

# Projects Abroad Fiji

August 2011 Newsletter





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# Editor's Notes



Bula Vinaka and welcome to Projects Abroad's 20<sup>th</sup> edition of the newsletter here in Fiji!

What a busy month it has been as usual here in Fiji, with lots of exciting things happening this month for both the volunteers and staff here at Projects Abroad Fiji, from new projects such as the chance to take English lessons with our qualified English teacher, to adventures to the crystal clear waters of neighbouring islands, fun filled socials and first hand accounts of volunteers experiences in Fiji! Also this month we are welcoming new friends to Fiji and saying goodbye to departing ones. We have the exciting annual Holiday School happening for 2 weeks this month, both in Suva and Nadi where volunteers get the chance to run the programme of educational games and activities for all ages on their own, but full details of that in next months newsletter!

In both Nadi and Suva there has been lots going on for the Volunteers to take part in such as the opportunity to go and watch the world renowned "Laughing Samoans" at the Sheritan hotel in Nadi and at the Vodafone Arena in Suva. This comedy duo performed their comedy sketch to raise money for a Cancer Charity set up by a young girl when she was first diagnosed and have raised thousands of dollars for this worthy cause. Also Suva is soon to have the annual Hibiscus Festival, filled with stalls, performances and of course the exciting crowning of "Mr and Miss Fiji 2011". The beauty pageant is in full swing as we speak with the contestants vying for the Hibiscus crown and the chance to represent and inspire young people all over the country.

So read and enjoy and as usual if you have any ideas or requests for articles in next months newsletter don't hesitate to get in touch with the Projects Abroad team at ....[sophiebirtwistle@projects-abroad.org](mailto:sophiebirtwistle@projects-abroad.org)!



# English Lessons

If you want to learn or perhaps just improve your English, we are now offering English lessons in Fiji!

July saw our inaugural English student Ayane Sato from Japan who joined us for a 2 week English lesson course. She spent 3 hours a day with one of our great English teachers, Losalini and together they explored the intricacies of the English language and had lots of fun going out and about practicing what they had learnt.

Our English lessons consist of one on one teaching and can be customised to suit each volunteer both in their level (from beginners to advanced) and their schedule and can be taken either as a project on their own, or in conjunction with another project.

If doing a language course on its own, you will receive approximately 15 hours of classes every Monday through Friday with of course the weekends off to enjoy your beautiful tropical location. If you are wishing to learn and improve your English in parallel with another project, a timetable will be agreed with you to fit in with your other commitments.

So, what are you waiting for?



# Our new placement...Dudley Kindergarten



We are proud to welcome a new placement in Suva, Dudley Kindergarten. This is a Methodist school located in one of Suva's schooling suburbs called Toorak. It is in the same compound as the Dudley Methodist Church, which oversees the management of Dudley Kindergarten, Dudley Intermediate School and Dudley High School. The kindergarten itself is a beautiful room decorated with drawings which the children have done and charts and posters made by teachers. It also plays host to students from the University of the South Pacific who are pursuing diplomas and degrees in Early Childhood Education who are completing their practicum.

There are two sessions per day with forty two children in the morning session and ten in the afternoons. The morning session has children between the ages of 4 and 5 beginning at 8.30 and finishing at 12 while the afternoon one is for the little ones between 3 and 4 years of age which starts at 12.30 and ends by 2.30. The curriculum includes learning to write and identify alphabets, learning the names of days and months in a year, counting and of course nursery rhymes!

Supervising Teacher, MsSaras is a charming lady, who has qualifications to teach primary school as well and is now helping the younger children's transition into the new curriculum for Kindergartens as set by the Ministry of Education. She has welcomed our volunteer into her small family of teachers and has assured us that she will advice and help as she best can to make our volunteer's experience and stay in Fiji memorable as well as fruitful.

The end of August is getting very exciting for school children country wide, as the school holidays are fast approaching, beginning the 19<sup>th</sup> of August, which gives the pupils the chance to take part in the Projects Abroad 2 week Summer School based here in Nadi and Suva. The Summer Schools allows the volunteers to be in charge of the project themselves coming up with fun and educational games and themes for the whole 2 weeks allowing the children to make the most of their school holidays! The project finishes on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September so full updates and pictures to follow, but I am sure, like every year it will be a great success for both the volunteers and pupils.



