

# Activities Report

March 2011

## Stepping stone for Fenc Fiji

"The work of a charitable organisation is a noble one. It is the change that we bring about in the lives of the poorest of the poor that matters most. The issue of poverty is one that fuels fear and insecurity in any community. As a community we are challenged by this fear. The Foundation for the Education of Needy Children has a specific focus – education of the poorest of the poor children as a means to eradicate this fear." Mr. Aisea Tuidraki, Special Administrator for Nadi Town Council and also a Western Division Committee Chairman for Fenc Fiji, in his opening speech during the first presentation held in Nadi to welcome the organization.



Members of the western division team during the presentation in Nadi

Mr. Tuidraki emphasized the importance of the organization's work and the urgency to establish a Western Division Committee to oversee our operations.

The National Coordinator – Irshad Ali presented the Foundation's main objectives and the role of the Western Division Committee. He further shared data and information on some of the observations made by the organisation over the past year of its operations - contributing factors affecting the poorest children, poverty, unemployment, disability, separation of parents, children under guardianship, family violence, neglect of children and displacement.

*"The vicious cycle of poverty continues and each one of us can play a key role in promoting the development of the poorest children, particularly in seeking resources to address their educational needs. You will be a team for the Western Division with a specific role adding value to a very critical humanitarian programme."* Irshad Ali

Participants found it moving to hear statistical analysis of cases seen at Fenc Fiji in its first year of operations which led to further discussions on how these can be tackled and further minimized. Participants expressed their determination to assume the responsibility of managing the Western Division Committee, also expressing their desire to actively engage in assessment of children and the selection process.

The evening ended with discussions on the formation of a committee for the Western Division Fiji headed by Mr. Tuidraki.



Mr Aisea Tuidraki emphasizing the importance of our work



## Formalizing the Western Divisional Team

A committee for the Western Division was formalized, headed by Mr. Tuidraki as the Chair. It is pleasing to note that several like-minded and community-focused individuals have come forward to help our Foundation grow in the burning West:

Mr. Aisea Tuidraki - Nadi Town Council  
Mr. Inosi Tora – Turaga Ni Koro – Namotomoto  
Mr. Sailasa Vuadomo – Turaga Ni Koro – Navoci Village  
Mr. Bhavik Raniga – Air Pacific  
Dr. Ram Raju – NCCI  
Mr. Vineel Nand – NCCI  
Dr. Devika – NCCI  
Mr. Shalendra Prasad – The Jet  
Ms. Seni Buliatoga – Gibson Freight  
Ms. Gemma Kwong – Air Pacific  
Ms. Vasemaca Laqekoro – Air Pacific  
Ms. Rengeena Singh - Air Pacific

Due to time limitations, members agreed to meet again for appointments and allocation of specific responsibilities. The National Coordinator advised that operational guidelines for the Committee will be submitted to assist in the allocation of duties for members. A temporary office space has also been identified within the Nadi Town Council premises to commence operations, manned by volunteer staff. The team agreed to solicit donations for office require-

Some of the equipment required to step up the office are as follows:

- Office Tables X 2
- Chairs X 4
- Filing Cabinet X 1 (4 compartment)
- 1 Computer / Internet
- Printer
- Photocopier
- Telephone
- Fax / Scanner
- Stationery
- Electric Kettle

## School Visits

We had the opportunity to visit three schools in Nadi, presenting payments for school levies and vouchers for school supplies to our sponsored children. Meeting our sponsored children in person, talking about their progress and achievements was a delightful experience. Every child had a story to tell. Despite the trials of life, children expressed their experiences and progress at school with much enthusiasm – their smiles and friendly faces was all we needed in the heat of the day.

## Lomawai Primary School

Located between Sigatoka and Nadi town, Lomawai Primary School is surrounded by cane farms and rolling but barren hills typical of the burning West. The Head Teacher and the President of the school were present to cordially welcome our team. Parents had been previously informed by the school regarding our visit and turned up in numbers. Parents and guardians of fourteen children were interviewed, identifying their plight, their strengths and informed of the list of requirements for sponsorship eligibility. Each case was documented and children were photographed. It was not possible to visit their homes to document their living situation due to time limitations.



*Ratan Prakash with his family during the interview*



*This horse helps me move around the community.*

It was noted during the interview that the majority of families requesting assistance were farm labourers and those displaced from farm lands. Neglected children and those in the care of elderly grandparents or a guardian also emerged. The case of a parent with a major disability and neglected by his immediate relatives is one that will linger in our minds for a while. Documenting his trials of life, the challenges he faces in raising three school aged children caught our attention. The faces of the children display all the signs of extreme poverty.

