

Celebrating Achieved **ASPIRATIONS**



LOKI AIMS TO LIGHT UP HIS VILLAGE IN THE SOLOMONS

AKAUOLA DRIVEN BY HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

**SCAN
FOR ECOPY**





From Students to FNU Ambassadors

Graduation is a very special event for all graduates, their families, and the University!

It was delighting to see smiling and happy faces at the Fiji National University's (FNU) March graduation ceremonies, which implies that students have successfully achieved their mission that began on their first day of studies at the FNU.

A total of 1874 students graduated during the five ceremonies, with 860 of these graduates being female.

It is pleasing to see that the Fiji National University was chosen as the university of learning that trained and qualified students who will now go into the world and implement the skills, knowledge, and expertise acquired at the University.

I am confident that our graduates will go out into their respective communities as ambassadors of FNU and use their knowledge and skills to make a difference to the lives of the people they serve.

The core role of the FNU Council, is to steer the university in the direction where our students receive relevant and forward-thinking learning, teaching, and research training.

The newly appointed FNU Council and I take this responsibility very seriously. We will work with the Acting Vice-Chancellor and her leadership team to drive the University forward in meeting its strategic objectives.

I also acknowledge Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba in her first major engagement as University Acting Vice-Chancellor. Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba



created history by being the first indigenous Fijian woman to be appointed Professor at a university and was the former Dean of the College of Humanities and Education at the Fiji National University.

Her knowledge and vast experience align well with FNU's strategic priorities during its next decade of providing accessible learning, teaching, and research opportunities to all Fijians and our regional and international students.

Through the continued support of the Fijian Government, FNU Council, and key stakeholders, FNU will continue to assist our local, regional, and international students in achieving their academic aspirations.

During the ceremonies, we also heard motivational and inspiring words from our esteemed Chief Guests. The Acting Vice-Chancellor also shared aspiring success stories from each College to show the impact and importance FNU makes in the lives of an individual.

I encouraged our graduates and guests who were present to take these words to heart as they go out into the world and pursue their career goals.

I look forward to hearing about the achievements and success of our graduating class of 2022 and the contributions, creativity, resilience, and determination they will each contribute to communities, businesses, and nations.

Dr Adi Kesaia Seniloli
Chancellor and Chair of Council

Be Lifelong Learners-

Prof Nabobo-Baba



Fiji National University’s (FNU), Acting Vice-Chancellor, Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba encouraged FNU’s most recent graduating class to remain in Fiji to build a nation we all can be proud of.

Her encouraging and inspirational words echoed across the walls of the Vodafone Arena in Suva, and then the Civic Centre in Labasa, during the five graduation ceremonies held in March. There was not a dry eye in the room, not a face without hope.

“Our FNU graduates, are like diamonds, and we believe at FNU, we have given you immense heat. We have given you pressure, and like diamonds, you are now polished,” she said.



“Continue to polish that precious gem. People that stop learning, stop developing. You owe it all to yourself and your people, your parents, communities, your *vanua*, your churches – to keep on developing.”

“You will be the architects for our modern Fiji, you will take us to the future. Be lifelong learners so you can return to upskill yourselves at FNU.”

Professor Nabobo-Baba said the University will strive to succeed, and TVET programmes will continue to excel in all aspects in the years to come.

“National universities all over the world have a tradition, we focus very closely on what the nation tells

us in its own development and other plans.”

“We will continue to develop, and with your help as alumni, together we will build a better Fiji National University.”

“I hope to collaborate with you and your organisations so that we can continue to impart knowledge to future generations. As a graduate of FNU, you will play a crucial role in moving our nation forward.”

“We are focusing on building a workforce not only for the present but for the future. We, therefore, take pride that the Fiji National University is playing that important role in your academic journey to connect you to your dream jobs.”

Chief Guests’ Key Quotes



“I am proud that you will now become part of our educated population and continue to make an impact in the country with your hard work, commitment and dedication that shall influence the growth of our nation’s progress. As your educational and professional status grows, never forget your parents, families and communities who supported you throughout your life - always strive to give back to your communities and country. In all you do, be transparent, diligent, and professional in your conduct and be a team player, be effective problem solvers, critical and creative thinkers, humble leaders and passionate workers.”

