



“THE BRIDGE”

Fiji National Council for Disabled Persons

FNCDP
3 Brown St, Suva

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**Message from
the Executive
Director**

After a successful year in 2005, the Fiji National Council for Disabled Persons anticipates exciting developments in the disability sector in 2006 with increased support from and awareness by the stakeholders. The Council's coordination role in disability-related initiatives in the country is further enhanced by the commitment, leadership and

assistance of the Government through the Ministry for Women, Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation. Much of the progress in this field to date is due to our desire to have a paradigm shift where disability is no longer regarded as a charity issue, but one of human rights. In this way, no one will be left out or left behind!

Government Builds Facility for Persons with Disabilities in the Northern Division

The Fiji National Council for Disabled Persons, with financial assistance from Government through its 2006 National Budget will build a facility for persons with disabilities in Labasa to benefit such persons in the Northern Division. The facility will provide office space, residential accommodation, day-care rehabilitation and skills training programs to these individuals who are receiving such services for the first time. The groundbreaking ceremony for this facility was held at the Nayaca Subdivision in Labasa on Friday, 28 April 2006 with the

Caretaker Minister for Youth, Sports and Employment Opportunities as its chief guest. The need for this facility was initiated by the Macuata Disability District Committee in 2004. Through the Government's Look North Policy, what was then a dream is now becoming a reality! The Council plans to construct and complete this facility by November this year. The support of the business houses, civil society, and communities of the Northern Division is truly essential for this goal to be realised.



**Images: Ground
Breaking of new
Labasa Facility.**



Affiliates and Development Partners

Recent Activities of United Blind Persons of Fiji

The Association sent a four member team to participate in the Sports School for the Blind which was held in Auckland for one week. The trip was sponsored by International Blind Sports Association and UBP. The team performed their very best and one of the athletes returned with a trophy. Congratulations to everyone involved!

The Annual General Meeting was held on 18

March 2006 and was attended by 40 members and supporters of UBP.

Free Postal Service for the Blind - the Association met with officials of Post Fiji and the Human Rights Commission. It was resolved that it be stated in the Postal Act persons who are blind can send articles for blind free of charge.

UBP Hosts National Council of the Blind in Malaysia at Qarase House

In March 2006 United Blind Persons of Fiji hosted a visit by the National Council of the Blind in Malaysia who offered to assist the visually impaired in producing computerised Braille materials. Training will be conducted in October 2006.



Image: Members of the National Council of the Blind in Malaysia meeting at Qarase House, Suva

Counterstroke Fiji

Counterstroke Fiji is an organisation working with people who have had a stroke, their families and caregivers.

Counterstroke provides counseling to families and caregivers on issues of care for a stroke patient when released from hospitals. Topics include feeding, bathing, exercise etc.

They also provide information to patients and families at the point of hospital admission and we distribute a special package containing posters and pamphlets.

Counterstroke Fiji conducts a "Talkshop Program" held every Friday from 10am – 12pm, providing members an opportunity to share their ideas and stories including discussions on issues such as diet, exercise and leisure activities.

Counterstroke look forward to their AGM, which will be held in Suva on 7 June, 2006 from 12-2pm at Qarase House, 3 Brown Street, Toorak.



Image: Participants of the Counterstroke Talkshop



Affiliates and Development Partners cont...

Fiji Disabled People's Association - Update

Fiji Disabled People's Association (FDPA) was the proud recipient of the 6th RRRT Pacific Human Rights Award as first runner up in the Fiji category this year. It is the third time that FDPA has been recognised for the work they do in promoting Human Rights of people with disabilities and for its strong commitment and sustained approach towards promoting social justice.

This award was given because of the Human Rights Project through which FDPA:

1. trained 17 people with disabilities as Human Rights trainers, of these trainers, 8 were involved in organising a three day workshop in their district
2. developed human rights resources

3. facilitated four workshops in Suva, Labasa, Lautoka and one for the Deaf in Suva.
4. prepared four different TV and radio advertisements.

Apart from this FDPA worked closely with the elections office to ensure that people with disabilities were not left out during the General Election process. The Fiji Human Rights Commission facilitated talks between FDPA and the Elections Office and the progress made in this area is encouraging.

There are many more things we can achieve in our lives and this can only happen if we work together for the betterment of people with disabilities in Fiji.

Image:
Launch of the
FDPA Human
Rights
Resources



FDPA Launch Human Rights Resources

On Thursday 23 February 2006, the Fiji Disabled People's Association (FDPA) launched a set of resources for people with disabilities in relation to their human rights as citizens of Fiji, at their head office, Qarase House.

Funded by the Australian Government's overseas aid program, and with the assistance of USP's media centre, the resource development project has run over the past 12 months and focuses on two main areas.

The first entitled "People with Disabilities and the Bill of Rights" discusses certain sections of Chapter Four of Fiji's constitution and its relevance to people with disabilities.

