

# TALANOA TOKTOK

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Opposition in motion ... Fijian parliamentarian, Lenora Qereqeretabua at the Papua flag-raising event

## Papua, Merdeka!

The Morning Star flag flew proudly in Suva on December 6, 2021, 60 years to the day it was first raised in Jayapura.

Young people, Opposition parliamentarians, academics and members of Civil Society gathered at the Pacific Conference of Churches' secretariat to raise the flag, listen to the Papuan national anthem and later attend a festival of song and art. Popular Fijian enetrainers, Laisa Vulakoro, and Savuto Vakadewavosa, performed for the event.

People carried banners calling for an end to human rights abuse by Indonesian security forces . They also called for self-determination as well as strong intervention on the matter by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. PCC General Secretary, Reverend James Bhagwan, read a message from the West Papua Council of Churches, calling for a peaceful day of prayer and fasting.

Outspoken parliamentarians Lenora Qereqeretabua of the National Federation Party and Ro Teimumu Kepa of SODELPA attended the event. Young people later met at the PCC Secretariat to discuss the situation in West Papua and reflect on action they could take to support the freedom movement through raising awareness in their churches and communities.

Police maintained a close watch over the peaceful ceremonies which took place in view of the Indonesian Embassy. This week the PCC is expected to increase its activity around the West Papua issue at regional and state level. The flag-raising, art and music festival were held in partnership with the Pacific Network on Globalisation.

### Activity draws attention

Indonesian sympathisers have taken a huge interest in PCC activities this year. The PCC work on west Papua has drawn regular criticism from Indonesian trolls on social media. This includes racist and anti-independence comments.



Out of sight ... the Namosi Joint Venture camp at Waisoi, Namosi

# Villagers want eco-database

Local communities will begin to compile data on forest assets in 2022. This is one of the outcomes of a COP26 side event organised by the Fiji Council of Churches, Pacific Conference of Churches and Transcend Oceania.

A meeting of Fiji-based civil society working with indigenous resource owners will approach the Fiji government this month to inform it of concerns raised by landowners at the event. Villagers from Bua, Dawasamu, Navua, Sigatoka, and Votua spoke of environmental damage caused by extractive industry and how it exacerbated the effects of climate change. Now, the communities will work with CSOs and faith-based organisations to create a baseline database of all natural resources on their land. This will help them put a realistic value to loss and damage caused by climate change and extractive industry. As part of the COP26 side event, delegates travelled to Delakado in Tailevu to see first hand the damage caused by gravel extraction.



## Warning for mine

Villagers have marched on a mining company in Fiji to demand an end to prospecting. The Nabukebuke Clan of Namosi Village has told the Namosi Joint Venture that its assets will not be harmed. Villagers have stepped up a media campaign to highlight the fact that NJV has not signed an agreement to compensate them for damage caused by prospecting work.

# Kanaky vote pressure mounts

Pressure is mounting on France to defer the schedule December 12 referendum on Kanaky's independence. The Pacific Conference of Churches has joined the Eglise Protestante de Kanaky Nouvelle-Caledonie to urge France to postpone the vote.

This call has been supported by the World Council of Churches in a letter to the French Embassy in Geneva.

In a separate urgent submission, 146 voters and three organisations have asked France's highest court to suspend the referendum.

They argue that given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is unthinkable to proceed with such an important plebiscite.

They said because of the lockdown, campaigning has been unduly hampered as basic freedoms were impinged.

For weeks pro-independence parties unsuccessfully lobbied Paris to delay the vote and they now say they will neither take part in the vote nor recognise its result.

Last week, France flew in almost 250 magistrates and judicial officials to oversee Sunday's vote. They are supported by about 2000 extra police, including riot squads, to provide security for the referendum.





**Young voices .... a child at Tukuraki Village, Ba, shares his views on development during a community consultation**



## Library project

Over the past 60 years, the Pacific Conference of Churches has generated thousands of books and papers covering numerous subjects.

