



Takitaki

YOUTH MURAL PAINTING PROJECT

The Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprise N Development (FRIEND) in partnership with APCO Coatings and Waterfront Hotel provided a one week artistic mural painting project for young people with the final goal of producing a mural painting in a public arena for the community to enjoy. Unemployed youths from various youth groups (Topline Youth and Wai-yavi) and high school students on holiday from around Lautoka were able to showcase their artistic skills and their basic mural painting skills. Approximately ten youths invested their time and efforts in ensuring that the mural was completed on time. It was encouraging to see that each day began or ended with a prayer.

There are a number of objectives and a mission regarding this project. The main mission of this project was to provide young people with opportunities to engage in the development of Fiji. The objectives are: to learn and develop skills in mural painting, to provide youth with role models—adults and older youth with experience in mural painting to pass on knowledge and skills to the new participants, develop a feeling of self-worth, learn and develop teamwork skills, increase opportunities for employment, make a positive contribution to the image of young people in the community and provide an attraction for the benefit of the local community.

FRIEND believes the way to social empowerment is partnership. We are grateful that corporate bodies like APCO are involved with the community and are showing such interest in developing young people and the country.



From top: Youth at work on the mural; mural detail; some mural painters on day 2 of the project.

OLD PEOPLE'S HOME VISIT



FRIEND staff who visited the Old People's Home.

FRIEND Youth Development Program in conjunction with youth volunteers was delighted to be able to help clean up the Old Peoples Home in Natabua on Saturday the 10th February from 10am to 1pm.

In spite of the rainy weather, it was very encouraging to see the support from people

who were willing to invest their time and efforts in a worthy cause. There were seven people in total who undertook this cleaning project: four FRIEND staff and three youth volunteers. These were the people who ensured that the clean up was done well.

Upon arrival at the Old Peoples Home premises, indoor cleaning duties like sweeping, mopping and wiping of louveres were delegated. The group was also given the opportunity to socialize with the elderly. Language seemed to be a barrier in some cases, but that didn't stop the youths from making the effort to engage the residents. This gave the youths a chance to give back to the community and it made the trip all the more worthwhile.

FRIEND recognizes the passion of our youths for working with communities to make those that feel neglected have a sense of belonging in society. We also try to educate the youths on the importance of sharing and caring for their communities.

RESTORATIVE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

With the generous support of Canada Fund, FRIEND will begin a new project this year. The Restorative Community Development Program was conceived to give dysfunctional communities the foundation of unity they need to start the process of achieving their collective goals. FRIEND is fortunate to have two NGO partners in this project, Women's Action for Change (WAC) and the Virtues Project, to help deliver services to the five communities that will be participating. WAC will do workshops on the Restorative Justice process through the use of drama. The communities will also learn how virtues are relevant in their everyday lives from the trainings facilitated by the Virtues Project. FRIEND will coordinate all of the activities of the new program and also with work with communities on identifying and implementing their projects for development after they have addressed any issues and obstacles to their progress in their sessions with WAC and Virtues.



JUST PEACE YOUTH CAMP

The second annual Just Peace Youth Camp was organized by the Ecumenical Centre for Research, Education and Advocacy (ECEA) with the theme "Youth: Custodians of Peace". The camp was held at the Centre for Appropriate Technology and Development (CATD) in Nadave.

There were approximately 30 youth participants from around Fiji with different ethnic and religious backgrounds. We were able to express our ideas and also raise our concerns on different issues within our own communities. It was very encouraging to see that youths who are usually seen and not heard could voice their opinions. The main facilitator, Babu Ayindo came all the way from Kenya to help us better understand the tools of analysis for conflict and peace. It was very interesting to see Babu bring things to life through story-telling, role-playing and drama. This was a good way to realize individual talents and skills. Babu's sharing his personal experiences growing up made it easier for us to relate to him. This was not only educational but very inspiring. Group discussions and presentations were ways in which our confidence was boosted through public speaking. Also, having ice-breakers every now and then made us feel more comfortable and less tense.

The important lessons learnt are that conflicts are about power and dependency. Ultimately, a conflict can be a crisis or an opportunity to make decisions.



Amy (far right) and fellow participants at the Just Youth Peace Camp

— Amy Manulevu

**What's
Happening?**

February
14 Valentine's Day
**21 Int'l Mother Language
Day**

March
1 World Book Day
2 World Day of Prayer
**8 UN Day for Women's
Rights and Int'l Peace**

SAVE SCHEME COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Mereani and Rekha talked to communities about Save Scheme

Mereani and Rekha, the Save Scheme Officers, recently spent time talking with Save Scheme groups in Ba to get feedback about the program. Following are some observations from their time in the communities.

We visited all of our Save Scheme community groups to ask them some questions about how Save Scheme is working for them. We began on Wednesday 31 January. The first groups we spoke to were Ba Senior Citizen Community Centre and Badrau Settlement. The seniors mentioned that due to their health they are not always able to save--health concerns and expenses will always affect their saving. Also with selling vegetables and Social Welfare allowance being their only means of income, Seniors often struggle to continue with saving. Though most of them do not receive any other support, they expressed that they want to continue putting away money for their needs as they are able.

In Badrau, we met with the Group Leader. Though they have had some members saving more regularly than others, those who are active intend to continue saving with Save Scheme.

On Thursday, we went to Nasolo Village and Koroqaqa Village. In both of these communities, the members who save regularly hoped to continue saving with Save Scheme indefinitely. However it seemed others in these groups were not saving. In Koroqaqa Village, members said that the reason they did not save regularly was that their group leader was away for a few months. We were also informed that some of the members weren't available to save while working as cane cutters during cane cutting season. However, we noted that even when the members and the group leader were there, the group still did not save consistently. In Nasolo Village, there were some internal problems with the group and the members would wait for Mereani to come and collect their savings instead of working with their group leader.

On Friday, we went to Kenani Women's Club and Tom's Security group. These are both groups with regular savers who continue to participate in Save Scheme. In contrast, on Saturday, we went to Ba Hart Home, Tauvegavega Lower Squatter and Vatulaulau Settlement group, and these groups are not saving regularly. All of this feedback is welcome. The information gathered from the talks with communities will assist with future plans for Save Scheme so we ensure that the program is efficient in the way it is administered and useful for the members who rely on it.