

Safe space needed for Charter talks

The National Council for Building a Better Fiji (NCBBF) was launched by Fiji's President, His Excellency Ratu Josefa Iloilo, at the Tradewinds Hotel in Lami, Fiji on 10 October 2007.

This historic event is significantly being launched on the date of Fiji's independence.

The NCBBF will comprise of members representing all stakeholders in Fiji, who will hold dialogue and discussions to prepare a People's Charter for Change and Progress.

While moving a Vote of Thanks to the President, CCF Chief Executive Officer Reverend Akuila Yabaki stressed that it will be important for the success of the dialogue that all participants feel safe to express their views openly and without fear of reprisal.

"In order to provide this sense of security, the Interim Government needs to show respect for Freedom of Speech. We

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CCF supports Article 9 of Japan's Constitution

To mark International Peace Day on 21 September, CCF's CEO Rev. Akuila Yabaki met the First Secretary of the Embassy of Japan in Fiji, Mr Hirotugu Ikeda, and presented a letter of support for Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution.

Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution renounces war as a means of settling international disputes and the maintenance of armed forces for those purposes.

On receiving the letter, Mr Ikeda commented, "We hope Article 9 will stay forever (in Japan's Constitution)".

The civil society international network, Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) regards Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution as



Rev Yabaki presents the letter to Mr Ikeda in front of the Embassy of Japan office.

an important peace building mechanism in North-East Asia. CCF is the Pacific Regional Secretariat of the NGO network Pacific People Building Peace (PPBP) which is the 15th region of GPPAC.

FICTU airs opposition to ER Bill at CCF workshop

President and Secretaries of Fiji Islands Council of Trade Unions (FICTU) attended a two-day workshop from 30-31 August 2007, to increase their awareness on the Employment Relations (ER) Bill.

The workshop was conducted by FICTU in conjunction with CCF, as part of CCF's activities on workers rights, funded by the European Union. The workshop was held at the Fijian Teachers Association (FTA) Hall at Knolly Street, Suva, Fiji.

In his opening address, FICTU President Mr Maika Namudu emphasised the im-



Participants at the FICTU-CCF workshop, held at the FTA Hall in Suva.

portance of the workshop, saying that, "As union leaders, we need to know about the legislation in order to discharge our responsibilities effectively."

General Secretary Mr Attar Singh, highlighted FICTU's opposition to the ER Bill, especially the sections dealing with Recognition and the Right to Strike.

Editor's notes

It has been a pleasure to prepare the inaugural issue of *Tutaka Online*. We hope this publication will help to better relay information on CCF's recent activities, and encourage more communication with members of the public.

We recently uploaded a totally revamped CCF website, which is user-friendly, visually appealing with information available in an easy way. Do check it out (www.ccf.org.fj).

Over the past months, CCF has largely concentrated on completing activities in the EU project, which came to an end on 31 August 2007. This marked the end of one major phase of CCF's activities, and signals the beginning of a new one.

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People, peace and playback

Citizens' Constitutional Forum (CCF) participated in a 'People, Peace and Playback' event organized by Women's Action for Change (WAC).

The event was held from 4.30pm-7.30pm at the Sacred Heart Cathedral Crypt on Pratt Street, Suva. CCF was among many organizations that set up a display for the event.

Other organizations that participated

were Initiatives for Change, CodePink, GPPAC and EqualGround Pasifik.

Koila Costello-Ollsson (Peace-builder) shared a peace story, peace songs and skits were presented by Initiatives for Change.

Two poems were read by Mosmi Bhim, Communications and Advocacy Officer at CCF.

WAC Creative Director Peni Moore and visiting trainer Bev Hosking, presented a



WAC actors enact participants stories through Playback Theatre.

short introduction to Playback Theatre.

There was one hour of Playback Theatre enacted by WAC actors.

Safe space is necessary for Charter talks

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therefore suggest that the Republic of Fiji Military Forces should issue a public statement at the outset of the process, guaranteeing the safety of all participants," Rev Yabaki said.

