

The UPLIFT! Project  
[www.upliftbras.org](http://www.upliftbras.org)

## **PRESS RELEASE 20/04/10**

### **What's the problem?**

Disadvantaged women across the Pacific often live without a bra. Second hand bras are sometimes available cheaply, but are rare, particularly in larger sizes. A new bra, if available, can cost 10-30 hours wages, beyond reach for most. In a subsistence economy, a huge proportion of income is spent on food.

In heat and humidity, rashes, fungal/thrush infections and abscesses (intertrigo) occur between the breast and the chest wall. Bras will help by allowing air circulation. Nursing mums everywhere leak, and bras allow the dignity of a dry shirt, and the comfort of support. A thrush rash on a mother's skin may spread to her baby's mouth, and then back into the breast itself. In some regions the lack of a bra is a badge of poverty, and women appreciate the common dignity of wearing one, particularly to church, business or social occasions.

### **What does Uplift do about it?**

Uplift collects and ships second-hand and new bras, and coordinates their distribution.

Uplift started in 2005, collecting and shipping second hand bras to Fiji through Rotary Australia World Community Service. To April 2010 Uplift has sent 350,000 bras to Fiji, Vanuatu, Tonga, PNG, the Solomon Islands & the Philippines. Uplift is collecting bras in Victoria and Tasmania at present. Uplift has received several large donations of new bras from Intimo, and donation from Fayreform and Berlei.

In many places distribution is done by workers linked to Rotary projects. In 2008 Uplift started working with women's organisations in the recipient countries, ensuring culturally appropriate distribution and fitting services. Uplift currently works with Soqosoqo Vakamarama (The Fijian Women's Society), PNG YWCA, Red Cross Vanuatu & Tonga, and the Cook Islands Women's Association.

### **What does Uplift need from you?**

Donations of good condition second-hand bras and new bras. Nursing bras, mastectomy bras and Size 18+ are desperately needed.

Donations toward shipping- \$10.00 sends 200 bras to Fiji if we can send a full container. Donate online at [www.upliftbras.org](http://www.upliftbras.org)

**The bra donated will often become the only bra a particular woman owns.**

### **Where do the donations come from?**

Don't send your spare bras to heaven, send them to paradise! Many Australian women have a bra in the drawer that was not comfortable. It is near new, too good to throw away, but they are never going to wear it. There are the bras we grew through and shrank through, and nursing bras we've finished with. There are the bras we left when we passed away. They are all better used through Uplift than in landfill.

Bras are relatively expensive, complex in construction, and specific in fit. Good quality lasts. Australians cheerfully wear off shop clothing, the environmental imperative is the same for these bras.

### **Where is this project appropriate?**

There is a narrow band of situations where this project is appropriate. Uplift does not send bras unless they are requested, and ships only in biodegradable materials. We do not wish to create rubbish disposal problems. Uplift does not wish to supply bras regularly and put local businesses at risk.

## **How are bras received?**

To spread the donations around many women are offered one bra each, and agonize over whether to choose a sensible one or a pretty one. Sometimes the half-cup push-up wins. Women will often use this bra only for social & business occasions.

Rotary and Uplift receive thank-you letters from the women, some of which are transcribed on our website.

*“We give our thanks too, to each and every women from Australia who donates us bras, they all fits us very well and we all happy about it, we say that we can't pay back your love and we pray our good lord Jesus Christ to help your country and your family and your club, Rotary, to be strong and guide you every day in your life: And we looking forward to see each and every face of you sometimes,”* Namuamua village chapter, Fijian Women's Society.

The bras are appreciated much more than Australians would expect.

One woman in her mid 30's a few days after receiving her bra and said quietly, “I wore it. I felt like a young woman again.” Another woman, an F cup in her 40's who had never been able to find a bra asked discretely if, by chance there was a bra for her. F cup women in Australia have trouble tracking down a bra, in Fiji it was hopeless. When one was found, and it fitted, and she was told she could have it, she sat down and cried. A bra is a small thing, readily available in the world-often made in Fiji- it is embarrassing that receiving a bra should mean so much.

## **Snippet quotes.**

Liz says,

“I had breast abscesses. I had surgery to both breasts and spent a week in hospital with an IV in my arm, (and managed to limp on feeding on one breast for 12 months.) If a bra can help someone avoid that, it is worth the effort.”

“I was in a four- star resort being waited on by a 20 DD woman who had no bra. I was very uncomfortable that she didn't have something so easily accessible to us, that we consider central to dignity and comfort.”

This is personal. **This is women passing on a little ordinary dignity to other women because they feel the situation is unfair. There are enough bras in Australia for women in the region who want for one to have one. All that is needed is redistribution.**