



Changing Faces Women's Leadership Seminar Women as Innovators and Entrepreneurs

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Oahu ♦ Maui

Draft Action Plan

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“Action Plan”

Issue/Problem Statement

In 2017 a national census took place in Fiji but the Government did not release statistics on literacy rates. However, in 2016 a Borgen project report stated that Fiji had a literacy rate of 33.6%. There isn't much reported on or said publicly in the media about Fiji's literacy problem, so it is difficult to attain an overall assessment of the problem or what I would claim to be a crisis in this day and age.

The educational system in Fiji is the primary reason children move up to the next class without learning to read. Teachers have quotas to meet and much of the local politics promotes an educated population with large amounts of graduates. However, the reality on the ground is bleak. This is especially the case in lower socio-economic settlements and rural communities. There are other contributing factors such as language and dialect barriers, particularly relating to the indigenous Fijians who have numerous dialects still spoken in village settings. Technology is another factor as many children prefer smart phones and tablets over books. Television programs, movies, and online videos are very popular, and many children spend their time watching these while there is very little emphasis on reading or at the very least, knowing how to read. There are cases where grown adults cannot read and there are students entering tertiary institutions who struggle with reading fluently and this becomes evident in their assessments.

Vunilagi Book Club was created to “promote” literacy in a squatter settlement in Suva. I surveyed the community in 2017 for the Methodist Church of Fiji and Rotuma, during which I learned that many children in the community could not read. I came up with an idea to start a book club that children could attend to engage with high quality literature that would otherwise be unavailable to them. It was to be a safe and fun setting with volunteers who would read and engage the children in conversation about themselves and the books read. The children were to be given something to eat and drink before going home.

The objective of the Vunilagi reading sessions was to provide a safe, fun, and nourishing space that was conducive for learning. What should children learn in the space of 30-45 minutes? First and foremost, that they are valued and important. Secondly, that reading and books gives access to the literary world and teaches them to use their mind to think and imagine. And thirdly, the book club should inspire the children to “want” to learn how to read.

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Mission & Project Description

Vunilagi Book Club promotes childhood literacy through reading activities, resources, and support.

I would like to register Vunilagi either as an organization or company. Vunilagi has been holding reading sessions for a year and a half now and I believe it is time to transition into areas where we can begin to create reading resources that are identifiable to children in Fiji or even the region. I want to start by writing a children's book that will be translated into the Fijian, Hindi, and Rotuman languages.

The long term goal would be to promote literacy through poetry competitions, school engagement, rural support networks, and scholarships.

Personal Role

My role as founder would be to set up the organization, ensure the vision is sharpened, and highlight illiteracy as an issue that requires social action. The long term goal would be to promote literacy through poetry competitions, school engagement, rural support networks, and scholarships.