

Tutalka

एकता | STANDING IN SOLIDARITY

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Citizens' Constitutional Forum Ltd - CCF



Volume 5, Issue 1, March 2011

Website: www.ccf.org.fj

ISSN: 1996-4412

Reflections On International Advocacy



Above: Rev. Akuila Yabaki with Croz Walsh in Wellington

Reverend Akuila Yabaki offers Australia and New Zealand a fresh perspective on the way forward for Fiji.

During recent visits "down-under", CCF CEO met and spoke with international partners on the current situation in Fiji and to enlist support for what could be deemed as positive developments in the country.

Discussions ensued with representatives of the two governments and the diaspora (former Fiji citizens and former expatriates) who follow news about Fiji and who remain interested in issues of critical engagement.

Reverend conveyed that, "One thing is to remain totally negative about developments in Fiji, since the 2006 coup, and to make statements from the safety of afar but another to take a stance of critical engagement with the state."

Reverend Yabaki was well received both in Canberra and Wellington. In each place he met with the Fiji Desk staff in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Pacific Division respectively.

In 1996 CCF initiated work on the People's Constitutional Charter (not to be confused with the 2008 People's Charter for Change, Peace and Progress) which remains the broad guideline of CCF's work and it states that Fiji as a part of the international community subscribes to the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). By its international advocacy CCF was obliged to make its voice heard (on behalf of the citizens).

Reverend Yabaki reiterated, "It is important to address issues together in partnership with the international community who can help us, but first they need to be made aware of what the facts are and look to developing home-grown solutions where necessary."

As with other Civil Societies Organisations (CSO) in Fiji, CCF's funding comes from European sources and also from Australia and New Zealand who support the work of CSOs involved in Human Rights and Millennium Development Goal (MDG) areas. Reverend Yabaki concluded, "It is therefore important to remain critically engaged within and abroad and continue with perseverance."

By: Sunayna Nandni

Competition



Citizens' Constitutional Forum

2011 NATIONAL ESSAY COMPETITION

Theme: "Promoting Multiculturalism"
Topic: "Importance of good citizenship in a Multiracial Fiji."

Up to 750 words, handwritten or typed.
Open to Fiji residents between the ages of 16-18.

1st Prize: \$150 2nd Prize: \$100 3rd Prize: \$50

ESSAY ENTRIES DEADLINE: 15th April 2011

HOW TO ENTER

* Applicants can send their essay entries to:
ESSAY COMPETITION, Citizens Constitutional Forum,
P. O. Box 12584, Suva or hand deliver to Citizens
Constitutional Forum Ltd, at 23 Denison Road, Suva
or

Email: ccf@kidanet.net.fj

* Each entry must include: Name, Address, and
Phone contact

For more information, contact CCF on Ph: 3308579

The CCF is a non-government organisation that educates and
advocates for good governance, human rights and
multiculturalism in Fiji.



www.ccf.org.fj

CCF is now holding the 2011 National Essay Competition. On the theme "Promoting Multiculturalism" participants are required to write an essay of up to 750 words describing the importance of good citizenship in a multiracial Fiji. The competition is open to all Fiji residents from 16-18 years old. The first prize is \$150, the second prize is \$100 and the third prize is \$50. Entries to be in by 15 April.

CONTENTS

2 Let's Break Stereotypes

3 Fighting Corruption

4 Participatory Theatre

5 Lessons Learnt

6 India Visit

7 Sereia Story

8 I am Equal

Editor's Notes

CCF continues to be critically engaged, seeking a way forward with a clear vision for the future. We welcome the news of Village Bylaws suspension pending further consultation. We continue to look for opportunities for engagement with the government calling for changes to allow for people's voices to be heard and for free public debate.

There is even engagement at the village community level as our education team persists with people empowerment on Human rights, Good Governance and, Countering Racism and Promoting Multiculturalism through the workshops. Village communities and Indo Fijian settlements have an opportunity to be heard as they discuss the risks and challenges of their daily lives. Our staff writes about the excitement of encounter with village life where even the journey there has its sense of adventure.

