

In this issue

Empower Pacific Launches	1
Defining Social Work	2
National Youth Day Celebrations	2
Team Vunibaka Updates	3
Pacific Islands Health Research Symposium—Social Determinants of Health	3
Social Work Placement students in Suva	4
Nadi Branch Update	4
Farewell to a dear friend & colleague	4

Empower Pacific Launches

The 31st of August this year was a historical day for the organization as it embarks on a new era of leadership and direction as it launches from the old identity as Pacific Counselling & Social Services to the new Empower Pacific.

The new name “Empower Pacific” with a new slogan “*putting people first*” speaks volumes about its core principles and the goal of all of its services.

“While counselling and social support services are still very much at the centre of our programs, we have broadened over the years to try and meet the various needs of our clients as they work towards individual empowerment and the ability to reach their personal potential in life”, said CEO, Rhianon Vichta.

It was a notable occasion for staff and stakeholders alike as the occasion was graced by His Excellency, the President of the Fiji Islands, Ratu Epeli Nailatikau.

In his speech, Ratu Epeli praised the work of Empower Pacific stating that not only government recognizes the high level of professionalism and technical expertise offered by the organization but that government fully appreciates the contributions of Empower Pacific towards Fiji’s health, education & social service sectors.

He further stated that he believes that Empower Pacific’s Income Generation program within the Yellow Ribbon project is very important as it provides former inmates the opportunity to attaining tertiary training, which will enable them to secure employment.

Also by being supported with small loans and basic management skills through the IGP Program helps them to live productive lives once released, said Mr. Nailatikau.

Despite the name changes from Family & Education Group to Pacific Counselling & Social Services to now Empower Pacific, the vulnerable people of Fiji remain the heart of the organization.

Empower Pacific has worked hard to develop a holistic service which includes services to meet the psycho-

logical, emotional, social, physical health, educational, family and financial needs of people.

According to Ms Vichta, a strong part of the organisations success is its focus on working in collaboration with various government sectors and other stakeholders.

She also highlighted that Counselling, Social Work, Prison Rehabilitation and Reintegration programs, HIV/STI programs, Gender Based Violence programs, Sex Workers programs, Flood Rehabilitation programs, Income Generation opportunities, Counselling Training and community based research make up the core of Empower Pacific services.

The launch was held at the Holiday Inn in Suva and was attended by the more than fifty stakeholders, staff and friends of Empower Pacific.

The similar launch was also held at the Waterfront Hotel in Lautoka and the Friendly North Inn in Labasa respectively later in September.



The President of the Fiji Islands, Ratu Epeli Nailatikau during his official speech at the launch.

Defining Social Work



“Everyone has a purpose in life...a unique gift or special talent to give to others. And when we blend this unique talent with service to others, we experience the ecstasy and exultation of our own spirit, which is the ultimate goal of all goals.” - Deepak Chopra

In a multicultural society like Fiji, there has been a lot of discussions surrounding the definition of Social Work.

The question that arises, what exactly does a Social Worker do?

A Social Worker basically helps in enhancing an individual's physical, emotional and spiritual well-being through professional assessment and intervention.

Since every person accessing Social Work services at Empower Pacific is unique, their individual human right is respected and their human dignity is valued by any of the Social Workers.

Fortunately through the availability of professional counselors to assist our clients by focusing on client's emotional needs on hand, the role of Social Workers has been made more effective, by allowing the social work team to focus on the other cultural, familial, structural, political, educational and material aspects of peo-

ples' lives.

We also have support from Income Generation Program which helps clients meet their financial needs.

Social Workers promote social justice to people through fair and equal treatment irrespective of race, gender, sexual orientation and ethnicity.

In Fiji, poverty seems to be the underlying problem depriving people of a quality and sustainable life.

Our clients' needs vary. Their needs include but are not limited to housing, food, finance, counseling, protection against violence, trauma, child protection and legal issues.

In order to help clients receive the support needed, Social Workers liaise and collaborate with different departments within Empower Pacific, other Non-Government Organizations and Government Departments for them to receive the best care possible.

In addition, part of a Social Workers job is to explore alternative ways for client needs to be met, since in certain situations clients may not meet the criteria to have access to the resources available with stakeholders.

In these cases, Social Workers empower people by assisting them to realize their strengths. In the strengths based approach, social workers help clients discover their potential whereby they can work towards achieving their goals in life.

The goal of using strengths based approaches in social work is to enable clients to better take charge of their lives, and be supported in making decision for themselves.

Social workers believe in resiliency. We have hope for our clients. No matter how hard or deprived their circumstances are, clients have the power to make the best possible change in their lives.

By Arti Ram

National Youth Day Celebrations



Empower Pacific booth during National Youth Day

National Youth Day was celebrated on the 30th of August, 2012.

As part of the celebration, the youth took full advantage of the day as there were a lot of activities provided to them by the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

There were also a number of stakeholders present at the Youth Day to provide awareness to the youths and the general public.

