



TUTAKA

STANDING IN SOLIDARITY *एकता*

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

RETURN TO DEMOCRATIC RULE AND CHALLENGES

By: Rev Akuila Yabaki

On 17th September 2014 Fiji and its people witnessed and actively participated in the 2014 Fiji elections following eight years of military rule after the 2006 coup.

Keeping in mind that democracy is not just about elections, but it is a process and what happens, before, during and after elections is part of building that process.

Fiji civil society organisations-with CCF taking a lead administrative role- formed a coalition named Civil Society Organisations for Democratic Elections Observer Group (DEOG) with the main objective to see Fiji through a free, fair and credible election and observe the electoral process.

But first CCF had to seek invitation and accreditation from the Minister of Elections, Attorney General Aiyaz Saiyed- Khaiyum who was the General Secretary and a candidate of the Fiji First Political Party.

After 3 months waiting for approval no response was ever received to emails, text messages and phone calls to personal and work contacts. In

the end on 23rd August 2014 the Minister when approached in person by Coordinator for CSO DEOG the Minister indicated that local elections observation was not going to be made possible for 2014 elections.

Reasoning given: the Multinational Observer Group (MOG) was in a better position to observe elections (92 observers from 14 countries including Australia, New Zealand, Russia, Iran, India Israel, PNG).

The value of having an additional technical professional report to support the processes and results of elections as well as training and building a pool of trained 300 observers equipped with local knowledge to be utilized in future local municipality elections and future national elections did not impress to change the Minister's decision so the refusal was confirmed.

He went further to state that CSO's have a bad reputation to discredit processes hence the MOG team would be sufficient for now.

Now with elections behind us, we welcome the democratic space before us and CCF together with fourteen NGOs that formed the coalition.

Concerned Citizens' for Credible Elections (CCCE) will share their findings with the purpose of engaging a broad CSO domestic observer group for future elections.

"Democracy is not just about elections, but it is a process and what happens, before, during and after elections is part of building that process."

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcoming the opportunity to vote at the last September elections a 19-year old student said he voted because he wanted to be part of the process of restoring democracy in his own country. This is precisely the opportunity as well as the challenge.

The impressive turnout of 84% and the low number of invalid votes (0.75%) voters reflected the yearning of voters to go to the polls; be represented in parliament and more important that they should have a say in the running of their country. And for people to be able to use this new-found democratic space both government and civil society organizations such as CCF need to take the lead in building trust.

One of the great peace-builders the world has ever known, Mahatma Gandhi once said, "The most practical way of going on in the world is to take people at their word when you have no positive reason to the contrary". Further he said, "I believe in trusting, trust begets trust. He who trusts has never lost in the world."

We have had examples of mistrust typical of an authoritarian military leadership. An attempt by concerned citizens to form a domestic election observers group was denied accreditation by the Minister of Elections. One of the reasons he stated was that CSOs have a bad reputation caused by heavy criticism of the military-backed government.

When CCF wanted to run a series of public conversations with focus on aspects of the Fiji Government 2013 Constitution these were stopped because Supervisor of Elections deemed these conversations to be in breach of Electoral Decree 2014.

Thus in early August Fiji Independent Commission Against Corruption (FICAC) conducted investigation against CCF and which yielded no result now four months after.

When asked what they expect of a democratically elected government at a CCF youth Advocacy workshop young people expressed the hope that government would create jobs as well as build capacity through job training. So as we appreciate the democratic space now before us we realize that it does bring opportunities as well as challenges. We citizens each have a part to play.

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HUMAN RIGHTS

CCF calls for a timely investigation into Soko's death Press Release

29/08/2014

The Citizens' Constitutional Forum (CCF) commends the criminal investigation led by the Police Commissioner, Ben Groenewald, which has resulted in four of his men being suspended while the investigation continues into the death of Vilikesa Soko.

CCF calls on the Commissioner to deliver justice to the victims of this tragic incident and conduct this investigation in a timely manner, without unreasonable delay. The Commissioner should be mindful that the unfortunate circumstances of Soko's case do not follow the same path as the case of lowene Bendito, in which a recaptured prisoner was assaulted by security forces. To date, those responsible for Bendito's assault have not been brought to justice.

According to Soko's autopsy report, there is no doubt that the circumstances surrounding Soko's death was inhumane and brutal and a grave breach of article 11 of the Bill of Rights as contained in the 2013 Constitution.

Actions such as these cannot and should not continue to be tolerated by the citizens' of Fiji. Police officers are officers of the law and have a duty to protect the security of the public.

