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Young PNG woman receives United Nations award

UNDP has honoured PNG's Bessie Maruia, for her work in providing an enabling environment for people living with HIV/AIDS.



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Welcome to 2005 all PASA readers!

Since the regional leaders endorsed *The Pacific Regional Strategy on HIV/AIDS (2004-2008)* at the Pacific Island Leaders Forum meeting in August 2004, things have been steaming ahead in addressing



Islands AIDS Foundation (PIAF), a regional workshop on "Managing Community-based HIV Programs in the Pacific" held at Fiji School of Medicine and a workshop on "Developing IEC

HIV/AIDS issues in the region. Powerful leadership was shown by Pacific parliamentarians in hosting the First Conference for Pacific Parliamentarians, which focused on "The Role of Pacific Parliamentarians in the Fight against HIV/AIDS". The meeting was initiated by the Pacific Parliamentary Assembly for Population and Development (PPAPD) in collaboration with the Forum Secretariat, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC).

PASA extends huge congratulations to Bessie Maruia of PNG on her United Nations award – well done! It's truly wonderful that her hard work and commitment has been recognised at an international level with this honour. Other exciting events in the region have included the launch of the Samoa AIDS Foundation and significant progress in tackling HIV/AIDS issues in Kiribati. Some powerful capacity-building workshops have also been held, such as the first regional meeting of HIV-positive people facilitated by the Pacific

tion and communication] Materials for Behaviour Change" involving Fiji stakeholders. These initiatives are highlighted in this edition of PASA. This issue also provides a snapshot of World AIDS Day activities around the region.

Following feedback from PASA readers, this edition has a new feature – some highlights from *PIAF Nius*, the excellent online newsletter of the Pacific Islands AIDS Foundation. Many thanks to the PIAF team for their spirit of sharing and collaboration.

This coming year will see the implementation of the new regional strategy and, with this, increased coordination and collaboration of activities and strategies to address the epidemic in our region. We look forward to continuing to showcase and share successful initiatives through PASA – onwards and upwards in the spirit of courage and commitment.

Robyn Drysdale

Why "PASA"?

Although the title of this publication is *Pacific AIDS Alert*, we refer to it as PASA – or Pacific AIDS/STI Alert – because of the very high rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in the Pacific region and the strong link between STI infection and increased vulnerability to HIV infection. While the number of known cases of HIV/AIDS is still relatively low in most countries in the region, the STI rate has reached epidemic proportions in many Pacific Island countries, indicating a high prevalence of risk-taking behaviours and low use of condoms. It is well established that, because a number of STIs also make transmission of HIV easier, a reduction in their incidence and prevalence can substantially reduce HIV transmission.

**Explanation kindly
provided by Steven Vete**





Bessie Maruia

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) recently gave international recognition to the work of a young HIV/AIDS counsellor and trainer from Papua New Guinea, Bessie Maruia. Bessie is 26 years old and comes from Okapa in Eastern Highlands Province.

The award was one of five granted by the UNDP in 2004 to people who provided an enabling environment for young people to combat HIV/AIDS as part of the United Nations campaign for the eradication of poverty. "By honouring these five men and women, we are demonstrating the capabilities of young people around the world to tackle these global problems with inspiring and innovative approaches," said UNDP Administrator Mark Malloch Brown.

Bessie is the second Pacific Islander to receive the award, which is given to just five people around the world each year. Responsible for coordinating counselling and home care programmes within the provinces, Bessie empowers people living with HIV/AIDS in Papua New Guinea and protects them from stigma and discrimination. An acknowledged

Bessie Maruia: Supporting the voices of people living with HIV/AIDS

youth leader, Bessie was nominated to share her work experiences with other young people from across the globe in the 2004 Youth Parliament in Sydney, Australia. In addition, her contributions have been recognised by the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre and AusAID, Australia's official development organisation, which supports HIV/AIDS response efforts in Papua New Guinea.