# 2 Week Special.....

Greetings to one and all on another segment of updates on our August issue! This project was quite different from the other months as I took the privilege of welcoming our Two week special Volunteers to sunny Fiji!

The programme which began on the 11<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> of July consisted of eight bright & young girls from three different countries. Madeline Schlissel, Natalia Smith & Kelsey Salvo came from America, Mercedes Fedato & Cassie Purcka from Canada while Michaela Stanley, Rosie Quinn & Jessica Squires came from Australia.



Our 2 week special girls painting the blackboards at Namaka Public School!

## THE PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES!

Our first week started off pretty well. The days were parted with Care work at Namaka Methodist Kindergarten from mornings to getting our hands dirty in painting their Playground in the afternoons. Some very good talents were discovered and were really appreciated by the teachers and even the children. Despite the changes in venue of their placements, the girls got to fit in well and got to experience the different cultural backgrounds the children were in. Volunteers were kept occupied and busy all throughout the week. In between the days, Volunteers were given the honors of treating themselves to their choice of dinner. Along with dinner they got to enjoy the fire dancing and the entertainment provided down at Smugglers Cove; a famous getaway for our Volunteers here in Nadi.



# Two Week Special continued....

Movie night was also on the list and we drove off to Lautoka City to watch the new Harry Potter movie. Our visit to the Hindu Temple was also another wonderful experience whereby the girls asked as many questions as they wanted to the temple guide and got to know more about Hinduism. First week ended with a night out on Mana Island; something that the girls really deserved after a long week of hard work. The boat ride & seeing how island life was, away from all the hustle & bustle; was truly a relaxing moment for everyone. Second week came with more projects on the list, but this was never a problem as the Volunteers were ready to take up the challenge. Our routine remained the same doing Care work at the Kindergarten from mornings and paintings in the afternoons. Since the playground at the Kindergarten was all done up, our placement in the afternoons changed and we were headed to Namaka Public School to help refurbish and paint their Blackboards. The Volunteers really enjoyed how they could help out in schools whether it is with the children or with something that needs to be upgraded in the school.



## 2 Week special continued....

The hard day's work ended with a Muddy Bath and a Hot Dip; something that we were all looking forward to! Loving the scenery as we drove out to the famous local Mud pool and Hot springs and meeting the locals in the village nearby was another great experience for our Volunteers. The whole afternoon was spent having a hot dip and a bit of massage from the local village ladies soothed it all. Feeling all relaxed and rejuvenated, we all wanted to be part of the local festival which was commencing that same week. The "Bula Festival" was a famous event in Nadi where families come out and enjoy a bit of leisure time with each other. Some of the Volunteers took their time in shopping for souvenirs while the rest of us were carried away with the rides!

Our last day at the Kindergarten was filled with sad farewells and goodbyes. The Volunteers also had some of their favorite children who tagged along with them all throughout the time at their placement. Some of the fond memories they've had together were captured with their cameras while others kept it in their thoughts. A short time indeed of Volunteering but it has really paid off and what an experience we've all had together! The great team work that I've discovered was just amazing and it has really helped all of us manage our time wisely; leaving nothing unfinished!

We also would like to thank the Volunteers for their kind donations and contributions to the Kindergarten; something that will leave behind memories to the children of Namaka Methodist Kindergarten.



The get together, the fun, and the excitement all happened so fast but it was time to part our friends. A sad farewell indeed as we say our final goodbyes over a nice meal at dinner and took time to chat over the two weeks memories we've had together! Coming from different aspects of life and from different countries we all got to learn a bit of each other. Then, taking back the good and bad times they've had while Volunteering in Fiji and leaving me with a proud heart of being a part of them and especially being able to be part of the Projects Abroad Team!