The numerous cases of brutality against detained persons and lack of accountability within the security and military personnel has been an ongoing problem in Fiji. This reflects a wider issue of a culture of abuse of power within these authorities, and the militarisation that still grips the country. The fact that cases like these are not followed up and authorities are continuously not held accountable for grave abuses of power legitimises such actions, and does not send a clear message that this behaviour is not acceptable.

The authorities have a responsibility to implement measures to ensure constitutional rights are practiced and protected, and that the culture of abuse of power by authorities is addressed.

CCF is hopeful that the Soko's case is not overlooked, and is thoroughly investigated in an independent and efficient manner.

CCF is of the view that as long as perpetrators of gross human rights violations avoid facing justice, human rights can never be fully realized.

Land Rights Debate

Note: Opinion Piece by Akuila Yabaki published in the Fiji Times: 23/10/2014

As expected Fiji First MPs including Minister of Land, Mereseini Vuniwaqa closely backed by AG Aiyaz Saiyed-Khaiyum are faced with the impossible task of assuring that indigenous and other landowners land was secure and protected like never before (Fiji Times, 18.10.14).

The truth of the matter is that the State can permanently alienate iTaukei land for public purpose. This exceptional power is given under Section 28 of 2013 Constitution which at the same time mandates the ownership of all iTaukei, the Banaban and Rotuman land remaining with customary owners. So therein is inbuilt contradiction.

To say for example that iTaukei land is secure and protected like never before is simply untrue. Protective legislation was entrenched in each of the 1970, 1990, 1997 Constitutions and in the 2012 Ghai Draft. This omission means that all these laws may be amended by a simple majority in what is now a 50 member Parliament with an overwhelming government majority. Fiji Constitution 2013 does not entrench the suite of legislation (including the iTaukei Lands Act, iTaukeri Land Trust Act, Rotuman Lands Act, Banaban Lands Act and Agricultural Landlord and Tenant Act) which forms the basis upon which the majority of land in Fiji is owned, accessed and developed.

There is no requirement that the State consult with affected land owners and communities in respect of proposed land developments; again, as set out in the 2012 Ghai Draft.

Of far greater concern the protection of iTaukei land can be limited, or completely removed, by an Act of Parliament; indeed the rights themselves can be abrogated by legislation introduced in accordance with claw-back clause. So here the Bill of Rights offers no real protection to iTaukei landowners. Going forward solution lies in an urgent review of the 2013 Government Constitution.

Universal Periodical Review 2014

International Lobbying for Human Rights

Article By: Sina Mario

The Citizens' Constitutional Forum, Fiji Women's Rights Movement and the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre engaged with seven other key Civil Society Organizations (CSO's) towards the 20th Universal Periodical Review (UPR) of the United Nations Human Rights Council.

The UPR session involves UN member states, through the UPR working group reviewing Fiji's commitment towards the respect for human rights on the ground. During the first UPR cycle in 2010, there were 103 recommendations that were put forward by 31 member states, out of these – 93 was accepted while 6 recommendations were rejected.

These included the: establishment of a full constitutional assembly to shape the future for Fijians by Fijians, the protection of human rights under domestic law including reinstating the 1997 constitution, revoke decrees that allow courts to consider legality of government actions and abide by future judicial decisions, revoke the Fiji Human Rights Commission decree and ensure the alignment with Paris Principles, take immediate steps to hold elections by 2010 and take measures to reinstate legitimate authority.



CCF's Research Officer, Sina Mario at the United Nations Universal Periodic Review 2014. Picture: Sandra Fong from Geneva, Switzerland.

The NGO Coalition together with its partner CSOs has grave concern for various human rights issues; more so for the repetitive human rights violations. Following the identification of cyclic human rights breaches, the CSO group focused on the freedom of association and expression, protection of civil society and human rights defenders, and the rule of law and democracy in Fiji.

These issues were evident in the compilation of ongoing advocacy on the ground and reflection of these in monitoring reports by partner organizations. Other key areas that were highlighted by the CSO group were areas of women's rights, workers' rights, children's rights, and access to land rights.

Following the compilation of a stakeholder's submission to the UN on March 2014, the UPR CSO group identified two key strategies to ensure the state continues to realize the basic human rights of all Fijians.

This resulted in two groups heading meetings with international missions in Fiji and Geneva.

Therefore a pre session group hosted a presentation on the human



Members of the Fiji Human Rights Coalition at the Pre Session of the Universal Periodic Review 2014. Picture: Sandra Fong from Geneva, Switzerland.

rights achievements and gaps since 2010. This space was represented by the FWRM and the CCF on the key developments around the rule of law and democracy in Fiji and the rights and situation of ethnic minorities.