As the only National Trainer and Counselling Supervisor at the National AIDS Council of Papua New Guinea, Bessie coordinates a national training programme in HIV/AIDS counselling that was developed through collaboration with selected church agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), government departments and tertiary providers. To date, 63 trainers from all sectors throughout the country have been trained by the council. The council has conducted some 40 training sessions on basic HIV/AIDS counselling throughout the provinces, reaching about three-quarters of the population of Papua New Guinea — a substantial achievement considering that the population consists of numerous ethnic groups speaking almost 800 languages, among whom 20 per cent are illiterate. While she was an Assistant Trainer from 2002 to 2004, Bessie's strong personal communication skills, natural caring attitude, determination and sheer hard work were noted by the



PNG flag

council's leadership, who then appointed her to her current position in which she supports 20 provinces in coordinating the Provincial Care and Counselling Programmes. During her tenure at the council, she has developed training manuals for both participants and facilitators that are in use throughout Papua New Guinea. These manuals include *Basic Knowledge of HIV/AIDS*, *Introduction to HIV Counselling* and *Introduction to HIV and VCT*. She is currently working on manuals for home-based care and for advanced care. In addition, she has developed a national database of trained people for those seeking assistance with counselling, care and support in various sectors. In a society where sex is taboo, and which is made up of people of various cultures, and is struggling to cope with HIV/AIDS, Bessie has worked to provide an enabling environment for people living with HIV/AIDS. This award is a great personal achievement for Bessie. She is a role model for young Pacific Islanders, especially young women, to aspire to. **More about Bessie and the Poverty Eradication Awards can be found at <http://www.undp.org/idep/2004/awards>.**

Pacific parliamentarians strengthen their commitment to the fight against HIV/AIDS in the Pacific region ... and make history

From Dr Dennie Iniakwala, HIV/AIDS & STI Adviser, SPC, Noumea, and Dr Rufina Latu,
Adolescent Reproductive Health Adviser, SPC, Suva



Parliamentarians and delegates attending the Suva meeting on "The Role of Pacific Parliamentarians in the Fight against HIV/AIDS"

The signing of the Suva Declaration on the Fight Against HIV/AIDS on 13 October 2004 marked another major step forward by regional leaders, as they continue to commit themselves to the fight against HIV/AIDS in the Pacific region.

More than 80 parliamentarians and government delegates from 19 countries and territories in the Pacific — including Australia, New Zealand and the French territory of New Caledonia — gathered in Suva, Fiji, to discuss, debate and deliberate. Also present were 70 HIV/AIDS advocates who encouraged parliamentarians to become champions and icons

in leading the fight against HIV/AIDS in our communities.

The meeting was initiated by the Pacific Parliamentary Assembly for Population and Development (PPAPD), in close collaboration with the United Nations



Hon. Ratu Epeli Nailatikau,
Chair of PPAPD

Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) Suva. PPAPD is a regional parliamentary body established in 1997 with membership from all independent island nations. The Speaker of the House of Representatives of Fiji, Hon. Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, is currently Chair of PPAPD.

The three-day regional meeting (11–13 October 2004) was held at the Tradewinds Convention Centre, Lami, Fiji. It represents the first of its kind in the Pacific region: that is, here parliamentarians gathered to discuss and were willing to learn about their role in the effort to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS in the Pacific.

The meeting reinforced the urgency for national and regional actions in implementing *The Pacific Regional Strategy on HIV/AIDS 2004–2008*, endorsed by Pacific Island Leaders Forum meeting in Samoa in August 2004. This regional strategy is far-sighted and all-encompassing in its vision, goal and principles, and highlights the importance of leadership in HIV/AIDS interventions. Providing the keynote address was Dr Nafis Sadik, Special Advisor to the United Nations Secretary-General and Special Envoy of the UN

The focus on parliamentarians is important for these reasons:

1. Parliamentarians are national leaders – they are icons of constituencies and Pacific Island societies.
2. They have leadership roles in leading the fight against HIV/AIDS in our countries and territories.
3. Parliamentarians have the mandate and public trust to act in the interests of the people.
4. They can influence mobilisation of resources both within their country or territory, in or outside the government system, and beyond their borders from development partners.
5. They may be able to establish or strengthen national parliamentarian advocacy groups, and national and regional networking to maintain dialogue and action in implementing activities that address HIV/AIDS.
6. Parliamentarians can initiate innovative activities to support HIV/AIDS. For example, in a parliamentarian exchange visitation programme, parliamentarians who are actively involved in HIV/AIDS advocacy might visit other countries and territories to share their experiences.
7. Parliamentarians bear a special responsibility to set examples that spur others into action. They can also be vulnerable to HIV infection as they travel widely, which strengthens the importance of involving them in HIV/AIDS initiatives, both nationally and regionally.
8. Their ability to contribute to the fight against HIV/AIDS will be greatly enhanced if they know more about the disease; for this reason, the focus is on both informing them and highlighting action that they can take.

