

# **Report of the Diplomacy Training Program and the Pacific Concerns Resource Centre, Supported by Save the Children**

## **Children's Rights in the Pacific – Training for NGO Advocates November 2003 – Suva, Fiji**

### **Background**

The Diplomacy Training Program program “Children’s Rights in the Pacific - Training for NGO Advocates” took place on 6-13 November at the CATD Training Centre in Nadave, Fiji (about 45 minutes drive from the capital Suva).

The training program was jointly organised by the Diplomacy Training Program (DTP), based at the University of New South Wales in Sydney Australia, and the Pacific Concerns Resource Centre (PCRC) of Suva Fiji.

Pacific Island nations have all ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), yet implementation remains a major challenge for government and civil society alike. Children’s rights are unrealised and at risk through uneven and unequal economic and social development, through conflict and through lack of awareness, lack of NGO and Government capacity and lack of adequate protection.

This DTP course in Fiji focussed in particular on children’s rights within the international human rights framework and the Pacific context. It serves as the beginning of a process to build the capacity of NGOs in the Pacific region to engage in advocacy on children’s rights within the broader human rights framework.

The training covered the following core areas:

- Introduction to the UN human rights system.
- Training in key concepts and principles of international law and international human rights standards.
- Detailed training in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and effective interaction with the Committee on the Rights of the Child.
- Training in effective lobbying and advocacy principles and practices.
- Training on how to effectively use the media in the promotion of human rights issues.

### **Participants**

There was only a small group of participants, as pre-publicity for the course was delayed. In the end, there were 13 participants from Fiji, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and Australia.

The group was balanced with a good mix of ages, gender and experience, including: a number of members of Save the Children organisations from the four countries (ranging from the head of a SCA office to a new voluntary worker); an Australian volunteer working in Solomon Islands on Children’s Rights programs; the President of Vanuatu’s pre-school association; a member of a Provincial Youth Council in Fiji; a former Professor of Pharmacology involved in public health campaigns on substance abuse amongst children; a staff member of the Pacific Conference of Churches; a former policeman now working with the Children’s Division of the Department of Home Affairs in Solomon Islands; a lawyer with the Solomon Islands Attorney General’s Department, who had been involved in preparing and presenting the country’s CRC report to the Committee in Geneva (see appendix 1 for list of participants).

The course was facilitated by Nic Maclellan, a journalist with long experience in human rights issues in the Pacific, and a former staff member at PCRC. Two resource people from the Save the Children

Alliance - Joachim Theis of Save the Children in Bangkok and Henk van Beers, of Save the Children from Hanoi – conducted sessions on the first three days, while the remaining days involved presentations by resource people from Fiji, including NGOs, UNIFEM Pacific, the Fiji Human Rights Commission and the University of the South Pacific (see appendix one for full list of resource people). Peceli Rokotuiivuna from PCRC played a sterling role both as a course participant and organiser, assisting with transport, lost bags and workshop logistics.

## **Training Sessions**

The full conference program is attached in appendix 3, but the following section notes some key themes and comments from each session.

### **Thursday**

The guest of honour at the opening ceremony was Mrs. Losena Salabula-Tubanavau, Assistant Minister for Women, Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation in the Government of the Fiji Islands. As well as the opening speech by Mrs. Salabula-Tubanavau, the opening was addressed by the director of the Diplomacy Training Program (DTP) Patrick Earle, and the Director of the Pacific Concerns Resource Centre (PCRC) Motarilavao Hilda Lini.

Following participant introductions, the rest of the day was spent listing a number of issues and concerns that they hoped would be covered in the training:

- How to lobby government at highest level
- How to get international support
- How to advocate for CR in the context of custom and “the Pacific Way”
- How to work with the media
- How to be a trainer
- Best practices in advocacy and lobbying
- How to make regional coalitions work
- Correct ways to network
- Similarities and differences between HR and CR, and how to prioritise when rights conflict
- Discipline and corporal punishment
- Who judges “the best interests of the child”?
- How to protect children in squatter settlements
- What is the role of human rights commissions
- What about men’s rights?
- How to teach people about HR?
- Promoting children’s participation
- How to develop rights-based goals and objectives
- Monitoring and evaluation.

