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Fiji: Solutions for a quality education

Fiji is a set of 330 islands and only 110 are inhabited. The islands are located about 2,880 miles off the coast of eastern Australia. In some parts of the island they are very developed with education but, unfortunately other parts are not. Fiji is a tourist destination stop for many people across the world. The island receives about 400,000 to 500,000 of tourists each year. Unfortunately, they only see the resort side of the island. Elsewhere, the island is economically challenged, and this is hurting the population by not providing high quality schools. The education in Fiji has improved by a degree in the private school system but not in the public schools. Parents can't afford to send their children to school, or it is too far away from home. There is an opportunity to improve the education system by having corporations work together with volunteer organizations.

Fiji's population is about 929,276 and most of the citizens live on the two main islands; Viti Levu and Vanua Levu. These are the main islands and the rest of the country is significantly more rural. The islands land mass is a little bit smaller than the state of New Jersey, located in the United States. The urban and rural percentage are somewhat equal with about fifty five percent in urban population and about forty-five percent in the rural population. The government system for Fiji is a parliamentary democracy ("Fiji: Population."). Fiji was a British colony for ninety-six years but then gained independence in 1970. The power is split between president Jioji Konrot, who is the head of state and prime minister Frank Bainimarama who is head of the government. The major crops in Fiji are bananas, pineapples, rice, and ginger. The major exports are fish, sugar, oil, and cereal. Fiji's land is fifty five percent forests, twenty-three percent agriculture land, nine percent arable land, four percent permanent, nine and half percent permanent pasture, and twenty one percent other. ("Fiji Land Use."). Fiji does a lot of farming, but the average farm size is only about fifteen acres. Since Fiji is right below the equator, the average temperature year around is from eighty-eight degrees to seventy-nine degrees Fahrenheit. Their winter is from May to November and is about eighty degrees. The rainy season for Fiji is from December to April which is their summer.

The typical family in Fiji is a multigenerational home with several people living in the house. The homes in Fiji may range from scrap metal covered structures to small homes that may be found in the United States. Marriages are arranged in Fiji and the female moves into the male family's home. Fiji has three official languages which are English, Fijian, and Hindustani. The family's diet consists of sweet potatoes, rice, coconut, and fish. Some more traditional dishes are cassarava, kokodo, and lovo. Lovo, for example, is a traditional cooking method where the food is wrapped in palm fronds and banana leaves and roasted in an earthen pit lined with hot stones. Fijians get their food by growing it or markets on the island. The most common jobs on Viti Levu and Vanua Levu are the sugar industry, fishing, and working at tourist attractions such as hotels. Fijians make \$2.32 per hour and is the lowest amount a worker can be paid. Since most Fijians have a low income it can be hard for them to purchase necessary products due to taxes. Families have some access to health care and schools but there is not many and the few that are on the island are not very good. Typical families have access water and electricity but may only work a few hours in the evening if it even works at all.

In Fiji the typical day for a child is waking up and assisting their parents for the day. The little girls normally help the mothers around the house and the boys help the fathers with fishing or maintenance that needs to be done. Only a few children attend school due to the distance or expense of education. The public education system is run by the government and lacks sufficient funding. There are private schools

but unfortunately those need to be paid for and most families on the island can't afford it. There are not many public schools on the main islands and the government has not done anything for that to change. Since education is the route for every successful life story, missing out on educational opportunities may be impacting the poverty rate. Improving the educational system would allow children to get the training they need to get a job and succeed in life. For example, the tourist industry may be a place that more individuals could get jobs. Partnering with corporations may allow Fiji to address some of its developmental related needs especially in the area of education and infrastructure. In today's society it is more and more common for corporations to be interested in not just the development and selling of goods and services but to be giving back to society.

Corporate social responsibility is how a company manages their business and produce a positive impact on society (Baker "Definitions of corporate social responsibility - What is CSR?" 2004). Corporate social responsibility is a strategy that companies use to give back to society while making themselves look more appealing. The idea of a corporation giving back to society is not new. However in the 1990s, companies were expanding rapidly throughout the globe. In this expansion, companies often found challenging environments to operate such as new regulations. In these challenging environments, companies found that they were more successful if they gave back to the new communities they were entering. The research in this area has shown that a good corporate social responsibility effort will lead to "increased customer loyalty and the attraction of new customers, as well as developing new areas of opportunity for products and markets" (Husted and Allen, 2007).

