

Partners in Community Development Fiji

Working to empower communities by assisting them to make informed decisions for their future development.

RA KAKA NEWSLETTER



March 2011

Issue 3/11

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Celebrating World Water Day 2011

Tackling the issue of water management for Urban communities

Suva, Fiji - To celebrate this years' World Water Day, PCDF's Natural Resource Management team took part in an event that run under the theme 'Working together for Water Management in Pacific Urban Communities' at the Civic Auditorium in Suva on March 22nd.

The event was coordinated by the Water Authority of Fiji and SPC/SOPAC and was attended by NGOs and other institutions, Government representatives and school students.

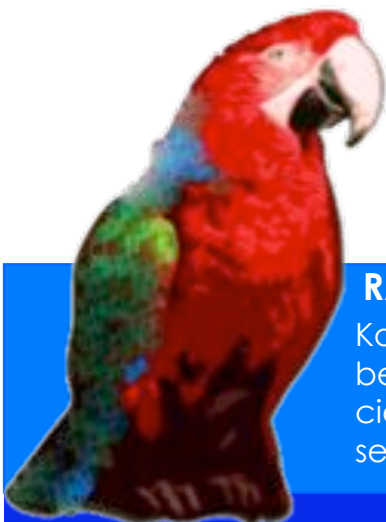
Chief guest Mr. Opetaiia Ravai, CEO of the Fiji Water Authority, praised the valuable information provided on PCDF's awareness material, which was handed out to many school students.

Urbanisation in Fiji and the Pacific has increased rapidly in recent years. Squatter settlements and low-quality housing often suffer of poor or no access to safe water facilities, increasing the need to develop systems to provide adequate water facilities to these areas.

UN-HABITAT Programme Manager for the Pacific Sarah McCartney says at the moment "the urban poor tend to receive the worst services and yet pay the highest water prices".



School students reading PCDF's Water Awareness material at the World Water Day in Suva.



RA KAKA

Kaka is Kadavu for parrot. Kadavu Province is the home of the beautiful shining parrot, 'prosopaea splendens', an endemic species. The Kaka is a messenger not only on land but also on sea - it serves as a communicator for God's living creatures.

Finance and Admin update

- The EED (Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst) audit was completed by KPMG
- Our Annual Report was sent out to Donors and stakeholders
- The Annual General Meeting was held on 26th March
- PCDF Board of Directors was elected under the chairmanship of Mr Sashi Singh
- PCDF is having on-going meetings with Donors on new projects

MEDIA COVERAGE

PCDF's business trainee receives national media attention

In January this year, we published the success story of Basilio Pita's virgin coconut oil business in our monthly Newsletter.

Pita had set up his successful business after completing a Business and Management Training facilitated by PCDF and CATD in Nadave, Vanua Levu.



After his story was released, it was picked up by the *Fiji Sun* and the 'Talk Business' section of *Fiji One*.

Talk Business dedicated a 7-minute slot of their 25 minute programme to Pita's story, which was broadcast on March 29th.

If you missed the original broadcast, you can catch up online at http://fijitv.info/talk_business (Segment 1).

“Nai Lavo e sega na Wekana”

~ Money knows no relations ~

By Talica Anderson

Nai Lavo e sega na Wekana - money knows no relations, was the message Vunidilo Tawake, 63, sent out to the younger participants at a recent 5-day Business and Management Training in Nasoqo village, Namosi.

Mr. Tawake shared with them how previous Business Training had taught him the true meaning of the term 'business'. Now, he is mindful of his money, so when he sends his Dalo to Navua market, he counts it beforehand.

Vunidilo will also refrain from providing family members with free Dalo and Kava crops or using them for bartering, as 'a person cannot reap what others sow, he will only reap what he sow'.



Top: Vunidilo Tawake (right) speaking at a recent Business workshop in Nasoqo.

“Today, the cost of living is high and you need money to pay your rent. We cannot live without money”

The constant struggle for a better living is not an easy flick for a 63 year old man. Therefore, close relatives should know that

a single cent should be count and a single sweat drop should not be wasted.

He ended his statement by saying “happy are those who dream dreams and are ready to pay the price to make them come true”.

MORDI NEWS

Capacity Building for Sustainable Living

By Tiri Naulivou

The MORDI team went into full force in late February and early March, traveling to the Districts of Wailevu and Kubulau in Vanua Levu; and Veinuqa District in Namosi to facilitate two training initiatives. During the same visit, our Executive Director, Tevita visited communities in each of the districts to assist with the formulation of Community Development plans.

During his travel around the two Vanua Levu Districts, Tevita was accompanied by our Women and Youth Coordinator, Tiri and FS-PI's Gender and Arts officer, Tura Lewai. Tura and Tiri met with the women's groups of each community to take stock of how the MORDI projects have impacted the lives of the women.

The village of Urata, situated just outside of Savusavu town was abuzz with activity in late February as the MORDI programme settled in to facilitate two training initiatives. A total of 67 men and women from around the District of Wailevu traveled to the village to attend either a Business training or a Community Facilitator refresher workshop. The participants stayed in Urata for the duration of the training, which began on 14 February and ended on the 18th of the same month.

