



Guests outside the New Production Facility in Tuvu

Sue Ni Vakhatokho—House of Cooking

The 11th Birth Anniversary of FRIEND was marked with yet another milestone for the Foundation.

The opening of the new EU Funded production facility named “**Sue Ni Vakhatokho**” was held on 29th August 2013 as part of official celebrations to commemorate 11th Birth Anniversary by Deputy Director of the EU Delegation in the Pacific Mr Johnny Engell– Hanson. Work on the production facility was initiated following severe damage to FRIEND Headquarters in Tuvu in the wake of Tropical Cyclone Evan on 17 December 2012 using contingency funds from the EU GROW project.

Upon request more funds were made available from the EU for the production facility.

The main administrative office building that also housed the production space for food products supporting poverty alleviation initiatives of communities sustained severe damage while two newly built supporting structures on site, a 200 seating capacity training facility, Natatadra Bure and a card/craft workshop, Deacon House were totally destroyed.

Despite the damage and challenges faced by the organization in picking up pieces FRIEND has been working hard to ensure the communities continue to be served from the donor funds as per contracts.

The European Union is an existing donor partner of FRIEND and funds GROW program for around 1500 beneficiaries through a social mitigation program aimed at improving livelihoods of sugar cane farmers and their dependents over three years.



EU Deputy Head of Delegation Mr Johnny ENGELL-HANSON after unveiling the plaque



Founder/Director Sashi Kiran watches the garlanding of the Chief Guest Mr Johnny ENGELL-HANSON



Garlanding of EU Head of Sugar Files Mr Xavier Canton Lamouse & Project Manager Mr Hamen Lodhia



Staff sing Happy Birthday to FRIEND



Cutting the anniversary cake - Staff & Invited Guests

Comments by Mr Johnny Engell– Hanson, EU

“We are here today to celebrate the opening of the processing facilities built by FRIEND and to see another concrete and visible output of the EU Support programme to Fiji.

I must commend FRIEND for the impressive achievements this far. Despite very adverse weather conditions that we all know, with two successive floods and the Cyclone EVAN in 2012, and the very severe damages caused to its buildings, FRIEND has managed to keep on track with the targets and timelines of the EU programme.”

EU programme implemented by FRIEND involves several activities complementary to sugarcane and produces supplementary income for the growers.

These include training of 495 farmers that are grouped together in different clusters to produce cash crops; training of 100 beneficiaries in the bee-keeping business; training of



200 cane farmers in poultry production and 200 young people are receive training and work experience placement under the YEN (Youth Employment Network) scheme.

Another 500 people are being trained in Food processing of crops in order to produce tea, spices and jam using products supplied from the sugar cane sector communities.

“These are all activities that are really changing the life of the farmers at a grassroot level and the EU is glad to support these.

Restart of a Journey—Sashi Kiran, Founder

“Since the tropical cyclone Evan eight months ago, only now we are pausing to rejoice the space that have been made available to us through this building on our road to recovery.

This morning we paid tribute to staff and officially opened our main office and are greatly honoured to celebrate our 11th anniversary with officiating of new production centre.

It has been difficult journey last eight months as FRIEND suffered almost total destruction in TC Evan but it continued to service the communities and we are grateful for all the support donors provided to the communities through their faith in us, however rebuilding our headquarters was quite a challenge. We were not able to secure any donor funding to rebuild our operations centre and had to fundraise to be able to reconstruct our office and



im thankful to staff for their perseverance. Rebuilding while being operational has not been easy and much of our files and recovered items are still being rescued from storage spaces.

However they say every cloud has a silver lining and we are grateful for the support of the EU for granting aid to build this 950 sq meter production facility and we are grateful for the support of Mr Hamen Lodhia and his team for making this happen.



Our Renovated HQ

It was a heartfelt event as staff suspended their flurry of activities as they gathered on the front lawn of the main building minutes before taking positions to play host to around 200 invited guests for the day.

The building which sustained severe damage in TC Evan has been built back stronger.