His Excellency Ratu Wiliame Katonivere
President of the Republic of Fiji
Labasa graduation session



“Post-graduation is also a journey to discover more about yourself. Remain positive, remain principled, but be proactive and work hard. Don’t be afraid of making mistakes, and don’t hide from making mistakes; be open to change and keep moving ahead.”

Honourable Professor Biman Prasad
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics
College of Business, Hospitality and Tourism Studies (CBHTS) graduation session



“As the newest batch of graduates to enter the workforce – of course, some of you may already be in employment – it is crucial that you understand the important role you will all need to play in the progress and development of the nation. It is a given that the world of work is constantly evolving. Hence, we all need to keep abreast and be adaptable to the current and new trends and standards. I encourage you all to go forward and pursue your professional aspirations with all your might.”

Honourable Agni Deo Singh
Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations
College of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (CAFF), College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences (CMNHS), Fiji Maritime Academy (FMA) and National Training and Productivity Centre (NTPC) graduation session



“My message today, to you young graduates, is that you’re going out into the world as leaders of learners, as the leaders of education, development, knowledge creation, and sharing, and imparting that with our younger generation - our students, our society, and our community. I want to put a big challenge on your shoulders today, The message is that your learning should never stop. If educators and teachers stop reading, stop learning, our students will stop learning, and our societies will not advance because all of us will stop learning.”

Dr Rohit Kishore
Director | Fiji Higher Education Commission
College of Humanities and Education (CHE) graduation session



“An American religious leader once said that graduation is not a completion of an achievement, but simply the closing of a chapter, and the beginning of another chapter. Explore opportunities with a goal-oriented desire and be resolute to serve others as you receive your certificates today. You will not only lead a reputable life as an adult, but you will also feel a sense of accomplishment.”

Honourable Aseri Radrodro
Minister for Education
College of Engineering, Science and Technology (CEST) graduation session



Careers Teachers at the workshop at FNU Ba Campus.

Nation-wide FNU Careers Teachers Workshop 'remarkable'

The inaugural Fiji National University (FNU) Careers Teachers Workshop (CTW) is a remarkable concept that has been carefully thought of, says Magodro Secondary School senior careers' teacher, Meresaini Wati.

With almost 20 years of teaching experience, Wati was part of the 20 secondary school teachers who were present at the first inaugural workshop at FNU's Ba Campus on March 15.

Magodro Secondary School, located in the Interior of the Ba district, has close to 100 students and is about two hours from the town centre. Despite the long travel away from her students to be part of the workshop, Wati said it was worth it.

"The concept of having this is really remarkable in the sense that it is an eye opener even for teachers. Careers in school is sort of like an extra subject for teachers to take up and there is not much thought and consideration of the significant impact it has on students, particularly at senior levels as we prepare them for tertiary level studies," she highlighted.

She commended FNU for organising the workshop as it enabled her to be more aware of the courses offered by the different Colleges at FNU.

"This workshop made me realise that universities are not only for students who wish to be part of white-collared professions, and this is the information I will take back to my school – there are limitless opportunities for students in the TVET sector as well," Wati said.

In addition to the Ba workshop, FNU conducted similar workshops for careers teachers nation-wide at its Namaka Campus in Nadi, Nasinu Campus in Valelevu, and the Naduna Campus in Labasa.

Arieta Maitoga made her journey from Levuka to

be part of the Teachers' Careers Workshop in Nasinu.

The Levuka Public Secondary School Teacher said it was enlightening to know that there are different entry-levels for students intending to study at FNU.

"This workshop made me realise that there is something for every child irrespective of their abilities," Maitoga said.

Imitiaz Ali, a teacher at the Seaqaqa Central College, attended the workshop at the Naduna Campus in Labasa.

"This workshop has really benefitted both us as careers teachers and our students, who will gain further insight and information about FNU."

"It is encouraging to note that even students who have dropped out of school still have an opportunity to pursue further studies."

FNU Acting Vice-Chancellor, Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba said that the workshops enabled teachers to be able to understand better how FNU can meet the academic needs of every student.