"CCF supports the objective of the dialogue process that it should be "inclusive" and broadly representative of all ethnic and religious communities in Fiji, as well as the different political groupings. The Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua Party in particular should be included as members of the proposed NCBBF," he said. Rev Yabaki thanked Ratu Iloilo for his words of wisdom which will provide the NCBBF with a framework for deliberations. Below are excerpts from Rev Yabaki's speech.

"The CCF was greatly concerned when another coup occurred in Fiji in December 2006. The CCF had advocated for ways in which power could be returned to a civilian government of national unity. These efforts proved to be futile. The damaging impacts of the 1987 and 2000 coups on Fiji have been reflected in the rationale provided for the December 2006 coup. No coup can be adequately justified under any circumstances. However, at this point in our nation's life-time, there

is a serious need to re-look at problems to find solutions to move the country forward. The CCF supports calls for a shared vision to move the country forward, and in this regard, the CCF has expressed support for the concept of building a better Fiji for all through a People's Charter for Change and Progress.

I wish to reiterate that CCF's support is subject to our abiding commitment to the 1997 Constitution and to constitutional change by lawful means alone. CCF suggests that the process of dialogue should not be allowed to be seen as, or become, an alternative to the rule of law or the return of Fiji to democracy.

Many of us believe that the answer to a more stable future is through political dialogue. The CCF further believes that the proposed process of the "charter" to be independent, is a positive feature that should not be downplayed. The onus is now on all stakeholders to take an active part, to make the process worthwhile.

The Charter process could be an ideal forum to discuss elimination of racial elements in Fiji's electoral process. However, any changes to the Constitution must be made through Constitutional means only. The CCF congratulates the interim government for this historic initiative, how-

ever, the CCF also emphasizes that the success of the Charter process will depend on the ability of the interim government to persuade all stakeholders to take a genuine interest and contribute wholeheartedly to the process

By the same token, the CCF is concerned that major stakeholders, such as the national Churches, have not been able to work together to heal the rifts within our society to move the country forward. It is a cause for disappointment that the Methodist Church, which has the largest number of indigenous Fijian membership, has so far been unable to contribute to reconciliation exercises which involves working with other religious and ethnic groups. However, individual Methodists, such as myself have been able to contribute within our own capacities.

The Interim Government needs to take on a humble approach, and identify intermediaries who can encourage, even those who have publicly opposed the NCBBF, to come forward and become part of the process.

Finally, CCF hopes that the Charter process will provide a forum whereby the hurts inflicted from past coups can be dealt with in an honest and sincere way, so that we can move ahead as a healthy nation."

Affirmative action must be built on equality

A Group and Minority Rights consultation was held on 16 August 2007 at the Jovili Meo Centre, Nasese, Fiji, by the Citizens' Constitutional Forum.

The consultation was part of European Union funded activities.

An opening address was presented by Fiji Human Rights Commission (FHRC) Director Dr. Shaista Shameem on the topic: 'Minority and Group Rights - International Law, the 1997 Constitution and the FHRC Affirmative Action Report'.

Sociologist Dr. Steven Ratuva presented a paper on 'Affirmative Action - the African and Malaysian Experience'. Physicist Dr. Anirudh Singh presented a paper on 'Affirmative Action in Education' and a response was presented by Mr. Remesio Rogovakalali. Academic Mr Sunil Kumar made a presentation on 'Ethnic Group Affirmative Action and Economic Development'.

A panel discussion in the afternoon on



FHRC Director Dr Shaista Shameem.

'Group and Minority Rights' was chaired by CCF's Legal Officer Piccolo Willoughby. Participants in the panel were: Noelene Nabulivou (Womens' Action for Change), Pateresio Nunu (Melanesian Community), Francis Sokonibogi (Fiji Indigenous Ownership Rights Association), and Teatu Rewi

(Chairman of Rabi Council).

The consultation was organised by Paulo Baleinakorodawa, with assistance from Lois Tuwere.

Group and Minority Rights and the FHRC Affirmative Action Report

The Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) and the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) were used as benchmarks to write the FHRC Report on affirmative action (AA). Fiji's AA policies, laws and programs neither conformed with international law nor with Fiji's 1997 Constitution. Two rights breached in relation to Fiji's AA policies, are: the Right to Equality; and the Right to be Free from Unfair Discrimination.