# Volunteer corner...



What is one of the first thoughts you have when you think of Fiji? Well mine was of course the movie *Cast Away*, but then my other thought was a lush, breathtaking getaway, and the perfect plan arised; Volunteer in Fiji! I live in Canada, so a week or two away would be much too short in order to deal with the excruciating pain of a fourty hours of travel time, and that's just one way (word of advice, you may want to spend a little extra on your flights to avoid an unbearable amount of layovers). Myself and my friend Meaghan are both nurses and have always wanted to nurse abroad so she presented me with a *Projects Abroad* magazine and I was sold on nursing in Fiji. We planned to volunteer in Fiji for a month, and soon after we found out we were going to be the first nurses to volunteer in Fiji with *Projects Abroad*. This experience was about to change our lives and open up our minds to a whole other world and live the Fijian way. The first week we arrived we had time to settle in, as our placement didn't start till a week after.

We were situated in a small village called Nausori, which was about a 45 minute bus ride to the capital, Suva. We made this trek quite often, many would say that this would be dreadful, but I always enjoyed taking the buses throughout Fiji because it gave me a peaceful opportunity to take in the beauty of the island. It felt surreal to be living in this tropical paradise.

We lived with an amazing Fijian family who really cared about the welfare of their guest and welcomed us into their family like one of their own. The Fijian people are truly amazing and even though we were across the world, it didn't even feel that far away as we had our own family in the South Pacific. It was such an experience to live with a Fijian family, this way we were able to see how different their lifestyle was and see how happy they were without all the technology that interrupts our life on a day to day basis.



Our placement was at the Nausori Maternity Clinic, which was about a 15 minute walk from our home. Even though we knew that their hospitals and clinics wouldn't even be comparable to our health care settings in Canada, it was still a reality check. The nurses and doctors work with such a lack of resources, but they do a remarkable job working with such limitations.. Epidurals and pain medication during labour and delivery is not a common practice for Fijian women. This was shocking to us, in Canada it's rare to find women in our society that want to deliver completely natural. The women in Fiji have to be some of the strongest women in the world to perform child birth in such a natural manner! Many of them do not even yell during delivery! We also had the opportunity to become great friends with a doctor in the clinic which was a bonus because we were able to work alongside her during doctors clinics. She shared with us great deal of knowledge and taught us so much. The nurses and doctors work hard at what they do, but it's always important to have those breaks to enjoy your complimentary tea, which they stress!



A newborn baby the volunteers helped to deliver!



Meaghan and Sabrina with one of the doctors at Nausori health clinic

I'm back in Canada and I feel like I'm a changed person. This change is for the better. I realize now how much our society takes for granted and complains. I will always remember my other family, the friends I made and the patients I met that influenced us to be better people. One thing that you have to get use to (and it isn't hard) is that when your in Fiji, everything is on Fiji time. If you haven't been to Fiji and don't understand this, then you definitely will when you get there. This being said, coming back to the western world has definitely been a difficult adjustment!

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Sabrina Lyons, Nursing volunteer April/May 2011

# Volunteer corner....



Help...learn...explore!" - when I read this slogan on the 'projects abroad' -website in my hometown Munich I was overwhelmed and I wondered, how far I would be able to experience this during my stay in Fiji.

By now I am in Suva for almost two weeks and things just exceed my expectations. I literally love everything here: My host mum is a wonderful and caring person (and a great cook!), me and my flatmate Anja (also from Germany) have quite our own apartment, all the other volunteers are amazing and I just LOVE the Fijian culture, food, people and even the weather (although we had quite a bit of rain yet)!!

The most interesting thing might still be my outstanding placement. I work at Raiwaqa Health Center in the MCH department, where mothers come to get their babies (at least children from 0-5 years) generally checked and immunized. The nurses are great, they show me everything they do in their everyday life, integrate me in their staff team and let me do a lot of their tasks! I am allowed to examine the babies (make sure their hair and skin looks fine, ask the mother whether everything is alright with her child), weigh them and write it all down in the babies' health record. Soon the nurses will teach me how to vaccinate, so I will be able to immunize babies, too!





"The best about my placement is that Neelta, the Health Center's Dietician, is running several projects alongside and I can be part of them!