As part of the CSO submission, key developments that took place since the first submission was the general elections in September. One that was anticipated by many for almost eight years, hence the CSO group acknowledged the movement to hold elections and permit a parliamentary system chosen by the people.

The processes towards the outcome of the elections were of grave concern from the CSO group; this was because of draconian decrees that limited the freedom of information, association and speech.

The participation of people in political parties and spaces showed various limitations of the rights of citizens. Additionally the continuous human rights violations which were of grave concern from the CSOs were the inhumane beatings of the prisoners and citizens that were critical of the government.

These key issues were reflected in failure of the Fiji Human Rights Anti Discrimination Commission to fully function and ensure the protection of citizen's rights.

Given the various human rights areas of concern, the review session allowed states to peer review the current administration and its commitment to the realization of human rights in its roadmap to reforming Fiji.

The session was attended by the CCF, FWRM and FWCC to ensure country missions continue to lobby key issues of concern from the CSOs who work directly with communities. The review and pre session allowed an organized advocacy to various missions.

This was in the view of assisting them to ask the right questions, lobby for repetitive human rights violations and continue to push its member states to maintain and strive for the humanity of people in their countries.

Participation of Young People in Elections & Their Expectations



Left, Camari Serau who was one of the 33 participants at the Citizens's Constitutional Forum's National Youth Forum in July prepares to cast her vote during the mock voting session facilitated by the Fijian Elections Office. Picture by: Nazeem Kasim.

Article By: Nazeem Kasim

September 17th 2014 general elections is now history and it was certainly a big step taken by Fiji towards restoring democracy after eight long years of military rule. There is no doubt young people played an influential role in the outcome of the elections and CCF commends the commitment shown by the youths of this nation in the lead-up to and during elections.

According to figures released by the Elections Office, 47 percentage of the registered voters voted for the first time. This was a huge achievement for young people.

Young people are at the heart of CCF's work and our youth arm worked tirelessly with them to educate and encourage their participation in the elections.

Under previous governments, CCF had proposed to reduce the voting age from 21 to 18 years, however this recommendation was not considered. CCF is glad that the current government considered this for the 2014 elections.

This move, not only gave political rights to more young people for the first time, but also required them to critically analyse party policies and make informed decisions.

CCF hopes that post-elections young people of this nation will continue to utilise the democratic space that is now available to them and they are part of the decision-making process.

After the elections, CCF's Communications Team spoke to few young people about their voting experiences and what their expectations were from the elected government.

Why did you vote?

"I voted because it is a way to speak my mind and let my voice be heard in terms of telling elected officials and lawmakers how we feel about education, public safety, social security, health care and other important issues." said Jofiliti Veikoso, 21, student at the Fiji National University.

"I voted because I wanted to be a part of the process of restoring democracy to my country," said Parvez Ziyad, 19, a student at the University of the South Pacific (USP).

How did you find the voting process given that you were a first time voter?

"It was very easy to follow because I was well informed about how it works from voter education done by FEO." said Jofiliti Veikoso, 21. "The voting process was reasonably simple and straightforward. It was also quite interesting," said Ziyad.

"The processes for me was easy as I'm educated and know how things will be going whereas taking into consideration from uninformed people they would have found it a little difficult as the six steps of the process was not that easy either." said Mohammed Farhan, first year Law and Politics student at USP.

What are two things that you want the government to focus on for the young people of this country?

"Government should prioritize creation of jobs and a skilled workforce by increased investment including from the private sector through programmes that foster youth entrepreneurship and provide capacity building to young people through (job) trainings, using formal and non formal curricula, education, vocational and employment counseling.

"Offer quality paid internships, social protection, mentoring and expertise sharing so that young people, in particular marginalized groups, get the necessary information and skills to access decent work opportunities," said Veikoso.

"Firstly, I would want the government to focus on the tertiary education sector. It is important to look at the fee structures of all tertiary institutions and also review the policies employed by the Tertiary Education Loans and Scholarships department.

Secondly, I would like the government to focus on restoring true democracy to the nation. Youths must be able to live in an environment where they can speak without the fear of repercussions. The media must not remain stifled and provide balanced, unbiased information to the public, for them to be able to make the right decisions." said Ziyad.

"I voted because I wanted to be a part of the process of restoring democracy to my country." Parvez Ziyad, 19, USP student.

"Government should prioritize creation of jobs and a skilled workforce by increased investment..." Jofiliti Veikoso, 21.

Elections Office Conducted Voter Education for CCF Youth

Article By: Nazeem Kasim

Thirty three young people from around the country engaged in an informative and interactive voter education session with the Fijian Elections Office representatives at the National Youth Forum convened by the Citizens' Constitutional Forum (CCF).

The young people welcomed the visit, stating that the session had immensely helped them to better understand the elections process and how they can vote.

CCF invited the Fijian Elections Office to conduct voter education with young people at the National Youth Forum 2014, which was funded by the European Union and Conciliation Resources in early July.

Frances Naruma, student at the University of Fiji, said the voter education session had enabled her to better understand the whole elections process.

"The voter education session has informed me of how the Electoral Commission works and the three different types of voting which are pre-polling, postal and on the polling day voting," said Naruma. "I now have better understanding on how the results will be tallied," said Naruma.



*Fijian Elections Office Official at CCF's National Youth Forum.
Picture by: Nazeem Kasim.*

Chief Executive Officer, Rev Akuila Yabaki said "With a new system of voting; one person, one vote, one value working in partnership with the Elections Office is critically important in assisting young people to learn how to vote. The bulk of voters being young people under 30 years and voting for the first time, CCF regards this as a great achievement."

"Next September 17 marks an important day; a milestone in Fiji's history when citizens are to vote for the return to constitutional democracy and CCF believe it's a day of celebration when power is returned to the people of Fiji," said Yabaki.

Civil Society Organisation (CSO) Partnership Coordinator at the Elections Office, Losana McGwan says voter education is vital.

"It is vitally important for us as the Fijian Elections Office that all citizens of Fiji are fully aware of the Electoral process and apart from going around to each and every community in Fiji conducting voter awareness we're also thankful to organizations, groups, etc who have invited us to conduct this," said McGwan.

"It is very encouraging to note the interest from young people and the interest to know more about the Electoral process and this stems from the quantities of questions that have been asked but as mentioned we're happy to answer any queries relating to the Electoral process at any given time.," added McGwan.

The Elections Office also facilitated a mock voting session with the youth participants to assist their understanding of how to cast their votes on 17th September.

John Peckham, Youth Volunteer, said the mock voting has enabled him to understand what to do and how to vote.

"It gave me a better view on how it's going to be like on elections day and that the voting process is very simple" said Peckham.

"The ballot paper and the candidates list is very easy to use and cast your vote," Peckham added.

"With a new system of voting; one person, one vote, one value working in partnership with the Elections Office is critically important in assisting young people to learn how to vote. The bulk of voters being young people under 30 years and voting for the first time, CCF regards this as a great achievement" Rev Akuila Yabaki



Group members engaged in discussion at the Citizens' Constitutional Forum National Youth Forum in July. Picture by: Nazeem Kasim.

Promoting Good Governance for Good Leadership at Community Level

Article By: Nazeem Kasim

A major aspect of our Community Education Workshops is to empower communities to initiate development and change in their own communities. Our workshops present a human rights approach to development.

We train and provide skills to leaders to conduct their own participation in needs analysis with their communities to identify development needs.

“A good training had me realize that good leadership will affect people’s life. As a new leader, I have come to learn a lot to help me in my leadership role.” Assistant Roko of Gau.

Citizens’ Constitutional Forum’s Education Team conducted thirteen Community Leaders Workshops in the months of July, August and September.

These workshops that were conducted in the grassroots communities around the country aimed to develop leadership qualities of villagers, community leader’s women and youths. The workshops were attended by Mata ni Tikinas, Turaga ni Koros, men, women and youth.

The workshop participants went through intense sessions on the thirty-one articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the eight principles of Good Governances and Leadership. Sessions on the Constitution were also conducted, which focused on educating the people about their rights and responsibilities as stated in the Bill of Rights section of the 2013 Constitution.

The participants welcomed such workshops as it provided them with the skills to bring positive change in their communities, especially at decision-making levels.

The Assistant Roko Tui of Gau advised during the workshop that community leaders should use the 8 principles in their decision-making, as this will bring about good decision.

“A good training had me realize that good leadership will affect people’s life. As a new leader, I have come to learn a lot to help me in my leadership role.” said the Assistant Roko of Gau.

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Members of Sawaieke Village at CCF’s Leadership, Good Governances, Human Rights and Constitution workshop. Picture by: Viniana Cakau

CCF's Voter Education Programme

Article By: Nazeem Kasim

After getting the approval from Elections Office in mid June to conduct voter education, CCF undertook the important role to educate voters in the lead-up to elections.