Companies such as Toms Shoes and the Walt Disney Company use corporate social responsibility to help manage and make their companies look good. The media plays a big impact in today's world so commercials and posts on social media help companies practice corporate social responsibility. Toms Shoes practices the "One for One" move which promises every one pair of shoes sold another one is donated to a child in need of shoes. Another company that practices corporate social responsibility is the Walt Disney Company that has been ranked the "Worlds Most Admired Companies" by Fortune. The companies' goal is to make communities stronger by "providing hope, happiness, and comfort to kids and families who need it most." The company gave more than 400 million dollars to nonprofit organizations that project their moto. ("Top 20 Socially Responsible Companies 2017: Smart Recruiters" 2018). While some companies practice corporate social responsibility solely to benefit the community, many companies see this effort as a way to gain more customers and to maintain loyal customers they already have.

The Fiji Water Company is a well know organization that sells high quality water around the world. They are known for their water to be "Untouched by man, earths finest water" ("about us"). The company was founded in 1996 and is one of the largest water companies in the world. It is interesting that they chose their company name from the small island country. In 2007 the Fiji Water Foundation was launched as a charitable foundation. The company claims to "provide clean water access to rural communities, building educational facilities and infrastructure that benefit children, teenagers and adults, and providing access to healthcare services to underprivileged communities" ("about us"). The company does follow through with education grants, but they do not appear to build school buildings that the country needs ("FIJI Water School Grants 2018 Grant Recipients"). It would seem logical that as this company has benefited from the name "Fiji", they would be more interested in better outcomes in their corporate social responsibility efforts. It is also reasonable to question the company's efforts as it has been in existence for 12 years with no apparent improvement to be found in the educational system.

In the case of the Fiji Water Foundation, there may be an opportunity to improve their impact on the island community. If the Fiji Water Foundation were to build schools and work with another organization such as Teachers without Borders, the population may be better served than their current efforts. Teachers without Borders is an international organization that was launched in 2000, to reach students across the

world with the education they need. They have locations all around the world including Brazil, Haiti, and South Africa but unfortunately not Fiji. This organization has received the 2018 Luxembourg Peace Prize for Outstanding Peace Education ("Teachers without Borders"). These teachers who go to remote countries are qualified enough and most of them can translate and teach English. The qualified teachers go to a community in a country for a certain amount of time to educate the children in the community. It may be beneficial for the Fiji Water Foundation to develop a relationship with Teachers without Borders. After all, the delivery of education is not likely the expertise of Fiji Water. Requesting Teachers without Borders to have a location in Fiji could change the education system for the people by bringing in experts in teaching.

It is important to measure the impact of the educational efforts. One measure that is often used is the literacy rate at various points in the student's education. Recently it has been found in the news where the pacific islands, include Fiji has not been maintaining data of the country's literacy rates. The issue had grown to the point where the United Nations has gotten involved as they too had been giving money to the island. Every other country involved in the United Nations track their literacy rates in their country and keep the data to see what can be improved. It will be important for Fiji to fix this problem and begin to track the literacy rates in order to continue receiving funding from the United Nations. By partnering with Teachers Without Borders, the company can help Fiji measure and get back on track with keeping their data. The Fiji Water Foundation efforts would be better if its efforts were measured and improved over time. By not measuring the educational efforts, it would be logical to question how the money is spent and if it is worthwhile.

In order to improve educational outcomes, additional solutions are necessary to improve the system. Primary schools is funded by the government but Secondary education is critical as well. In the process of constructing schools it would be better if there was no attendance fee because most of the children indeed cannot afford the education. The Fiji Water company already does help the schools by donating some supplies but if they were to build actual school buildings it would change the island. If the public around the world were to find out they were building educational facilities it would make them want to purchase more of the company's products. A building permit would be necessary for construction, but it takes about twenty-eight days now to have one, then after receiving one construction could take place. ("28 Working Days for Building Permits.") Administrators and teachers would need to be hired so partnering with the company Teachers without Borders would allow educators to come into the county. Teachers without Borders is an organization that allows educators to apply for a spot and be sent all over the world for a certain time period and educate the students in that country. Teachers without Borders does not have a Fiji location set up so pairing up with this company would allow for them to expand their organization.