"Careers teachers spend a lot of time with their students and would be aware of their interests, strengths, and career ambitions. This allows the teachers to help direct students to the most suitable programmes aligned to their interests and capabilities," Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba shared.

"This ranges from our certificate, diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate levels of qualification. Hence, these teachers act as an information bridge between FNU and the students."

A total of 140 teachers participated in the workshops, with a virtual session organised on April 5 for maritime careers teachers.



Careers Teachers after attending the CTW at the FNU Naduna Campus in Labasa.



Careers Teachers at the workshop held at the FNU Nasinu Campus.



Careers Teachers at the CTW held at the FNU Namaka Campus.

Empowering women in education

International Women's Day is celebrated in the month of March, honouring the achievements of women, and promoting women's right.

The theme for International Women's Day, 8 March 2023 (IWD 2023) is, "DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality."

My advice to the young women today in the digital age is that the pandemic has brought a new shift in education towards online learning.

It is very important for women and girls to adapt to the changes brought about by whatever new situations arise. You need to have access to digital resources, especially those who are in disadvantaged backgrounds.

"Educate a man and you educate an individual. Educate a woman and you educate a nation."

This was the vision of my father, a feminist and champion of women's rights, my mentor and the greatest support in my education and career.

His vision was to see that all his daughters attain tertiary education and be able to deal with life's

challenges. God rest his soul. He passed away in 2002.

One day, when I was very young, I overheard my father say to my mother, "We must educate our daughters. It's very important that they have a good education and can take care of themselves when they grow up. If they don't have a good husband, or an unsuccessful marriage, they'll have their education to fall back on."

These words reverberated in my father's household for as long as I can remember. This led to the beginning of my 43-year-old education and career journey upon graduation from the University of the South Pacific (USP) in 1979. In September 2002, I embarked on my lifelong career as an English lecturer at the former Fiji Institute of Technology (FIT) while continuing to upgrade my qualifications, working full-time and raising a family. I have since graduated with a Masters in Business Administration from USP in 2000 and a Masters in Applied Linguistics from University of New England, Armidale, New South Wales in 2006. My ultimate goal was to do a PhD in Linguistics and I graduated with this from USP in 2015.

Some of you may be pursuing education in male dominated fields, such as STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), how you will navigate your way successfully will impact positively on your freedom of expression, education and employment opportunities. You need to break your own shackles and fears.

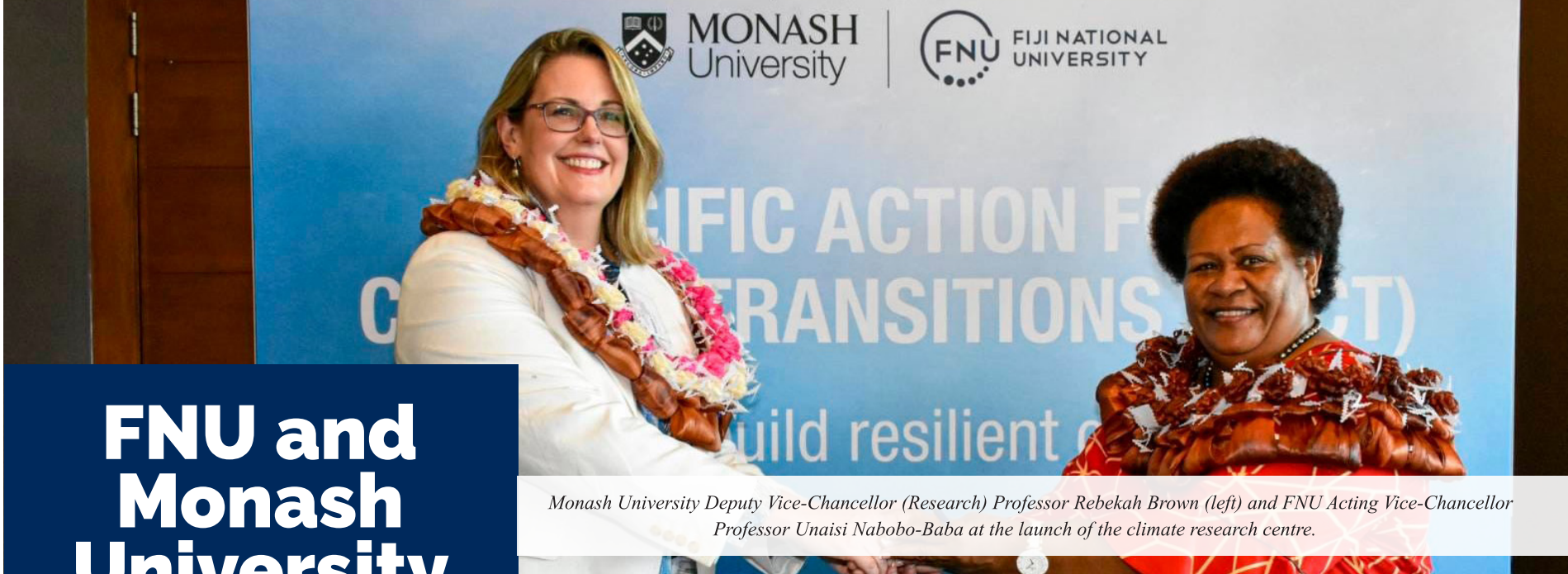
You need to be a fighter for your own rights and