Tutaka - Published by: CCF, 23 Denison Rd, PO Box 12584, Suva, Fiji.

Masthead design: Jo Uluinaceva

Editor: Rev Akuila Yabaki

Lay-out and Design: Sunayna Nandni

Ph: (679) 3308379, Fax: (679) 3308380

Website: www.ccf.org.fj

Media Release

CCF welcomes Village By-Laws Suspension

The Citizens' Constitutional Forum (CCF) welcomes the suspension of the proposed Village By-laws by the government.

A meeting at the Ministry of ITaukei Affairs on 21 January 2011, attended by NGOs and ITaukei ministry officials, CCF was informed that Cabinet had decided to suspend the implementation of Village By-laws pending further wider consultation with stakeholders. "This government move will receive wide support from Civil Society Organisations, particularly because the Village By laws was incompatible with United Nations Conventions on Human Rights which Fiji has ratified, namely CEDAW, ICERD and CRC," Chief Executive Officer Rev Akuila Yabaki said.

In a letter signed by Rev Yabaki and addressed to Colonel Apakuki Kurusiga, Deputy CEO, Ministry of ITaukei Affairs on 14th September 2010, CCF shared fears and reservations about the current draft By-Laws, including:-

* Some villages according to media reports have already embarked on implementing By-Laws and those found or caught breaking the By-Laws was punished.

* CCF believes that the goal of national unity compels us to move away from racial or communal approaches. A sentiment that

finds resonance in the Peoples' Charter for Peace, Change and Progress.

* The proposed By-Laws creates separate laws based not only based on geographical positioning but more importantly separate laws applicable only to a particular race. This not only contravenes the principles of non-discrimination stated in the Universal declaration of Human Rights but also contravenes other International Human rights Instruments, which includes the International Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Racial Discrimination ("ICERD").

* The By-Laws if enacted must also ensure that it promotes and protects their human rights of all members of the community, particularly the rights of women, children and young adults who may be powerless within the traditional village setting.

* Fiji has to ensure the maintenance of the State's obligations under the human rights conventions it has ratified. This includes each of the international conventions Fiji's party to, namely the ICERD, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women ("CEDAW") and the Convention on the Rights of the Child ("CRC").

* It is also important that women and youth may have adequate voice in a village setting to speak freely about their aspirations.

Lets Break Stereotypes!

CCF gears up for the celebration of International Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination on March 21.

Through a creative brainstorming session via working group, while exploring themes for the day itself, staff members had the idea of using stereotypes for our advocacy theme. Growing up in the Pacific we all have been made aware of the common stereotypical words to describe the various races in Fiji.

The team decided to explore the theme of "Lets Break Stereotypes". Apart from having common stereotype images on our t-shirts, a radio and TV advertisement was made as well. The radio and TV advertisement were recorded at a local production company, Skylite Production.

Both advertisements feature a group of youngsters saying some of the common stereotypes that are quite well known and capturing their reactions to the words.



Above: Advertisement cast in studio

Some showed shock and horror while others showed attitude and humor. However, a strong positive message comes in the end encouraging viewers not to believe stereotypes and help Fiji to be a RACIST FREE nation.

The advertisement was directed by CCF's Media Research Officer Ulli Cannizzo Marcus. The advertisement is to air on the local radio and TV stations from March 14- March 21.

By Sunayna Nandni

Fighting Corruption In Fiji

Revisiting the history of fighting corruption in Fiji and the role of FICAC today.

Opinion

With the Public Emergency Regulations (PER) still in place and extended every 30 days since April 2009 it is not possible to have an open debate on the extent of corruption in Fiji. However, I write as someone who took part in 2008 People's Charter for Change, Peace and Progress and who pledged to hold responsible and accountable anyone who hold positions of leadership and responsibility including those in government.

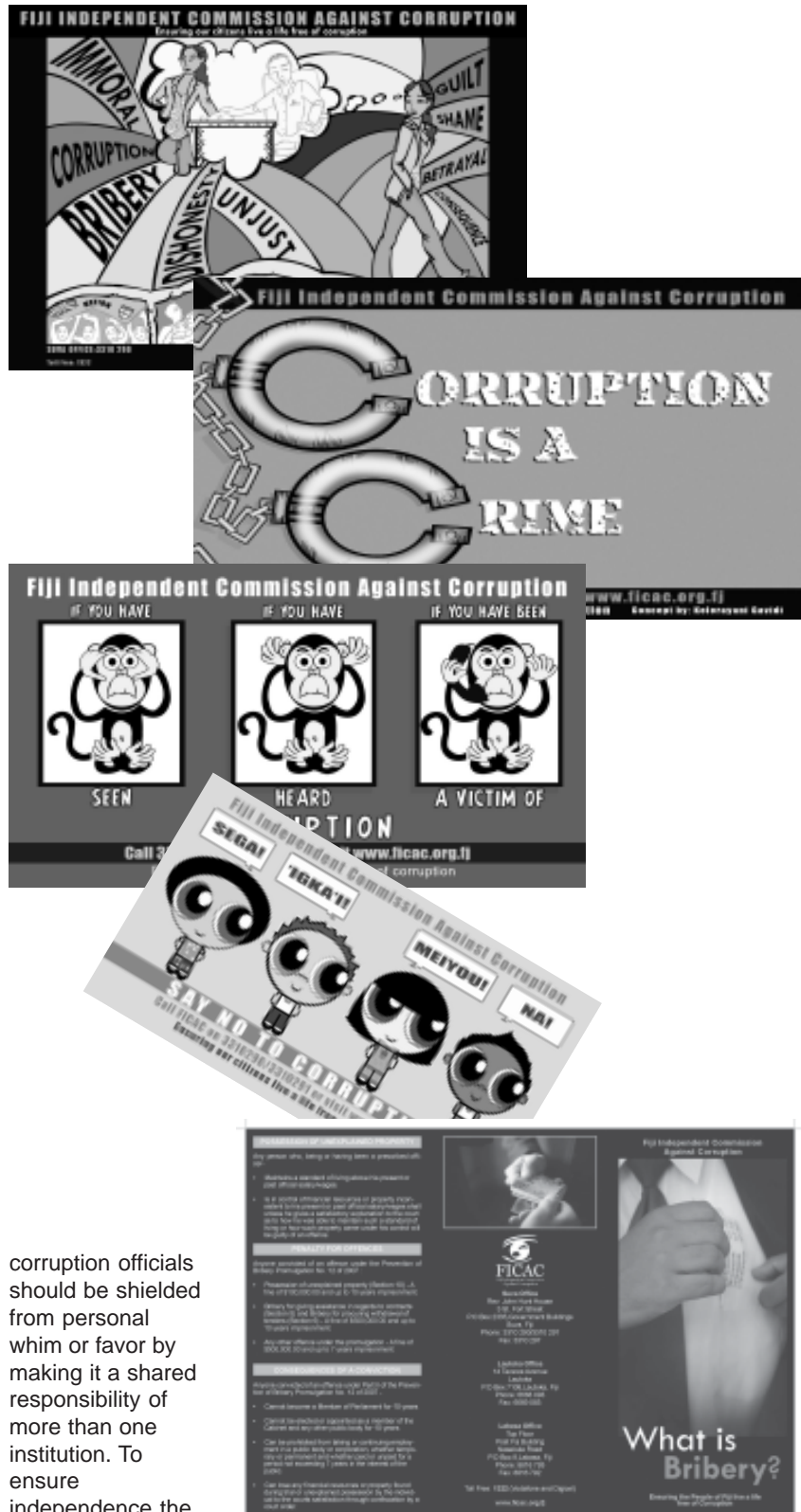
Back in February 2007 well before the establishment of an anti-corruption agency since called Fiji Independent Commission Against Corruption (FICAC) I had publicly raised the question whether it was appropriate to establish a new government agency in the middle of what should be an unprecedented exercise in cost-cutting and down sizing Fiji's public service.

Corruption is of course something that no government can afford to ignore. The weight of expert opinion around the world, however suggests that there is no quick fixes. A 2005 report by UNDP suggests that a well thought out anti-corruption reform requires a long-term vision and a clear understanding that any fundamental change will take place, at the earliest, in the next and not in the present generation.

As it stands now, FICAC cannot function without other elements. Offices of the Ombudsman and Auditor General for example both of which are directly concerned with investigating allegations of corruption in government. Fiji Human Rights Commission (now much depleted in its function) the Public Accounts Committee (existing now without the scrutiny of Parliament) and of course the office of Director of Public Prosecutions, with the powers to prosecute corruption-related charges before courts and last but not least the Public Service Commission with its disciplinary procedures.

Prior to the current administration, in December 2004, Fiji Law Reform Commission made some suggestions in its monthly bulletins to include the Bill on Investigation of Corruption and Related Offences 1997, the Penal Code (Amendment) Bill 1977 and Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill 1977 into a new law. Another suggestion which they made was to form a policy guideline for the Public Service Commission (PSC) relating to "gifts" being given to civil servants in their course of duty.

Whereas everyone should support the establishment of FICAC there are these other elements which should assist in a robust fight against corruption. Appointment of anti-



corruption officials should be shielded from personal whim or favor by making it a shared responsibility of more than one institution. To ensure independence the agency should be led by people who come into the positions without preconceived agendas or personal grudges. Four years after, FICAC is in place and running but perhaps its time to think about these other questions.

Photos :Courtesy of <http://www.ficac.org.fj>

By Rev Akuila Yabaki

Challenges Of Participatory Theatre

By: Ulli Cannizzo Marcus

In a far-off forsaken tropical Colombian jungle village of Buenaventura along the Atrato River guerilla and paramilitary faced off in a bloody encounter. 20 villagers, who took refuge in the church as all the others did, were killed after shots drilled through the wooden walls of this place of worship.

Later massacre survivors sat in a circle trying to portray their feelings through mimic depictions and gestures. It's a beginning of trauma healing, a lengthy process of therapy and if they are lucky it will work.

A German theatre pedagogue through Participatory Theatre wants to help the affected victims, especially those who still can't forget the recurring visions of the massacre. Her intention is to accompany them on the road of emotional processing, consciousness raising through performance which will move towards a long-term healing.

This playful encounter with theatre performance as a way to conflict transformation and as a means for reconciliation was originally discerned by Brazilian theatre practitioner Augusto Boal in 1960s. Boal and his Teatro de Arena appeared in slums and villages engaging more and more of the audience into the performances redefining the border between actors and spectators focusing on their realities and social changes. Out of these movements the Theatre of the Oppressed was born. It has advanced since then to become one of the most important and creative instruments of the Peace Building Movement.

"Every Human Being is a Theatre!" is one of essential messages in the Declaration of Principles of The international Theatre of the Oppressed Organization (ITO) (www.theatreoftheoppressed.org). "Forum Theater's one of the most well known techniques where the actors or audience members could stop a performance, usually a short scene based on an experience of oppression and suggest different actions for the actors to carry out on-stage in an attempt to change the outcome of the play. The traditional actor audience partition is removed to allow for dramatic interaction.

The audience could propose any solution and freedom to act it out with the actors. The audience is now encouraged to not only imagine change but actually practise that change, reflect collectively on the suggestion, and thereby become empowered to generate social action. In addition to that, there are several

more techniques of the Participatory Theatre e.g. Debate Theatre, Invisible Theatre, and Image Theatre among other forms. All of them have generally the same goal, to engage the spectators to become part of the performance, in order to find out their own form of expression of their needs.

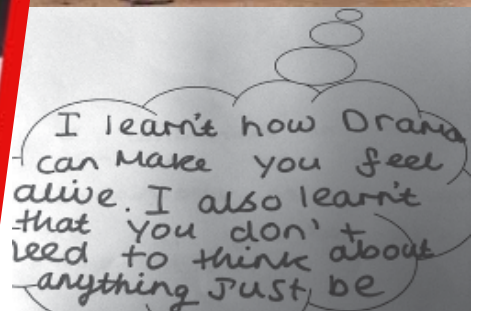
And now you may ask yourself what is this all about for us in Fiji?

On one hand, because the original indigenous Fijian culture contains so many elements of performing arts such as a certain kind of story telling through dance and mime, through expressive movements and symbolic actions.

Indian Culture has a long and interesting history in performing arts. Participatory Theatre is made for Fijians as a creative instrument for conflict transformation and to reflect actively on the past using the stage to explore new ways to express visions of the future.

CCF wants to explore the use the elements of the Participatory Theatre as an advocacy and education tool. Our goal is to establish a highly motivated theatre ensemble that will be trained by theatre experts in order to perform in workshops, communities, schools, rural & urban areas, churches, the streets and of course on stage with the aim for us to portray a better Fiji.

CCF is planning to establish a theatre group in Fiji. We are looking for people who are motivated. We are looking for theatre practitioners with experience...we are looking for creative and engaged people!



Lessons Learnt



Above: Bulutani Matai crossing Wainimala river on his way to Saumakia Village for a workshop.

Side: (Top-bottom) Workshop session, Unloading at river's edge, boat ride to the village and women participants at a workshop

As a part of the CCF Education Team, for almost 3 years, I have traveled to communities and settlements in different parts of Fiji. These trips offer insights of how different grassroots communities live, how some manage to survive under harsh geographical conditions and their vulnerability to outside changes threatening their peaceful environment and the order and harmony of their everyday living. This is the harsh reality of globalisation and development. This is the challenge of working as a community trainer or educator.

This role will be without excitement if there are no challenges to keep the adrenaline going. From big bowls of yaqona they serve you in Wainibuka and interior of Ra at one light extreme to the dread of crossing the flooded Wailotua, the other. I recall in 2009 when we had to change tyres while being pelted with rain, and with drenched clothes, we had to turn back from a point past Korovou town to Nausori to get our spare tyre fixed!

All these, including belittlement by the communities through suspicion of the organization CCF, the name of its CEO – Rev. Akuila Yabaki, and their feeling uneasy to the point of being threatened by our presence. This would require a proper explanation during the presentation of our i

which then calms the suspicion and we would be given full authority to commence with our workshops.

However, there is nothing as challenging and more frustrating than the Public Emergency Regulation (PER) and the requirements for the permits.

My first experience was in Rewasa village, in the Ra province, where we were approached by a group of police officers who stopped our workshop midway into the Human Rights and Responsibilities presentation. This followed a tip off from a participant that "Rev Yabaki is conducting a meeting" in the village. From there on, the officers from Rakiraki are always on the lookout in almost every CCF workshop convened since June 2009.

Without being judgemental or critical of the process I would like to simply illustrate how bureaucracy can frustrate the important effort of sharing information on key issues of Good Governance, Human Rights and Citizenship to our fellow grassroots citizens and to raise their capacity to make good decisions through "change knowledge."

Great to note though, for me and our CCF team, is that these challenges build character and perseverance giving hope, that at the end of this trying times, the public will know their rights, learn to be law abiding citizens of Fiji and practice good governance and at the same time anticipating good governance practices from their decision makers.

By Bulutani Matai

CCF Staff Visits India



Top: The OIYP team at the Taj Mahal
Below : Losana Tuiraviravi with the other OIYP youth team

CCF's Youth Liaison Officer, Losana Tuiraviravi recently had the opportunity of visiting New Delhi, India as a part of the Oxfam International Youth Partnership programme. The event organized by Oxfam Australia is conducted in every three years.