Secretary-General for HIV/AIDS in the Asia-Pacific Region, while the Hon. Prime Minister of Fiji delivered the opening address of the meeting. Other guest speakers included Mr Peter Witham, UN Resident Coordinator, and Dr M. Sukavejworakit, Secretary-General, Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development. In her closing address, Dr Nafis Sadik challenged

the leaders to be an example and accelerate the responses in their respective countries and territories.

The meeting culminated in the signing of the Suva Declaration on the Fight Against HIV/AIDS. Through this action, Pacific parliamentarians documented their agreement to commitments and action in the fight against HIV/AIDS, in the areas of advo-



Hon. Dr Stephen Sanga Aumanu (MP) signs the Suva Declaration

“
You can find the Pacific crippled by HIV or you can seize the opportunity you have to protect your countries from having such epidemic. Be an example of leadership in the fight against HIV/AIDS. I know you will choose to be true leaders in these efforts to accelerate the responses in your countries in the Pacific”

Dr Nafis Sadik, Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for HIV/AIDS in the Asia-Pacific Region

cacy, legislation and resource mobilisation.

Copies of the Suva Declaration can be obtained from:

PPAPD Secretariat, PO Box 2352, Government Building, Suva, Fiji
Phone: (+ 679) 3305811
Fax: (+ 679) 3305325

The role of non-state actors in the fight against HIV/AIDS

From Jane Keith-Reid, AIDS Task Force of Fiji

Paper presented at the First Conference for Pacific Parliamentarians on "The Role of Pacific Parliamentarians in the Fight Against HIV/AIDS", Suva, Fiji, 11-13 October 2004

Involvement of NGOs and people with HIV/AIDS

In 1994, forty-two nations signed a declaration that echoed the principle of Greater Involvement of People Living With HIV/AIDS (GIPA). This declaration resolved to "support a greater involvement of people living with HIV/AIDS through an initiative to strengthen the capacity and coordination of networks of people living with HIV/AIDS and community-based organizations".

The 1994 declaration was prompted by the recognition that such networks and community-based organisations had played a leadership role in increasing society's acceptance of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA), in reducing infection rates among PLWHA's peers, in mitigating the personal and social impact of the disease, and in fighting for the right to health care for PLWHA.

If anything, the involvement of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), including those run partly or wholly by HIV-positive people, has become even more visible and credible since 1995. It was from that time that community pressure to increase access to highly active antiretroviral therapy (ART) was stepped up. This



PIAF founder Maire Bopp with Pacific parliamentarians

move was in memory of those who had not survived long enough to benefit from this therapy and in solidarity with the millions of people, mostly in developing countries, who still could not afford the treatment.

The past two decades of fighting against the epidemic have proven that community-based organisations, including groups of PLWHA, play an important role in tackling the infection through the implementation of prevention programmes and the provision of care and support for people affected or infected. NGOs' achievements have been recognised as vital contributions to effective national responses. In the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS issued after the United National General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS in 2001, the importance of involving NGOs and PLWHA was reiterated.

The concept of partnerships was again emphasised in the framework document of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. A new "public-private partnership", "the creation and expansion of government/private/non-governmental partnerships" and "strengthening the participation of communities, particularly those infected and affected" by AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria are laid down as principles. So there is the general recognition of the role of NGOs in their diversity. They are advocates, they have the ability to contribute to policy development, some possess significant technical expertise, and they also work at the community level in the day-to-day provision of services.

Pacific context

Given this impressive framework of engagement, let us see how we in the Pacific are faring. How

have our NGOs engaged in HIV/AIDS activities?

In recent years NGOs have become increasingly involved in community-based prevention programmes. Examples include community education and outreach to young people through peer education. Some have focused on working specifically with vulnerable or marginalised groups such as sex workers and men who have sex with men. Organisations like Wan Smolbag in Vanuatu have focused on prevention and awareness-raising through drama and videos. All have sought to create a greater awareness that the threat of HIV infection cannot be ignored by any of us, and to build knowledge and strengthened skills to reduce HIV infection.

As more cases of HIV infection have been identified in Pacific Island countries and territories, NGOs and community groups have responded to provide care to people living and affected by HIV/AIDS.

However, the road has not been easy for Pacific NGOs. Little attention had been given to building their capacity and skills. Resources for programme implementation have been sporadic. As a result, NGOs are fragile and isolated, and their HIV activity fragmented.

In the past few years, several sig-



nificant events have begun to shape new opportunities for NGOs in our region, giving them opportunities to learn from the experiences of more experienced NGOs in other parts of the world: The main events are as follows:

1. At the 2001 **United National General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS)** on HIV/AIDS, Fiji and three other Pacific countries of the 11 participating included NGO or civil society representatives in their delegation. Meetings of NGOs held prior to this UNGASS also fuelled a vision of what can be achieved by NGOs collectively.
2. The **Global Fund Pacific Multi-country HIV/AIDS project (GFATM)** has facilitated new opportunities for regional NGOs to meet. Currently they are working to establish a Pacific Network of NGOs working in HIV/AIDS
3. **The Pacific Regional Strategy on HIV/AIDS 2004– 2008** includes a Coordination Component. Key actions of this component are to support and sustain the development of a regional network of NGOs, including the Pacific NGO HIV/AIDS Network, and formal recognition of the regional NGOs including the Pacific NGO Network.

Moving forward

In the last 18 months, NGOs have begun to address new issues, including voluntary counselling and testing, and access to treat-

ment.

Recently, with funding through Pacific Islands AIDS Foundation (PIAF) and Fiji's Ministry of Social Welfare, ATFF conducted treatment preparedness training for members of Fiji Network of Positive People (FJN+) who were starting ART. The training was conducted in partnership with the HIV medical staff of Fiji's Ministry of Health and has resulted in a strong support team for those on ART. This activity is a result of partnership between government, NGOs and PLWHA and is representative of the new partnerships that can and must be forged.

Another example of partnership is the capacity-building project being implemented by ATFF with FJN+, funded through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Over the past 12 months it has been a privilege to work with FJN+ in the development of its network and to document the positive impact of peer support amongst PLWHA. These experiences and lessons learned from both these partnering activities can and should be shared with our NGO counterparts in other Pacific Island countries and territories.

Challenges

Many community-based organisations are driven by passion and energy. They are motivated to develop their communities, whether through the provision of education and training, or by

working with PLWHA in care and support programmes. However, are such passion and energy enough?

Is enough being done to involve NGOs? The answer is still no. There is a lack of enthusiasm in establishing true partnerships between government and NGOs. We need to find new ways of relating and working together.

Take-home messages for parliamentarians

So how can you as parliamentarians help bridge the gap and secure broader NGO participation? How can you, who are viewed in NGO eyes as powerful, engage and interact with NGOs and provide an equal platform for NGO-government partnerships to develop?

1. Know your local NGOs. They would be more than happy to provide an overview of the work they do.
2. Ensure mechanisms are in place to build up the capacity and skills of NGOs and PLWHAs so that they can be effective partners.
3. Ensure NGOs and PLWHAs are engaged meaningfully and thoroughly from proposal development, through programme planning, to implementation and evaluation of activities designed to fight HIV/AIDS. Forget the tokenism — it does not work. It is said that we in the Pacific have a window of

opportunity but it is limited and the expiry date is upon us. If we are to reverse HIV infection rates and save the lives of our people, we cannot shy away from certain facts:

- ▶ We need to talk openly about sex. NGOs have been running programmes for years that address this issue comprehensively. Give us your support so we can get on and do the work we know best. We are your allies.
 - ▶ We need to be very specific about the groups who are most vulnerable to infection, who need to be educated about prevention, and who need care and treatment. These groups include men who have sex with men, and sex workers and their clients. Your NGOs are your partners and can be mobilised to take action.
 - ▶ You as parliamentarians must act to ensure sufficient resources are available to keep your NGOs actively involved in effective and sustainable programmes. We are your partners and stand ready to turn your policies into action.
 - ▶ We cannot allow ignorance and fear to fuel stigma, silence, blame and discrimination. We need your leadership so that the people of the Pacific can understand what needs to be done to fight this infection.
- If we can count on each other, trust each other and work together as true partnership, we still

Launch of Samoa AIDS Foundation

From Ken Moala and Peone Fuimaono, SAF



Peati Maiava Iupeli SAF
Training/Counselling Officer

Photo courtesy of PIAF Nius

A new organisation has just been formed as a support group for people living with HIV/AIDS in Samoa. The Samoa AIDS Foundation Incorporated (SAF) is fully registered as a membership-based organisation that is non-political, non-discriminatory and non-governmental.