Funded by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) CCF's Education Team facilitated a total of thirteen (13) workshops around the country in less than a month.

The main objective of this program was to educate the greater public about the 2013 Fiji Constitution in particular their rights enshrined in the constitution, political rights in the lead up to the September 2014 election, the new election process and how to vote in the 17th September elections in order to develop, empower and encourage attitudes and behavior to make informed decisions in the elections to promote peace, justice, equality, and respecting the rule of law at all times.

According to the Supervisor of Elections, Mohammed Saneem, the total number of invalid votes recorded in these elections was 0.75 percentage compared to 6 percentage in the 2006 elections. This achievement not only reflects the hard work put in by the Fijian Elections Office in educating voters, but also the commitment put into this exercise by Civil Society Organisations like CCF who invested a lot of time and effort to educate voters at the grassroots communities.



Members of Saiyaro Village attend CCF's voter education workshop:
Picture by: Viniana Cakau.

Although the communities welcomed the voter education workshops, they felt it was a bit too late to conduct voter education one month before elections because the new electoral system required more time for them to understand.

One of the workshop participants said "with this new election system, we in the rural areas should be given a lot of time on the education ourselves about the system, because it takes time for us to understand new things like this, we only know and understand and are familiar with the old way of voting."

Another participant shared while he hopes the international observers has done a good job, he questioned if the number of international observers was sufficient to observe all the 2028 polling venues and accessing these areas.

There were a lot of questions posed to the facilitator regarding the Secular State. Explanation was given with references made to the 2013 Constitution then the people understood better.

Chapter 1 (4) of the 2013 Constitution states that Fiji is a Secular State. A secular state treats all its citizens equally regardless of religion, and does not favour a citizen from a particular religion over other religions. The State does not associate itself with any specific faith and therefore allows all faiths and beliefs to be practiced equally and without favour by the State.

The table below shows the communities in which CCF conducted voter education workshops

#	Date	Community
1	21st August	District of Nayavu
2	27th August	Naqia & Naveiveiwali communities
3	27th August	Saiyaro & Waito Lodoni Communities
4	27th August	Nasaibitu, Namoka & Nalidi
5	4th September	Waivola, Nananu, Namena & Korovou
6	4th September	District of Nasau I Wai
7	5th September	Vunivesi, Vunileba & Navaravidoko
8	5th September	Navulase & Natila
9	6th September	Vunivau Settlement, Samabula & Jittu Estate
10	6th September	Kasavu, & Koronivia
11	10th September	Dugavatu, Rakiraki
12	10th September	Mulau & Colasi
13	13th September	Nananu

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Research Paper & Public Conversation on International Benchmarks of “Free and Fair Elections”

Article By: Nazeem Kasim

To strengthen the public and civil society's understanding of the international indicators of “free and fair” elections, the Citizens' Constitutional Forum (CCF) published a research paper on international benchmarks of free and fair elections and held a public conversation event on the same topic in late July.

The event, which was hosted at the University of the South Pacific's (USP) ICT Building presented the public with the opportunity to also learn to what extent did Fiji's Constitution ensure “free and fair elections” and the possible repercussions of any shorting-coming in the 2013 Constitution.

The research paper positively rated Fiji's elections, but noted that there was room for improvement in some areas.

CCF strongly believed that in order for this research paper to generate informed national debate it was important to provide a platform for political parties, CSOs, academics, students, young people, women, those outside of Suva and other members of the public to engage critically with the research and participate in informed debate in a safe, non-political environment.

Thus a panel discussion was facilitated, which consisted of United Nation Parliamentary Development Expert, Dyfan Jones, Suva Lawyer, Richard Naidu and Fiji Women's Rights Movement, Tara Chetty.

Jones said “There is no “one -fits- all” electoral model that is appropri-

ate to all countries and must be implanted in every country.”

CCF had also decided to publish three other research papers- Separation of Power, Bill of Rights and Transition Process, but had to cancel these publications and conversation events due an investigation carried out by the Fiji Independent Commission against Corruption (FICAC) alleging CCF had breached the Electoral Decree.



Audiences had a chance to interact with the panel by asking questions regarding the research paper. Picture: Nazeem Kasim.

Young People's Willingness to Participate in the Democratization Process

Article By: Nazeem Kasim

“The various sessions and activities broadened young people's understanding of democracy and elections. They now understand the relevance of elections as a democratic process.”

Those were the expressions of the Citizens' Constitutional Forum's, Youth Coordinator, Alzima Bano, upon the completion of the National Youth Forum funded by the European Union and Conciliation Resources in July.