### **Friday / Saturday**

Friday’s program started with a brief introduction to international human rights law, the UN system and government obligations, presented by Deveena Sudhakar, Child Rights Officer of the Fiji Human Rights Commission (the only such commission in the Pacific islands, created in the 1997 Constitution).

The rest of the day and Saturday morning involved presentations and practical sessions led by Joachim Theis of Save The Children Alliance, who acted as a resource person throughout the training.

These sessions involved presentations on core principles of children’s rights (the catchwords of protect / respect / fulfil), approaches and ways of working with children, and the role of the CRC Committee. The participants broke into country groups to review the Concluding Observations of the CRC Committee on

their latest CRC country report, and later broke into groups to discuss opportunities and challenges in their work in the Pacific:

### **Opportunities**

- Availability of local legislation to support CRC
- Using media to raise awareness
- Parallels between Christian values and CR
- Churches provide a strong network to use
- Communal society in Pacific includes good practices
- There is support for children in strong family structures
- Children are enthusiastic advocates of CR
- Potential for networking between NGOs and government departments
- Availability of external donor support
- Opportunities available for training

### **Challenges**

- Lots of child abuse, sexual abuse, health and nutrition problems
- Lack of resources
- Lack of manpower
- Lack of lobbying skills to persuade government
- Lack of resources for children
- Lack of referral system for child abuse
- Governments have shifting priorities
- Governments talk of CR, but may not implement as effectively as they claim
- No will, no facilities, no policy
- Geographic and languages barriers in Melanesian countries
- CRC seen as a foreign concept in our communities
- CR seen as sensitive issue in communities, so we can't be seen as imposing ideas
- Clashes between custom and CR
- Traditional communities rely on children for farming, childcare, labour, gathering firewood, with less emphasis on education.
- Weak economic status
- Social unrest and conflict / coups affects children.

Conference participants adjourned to the capital Suva on Saturday night to watch the rugby or see the sights, and had a day of rest on Sunday.

### **Monday**

On Monday, Henk van Beers of the Save the Children Alliance, based in Hanoi, acted as a resource person for the day's program on issues of Children's participation.

He started by getting participants to draw pictures of their early childhood, evoking images of play, schooling, working in the gardens or copra plantations, hunting pigs, child minding and domestic work (for girls).

The participants discussed different stages and ages of childhood in Melanesian contexts, with the rites and rituals of initiation; growing responsibility at puberty, differences between urban and village settings, and different gender roles with girls taking more responsibility than boys.

In both theoretical and practical sessions, participants discussed the dilemmas of involving children in decision making, in a cultural context in Melanesia where children are often seen but not heard. From small group discussions, participants noted that the level of expressing views by young people is low, but involvement in implementing adults' decisions is high! Generally across the four countries, there is a good level of freedom of association for children (through churches, sporting clubs, youth groups, cultural associations), but limited or no involvement in decision making. Disabled young people are especially marginalised in children's participation.

## **Tuesday**

Tuesday's program focussed on skills training in media, lobbying and advocacy. The opening session was a theoretical presentation on media in the Pacific by Dev Nankardi, Co-ordinator of the Journalism Program at the University of the South Pacific.

This was followed by a practical session on strategies for getting children rights issues into the media, by Virisila Buadromo (Viri is currently co-ordinator of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement, but a former news director for FM96 and commercial radio in Fiji).

Later in the day, facilitator Nic Maclellan and former journalist Stanley Simpson (now organiser with the Pacific Action Network on Globalisation), combined to present practical skills on how to write a press release, how to lobby a senior official, and what elements make up a campaign.

