



March 2014 Edition

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Editor's Comments

Bula to you all and welcome to March! Time is of the essence, so much to do and so many people to inspire. We have projects galore from teaching, care, community and animal care to shark conservation - a little bit of everything for everyone. To all the Fiji volunteers, we would like to hear from you so please send us your photos, videos, articles or briefs, anything to tell us how you have enjoyed your time with us and we will share it with the world. It is because of experiences like yours that others are able to be inspired.

As more volunteers come in and out of Fiji, we hope that they take back a taste of Fiji with them - all the Bula smiles, laughter and experiences that one can only experience in Fiji. Please read on to find more about our project updates, our project day for the month and the March Photography Competition winner. Enjoy our updates and be sure to send us your own update for the world to see...Till next month, have a Wananavu (awesome) time!

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Country Director's Note - Ingrid Sprake

Howdy!

It is the month of March and spring is in the air! The time symbolizes rebirth and renewal, a time to reflect on what we have done, revise our plans and look forward to the future.

Fijian Hindi Proverb says,

“Mare bina swarg nai mile hae.”

Which when translated means:

‘Great things can be achieved only with great effort.’

These words not only encourage me to continue with all the incredibly work we are doing on all our projects in Fiji, but also reminds me that we have the ability to accomplish some amazing things as long as we put in the effort and hard work.

As individuals who deeply care about the impact we have on our planet and fellow inhabitants, I applaud our volunteers for coming here and trying to restore the balance of basic human needs with the need to protect what we have left of this precious world of ours.

So when I find myself saying I’m too busy to do something and caught up in life’s challenges, I remember the opening proverb and I then take the time to notice the incredible achievements happening each day and the part that Projects Abroad is playing in that.

It feels so good to be part of the solution.

Teaching Project

Our young teachers are doing a wonderful job at the primary schools all over Nadi. They have had a unique taste of interacting with many children, all full of energy running around and needing constant guidance. Needless to say, all our teachers are usually tired when they reach home at the end of the day but they are happy and satisfied with the achievement they made during the day. Our Teaching Project in Fiji focuses on tutoring children who struggle with English, mathematics and science subjects at the local primary schools.

We have had a wonderful month with some amazing volunteers completing their teaching placements at the Nadi Arya Samaj Primary School, Votualevu Public School, Namaka Public School and Nadi Primary School. Stefan Herz, Jana Lerch and Birte Roether of Germany; Georgia Tafe of Australia, Erik Larsson of Sweden and Michel Mooring of Netherlands completed their placements and have left our children enriched with knowledge and passion to learn!

Erik Larsson and Stefan Herz organised a mixed soccer competition in their placement at Votualevu Public School which was an amazing success! Georgia, Jana, Birte and Michel contributed to the children by teaching them about different cultures while at the same time learning about our culture.

Care Project - Norwegian Volunteer Adapts well to Fiji

Ingfrid Toressdal (19) is from Norway and has volunteered as a teacher with Projects Abroad Fiji under the Care project at Andrews Kindergarten in Nakurakura, Nadi. Helping others has always been a part of Ingfrid's family background.

"I came to volunteer because I wanted a change of place and I wanted to do some travelling but meaningful travelling," she shared.

"I've been brought up by parents who always taught me to help others so it came pretty naturally to choose volunteering," she added.

At the Andrews Kindergarten Ingrid's daily tasks include teaching the alphabets, different seasons, games, arts & craft, playing and assisting teachers to have a more controlled environment.

During her volunteer work Ms.Toressdal imparted vital knowledge to the students in terms of sharing the uniqueness of Norwegian culture, arts and craft, music and dancing

Ingfrid may seem more of a local Fijian now, but at first it was hard for her to adapt.

"It was very hard for me to adapt as I was very homesick and because I have sensitive skin, my skin reacted badly to the mosquito bites, but I soon got over it and I love the Fiji culture, the people are so friendly and the scenery is just beautiful," she added.



If there's one thing Ingfrid has learnt it is "definitely more patience especially with handling children and adapting to different cultures and ways," she shared.

As for the future, Ingfrid has her mind set for teaching. "After volunteering I'm going back to my job, working with special needs and I do one-on-one training in a special school in Norway," she shared.

"My volunteer work experience is very useful for my future, I'm pretty sure I'm going to become a teacher," she added.

Ingfrid explains why she loves Fiji as a volunteer destination. "I like how Fiji is more relaxed, people are so friendly, the food is awesome Lovo and roti are my favourites and I believe it's the most untouched beautiful place on earth," she opined

Her advice to potential volunteers for Fiji is to try to have patience not just with time difference but with trying to adapt as much as possible.

"Don't be weird out by how friendly the people are when they approach you, it's their nature so enjoy it. The experience is going to change you and make you grow so I would say go for it and don't look back," she concluded.

Animal Project



The staff and animals said a sad good bye to volunteer Jessica Schmid who left at the beginning of March to continue her project in Samoa and welcomed Maria Hovgaard from Denmark for two months. She and Dagmar Demandt, from Belgium, are doing an excellent job with the animals at Animals Fiji in Nadi.