This breach resulted from the government's failure to correctly read and analyse data, and misrepresentation of statistics to support programs and policies that breached international and domestic

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Over 100 participants attend CCF-FTUC workshops

The CCF-FTUC (Fiji Trades Union Congress) workshops on workers rights were conducted from June to August 2007 in the three divisions of Fiji and attracted a total of more than 100 participants.

Six workshops were conducted on the ILO Convention 87 on Freedom of Association and Right to Organise, and on the Employment Relations (ER) Bill for FTUC affiliate members.

The workshops were part of CCF's activities under its European Union (EU) funded project. EU representative, Michael Graf, was present at the first workshop held in Suva and was thanked by CCF and FTUC.

The workshops were considered very timely in empowering workers on expected changes in legislations, after the new ER Bill is promulgated in October 2007.

The core ILO Convention, Convention 87, ratified by Fiji in 2002, was a major subject covered during the workshop. Convention 87 articulates workers' right to join a union of their choice without any interference by any public authority or organisation. These individual rights are protected under the Section 32 and 33 of the 1997 Constitution of Fiji, and has been incorporated in the new ER Bill.

The first workshop was held on 15-16 June



Shiu Din speaks to participants at the Southern Cross Hotel, Suva.

2007 in Lautoka; the second was held at the Takia Hotel, Labasa on 13-14 July and had 25 participants; the third was held at the Lautoka Hotel, Lautoka on 20-21 July and had 25 participants; the fourth was held at the FTUC office in Suva from 2-3 August and had 21 participants; the fifth was held at the Capricorn Hotel, Nadi from 10-11 August and had 26 participants; and the final one was held at the Southern Cross Hotel in Suva from 16-17 August and had 10 participants.

The workshops were conducted by Mr

Rajeshwar Singh - the Assistant National Secretary of FTUC; and Mr Shiu Din from the Ministry of Labour and Industrial Relations. They were assisted by Ms Jotika Sharma, FTUC Education Officer.

Upon completion of the workshop, the participants were able to clearly link human rights to workers rights and identify how these were enshrined in the Bill of Rights and sanctioned through the ER Bill, the FTUC evaluation revealed.

A Certificate of Participation was given to all members who attended this series of workshops.

According to the FTUC, the financial support provided by European Union through the CCF made it possible to reach out to the grassroots level of workers who did not have any prior knowledge and understanding of the ER regulations and human rights.

"Current issues that affect workers, especially concerns on how these rights have either been curtailed or deprived during the current situation were also addressed. On the outset, the workshops provided an appropriate forum for workers at the right time, to seek clarifications on how their rights are still secure and to what extent they can exercise their freedom and basic human rights," the FTUC stated in their workshop report.

Strikes delay PACFAW human rights workshops

After several deferments due to FICTU affiliated members going on strike in August, the Pacific Foundation for the Advancement of Women (PACFAW), conducted two one-day workshops on human rights and workers' rights on 29 and 31 August 2007.

The PACFAW workshops were held in partnership with the Citizens' Constitutional Forum (CCF) through European Union funding. They were conducted by PACFAW's Pasifika Consultancy Team on Education, NGO work and Trade Unionism.

Workshop one, held at the Fiji Institute



Ms Tuisawau (left) speaks to participants at the Peninsula Hotel.

of Technology (FIT) in Suva, Fiji, on 29 August, was organised for all sector union workers encompassing: the Automotive Industry, the Seafarers/Maritime

Workers Union, workers in the Financial Sector, workers in the Electrical and Electronic Industry and, FIT lecturers.

Workshop two was held at the Peninsula Hotel, Suva, Fiji on 31 August, and focused on women workers in the education and private sectors, and secondly, on retired teachers who were trained to conduct future workshops on human rights, workers rights and ILO conventions and mechanisms.

The workshops were conducted by Ms Susana Tuisawau, Executive Director of PACFAW. A total of 40 people – mostly women – participated in the workshops.