With Global Ministries mission worker, Robert (RJ) Howard, the PCC has started work on a physical and on-line library which can be used as a resource for students, researchers and church workers.



## Canoe voyage

In 2022 the PCC will partner with the Uto Ni Yalo Trust in a sea voyage to Bua in Northern Fiji. The voyage will allow young people to share ideas on alternative development and economic models for sustainable growth. The Uto Ni Yalo is an ocean-going double-hulled canoe which the PCC has used as a teaching platform in island communities.



## World post

The World Association of Christian Communications has appointed Netani Rika its director for the Pacific.

Rika heads the PCC Communications and Development team. He has over 30 years of experience as a journalist and lecturer and is former editor of the region's largest newspaper.

# Development: A new face

Fijian villagers have been challenged to find new models of development, education and ecumenism.

A team from the Institute of Mission of Research at the Pacific Theological College last month visited villages in six provinces to discuss plans for community-oriented learning at the regional institution. As part of the consultation, villagers were asked to share their views on education and development.

They were also asked to explore the negative and positive effects of education and development in order to build new models and design educational courses which would benefit indigenous communities in the Pacific. The courses would add Pacific Philosophy, Culture and Tradition and Resilient Transformative Communities to the PTC's current courses on Theology and Ecumenism. The Pacific Conference of Churches provided a resource person for the consultation as part of its commitment to the Pacific Ecumenical Community.

## Children add to discussion

The village of Tukuraki in the interior of Ba Province, Fiji, was destroyed in a landslide in 2012. Four people lost their lives and the village has been relocated.

During discussions on development, children were invited to share their view in art. It was an enriching experience for adults and the PTC-PCC Team as children are often not included in village discussions.

The children were encouraged to draw their village as they saw it and share their reflections. This activity may be drawn into future PCC community training to allow a wider, more informed view of village life.

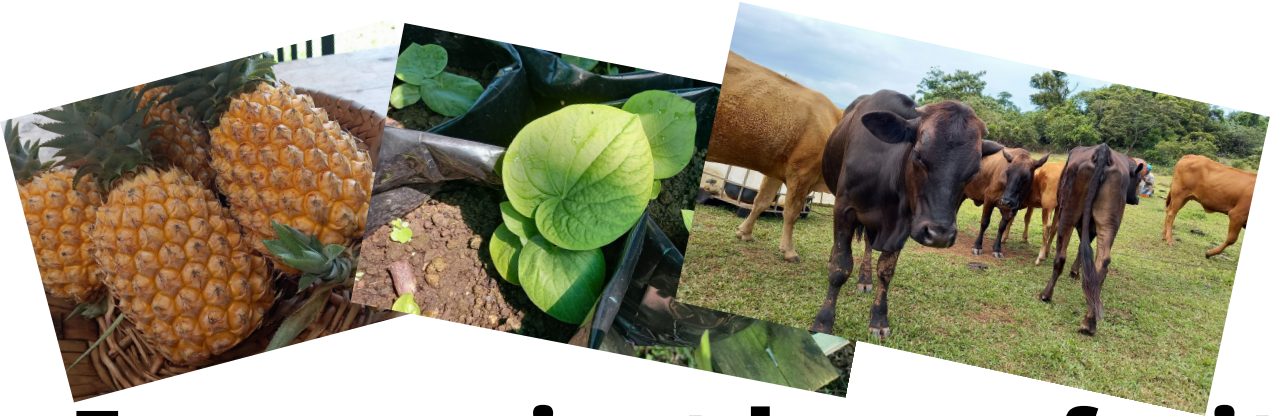


## Villagers want change

Villagers in Fiji's villages want an education and development framework which is friendlier and addresses indigenous issues. Speaking at a consultation organised by the Pacific Theological College, villagers around Fiji agreed that their history needed to be reviewed and taught from the perspective of local communities. "We also need to speak about and document our identity so that this can be handed down to our young people," said an elder from Nalase Village in Rewa.

"We cannot afford to have communities in which the young do not know who they are or where they originated. It's time for that to change."