The idea to form this organisation came about when Peati Maiava Iupeli and Ken Moala returned from the XV International AIDS Conference in Bangkok, Thailand last July. At this time they began to discuss the need to raise awareness to help stop the wave of discrimination that has followed the spread of the pandemic throughout the Pacific.

It was also noted that more needs to be done to give voice to the collective interests and plight of people living with HIV/AIDS in Samoa. The Samoa AIDS Foundation will serve as a vehicle for change through empowerment; it aims to achieve fundamental socio-economic change for the wellbeing of those infected and affected by the epidemic.

SAF has 25 members at present. Membership is open to all irrespective of race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, culture



Maire Bopp

Photo courtesy of PIAF Nius

The aims and objectives of the Samoa AIDS Foundation are to:

1. represent, coordinate and communicate the needs of all people living with HIV/AIDS in Samoa;
2. ensure that the fundamental human rights of all are recognised and upheld;
3. facilitate the research of information relevant to all;
4. collect and disseminate relevant information on HIV/AIDS to all;
5. mobilise all infected and affected people to unite against the HIV/AIDS impact and spread in Samoa;
6. support and develop support group structures and networks for all infected and affected people;
7. promote education that is sensitive and specific to the needs of all;
8. provide guidance and support for all people living with HIV/AIDS;
9. expose and prevent the exploitation of all people living with HIV/AIDS;
10. give expression to the needs, demands and human rights of all people living with HIV/AIDS in Samoa through advocacy and activism; and
11. implement and facilitate capacity building for the empowerment of people living with HIV/AIDS.



Samoa HIV Educator Palapoi Sione Pula with resources

and socio-economic background, and is guided by democratic principles.

The foundation is planning to work closely with the Samoan Ministry of Health on issues pertaining to HIV/AIDS in Samoa. It will assist and complement HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention programmes initiated by the Ministry. It will hold meeting with the Minister of Health, Hon. Mulitalo Siafausa Vui, to seek assistance with and endorsement of SAF's aims and objectives.

SAF held its official launch on 1 December 2004 to coincide with World AIDS Day. The launch programme included distribution of Red Ribbons (a sign of solidarity with those living

with HIV/AIDS) and a Charity Auction Cocktail.

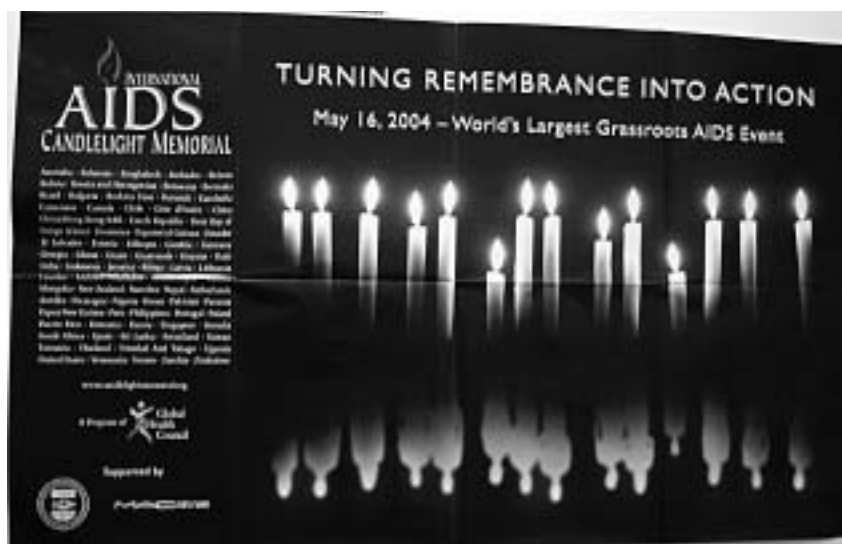
The Samoa AIDS Foundation is extending a warm invitation to the official launch to all the prominent women of Samoa in order to solicit their support to mobilise the interests of the mothers of Samoa. The foundation will be appealing to the community at large, as well as to the diplomatic corps, business houses, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other organisations for financial support and for items to be auctioned at the Charity Auction Cocktail.

SAF will be seeking to work in close partnership with relevant organisations such as the Samoa Umbrella for NGOs, the Red Cross and the broader community. The foundation wishes to extend our thanks to Ernie Meyer of Haleck Motors, the New Zealand High Commission, and the Aus-

tralian High Commission, who have come on board to assist us.

The Samoa AIDS Foundation holds its meetings every Thursday at Toilolo Village, Vaimea.