The first project we're doing is called "EAT WELL STAY WELL". Here in Fiji Diabetes is a very common disease as people tend to eat much and heavy food but do actually not really like to be sportive. Some of them do have such a heavy form of Diabetes that one leg had to be amputated. As soon as they get to lose one body part, life is over in their heads. Henceforward they just sit in their small barracks the whole day and do nothing but eating, getting more melancholic each day and feeling sorry for themselves. The "EAT WELL STAY WELL"-project is to get those people active again, to get them (physically) exercising and to bring the joy of life back to them. Thus, the Raiwaqa Health Center staff and me went to the affected families and planted all kinds of vegetables (cabbage, french beans, butter beans, capsicum, celery, tomatos) in their small front gardens with them. As these people live in very poor areas here in Suva they were very grateful for our help, which was a big pleasure to see. Like this, they can take care of their new own food every day, they have their own activity. Therefore, the project is not only good for their souls but also treats their wallet with care. Moreover they can eat healthy from which their Diabetes benefits a lot!



There is a third project planned, "FRUITFUL SCHOOL", which is aimed at planting fruit trees in primary schools to educate the children about environmental awareness as well as the benefits of fruits, how they can be used i.e. against malnutrition or diseases. It could not be realized yet because the needed money was not given by the Ministry of Health. Only yesterday they approved that they would give us the money!!

You see, working here is a wonderful experience and it gives me a very good, satisfying and fulfilling feeling; especially because Neelta and the nurses are such engaged persons, they really care for the people around.

As far as I can judge by now, I totally can confirm that the slogan "Help...learn...explore!" is what it's all about at my stay here in Suva!

Today I went with Neelta and the other Raiwaga nurses to a house in Howell Street, Samabula, to do medical checkings for free for the people in this area. The nurses checked the people's blood pressure, took their weight and height and checked their blood sugar to see whether they have Diabetes or not. They also immunized people there against Rubella because there has currently been an outbreak of this disease here in Suva.

As people here in Fiji eat a ver poor diet, many of them suffer from Anaemia which means that they have a big lack of iron. To fight against Anaemia, Neelta, Tima, other nurses from the Health Center and me are doing the NIMS-project (NIMS= national iron and multivitamin supplement). We distribute iron tablets to women between 15 and 49 years. When we were in Howell Street yesterday, I was allowed to do the NIMS with children from 0-5 years!! I gave them vitamine A capsules, iron liquid and medicine against worm diseases. It was such a great experience!!



# Host Family of the Month



Pastors Jack and Asenaca Prasad have been a host family since June this year and live in a very beautiful house, just off the main road in Namaka, Nadi. They have four children, three girls, the oldest being 14 years old and their youngest, their son, is three years old. Their first volunteer was Aidan Roszak from Canada and here is his experience...



This July, I traveled to the remote island of Fiji to spend three weeks at a sports/English teaching placement in Nadi. Working at Namaka Public School was an incredible experience. After a long hard day's work, I was really comforted to know that I was going home to such a kind and caring family, like the Prasads. My Fijian host family consisted of six of the nicest people I've ever met. My trip wouldn't have been the same if it weren't for them. Although I spent all the time I could exploring the beautiful islands of Fiji alongside other volunteers, the highlight of my trip was learning from the Prasads. All in all, I had a wonderful experience with Projects Abroad. Next up, Mongolia!



# Social time....Nadi and Suva

Wednesday nights are always an exciting evening for the Nadi Volunteers with our weekly socials happening, allowing old and new volunteers to share stories of beautiful islands they travelled to at the weekend and planning adventures to come! The first of the month's socials was held at Smugglers Cove, Wailoloa Beach, where the famous traditional fire dancing took place throughout the meal allowing some of the newest volunteers the chance to experience this thrilling show for the first time. Hong Sheng restaurant was the destination for the following social, a very popular Chinese restaurant in Nadi town with lots of yummy dishes to choose from (and desserts!) We had a great turn out with 27 volunteers coming including four volunteers from Suva, having completed a medical placement, who had finished with Projects Abroad but were most welcome to come and share stories with the Nadi volunteers.