success. You need to have courage to flow against the tide. You cannot drown yourself in the sea of challenges always facing women in all ages. Look at the positive role models around you.

You need to remove yourself from situations which do not recognise your worth, your talent, your skills, and your contribution to society. You can be the change yourself, before you can become an agent of change.

Article by;
Dr Zakia Ali-Chand | Assistant Professor
College of Humanities and Education





FNU and Monash University launch climate research centre

The newly-launched Pacific Action for Climate Transitions (PACT) research centre will focus on the critical links between business and climate change, and find real-world solutions for communities at the frontline of our changing environment.

The PACT centre is a world-first collaboration between the Fiji National University (FNU) and Monash University in Australia, and will be jointly

Monash University Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) Professor Rebekah Brown (left) and FNU Acting Vice-Chancellor Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba at the launch of the climate research centre.

based across both universities.

“Fiji is one of the many Pacific Island countries facing the drastic impacts of climate change on our nation and the livelihoods of many of our citizens are being affected,” FNU Acting Vice-Chancellor, Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba said.

“As the national tertiary institution, FNU is delighted to collaborate with neighbouring partners such as Australia’s Monash University to address the issues associated with the grand global challenge of climate action.”

The PACT partnership will address the business and economic implications of climate change, with world-leading academic researchers highly sought after by policymakers looking to effectively fund mitigation and

adaptation measures in the Pacific region and beyond.

Monash University Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), Professor Rebekah Brown said that the launch of the Centre reaffirms the deep and enduring relationship Monash University has built with the Pacific region over many years.

“The PACT Centre further enhances our capacity to find evidence-based global solutions to the challenges of our changing climate and beyond. We’re so proud to partner with FNU and to have the continuing support of the Government of Fiji on this flagship initiative,” Prof Brown said.

Individuals can access the link below to read the latest information from the PACT centre: <https://www.fnu.ac.fj/research/pacific-action-climate-transitions/>

Taslim aspires to develop welfare of Fijian seafarers

Fiji National University (FNU) staff member, Mohammed Taslim aspires to develop the welfare of Fijian seafarers and is working towards becoming part of the Fiji Maritime Academy (FMA) academic team.

The FMA Executive Officer and part-time lecturer of the Maritime Law unit said it was a goal of his to transition from being a support staff to being directly involved in teaching students.

“Being the EO at FMA, which is the only maritime training institute in Fiji, and at the same time getting involved in teaching cadets and senior officers is a demanding profession to be involved in,” the 33-year-old said.

“I would like to join the Academic team on a full-time basis and complete my PhD in Maritime Law so that I can contribute to developing the welfare of

Fijian Seafarers. My goal in life is to be a respected person who people see as a role model.”

As a lecturer for the TVET unit, Taslim (*pictured below*) says there should be more focus on TVET compared to Higher Education regionally and internationally.

“Looking at the maritime industry, seafarers earn a lot, and that money is brought to our country when they sail on foreign ships, contributing significantly towards our economy,” he explained.

