



FEBRUARY EDITION 2014

BULA NEWS

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## *Editors Comments*

Welcome to February 2014! Now that we've settled into the New Year, we can get started right away with our respective projects and embracing all our volunteers who have or will be welcomed into Fiji. The project team has been super busy this month with their respective projects, especially with the commencement of Fiji schools. There are more upcoming placements and we look forward to the months ahead!

Please read on to find more about our project updates, Project day at Dratabu and Dranikula village, Bula Face for the month and not forgetting our first winner for the Photography Competition so, enjoy the updates and until we update you again...Keep Smiling!

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### *Country Director's Note*

Ahhhhhh February...the month of love! And here, staff and volunteers alike all felt the mutual love for our planet and the work we do

During February we had a fantastically fun, busy and successful month as we saw our volunteer numbers reach an all-time high, with volunteers from over 12 different countries and ages ranging from 16 to 35.

The volunteers who come to Fiji are here as caring individuals who have dedicated their time and hard earned cash to take part in important community and development work. When such a variety of people get together for the common purpose, the atmosphere becomes electric.

For me and my team, it is vital for us to have this deep fervor for what we do, in order to remain passionate and committed, even in the face of the challenges we face each month.

The reality of our situation is that we find our strength in all of the incredible people who volunteer with us. Every month brings in new faces, with new ideas and an endless supply of energy and enthusiasm.

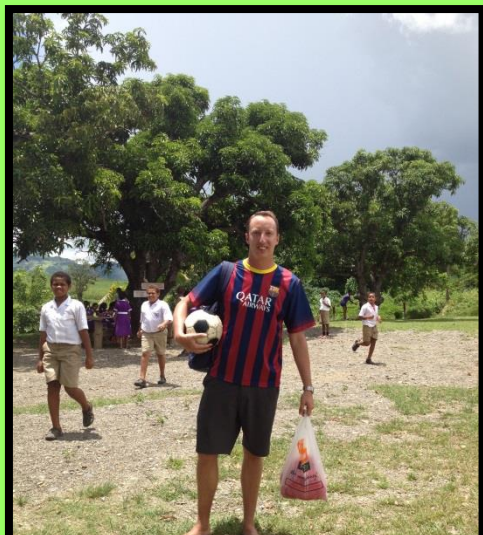
I feel so encouraged as I look at the volunteer applications that come in every day, knowing that out there, all over the world, there are individuals who are dedicated to the same plight, acknowledging the need for global awareness and change and are willing to come together to fight the good fight!

"Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not." ~ Dr. Seuss

'Til next month, keep loving!

**Ingrid**

## Teaching Project



**Erik Coaching students for the soccer tournament**

With the start of the new school term, three teaching placements are currently in high spirits with our volunteers. This includes our newly activated placement Votualevu Primary School with volunteers Erik Larsson (Sweden) and Stefan Herz (Germany).

Other placements are:

Nadi Primary School - Michel Mooring (Netherlands)

Nadi Arya Samaj Primary School - Charlotte Stamer (Germany), Barbara Hennighausen (Germany) and Jelena Jovetic (Australia).

All teaching volunteers are doing a marvelous job in helping out at their various placements. I commend them on their tireless efforts in going out of their way making lesson plans and all I can assist with is the printing of it! They have all been working together in pairs in their respective placements from 8 am to 3 pm, making sure that their daily work is covered with the

children.

## Animal Care Project - Animal lovers volunteering Experience in Fiji.

Projects Abroad Fiji animal lovers Ms. Dagmar Demandt (23) from Belgium and Ms. Jessica Schmid (20) from Germany are enjoying their volunteer work at the animal project, West charity Trust for Animal Welfare in Nadi.

They both were interested in volunteering in other countries but changed their decision once they heard about Fiji.

“There were two Projects that involved dogs which were in Europe and Fiji and because I’m from Europe I chose to come to Fiji to learn another culture, another climate and a whole other experience,” Dagmar shared.

“Well I actually wanted to go as far away as possible from Germany. I was first interested in Samoa but then I thought I’d do something different and come to Fiji for the Animal Care Project and I love it,” Jessica added.