300 young people from 97 countries are usually selected in these three years under the OIYP programme as Action Partners. This programme has been running for the last ten years.

Speaking to *Tutaka*, Ms. Tuiraviravi says that India's experience was a whole lot different as her role changed from being an Action Partner to being a Mentor and Motivator (M&M) for another three years with the current Action Partners. She was in India from 21-29 November, 2010.

"The role of an M&M is quite challenging and a step further up the ladder; experiencing India was another new adventure for me; as I was always reading and hearing about India in the news and in the papers. Oxfam Australia and Oxfam India offered us a lot of experiences to India covering youth issues. Action Partners converged to India for 9 days of sharing and learning from one another about their own work and also relating it to their own experiences and situations," she added.

According to Ms. Tuiraviravi,

community visits were one of the highlights of her trip as it provided more of the "hands on" work with different local organizations in New Delhi.

She accompanied a group that visited an organization that works with women and girls.

"I learnt that non-governmental organizations at times find it difficult to work alongside government and to push for policies that focus on women and girls. They work mostly with women in poor communities which we all visited just outside of the main city. We also joined the community in celebrating with mothers who give birth to daughters," she added.

She stressed one of the main priorities of advocacy for this organization is the Girl Child empowerment and each year in collaboration with the 21 Days of Activism is appreciating mothers that save their "girl child".

"It was a very memorable trip as it offered a lot of networking opportunities between Action Partners/ young people, who were also doing similar work in their own different countries".

"We were able to share resources, learning from each other's experiences and even building lifetime friendships," she said.

By Sunayna Nandni

Media Release

Sacrilege Is A Concern

The Citizens' Constitutional Forum is calling on people of Fiji to respect the values and practices of people from different religious groups.

"Fiji is a country where people from many different racial and religious groups have been living together for the past century. This has been possible because there has been respect, tolerance and non-interference with the cultural and religious values of others," CCF Chief Executive Officer Rev Akuilua Yabaki said.

"We deplore the actions of thieves who stole Hindu religious deity statues from a family residence in Valelevu. This is a violation of the human rights the Right to Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion, and also the Right to Own Property," Rev Yabaki said.

Rev Yabaki is further calling on religious organizations, as well as parents and community leaders, to create understanding of human rights to children and community members.

"An increased knowledge of human rights can create better understanding and respect for the religious and cultural practices that are different from yours," Rev Yabaki said. "Government should step-up the activities to create racial and religious tolerance if it is indeed committed to multiculturalism."

CCF is concerned that the Police Crime Statistics do not register sacrilege as a category of crime anymore, even though it is classified as a separate serious offence under the Crimes Decree. "Failure to monitor sacrilege or categories of specific hate crimes allows them to go unnoticed," Rev Yabaki said.

Media Release

PER Must Be Lifted

The Citizens' Constitutional Forum is concerned that the ongoing imposition of the Public Emergency Regulation (PER) is not allowing the Media Industry Development Decree to be tested, resulting in the muzzling of free speech and expression of opinion which will lead to the emergence of blog sites as the only resort for political opinion and news for the citizens, the state and political opinion makers.

Rev. Yabaki said, "A free, fair and open media without the constraints of censorship will allow for freedom of expression for all citizens to debate issues reasonably and openly."

He added that, "the Media Decree which came into place in June 2010 should be given space to be tested and this can only happen when the PER is lifted".

Serea –The Way Fiji Should Be

Quite recently I had the opportunity to visit a small village called Serea in the Naitasiri province with the CCF education team.

The team was holding a workshop on human rights, multiculturalism and citizenship for the Indo-Fijian community in Serea. I had been informed by colleagues that this particular community was well versed in the Fijian language.

Nevertheless I received a pleasant surprise when we entered the community and we were all greeted in fluent Fijian.