Originally from Tuvurara Estate, Savusavu, Taslim has two children and is married to Misbah Takenat Tasneem, who is a teacher by profession. He spent most of his childhood and teenage years at Tabia in Labasa

“My father was a priest at the Tabia Mosque for 33 years, and I came to Suva after completing my secondary school at Labasa College to further my education,” he explained.

“I come from an average family and I’m proud to have my parents staying with me – it’s a huge blessing. I also have an older sister and a younger brother.”

Taslim attained his Master in Maritime Affairs (Education and Training) from World Maritime University (WMU), Malmo in Sweden, and a Post Graduate Diploma in Climate Change and a Bachelor of Science in Marine Science from the University of the South Pacific. He recently revalidated his Boat Master License (BML) Certificate of Competency.

“Maritime is a specialised area like Medicine and Aviation. I did my Masters in Maritime Affairs so that I can better understand the operations and legal aspects of the Maritime Industry. I am involved in many things related to maritime and every day there is something new to learn that I could then impart to my students,” Taslim said passionately.

“There is nothing that I consider difficult – Alhumdulillah, I am happy with whatever God has blessed me with.”



Krishna upskills in Accounting



A keen eye for detail and the desire to gain further insight culminated in Shinal Shivagni Krishna graduating with a Postgraduate Diploma in Accounting from the Fiji National University (FNU).

The 29-year-old Team Leader Internal Audit at Vinod Patel and Co Limited expressed a mixture of both relief and excitement after completing her studies at the College of Business, Hospitality and Tourism Studies (CBHTS).

“I feel a great sense of achievement and pride upon completing the Postgraduate Diploma in Accounting and finally graduating. It was a challenging and intensive journey, but it was all worth it,” she said.

Krishna’s (*pictured above*) success

story is an inspiration to aspiring accounting professionals and underscores the value of quality education.

“I chose my postgraduate studies at FNU to enhance my knowledge and skills in accounting, which is a crucial area in the business world. The Postgraduate Diploma in Accounting offered comprehensive coverage of accounting principles, financial analysis, and reporting, which I found to be highly relevant to my career goals.”

“My message to others who want to join the field of accounting is to have a passion for numbers and a keen eye for detail. Attention to detail is critical in this field, and one should be willing to put in the effort to continuously upgrade their skills and knowledge.”



Raqina

defies all odds

Becoming a parent did not deter Loata Tavata Raratabu Raqina’s thirst for education.

At eight months pregnant, Raqina pursued her academic journey to become a teacher and defied all odds by conquering her Bachelor of Education (Primary) degree.

A current teacher at Loma Primary School in the District of Nadroga/ Navosa, the 29-year-old successfully graduated from the Fiji National University’s, College of Humanities and Education (CHE) in March.

“I began my bachelor’s degree during the summer class of 2021 when I was eight months pregnant. The class lasted for six weeks, and I wasn’t sure how I was going to cope,” she shared.

“In January, I had a major assignment due and during the same week, I was admitted to the hospital, ready to deliver my baby girl. I quickly messaged my lecturer to explain my situation and he was very accommodating

and accepted my delayed submission.”

“I thanked the Lord, as it says in the Bible (Luke 18:37), *‘What is impossible with man is possible with God.’*