The two young ladies feels there is much needed attention towards the Projects Abroad Fiji animal Care Project.



**(L-R) Jessica Schmid & Dagmar Demandt**



“I do feel there could be more attention towards the animal care project or even have a Project day to help with the animals because it is definitely a need,” Dagmar remarked.

They strongly believe that more volunteers must be encouraged to join the animal care project.

“Well I think they need more help from volunteers because it is a small organization and sometimes they have a lot to do and I think they need all the help they can get,” Dagmar opined.

Dagmar says their everyday tasks would begin with “cleaning the cages and the animals, then we help with feeding them particularly to some dogs who are unable to walk. After, we assist with de-ticking and sometimes we get surrenders which are full of ticks which can take up to four hours de-ticking them,” she enthused.



“Apart from the cleaning and feeding we are usually given responsibility to give the dogs and cats their medicines and assisting with operations, not directly but just handing the equipment’s to the vet during the operation, which is actually pretty cool,” Jessica added.

Jessica feels that as a team they have accomplished a lot. “I feel like as a team we make a difference although we have different roles to play, as a team we make difference for these animals and at the end of the day that’s what matters,” she enthused.

To conclude their advice to future Projects Abroad Fiji volunteers are to be as active as possible during their volunteer work. “Don’t be afraid of animals. Always ask where you can help, go to the staff and vet and don’t worry if you get dirty because it’s quite normal here and remember to never hold back,” they both concluded.

## Community Project –Young Volunteer takes a new turn at Life



**Lauren digs gravel to mix with cement**

Lauren Bezzano (18) from Hong Kong enjoys her volunteer work at the Community Project at the Dratabu village in Fiji.

Lauren wanted to do something totally different so she chose to volunteer in Fiji. “I was very much interested in learning a different culture and a different lifestyle so Fiji was an ideal destination,” she shared.

“I think that it is important for volunteers to see the village life which is a lot more different from the towns,” she added.

Lauren believes that Projects Abroad is contributing a lot for the children of the village. “At the moment we are renovating the care center which I think will be a big help

for the younger children to have a place to go rather than following their older siblings to their schools and this will help them in their transition into kindergarten level,” she shared.

She further explains their tasks everyday which is “in the mornings I work at the kindergarten from eight O’clock to 12 followed by lunch. After I help out with the care centre and walk down to the river to dig out gravel and transport it back to the village to mix cement in order to fill the holes and fix the windows, so that was quite an experience.” up

As for responsibilities Lauren has stepped in to help out at with the primary schools where necessary.

“At the primary school I took a class on my own because the teacher was off sick and that was a struggle for me to discipline the kids because they saw me as a fun teacher and trying to teach them during these two days was a big hassle,” she enthused.

“The kids I’m working with are quite different as they are eager to experience a bit of my culture as well and having to speak in English is an advantage because it helps to immerse themselves into a different culture,” she added.

Lauren feels almost everything is different compared to her lifestyle back at home. “There is so much difference compared to Hong Kong culture it seems calm and relaxed here whereas back in Hong Kong everyone is so stressed and too busy to enjoy life, I really enjoy the lack of worrying in the village, I just love it,” she remarked.



**Lauren with the kids at school**

Lauren's best memorable experience happened on the first day when she started at Dratabu village.

"In Hong Kong I teach at primary schools and because I'm western the kids are very distant and they are very shy to approach me. My first day here, the kids were jumping on top of me by lunch time and I just couldn't believe how open they are," she opined.

I actually want to go back and apply to university and get some work experience as well. My goal is to become a scuba diving instructor and hopefully to teach that for a bit. I'm actually doing them all. Im working at the Community project, Care and Teaching and later will be doing the Conservation project. I'm based at Dratabu village.

Marine biologist is the path Lauren hopes to take for her future.

"I was looking forward towards teaching but after this experience, I finally found what I wanted and that is to be a marine biologist which I think the shark conservation project would be much useful for," she remarked.