The forum was held at Tailevu, Nadave to assist youths understand the elections process and provide the relevant information about the September elections and the significance of participating in Fiji's democratic process by voting.



Right: Rosalba Tuseo from the Delegation of the European Union hands Zaiyna Begum her Certificates at the National Youth Forum. Picture: Nazeem Kasim.

“The various sessions and activities broadened young people's understanding of democracy and elections. They now understand the relevance of elections as a democratic process.”

Alzima Bano

The forum was attended by youths from diverse backgrounds such as government, civil society organisations, political parties, corporate, religious, cultural, health, rural, urban organisations and so forth.

Given the fact that the bulk of the young people voted for the first time, this forum provided the youths an excellent opportunity to understand the political parties and analyse party manifestos, party mandates and the youth participation in democratic process.

It was very pleasing to see the strong involvement by the youths of this country in the recent elections and the turnout demonstrates the significance of the recent polls for them.

“Participants valued the process and the opportunity to learn how to participate in the democratization process in Fiji.” said Bano.

CCF Helps Young People Develop Advocacy Skills

Article By: Nazeem Kasim

“Advocacy isn’t about just standing up and talking about an issue you are passionate about; it’s about encouraging change or trying to move people towards change.”

Those were the words of Dr Vanisha Mishra-Vakaoti who facilitated CCF’s Youth Advocacy Training in July.

The objective of the workshop was to provide youths the opportunity to enhance their existing knowledge on advocacy and boost their confidence to carry out advocacy campaigns in their respective communities and to equip them with the skills and knowledge required to carry out successful advocacy campaigns by giving the practical tasks needed for advocacy.

At the end of the training all twenty participants of the workshop were placed at a nearest NGO for internships to help them utilise the skills gained from the training and further develop them.

“Advocacy isn’t about just standing up and talking about an issue you are passionate about; it’s about encouraging change or trying to move people towards change.” Dr Vanisha Vakaoti.

Upon the completion of the week long training in Suva, CCF’s Communications Officer, Nazeem Kasim sat down with workshop facilitator, Dr Vanisha Mishra-Vakaoti to get her feedback about the training and below is what she had to say about the training.

Nazeem: Can you explain what the training was about and why is it important for young people to be involved in advocacy?

Dr Vanisha: It was really about the understanding of what advocacy is. A lot of these young people thought advocacy was simply getting up and talking about an issue and that’s why the content of this training was very important because we fill the gap. Advocacy isn’t about just standing up and talking about an issue you are passionate about; it’s about encouraging change or trying to move people towards change. So, yes I did find that many of the participants were perhaps more opinionated than informed, but it’s a process.

Advocacy itself is not an event, it’s a process and these young people will learn. Now that they understand what it involves they see the importance of been informed, they see the merit and they see the dangers of what happens when you are ill-informed.



Kaliova Nadumu works on a video, which attempts to show the level of discrimination levelled against the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Intersexual Questioning (LGBTIQ) community in Fiji and how people can treat the LGBTIQ community better in our society. Picture By: Nazeem Kasim.

Nazeem: Could you talk about the content of CCF’s youth advocacy training and why is it relevant to young people?

Dr Vanisha: The content for CCF’s youth advocacy training was both relevant in terms of advocacy and also quite unique as in I don’t think a workshop or training of this nature has taken place before where the content covers things like storytelling, social media advocacy, radio broadcasting, video making and how to connect with the media. So all of these things are relevant and as I said quite new, quite novel and it’s amazing that young people have really connected with the content.

Nazeem: How was the feedback from the young people?

Dr Vanisha: The verbal feedback I got has been very encouraging, based on that I think my recommendation to CCF would be to continue these sorts of training programs. The feedbacks in terms what I have seen the participants do speaks volumes. Normally at training and workshops the facilitator can’t get the people to do the work. At this particular training I couldn’t get the participants out the door to have lunch or to have afternoon tea. Everyone was so excited and so motivated to work on the programs they had designed from start to finish and there are very few training programs that go on for week that exactly empower, motivate and aspire young people to work that way.

So that was very encouraging for me as a facilitator and I think for organisations like CCF and for your donors I think that is excellent news and that should be really motivating for you to carry on doing this type of work.

The workshops were funded by the European Union and Conciliation Resources and were held in Suva and Nadi with twenty young people from around the country.



Dr Vanisha Mishra Vakaoti

Maintaining the Spotlight on Budget Documents

Article By: Sina Mario

The Citizens' Constitutional Forum Education Advocacy Team is credible of conducting budget workshops in Fiji. This activity is in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance budget planning division.