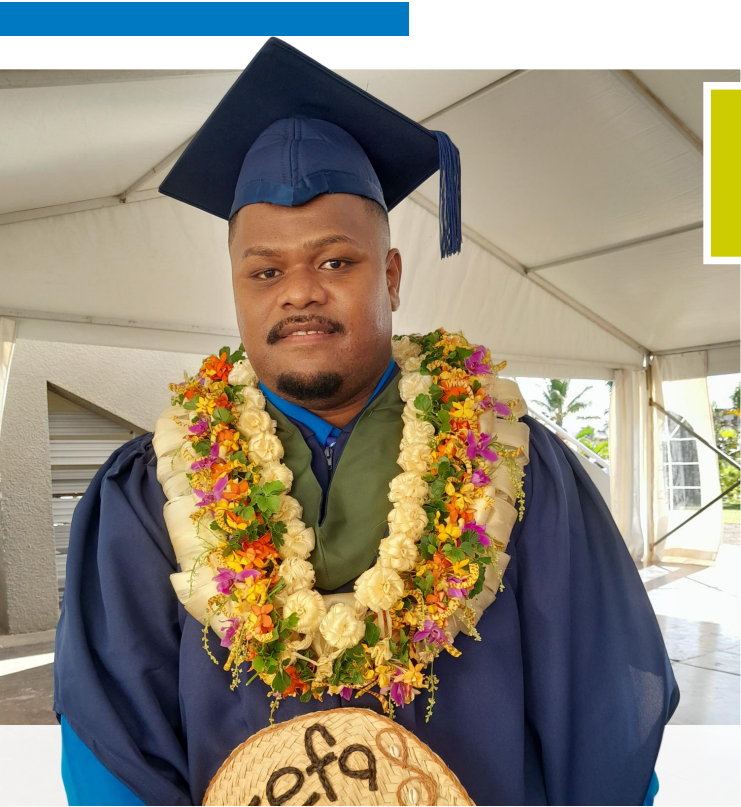
Raqina (*pictured right*) highlighted that teaching is a profession that requires empathy, love, and a lot of patience. She encouraged individuals to join this noble profession if they have the qualities of an educator.

“I would like to inspire someone out there with three powerful messages. The first one is to always remember that you must create opportunities through hard work and dedication,” she said.



Raratabu Raqina with her parents at the graduation ceremony.

“Secondly, love your family and put in the effort to achieve your dreams. Find your passion and pursue it with all your heart, and finally, it is never too late to become the person you have always wanted to be.”



Sadreu succeeds

Losing loved ones is a heart wrenching experience, and for Josefa Anthony Sadreu, this was a painful reality during his final year of studies at the Fiji National University (FNU).

From Bua in Vanua Levu, Sadreu said the passing of his father last year impacted his personal and academic journey. Guided by the words of encouragement of his late parent, the 25-year-old (*pictured left*) persevered through a difficult time and successfully graduated from FNU’s College of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (CAFF).

“My father would have wanted me to never give up, and to show strength despite my struggles,” he shared.

“In life, things will never be smooth sailing all the time. There will always be struggles. I even

went through financial difficulties during my journey, but I am so happy that I did not give up on my dream.”

“Despite the tough times, I have managed to receive my qualifications in the Bachelor of Science in Animal Husbandry programme from FNU.”

Sadreu was one of 1874 students who graduated during the March 2023 ceremonies.

He shared that being away from family was a sacrifice he underwent in order to graduate and contribute towards his family’s livelihood.

“Stay consistent towards your goals,” he said.

“There will be many unexpected challenges on your way but through your hard work, you will be able to achieve your dreams.”

Nothing is impossible - Raju



FijiNational University (FNU) graduate, Mansi Raju believes that there is nothing impossible in life.

Fueled by the desire to succeed and the support of her family and friends, Raju proved this to be true during her graduation from the University’s National Training and Productivity Centre (NTPC).

The 23-year-old (*pictured left*) always had keen interest in this trade and had a wish to undertake and learn more

about Automotive trade to improve her skills. She was excited that finally her dream had come true.



Mansi Raju with her family at the graduation ceremony.

“It is a dream come true, as many challenges came along the way and through family, friends and workmates support, things always turned into positive direction,” she said.

From Olosara, Sigatoka, Raju is currently employed by Niranjans Autoport Limited as an Automotive Electrician.

“The interesting thing about the Automotive Engineering programme is that you will learn something new each day,” she shared.

“By studying this course, I was able to keep up with new and upcoming technology related to my field of work.”



Loki aims to light up his village in the Solomons

Wilfred Loki will use the qualifications and skills he attained at the Fiji National University (FNU) to ensure that his village in the Solomon Islands has electricity.

The 25-year-old from Nela, Santa Cruz Islands in the Temotu Province of the Solomon Islands, graduated with a Bachelor of Engineering with Honours (Electrical) from FNU's College of Engineering, Science and Technology (CEST).

"I studied this programme because we are from a village that does not have electricity, I want to provide a source of electricity to my people, and that is what I will do once I am home," he said.