He said history and philosophy needed to reflect local stories, wisdom and knowledge. Villagers said local wisdom was crucial in the fight against climate change and prevention of environmental damage caused by development.



# Farm project bears fruit

The Lomana Na Vulagi Eco-Farm has borne its first fruit with pineapples and cattle being sold commercially. This project started to take shape between the first and second wave of COVID-19 in Fiji and was held up due to strict national quarantine measures in Fiji. But with internal borders open, it has been possible to plant 1000 tavioka (cassava), 200 kumala (sweet potatoes) and trial kava (yaqona). In Quarter 1 of 2022 the first ginger and turmeric will be planted. The first sale of cattle was to Wahleys Butchery while pineapple was sold to a number of caterers. It is envisaged that the farm will help with the PCC's long-term financial sustainability while providing a training platform in the areas of climate change resilience, responsible land use and rethinking economic structures for churches.

## Violence against women

Violence against women is a form of discrimination, directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately\*. This violence seriously inhibits women's ability to enjoy their human rights and freedoms on a basis of equality with men.

CEDAW Committee General Recommendation (No.19 para.6.)

**Did you know?** Violence against women can be physical, sexual, psychological or economic, and can occur in the family, the community, and/or be perpetrated by the state.

- About 1 in 3\* Caribbean women are victims of intimate partner violence
- Abusers are usually men and the victims are usually women and girls
- Women are more likely to be harassed, assaulted and killed
- Violence against women can happen regardless of socio-economic status, religion or ethnicity.

### Major Challenges

- Empowering Women:** Victims of gender-based violence often face obstacles to claim their rights and seek redress.
- Improving Data:** Systematic data collection and analysis on violence, that is broken down by age, sex and type of offence, remains insufficient in the Caribbean region.
- Reinforcing national capacity:** Limited institutional, human and financial capacity and coordination among national mechanisms lead to inadequate responses to victims in need of protection.

### Recommendations

- ✓ Ratify and implement international and regional human rights standards in order to ensure that all women and girls in the Caribbean are able to exercise and enjoy the full spectrum of human rights
- ✓ Strengthen collaboration among stakeholders, including Government, Civil Society, Private Sector and the United Nations in the field of sexual and reproductive health
- ✓ Conduct systematic and regular data collection and analysis, disaggregated by gender, age, location, disability, ethnicity, types of offences against women and girls, in compliance with international standards on data protection and the right to privacy.
- ✓ Develop public-information campaigns and raise awareness with education and training programmes for national and local authorities, the police, judiciary, social services, the mass media, civil society organisations and women and girls themselves

\* Source: WHO, Intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence. Global Health Observatory data repository, 2016. Icon made by Freepik

## Campaign gains ground

Thousands of people viewed a regional advocacy campaign on social media to highlight the contribution of regional women.

Designed to coincide with the international 16 Days of Activism, the PCC highlighted the work of women throughout the region - among them advocates, educators, theologians, sailors and politicians.

The response has been so good that a new series will be launched early in 2022 to pay tribute to the contributions of Pacific women in a vast number of fields.

Work has also started on a liturgy for the 2022 Break The Silence Sunday.

**Pacific Hero**

When the 18 women students at Tangintebu Theological College, Kiribati, graduate, they will join 36 colleagues in the ministry. It's the work of Reverend MALETA TENTEN and her research and writing about contextual theology in Kiribati culture that attracts women candidates. After writing extensively on i-Kiribati culture and Christianity, she joined the staff of the college. We recognise her for being an example to young women and pushing church boundaries.

#16days #16ways

Reverend Maleta Tenten, Kiribati

## Concern over rape, murder

The brutal rape and murder of a girl in the Solomon Islands has sparked a campaign for tougher laws in the country. A group supported by PCC Women's Desk Officer, Sierra Bird, has called on the Solomon Islands government to enact stricter penalties on people who perpetrate violence against women and children. Police continue to investigate the attack on the seven-year-old in the Western Province. The PCC has joined local groups to condemn the attack.