

January 2, 2011

A one-day workshop on Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development- Challenges and Opportunities for Youths in Rural Communities was conducted by FNU Labasa Campus Coordinator and Lecturer, Mr. Gaya Prasad at the Nabukadogo Village for youths of the area.

The objectives of the workshop were to identify and discuss Challenges and Opportunities of entrepreneurial activities for Youths in their community, analyze the impact of culture on the success and sustainability of business activities in rural areas, understand the key features of entrepreneurship and small business management and identify sustainable entrepreneurial activities and ways of implementing them.

A total of 35 youths from Naduri, Nabuladogo and Nalalau villages attended the workshop to acquire information, knowledge and skills on the various opportunities available to them to further their aims and aspirations in trying to make a useful leaving in the rural areas. During the workshop, the youths identified entrepreneurial opportunities that were available within the village environment which could be capitalized on to venture out into various successful business initiatives.

Mr. Prasad said that the growing numbers of unemployed youths in Fiji are not only a growing challenge to the government and planners but also a concern to the parents as they are unable to contribute meaningfully towards the social and economic development of themselves, their family and the nation as a whole. While the above can be partly blamed on the youths themselves, a significant share must also be attributed to the bureaucratic nature of the organizations formed to assist them and their overwhelming processes and procedures that inhibit these youths from exploring their full potential and to participate in various initiatives that could realise their goals.

He said that a number of youth groups have been formed in Fiji with a view to bringing the youths together to help achieve their aims and aspirations and ultimately realize their full potential. However there has been varying degrees of success towards realization of the aims and objectives of the youth groups. While the youths are individually and collectively responsible for this, their success is largely depended on the manner in which the various stakeholders contribute and play a meaningful role in assisting these youths. Without appropriate support and assistance, the youth groups' performance is severely impaired and the strategic aims and objectives of forming these youth groups compromised.

In his opening speech, the Senior Youth Officer, Mr. Eminoni Roradua emphasised the governments' commitment to provide roadmap for the youths to contribute directly to nation building. He stressed that the youths of our country, particularly those who are not longer at school need to explore alternative means of livelihood. This will assist them in being usefully occupied in economic activities and improve their livelihood.

The Manger for the Northern Development Program Mr. Waisele Tuidama, in his closing address stressed that the youths needed to focus on identifying business opportunities around them in the rural areas and make use of the resources available. Businesses such as fishing, planting crops in the large areas of available land, piggery farms etc could be successfully explored as these had large potential for growth but he pointed out that the business must make profit in order to be sustainable. He urged that everyone in a village must learn to accept the changes happening to the world around them. Then only they could adapt themselves to these changes.

According to Mr. Prasad the workshop provided the youths of the area the opportunity to have a closer look at their environment and generate ideas for new venture creation. The workshop managed to create the enthusiasm and interest in youths to take a more dynamic role in exploring opportunities available to

them within their environment. They were encouraged to vigorously pursue them through appropriate channels to improve their socio economic position and that of the village.

He said that many workshops are being held for rural communities but the manner in which the ideas generated have been successfully implemented to positively affect the livelihood of the rural dwellers is really what justifies spending resources and energy on such initiatives. Such workshops should not be seen as an end in itself but a means of achieving broader development objectives leading to improvement of the living standards which would lead to overall economic development.

As a result of the workshop, youths have identified certain projects which would be taken to other level. It is hoped that with the assistance of relevant stakeholders it is hoped that these projects would be turned into successful and sustainable businesses.