Affirmative action must be built on equality

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law. In addition, the AA policies and programs further aggravated the poverty situations of disadvantaged people in Fiji. The report's main finding was that ethnicity in Fiji cannot be equated with being disadvantaged.

Affirmative Action Criticisms

Some criticisms of AA policies in Fiji: it politicizes life chances and focuses blame on race; they are implemented as a political favour or reward by politicians; denies others rights; it is a misguided and immoral piece of social engineering that will perversely perpetuate discrimination; in reality, AA programs benefit middle class individuals or groups most; it is an evil form of racism that amounts to an extended form of nepotism or inter-ethnic favouritism and corruption.

Recommendations

The Group and Minority Rights Consultation Report, recommends:

i) The Need for a National Identity

All communities and individuals need to feel secure in this country and for this to happen; a sense of national identity is needed. The constitution should term all residents and citizens of Fiji as 'Fiji islanders' and not have different names for different ethnic groups. Education about national identity should start at a very young age and should be part of early childhood learning. Without a national identity, the minorities will always be discriminated.

ii) Electoral System Reform

Fiji should find an alternative to the present system of 'voting along racial lines'.

iii) Education System Reform

Racially segregated schools have existed in Fiji since the colonial days. A way must be found to deal with this sensitive issue.

iv) Scholarship distribution

Scholarship distribution has been highly devious, unjust and problematic. They should not be based along racial lines. Selection processes should be non-corrupt.

v) Security in Fiji

Security should be defined according to the lived realities of people's context and what it means to them.

vi) Land Ownership in Fiji

Indigenous Fijians express a lot of frustration over land ownership in Fiji. The current practices and policies are not meeting the needs of modern Fiji. As a market economy, Fiji needs to be clear about what productive land is and what other uses of land are. The distribution of income through land has become hierarchical and unfair. Current issues of land security for the minority groups also need some critical attention.

vii) Opportunities for Dialogue

There should be more spaces for dialogue on human rights in local languages. Minorities must be able to participate in debate on issues pertaining to their rights.

viii) Socio-Economic Issues

Programs and policies such as poverty alleviation, affirmative action, etc. should be designed to effectively address socio-

economic issues of disadvantaged groups. In Fiji, minority groups such as the Banaban and the Melanesian communities fall under the broad category of 'disadvantaged' groups. Data that gives evidence to the poor socio-economic realities of disadvantaged groups must be constantly reviewed and analysed.

viii) Government Policies

Government policies must place heavy emphasis on meeting the needs and the rights of minority groups in Fiji.

x) Defining Groups and Minorities



Panelists for the session on 'Group and Minority Rights' from left: Noelene Nabulivou, Pateresio Nunu and Teatu Rewi. Also in the panel was Francis Sokonibogi.

Some clear justification should be made on who falls under which category in Fiji. There seems to be some confusion on minority groups (such as Rotumans, Banabans) who fall under the 'group' category here in Fiji.

A major conclusion of the Group and Minority Rights Report is that: the government of Fiji has a huge responsibility in ensuring that all people are treated equally regardless of race, religion, or political conviction. Policies, structures and programs such as Affirmative Action must be built on the founding principle of equality and fairness amongst all citizens of Fiji.

Pacific CSOs release Nuku'alofa communique

The Pacific Regional CSO (Civil Society Organisations) Forum was held from 12-15 October 2007 in Nuku'alofa, Tonga.

The participants representing 17 Pacific nations released a Nuku'alofa Communiqué after the four-day meeting. The meeting was organised by Pacific Islands Association of Non-Government Organisations-PIANGO.

Participating in the meeting was the Regional Coordinator for the Pacific People Building Peace (PPBP) Secretariat, Ms Marie-Pierre Hazera. PPBP is hosted by CCF.

The Tonga meeting was considered timely as it provided an opportunity to CSOs to contribute to the improvement of the Pacific Plan.

The Nuku'alofa Communiqué emphasizes that civil society's understanding, support and input into the Pacific Plan is integral to its success.