The Business Training initiative is a collaboration between PCDF's MORDI project and the Centre of Appropriate Technology and Development. 47 men and women filled the Urata village hall to its capacity to participate in the training. They found the five day training grueling but reward-



Community Facilitator of Kilaka village, Maria Dimara, at the training in Waisa village, Kubulau

ing as the aspiring businessmen and businesswomen learned and worked night and day to put together their individual business plans. They intend to perfect and present these business plans to potential partners and donors to assist with their business set up.

While these participants sat and took in all they could learn about running a business, a another workshop was being conducted in a little wooden house just across from the village hall. The MORDI trio, Iliapi, Talica and Feke introduced 10 new Community Facilitators to the MORDI programme while the 11 continuing CFs underwent a refresher training. These CFs play a crucial role in ensuring that the communities get the best of what MORDI has to offer.

During the stay, Tevita and team visited a total of 15 communities in Wailevu and Kubulau. While Tevita assisted the communities with their Community Development plans, Tiri and Tura talked with the members of the women's group to determine how much of an impact MORDI projects have made on their lives and communities.

The aspiring businessmen and women learned night and day to put together business plans that they will present to potential partners and donors

The Business Training and CF sessions were again conducted in Kubulau and Veinuqa. The Kubulau trainings were conducted in the village of Waisa and saw a total of 16 participants attending the business training and 17 attending the CF session. The village of Nasoqa catered for the training when it was taken to Veinuqa on 14 March. 16 participants attended the business training, while 7 CFs received their training. Tevita also visited the communities in Veinuqa to assist with the Community Development plans.

FEATURE STORY

Fiji's forgotten villages

By Alexandra Schiffmann

Tucked away in the interior of Viti Levu lie the Namosi Highlands. Cut off from vital infrastructure, many of the villages depend entirely on the solidarity and endeavour of their people. Communications Officer Alexandra Schiffmann accompanied PCDF's Executive Director on a 3-day expedition to record the concerns and aspirations of these village communities.

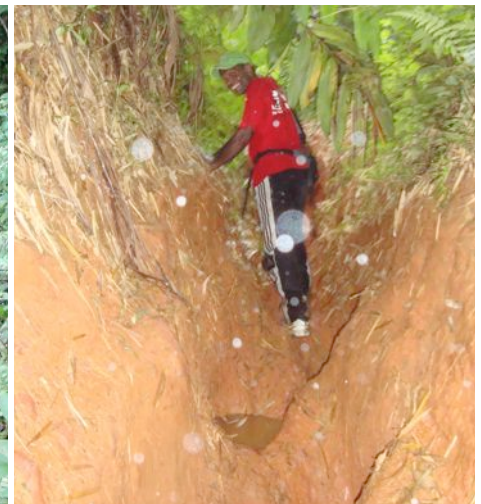
"Wait, I'm stuck!", I call out to Tevita who is walking a few meters ahead. He turns, looks at me and laughs. I can't blame him; I must be a hopeless sight. He then quickly navigates back down the slippery path to help me recover my leg and shoe from the mud. We have been walking for a few hours up in the lush interior of the Namosi Highlands on Viti Levu, Fiji's main island, and this, I'm afraid, is not an isolated incident.

I am accompanying PCDF's Executive Director Tevita Ravu-maidama on a three day visit to five communities in the Veinuqa District: Nasoqo, Wainilotulevu, Wainiyavu, Vunidavo and Burotu.

Tevita has come to discuss and draw up management plans with the communities that will help them recognize their most urgent needs and locate sources of support. But he also wanted to experience for himself the hardships the people of the Tikina Veinuqa face everyday.

The track

The journey to Namosi is a challenging one. An hour and a half west of Suva the asphalt road stops and the track continues over rock and rubble. As the



Top: Rogasio Butokere steering a boat on Navua River.

Bottom left and right: Alexandra and Tevita mastering the track to Nasoqo and Wainilotulevu.

landscape changes, the sticky heat of the coast eases. Shifting shades of green replace the dominant blue of the sea and deep waterfalls and gushing rivers emerge. We take a short boat ride and the villagers manoeuvre the boat through the strong currents with calming ease. Worlds away from tourist dreams of islands and white sand beaches, this feels like real Fiji.

Veinuqa's five villages are not accessible by road, making them extremely difficult for visitors to access. More critically, the absence of a road is a hindrance to local people who struggle to transport their produce to Navua market and the sick to hospital services. "The journey is so difficult and the boat journey costs \$15 per person. It is too expen-

sive for us", one lady tells me.

Being able to transport crops to Navua Market is crucial to the villagers, as it provides a main source of income, but this is currently only possible through an intimidating two hour walk followed by a one hour boat journey.

We are led by Rogasio Butokere, Rex, the District Facilitator of Veinuqa. As a resident of Wainilotulevu, he knows the area like the back of his hand. He will accompany and guide us on our journey through his Tikina.