Suva's monthly paid social was at the Central Cuisine Restaurant. It is a nice Chinese eating house quite popular among the people of Suva as they are famous for their delicious dishes and large serves. Our menu was made up of Cashew Chicken, Beef in Black Bean Sauce, Sweet and Sour Fish, Vegetable Chowmein, Egg Fried Rice, Chilli Pork and Stir Fried Lamb served with steamed rice and soft drinks. Our volunteers really enjoyed themselves as we all chatted happily and welcomed our three new volunteers, Hannah Smith, Alana Ray and Belinda Sheehan. At the same time we said our goodbyes to Sangeeta Athwal who has completed her stay with us. It was a fun night and we all cannot wait to go there again!

There was so much food the Suva volunteers couldn't decide what to eat first!!





# Time to say Bula.....

Coming to another country can be daunting enough, even more so if you have no idea what the natives are saying, so why not try and learn some useful words to help you enjoy your experience even more!! Surprisingly enough there is around 300 regional dialects of the Fijian language, but there is one variety of the language that is understood by the natives all over the country. When looking at the Fijian language you will notice they have the same letters as the English alphabet, but some are missing. Even though they have the same letters, they are pronounced differently which can easily confuse us all, an example being somewhere everyone knows, "Nadi" town, not pronounced "Nad-e" but "Nandi" (rhyming with candy!) One word that we would have all heard from the moment we stepped off the plane and countless times more is "Bula" often said with great enthusiasm (even in the earliest hours of the morning when most of us are half asleep!). Another commonly heard word being "Vinaka" (say - vee naka) meaning "Thank you", and if you are feeling extra polite that day "Vinaka vaka levu" (say - Vee naka vaka lee voo) meaning "Thank you very much"

Here are some other phrases/words for you to get your head/tongue around!

Fiji - Viti (vit-e)

Good morning - Ni sa yadra (nisah-yan-dra)

Good bye - Ni sa moce (ni-sah-mothey)

Please - Kerekere (kerri-kerri) or yalo vinaka (yalo-vee-naka)

Excuse me - Tulou (too low)

Yes - Io (ee-oh)

No - Sega (sang-a)

Food - Kakana (ka-kah-nah)

Drink - Gunu (goo-noo) or probably more useful "Beer" - bia (bee-a)





## Pronunciation:

Now, this can be a little tricky as the letters d, b, g, c and q are pronounced very differently to how we know it to be in the English language and the letter "r" is rolled on the tongue, similar to Spanish. Here is a little help...

The letter "b" is pronounced "mb" therefore, **Bure**...is "**mBure**"

The letter "d" is pronounced "nd" therefore, **Nadi**...is "**Nand**"

The letter "q" is pronounced "ng" therefore **Beqa Island**...is "**Benga Island**"

The letter "c" is pronounced "th" therefore **Moce**...is "**Mothe**"

So why not head out today and put your new found phrases into practice, the local people love the enthusiasm visitors put into speaking the local language, as even the most minimal attempt will be gratefully welcomed!



# Farewell to Jone Lali Solinaikoroi.....



I am sure many of you may already have heard the sad news of the passing of Jone Lali Solinaikoroi. Although only with us for a short time, Jone managed to make a big impression on many of our volunteers in his role as Social Manager for Projects Abroad - Fiji.

Unfortunately his illness and subsequent death has taken a member from our Projects Abroad - Fiji family from us and we are grateful that we had the honor and pleasure to know and work with him.

I am sure you will join us in sending our sincere condolences to his family at this time.



# Stay connected.....



As usual there are lots of ways to stay connected and chat to past, present and future volunteers, a great way to share stories, adventures and give advice.....so why not join us on Facebook today...Projects Abroad Fiji-The official group!

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/projectsabroad.fiji/>

For updates, tales and adventures about what's going on in Fiji at the moment follow our blogs to learn more about volunteers experiences and exciting events in this country!



<http://www.mytripblog.org/pg/groups/2887/Fiji>



Our monthly newsletter is a great way to catch up on tales of Fiji, filled with stories and pictures of volunteer updates and lots more!!

<http://www.projects-abroad.co.uk/volunteer-destinations/fiji/newsletters-from-fiji/>

A special thank you to all those who contributed pictures and articles to this months newsletter, if you have any ideas for following months or would like to become more involved in the newsletters please feel free to contact me at: [sophiebirtwistle@projects-abroad.org](mailto:sophiebirtwistle@projects-abroad.org)