For further information on SAF please contact the Secretary, Peone Fuimaono on: mobile + 685 777 9566 or email pfuimaono@yahoo.com, or email the President, Ken Moala on kenmoala@hotmail.com



Kiribati HIV/AIDS-TB Task Force makes strides with national support!

From Kiribati HIV/AIDS-TB Task Force and Mike Roman

Since mid 2004 the Kiribati HIV/AIDS-TB Task Force (KHATBTF) has made significant progress in raising awareness, providing support and acquiring national funding to deliver programmes in relation to HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis within Kiribati.



Starting in June, the task force hosted a Masters degree student to conduct research that focused on adolescent populations with ethnographic, social marketing and with intervention design research for HIV/AIDS. In cooperation with the Kiribati Red Cross, Kiribati Scout Association, the Adolescent Reproductive Health (ARH) Center and the Ministry of Youth Education and Sports, the task force co-sponsored 11 educational intervention programmes which were held on three islands and in four schools, and were delivered to youth groups, primary scouts, ARH volunteers and the general public.

In August the constitution of the task force was officially recognised by the Ministry of Environment and Social Welfare. In this way the task force became the second incorporated society in Kiribati, which enabled it to seek funding

and implement capacity development programmes. Additionally, the task force has partnered with the two major religious HIV/AIDS task forces in Kiribati in efforts to reduce stigma and encourage care and support for individuals living with HIV/AIDS. In July 2004 members of the task force and the Kiribati Catholic Church donated to Kiribati its first AIDS quilt. A sobering reminder of our past, this quilt travels wherever intervention programmes or awareness campaigns are run. In October, Kiribati had its first seropositive individual come out in public. Until this point, not many people



knew (or realised that they knew) a real person living with HIV. Since going public, Buraua has been instrumental in raising awareness and support for HIV/AIDS work in Kiribati by talking to students, parliament members, doctors and nurses about living with HIV/AIDS. Through these efforts, in addition to international efforts within Kiribati, the need for sustainable funding has been recognised. In an unprecedented decision, the Kiribati Government passed a bill, on its first run through the house, that allocated AUD 40,000 in support of HIV/AIDS work beginning in January 2005. Most recently, Kiribati's World AIDS Day celebrations took centre stage on the task force agenda. Schools, government ministries, churches and individuals from the Fiji Network of Positive People combined talents, skills and heart in making the 2004 celebration one of the largest in Kiribati history. (For more detail, see "World AIDS Day around the Pacific", page 26.)

A great amount of work has been accomplished. However, as study results become available it will be apparent that there is more work to be done in the future. With the knowledge that our hard work has paid off in the past, we feel opti-

Pacific region's first meeting of HIV+ people

A first step. Certainly nowhere near the last.



"This is not the end but just the beginning of a process to strengthen and assist positive people in the Pacific region through networking and capacity building," reads the minutes from the closing of the region's first meeting of positive people in September. After so many years and so many dozens of meetings on HIV/AIDS in the Pacific, it was nice to see one aiming specifically at positive people.

No other conference like it has ever been held in the region. It started with each of the 13 delegates being assigned an unknown partner and talking with them for five minutes. No danger from these strangers: they then introduced their partner to the meeting. Participants in the two-day meeting were members of positive groups from Igat Hope (Papua New Guinea), FJN+ (Fiji), NAPWA (Australia), APN+ (Asia), SAF (Samoa), and IZA (Vanuatu). Part of the meeting programme was taken up with planning for other future

meetings, notably the proposed 2005 Pacific Regional meeting and ICAAP, the 7th International Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific, 1 to 5 July 2005. It also aimed at exchanging views, experiences, and essential needs.

Samoa is one of the countries with less than a dozen cases on their books. That is only because eight of 12 positive people have died or moved overseas, delegates from Samoa told the meeting. "Our support group initially lacked a core group to develop effectively," said one Samoa delegate.

Igat Hope, the network of positive people in Papua New Guinea, is at the other end of the scale from Samoa, but reported similar problems. "The biggest obstacle is in poor relationships with other key organisations, and members falling sick and dying." They reported 8,617 cases as of March 2004, up from the latest otherwise known figures from August 2002 when cases stood at 7,320. It was a sobering moment in what was a joyous and historic occasion for positive delegates meeting for the first time.