Another solution to fix education rate in Fiji would be creating a home-schooling program. Home schooling is popular in the Unites States. Over time, Teachers without Borders may be able to teach parents to homeschool their children. The education may need to focus on the parents first so they can help their children. Mothers in communities could be sent materials such as textbooks and notebooks and several students could be educated together. On the other hand, the children educated in schools may be able to share their learnings with the parents. Home schooling is better than no education at all and families have been struggling to find a good education program to follow. ("Regulations for Homeschooling Overseas (Fiji)"). Some families struggle on finding a curriculum. The government could pass a law that allows anyone children could be homeschooled and find a suitable curriculum. The Fiji Water company could also sponsor this solution by donating some supplies if they have not already and would not just help many students who want an education but would so make their company look more appealing.

The internet may help the homeschooling system for the children in rural communities or separate islands. The communities would need the technology and internet access to be able to pursue the program. While

the main cities have suitable internet access, rural areas and the many smaller islands suffer from poor or no internet service. In order to improve education and provide homeschooling in these areas, the internet connect must be improved. The technology company Samsung donates a lot of money to nonprofits and grants. Their focus is education, healthcare, and environmental sustainability. Creating a homeschooling program online would allow the company to practice corporate social responsibility. Another company who has donated twenty two million dollars in the past twenty two years called Vodafone could also be willing to assist with the internet installing process for a homeschooling program. Vodafone is a telecommunications company that mainly works in Asia, Africa, Europe, and Oceania. In October of 2017 the company donated supplies to a school on Taveuni which is one of Fiji's islands. The supplies mainly consisted of paper, writing utensils, and paints. If Vodafone were to partner up with Fiji and there educational system it would continue to practice corporate social responsibility. With internet access in the schools it would allow the students to use a homeschooling program as an alternative for public schools. A grass roots donation company called Global Giving could allow internet to get to the communities. The company sets up an account for the cause and people can donate money to install internet access. This may be another option to raise money to support internet access and expansion through rural areas. Similar to Kickstarter or GoFundme, it may be possible to set up a campaign to meet the islands financial needs in this area. If it was connected with some large corporations such as Fiji Water or Samsung it may be very successful for not only for the islands but for the companies involved as well.

Education has a very strong impact on food security. The public-school community has been poor for quite some time and the trend has not changed. ("Education and Schools in Fiji.") As in the United States, breakfast and lunch could be served at school during the day. In order to help the children learn about quality food and the food preparation process, the students could assist, and this would teach them proper food nutrition as well. A garden could take place on the school yard growing fruits and vegetables for the class. This would allow the students to also learn how to grow food and use the products of the garden for lunches. This vegetable garden has worked in other schools such as Martin Luther King Junior Middle School in Berkeley, California. ("Middle School Students Grow Their Own Lunch") The Junior Land care Australia allows schools to apply for grants to create a garden. ("Grants for Gardens") Education is the root to everything these days and most of the time if a citizen does not have a proper education is can be very difficult to maintain a sustainable job. If one does not make an income is can be difficult to put food on the table and provide for themselves or others.

In conclusion education in Fiji needs to be fixed because education is will lead to improved life on the island. The best way to do so is to construct multiple no attendance fee schools around the main islands Viti Levu and Vanua Levu. Creating these schools would allow students to go to school and receive a quality education and allow teachers across the world come to Fiji and change the education outcome in Fiji. The Fiji Water Company and Teachers without Borders will have a large impact on making this positive change. In addition to the schools, homeschooling and internet access will help reach smaller islands and rural areas of the country. Fiji Water has a program where they donate money to the island to help the community but there has not been a huge change needed considering it has been twelve years since the program was set up. Fiji water, and other companies would benefit from improving their efforts in Corporate Social Responsibility as it is good for the communities as well as improving customer loyalty and sales. Setting up education programs and schools in Fiji will help the students to be very successful in life and increase food security because education it the root to everything. With the new quality education not only receiving education but if the garden was set for the classrooms it would also teach the students about the importance of food and how to take care of it.

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