

D9830 RAWCS ROTARY VOLUNTEERS PROJECT 2009

LAUTOKA SCHOOLS PROJECT REPORT

Background of the project

In 2004 a building team from the Rotary Club of Bellerive in Tasmania went to Fiji to build House 20 in the Rotahomes Koroipita Village Project near Lautoka. As a result of this visit, the Lautoka Schools Project was established in 2005 to provide support for the schools attended by the children from the village. The project, now in its fifth year of operation, has provided support primarily for three schools: the Ami Chandra Memorial School, Lovu Sangam Primary and Drasa Secondary School. In 2009, the work of the team was based at Drasa Secondary. From 2006, in addition to the work done in the schools listed above, members of the project team have also conducted literacy workshop for teachers from schools in the Lautoka area.

2009 Project Team

In 2009 the team of fourteen people consisted of three Rotarians (Veena, Malcolm and Liz), two students from Kingston High (James J and Jackson) and their fathers, and seven other members all of whom had worked previously on the Lautoka Schools project. Roger, an experienced medical practitioner, also carried out volunteer work at the Lautoka Hospital.

Team members:

Veena Tilly	Rae Wells	James Jestrinski
Denys Tilly	Malcom Wells	Gregory Jestrinski
Joan Booth	Brenda Kimber	Len Pastoor
James Booth	Roger Kimber	Jackson Pastoor
Elizabeth Bulman	Andrew Watts	

2009 Program Dates

Saturday May 16	Team member Denys arrived in Lautoka.
Monday May 18	40foot shipping Container arrived in Lautoka
Saturday May 30	The team arrived in Lautoka
Sunday May 31	Friday June 5: Team completed work program at Drasa Secondary School
Saturday June 6	Professional learning workshop held at Tilak High School.

Background of Drasa Secondary School

In 2007 while Drasa Secondary did not have any Koroipita students, the plight of the school was brought to the team's attention by Mr Jeremy Woodcock from the Rotary Club of Saltram in England. Mr Woodcock made a personal donation to the Lautoka Schools Project to assist with the cost of sending computers from Donation in Kind Geelong for the computer lab. He has continued to support the project in 2008 and 2009. In 2008 Drasa enrolled children from the Koroipita Village.

Focus of Support in 2009

In December 2008, a cyclone hit western Fiji and the ensuing devastating floods resulted in Drasa Secondary being one of the worst effected schools in the area. Earlier in 2008, the project team had placed 4,000 books in the school's library and thirty five computers had been installed in the computer lab. Unfortunately, both of these areas were a total loss.

As a result of this tragic event, the focus and plans for the work of the 2009 team were changed to focus on the rebuilding of these two valuable resource areas. In the interests of preventing a similar

recurrence in the future, the school agreed to re-establish both the library and the computer lab upstairs in the main block. Four classrooms were then allocated for these facilities, two classrooms for each. Apex Queensland was consulted, as they were the original builders of the library in 1991 and they agreed that in the best interests of the school the library should be relocated.

Following the extensive flood damage, the school was allocated funding by the Fiji government. The school then prepared the two areas ready for relocation by painting ceilings and walls and covering the floor with tiles. This preparation by the school and the arrival of the container on May 20, enabled an immediate start by the team on their arrival at the school. As a result, the work of the team together with help from the school exceeded expected targets.

Pre- Project Work

Over a four month period prior to the forty foot shipping container leaving Bellerive in early May, the work of Denys Tilly was invaluable in packing it with school furniture, computers, books, shelving and storage units. Denys also arrived in Lautoka two weeks before the team to clear the container and to organize equipment for the project. Denys' dedication, hard work and skills in completing this part of the team's work, undoubtedly was a key factor in the project team achieving the excellent success it did this year.

In addition, the container also carried bras for the "Uplift Project" and X-ray equipment to go to the CWM Hospital in Suva. The X-ray equipment was organized by Peter Koens from the Rotary Club of Nunawading while Peter Drysdale (Rotary Club of Lautoka) kindly organized it to be freighted to the William & Gosling depot in Suva.

Also in the container were forty eight sewing machines donated by Stewarts Sewing Centre in Devonport. Ross Stewart (Rotary Club of Devonport North) delivered these machines to Hobart. On their arrival in Lautoka, twenty of these sewing machines, some office furniture and a fridge were delivered to the Koroipita Village.



