



With a postcard  
picture south  
Pacific charm,

wonderful people, unique culture  
and its stunning coral reefs, Fiji  
is seemingly a destination for an  
idyllic holiday in the South Seas.

h owever, relatively few visitors  
make their way to the island  
of Ovalu whose main town,  
Levuka, was Fiji's earliest  
European settlement and was the nation's  
first capital. Levuka has managed to retain  
its charm; an amble down Beach Street will  
somehow evoke a feeling of walking down  
the main street of a town in the old Wild  
West. One half expects to see a cowboy  
tumble out of the swinging doors of a street  
front saloon.

Two miles away from Levuka lies the village  
of Naikorokoro. Due to its proximity to  
Levuka, much of the reefs here have been  
over-fished. At the same time Naikorokoro  
was in need of a kindergarten so the young  
children of this small village would not  
have to be sent elsewhere for school. This  
is where we came to assist; in line with  
Seacology's modus operandi of offering

# Hands across the Ocean

DUANE SILVERSTEIN





*(Left)* **THE LOCAL COMMUNITY**, teachers, students and donors from Seacology and a brand new kindergarten.

local stakeholders tangible benefits in exchange for an agreement to preserve threatened marine or forest ecosystems, we offered the village funding for the construction of a kindergarten in exchange for the establishment of a 4,403 hectare ‘no-take’ marine reserve. The Naikorokoro villagers were pleased to set aside this section of their traditional fishing area as a marine protected area so that fish and other marine life could once again flourish

As we were about to confirm our assistance with Naikorokoro, on the other side of the world an environmental club at John Gray Secondary School on the Caribbean Island nation of Grand Cayman won a several thousand dollar prize for being the outstanding school environmental club in the British Commonwealth of Nations. Instead of using this money for themselves, the John Gray Recyclers approached

Seacology indicating that they would like to fund a conservation project on the Pacific islands. They became one of the main funders of the Naikorokoro, Fiji project.

Seacology built the kindergarten and renovated the community center in exchange for the establishment of the marine reserve. Though most members of the John Gray Recyclers had never been overseas, several came to Fiji for the official opening of the new kindergarten. We also arranged for an experienced teacher from the U.S. to spend a month in Naikorokoro to train the village’s new kindergarten teacher.

For a relatively small amount of funding, an area became a marine reserve and Naikorokoro got a new kindergarten and a renovated community center. This is an exemplary model of international cooperation; it would be hard to imagine a more meaningful project. Likewise, it would be hard to imagine a more generous group of high school students than the members of the John Gray Recyclers club. 