



## **Let the Children Live: People-centred Development in Fiji**

### **Special Project Talk 2018 - 2019**

#### **Slide One**

Thank you for working so hard to support the Special Project and remembering Christian World Service in your prayers. We value our special relationship with you.

Your fundraising efforts are giving hope to people in Nicaragua and Uganda. Last year you raised \$29,988 for Nicaragua where CEPAD trains and supervises 120 young people in community based psycho-social care. Your efforts will secure funding for their young people's programme for a number of years. They also speak in schools and churches, emphasising violence prevention. 2018 has been a tough year for the country. In April conflict broke out after protests over the social security system. More than 300 people have been killed and the underlying causes have not been resolved. Now farmers in one region have lost their crops in major flooding. Please keep CEPAD and the people of Nicaragua in your prayers.

From the Centre for Community Solidarity in south Uganda: "The caregivers of orphans and vulnerable children wish to extend their heartfelt gratitude to Methodist and Presbyterian women who have generous and compassionate hearts like that of Christ. The work of loving our children is one that lasts a lifetime. It was the case 10 years ago when we started, and it continues today as we help caregivers construct rainwater tanks. We remain, incredibly grateful to CWS and their supporters in New Zealand more especially Methodist and Presbyterian women for their love, kindness, compassion, generous and invaluable contribution.

May God bless you all, Best Regards, Charles Rwabambari

#### **Slide Two**

This year the Special Project is raising funds for the Go Organic! Grow Organic! Project of Christian World Service partner, Social Empowerment Education Programme (SEEP) in Fiji.

#### **Making links with Fiji**

*Invite group members from Fiji to share a story from their childhood or youth. Those who have visited, may like to talk about their experiences or show local artefacts.*

Now SEEP is taking a big step forward. The Special Project will help fund this work in villages where it works and in new villages specifically targeting *i-Taukei* (indigenous Fijians) landowning units where major developments like mining are planned or underway.

The programme will:

- Help these communities to prepare in case of disaster
- Improve agricultural livelihoods using organic and 'slow food' methods
- Strengthen local participation especially for women and young people, growing 'organic' democracy from the grassroots up.

### **Slide Three**

Fiji is made up of more than 330 islands of which about a third are inhabited. Fiji's total land area is 18,333 square kilometres. The 2 major islands are Viti Levu (where the project is based) and Vanua Levu.

According to the last census, the population [was](#) 884,887 with an average growth rate of 0.6%. Half the population is under 27.5 years old. 44.1% live in rural areas, down from 49.3% at the 2007 census.

- Indigenous Fijians 56.8%
- Indo-Fijians 37.4%
- Other ethnic groups 5.8%

The SEEP plan is to work with 20 villages and three settlements in Nawaidina, Nagone-ni-Colo, Mua I Ra, Yadua, Saivou and Ba Districts.

### **Slide Four**

In February 2018, Tropical Cyclone Gita caused damage on two of Fiji's southern islands. In 2016, Cyclone Winston claimed the lives of 44 people, affected 40% of the population, and caused an estimated \$US 1.4 billion in damages. Donations to the CWS Appeal enabled SEEP to deliver emergency supplies including school kits (right) to some affected communities and provide psycho-social care.

The United Nations Risk Report [puts](#) Fiji as the 15th most vulnerable country to natural risk measuring from 2012 - 2016. The index measures the probability of hazards like cyclones and sea level rise, their likely impact on people, the ability of the people to cope with extreme disasters, and the extent to which the country is prepared for possible disaster.

Climate change is having a significant effect on Fiji. Already some villages threatened by rising seas have moved further inland. SEEP will help rural communities become more resilient using a combination of traditional and new disaster preparedness strategies.

### **Slide Five**

The work of SEEP in a community begins in conversation. Staff take time to get to know the people. They work with the women and young people to make sure they are part of discussions. *Mai* Democracy as they call it starts from the grassroots and grows up.

Working this way, trust is developed and harmonious relations maintained in a way that enables everyone to participate. Together the community identifies its own priority needs.

In this new phase, SEEP wants to draw on the traditional understanding of land as the centre of family and village life. In their Go Organic! Grow Organic! Programme they will build on this knowledge to encourage more productive agriculture and better protection from natural disaster for communities.

### **Slide Six**

Using its 'Mai' approach from the grassroots up, SEEP is working with rural marginalised communities, including those in areas threatened by gold and other mining. Their focus is on farmers who are interested in or already committed to using organic methods developed from traditional practices or improved techniques based on agro-ecological methods like permaculture.

The programme will include training in organic and semi-organic farming methods, the training of local leaders in each village, and exploring the possibility of setting up a model farm.

Depending on the requirements of each village, they will supply the materials, animals or seeds the people need to grow new plants and animals. Where necessary, farmers will learn new growing methods to deal with changing weather patterns and improve local resilience.

### **Slide Seven**

Once increased food sources are established, SEEP will encourage villages to explore new markets or develop cottage industries using the produce they grow. The families will have more food choices, better food security if disaster strikes, and the benefit of improved income. Most importantly, they will have more resilient communities who can help each other no matter what happens.

A second part of the programme is to train locals in new marketing skills and promote improved opportunities for selling organic produce—this will be funded by other international partners.

### **Slide Eight**

SEEP encourages communities to protect their land and ocean from harm. They run educational programmes on issues of concern and join campaigns to protect Fiji's future from deep sea mining for example.

### **Slide Nine**

One way SEEP teaches people to value traditional foods and eat a balanced diet is through food stalls. Here women tell other women to “Roast in Bamboo”.

SEEP focuses on women and young people, giving them training and support to improve their confidence and enable them to take a greater role in local decision-making.

For young people and women who are not used to being part of the village decision-making process, this is a big step. In some villages, these groups have already discovered the power to make life better for their families.

### **Slide Ten**

#### *A story from Lutu*

The members of the Lutu Women's Group were worried about the struggle their children were having with schoolwork and came up with the idea of a library. Every day when school is over the children race to their Community Library. Only a year old, the library housed in an abandoned home has inspired the children of this inland village. They are doing better at school and most won academic prizes last year.

At the library, the school age children do their homework and practise reading. Preschool children take part in activities and listen to stories. Nai (pictured with SEEP director, Chantelle) a mother and the community librarian encourages the mothers to join their children for the reading time, giving extra parental support. Every day Nai records their attendance. If they miss too many sessions, she talks to their teacher or raises it at the Bose Vakoro (village meeting). Each child is given a book to take home to read for the week.

Lutu is a community of around 50 homes, though some houses are empty because families have moved to the city three hours away. The majority of its 400-500 residents are

preschoolers or school age children. It takes 20 minutes to walk to the primary school in the next village. There is no preschool.

They worked together to get village support and, earlier this year with the local men, met the Provincial Administrator who agreed to repair the building to make it safe and colourful for community use.

### **Slide Eleven**

#### ***A message from SEEP:***

“When Trish relayed to us that the Methodist and Presbyterian Women had decided to support us in their Special Project, we were humbled and grateful for the love and generosity shown.

It is exciting to know and be able to share with our people that there are former Fiji citizens among the group, making this more special!

We acknowledge with gratitude, the kindness and warmth coming from your lands to ours. We look forward to hearing from you and are grateful of this blessing...

Vinaka vakalevu na loloma (Thank you for the love).

May God Bless and Guide you always!

Chantelle and the team”

### **Slide Twelve**

Invite your church and the wider community to support this programme for one of our closest neighbours.

We will let you know how the project is going through the newsletter and church publications.

Let the Children Live Well!

Thank you

Christian World Service.