Children between 11 and 13 years of age designed posters for the MDG Poster Competition. (UNV 2010)

IVD 2010: Stories from Fiji

The celebration in 2010 was composed of several events, such as,
Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) poster competition which provided an opportunity to address the issues of the MDGs in Fiji from children’s perspectives and Family Fun Walk and Sports Day with more than 200 participants.

The National Steering Committee (NSC) in Fiji has been celebrating International Volunteers Day (IVD) ever since the 5th of December was declared as IVD by the United Nations (UN). The NSC, which has been in the forefront of celebrating IVD, is comprised of the national and international volunteering agencies.

The celebration in 2010 was composed of several events, such as, Volunteer of the Year Award, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) poster competition, Family Fun Walk and Sports Day, and volunteer appreciation evening.

The Volunteer of the Year Award Competition was held in two categories: national and international. Sneh Naicker was given the National Volunteer award for her significant contribution as a volunteer with St. John’s Association for the past 13 years and also for her assistance to the local hospitals and communities during the recent period of natural disasters.

Jacque Koroi, who was a youth advocate in Fiji and also the former President of the Pacific Youth Council, was given the runner-up award for her contribution to the National Youth Council in the Pacific Island nations region.

The winner of the International volunteer category was Dr. Maung Maung Mon from Myanmar. Dr. Mon was a former UNV volunteer and served as a UNV Medical Officer from 1988 to 1994. Later he joined the Ministry of Health and continued working there until his retirement in 2007. Since his youth, Dr. Mon has actively volunteered for the Red Cross Movement in Myanmar and he successfully set up the Red Cross Office in Tavua (in the West of Viti Levu). He also received the Fiji Red Cross Community Spirit Medal in 2010.

The runner-up of the International volunteer category were given to Jenny Brown and Kaye Elliot. Both these volunteers have been associated with Austraining International and helped set up the LifeLines office in Ba (west of Viti Levu).

MDG Poster Competition
The idea for the MDG Poster Competition was conceived by UNV volunteer Masanobu Yasukawa. When Masanobu attended the 63rd UN Public Information/Non-Governmental Organization (DPI/NGO) Conference in Melbourne in August 2010, he revealed to various NGOs the limited trickling down of information on the MDGs at the community level. Further, Masanobu chose to focus on children between 11 and 16 years of age (i.e. in two categories 11-13 years and 14-16 years) and involve them in designing the MDG icons with commitment statements.

This initiative has provided an opportunity to address the issues of the MDGs in Fiji from children’s perspectives. The winning nominations along with selected drawings will be featured by United Nations Volunteers (UNV) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2011 in various publications to promote the MDGs.

Celebrations on December 4 2010
Since IVD 2010 fell on Sunday which was an official holiday in Fiji, all local events were organized on Saturday, the 4th of December. The National Steering Committee in cooperation with the Fiji Association for Sports and National Olympic Committee (FASANOC) organized a Family Fun Walk and Sports Day which commemorated both International Volunteers Day and also World Aids Day.

More than 200 individuals participated in the Fun Walk which started early in the morning and was livened up by a session of Zumba aerobics. Knut Ostby, the UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, and Mahamane Baby, the Caribbean and Pacific Portfolio Manager, were among those who participated in this event. More than 100 volunteers from various organizations also participated in the Sport Day events. Many joined various sports groups for football or rugby and had a pleasant day, meeting volunteers from various organizations.

Launching of the Film Festival in the Pacific
This year, the UNV Country Office in Fiji provided videos for the Share the Story Campaign with a focus on the work undertaken by UN volunteers, especially nationals, working on the National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE) project. The online film festival commenced at 3 p.m. Suva Time and about 25 individuals gathered to view the launching ceremony and others joined via the Internet to provide their comments. The Fiji film was followed by another video from the Pacific – Vanuatu.

The Film Festival featured three stories from the Pacific and certainly brought volunteerism in the region to the forefront. The voluntary works by partners of the project were also highlighted in these stories. Not to forget
that the UNV Country Office Team hopes to build on this momentum in 2011 in recognition of the International Year of the Youth and International Year of the Volunteer + 10 campaigns.

**Volunteer Appreciation Evening**
The final event for the IVD celebrations 2010 was the Volunteer Appreciation evening held in Suva on Monday, 6 December. This event was led by Knut Ostby, who opened the evening with a speech on the importance of volunteerism and its contribution to the achievement of the MDGs. This was followed by the presentation of awards to the winners and runner-up of the Volunteer of the Year Award Competition and dinner. Members from various volunteer involving organizations and government departments as well as private sector partners were also present on that evening event.

Sustainable Development Goal: