



# TUTAKA

STANDING IN SOLIDARITY एकता

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

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## Space for Fijians to Lobby Members of Parliament

By **Citizens' Constitutional Forum**

In late January, the Citizens' Constitutional Forum (CCF) in collaboration with the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and the International Republican Institute (IRI) introduced a first of its kind *Town Hall Meeting* or *Talanoa Session* between the Members of Parliament (MPs) and community members in Rakiraki, Lautoka and Labasa.

The two-day community engagement sessions between the Fijian MPs and community members provided an opportunity for about 180 Fijian citizens from the three districts to effectively lobby with their elected members of parliament, and for the MPs to be able to work well with the people.

CCF believes that it was important to have such interactions between Fiji citizens and MPs.

"This was the first time that community members and elected MPs representing all three political parties in Parliament were given the opportunity to listen and work together and CCF was excited to work with IFES and IRI to make this happen," said Mr Ken Cokanasiga, CCF's Programme Manager.

"CCF is confident that this process positively impacted both the community members and the MPs and we hope that this kind of engagement between Government and its citizens continues throughout Fiji in the future," Mr Cokanasiga added.

The first day of training equipped the participants on how to lobby their issues to

Government, while six MPs – two each of the Fiji First Party, Social Democratic and Liberal Party, and the National Federation Party – discussed how to effectively aid communities with their grievances. On the second day, the community members had the opportunity to engage and raise their issues with the MPs who in turn responded.

Ms Terry Ann Rogers, a Consultant with IFES shares that they were delighted to have worked with CCF.

"Fiji had its first elections after seven years and it was a good election. Now parliament is sitting, but people do not know how to lobby their government. The workshop with IFES and IRI with CCF focused on working with MPs about interfacing with the people and working with citizens so they know how to work with members of parliament," Ms Rodgers said.

All three urban areas had a panel of six different MPs representing the three political parties in Parliament during the sessions. Ms Melissa Yeakley of IRI said the *Talanoa* sessions in Rakiraki, Lautoka and Labasa was a good experience for the MPs and the citizen participants.

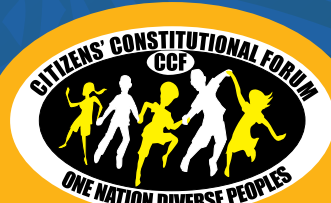
"We hope that all the political parties saw the value of holding these discussions between elected officials and citizens. It was an important opportunity to talk to MPs about different strategies to engage with the citizens who elected them, as well as, for MPs to talk to the citizens and let them know what they are doing in

parliament, and then also to hear feedback from the citizens and issues that are most important to them to help shape how parliament precedes before the next election," she adds.

The meeting was moderated by an independent Consultant from IRI and a former Head of the Republican Party in Hawaii, Mr Jess Yescalis.

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# Uncertainty Ahead

By **Reverend Akuila Yabaki**

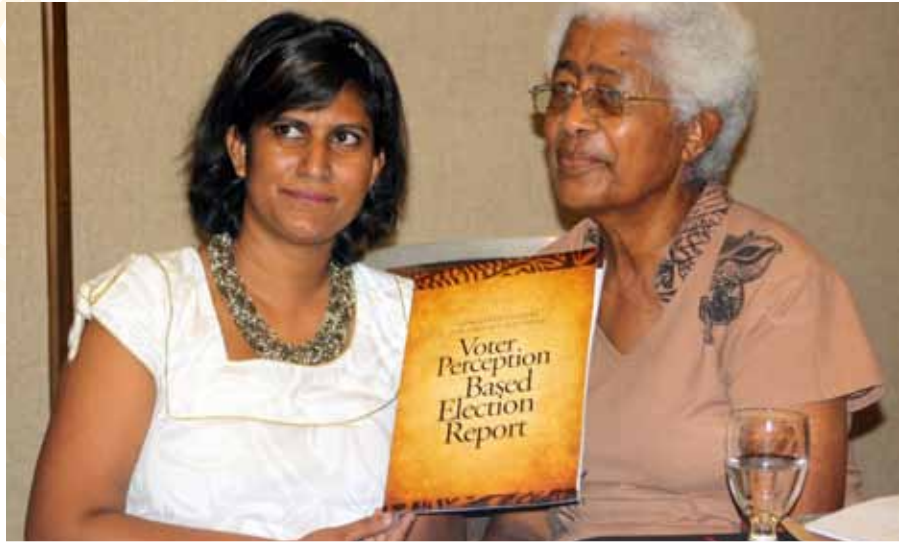
The path ahead for Fiji is an uncertain one. Great responsibility rests on political leaders and the Fijian people to establish a successful Constitutional democracy. This is one of the points raised in the 'Perceptions Survey' conducted by CCF and published in our latest publication Fiji in Transition: Towards a Sustainable Constitutional Democracy.

As Fiji emerges from an extended period under military-backed rule, it is important to remember that transition to democracy will take much time. This can often span decades and involves significant political negotiation.

*Great responsibility rests on political leaders and the Fijian people to establish a successful Constitutional democracy.*

The 2013 Constitution is far from perfect, with wide ranging powers vested in the executive, lack of adequate checks and balances between the three arms of government, weak human rights protection mechanisms, entrenchment of restrictive decrees and broad immunity provisions granted to government officials, the 2013 Constitution does contain some progressive provisions and provides a path to move forward to parliamentary democratic rule. Political will and commitment from political leaders and parties together with the sustained constructive engagement of civil society will be of great importance.

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## Elections were Credible: Concerned Citizens for Credible Elections

By **Nazeem Kasim**

A voter perception based report published by the Concerned Citizens for Credible Elections (CCCE) established that the September 2014 elections were credible.

"Voter Perception Based Election Report" gives an analysis of the electoral procedures, and recommendations to improve future elections. The report was launched by CCCE Chair, Suliana Siwatibau in January.

The report titled: "Voter Perception Based Election Report" gives an analysis of the electoral procedures, details of the research, results and recommendations from the lessons learnt.

CCCE consisted of 16 Civil Society Organizations around Fiji, and was administratively led by the CCCE Secretariat and host- the

Citizens' Constitutional Forum (CCF). The main objective of CCCE was to conduct unique and valuable research on the September 17th election to provide information that may help improve electoral processes in the future.

"The September 17th election was significant for Fiji's transition from eight years of undemocratic rule, to civilian rule. However, we must be reminded that democracy is not just about elections. It is a process- what happens, before, during and after elections is vital to developing a truly participatory democratic nation," Siwatibau added.

The report is available on CCF's website [www.ccf.org.fj](http://www.ccf.org.fj).

By **Citizens' Constitutional Forum**

Fiji has just witnessed its first general elections and the first sitting of Parliament under the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji 2013 (the 2013 Constitution). The Citizens Constitutional Forum shares in the excitement felt by many Fijians about the emergence of a democracy based on human dignity, equality and freedom.

CCF recognises the progressive steps Fiji has taken towards a sustainable democracy, and in an attempt to continue with this progress, CCF has released the publication *Fiji in Transition: Towards a Sustainable Constitutional Democracy*. This publication contains a substantive analysis of parts of the 2013 Constitution, and we hope it will inspire informed and open debate directed towards active citizenship and a vibrant democracy.

The publication includes three discussion papers that provide substantive expert analysis on technical constitutional issues. The first, on the Transitional Process, describes international and comparative best practice for nations emerging from military-backed rule to civilian rule. In this paper, the transitional provisions in the 2013 Constitution are assessed against international and comparative best practice. It also provides some suggestions on ways in which the 2013 Constitution can better support a successful transition back to civilians rule.

The second discussion paper tackles the constitutional issues surrounding the doctrine of Separation of Powers. It highlights the importance of appropriate checks and balances on the executive power, including strong oversight powers in the legislature and an independent judiciary. This is discussed in the context of the importance of the Separation of Powers in nations emerging from military-backed rule.

The third discussion paper explores the

2013 Constitution's Bill of Rights. It highlights the importance of a strong Bill of Rights in protecting citizens during a period of transition. The paper analyses the latent application of the limitation clauses contained in the Bill of Rights, and suggests key actions for Parliament and civil society to better protect these exhaustive rights and freedoms.

The publication also investigates the Fijian public's understanding of the 2013 Constitution through a Constitutional Perception Survey involving 275 participants. This survey documents a small portion of Fiji citizen's thoughts and opinions of the Constitution, and assesses their sense of ownership over the document. The publication concludes with a Constitutional Monitoring Report, which monitored and documented the implementation of the transitional provisions in the 2013 Constitution.

CCF presents these papers and recommendations as a starting point to encourage informed discussion and debate. It takes international and comparative best practice and applies this to a Fiji context, taking into account the unique history, culture and political environment. CCF hopes this publication is well received by all, and inspires Fiji's people to ask fundamental critical questions. "We have an



elected government and a functioning Parliament for the first time in eight years: how can we further improve these advancements to achieve full democratic governance?"

*"We have an elected government and a functioning Parliament for the first time in eight years: how can we further improve these advancements to achieve full democratic governance?"*

## CCF Launches New Publication

By **Nazeem Kasim**

Citizens' Constitutional Forum (CCF) launched its new book titled "Fiji in Transition: Towards a Sustainable Constitutional Democracy" on 10th December 2014.

