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# EMPOWER PACIFIC

*Putting People First*



## Reflecting our past, Reframing our future

As known to many Pacific Counselling and Social Services (PCSS), was born 18 years ago under the direction of the former CEO, Mrs Joanne Cohen.

Originally called the Family Support and Education Group, the organisation began to grow organically out of the passion and desire to support families to find ways to cope with the struggles of their daily lives.

Now, under the leadership of the new CEO, Ms Rhianon Vichita, Empower Pacific now employs over 70 staff, has 5 branch offices around Fiji, provides services across 12 Pacific countries.

Whilst supporting the needs of Fijian communities to overcoming the struggles which affect their daily lives remains its core commitment, the name Pacific Counseling and Social Services was no longer a name accurate of the services and assistance that provided by the organisation.

Whilst of course, professional counselling and support services continues to be provided, the expansion of the organization oversees the delivery of 11 more programs, namely professional Social Work, HIV/STI/GBV Programs, Disaster Preparedness & Response work, Training, Income Generation Program, Research, Sekoula Program, Prison Program, Child Protection & Care Services, Employ-

ment Assistance Program (EAP) & Community Development Organisation(CDO).

Empower Pacific is committed to providing free and confidential, professional services to all those in need, regardless of age, race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, background, income, health status, or disability.

Empower Pacific helps men, women, children, teenagers, mothers, fathers, individuals, couples, families, communities, sex workers, HIV positive clients, (ex) prisoners, farmers, business owners, unemployed, homeless, mentally ill, those living with a disability, students, professionals, government departments, schools, health care workers, community groups, the marginalized, the sick, to anyone who requires a helping hand, to those looking for support to achieve their full potential.

Empower Pacific works in a variety of settings, in collaboration with Government Departments to offer a network of professional counseling services when and where people need it most.

We are committed to partnerships to avoid duplication of services and to ensure our services adequately meet the human development goals of our Pacific Region, in the interests of Human Rights and gender equity.

Empower Pacific is efficient, transparent, accountable, evidence based and focused on putting people first.

*Our Mission- To empower individuals and communities to achieve their potential by providing access to professional holistic Health and Social Development services.*

*Our Vision- A Centre of excellence and integrity that is committed to promoting sustainable personal and professional development to enhance the wellbeing of all people.*



*“An ounce of action is worth a ton of theory” - Friedrich Engels (1820-95)*



*Clinical Practise Leader, Ms Alita Waqabaca with one of the Prison Program graduates.*

## MOU with Ministry of Social Welfare, Women & Poverty Alleviation

EMPOWER PACIFIC signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to provide support to the Ministry of Social Welfare, Women & Poverty Alleviation (MSWWPA) in the area of Child Protection as a follow through from the 2010- 2011 pilot project.

This MOU will build and strengthen EMPOWER PA-

CIFIC's involvement in Child Protection in Fiji, making counselling, case management, conference and follow-up services available for families referred from Department of Social Welfare.

Initially EMPOWER PACIFIC started this project with the sites of Ba, Lautoka, Nadi, Suva and Nausori and has

later extended to other parts of the country including Tavua, Raki Raki , Sigatoka and Savu Savu.

EMPOWER PACIFIC values its relationship with the Department of Social Welfare, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and other stakeholders in Child Protection work.

## MOU with Ministry of Health

EMPOWER PACIFIC, formerly known as Pacific Counselling & Social Services signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Ministry of Health on the 20<sup>th</sup> February 2003 to provide counseling services to all divisional hospitals in Fiji.

In EMPOWER PACIFIC's Strategic Plan 2010- 2015 states the intention to provide

professional counseling services to all divisions in Fiji, both through hospital and community based initiatives.

Since the signing of this MOU, intensive training and capacity building has been carried out to allow EMPOWER PACIFIC to provide Diploma qualified, experienced professional Counselors in Fiji's three large Divi-

sional Hospitals, the Colonial War Memorial Hospital ("CWM Hospital"), the Lautoka Hospital and the Labasa Hospital, plus selected subdivisional facilities.

Recently, EMPOWER PACIFIC has extended its services to the Health Centres in the greater Suva area, namely Raiwaqa, Lami, and Valelevu Health Centres.

## Partnership with the Fiji Corrections Services

EMPOWER PACIFIC has also been working with the Department of Prisons & Correctional Services for the past 6 years.

Several Programs from EMPOWER PACIFIC are run simultaneously within the prison facilities in the north, western and central divisions.