After a couple of days of theory focussing on international human rights law, the practical sessions were well received and gained some positive feedback in the post-training evaluations.

"I wish I'd known about these lobbying tactics before we'd gone to talk to all the provincial governments about providing office space for our project in each provincial government office. Now RAMSI and foreign NGOs have taken all available space and we're out of luck" - Rose, Solomon Islands.

"I now feel more confident with my media and lobbying skills and would like to use them very much in my program. We started lobbying months ago but stopped due to other commitments, but now that I've learnt these new lobbying skills, I will definitely use them to achieve a children's desk in the government...Now I'm confident, and we can follow up lobbying the Prime Minister to get office space in the government offices for our National Children's Committee" - Jilda, Vanuatu

"Already I have plans to co-ordinate with another local NGO in a campaign that involves the local youth in an awareness drive for CRC" - Peceli, Fiji.

## **Wednesday**

The opening session on Wednesday involved a presentation on CEDAW by the Regional Co-ordinator of the UNIFEM Pacific Regional office in Suva, Amelia Kinahoi Siamomua of Tonga. It was noted that of the remaining 16 countries still to ratify CEDAW, over a third are Pacific Island states.

The following session was a panel presentation by three NGO activists, focussing on three thematic areas and highlighting NGO actions in local, national and regional campaigning and networking:

- Edwina Kotoisuva, of the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre talked about sexual violence against children in the Pacific, and the work of the Pacific Regional Network Against Violence Against Women

- Sainimili Tawake of the Fiji Disabled People's Association spoke on the special problems facing children living with disabilities, and the work of the Oceania sub-region of Disabled Peoples International (DPI).
- Adi Ema Tagicakibau of the Pacific Concerns Resource Centre talked about children in conflict zones, and the work of PCRC as a member of the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA).

After lunch, participants broke into three workshops led by the resource people, to discuss issues of: violence and sexual abuse; armed conflict; and living with disabilities. Each workshop reported back on particular problems facing the Pacific, but also best practice or examples of groups working to address the problem.

These sessions highlighted the differences in the community sector in the Pacific, between groups already involved in advocacy and campaigning, and those involved in project or program activity (often donor funded and sometimes donor driven). There was lots of discussion about the differences and difficulties of operating in different parts of the community (churches, NGOs, grassroots rural communities), and a lively debate about feminism, men's rights and responsibilities and how human rights can best be articulated in a Pacific context!

## **Friday**

The final day involved a role-play involving all participants, to combine their theoretical knowledge of the CRC, with practical media and lobbying skills (see appendix two for full scenario).

The scenario of the role-play stated that the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has appointed a Representative to visit the Pacific Islands. Participants were given about three hours to prepare for a flying visit by the CRC Committee Representative (played by resource person Joachim Theis). The Cabinet of "Nadave" established a task force of government officials to prepare a briefing for the visiting delegate, to present the three key issues on children's rights facing the country, including reference to relevant provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

The participants were divided up into Government officials (from the Ministries of Health, Education, Police, Treasury, and Welfare), a range of NGOs, including a women's advocacy group, a disabled people's association and the National Youth Council; a journalist; and a representative of the Human Rights Commission. Beyond the general scenario, each participant was given extra notes to define their role. These notes secretly created potential conflicts of interest between the NGOs – over whether to form a coalition and how hard to lobby without jeopardising access to government funding - and between the various government departments.

The role play ended the course on a high note, as participants really got into their roles, there were practical examples of lobbying officials and briefing the media, and some affirming moments of humour (the NGOs missed a long awaited meeting with the Minister because their office was staffed by a deaf-mute of the Disabled People's Association who couldn't answer the phone, and the CRC representative was left at the "airport" for twenty minutes because the government was still arguing over which issues should be presented to him, and whether NGOs should be allowed in the presentation team.)

One interesting feature of the role-play was that very few participants drew on the expertise of the Human Rights Commission (played by an actual government lawyer involved in CRC work). This is not too surprising given that there is only one HR commission in the four countries represented at the training, but an interesting example that reaffirms the need for human rights training and awareness raising in the Pacific islands.