The second entitled "Know Your Rights: A Guide for People with Disabilities" gives clear and simple information to people with disabilities regarding what to do if their rights

are violated.

Both resources are available in English, in full colour large print booklet, in Braille and as a documentary in VHS, DVD, VCD and audiocassette formats. The second set of resources has also been translated into Fijian and Hindi in booklet form.

The documentaries use actors who are all people with disabilities and members of FDPA and its affiliate organisations. A sign language interpreter is used throughout, making them fully accessible to the Deaf community.

FDPA has also developed four community awareness advertisements, airing on Fiji One and various radio stations. They aim to raise awareness amongst the general public on the rights of people with disabilities to be treated "not better, or worse, just equal".



Affiliates and Development Partners cont...

Psychiatric Survivors Association (PSA)

Psychiatric Survivors Association (PSA) is a non-government, self-help organisation run by people with mental illness, for people with mental illness. PSA was formed in August 2004. To date PSA has 59 members. 7 office bearers form the Committee who run the organisation on a daily basis. The majority of the members of the Committee have a mental illness.

Mental illness refers to a group of disorders that affect thoughts, mood, memory and/or behaviour.

Mental illnesses include:

- Depression
- Bipolar disorder

- Schizophrenia
- Anxiety disorders
- Personality disorders

Some symptoms include: difficulty concentrating; reckless behaviour; loss of desire to do things; feeling worried; and confused thinking.

Aims

1. Provide general counseling, education and training for members.
2. Raise community awareness about mental illness and the role of PSA.
3. Address systemic issues for people with a mental illness.

Walking Out of Poverty

Continuing on from the Walking Out of Poverty program activities last year, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Regional Office in Suva, in partnership with the Ministry for Women, Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation conducted training programs in sewing and cooking.

Two cooking and one sewing course have been conducted with a total of 70 participants. The courses were comprised of both able bodied (50) people and people with disabilities (20).

It is expected that further courses will be conducted through the year.

Fiji Association of the Deaf (FAD)

FAD is into their second year of making a sign language dictionary. They are currently completing the second round of dictionary workshops around the country.

FAD is running the first ever Sign Language Interpreter training course with 23 students enrolled. There will be two guest lecturers, professional interpreters themselves, coming in August. The course is expected to finish in September.

Three deaf students successfully completed their Form 3 education last year and have moved on to Form 4. There are presently ten deaf students attending mainstream school in Suva.

Images: Participants of the ILO Training.





Affiliates and Development Partners cont..

Wheelchair Donations

The fourth shipment of 250 wheelchairs donated by the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints was received in February 2006. One extra carton of spare parts was also part of this shipment. The handing-over ceremony was conducted in March and attended by the church representatives and the Honourable Minister for Women, Social

Welfare and Poverty Alleviation. The rural areas and outer districts will be targeted in this new shipment through the Council's District Committees.

To date 50 of these wheelchairs have been sent to Labasa, Savusavu, Nabouwalu and Taveuni in the Northern Division.



Above Images: Wheelchair Donation Ceremony

Workshop on Special Education

A workshop on Special Education was conducted at Qarase House on 29 March 2006. Participants were predominantly head teachers and focused on policy development for special education. Of particular importance was the document entitled "Blueprint on

Affirmative Action for Special Education" which was discussed in detail by participants and formed the basis for much of the planning for special education in Fiji.



Image: Ms Kaushilya Prasad and Nakamura Ken of JICA (Courtesy: Fiji Times, 31 March 2006, p.20)

FNCDP Activities

Fiji Rehabilitation Council Handing Over Ceremony

On 3 April 2006 at a meeting of the Fiji Rehabilitation Council trustees it was resolved to transfer all ownership management of assets and liabilities of the FRC to FNCDP for its ownership and management. A formal handing over ceremony took place on 21 April 2006, where the hand over documentation was

publicly signed by the CEO for the Ministry for Women, Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation, Ms Emele Duituituraga in her capacity as Chairperson of FNCDP and Mr Frank Hilton on behalf of the FRC Trustees.



Image: Ms Emele Duituituraga signing FRC handover documents



FNCDP Activities cont...

Fiji Rehabilitation Centre – Open Day

A Public open day was held on 21 April, 2006 to provide opportunity for coordination of efforts and offered an occasion for networking in support of the centre's objectives.

The Open Day was an attempt to lift the centre's image and status to become an activity and growth centre, where parents, friends, families, business houses, government and embassies, company managers and officials gather to contribute to the centre's growth and development through increased networking, coordination, exchange and support.

Approximately 500 people were present throughout the day. The day was opened by Mr. Paul Hooper, the South Pacific Regional Director of DHL Limited with a generous donation. The day's activities included the display and sale of products made by

trainees, and the sale of cold drinks, Indian sweets, BBQ, Yaqona stalls and other social activities. A dance troupe from Nakorotubu provided a lift to the status of the occasion with traditional ceremonies for the opening and closing and also provided a cultural atmosphere with songs during the day to serenade the crowd. The open day also provided the opportunity for parents to meet one another as well as centre staff.

