

TALANOA TOKTOK

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Civil society joins forces to speak out



Joint journey ... Reverend James Bhagwan (left) of the PCC and Josaia Osborne of PIANGO prepare to address Pacific leaders in Suva

Pacific solidarity

THE 50th Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat allowed civil society to cooperate in an unprecedented way to address regional issues.

Under the Pacific Regional NGO Alliance (PRNGO), civil society organisations pooled resources to ensure their voices were heard at the Suva meeting.

The collaboration started before regional leaders met in Fiji's capital and involved the Fiji Council of Social Services, Pacific Islands Associations of NGOs, Pacific Disability Forum,



Pacific Network on Globalisation, Development Alternatives for Women in a New Era and the Pacific Conference of Churches. By pooling resources and taking responsibility for specific thematic areas, the PRNGO

Alliance was able to maximise its reach and participate fully in discussions.

PCC General Secretary, Reverend James Bhagwan, said this was an example of effective regional cooperation.

"With limited resources, it's important that we share skills and put these to use as effectively as possible," he said.

"Civil society - through cooperation - can have a huge impact on decisions.

"We must set aside differences and work for the common good."

Easier access to our website



WE'RE making access to our website easier with the development of a QR code so that users can scan their way into our on-line communications. As we develop further, there will be links to material which churches and educators can use in the areas of climate change, gender and child protection, climate change and general information about our member churches. We're also working on bringing on-line, hundreds of papers and books on regional history and ecumenism for use by students and researchers. We welcome your comments.

Vigil for the region



Flame of love,,, Reverend Dr Cliff Bird at a vigil for the Pacific Islands Forum

AS regional leaders gathered in Suva for the 51st Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting, faith society met at a Prayer Vigil..

Members of the Diplomatic Corps, Pacific Theological College Community, Pacific Civil Society Organizations and representatives of our member churches, prayed and reflected on the issues and outcomes of the regional meeting.

Archbishop Peter Loy Chong, head of the Roman Catholic church in Fiji, reflected on the vulnerability of the the region and the world as a whole.

But in our vulnerability, recognizing the power in that vulnerability, he said.

Just as Jesus portrayed his power in his vulnerability, in his passion, so should we follow his example. He went on to speak on the need for us the church, and for regional leaders attending the week-long meeting, to amplify the voices of the community.

Archbishop Chong said the church had a duty to ensure the voices of those most vulnerable in society were heard at regional level..

A week of advocacy

JOINT advocacy was the order of the week when Pacific leaders met in Suva. Civil society had prepared for weeks in advance to address issues such as self-determination in West Papua, a moratorium on Deep Sea Mining, reparation for the victims of nuclear testing and the inclusion of people with disabilities in regional discussions. The Pacific Conference of Churches Secretariat became CSO Central with members of the PRNGO Alliance operating out of the office for a week. With the PCC Secretariat just a walk away from the PIFS venue, it provided a convenient space for media conferences, social gatherings, meetings and a planning centre.

Members of the Pacific Regional NGO Alliance joined forces and launched

their joint and individual activities from the centre, returning each evening for a debriefing session before planning operations for the next day.

PCC Programmes Manager, Frances Namoumou, said the week was filled with engagement between governments, Civil Society Organizations, and faith groups. "It cemented PCCs path to advocating and supporting the region towards justice, self-determination, and peace," Namoumou said.

"We look forward to cooperating in a similar way during future regional meetings by pooling resources and staff to ensure the widest possible coverage on issues which matter to our members and the people.."

The next PIFS meeting will be in the Cook Islands in 2023.



United front ... civil society representatives front the media

Violence: The new epidemic

Gender Based Violence (GBV) continues to be a major concern with the Pacific having some of the highest per capita rates of violence in the world.

It's an issue of growing concern in the region and Civil Society is addressing the issue on several fronts.

The Pacific Conference of Churches, with UN Women, is in the process of rolling out a baseline survey to measure the extent of the problem in faith-based organisations.

It is envisaged that this will provide a platform for other Civil Society partners to mount similar initiatives and help reduce violence against women and children.

From July 25-30 men and women r in Fiji attended a Positive Role Model Workshop in Suva. Organized by PCC, UN Women and the Welfare Improvement Network (WIN), it was a week of learning, sharing and deep reflection for participants who returned to their communities to implement what they had learned.

The workshop theme was genesis 1: 26 - 26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.





Hear our cry Setareki Macanawai of the Pacific Disabilities Forum speaks at a meeting in Australia

Milestone for Solomons Church

THE United Church in the Solomon Islands has ventured into real estate. Moderator, Reverend David Garunu, with the help of the General Secretary Braena Bird, conducted a groundbreaking ceremony at the selected site for the first investment in real estate (rental property) by the church at Munda. This was the eventual realisation of multiple layers of church resolutions over 20 years calling upon church leadership to engage in property investment. This first investment is a triplex building structure: 2x2 bedroom flats and 1x3 bedroom flat. Church leaders said this was the the beginning of investment plans which would take shape in the years ahead.

"We will diversify our investments," a church spokesperson said. The primary immediate and long-term goal of the UCSI Business Plan, developed by the Assembly Office Team and endorsed at the Assembly Meeting in October 2019, is to move the church toward a future of economic-financial strength, independence and sustainability in order to grow its mission mandate and engagements.

Talks focus on migrant work

REPRESENTATIVES of Pacific and Australian Churches have concluded the first face to face meeting of the Pacific Church Partnership Advisory Network ('PCPAN') in Canberra.

Discussions focused on self-determination, Pacific migrant labour, development in the Pacific and an affirmation of the vital role of Churches, faith-based agencies and civil society organisations as development actors in their own right.

The two-day meeting, which took place under the auspices of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Pacific Church Partnerships Programme was held

held on Ngambri and Ngunnawal Land at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture.

It was the third meeting of the PCPAN, which is made up of the Pacific Conference of Churches, the National Councils of Churches from Samoa, Vanuatu, Kiribati, Tonga, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Fiji and the Pacific Disability Forum from the Pacific; and the National Council of Churches in Australia, the Church Agencies Network, Representatives of Australian First Peoples and Pacific Diaspora, Australian Christian Churches, Micah Australia and DFAT's Office of the Pacific.

Pacific communities have seen a need for discussions on migrant work following Australia's implementation of a labour mobility scheme.