The Communiqué calls on Leaders to ensure that Pacific ACP countries:

- Insist that the EU honours its legal obligation to provide an alternative to the EPAs that maintains current levels of market access as provided for in the Cotonou Agreement, article 37.6;

- Delay negotiations if Pacific ACP countries do not achieve their negotiating position by December 31st, 2007.

Climate Change is already a reality and poses immediate danger to survival of Pacific com-

munities, particularly those living in Small Island States, in coastal areas, depending on agriculture and natural resources. Deep concern was expressed with the lack of action by major polluting countries and those that have not signed the Kyoto Protocol.

With regards to human security, the Communiqué calls upon the Leaders to:

- Initiate studies into conditions that contribute to militarism and armed conflict in the region and document best practices from traditional, customary and religious practices that have promoted and maintained peace, justice and reconciliation.

- calls on the Forum Secretariat to recognize and consolidate the diversity of CSOs providers of human security programs that address its multi-dimensions.

- Actively support the UN process towards an Arms Trade Treaty and declare the Pacific a "No Arms Trade Zone".

With regards to Self-Determination, the Communiqué urges the Leaders to:

- Request the review of the 1969 UN Act of Free Choice for West Papua and re-list West Papua and French Polynesia on the agenda of the UN Decolonisation Committee;

- Maintain support to West Papua by granting it observer status in the Forum and encourage dialogue between Indonesian government and West Papuan leaders on self-rule;

- Commission a fact-finding mission to assess human rights violations in West Papua;

- Promote cultural exchanges between West Papua and the rest of the Pacific, including its inclusion in the Pacific Arts Festival and South Pacific Games;

- Oppose any attempt by the US government to influence or control in any way, the self-determination efforts of the citizens of "Ko Hawaii Pae Aina" (Hawaiian Kingdom).

On the issue of Women, the Communiqué calls upon the Leaders to:

- Recognise the high level of gender-based and institutional violence in the region and work with women's CSOs to address issues.

- Initiate studies in partnership with Women CSOs and consultants on:

- a. the feminization of poverty;
- b. the contribution of women in the development of economies;
- c. the utilization of women and traditional practices in conflict resolution matters.

It recommends to include women's CSOs in the evaluation and future development of the strategies of the Pacific Plan; and to ensure the effective participation of the Pacific Islands, including women CSO representatives in government delegations to inter-governmental and international platforms, particularly the upcoming UN-GASS 2008 and 2011.

Civil society and human security in Pacific region

The Pacific People Building Peace (PPBP) network held a regional consultation on 'Civil Society and Human Security in the Pacific Region', in Nadi, Fiji, from 26-28 April 2007.

The outcomes document of the meeting had the following recommendations:

Security and the State

- In accordance with Pacific Plan, the concept of human security is to underpin all works of the Forum Regional Security Committee (FRSC);
- Developing national Dispute reconciliation mechanisms for trade disputes, land conflict and other inter-group conflicts;
- National review of current peacebuilding and conflict resolution capacities, leading into 2008 pre- FRSC consultations;
- Regional study on existing disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration strategies;
- Closure of all foreign military bases, and end to externally funded military training;
- National legislation and policies adopted relating to peacekeeping and private security recruitment, working conditions, and reintegration and post-traumatic stress disorder;
- Legislation on small arms.

Governance

- Quota system for women in all formal na-

tional decision-making bodies;

- Conduct code based on Forum principles of Good Leadership and Accountability;
- National Legislation in all Pacific countries on Freedom of Information, guided by a set of agreed regional principles;
- Availability of all Forum documents to be in French, English and local languages;
- Ratification of all relevant human rights instruments, establishment of national human rights commissions, harmonisation of HR instruments and local legislation;
- Local initiatives on access to and implementation of human rights at local level, including focus on local tensions and cultures;
- Civil society regional platform on decolonisation, and reiteration of Forum position as per existing agreements;
- Review of Treaty of Rarotonga with regards to permanent denuclearisation and clarity on compensation for victims.