CCF is the only civil society organization that works in the area of budget education workshops. It is an important advocacy component of the CCF's goal towards achieving accountability and transparency of public funds.

While the education team continues engaging communities with budget workshops, the research arm of CCF took the task of conducting an open budget survey. This involved researching key budget documents and its public availability through the renowned International Budget Partnership program.

The research on Fiji's budget documents began in 2008 and takes place biannually. Results demonstrate the current status quo of budget documents being unable to meet basic international standards of availability, simplification for public use and comprehensiveness to cover use of public funds.

In 2008 the Open Budget Survey (OBS) outcome rated Fiji 26/100 and in 2010 it dropped dramatically to 0/100. Following this in

2012 the survey saw Fiji climb 6 points to achieve 6/100 in rating. Regardless these are very poor ratings in comparison with neighboring Pacific islands.

The OBS Tracker will allow Citizens, Civil Society Organizations, Journalists and other stakeholders to know on a monthly basis whether their government is releasing a set of budget documents — key planning, implementation, and oversight reports — in a timely way as prescribed by international standards for public finance transparency and accountability.

CCF is the only civil society organization that works in the area of budget education workshops. It is an important advocacy component of the CCF's goal towards achieving accountability and transparency of public funds.

International Peace Day 2014

Promotion of peace is vital for the full enjoyment of all human right

Article By : Nazeem Kasim

CCF used songs, poems, dances, drama and fine arts to commemorate international peace day 2014. This allowed young people to express why human rights and peace cannot be separated.

Each year the International Day of Peace is observed around the world on 21 September. The United Nations General Assembly has declared this as a day devoted to strengthening the ideals of peace, both within and among all nations and peoples.

To mark the 30th anniversary of the General Assembly Declaration International Peace Day 2014, the theme of this year's International Day of Peace was "Right of Peoples to Peace".

The Declaration on the Right of Peoples to Peace recognizes that the promotion of peace is vital for the full enjoyment of all human rights.

The Citizens' Constitutional Forum commemorated International Peace Day on the 22nd September at the University of the South Pacific's Oceania Centre.



Members of the public gathered at CCF's Peace Day celebration at the University of the South Pacific's Oceania Centre. Photo: Nazeem Kasim.

The objective of celebrating Peace Day 2014 was to create awareness and understating of peace day and why Human Rights play's an essential role in maintaining peace.

The event also presented the prefect opportunity to showcase a video produced by CCF's strong partner, Conciliation Resources, a London based NGO.

The video, which was titled "Conflict-look Closer' was released three days before peace day and it called for a commitment to investing in peace building alternatives to prevent and resolve violent conflict. "Conflicts in Ukraine, Iraq, Syria and the Middle East may claim the media headlines today but beyond the media spotlight, millions live every day with violent and intractable conflicts and their consequences." said Conciliation Resources.



Adopted from the press statement : Citizens' Constitutional Forum Response to the Supervisor of Elections Fiji: CCF has not breached the Electoral Decree 2014

Press Statement

08/08/2014

Citizens' Constitutional Forum (CCF) strongly condemns allegations from the Supervisor of Elections, Mohammed Saneem, that it has breached the Electoral Decree 2014 by publishing a research paper on international benchmarks of free and fair elections and holding a public conversation on the same paper.

"CCF maintains that we have not breached the Electoral Decree 2014," says Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Rev Akuila Yabaki.

Public Conversations on Free and Fair Elections- s 115.

Section 115(1)- Section 115(1) places restrictions on foreign funded NGO's, such as CCF, from engaging in any form of 'campaign' related to the election or any election issue or matter. The Public Conversation held on 29th July, was a research and dialogue event, and cannot be seen to fall within the definition of 'campaign'.

The event was an informal technical discussion in partnership with an educational institution, in the context of the elections being a component of the Constitution.

Overall, the purpose of the first Public Conversation was to:

- (i) share research findings with the general public;*
- (ii) provide technical information on Constitutional issues to the public;*
- (iii) provide an apolitical platform for public discussion on Constitutional issues to the public; and*
- (iv) create inclusive discussion particularly amongst young people and women to be actively included in these national discussions.*

The content of the research paper and discussions focused on the universal benchmarks of free and fair elections in general, and assessed how the current electoral process meets this criterion.

The Conversation was not directed solely at voters or potential voters, and was not intended to provide voter information or education about the elections to be held on September 17.

CCF reiterates that it was an all-inclusive event focused around general information in relation to the Constitution 2013, specifically Chapter 3.