"But I can so live in this kind of environment so I'm definitely going to look to work outside of Hong Kong like Thailand," she added. Lauren's advice to future volunteers is to "Just get on with it. If there's a hindrance or challenge you face while volunteering, overcome it and move on. Don't let it ruin your experience here in Fiji," she concluded.

### **Sports Project – New Placement**

Ratu Navula Secondary School whose under 18 Rugby Team currently defends the prestigious Fiji Secondary School Rugby's Dean's Trophy, has agreed to work with Projects Abroad sports volunteers from February, 2014. School Principal Mr. Setareki Merekula, in a meeting with Project Coordinator Maika Raisilisili, mentioned the need for sports volunteers who would be referred to as Physical Education Teachers. He adds, the school, which has a total of 975 students from forms 3 to 7, currently employs one Sports or Physical Education Teacher. Given this need, future Projects Abroad sports volunteers would be able to get involved in a worthwhile project teaching sporting skills, as well as the added benefit of being included in a rugby loving community.





## Shark Conservation Project – Shark Awareness Programme in Local Schools

The Shark conservation project volunteers were ecstatic to visit the Pacific Harbor's Multicultural School and advocate on the importance of sharks and mangroves to the school children.

The school is already incredibly active with mangrove conservation and shark education, so it was a perfect fit for our program to start working with them.

The school children were incredibly excited to meet our volunteers and loved playing the educational games (created by the volunteers) and learning about shark anatomy, how to use scuba tanks/masks, a memory shark game, and also coloring pictures of sharks. Our volunteers had a great time playing with the children throughout the morning and afternoon.



**Shark Conservation volunteers with the children & staff of Pacific Harbor's Multi-cultural School**

Most volunteers were surprised about how much the school children knew about shark conservation and the importance of mangroves at a young level. Volunteers came away from the visit excited to spend more time at the school and to possibly build a mangrove nursery for the school in the future.

## Meet our Bula Face...

Project Manager Karishma Nandan. She is looking after all Project Coordinators in Nadi ensuring that the daily operations of the Projects team in Nadi are up to standard. She is our longest serving staff at the moment and has grown over the years with Projects Abroad. Check out her Profile:



**Name:** Karishma Priti Nandan

**Nick Name:** Kay

**Age:** 26

**Birth Place:** Nadi **Relationship Status:** Single

**How would you describe yourself?** This is the single most dreaded question I ever face. I think of myself as very self-assertive at the same time caring person. I am carefree and fun loving. In addition, I would take the chance to go on an adventure (however small). I hold my friends in very high regard and my best friends know I am always there for them. I value my family and my personal beliefs above all else.

**What is your favourite food & Drink?** I love food in general so I cannot pick any. With drinks, that would depend on what time of the day it is.

**Favourite colour?** Black – that's a secret. Blue –there is something very calming for me in this color.

**What were your best memories from Projects Abroad?** Receiving an angry phone call at 9 in the evening by a certain executive from a partnering organization. It was frustrating at the time but is now a hilarious memory. It shows that there are many people who do not understand our work and how our volunteers help Fiji.

**What do you enjoy about your work? Why?** The ability to effect change in people because belief and faith in one's self is the most powerful thing a person needs to do good in the world. **What would be your guilty pleasure?** Chocolates and tequila

**Where do you see yourself in ten years from now?** Enjoying my life to the fullest. **Favourite quote:** When it comes to dreams, one may falter, but the only way to fail is to abandon

**Sneak Peak into Bula Face next month:** She is also a Project Manager for Projects Abroad Fiji.





## FEBRUARY PROJECT DAY - DRATABU VILLAGE!!

Projects Abroad Fiji volunteers and staff held their Project day at Dratabu village in Nadi. The project was to paint the vakatatalo (playhouse) building for the children under the age of four years old in order to support early childhood development in the village. This was a project initiated by the Womens Club of Dratabu village and Projects Abroad has supported them in their initiative. We thank the volunteers for the creativity and hardwork towards this project.