Loki (*pictured left with family*) was also awarded the Telecom Fiji Limited (TFL) Topper in CEST prize during the March graduation ceremony. He attributed the success to his mother, who is his biggest supporter and inspiration in his life.

"My father passed when I was just about to turn three years old, and my mum has been my biggest inspiration. I want to thank my mum for performing both the roles of my mother and father as I was growing up," he said emotionally.

"I am grateful to God, for the wonderful opportunity, and would also like to thank the sponsor, TFL, as well as my FNU lecturers, my colleagues, the students, and my family."

The ambitious Solomon Islander said the timing for the award was perfect, and that he will use the \$1000 prize money to pay for his airfare back to the Solomon Islands.

"I have been away from home for four years now. I came to Fiji in 2019, the following year COVID-19 hit Fiji, and I have been here since. I am excited to go back and see my mother."

During COVID-19, the regional student faced a lot of hardships, but he came on top striving through the support of his friends and family.

"Surviving in a foreign country is hard, but I stayed with my aunt, Rose Kitua and a friend of mine, by the name of James, paid for my fees in the final year, and with the money I was paid at attachment, I paid for my lunch and transport."

FNU Acting Vice-Chancellor, Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba congratulated the fresh graduate on winning the TFL topper award.

"From today onwards, you will be well-positioned to make good decisions for all of us, you will contribute to the Fijian society, to Pacific society. I know that our Wantok from Melanesia took the most coveted prize. Congratulations, Wantok!" she said.

Loki's advice to students is to keep working hard and never give up.

Recycling as a WISH Fiji intervention for household solid waste management

Whilst there are services available in urban areas for waste management, they are quite limited-to-no services available for rural areas in the Pacific, let alone Fiji. Dumping and burning is the most common household solid waste management practice in rural areas, even though it represents the worst type of solid waste management.

Baseline surveys conducted by the Watershed Interventions for Systems Health (WISH) Fiji identified inadequate solid waste management practice as one of the risk factors contributing to the spread of enteric diseases such as leptospirosis, typhoid, dengue fever and other skin diseases.

These surveys were done across 29 rural communities in Fiji. Additionally, through the consultative Water, Safety and Sanitation Plan (WSSP) process with the community, actions were identified to address improper waste management practices. Waste separation and recycling were identified by communities to address poor household solid waste management.

In 16 communities of the Central Division, this intervention was delivered in three phases. Firstly, there was an information-sharing stage whereby communities were enlightened on when, how and what to recycle and burn. The training on recycling was facilitated by a local consultant identified through local networks.



Kelera Naivalu

No two communities are the same, so the approach to disseminating this information varied across communities. The group learning was practical for the iTaukei communities, but house-to-house learning for the Fijians of Indian descent communities. This is due to the diverse structure and makeup of each community.

Recycling points and burn areas were constructed in the second phase. Sites for recycling points were deliberately identified for ease of accessibility to nearby households and collection for transportation to the recycling plant. On the other hand, the burn area location was identified taking into consideration the weather, wind direction and accessibility.

Lastly, a refresher training was conducted to produce an action plan on how to manage the collection of recyclable waste, from individual households to the recycling point, right up to its delivery to the recycling plant in Lami, Suva.

In addition to achieving the objective of the project, this intervention aims to encourage more community-driven actions. It also promotes sustainable household waste management practices and positive behaviour change, which in turn will contribute to achieving a healthier community.

WISH Fiji is implemented by the Fiji National University (under the Fiji Institute of Pacific Health Research), University of Sydney, Edith Cowan University and the



A project by the WISH Fiji.

Wildlife Conservation Society. WISH Fiji is funded by the Australian Government's Indo-Pacific Centre for Health Security and Bloomberg Philanthropies' Vibrant Oceans Initiative.

For more information contact:

Timoci Naivalulevu –

Email: timoci.naivalulevu@fnu.ac.fj

Article by;
Kelera Naivalu | WISH Fiji



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MY FNU

Talanoa

with our Alumni



Ruci Akauola with her family at the graduation ceremony.

