**Sewaid Fiji August 13th – 28th 205**

**Venue: Koroipita Model Homes Village – Lautoka- Fiji**

This village is a model homes village of 221 Rota Homes established and organised by Rotarian Peter Drysdale. The project was originally a Rotary project with many Australian and overseas Rotary clubs being involved. Now most of the funding comes from New Zealand Aid, and after working on this model village and others previously for over 25 years as a volunteer, Peter is now employed by New Zealand Aid, but still works 24/7 on the project. Many Rotarians involved with this project visit regularly and while we were there, there were several Rotarians from Australia visiting, including PDG Lou Pretorius from Launceston who was making his 21st visit to the project. He is a director on the Koroipita Board.

The village takes in destitute people and families and re-builds their lives- and from what we observed- very successfully. The 221 Rota homes are stage 1 and 2, and they are about to commence stage 3 which will be about another 27 Rota homes and eventually the village will have a population of around 1,200 people. They are planning a sports ground and a commercial building for businesses in this stage three.

We ran the Sewaid training in the village hall which was an excellent facility with plenty of room and everything we needed. Susan Nadu who is the main organiser was so helpful as was Vika the young lady who is the events manager for the hall.

**Equipment, preparation etc**

We shipped over by airfreight, 14 new Singer 8 stitch automatic sewing machine, 4 second hand overlockers – which were serviced and checked before sending, and then a lot of sewing accessories, and fabric, elastic, thread, etc.

We were very grateful to Rohlig Australia who paid all the airfreight and landing costs for us. Many thanks to Rohlig Australia. Many thanks too, to our sewing machine mechanic Mario who prepared the four second hand overlockers for us.

All this equipment we donated and left with them for ongoing use after the training program. Everything went very well the Singer sewing machines were bullet proof and just ideal for the project and the overlockers held up well. Peter said he would make special lockers for the storage of the machines.

**Our Team and the Set Up.**

Our Sewaid team was: Glenda Bones- Head Teacher, ( her third Sewaid project ; Sharon Tunks – senior sewing and craft consultant , her second Sewaid project; , Judy Jones – senior dressmaker her 3rd Sewaid project ; Sheila McDowall sewing teacher her 2nd Sewaid project;, Julie Walsh Craft teacher her 2nd Sewaid project ; Sandra and I as Managers and equipment organisers. Alacoque Welsh from the Rotary E-club of Greater Sydney joined us form some of the time. .

We flew into Nadi on Thursday August 13th and was met by Peter Drysdale and Allan?? who took us to our hotels in Lautoka. All the team stayed at the Northern Club Apartments but because they were fully booked Sandra and I stayed at the Tanoa Waterfront Hotel where we all had dinner together on the first night. Allan is a PDG from 9870 in Victoria but now living in Fiji.

Friday morning I picked up the rental car and after some shopping we went out to the Koroipita Village and spent the rest of the day unpacking the equipment setting up the machines etc.

Saturday morning the ladies went fabric shopping and then took the fabric out to Koroipita and prepared it all ready for Monday morning. Some of the local ladies who had been chosen for the training came up to the hall to meet us.

**The Training Program Monday 17th to Friday 28th August**

Monday morning the training began, The 25 trainees who were women from the village of varies ages ranging from 21 to ??? were divided into 5 groups of 5 with a teacher each. Julie took most of the one who had never sewed and taught them mainly Craft while the other concentrated on dressmaking and in particular how to use commercial patterns.

The first project that everyone made was a Days for Girls bag, which all finished that day. After that they made a skirt, a shirt, a dress, some hats, and some much larger bags etc.

The progress was amazing and much faster than any Sewaid we had run previously. This was due to a number of things, incredibly enthusiastic students who really put their heads down, a very good venue, with plenty of good tables and room, all the students spoke English, and the fact that we supplied new sewing machines this time- really made a difference as it was so much easier to teach them how to use the machines.