The book intends to allow Fijians to have a better understanding of the 2013 Constitution and Fiji's return to parliamentary democracy.

CCF's Chief Executive Officer, Reverend Akuila Yabaki, said the publication and the launch was in line with Article 17 of the Constitution on freedom of speech and expression, which every person has the right to.

Mr Yabaki said the CCF publication was

timely since Fiji had just witnessed parliamentary elections and the first Parliamentary sitting in eight years, and CCF wanted to share the excitement with Fijians about the new democracy.

"CCF recognises the progressive steps Fiji has taken towards a sustainable democracy, and in an attempt to continue with this progress, CCF has released the publication," Mr Yabaki said.

The publication contains a substantive analysis of parts of the Constitution, and CCF hopes it will inspire informed and open debate directed towards active citizenship and a vibrant democracy.

The publication also investigates the Fijian public's understanding of the Constitution through a Constitutional Perception Survey involving 275 participants from across Fiji.

The survey documents a portion of Fiji citizen's thoughts and opinions of the Constitution, and assesses their sense of ownership over the document.

**The publication is available on CCF's website: [www.ccf.org.fj](http://www.ccf.org.fj)**



Members of the Duguvatu community who attended CCF's lobbying workshop.

## Rakiraki Community Learn to Advocate and Lobby Members of Parliament

By **Nazeem Kasim**

Dugavatu, Rakiraki - (Communications) – 35 members of the Duguvatu community in Rakiraki actively participated in a workshop designed to empower citizens to effectively advocate and lobby government officials and members of parliament on issues that concern their community.

"We have benefited a lot from this workshop because now we know what we can do. Prior to this workshop we did not know how to raise our concerns and issues to the government. Now we are empowered and are confident," said Suresh Nand a workshop participant.

Citizens' Constitutional Forum (CCF) facilitated the workshop in the sugar-cane farming community in a bid to build the community's capacity to influence decision makers and effectively lobby public interest on the social issues most important to the community.

With the nation now in parliamentary democracy, advocacy and lobbying of legislative bodies are critical components of the democratic process.

Fijian citizens elected their leaders to Parliament in the September 2013 general elections. Now they need to have the knowledge and capacity to effectively and efficiently advocate and lobby their concerns to their representatives in Parliament.

Although the training focused on lobbying at

the parliamentary level, all concepts, strategies and tactics discussed may also be applied at local and district levels.

Such a workshop was conducted for the first time in this community and the members welcomed it, saying it enabled them to understand how they can address their issues to the government and the Parliament.

"The workshop was very beneficial and fruitful for us. Most of us did not have any knowledge on the lobbying processes, how to raise issues and how to address these issues to the relevant government departments and ministers," said Lal Mani a workshop participant.

"Now we know that we can make direct contact with the respective ministries. It's easy now because we know the procedure," said Mani.

Nand says the Dugavatu community will soon convene a meeting to discuss their strategy of lobbying the issue of water, electricity and road to the local divisional officers, ministers and members of Parliament.

The workshop was supported by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and was attended to by the Special Administrator Ra Provincial Office, members of the police force, religious leaders, women, men and youth.

Fiji has only one constituency. Thus, members of Parliament are elected to office by



CCF's Programme Manager, Ken Cokanasiga.

voters in the whole country and do not represent a particular district. Members of the community say lobbying under the one constituency system will be a challenge since it is difficult to identify their district representative in Parliament.

"Previously we knew the person who was elected from our district, and so we always took our issues and concerns to that person, but now the system has changed under the one constituency system and this will be a challenge for us," says Nand.

# Young People Receive Skills to Lobby Government and Members of Parliament

By **Nazeem Kasim**

Thirty-five young people in Suva now have the skills and techniques to lobby and advocate government officials on issues that concern them.

"One thing I learned was the technique to lobby my issue to the members of Parliament," said Meli Nakauvadra, 21, Bachelor of Education student at the University of the South Pacific.

Citizens' Constitutional Forum facilitated a two-day workshop for young people in the Central Division to enhance the skills and techniques of youths to influence decision makers and lobby effectively.

Workshop facilitator and CCF's Community Education Support Officer, Viniana Cakau says with the democratic space now available to young people lobbying young people's issues is important.

"Lobbying is important for young people as it is essential for influencing the people who make decisions that directly affect their lives. It is also making their voice heard in a more challenging space rather than the single constituency system that they voted in," Cakau said.

"Youths will be able to use lobbying tactics to strategically have their voice or issues heard rather than aggressive and passive approaches that will cause harm.

Although the training focused on lobbying at

the parliamentary level, all concepts, strategies and tactics discussed may also be applied at the district and local levels," Cakau said.

This was the first time a lobby workshop was conducted for youths in Suva and for a high school student it was an opportunity to learn the importance of pressuring government officials about issues that matter to young people.

"I plan to use this information with our youth group to enlighten them on the importance of the Constitution and how lobbying can help the government understand our views. The more we lobby the more the chances the government would be able to see how important our concerns are and what could be done," said Adi Taraiui Gadolo, a form seven student of Suva Grammar School.

International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) supported this workshop.

"I'll start my own advocacy group and advocate on the Media Decree because there is supposed to be some amendments to it because some of it seems unfair," said Monica Aguilar, a first year Journalism student at the University of the South Pacific.

"Their lobbying effort will be most powerful when supported by large numbers of people or youth," Cakau said.

*Lobbying is important for young people as it is essential for influencing the people who make decisions that directly affect their lives.*



**CCF's Education Support Officer, Viniana Cakau facilitated the lobbying workshop for youth.**



**Members of the youth community who attend CCF's youth lobbying workshop in Suva**



# Universal Periodic Review 2014

By **Sina Mario**

The 29th of October 2014 marked an important day for Fiji's order of human rights. Members of the UN Human Rights Council examined the human rights situation in Fiji, and assessed the progress made since 2010, at the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in Geneva, Switzerland. This in turn saw an interactive session between member-states and the Fiji delegation. The atmosphere created by the member-states generated a critical and vibrant democratic space. It was indeed an experience to witness our administration and other member-states interact on grounds of diplomacy, human rights and development. While this process is an international one based on principles of absolute respect for human rights, achieving a vibrant review system is accomplished when actors that *speaks truth to power* are actively involved. This highlights the importance of stakeholders, such as human rights advocates and international organizations, to ensure vibrant and forthright discussions take place. This was particularly reflected in Fiji's case when the context of the review took place during an instrumental time of transition from undemocratic rule to an elected administration.

This further encouraged the NGO groups to visit Geneva prior to the review session. The pursuit saw the Fiji NGO coalition, with four other international NGOs, advocate on Fiji's human rights context. As the UPR review session is predominantly a state to state process, a 'pre-session' is organized by UPR Info, an independent NGO, to facilitate critical dialogue between non-State stakeholders and member-state representatives. The opportunity allowed activists both on the ground and in international lobby spaces to unpack the violations

of human rights since 2010. The issues represented were predominantly based on violations of basic tenants of human rights: the freedom of the media, ratification of international protocols to ensure children's rights are fully protected, sexual minorities having equal legal protection, the ratification of international instruments protecting civil and political rights, and dealing with cases of torture in a timely and proficient manner. Following the in-depth testimonies from NGO's, questions were raised from the member-states, which were addressed by NGO groups.

While lobby statements were used and face-to-face discussions were organized, the Secretariat of the NGO Coalition – Citizens Constitutional Forum ensured that meetings were aligned to the recommendations in the previous cycle, and discussions were evidence driven and on point. Further into the month, the review session took place and the vibrancy of discussions were reflected in the recommendations that countries put forward and queried. This again highlights the significance of stakeholders to take part and speak on behalf of the voiceless – the disempowered communities.

Succeeding the adoption process on the 31st of October, the NGO Coalition welcomed improvements after a hosted meeting with the Fiji government delegation. Fiji has accepted 86 of the 138 recommendations, identifying 12 that are considered to already be achieved or in progress, and undertaking to further consider and respond on the remaining 40 recommendations by March 2015. It was encouraging to hear government representatives recognise and reiterate to the

UN Human Rights Council of the commitment to engage with the NGOs. Such gradual comments have shown the importance of involving NGOs and stakeholders in the UPR process, particularly when government strategies are oriented on achieving social and economic rights in the context of substantial development around infrastructure and economic growth.

While the UPR experience of organizing priority issues, researching and lobbying to key members at the international arena was memorable and testing, the major lesson learnt was profiling the issues of Fiji's human rights against countries that were larger in population and size at a global level. From the perspective of a human rights activist, it is essential to engage the right decision makers who practice and have respect for the principles of human rights and experience genuine trials from balancing development and respect for humanity. Furthermore one must be organized - prioritizing areas of concern and keeping advocacy evidence based and point driven. This is essential, as one is faced with critical observations from administrators.

While involvement in the process has carried us to remarkable scenery across the globe, it has been most enlightening to witness spaces in which influential decisions are made and the process in which these decisions are brought about. Without a doubt the motivation to be a committed human rights advocate during transition into a democratic system is being able to affect positive change. The change will begin when stakeholders are in sync for progress and it is essential that the difficult discussions take place for the benefit of all Fijians.

# CCF Commemorates World Human Rights Day

By **Nazeem Kasim**

On 10th December 2014, the Citizens' Constitutional Forum with other non-governmental and civil society organisations in Suva celebrated World Human Rights Day 2014. Civil society and supporters marched from Suva's Flea Market to the Civic Centre to mark the occasion. The event was an initiative by the NGO Coalition on Human Rights including, for which Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, Fiji Women Rights Movement and CCF are the Secretariat.

The march provided a platform for NGO's, civil society, activists and the general public to participate and celebrate Human Rights Day as well as reminding the government to uphold and respect human rights in Fiji.

Chief Executive Officer, Reverend Akuila Yabaki who was recently part of the NGO Coalition on Human Rights delegation to the Universal Periodic Review in Geneva, Switzerland commended the government's acceptance of the

98 recommendations in his Human Rights Day address at Suva's Civic Centre.

"We would like to thank the government, led by the Attorney-General Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum. The Coalition further welcomes the assurances from the Government regarding the commitment to engage with civil society," said Reverend Yabaki.

"The Coalition agrees that the 2014 UPR was largely constructive and for that we applaud the Government for accepting 98 of the 137 recommendations and we look forward to engaging with the Government in building a better Fiji," said Yabaki, adding that it was a positive step taken to improve human rights in Fiji.

However, Reverend Yabaki expressed some disappointment at the indication that government will not review the 2013 Constitution - a recommendation put to Fiji by Estonia and Namibia at the UPR review session.

*The march provided a platform for NGO's, civil society, activists and the general public to participate and celebrate Human Rights Day as well as reminding the government to uphold and respect human rights in Fiji.*



CCF staff portray the Human Rights message printed on their tee shirts and the banner at the march

# Ripples of Change from Community Leaders Workshops

By **Sereima Lutubula**

*CCF's Community Leaders Workshops are transforming leadership qualities at the community level bringing significant changes and benefits in communities.*

In July 2014 Milika Ledua, President of Tabia Women's Group in Labasa participated in the Community Leaders Workshop conducted in the village of Navakaka, Cakaudrove, Vanua Levu. Prior to her involvement in the workshop, Ledua said she had very limited knowledge on her role as the President of the Tabia Women's Group. After under-going the leadership workshop with CCF's Community Education Team, she acquired the necessary skills to become an efficient and effective leader in her community.

"The training changed my perception of leadership; my role is important and adds to the development of my community. I learnt a lot of new things; about the Constitution, election, rights and responsibilities and how I can access development," Ledua told CCF.

"This new information has changed the way I think and do things. I have incorporated what I learnt in the way I administrate my organisation; I have used measures to handle financial matters, opened a bank account for the organisation; demanded for and used receipts," said Ledua.

CCF's leadership workshop also presents communities with a human rights based approach to development, how to identify development needs and ways in which community leaders can

access funding for development.

After the workshop, Ledua undertook a 'needs assessment' with her group. They then collectively decided to implement a project which entails setting-up a piggery as a source of income generation.

"We did a needs assessment together with the members of my women's group, and collectively agreed for piggery as an income generation project for the organization," said Ledua.

"I presented the decision in the village meeting. Not only was I aware of the tasks involved but also the processes and knowing our partners in this development initiative. I went to seek advice from the Cakaudrove Provincial Office and was advised to get a support letter from the Ministry of Women, which I did," said Ledua.

Ledua says she got assistance with quotations provided by the Ministry of Agriculture and filled out the Direct Assurances Project Form (Direct Aid Program, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade) that was given by CCF in the workshop.

Ledua says leaders must be responsive to the needs of the group or community they are assigned to lead.

## Domestic Observers add Credibility to Elections: CCCE

By **Nazeem Kasim**

A voter perception based report, published by the Concerned Citizens for Credible Elections (CCCE) Elections reiterates that domestic observers are important in assuring a favorable environment for credible elections.

The report titled: "Voter Perception Based Election Report" gives an analysis of the electoral procedures, and recommendations to improve future elections. The report was launched by CCCE Chair, Suliana Siwatibau in January.

A Domestic Election Observation Group was set up and was interested to observe the September 17th elections, but was refused accreditation by the Minister responsible for Elections, Mr Aiyaz-Sayed Khaiyum. The group was verbally informed of this decision only 26 days before the election. Hence the domestic observation mission had to be set aside for future elections.

Siwatibau said despite the refusal to observe the 2014 elections, she is hopeful domestic observers will be considered for future elections.

"The report reiterates the vital role an accredited domestic observer group could play in assuring a favorable environment for credible elections. The value of a domestic observer group has been supported by a swathe of international experience documented by credible election researchers," said Siwatibau.