Sports Project



Miss Charlotte Stamer becomes the first Projects Abroad Volunteer to teach Physical Education at Secondary School level. Ms Stamer, originally from Germany, teaches student ages nine to 13-years-old at Ratu Navula College. As a physical education teacher, Charlotte comes under the direct supervision of the Head of Department for PEMAC which is short for Physical Education, Music and Arts Craft. These three streams combined form a new project that the Fiji Projects Team is working on.

At the moment Charlotte is helping to coach the 86 Ratu Navula Athletes who will be attending the Western Zone Meet this week. Apart from that, the school has also reached quarter final stages in the Western Schools Rugby League Competitions of which Charlotte is a part of. Ratu Navula College looks forward to receiving more sports volunteers.



Shark Conservation Project

I cannot believe we are into the third month of the Shark Conservation Project. I remember when the project was just an idea and the massive task of creating a project like this seemed just too much. With the dedication and hard work of everybody involved, we have created what we believe will become one of the most important Shark Research Centres in the world.

We have recently been visited by the following shark scientists and experts.

- Angelo Villagomez, Manager, Global Shark Conservation, PEW Charitable Trusts.
- Dr. Colin Simpfendorfer, Director, Centre for Sustainable Tropical Fisheries and Aquaculture & Professor, School of Earth and Environmental Sciences, James Cook University.
- Dr. Ralf (Perry) Sonntag, Country Director, Germany, IFAW
- Gary Adkinson, Director, Shark Foundation, USA and President, Sharkrodeo Ventures
- Ian Campbell, Global Shark Programme Manager, WWF
- Dr. Juerg Brunschweiler - already partnered
- Dr Demian Chapman - already partnered

All of which have shown great excitement about the future of our project. After meeting and getting inspired by the scientists, I truly believe we can make a real difference in Global Shark Conservation.

BRUV Project - The Shark Count Survey and BRUV projects are now up and running. We conduct four research dive trips a week, including eight Shark Count Surveys and 4 BRUV drops. Our data is starting to accumulate and we are quickly seeing patterns where sharks can be located; all in efforts to enlarge MPA's here in Beqa Lagoon, Fiji and protect shark as well as other marine organisms. A more detailed report is to come this time next month; I do not want to jump to conclusions too soon! Other than that, I have personally made it my goal to make all of our volunteers here at the Shark Research and Conservation Centre good research-minded divers with solid dive skills that they will carry with them throughout their lives, promoting environmentally friendly diving all over the world.



Meet Our Bula Face for the month...

Project Manager Sophie Birtwistle. She is currently looking after the administration of the Health & Wellness Project as well as other projects in Nadi. Sophie is also one of the longest-serving staff for Fiji.

Name: Sophie Birtwistle Nick Name: "Jane" "Birtie" Age: 93!
Birth Place: England

Relationship Status: In a relationship (I have a better half!)

How would you describe yourself: Fun loving, hardworking, love meeting new people and trying new things!

Favorite food & drink? Spaghetti Bolognese and a glass of white wine!

Favorite colour? Why? Sky Blue – it's a colour that matches the beauty of the Fijian skies!

What is your most attractive feature? My sense of humor!

How long have you worked with Projects Abroad? I started in 2011 so three years in June!

What were your best achievements while working with Projects Abroad?

Taking shy and nervous volunteers and turning them into confident and independent people through exposing them to the Fijian culture and helping them achieve the most from their time with Projects Abroad!

What do you enjoy about your work? Why?

Meeting people from all walks of life and cultures and helping them find their place in Fiji. I really enjoy helping volunteers discover their individual talents and giving them the opportunity to utilize these skills during their time in Fiji!

What would be your guilty pleasure? Watching the Jeremy Kyle Show!

Where do you see yourself in ten years from now? Sitting on the beach sipping a cocktail!

Favorite quote? "Life is like a box of chocolates, you never know what you're gonna' get" – Forrest Gump

Sneak Peak for April: He is also a senior staff member for
Projects Abroad Fiji



Project Day – Saravi Village

For March we held our Project day at Saravi Village. Projects Abroad volunteers painted and refurbished the Saravi Village kindergarten where there was much needed attention. The kindergarten is currently receiving younger students at the age of 2-4 years and is trying to get their building certified with Ministry of Education.



Project Day- Shark Conservation Project

After experiencing very heavy rainfall, the villages along the Navua River suffered from severe flooding. This month's VERY Dirty Day saw the volunteers clearing blocked drainage ditches and giving out food parcels. A massive thank you to all staff and volunteers who made a real difference in the life's of the local villagers.



Photo Competition Winner!!

Let's Congratulate the March Photo Competition Winner Mr Jorel Delepine from the Shark Conservation Project. Enjoy this awesome photo of him treading in our beautiful seas just in front of Beqa Island. It is surely a unique moment captured in Fiji. Vinaka Jorel 😊