On the final Friday they had the usual party and modelling of their clothes which was such a great day.

**On-going Program.**

With the help of Peter Drysdale, his staff and Alacoque from our E-club, we were able to virtually set up the whole ongoing business plan. The supply chain was not difficult and Alacoque kindly found a fabric wholesaler for them. Additionally potential sales outlets were contacted with good success in fact some of the clothes made were successfully sold even during the program, The Koropipita organisation will run the business and the ladies we trained will be employed and they will be able to earn much more than they could elsewhere. For example one lady gave up her job at a jeans factory so that she could take the Sewaid course. She was earning FJ$1.10 an hour at the factory ((A$0.70) and now she should be able to earn much more than that, and not have to leave the village.

This is the most successful Sewaid we have ever had, and the first time we have been able to leave the project with an operational business plan in place.

Our five volunteer Sewaid teaches were as usual absolutely fantastic. They worked everyday non-stop. In just two weeks they took ladies who had never sewed to a point where these ladies could make professionally finished garments!! Amazing!!

What we do like about our Sewaid program is that it gives the people a hand-up, not a hand-out and these ladies who have absolutely nothing can now make an income for themselves and their families, and ultimately that income will spread around the whole village.

Many many thanks to our teachers, to Peter, Sue and Vika from the Koroipita Model Towns, to Alacoque, and all our many other supports. I will finish with just two emails my teachers sent to me, as I wasn’t able to stay for the final few days.

Tony Castley, Sewaid Manager.

*Hi Tony and Sandy,  
  
We finished up yesterday and it was just fantastic.  There is never enough time to get done what you want but the ladies just loved it.  
  
It was such a shame you didn't get to stay for the whole time and especially the lunch and festivities on Friday afternoon.  The food was absolutely sensational !  
  
Peter did a great job of outlining where the program was heading and how it would unfold and progress, which would have given the girls a feeling of hope and purpose.  
  
The fashion parade was such a hoot with all the kids parading.  The first little girl was just SO cute how she moved to the music and she must have been all of 4.  Then of course all the girls loved showing off what they had made and so proud of their achievements.  
  
This was followed by a beautiful thank you speech from Katherine in my group - she was not the best sewer but I couldn't believe how eloquently she spoke, off the cuff, with so much poise and grace....we were all very impressed by her. Then the girls then put on a song and dance routine which we had to participate in and lastly they sang a farewell song to us...very touching  
  
If this wasn't enough we then had gift giving to the teachers where we were all showered with little things from them all.  This was on top of some very nice neckless's we got first thing in the morning from Rohini.  
  
So I just wanted to thank you both so very much for giving me the opportunity to do another sewAID program.  I feel very privileged to be part of the team and already look forward to the next one.  
  
Kind regards  
  
Sheila*

*Hi S & T -  Apologies for tardy communications but it has been a busy few days with many projects being finalised & new ones started.   
  
On Wednesday Peter had a delegation of Red Cross people at Koroipita for a presentation so we quickly displayed our clothing.  They purchased about $145 worth & would have bought more except they were being hurried along by the bus departure - shame!  Susan couldn't stop smiling as she remarked it had almost paid for the first lot of fabric purchased.  I think they are truly amazed at just how quickly the women learn & produce quality items.  There were also some orders for 2 of the little girl’s dresses. As in Uganda we have left them with a potential business & some very enthusiastic workers - how good is that!   Sewaid is such a wonderful project & makes a big difference to the lives of these lovely, poor women.*

*Our final day was chaotic as the ladies tried to finish their projects, did a machine maintenance & cleared the sewing tables for a beautiful vegetarian lunch sourced from the Village gardens.  Peter made a business plan presentation on how he thinks it will all work - beginning next week - and it was well received by the ladies.  The fashion parade was followed by loud and fabulous dancing - my pictures don't do it justice but Sharon & Alacoque's will.*

*We missed you both being around for the last week - but  thanks for your support - another great project*

*Glenda*