Akauola driven by humble beginnings

A bamboo-thatched mud house, a bed made of porous grass, and a kerosene lantern as a source of light did not deter Ruci Sainimoli Sera Akauola from working hard to achieve the collective dreams of her family.

Akauola is a living testament of how faith in God makes anything possible, including academic ambitions such as graduating from tertiary studies.

The 22-year-old from Lomati in Matuku, with maternal links to Sawakasa, Qoma in Tailevu, successfully completed a Bachelor of Engineering (Civil) with Honours from the College of Engineering, Science and Technology (CEST) at the Fiji National University.

Education

For Akauola, the transition from secondary to tertiary studies was a challenge she endured.

From having to move homes within Viti Levu, and starting from scratch due to unprecedented circumstances, life was not easy for the young lass.

“I spent majority of my primary school years in Suva and Lautoka, completing Years 1-7 at Davuilevu Methodist Primary, Dilkusha Girls in Suva and then Saru MGM Primary School in Lautoka,” Akauola shared.

“Whilst I was studying at Jai Narayan College, we lived in a bamboo shack house and there was no electricity. All the studying that I did at night was done under the beams of a kerosene lantern,” she said.

“However, I still had hopes for a better future

and used my situation at the time to motivate me to do better.”

“We moved to Lautoka in 2012 and during Tropical Cyclone Winston in 2016, our house was blown away, so we had to start from scratch, we found temporary shelter at the Saru Assembly of God (AOG) Church until our house was rebuilt.”

Akauola then completed her high school studies at Natabua High School in Lautoka.

Whilst sure that she planned to pursue studies and a career in the field of engineering, Akauola began doing her own research on suitable tertiary options aligned to her interests.

“I chose FNU, because I believed that they would directly have an influence and be the foundation towards my career choice,” she highlighted.

“I had done research regarding the engineering programmes and saw that it was relevant to the engineering work life, and also because of the practicals associated with the theory taught at the college.”

Despite being away from home at FNU, Akauola found a new family in the residents of the Derrick Campus Hostel in Samabula during her four-year programme.

Career

The soft-spoken Akauola is currently a Technical Assistant at the Leak Detection Unit of the Water Authority of Fiji’s (WAF) Shipping Depot.

“I assisted the team by updating works carried out within the week, to assess the minimum night

flows used by each area, and to indicate the leaks that might be present within a pipeline that would need attending to,” she explained.

“If my task is completed properly, I save my team’s time, by indicating places that need immediate attention and areas that would need attending to later.”

Family

“My family and I have been through a lot of hardships, and I contribute my success to them,” the aspiring engineer said.

“My parents have done their best to support me throughout my years of studies and I am grateful for their lives. My father, Rusiate Vulaono, was the sole bread winner of the family. My mum, Ulita Tokimailakeba, was a domestic worker, but she left for a contract overseas as a caregiver last year.”

“Being the eldest in my family, I always strived to be a better role model for my younger siblings.”

“In 2019, I lost my mentor and grandfather, and I thought my world had ended. However, I had my younger siblings looking up to me, and my grandmother to take care of.”

“Life hasn’t been so easy for us all. My grandmother also suffered from a mild stroke and is currently recovering.”

“I am hoping that graduating from a Bachelor of Engineering (Civil) with Honours will likely ensure my family’s needs are fulfilled, and I intend to keep on making them proud. With God’s guidance and protection, anything is possible.”

Words of Wisdom

“Life has not been one smooth ride, but I still had hopes for a better future.

“The circumstance and situation that I encountered at every step of my life, motivated me to do better, and I am grateful.

“Even though I was enrolled in a traditionally male-dominated programme, I am grateful for God’s guidance.

“The support I had from both my family and friends at home, as well as from my new family at FNU, especially the tireless efforts of my lecturers, helped me pull through.”

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Division Head: Director Marketing and Communications, Karen Lobendahn
Writers: Aachal Chand, Jennis Naidu, Pravin Narain, Nicolette Chambers, Fotagkauriro Aisea
Contributors: Chancellor, Dr Adi Kesaia Seniloli, Acting Vice-Chancellor, Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba, Assistant Professor, Dr Zakia Ali-Chand, Kelera Naivalu

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