As we were still waiting for other participants I started chatting with some community members including 70 year old Hari Prasad, who held my attention in particular, as he was the oldest member present for the workshop. Hari has lived in Serea all his life and he is also known as Viliame to his Fijian neighbors.

Speaking to *Tutaka*, Mr. Prasad says multiculturalism has always been a part of life for the people of Serea. "We do not judge people by skin colour, race or religion, we judge how a person lives with his fellow community members," he said.

He added that people in the community did have differences however they were careful not to involve factors such as ethnicity in disagreements.

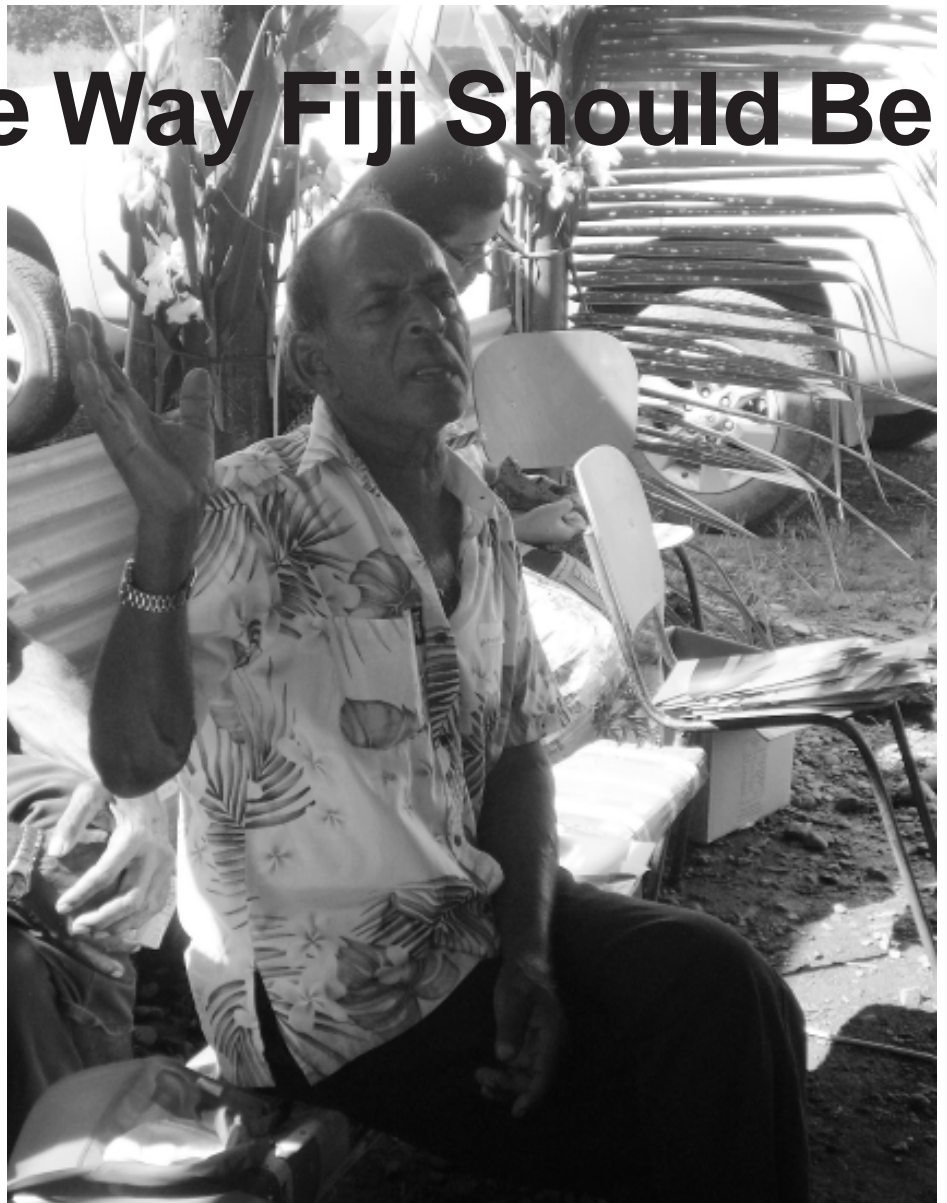
"When we have functions we give an open invitation and our Fijian brothers and sisters always do the same in return. We share each other's happiness and sadness as we have realized life is hard enough without trivial matters such as skin colour or religion," he stressed.

