

FIJI UPLIFT DISTRIBUTION REPORT 26TH AUGUST TO 9TH OCTOBER 2014

The latest distribution to date in Fiji was by far our biggest ever, fitting out 4 bras each to just under 25,000 women equating to just under 100,000 bras to 18 distribution centres around Viti Levu and the Malolo Islands in the Yasawa Group. This mammoth and uncharted journey was made possible with the countless volunteers and donors and sponsors in Australia, Fiji and far yonder in Rwanda and the United States. Our biggest and endless gratitude as always is reserved to the countless donors here in NSW, ACT and Victoria, the tireless Uplift Project volunteers in Melbourne, ACT and NSW. The freight companies, Gibson in Melbourne and C.T. Freight in Sydney. My counterpart in Fiji Ms Tulia Takala for patiently working with Fiji Customs in releasing all the cargoes and all our Cargo handlers and bra fitters who also worked tirelessly and with a smile permanently fixed on their faces for the 6 weeks of distributions.

During the six weeks there were 18 distributions done and we finally got a roster going as we now have 8 boys (cargo handlers) and around 20 bra fitters. Each distribution requires a minimum of 4 cargo handlers and 12 fitters. Each distribution centre is about an average of 3 hours' drive from Suva and we always travel with a hired 3 tonne truck and a hired 12 seater mini bus for our fitters. Each distribution centre is picked according to requests that are received from mainly someone that is originally from that area. Once contact is made then we worked with them for organising our 3 tonne truck and refreshments for the Uplift crew. If travel time is outside of 2 hours then we ask the contact if refreshments can be provided upon arrival at 7am before setting up for 8am start. Morning tea break is around 10am and then lunch at 1pm, afternoon tea break at 3pm and then fitting until the last lady is done, which is normally around 4pm and in some cases if there are over 2000 ladies then they would finish around 7pm. We normally get an estimate of how many ladies are expected. If it's around 1000 ladies then we pack 1000 of each sizes. This way we are guaranteed that we won't turn any one girl/woman away for a lack of sizes. We now have 3 nurses on our fitting crew and they talk to the breastfeeding mothers especially on the importance of alternating their breasts whilst feeding their babies. We had witnessed a lot of one sided breasts due to the misconception that the other breast is empty so it's not being given to the baby at all. At this distribution we were also able to give out 2 prosthetic breasts each to an average of 2-3 breast cancer survivors at each distributions. A total of 16 ladies altogether received prosthetic bras and four of its special bras during this 6 weeks distributions.

For this distribution to go ahead, we had received 4 freights in Suva. One was a container packed straight from Intimo with just over 15,000 bras. 2 lots of freight via Gibson that was packed by Uplift National Director Liz and the Victorian Uplift with just under 20,000 bras. Final freight was from our garage in Sydney with the help of NSW Uplift Coordinator Anna via C.T. Freight with just under 40,000 bras. A reserve of around 20,000 bras was left over from the December 2013 distributions that was already in Suva. After this recent distribution of just under 100,000 bras (just the mention of these mammoth number is still unreal and hard to imagine that only 3 years ago we were still running to the 2nd hand shops to make up my shortage of bras), we now have a reserve of about 5,000 bras waiting for the next distribution of hopefully later on of this month of February 2015. A total of \$5889.04 (\$2217.52) was the cost of releasing the freight in Suva. We were able to pay for this upfront and with the sale of 500 bras at \$5 each to friends and families working in Suva and the sale of 2nd hand clothes and shoes that sometimes comes in with the bra donations we were able to recoup our freight costs. We have been approached by some ladies in various distribution centres if we could sell them extra bras, and I've rejected their request as I saw it as unfair for there will always be some lucky ladies with money and I wanted every lady to be seen as equal with the Uplift Project irrespective of their monetary powers for once in their life.

Some quotes heard and received from forever grateful recipients of Uplift Project:

From a retired teacher at the distribution centre in Wailevu Wainibuka:

This project came straight from heaven. I've owned only one "going out" bra. Nora (a well-known Chinese General Store in Suva) is no use to me because they only sell small bras. So I normally go searching for any bra in the second hand shop and then come and amend it so it fits me. I wished my two daughters were here to see this. We are so blessed to have Uplift Project coming to us.

On a funnier note, another lady from Wailevu Wainibuka:

I just want to wear my bra and walk around without any top. And now I want to see if my husband will take notice.....then they all laugh..... At least I now own something that is nice and expensive that I can show off to my female cousins that all have paying jobs.

Email from Litia Daugunu of Sawani Village:

On behalf of the ladies in Sawani, I would like to take to express our very heartfelt attitude towards you, your loving Mum, your good family and your Uplift Project for your tremendous help towards the ladies of Sawani village. There was never a time where a donation was done solely to our ladies in terms of lingerie and with your timely help, we would like to say a big thank you. We will never forget what you have done.

Email from Filomena Dokoni, Supervisor of the Fiji School of Nursing:

Words cannot express my utmost and most sincere gratitude and appreciation to you and your family for your support of the class of 2012 student nurses rural attachment projects for the year 2014. The students attached in Matainananu, Nagodoloa, Delaiyadua and Naivoco will always remember throughout their nursing life, the smiles of joy and gratitude on the women of these villages through the "UPLIFT PROGRAM". Honestly for me their supervisor I could not stop the tears as I watched the sheer joy and the unbelief on the faces of the women after having the fitting and receiving their most wonderful gifts from the uplift team. I commend you for the great insight that has eventuated into such a great program that has brought contentment, comfort and great joy to the many recipients in our beloved home Fiji. I cannot thank you enough but it is my prayers that Our Loving Lord will continue to bless the Project most abundantly for your great love and for your most valued contributions towards HUMANITY.