"Not only can domestic observers monitor pre-election manipulations, but will also field many more observers on election day/s enabling greater chances of fraud detection. This would have been valuable in the September 17 election, due to the high number of polling stations, reaching nearly 2000," Siwatibau added.

Siwatibau said domestic observers are also equipped with local knowledge of customs,

*"Domestic observers are also equipped with local knowledge of customs, practices and geographical region, and is capable of observing election administration within a cultural context, which is particularly important here in Fiji."*

practices and geographical region, and is capable of observing election administration within a cultural context, which is particularly important here in Fiji.



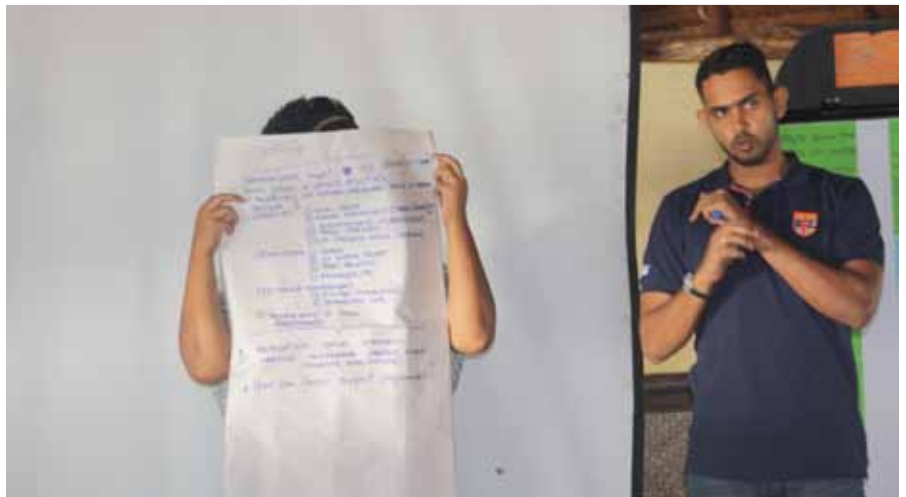
# Strategic Planning Meeting

By **Nazeem Kasim**

In October 2014, CCF's Board, Management and Staff met at the Leleuvia Island Resort to develop plans and strategies for their programs and the management of CCF in 2015. CCF reconfirmed its commitment to its Vision and set out 4 key areas of focus for the New Year.

The 4 focus areas for 2015 are:

1. CCF intends to see **civil servants** in Fiji adhere to the law and appointed in an equitable and transparent manner, responsiveness, efficiency and effectiveness in their service delivery and be accountable to the citizens of Fiji;
2. CCF intends to see **Parliamentarians** who represent Fiji and its citizens work to strengthen the constitutional, legislative, and institutional framework of Fiji to protect Human Rights;
3. CCF intends to see **young people** in the provinces of Bua, Navosa and Ba and peri-urban areas within the Suva-Nausori corridor in key decision making positions and become active agents of change in promoting and practicing active citizenship and democracy.
4. CCF intends to see **community members** in Bua, Navosa and Ba, who are actively participating in their own community governance and development, practice and demand good leadership, and promote multiculturalism.



## Ra Province wants Government to listen

By **Nazeem Kasim**

People at the village level have a voice and they hope it will be heard by the government.

That was the message from the people of the Ra Province to the Members of Parliament (MPs) who gathered for a *Talanoa* session with the community.

The *Talanoa* session was organised by the Citizens' Constitutional Forum (CCF) in collaboration with the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and the International Republican Institute (IRI) in mid January at the Tanoa Hotel, Rakiraki.

Community members from Saivou, Nakorotubu, and Rakiraki village welcomed the opportunity to meet with the MPs as it enabled them to raise issues which affects their livelihood.

For the 60 men, women, and youth participants the engagement was educational

as well as empowering.

Mrs Vani Korowaqa, 44, from Rakiraki village, said that people in the village feel they have the right to be involved in the governance of the county and the *Talanoa* sessions with the MPs was an opportunity not to be missed.

"I have spent all my life in the village and was never interested in the political affairs of the country. I always thought that we in the village do not have the right to talk to the government and raise issues that affect us. We have plenty things we want to say, but did not know how to," Mrs Korowqa said.

"This meeting with the Parliamentarians has changed my mind-set. Now I'm interested in what the government does for the people. I also learnt that I have the right to share my

point of view with the government. I feel much empowered after sitting with the MPs and talking to them about our struggles. I will go back to the village and share this with the people," she added.

Mr Isikeli Naitura, 75, a retired civil servant and one of the oldest persons who attended the *Talanoa* said he was delighted to see both sides of Parliament equally present to listen to people's concerns.