Pacific Culture and Environment

- Communal agreement and mapping and registration of land boundaries, including regional agreements;
- Provisions of land for internally displaced peoples;
- Regional focus on issues and strategies for

climate change;

- National legislation on indigenous intellectual property rights, knowledge and genetic resources, guided by regional agreement;
- Regional response on multi-national extraction industries;
- Revision and strengthening of Noumea and Apia Conventions, to protect environment;
- Local traditional early warning and coping mechanisms to be revisited and popularised.

Communities, Equality and Opportunity

- Sustaining funding and technical assistance for CSO efforts on elimination of all forms of violence in the Pacific, including CEDAW;
- Greater recognition of civil society diverse roles, including research, education, best practice and dissemination of lessons learnt;
- PIF governments to reaffirm rights to education, and link to '6 Education for All Goals';
- Develop curriculum and teacher training for peacebuilding, gender equality, human rights and multicultural education, to agreed regional standards, and adequate resourcing;
- Strengthening existing local, national and regional HIV and AIDS Councils and Committees, and ensuring human security framework throughout all HIV and AIDS work.

North grassroots concerns highli

THE Northern division of Fiji faces a peculiar predicament. Peculiar because the North – according to its constituents – is endowed with natural resources in terms of the best fertile soils in Fiji to grow fruits, staple crops and timber. Many top academics and professionals from Fiji have grown up in the North and have gone on to contribute to the development of Fiji's economy. However, the North itself has remained under-developed.

The 'Look North' policy has been proposed by successive governments, but so far, no concrete implementation has occurred. Problems of infrastructure have existed from the time of Fiji's independence and have resulted in a feeling of helplessness by people on how to engage in economic activity.

For Labasa, an added concern is that the sugar industry has been declining and there is a fear that the imminent closure of the sugar industry may lead to a further decline in the economy of Labasa.



Former Public Utilities Minister Robin Urwin.

Grassroots Budgetary Workshops

CCF conducted two Grassroots Budgetary Workshops at the Scouts Hall, Labasa from 24-25 May 2007 and at the Hot Springs Hotel, Savusavu from 29-30 May 2007. The workshops were conducted by Mosmi Bhim and Ponipate Ravula.

The Grassroots Budgetary Workshops are part of CCF's work to assist communities, groups and individuals to understand and exercise their constitutional and democratic rights. Democratic right includes the rights of citizens to understand the processes and content of the government's national budget, and the right of citizens' to scrutinise and participate in the national budget process. The CCF is grateful to the German-based organization Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst



Infrastructure and agriculture related issues are major concerns in the North.

(EED) for funding these workshops.

The Grassroots Budgetary Workshops in the North attracted genuine participants from the grassroots communities in Labasa and Savusavu. Almost all the participants have lived in the North for their life-time. Most of the participants travelled long distances from rural areas to attend the workshops. In Labasa, the workshop attracted 39 participants on the first day; out of these, 34 participants returned to complete participation in the workshop on the second day. The Labasa participants came from a range of grassroots, religious and non-government organisations. In Savusavu, 39 participants attended the workshop on both days. Participants came from Savudrodoro, Nadamole, Kasavu, Dreketi, Vakativa and Savusavu town. Savusavu participants were predominantly from agrarian rural backgrounds, bulk of whom were women.

Some Concerns & Recommendations

The workshop participants concerns and recommendations were presented by CCF in a Community Submission to the Ministry of Finance & National Planning, for the 2008 Budget. These include:

1. Infrastructure - roads, water, electricity, telecommunications

People from the North have identified the lack of infrastructure as the root cause of all their problems. If the infrastructural facilities are available, they will be able to access the resources needed to generate economic activities, provide tourism services, and get easy access to markets. Good roads and regular transport are also needed for people to access education and health facilities and government departments.

Telecommunications and electricity are essential for establishing links and source services, markets and business opportunities. Water is essential to maintain standards of life, basic living and hygiene.