Another participant Purnima Singh told *Tutaka* that when her sons were born the biggest surprise for her was the visit of the women from the nearby Fijian village. "I was touched by their visit, the presentation of mats, however the best thing was when the women named my sons in Fijian as well," she said.

Mrs. Singh's sons, Aten and Aryan are also known as Josefa and Mosese around the village.

I can't help thinking that Serea is a wonderful place; it's the way Fiji should be!!!

By Sunayna Nandni



Top: Ram Shankar asks about citizenship

Bottom: (L-R) 70 year Hari Prasad(Viliame) and Purinima Singh with her sons Aten (Josefa) and Aryan (Mosese)

Right:CCF education team (R-L) Analaisa and Sereima .



I Am Equal

A radio play based on an actual human rights case in Fiji.

“I am Equal” is a radio play focusing on the four human rights: **Freedom from discrimination, Right to equality, Right to education and Freedom from cruel and degrading treatment.**

The play has been inspired from an actual recorded human rights case in Fiji back in 2002. The plot of the play is about two young boys who are beaten up, tormented and bullied by their school prefects and other students on a daily basis. The principal of the school, instead of disciplining the prefects, suspends the victimized gay students. The boys seek the help of an NGO dealing with human rights who then fight their case in court. A year later the



boys win their case and the prefects are sentenced to community work.

CCF believes this radio play is positive for human rights as it shows that justice can be sought, it also relays to listeners how to seek help and encourages them to seek justice if they feel their rights have been violated. It also educates people to respect others rights, even if they are different.

The English version of “I am Equal” is 18 minutes long and has been aired on local radio stations Radio Fiji Gold and 2DayFM on 19 December, 2010. This radio play was also picked up by Fiji One National News.

“I am Equal” is a CCF production.

By: Sunayna Nandni

Upcoming Activities

Street Theatre

March 11

CCF kicks off auditions for street theatre collective

Land Workshop Labasa

March 17-18

Friendly North Inn. landowners, tenants and state dialouge workshop on land issues.

International ICERD Day

March 21

International CERD Day will be celebrated on March 21. A programme of activities has been planned.

NGO Strategies Workshop

March 28-29

Peaceworks Australia with FWRM and CCF collabrate on workshop with NGO's for common goal setting.

National Budget Workshop

April 19-20

The national budget workshop will be held in Labasa. The venue for the workshop will be confirmed later.

National Youth Forum

May 10-14

CCF will be hosting a youth forum at Nadave (To be confirmed).

Annual Public Lecture

June

Justice Micheal Kirby to present public lecture. Topic details on venue and date will be advised later.

Peace Media Workshop

June

Renowned expert on peace journalism Professor Jake Lynch will faciliate a workshop for mainstream journalists on peace media. Details on venue and date will be advised later.

Staff News



January: Aarti Sewak is the new Research Assistant. She has a Bachelors in Information Systems & Public Administration (USP). She has worked as tutor for Management & Public Administration at the USP. Aarti says it has always been her desire to join an NGO.



February: Esther D Immanuel is the new Legal Officer. She has a Bachelor of Law degree from the University of the South Pacific and a Post Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice. She was previously employed by the Commerce Commission. Esther has a passion for human rights and good governance issues.



January to July: CCF would like to congratulate Research Officer, Lisa Ralifo on the birth of twins. Lisa gave birth on 17 November, 2011 to a boy and a girl. She has named her twins Tamika and Maddox Ralifo. We wish the first time mum and her twins all the best.

By : Sunayna Nandni