"We could see the different perspectives that were shared by the MPs on the various issues that had been raised," Mr Naitura said.

"We see the parliamentarians as a bridge between the grassroots people and people in power. Now the ball is in their court and we will have to follow up and see if they deliver the promises they have made to us," said Mr Naitura.

# CCF Staff Benefit from Mango Financial Management Training

By **Talei Tuinamuana**

CCF's Finance Officer, Programme Manager and Project Support Officer gained valuable financial management skills from a recent training conducted on "Getting the Basics Right" by a United Kingdom based organisation.

"This training was very helpful. I was able to understand the concepts behind financial management, why we do the things we do and why it is very important to do them correctly. The Mango training style was simple, visual and fun – it really took the fear out of finance," said Project Support Officer, Talei Tuinamuana.

The Financial Management Training, which was facilitated by Mango, UK based organisation that works with Non-Government Organisations (NGO's) around the world to strengthen financial management and accountability, allowed participants to learn about the fundamentals of financial management and to be confident when dealing with financial matters in their organisation.

Some of the topics covered in the training included Key Principles and Concepts, Financial Planning, Accounting Records, Financial Monitoring and Internal Control Systems. "The Mango Training sessions on Planning for Financial Stability and Keeping your Donors were a great networking session to meet finance & non finance personnel in other NGOs," said Finance & Administration Manager, Valerie Lum.

"As a participant I learnt about how to set up an organisation's reserves in case of any gaps in donor funding and develop a risk register for an organisation," Lum added.



**CCF's Finance & Administration Manager, Valerie Lum (right) receives her Certificate from Mango's Financial Management Trainer, Lyn Harper**

## Parliamentary Training for CCF Staff

By **Nazeem Kasim**

On 6th November 2014 three of CCF's staff attended a Workshop facilitated by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) on the roles and work of Parliament.

As Fiji returned to parliamentary democracy after 8 years, the UNDP's Fiji Parliament Support Project Team facilitated the training for civil society organisations to help understand Parliamentary functions.

The daylong Workshop was held at the Holiday Inn, Suva and was divided into three sessions, which included the core functions of Parliament, how Parliament works, and how

CSOs can engage with the legislature.

Upon the completion of the training CCF's Lucrisha Nair said the training helped her understand how CSOs can engage with members of parliament and the process involved in making laws in Parliament.

"The Parliament training has helped me immensely. I was able to learn the roles of Parliament and how CSO's can engage with Parliament," said Mrs. Nair.

"The training also helped me understand the six Standing Committees and their roles and responsibilities," Nair added.

**The six Standing Committees are:**

- **Economic Affairs**
- **Social Affairs**
- **Natural Resources**
- **Public Accounts**
- **Foreign Affairs and Defense**
- **Justice, Law and Human Rights.**

These Committees are tasked to scrutinize Government administration, examine Bills and subordinate legislation and such other functions as are specified from time to time in the rules and orders of Parliament.

# P R E S S   R E L E A S E

## Engagement in the Universal Periodic Review

By **Citizens' Constitutional Forum (CCF), Fiji Women's Crisis Center (FWCC)**  
and **Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM).**

**10th December 2014**

October 29th marked an important day for Fiji's human rights commitments. The current human rights situation in Fiji was reviewed by member-States of the UN Human Rights Council at the Universal Periodic Review in Geneva. This interactive session, allowed the government to present on the progress toward human rights in Fiji, and respond to, or clarify, human rights issues where appropriate.

The NGO Coalition on Human Rights (the Coalition) applauds the government on the acceptance of 98 of the 137 recommendations put forth by member-States. The Coalition further welcomes assurances from the government regarding their commitment to engage with civil society in furthering human rights in Fiji.

The Hon. A Sayed Khaiyum (Attorney-General and Minister of Finance, Public Enterprises, Public Service and Communications) is correct in that the process regarding the UPR does need to be clarified, as stated in Parliament on 1 December.

The UPR is a State-driven process aimed at improving the human rights situation on the ground of the 193 member-States of the Human Rights Council. It is a 4.5 year cycle with three stages:

Review of the human rights situation of a State, in which recommendations are put to the State by the Working Group. The Working Group is composed of all UN member-States. The State under review makes voluntary pledges to either accept or reject recommendations from member-States.

Implementation of the accepted recommendations over 4.5 years.

Reporting at the next review on the implementation of the accepted recommendations, and of the human rights situation since the previous review.

This year was Fiji's second UPR cycle, with Fiji's first review being conducted in 2010. In October, Fiji reported back to member-States on the implementation of accepted recommendations from 2010, and had the current human rights situation reviewed by the working group.