The Computer Lab

After consultation with Amitesh Chand (the school's computer teacher) and Rajnesh Lal (the vice principal), the original plan of forty networked computers was extended to fifty to cater for the largest class likely to use this facility.

The school had painted the room and tiled the floor and arranged for power points as planned. Ply sheets were used for the bench tops and these were the most expensive items purchased from the team's budget this year. A white board replaced the blackboard, and new display boards were built. A compactus from Huonville High School was installed at the rear of the room for storage.



The Library

The books from the previous library were sorted and many were discarded as they were water damaged. Shelving from North Lindisfarne Primary was erected and books sorted and shelved. Finally approximately 4 000 books were placed on the suitably labeled shelves of the school's 'new' library. Four computers were also set up in the library for student access for research.



Sewing Room

The old staffroom was painted and converted into the sewing room. The school requested thirty sewing machines and these were made available. Len Pastoor wired in extra power points for the machines and single adjustable desks were arranged for each machine. While the furniture could be improved, students now have thirty machines operating in the 'new' sewing room.



Staffroom

The original library was converted into the staffroom. Twenty nine teachers operate from this room and it was decided that each teacher would have their own computer. Len Pastoor again wired the room and a server now provides teachers access to the schools' data base. This networking was completed by Rajnesh Lal and it has brought the school and the teachers into the information technology era.



Summary

The successful 2009 project at Drasa Secondary has been achieved as a result of an excellent team effort involving the school committee, the school's staff and students and the project team. The result was greater than expected because of the involvement of all parties.

The computer lab was expanded and updated and once wireless internet is connected, it will be fully operational as one of the best in the area.

The library is also a significant improvement of the school's previous facility but it will need further donations of appropriate resources each year to ensure that the students have access to the latest information and reading materials generally.

LITERACY WORKSHOP FOR ENGLISH TEACHERS :

DRASA SECONDARY, DRASA INDIAN PRIMARY AND TILAK HIGH.

As arranged with Drasa Secondary in 2008, a professional learning workshop was held on Saturday morning June 6 after the completion of the project work at Drasa Secondary. At the request of Mr Shashi Kumar, previous principal of Drasa Secondary and now principal of Tilak High, English teachers from Tilak High School were invited to join teachers from Drasa Indian Primary School and English teachers from Drasa Secondary for the workshop. Twenty two teachers attended the session. The session was conducted at Tilak High and a hot lunch was provided for participants. The costs were covered by the project.

After some introductory activities addressing teachers' views about literacy teaching, the group divided into three to work on school based ideas for developing literacy teaching. Joan Booth worked with teachers from the Drasa Indian Primary School while Rae Wells and Veena Tilly worked with teachers from the two high schools. Teachers were presented with many practical ideas and resources as well as stationary items to be used in their classrooms.

While the workshop provided useful strategies in teaching literacy, the organizers recognized that perhaps in future workshops, there is a greater need to focus on the curriculum content set by the Fiji Education Ministry. The strategies suggested by the workshop presenters should focus more on how these may be better used in specifically delivering the contents of the national curriculum.

Both participants and organizers acknowledged that the professional learning workshop is an important part of the project and should continue to be offered to teachers.



Student Exchange Program

Following the successful student exchange program between Kingston High School in Tasmania and Natabua High School in Lautoka in 2008, two students, James and Jackson were selected from Kingston High School to be part of the project team in 2009. Their fathers, Gregory and Len proved to be valuable members of the team, with their skills and experience in the trade areas.

James was home hosted by Rahul Gounder and his family during the week of the project. There was such a strong and immediate connection between the two families that it was decided to invite Rahul to visit Tasmania for two weeks in September. James and his family will raise funds to cover the cost of air fares for Rahul and the project will cover other expenses.

Litia Rokodi, also from Drasa Secondary will be accompanying Rahul. Litia was selected to come to Tasmania in 2008 but due to lateness in receiving her visa, she was not able to do so. Litia will be hosted by Madison Hawes and her family. Madison was part of the project team in 2008.

The student exchange aspect of the project has enabled ongoing connections and friendships to be made by families from Kingston and Lautoka. The young students involved and their schools have gained first hand knowledge and understanding of different cultures and countries.



Veena Tilly

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Cc: RAWCS, all team members, Drasa Secondary School, Rotary Club of Bellerive, Ministry of Education-Western Division Office, Rotary Club of Saltram