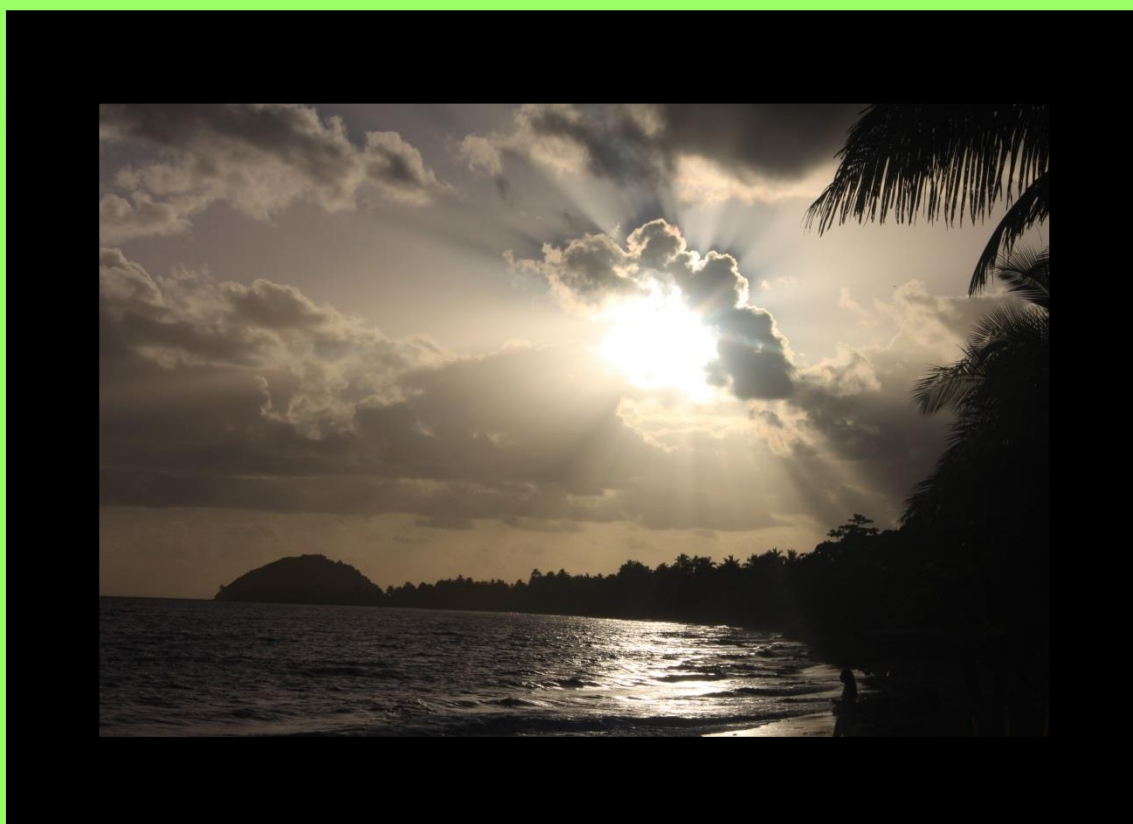
## PROJECT DAY – DRANIKULA VILLAGE

Another Project day in Fiji was held at the Dranikula village at Galoa just five minutes away from Pacific Harbour. The Project included painting of the community hall which is regularly used by the village clan for their meetings and functions. After the painting, the village women prepared a lovely lunch followed by a kava ceremony by the chief and villagers. We thank the shark conservation and Suva volunteers for the awesome job.



And the WINNER for Projects Abroad Fiji's 1<sup>st</sup> PHOTOGRAPHY MONTHLY COMPETITION GOES TO:

NICOLAS TYTGAT



Thank you for capturing this special moment which definitely shows a remarkable part of Fiji...it's moments like this that make us realize the beauty in nature. Nicolas will be receiving a gift on behalf of Projects Abroad Fiji and will be featured on all our media platforms. Vinaka Nicolas!! You can find all entries on our facebook page under the Photography Competition Album. Please send in your photos for March to [infomanager-fiji@projects-abroad.org](mailto:infomanager-fiji@projects-abroad.org).