Recommendations

a) Roads – participants recommended that the government and the community should work in partnership to build roads. The community could provide unskilled labour, gravel and sand. The government could conduct surveys, deal with legislations and contracts, and provide machines, engineers and experts.

b) Water – participants recommended that the government and community should work together to solve the problem of water. The community could provide labour, gravel and sand and government could provide machines, engineers, skilled labour and other materials needed for setting up of water supply facilities.

c) Electricity – the community can provide one-third contribution and government can provide two-thirds to make electricity available in all Northern areas.

d) Government should introduce modern technology for water supply in urban areas whereas in rural areas, they should supply water tanks and bore holes.

e) Government should allocate resources to train skilled engineers for water works.

f) Officials should go out to the field and carry out meter readings for water. Government should allocate resources to cater for officers' transportations and create incentives for them to perform better.

2. Education, employment

Concerns

ghted in CCF budget submission

a) Education is not accessible to all children. Infrastructural problems like bad roads, washed away bridges and deplorable local shipping conditions severely undermine access to education.

b) Government is not providing building grants and financial support to schools.

c) People who are not educated are more difficult to communicate with and find it harder to cope with life. A few weeks ago, 80 people from one village in Wailevu suffered from typhoid. People were not educated, therefore ignorant about how to take precaution from typhoid.

d) There is very few training or employment opportunities available to school drop-outs, youths and ex-prisoners.

Recommendations

a) Education - Families should be encouraged to give education to their girls to create equal opportunity in life. Where a girl is not receiving the same opportunities for education as the boy in the family, the government should cater for the education needs of the girl.

b) Education should be compulsory and free. Implement education for all policy.

e) Employment - Government should encourage people to make use of the land they have. School drop-outs and ex-prisoners can be employed through farming.

f) Government should provide free vocational training to school drop-outs, to enhance their employment opportunities and income generating capacities.

g) Lease money and royalties - a portion should be kept aside to invest in education and other services.

h) More facilities should be created in the North to encourage investments such as building hotels which would create jobs. Proper roads, airports and port of entry in the North will encourage investors.

i) Improve conditions for garment factories to create more jobs for women.

j) Tax free zones should be created in the North to encourage industries to invest.

k) Men should be encouraged to share the work load at home so that women do not end up being overworked, and also to enable women to gain some free time to improve themselves.

3. Agriculture, Land, Marketing and Sugar

Recommendations

a) Government should provide a scheme

where dalo and other crops can be bought directly from villagers to avoid middlemen sponging off money from farmers. Maybe government can provide direct buying with better prices.

b) Government should promote a scheme to employ youth in agriculture so they remain in their villages as they would have something useful to do.

c) Government should increase prices for copra and explore making of copra products such as producing coconut fuel. In Vanuatu, copra fuel is being utilised. Government should subsidise coconut oil for use as fuel.

e) Government should provide proper assistance to farmers through financial support, farming tools and seedlings.

f) Government needs to provide subsidies



Participants at the Labasa workshop.

for cane access roads.

g) Government should negotiate with the landowners, NLTB, and the mataqali for the renewal of leases.

h) All expiring leases should be sorted out within a time-frame of five years. Master lease should be organised where government would lease a major piece of land and sub-lease smaller portions to farmers.

i) Forests should not be over-cut and logs should not be over-harvested because the minerals in the soil will be lost through deforestation.

4. Social welfare - Housing, health, sanitation

Problems of health and sanitation were highlighted in both Labasa and Savusavu. These are linked to lack of access to clean and safe water. The recent outbreak of typhoid in the North resulted in a few deaths which participants felt could have

been avoided if there had been awareness of water safety issues and availability of clean and safe water to drink. In Wailevu, 80 people from one village suffered from typhoid. Another health issue is the incomplete sanitation (provision of proper toilets) works in the North. The increasing number of squatters in Labasa and the poor housing conditions of some residents is another area of concern.

Recommendations

a) Replace old water pipes and introduce better technology to improve water supply.

b) Complete the unfinished sanitation works (provision of proper toilets) that were begun in the North.

c) Government is requested to not increase VAT as this would place a bigger

burden on the grassroots people.

d) More affordable and low cost housing schemes should be made available. Use of natural resources such as timber, should be encouraged to construct more houses.

e) Regularisation of tenancy - NLTB and the Social Welfare

department should work together to obtain lease titles for those with no access to land.

f) Upgrade squatter settlements to improve living standards - upgrading can be done through provision of access to clean water, health facilities, better roads and education.

g) Labasa to Suva immigration - Government should facilitate the construction of more hotels, businesses, and commercial investments and industries in the North, which will provide employment and curb the migration from Labasa to Suva.