Rex finds his horse by the side of the river, loads our luggage on and we start walking. Our first stop will be the villages of Nasoqo and Wainilotulevu, the most



Left: Tevita explaining the importance of management plans to villagers of Wainiyavu (bottom)

“I had no idea such tracks still existed today – especially on the main island”



remote of the five. As we follow the horse moving up the track with ease, we trip over the sticks and stones; glide down rocks and beat our way through the jungle. It doesn't take me long to realise that my trainers are not the right footwear for this undertaking.

The path has worsened over the years, Rex tells me. Of course, frequent rain and the fact that both horse and man share the same path haven't helped.

Coming from a metropolitan city in the heart of Europe, the journey is like nothing I have experienced before. As we walk, Tevita and Rex pull me out of the mud, take my hand, and walk in front of me so I can follow their tracks. I walk behind Tevita, my hands on his shoulders, so I don't slip. *This is teambuilding*, I think.

Tevita is from Vanua Levu. 'When I was a child many of our roads were like this', he says, 'but I had no idea that such tracks still existed today – especially on the

main island'.

Village hospitality

Nasoqo and Wainilotulevu are set high up amongst spectacular mountain scenery. A stream separates the two villages and as we walk to Rex's house in Wainilotulevu, his wife Asinate and other villagers come to greet us. I am immediately hit by their warmth and hospitality.

We wash off the mud, take a rest and have some food. Tonight, Tevita will be leading an important discussion with both villages, to update their respective Management and Action Plans. One of PCDF's core programmes, Mainstreaming of Rural Development Innovations (MORDI), works with the people of Veinuqa to increase sustainable livelihoods in line with the Millenium Development Goals and this visit is part of the initiative to help the communities become more self-reliant.

By the time everyone has gath-

ered at the community hall, night has fallen. The lights are dim and we sit on the floor, cross-legged and wearing sulus. The men sit at the front, where the bowl of Kava is being prepared and I sit a few rows further back with the women of the village. The meeting is held in Fijian, but Asinate goes out of her way to translate and explain to me what is being said. Everyone is trying to make me feel comfortable and it is a wonderful atmosphere.

After the sevusevu, the traditional ceremonial offering of Kava to the village chief where the purpose of our visit is presented, the villagers are split into small groups to discuss their immediate needs and prioritise them in a list. Later, Tevita will evaluate the different sheets using a point system and draw up a list of priorities.

The construction of a road is of course the leading priority and many other projects are delayed because of problems transporting construction materials to the village. "The only way of transport is by horse back or manual carrying", Tevita tells me. When I have a look around the village in the daylight the next morning, I am amazed by how developed it is, considering. All this was achieved through the endeavour and teamwork of the people, who are passionate about developing their village.

Keeping promises

Over the next two days, we continue our journey to Wainiyavu, Vunidavo and Burotu. Wainiyavu rose to fame in January this year, when Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama visited the area to survey the road access for himself. The government has now pledged to commit \$2-4 millions towards the construction of two bridges and a road for the community, to improve ease of access to and from the villages. However, local people have been given many promises over the years, and will remain sceptical

until they see the arrival of construction workers.

In Vunidavo we see first hand what difference road access can make to community development. The newly constructed community hall has two storeys and a cement footpath provides access to every one of the neatly placed houses. Infrastructural development has been quicker to arrive in Vunidavo, because materials can be transported back and forth.

After visiting Burotu, we head back to the river landing, where we find our PCDF colleague and MORDI Project Coordinator Iliapi Tuwai already waiting for us – he is on time! “This is not Fiji Time” I remark stunned, ‘it’s PCDF-time!’ Tevita counters. Tired and exhausted we fall into the car seats. We say goodbye to Rex and as I see him and his horse disappear in the distance, the trip is already starting to feel like a far-away dream.

But it wasn’t. And the hardships the people of the communities face are far from a dream – they are very real.

While we can learn much from the peace and solidarity central to these communities, their people still need ways to sustain themselves, to secure their livelihoods and those of future generations.

In Veinuqa, the construction of a road would go a long way to achieving this.

For many it is perhaps too easy too forget about these villages, tucked away in the interior of Viti Levu. Detached by road and basic infrastructure, they are a long way from government and civil society headquarters in Suva, and their voices often go unheard. We must make sure that their concerns and aspirations are heard, and that the development of Fiji is judged on progress in its most detached communities.



Top: Rogasio Butokere and Tevita Ravumaidama at the entrance to Nasoqo village



Top: Alexandra Schiffmann with the Tabua (whale tooth) of Wainilotulevu village



Top: Women and children of Wainilotulevu.



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The PCDF Team

PCDF would like to wish you a very Happy Easter!

Passionate about Community Development?

Why not become a member of PCDF and support our important work with an **annual membership fee of only \$20.00.**

If you are interested in becoming a member, please write to the Executive Director at our Suva office.

Previous members are also encouraged to apply

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Donors

PCDF humbly salutes the following organisations, without whom we could not complete any of our important work:

AUSAID, NZAID, IFAD, FSPI, EED, Rotary Water for Life, Shangri-La's Fijian Resort, Canada Fund

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