The centre wishes to acknowledge all those who came to support the centre on the day, particularly all those who gave generously in cash and in kind to assist. Appreciation is rendered to Mr. Hooper of DHL, who was guest of honour at the opening and Ms Emele Duituituraga who officially closed the day.

The centre will look forward to the next Open Day, which will be in August 2006.



Images: FRC Open Day 21 April 2006



FNCDP Activities cont...

Appointments of FNCDP Board, Advisory and District Committee Members

In accordance with the FNCDP Act of 1994, Section 7/2, Section 8/2, and Section 9/2 regarding the appointments and term of office for the members of the Council, Advisory and Divisional/District Committees respectively, and in view of the expiration of the term of current members on 1 February 2006, the Secretariat has consulted relevant Government Ministries and Departments, statutory bodies and disability organisations to confirm their representatives to, and finalise new

membership of the three Committees of FNCDP.

The final list was submitted to the Honourable Minister for Women, Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation through the Council's Chairperson, and CEO for the Ministry for their endorsement. Names of all Committee members who will all serve a term of two years with effect from 1 February 2006 will also be published in the Fiji Republic gazette.



Images: Vunidawa District Committee Meeting

District Committee Meetings

The District Committees in the Central and Western Divisions also conducted their first quarterly meetings in March. District Committees in the Northern and Eastern divisions conducted their quarterly meetings in April. To guide the activities of District Committees this year, and link them to the Council's 2006 Corporate Plan, a Business Plan for the District Committees was also developed and presented during the meetings.

The District Committees will conduct their next meetings in July 2006.

FNCDP Council Meeting

The FNCDP Council held meetings in January and April at Qarase House and endorsed the Corporate Plan and budget for 2006. The next meeting will be held at Qarase House on 27 June 2006.

Something to Think About.....

Them Us

- Where do I fit in?
- If I am one of "them", they are "us"
- If I am one of "us", who are "they"?
- Being one of "us" is only half
- I miss "them"
- Only when I am one of "them" I can be part of the complete "us"
- I know both: "them" and "us"
- How do I dare to become one of "them" to become one of "us"?

Simone Poortman, Porto Alegre, February 12 2006

For further information on the activities in your district please contact the Provincial Administrator, District Officer or Social Welfare Officer in your area.

Advisory Committee Meeting

The Advisory Committees held their first two-monthly meetings in February where the main agenda focused on activities for 2006. As a result, the Secretariat was requested to compile a Business Plan for each Advisory Committee which was presented and discussed in their April meeting.

The Advisory Committees will next meet in June 2006.



In Other News...

Disabled People Challenge World Council of Churches Inclusivity (Source: WCC e-news, 14 February 2006)

Disabled people will try to affirm the church as an inclusive community, but the struggle for recognition at the decision-making levels of the World Council of Churches will be a long and difficult struggle since it was only at the 1998 Harare Assembly that the Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network (EDAN) was established as a full programme of the WCC. General secretary Samuel Kobia met with the disabled participants during pre-Assembly meetings at the 9th Assembly of the World Council of Churches held in Porto Alegre, Brazil from 13-24 February 2006. Mr Setareki Macanawai, President and Founder of Horeb Christian Disability Ministry based in Suva, Fiji attended this world conference as a delegate of EDAN.

In a classroom packed with people living with a wide variety of disabilities from almost all regions of the church, Kobia presented his vision of inclusion and challenged the EDAN leadership to make their impact heard and felt in Porto Alegre "because it has been a major omission at previous assemblies". Kobia

engaged in a lively discussion with more than 100 EDAN representatives, especially around their small representation among the 691 delegates. Of that number, Kobia noted, only one percent were from EDAN. Men represent 67 percent, women 37 percent, but only three delegates are disabled, along with five advisors.

EDAN has its headquarters in Nairobi under the full-time co-ordination of Samuel Kabue, a blind Kenyan, who stressed, however, that EDAN is not an African Program but a full part of the WCC although based outside Geneva. It has a well-deserved reputation for action and efficiency in its short WCC life, Kobia said, noting that "in a world that is not enabling to disabled people, EDAN presents a different attitude to the 9th Assembly and you must come up with a strong statement of what transformation means - that perspective brings a critical view of transforming the world."

International Women's Day "Reclaim the Night" March

Staff and affiliates of FNCDP joined other local people in the International Women's Day night march through some of the most notoriously dangerous streets of Suva, to mark International Women's Day 8 March 2006. The event reminded the community that assault and domestic violence against women is both unlawful and unacceptable.

Images:
Staff and affiliates of FNCDP marching through Suva



SUBMISSIONS

If you would like to submit an article for consideration in our next newsletter, please contact Theresito Thompson at FNCDP for a copy of the submission guidelines.

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