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SPECIAL UPDATE AUGUST 2022

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES BOUND FOR NEEDY SCHOOLS IN FIJI

**Ian Hubble, Secretary, Library Aid International Inc, Burnie,
Tasmania. 03 6435 1111**

Burnie, Tasmania organisation Library Aid International Inc, (LAI) has provided more than 240,000 books and educational resources free-of-charge to over 450 needy schools in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Fiji since 2011. If these books and resources were bought new, it is estimated that they would cost around \$AU 4 million! The schools could not afford their cost.

LAI's ninth container of 849 boxes with proximately 26,000 books and educational resources including 35 used Department of Education laptop computers is to be sent by ship to Lautoka in Fiji to arrive in mid September. The distribution of the container contents to needy schools, an orphanage and a village library will be undertaken by the Rotary Club of Lautoka and others as part of the Rotary Australia Fiji Schools Project (RAFSP).

Originally from Fiji, now of New South Wales, RAFSP representative Veena Tilly is currently undertaking school visits in Fiji to allocate the donations from Library Aid International according to need. Veena advises that the price of books now in Fiji (if you can get them) has tripled! She says, "Fiji gets 'under your skin'. The people are just so friendly, appreciative, and genuine. The schools I have spoken to are very excited about receiving the books and laptops. I was very impressed with the physical environment, the well-managed programs, and the people working at the orphanage."

The container will also be donated by Library Aid International. One of the schools wants to purchase the container to use for the storage of books and other school resources. The funds from this sale will be used to ship two crates of computers, and other school items that have been donated to the project for Fiji schools and to assist in bringing 10 teachers on a study tour to Australia next year.

LAI aims to improve educational outcomes and life opportunities of disadvantaged children as 'Readers Become Leaders' in their own countries and communities. Education is vital to breaking the poverty cycle in such countries and societies benefit with lower crime, better overall health, and civic involvement.

LAI trust that this shipment will encourage the recipients' to know that others are thinking of them.

LAI are now filling a tenth shipping container for an overseas destination but we have run out of incoming books and educational resources.

Educational resources for any age level are wanted for this next shipment and to keep our volunteers busy! Books kids and grandkids no longer use. High School, College and University textbooks are also needed

For a full list of educational and school supplies that we can use, please see the Books Tab on the Donations Page at <https://libraryaid.org>. LAI also has a Facebook page.

Boxed resources labelled 'Library Aid c/- Burnie Depot' left at any DeBruyn's transport depot will be transported to us at no cost.

BACKGROUND: FIJI AREA/POPULATION/ EDUCATION/POVERTY

The archipelago of Fiji consists of some 300 islands and 540 islets scattered over about 3,000,000 square km. Of the 300 islands, about 100 are inhabited. Fiji has a population of approx 903,000 people with children and youth aged 0–19 comprising 38.5 per cent of the total population with the median age being 27.9 years.

Despite the glossy holiday-brochure image of Fiji, poverty is still a significant concern. The poverty rate in fact increased from 28.1% in 2013-2014 to 29.9% in 2019-2020.

Whilst the overall level of development and the moderately high average incomes have improved, this is not evenly distributed. This includes a lack of food, adequate housing and educational opportunities.

Poverty is higher in rural areas than urban areas (41.5 percent and 20.4 percent, respectively). The poverty rate is also higher in the outer islands compared to the

main island of Viti Levu (36.8 percent and 28.1 percent, respectively), but three-quarters of Fiji's poor are located in Viti Levu.

Despite school not being compulsory until 15 years of age, there is a high rate of primary school enrolment, but around 30 per cent of children do not complete primary school or proceed to secondary school. Financial pressures are a principal factor in this drop-out rate.

Another link with poverty is that many children leave school because they fail in national examinations; children from resource-poor schools and poor communities generally score lowest. Among adults, there is a clear link between low education, insecure employment status, and low incomes. Enabling poor children to stay healthy and in school helps prevent them from becoming the next generation of disadvantaged adults.

Photos:



1) The full container bound for Fiji.



2) 35 bubble-wrapped computers in the container.



3) Students at Molumolu Secondary School in a rural area of Fiji in the school library. The school received books in a previous Library Aid International shipment to Fiji in 2018.



4) Library Aid International President Peter Cunningham (left) and Secretary Ian Hubble (right) catching up on some light reading.