As one participant noted in the evaluation: "The role-play pulls all the aspects of the training into focus and demonstrates how useful to develop plans and think about the processes at lobbying of high levels".

# APPENDIX 1: PARTICIPANTS AND RESOURCE PEOPLE

## Participants

**Mr. Hilson TOALIU**

Save the Children Australia Vanuatu Office

**Mrs. Sembu GEORGES**

Pri Skul Asosiesen Blong Vanuatu

**Ms. Jilda SHEM**

Save the Children Vanuatu Office

**Ms. Elizabeth EMIL**

Save the Children Vanuatu

**Mr. Clement KIPA**

Save the Children Papua New Guinea

**Rev. Leva KILA PAT**

Pacific Conference of Churches Fiji

**Mr. James RIZZU**

Department of Home Affairs Solomon Islands

**Ms. Rose MAEBIRU**

Save the Children Solomon Islands

**Ms. Annika Kingmele MEKAU**

Attorney General's Office Solomon Islands

**Ms. Cathy McWILLIAM**

Save the Children Australia Solomon Islands

**Ms. Lynette PETUELI**

Save the Children Fiji

**Dr. Sainath IYER**

Citizen's Constitutional Forum Fiji

**Mr. Peceli ROKOTUIVUNA**

Pacific Concerns Resource Centre Fiji

## Resource People

Patrick Earle

Director, Diplomacy Training Program (Australia)

Nic Maclellan

Journalist and researcher (Australia)

Deveena Sudhakar

Child Rights Officer, Fiji Human Rights Commission

Joachim Theis

Save the Children Alliance (Bangkok)

Henk van Beers

Save the Children Alliance (Hanoi)

Dev Nankardi

Co-ordinator, Journalism Program, University of the South Pacific

Virisila Buadromo

Fiji Women's Rights Movement

Stanley Simpson	Pacific Action Network on Globalisation
Adi Ema Tagicakibau	Pacific Concerns Resource Centre
Edwina Kotoisuva	Fiji Women's Crisis Centre
Sainimili Tawake	Fiji Disabled People's Association
Amelia Kinahoi Siamomua	Regional Co-ordinator, UNIFEM Pacific (Suva, Fiji)

## **APPENDIX 2: ROLE PLAY**

### **VISIT BY REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UN COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD**

#### **a) Scenario:**

For the first time, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has appointed a Representative from the Pacific Islands.

On Thursday 16 November at 12 noon, the CRC Committee Representative will be making a brief visit to your country, to meet with the government to discuss the situation of children's rights, before he takes up his post at the UN.

The Cabinet has decided to establish a task force of government officials to prepare a briefing for the visiting delegate, to present the THREE key issues on children's rights facing the country.

The briefing should include reference to relevant provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

The taskforce will include Government officials from the Ministries of Health, Education, Police, Treasury, and Welfare. The first meeting of the government task force will be held at 10am on Thursday, and will resume at 11.am after morning tea.

The taskforce will present its briefing to the delegate at 12 noon. If there is any time available, other "competent bodies" can also make presentations to the visiting Representative (Under article 45(e) of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, other "competent bodies", including appropriate NGOs, can provide advice to the CRC Committee on implementation of the Convention in their area of expertise).

At its first meeting, the government task force can decide to invite other organisations (statutory bodies, media, NGOs) to become FULL MEMBERS of the task force, OR OBSERVERS at the task force meeting, OR to make SUBMISSIONS to the task force.

#### **b) Background**

Our country is a Pacific Island nation – the majority of the population are Melanesian, with small numbers of minority communities (Chinese, Polynesian, European etc).

The economy is mainly agricultural, with the bulk of the population engaged in subsistence agriculture and cash cropping. Export of agricultural products has dropped as international prices have fallen, and a number of rural villagers are moving to urban centres to seek employment. Tourism is a major income earner, though the tourism sector was badly damaged by the coup in 2000 and is only slowly recovering.