“When the cyclone struck there were two choices I had,” says Founder/Director Sashi

Kiran. “To close down in face of the losses or to persevere in our dream of a Fiji where all can live with dignity. “The organisation may have been founded by me but it really belongs to the people who work with us and the people we work with. I thank you all who stood by in the decision to rebuild and for persevering through the journey”

A Staff from each department came together to officiate the building.

Recipe Corner - Pumpkin Kheer

Ingredients:

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|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 Cup Pumpkin, | 10 Almonds, |
| 4 to 5 Cups Milk | 1/2 Teaspoon Cardamom Powder, |
| 1/2 to 3/4 Cup Sugar | 2 Teaspoons Ghee. |
| 1/2 Cup Sulatanas, | |

Method

- 1 Put the pumpkin into small cubes. Cover pumpkin cubes with water just to cover it and cook till soft. Mash with pumpkin with spoon along the sides of the pot.
- 2 Meanwhile in a saucepan bring the milk to a boil.
- 3 Add the pumpkin puree to the milk and let it simmer for another 10 minutes.
- 4 Switch of the stove and add the sugar, Almonds, Cardamom Powder and ghee. The sugar will melt in the heat itself.
5. Serve hot or cold.



European Volunteers share their skills

Frank Hagen & Gerda Kolb from Austria arrived in Fiji when FRIEND was in its temporary location at YWCA. Unfazed the visitors offered to help and wanted to 'orbit' around FRIEND.

Gerda while minding her infant looked through all the electronic materials FRIEND had on its history and compiled a publication to record history while Frank travelled with staff to visit various activities to 'observe' and capture these images. Frank developed various educational videos on food processing, poultry, gardens and livelihoods that are now used as

learning tools.

Both Gerda and Frank are experienced community development activists in Austria and wanted to spend their holiday where they could contribute. During their time in Fiji Gerda also conducted capacity building training for Lautoka and Labasa staff.

The couple ended their 6 months holiday and left for their 'busy lives back in Austria. FRIEND is so thankful to both Frank and Gerda for spending their holiday time in supporting FRIEND when we most needed it. Bon Voyage and Vinaka Vakalevu :)



From: CEMA BOLABOLA [mailto:bolabola_c@yahoo.com]
Sent: Monday, August 19, 2013 10:12 PM
To: director@friendfiji.com
Subject: GEMPI Field Visit, 17th August, Vitogo Village: Vinaka vakalevu

Dear Sashi

A note to sincerely thank you and your staff for organising the subject field trip to your project site, Vitogo Village.

We were well received by your team (Mereani and the three male field staff) and the Vitogo Women's Group were just impressive especially the presentation by Adi Litiana the group leader.

The GEMPI participants commended the work of FRIENDS in Vitogo and found the short documentary on FRIENDS' work in Vitogo to be informative and enjoyable.

I missed you when I visited FRIENDS office on Friday and was just impressed with the progress that FRIEND Fiji has made- CONGRATULATIONS! The view from the office was just breathtaking. Great location!

Vinaka vakalevu for sharing the work of FRIEND with the GEMPI course participants.

Warm regards, Cema

YEN GRADUATION for Nadi students



A group of youths from Nadi also received their graduation certificates at FRIEND's 11th Anniversary celebrations.

The youths are part of YEN—Youth Employment Network which has also received funding from the European Union.

The funding has allowed FRIEND to engage with the University of the South Pacific Lautoka Campus, a regional leader in Continuing and Community Education for provision of soft skills and basic IT knowledge to boost employability skills of youths from sugar related families.

The course is conducted at central venues in Lautoka, Ba, Nadi, Tavua and Rakiraki over 10 weeks to allow students to enhance their employability skills to participate in the sponsored program.

“Youths are also required to do 32 hours of volunteer work during this period as this enhances their learning in the classroom,” says Youth Coordinator Sandhya Narayan. “This is followed by 4-6 months of workplace attachments where youths are coached by workplace mentors to further develop their skills.