It was not to support any particular political party directly or indirectly, influence voting at elections. In fact, to minimise the risk of this, CCF took a number of measures to ensure the event

remained apolitical and did not violate this section.

Section 115 (2): Section 115(2) of the Electoral Decree 2014 requires written authorisation from the Electoral Commission or the Supervisor for acts which 'under the Constitution or under [the Electoral Decree], is given or assigned to the Electoral Commission or Supervisor.'

The Electoral Decree assigns 'voter information and education initiatives' to the Supervisor under s 6(1)(d). Further, s 3(2) assigns the duty to implement a 'nationwide voter information and education programme' to the Electoral Commission, including information on the voter registration process, candidates and political parties, voting procedures, including postal and pre-poll voting and procedures for protecting electoral rights.

The Constitution of the Republic of Fiji 2013, s 75(2)(b), further assigns 'voter education' to the Electoral Commission.

CCF maintains that as the Public Conversation was not a voter education or voter information event, it did not cross over with a duty assigned to the Electoral Commission or Supervisor and therefore did not require approval.

Invitation to the Fiji Electoral Commission: CCF ensured that all relevant government stakeholders were invited to the event.

Specifically, invitations were extended to the Minister for Elections and the Electoral Commission. CCF was not aware that the invitation to the Electoral Commission was not further extended to the Supervisor and FEO.

CCF notes that a member of the Electoral Commission was expected to attend the event as a panelist, however, this did not eventuate. Although we are disappointed that the event did not have an Electoral Commission or FEO representative, CCF were pleased at the open communication between the Electoral Commission and CCF.

Looking forward: CCF respects the national responsibility of the Supervisor of Elections and the Fiji Electoral Commission in steadily taking Fiji to a fair election in September particularly in strengthening its democratic processes and governance beyond 2014.

CCF continues to view the Supervisor of Elections and the FEO as key partners.

CCF would also like to remind the Supervisor

of the pressing need to be particularly mindful of the constitutional freedoms anchored in Article 17 (1) of the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji 2013: Freedom of speech, expression, thought, opinion and publication which states:

Every person has the right to freedom of speech, expression, thought, opinion and publication, which includes specifically

(a) freedom to seek, receive and impart information, knowledge and ideas and the

(b) freedom of the press, including print, electronic and other media

(c) freedom of imagination and creativity and

(d) academic freedom & freedom of scientific research.

And in protecting and upholding these Constitutional freedoms as a State public office holder. CCF strongly urged the Supervisor of Elections to be particularly mindful of Article 2 (3) of the Constitution 2013 which states:

This Constitution shall be upheld and respected by all Fijians and the State, including all persons holding public office, and the obligations imposed by this Constitution must be fulfilled.

Staff Movement



CCF welcomes the newest addition to our organization.

Ken Cokanasiga, officially joined us as the Programme Manager-bringing with him more than six years of experience working in the government, climate change, NGO's and communities.

Being part of CCF, Cokanasiga hopes to broaden his knowledge and feels excited to be working at CCF. He is looking forward to the exciting times ahead.



Sandra Fong retired from CCF towards the end of September. Fong joined us in January 2014 to coordinate the project "Promoting National Constitutional Engagement". Since March of this year she undertook on the additional role as Interim Programme Manager. Sandra had worked with various NGO's in Fiji and abroad. She has now moved to Switzerland where she wishes to broaden her career.

CCF wishes Sandra all the best for her future plans.



Alzima Bano joined us on 7th January 2013 as the Youth Coordinator.

Bano was very passionate in her work and strongly believed in youth empowerment and providing young people the space to express themselves.

Bano left CCF in July and we wish her good luck in her future career paths.



CCF farewelled Rajjeli Vasakula Tuivaga in mid September. She was contracted on 6th January 2014 and was attached to the "Promoting National Constitutional Engagement" as its Legal Researcher.

CCF wishes Tuivaga all the best in her future.

One Nation Diverse Peoples

One Nation Diverse Peoples

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About CCF

The Citizens' Constitutional Forum (CCF) is a non-government organization based in Suva with more than 20 years' experience in community education and advocacy on Fiji's Constitution, democracy, human rights and multiculturalism.

Our Vision

To build a nation in which Fiji's people live together in equality, justice and peace, respecting the rule of law under the Constitution that guarantees democracy and human rights.

Our Purpose

To empower the people of Fiji to participate in and demand good governances, democracy, human rights and multiculturalism.

**Brot
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Thank you for reading the Tutaka. We would love to hear from you. You can write your feedbacks and comments to media1@ccf.org.fj.