"My feet are deformed and I cannot walk very well. My wife is very helpful. She does most of the heavy work when we go out to work on farms. Our income is not much but we manage to feed our children with what we earn, vegetables we plant around the yard and the monthly welfare allowance we receive from the government. We do not have a home and live in a room given to us by a friend. We are building a bure so we can have space for our children. I attended a school for children with disabilities in Lautoka but could not find a job because of my legs. We have nowhere else to live. I have a horse so I can move around the community." Ratan Prakash



*The President of Lomawai Primary School (far right) with the Head Teacher and Assistant Head Teacher*

"I have been serving this community as the President of the School Committee since 1992. When I first started, the school had a roll of 400. Today, it is around 150. Due to the expiry of land leases, the number of children attending our school has rapidly declined. There is a sense of insecurity in this community. Today, most families try and find employment for their children in town to make ends meet." Mr. Moti Ram, President, Lomawai Primary School Committee.

# Team Jewel



The Central Division Committee headed by Mr. Anirudh Singh, a Mediator by profession and a community worker met twice during the month to formalize appointments and allocate responsibilities.



*"Today we are fortunate to have so many of you young people with the passion to deliver services to the unfortunate and the disadvantaged in our community. I had the opportunity to conduct a home visit with the National Coordinator. This visit, and learning about what needs to be done, and what can be done, fully convinced me to actively engage myself in the activities of the Foundation and as the Chair of this Committee. Words alone cannot express the joy of witnessing change and I urge you all to be part of something you will never forget." Anirudh Singh.*

➤ Mr Ali (far left), Mr Ami Prasad and Chairperson Mr Anirudh Singh

In accepting their individual roles, the team devised a fundraising strategy for the year, creating innovative activities. On the basis of suggestions, the Committee came to an agreement to host a first for Fiji 'Car Show'. Several other activities have been planned for the year including a grand gala night in partnership with Sprout Fiji. In addition, members quickly set about creating promotional material, identifying sponsors and establishing further networks.

"I have participated in many events and activities over the years of my working career. I did much soul searching and realized, I wasted much of my time in activities that never meant much to me. I explored options available to me and found that investing my time in promoting a noble cause is more rewarding than anything else." Krishan Prasad, Committee member, Team Jewel.



Team Jewel during their first meeting at the FENC head office.



The Chairperson for Team Jewel, Mr Anirudh Singh leading his fundraising team through discussions.



Together for a noble cause... Team Jewel.

**Team Jewel Members:** Anirudh Singh - Chair, Hadassah Duaibe – Deputy Chair

Watesoni Nata, Lavenia Cagi, Kolinio Rokotunaceva, Lisa Faktaufon, Krishan Prasad, Adarshini Vikash, Elenoa Nalawa, Ami Prasad, Daniel Singh, Jamie Bancod

## Case Review - SOKOIWAI FAMILY

Pelame Rokovinono, Timoci – deserted and challenged in many ways. The story of two brothers living with their father on a swampy island surrounded by mangroves.

The Head Teacher was astounded to hear the testimony of the two children when interviewed by Mr. Irshad Ali, the National Coordinator of Fenc Fiji.

**Irshad:** What did you have for breakfast?

**Timoci:** Rice and black tea.

**Irshad:** What did you have for dinner yesterday?

**Timoci:** Rice and tea

**Irshad:** What did you bring for lunch today?

**Timoci:** Rice and one egg. Someone gave us an egg.



Mr Solomon Sokoiwai in front of his house in Naqiroso, Lautoka

After talking to the children at school, we decided to visit the family home. Walking three kilometres through sugar cane farms and a soggy bush track, we came to a little swampy island, sparsely inhabited by few families. In the corner of a tin shack sat the children's father, an amputee with total loss of vision in one eye – a bowl of rice in one hand.



"I crawl to the kitchen every morning and stay here all day. I wait for someone to bring food for my children. I will go hungry but I cannot see my children suffer. Someone gave me a bowl of rice today and this is all we have for dinner. You see, my children are my arms and legs. They are everything for me and I want them to have an education. Their mother left us when I lost my leg. The children often cry for their mother and they haven't seen her ever since she left us. When she was around we were doing well. I did not ask anyone for help". Said a soft spoken Mr. Solomon Sokoiwai

Life is difficult for me but children should not suffer.

"My children collect firewood everyday so we can cook a meal, they catch crabs when they can. They clean the house, wash the dishes and do everything for me. Sometimes they are reluctant to look after me. I know they get tired. But this is all we have and this is our fate. Sometimes church members bring us food and clothing but often I do not know where our next meal will come from. You are helping my children at school and I thank you for what you provide. I don't know where else I can seek help. You see, I am sick and I don't know what will happen to me. Who will care for my children?" added Mr. Solomon.

"We depend on rain water but we do not get enough, so most often my children bathe in the sea. Life for us is difficult but my children are very close to each other. They look out for each other and I always tell them to work hard at school. They must get an education."