Namely, for the basic training

Natabua, Ba and Nasinu facilities.

For the Health in Prisoners (HIP) Fiji Research, the program runs in Natabua, Ba, Suva (both men & women), and Labasa prisons.

Our Income Generation Projects is also implemented in prison, namely in the Nasinu, Natabua & Labasa Prisons.

This partnership has been sus-

tained over the last six years since 2007 and EMPOWER PACIFIC works along side Rehab Officers and Officers in Charge in the respective prison facilities to see that the operation of these programs are smoothly carried out.

## WE Provide Quality Services

### Counsellors professionalism sustained through Accreditation Process

In an effort to ensure a high level of professional service and quality of care, Empower Pacific facilitates an internal accreditation system for all of its Counseling staff, across all our divisional offices.

The certification is a process by which it grants an EMPOWER PACIFIC staff member the right to practice within the organization, provided certain established professional qualifications and other conditions are met.

This includes the maintenance of codes of ethical conduct, acceptable standards of best practice through an evaluation process and a commitment to

ongoing professional development through continuing education.

The purpose of this counsellor certification program is to identify within EMPOWER PACIFIC those counsellors who, through a process of credential and skills evaluation, are judged qualified to provide counselling services to certain client populations.

Besides setting standards of professional preparation, this program also mandates expectations for continuing education, requires adherence to a formal code of ethics, and provides for advising and disciplining those members on

matters of professional conduct.

Upon successfully completing a required level, counsellors will be awarded certificates that will recognize their improved ability as clinicians.

The Clinical Practice Leader (CPL) will manage the certification process and has responsibility in collaboration with the Certification Committee, to evaluate all applications, including credentials and references submitted for certification.



*“The purpose of this counsellor certification program is to identify within EMPOWER PACIFIC those counsellors who, through a process of credential and skills evaluation, are judged qualified to provide counselling services to certain client populations.”*

### Prison Modules contribute to Behavior Change

EMPOWER PACIFIC’s Prison Program has been going on for six years now.

Since 2007 the program has been operating in Natabua, Ba, and recently in Nasinu Prisons.

Discussion has also taken place to explore the possibilities of extending our services to the Naboro and Suva Women’s prison complex.

The program works in compliment with the Yellow Ribbon Program, in preparing pre-release prisoners for their release, psychologically and socially.

For Natabua and Ba prisons, the program runs twice a week, and Nasinu, the program runs four days a week for six weeks.

The participants are selected through referrals made by the Internal Rehab officers inside prison.

The team usually recruits 8-10 participants per session. So far it has helped participants learn how to control and manage circumstances or issues they may encounter inside prison, at the same time preparing them for their release back into the community.



Inmates at the Nasinu Correction Centre (back row) show off their certificates with Senior Prison Officers & EMPOWER PACIFIC Counsellors.



SPECIAL LAUNCH ISSUE

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**We Are People Focused – Quotes**

*“I was raped & left pregnant. Whilst admitted at Labasa Hospital, I was referred to a Counsellor who informed me that it was never my fault and that help was available for me. She was very supportive and understanding. Through several counseling sessions, I have re-gained my confidence to go back to school and have my parents support me with the baby.” - General Counselling Client*

*“I have been through a lot of violence in my marriage. When we got separated I filed a Domestic Violence Restraining Order (DVRO) on my husband, but this didn't help as he continued to threaten me and my baby. I was able to meet up with your Social Worker when I came to Lautoka. She helped me a lot, informed me of the Domestic Violence Decree and how Police could help me. Since then, I have re-gained hope for me and my baby” - Social Work client*

*“Before accessing your Sekoula Program, I never used condom consistently and I was also afraid of coming for blood test because of the fear of being stigmatized in hospital. But through your Sekoula Field Officer in Suva, I was able to know my HIV status by being referred for testing at the STI clinic. I was also referred for counseling through which I was able to identify my need of either going back to school or starting my own business to support me financially. I am able to make informed choices now” - Sekoula Client*

*“I am a GBV client, I was first referred for Counselling with your organization. Then I was able to work with your Social Worker who later referred me to Income Generation Program (IGP) Officer. Now I have gone through your Small Business training and was given a loan by your organization to start my Canteen business. My business is running now and my husband has found a job of his own. Before, we used to stay with relatives in one house but now, we have managed to build our own home. I would like to thank your organization for the great help.” - IGP Client*