The country has a lively NGO and church sector, but NGO-government relations were strained by the 2000 coup, when NGO leaders were critical of human rights violations by the police, army and interim administration.

News is broadcast by the Nadave Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) at 10, 11 and 12 o'clock every day.

#### **c) Participants**

##### **Government officials**

- Ministries of Health, Education, Police, Treasury, Welfare



### **National Human Rights Commission**

- Statutory body responsible for promotion of Human Rights

### **Nadave Broadcasting Corporation (NBC)**

### **Women's Advocacy Network**

- Women's non-government organization

### **Disabled People's Association**

- Non-government self-help association for disabled people

### **National Youth Alliance**

- Government-funded youth network

## **d) Extra notes for different participants:**

### **Government officials (Ministries of Health, Education, Police, Treasury, Welfare)**

The Minister has asked the task force to prepare a short briefing paper for the CRC Committee Representative

The briefing paper should focus on THREE key issues. The task force can choose the three areas, but the Minister suggests the following as priorities for your consideration:

- Economic development and the minimum age of work
- Juvenile justice
- Drugs and substance abuse
- Access to education
- Proposed establishment of position of Child Commissioner
- Child Health issues

The Ministry of Finance sends its apologies for the task force meeting, but asks members to remember that the Government's current priority is to rebuild the tourism industry after the fall in visitors since 2000. We must avoid controversy that will adversely affect the country's overseas image.

### **National Human Rights Commission**

The mandate of the National Human Rights Commission is to advise government on Human Rights issues, and to ensure that government policy and legislation is in line with the Human Rights provisions of the Constitution.

The National Constitution includes clauses that ban discrimination on the basis of "age, gender, sexual orientation, disability and race."

The Commission also has an important role to encourage government to strengthen the Human Rights mechanisms and institutions within the country, and to promote dialogue between government, media and the community sector.

### **Nadave Broadcasting Corporation (NBC)**

The Nadave Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) is the major media outlet for our country. NBC prides itself on its tradition of investigative reporting, and "no holds barred" style. The task of the NBC reporter is to prepare and present a two-minute broadcast at 10am, 11am and 12am, focusing on issues relating to Child Rights and the visiting delegate.

### **Women's Advocacy Network (WAN)**

Women's Advocacy Network is an activist NGO, involved in promoting human rights for women and children. WAN lost its government funding after criticising government policy during the coup, and is reliant on funds from overseas donors. WAN has had a long-running campaign to raise awareness about the problem of police harassment of young people who've drifted into town from the rural areas.

It has also received an offer of extensive funding from an Australian NGO partner to run a campaign on sex tourism and how it affects young people.

Under article 45(e) of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, other "competent bodies", including appropriate NGOs, can provide advice to the CRC Committee on implementation of the Convention in their area of expertise.

### **Disabled People's Association (DPA)**

The Disabled People's Association (DPA) is a new non-government organisation working to promote the needs of people living with disabilities. DPA is largely a volunteer organisation, made up of people living with disabilities. It was created because existing organisations were doing little on their issue.

A particular concern is supporting the rights of people with disabilities who beg for finance from tourists and locals in the capital city. Under article 45(e) of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, other "competent bodies", including appropriate NGOs, can provide advice to the CRC Committee on implementation of the Convention in their area of expertise.

### **National Youth Alliance (NYA)**

The National Youth Alliance links young people from provinces across the country. The alliance is reliant on government funding for its operations. The last General Meeting of the Alliance passed policy "calling on government to urgently implement the High Court ruling which forbids corporal punishment in schools" The Alliance has also been mounting a campaign for government to fund Internet access for all schools.

Under article 45(e) of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, other "competent bodies", including appropriate NGOs, can provide advice to the CRC Committee on implementation of the Convention in their area of expertise.