5. Leadership - corruption, inefficiency, poor performance

Concerns:

a) Corruption - government departments, NGOs, communities (leaders), churches

b) Inefficiency - for example, in Dreketi, (continued on page 8)



Radio play

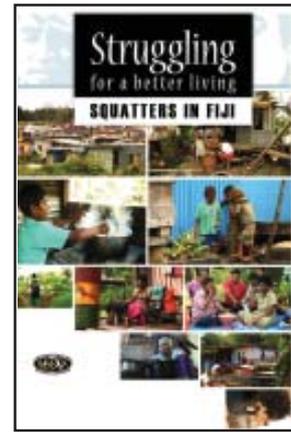
The recording of Radio Play One - 'The Ex-Prisoner' has been completed. The Radio Play project is funded by the German-based organization Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst (EED). Participants who provided voice talent for the play, are pictured here at the ReelTime office, after a successful day of recording.



CCF legal officer farewelled

CCF Legal Officer, Piccolo Willoughby (standing, second from left) was farewelled by staff members on 20 September, after spending three years with the organisation. Piccolo has moved back to Australia, with his wife Jyoti.

Documentary review



Reviews of the documentary *Struggling for a Better Living: Squatters in Fiji*, produced by Citizens' Constitutional Forum (CCF), has been published several times.

Reviews were published in August in *Islands Business*, and in Auckland University of Technology's *Pacific Media Watch*. In July, reviews were published in *Sunday Times*, and in *Pacific Islands Report*.

The documentary, funded by the European Union (EU), was launched in April 2007. It has been directed by Larry Thomas, SPC Regional Media Centre.

About 130 Form six and form seven students from schools near Suva, watched the documentary, during a special screening on August 31 at Village Six cinema, Suva.

The documentary can be purchased from the USP Book Centre for FJ\$30.

North grassroots concerns highlighted in CCF budget submission

(continued from page 7)

households paid \$6000 each in 1999 to government officials on the promise that electricity would be installed in their houses. But to date, villagers have been waiting and government has not yet provided them electricity.

c) The Auditor General's report highlighted so much corruption and mismanagement in government over past years. However, the participants asked why has there been no prosecution?

Recommendations

a) A good leader has to be accountable. If government officials are not performing and are not accountable, they should be investigated and replaced.

b) Government officials should not receive gifts or engage in *magiti* (feasting) when visiting villages, provinces and other gatherings. They should bear the costs of meals prepared for them from their catering allowances. Instead of feasting during village visits, they should listen to

people's concerns.

c) Government should prepare appropriate Code of Conduct legislation.

d) Government officials should be accountable for their actions and activities with regards to their official work and use of government properties and facilities.

e) If funding is available, leadership training on good governance concepts should be provided from village level upwards.

f) An independent body is needed for people to lodge complaints about government officials who are not doing their jobs.

g) The Auditor-General's office should be given powers to prosecute civil servants and government officials who misuse government funds and resources.

6. Law and Order, Democracy

Recommendations

a) Government should allocate resources for civic education, for transparency in use of donor funds and to meet its commitments to the donor communities for free

and fair elections.

b) Community policing should be continued and extended to a wider geographical area to deal with increasing robberies and vandalism. Police and the community need to work together.

c) Village participants requested for a re-establishment of village courts (Vanua-based) and village police posts as a way of reducing crime.

d) Awareness programs should be held on the negative impacts of criminal activities to discourage people from going in that direction in life.

e) Heavy fines and censorship to decrease illegal activities such as pornography, blue movies and prostitution.

f) Improve judiciary system to make it more efficient in dealing with cases.

g) Return to democratic rule by parliamentary elections as soon as practicable to regain confidence in the economy and so that citizens can enjoy the benefits of living in a democracy.