

ACTIVITIES REPORT - OCTOBER 2011



Life is a journey of many miles, dreams and aspirations. We all strive for a better future with ambitions and to make life better for our children. However, when tragedy strikes, we often become fearful of what the future holds.



SHARING THEIR WORLD



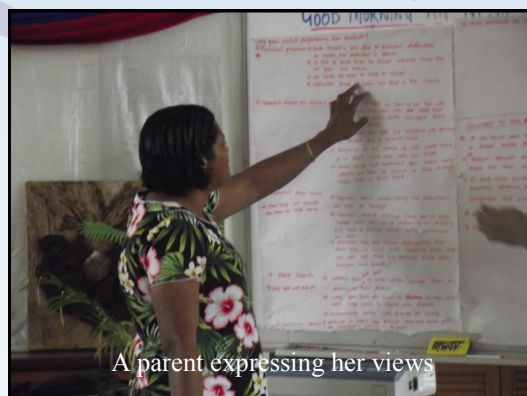
Over the last decade there has been an increased awareness of the important role that parents play in the education of their child. At the same time, the role of schools and the community has gradually evolved, seeing a greater focus on the wellbeing of children. Kids are people with their own ideas and personalities. The poorest kids however, face many challenges in life. Counseling for 'socially challenged' kids can be difficult. Bringing a group of our sponsored children and their parents together to discuss performance issues at a recent counseling session, many critical issues emerged.

Led by our Programme Officer and volunteers, we documented some of the experiences of the poorest of the poor children and their parents. As rapport continued to build during the session and children became more comfortable, they began to relate how they felt and offered more of an explanation about their personal situation and performance at school. Most children cited personal barriers, time management, and raised concern that parents' unrealistic expectations at home and at school created stress and performance anxiety. Some children worry about their added responsibilities at home – of caregiving and facilitating income-generating activities.



Listening eagerly to the counselor

We examined parents' perceptions of barriers to achievement and academic success of their children. A major concern expressed by parents is how to help children who experience difficulty learning in school. Everyone wants to see their child excel, and it can be very frustrating when a child falls behind in learning to read, do math, or achieve in other subjects. We heard from parents the need for more targeted help, or intervention, to struggling learners before they fall too far behind. Several parents felt that their child's education was suffering as a result of a difficult home life, expressing the need for some form of external support such as a Parent Support Worker would be vital. We observed parents having a difficult time with their own feelings, in particular, their concern for sustainable income, illness and incapacity to seek employment.



A parent expressing her views



Sponsored children during the counseling session

Most parents really care a lot about their kids, but a lot of them are so stressed, they have so many other problems that they're dealing with, that sometimes the children aren't the main focus.

*"My three children and I live with relatives in very difficult circumstances. We do not have a home of our own and life is difficult for us. Sometimes, my children cannot attend school because I cannot provide lunch."
Mother*

Children living in extreme poverty conditions around the country is not debatable. The question is how can these children go to class, get good grades, and rise above difficult circumstances when their most basic needs haven't been met? If a parent does not have the education level, unemployed, incarcerated, away from the child or traumatised, the impact on children can be unfavourable. These types of situations combine and that's where we find real social and emotional types of issues that adversely affect academic performance of the poorest children.

We know that barriers that prevent parents from taking on an active role in their child's learning remain, and we are committed to working collaboratively to help families overcome those barriers.

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY

17 OCTOBER 2011

“The fight against poverty starts today and we need to reach out and make friends with the poor in order to view what they are experiencing.”
Fr. Kevin Barr.

A day to mark the plight of the poor and efforts to eradicate poverty was held at the University of the South Pacific. We teamed up with UNDP and other NGO's to jointly showcase our work. Our volunteers and staff were on site to share their knowledge and network with agencies, staff and students at the University.

Several guest speakers brought to light the situation of growing poverty within Fiji and abroad.

“The fight against poverty starts today and we need to reach out and make friends with the poor in order to view what they are experiencing.” Fr. Kevin Barr.

As he quoted Nelson Mandela, “Overcoming poverty is not a task of charity, it is an act of justice. Like Slavery and Apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings. Sometimes it falls on a generation to be great. YOU can be that great generation. Let your greatness blossom.”



Fr. Kevin Barr addressing the participant of the International Poverty Eradication Week at USP

“Poverty is indeed real, there is a threat to it but instead of putting emphasis only on education, there are other ways in which this issue can be met, and that is to use the existing talents and resources that surrounds us”, said Miss Musarat Natasha Begg; a second year psychology student and winner of the essay competition during the event.



Fenc Fiji volunteers, Unaisi and Aisake sharing their knowledge and networking with other agencies during the poverty eradication week.

“The Mantra of Women”

The commitment to community provides a strong foundation for ‘making life better for everyone’. That mantra is what Soqosoqo Vakamarama relies upon, and in doing so, bringing a beacon of light for the poorest in the community the community.

Raising funds for children at a dinner night for Fenc Fiji, the group of women pledged their support for the work we do. Local entertainers from various parts of the country kept the guests amazed with their singing throughout the evening. The night was filled with guests of distinction and food. Our National Coordinator was offered a few minutes to highlight the purpose and objects of Fenc Fiji, bringing to light the plight of the poorest children in Fiji.

“We are fortunate that a distinguished group of women have come together to raise funds for a cause its members believe in. The growing partnership is an example of what our community can do for the poorest children.” Mr Ali

The Soqosoqo Vakamarama Itaukei is an organization focused on empowering Fijian girls and women throughout Fiji.



National Coordinator, Irshad Ali presenting during the fundraising

For more information on how you can help contact:

Foundation for the Education of Needy Children in Fiji (Fenc Fiji)

P O Box 2201,
Government Buildings,
Suva

Phone/Fax: 310 0660

Email: info@fencfiji.com

Or Visit our website: www.fencfiji.com