Stakeholders that were present at the function included Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health- Hub Centre, Red Cross,

Fiji Rota homes, Lifeline Fiji, Solo West (MOH), National Fire Authority of Fiji, Fiji Police, Dialogue Fiji and Empower Pacific.

Empower Pacific had their own booth with all the services displayed together with free distribution of condoms and brochures.

Presentation was done by Veronica and Loraine on the services offered by Empower Pacific to the general public and the Youth present.

There was a lot of interest shown by the youth on HIV/STI

and Condom use.

It was an interesting experience as we came to know that the most of the youth present were still was not aware of STI's and its symptoms and the consequences of not having safe sex.

This led to having small group discussions in the booth.

Both female and male condom demonstration was also done for different aged youth groups.

There were even older males who came in to see the demonstration and took advantage of the free condoms being offered.

Team Vunibaka Updates

Counselor Rashika after attending to staff of the Vatakoula Gold Mine who have been through a traumatic experience.



On the 17th of August, Team Vunibaka decided to explore a new way of approaching their normal Clinical Supervision Session.

Their Clinical Supervision was held at the Coffee Bean Lounge in Lautoka, during which they were able to hold role plays and group discussions.

Present at this Supervision session were Counselors Vijayanti, Lorraine, Rashika Rekha & Lavinia.



Counselor Lorraine addressing parents of Zhiang Hua Primary School in Lautoka.

Some of the topics addressed were Basic Micro skills (e.g. active listening, & questioning skills), signs of child abuse and counseling referral processes for parents, teachers, alike.

The presentation was conducted between 6 to 8pm on Wednesday 19th September and was attended by 70 parents.



Pacific Islands Health Research Symposium—Social Determinants of Health

The 2nd Pacific Islands Research Symposium was organized by the Fiji National University College of Medicine through the Center of Prevention Of Non-Communicable Diseases (C-POND). It was a 2 day event which took place at the Tanoa Hotel in Nadi.

Empower Pacific's Research team was also part of this Symposium presenting three of its abstracts at the event. The abstracts included "HIV, health and prisoners in Fiji", "Stigma and sex work:" and "The impact of gender as a social determinant of health". For more information about these research projects, please contact either Lani or Kate at the Research Department.

The whole program was innovative, educational and at the same time provided an opportunity to build networks with other Health Researchers from around the region. The research department is hoping to continue to expand and develop as it establishes strong networks with other research institutes both nationally and around the globe.



Pacific Islands Health Research Symposium
6-7 September, 2012
Tanoa International Hotel, Nadi, Fiji



EMPOWER PACIFIC

Head Quarters
2nd Floor, Meghji Building,
157 Vitogo Parade
Lautoka, Fiji Islands.

Phone: 679 6650 482
Fax: 679 6650 482
E-mail:

headoffice@empowerpacific.com

Visit us online @
www.empowerpacific.com



Putting People First!!!

Social Work Placement Students in Suva

Two Social Work Degree Students from the University of the South Pacific are currently attached with Empower Pacific Suva Office.

Afrada Shah and Tamara Balenaveikau are final year Social Work students, who have just commenced their placement with the Suva team.

"When I found out that there was a specific program for social workers this was great because then this would enable me to further practice my social work skills and to learn from social workers in this field." Exclaimed Tamara.

"Also with the variety of programs and casework managed gives exposure to me as a trainee." She added

For Afrada, she wants to enhance her research and case management skills whilst attached with Empower Pacific. "Interacting with both staff & clients with distinct and unique backgrounds allows me to learn something new everyday", she said.

The two students have become an active part of the Social Work team in Suva as well as the Satellite centers. Empower Pacific looks forward to hosting them for the next three months.

Nadi Branch Updates



Empower Pacific's Nadi Branch Manager, Emi Prasad (pictured in pink top) with the Nadi Hospital team after an outreach at Tabuqota village, which is 48 km from Nadi town.

The team provided awareness on general health issues including the availability of Counselling services at the Nadi Subdivisional Hospital.

About 40 villagers attended the session and it was held on the 27th of September 2012.

Farewell to a dear colleague and friend

We would like to acknowledge in this issue the passing of our dear colleague and friend, Maryanne Wilson.

She was based at Empower Pacific's HIV Facility in Suva.

Maryanne was a Counselling Diploma graduate in 2008 (Group 3 graduates) and has been practicing with Empower Pacific for more than 3 years.

Maryanne was a knowledgeable Counsellor, who had the generosity, determination & commitment towards her work.

Maryanne passed on at the Colonial War Memorial Hospital on the 7th of September 2012.

She was one of the many survivors of Cancer who fought to the very end and she will be surely missed by her colleagues and close friends at Empower Pacific.



Maryanne Wilson

NEXT MONTHS ISSUE WILL BE SPECIFICALLY FOCUSED ON MENTAL HEALTH IN RECOGNITION OF WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY ON OCTOBER 10th- Please contribute articles, comments, photos, stories and news updates related to this topic.

(To be featured in the next issue, please send in your articles and photos to lanieta.matanatabu@empowerpacific.com before the 29th October 2012)