Danny Hunter

Team Leader

Development of Sustainable Agriculture in the Pacific (DSAP) Project

SPC

Suva

**What's
Happening?****March 1**

International Women
of Color Day

March 8

International
Women's Day

March 14

World Book Day

March 21

International Day for
the Elimination of
Discrimination

March 22

World Day for Water

March 23

World Meteorologi-
cal Day

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

USP Lautoka Campus and FRIEND have organized a new lecture series in Lautoka. In commemoration of International Women's Day, the inaugural program in the series was a seminar on *Women in Economic Development*. Some of the prominent women from Lautoka, Nadi and Ba were invited for the program at the USP Lautoka Campus on 8 March.

The keynote speaker was Ms Aileen Burness, Director, South Seas Orchid. She gave a very lively presentation on the Floriculture Project she started to encourage women to grow orchids and anthuriums to generate income for their families. Seini Puamau, Managing Director of CAISEN Limited, provider of accounting and IT solutions, spoke on women in business. Several audience members took the opportunity to ask Ms Puamau questions on starting a business and the challenges women face in the business world. The seminar was well-attended and ended with a light lunch that gave the women an opportunity to network, and in many cases, get reacquainted with familiar faces.

Planning for the next program in the series is underway. If you have suggestions for a topic of interest, email us at friend@connect.com.fj



*FRIEND staff garlanding
speakers on Women's Day*

FIRE AWARENESS TRAINING PROGRAM

*Paul Kamoe
FRIEND Volunteer*

I organized the Lautoka Fire Authority (LFA) to come to FRIEND and teach us on Fire Awareness. I thought it was important for staff to be trained because both of our buildings are wooden and none of the staff knew about fire prevention. It is essential for staff to think quickly when there is a fire, not to panic, and to do things slowly and thoroughly.

It is especially necessary for the Chutney Ladies to be aware of firefighting. They are using burners and gas; they need to know how to react quickly. The staff have learned to take more care around their workplace, to be wary of electrical appliances and to help us avoid fire and save lives. What was taught in the session can also be used at home—it is important to be aware of small risks that can become big problems.

The staff gained a lot of knowledge in the fire awareness program. In the next session they will learn how to put out fires using extinguishers, fire blankets and water from the hydrant. This demonstration will help staff fully understand how to react in case of fire and will give them confidence in how to use all the equipment without hesitation. That is why I thought it was important for all staff to know about firefighting.