The review by member-States is based on information received by three main documents:

A national report prepared by the State;

A report prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) containing information from UN agencies; and

A summary prepared by OHCHR containing information from civil society.

These can be found here: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/FJSession20.aspx>.

Non-governmental organizations and civil society play a vital role in the UPR process. It is essential that civil society and NGO's take part in national consultations with the State to assist in compiling the national report (unfortunately this was not an option for NGO's in Fiji), submit information on the human rights situation, and lobby member-States in order to bring their attention to specific issues.

The Coalition agrees that the 2014 UPR was largely constructive. However, we were disappointed to hear the Hon. Minister and Attorney-General's assertions in Parliament on 1 December that discredited the involvement of NGO's in the process.

The Coalition refutes the defamatory allegation that NGO's 'do not necessarily tell [them] the truth'. The information provided by the Coalition during the UPR process was evidence based. The NGO's that were involved in the UPR did so following sound research and genuine engagement with citizens, communities and organizations.

It is misleading to assert that NGO's from Fiji lobbied member-States with incorrect information, which then turned into recommendations. Member-States conduct their own research in relation to the human rights situation in Fiji, and their recommendations are based on a number of sources. They then raise the issues that they feel are pertinent for Fiji to consider. Estonia and Namibia put forward a recommendation for the State to consider establishing a Constitutional Commission to conduct a comprehensive review of the 2013 Constitution. This was raised because, based on their wide-ranging research, these member-States consider this issue to be important to developing human rights in Fiji.

The Hon. Minister and Attorney-General responded to this by asserting that the 2013 Constitution already contains a review mechanism in the Chapter 11 amendment provisions. This response uses the term 'review' and 'amendment' interchangeably. Unfortunately, it does not address the fact that the 'amendment' provision contained in the Constitution is distinctly different from a 'review' of the Constitution. A 'review' involves

an evaluation and assessment of the entire Constitution, having regard to public submissions, with the possibility of instituting change if necessary. That is, if and where it is found that the Constitution does not reflect the will of the people, consideration can be had to amending and improving these parts.

This is quite distinct from an 'amendment', which would involve changing, repealing or adding to the Constitution.

There were no assertions by the Coalition that Fiji did not have a Domestic Violence Decree, or had not ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), as implied by the Hon. Minister and Attorney-General. On the contrary, these areas of advancement are celebrated by the Coalition, while recognizing that there is still a lot of work to do.

The Coalition strongly refutes the implication that funding by external parties renders NGO's susceptible to a political agenda. The Coalition is staunchly apolitical and stands for the furtherance of democracy, human rights and good governance. We are principle based, and have advocated for the same principles, regardless of the government of the day. It is fundamentally incorrect to imply that funding from international sources has given NGO's a political agenda. It simply has not.

The NGO Coalition places solidarity with the recommendations by many states that have shown the true spirit of democracy by testing critical issues. These include the constitutional process, human rights institutions and protection of basic human rights for citizens and defenders.

The Coalition would like to reiterate the value and importance of NGO's in the UPR process. The State accepts these recommendations on behalf of its people, and the role of civil society is to represent the voice of those Fijians that are disempowered, and unable to otherwise access these forums.

The interests of government and civil society are aligned in achieving the goals of the accepted recommendations in the UPR. The NGO Coalition is committed to assisting in the implementation of these recommendations and furthering the full realization of human rights and democratic governance in Fiji.

# Staff Movement



**Supreena Naidu**  
Legal Officer

Supreena Naidu worked at the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions prior to joining the CCF. She has experience in the legal field for just over 3 years. She completed her Bachelor of Laws from the University of the South Pacific and possesses a Master of International Laws and International Relations from the University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia. Naidu says she feels excited for the new challenge and how it will broaden her perspective on human rights issues, framework, law and practice in Fiji.



**Damien Gock**  
Research Support Officer

Damien Gock joined CCF in January. He has a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and Psychology from the University of the South Pacific. He feels privileged working for such a reputable Human Rights organisation, especially being part of the Research Team. "Research has really been my forte since pursuing higher education and has been exemplified by my involvement in the current projects that CCF is undertaking."

## OUTLOOK FOR THE NEXT QUARTER



**Community education on good governance, democracy, human rights and good leadership**

**Parliamentary engagement**

**Universal Periodic Review**

**Research**

**Media advocacy**

**Youth**



### 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 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.



This publication is produced with the assistance of Brot für die Welt. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the Citizens' Constitutional Forum and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of Brot für die Welt.

Thank you for reading the Tutaka. We would like to hear from you. Send us your feedback or comments to [media1@ccf.org.fj](mailto:media1@ccf.org.fj)

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