The National Association of People Living with HIV/AIDS in Australia was the other big network represented at the meeting

Extracts from the newsletter of the Pacific

with more than 10,000 cases in that country. "NAPWA believes firmly in positive people taking control and making the decisions," delegates were told. Funding for the meeting came from the Pacific Regional HIV/AIDS Programme, with input from the Australian Red Cross and the Pacific Islands AIDS Foundation. PIAF's next gathering of positive people will be at the end of January 2005 for the second AIDS Ambassadors training workshop.

AIDS Ambassadors – funding ok for next six months

Fragile regional funding for people living with HIV/AIDS got that little bit stronger with Global Fund continuous support towards the PIAF AIDS Ambassadors project. "This great news will allow the foundation to maintain financial assistance to its two current AIDS Ambassadors," says PIAF founder Maire Bopp. These are Irene John in Vanuatu and Tuberi Mudunavosa in Fiji. "It will also allow the programme to be extended to Peati Maiava in Samoa until other positive people are trained and willing to joint the project." Outside of Fiji and Samoa, another HIV patient has declared his status to private meetings in Kiribati and is considering going fully public. PIAF Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Maire



highlights

Islands AIDS Foundation, October–November 2004



Tuberi Mudunavosa, AIDS Ambassador in Fiji
(Photo courtesy of Litiana Kuridrani)

Bopp is currently discussing further ambassador funding for the Kiribati positive person. There are two main parts to the AIDS Ambassador programme, the first being training. One training event has already been held in Fiji in December 2003 with a second planned for late January 2005. “It’s about training them to build confidence and knowledge in facing the public and becoming a public speaker,” says Bopp. Included in the training will be advice on aspects of the HIV condition, medical responses, side effects, human rights, and economic considerations. Outreach activities form the second main part of the Ambassador programme. AIDS Ambassadors take the HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment message throughout the community. Typically, there is

a wide range of outreach events, ranging from speaking with young school children in remote villages to senior politicians in national capitals. Many of the meetings are highly emotional, with Vanuatu’s Irene John reporting tears as dozens of countrywomen and men lined up to apologise for past discrimination. “A particular emphasis will be placed on advocates becoming peer educators, working with schools, in church groups and communities to challenge many commonly held misconceptions regarding HIV/AIDS,” reads the PIAF 2003–2005 strategic plan. January’s training workshop is also being supported by the Global Fund.

Global Fund update

Most people think prevention should be the number one priority in the response to HIV/AIDS, then testing and treatment. PIAF say those priorities should be reversed — treatment for existing positive people encourages others to get tested which leads to much stronger prevention efforts. Such viewpoints were up for debate again in Fiji. Twenty-two representatives — one each for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and government — met for a meeting of the Pacific Islands Regional Multi-Country Coordinating Mechanism which oversees

the three projects that have been funded with Global Fund resources. Held in Fiji, 25 to 29 October, the assessment meeting also had regional representation, including a representative on behalf of PIAF. Days one and two focused on “a year in perspective — reviewing the progress of the existing projects”. Day three focused on “phase two — applying the lessons learned”.

The final day and a half was on initial preparations for a possible round five submission. Provision of treatment for existing cases emerged as one of the other big issues. Treatment has been pushed strongly by the Pacific Islands AIDS Foundation. “Many potential carriers never bother to get tested because they know that even if they test positive, no affordable treatment can be provided to them,” reads Output 2.1 of the PIAF 2003–2005 Strategic Plan. “Access to treatment is not often considered from a prevention viewpoint. PIAF is calling for HIV medical supplies to be negotiated on a regional basis, better information for people treating and living with HIV/AIDS, participation in drug trials, and access to training for doctors.” Earlier this year, PIAF provided F\$36,000 towards antiretroviral drugs for 20 patients in Fiji.

*PIAF Nius highlights
reprinted with the kind*

Developing information, education and communication materials

for behaviour change – Fiji training workshop

From Robyn Drysdale and Dr Jiko Luveni



Participants in Fiji IEC development workshop

At the National Centre for Health Promotion (NCHP), Fiji in November 2004, a capacity development workshop was implemented to develop participants' skills in producing information, education and communication (IEC) materials with behaviour change approaches for targeted population groups. This workshop was a collaborative effort of NCHP, the Fiji Ministry of Health HIV/AIDS programme and the Global Fund, with the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) providing technical support. Facilitators included Dr Jiko Luveni (Ministry of Health), Mosese Salusalu (NCHP) and Robyn Drysdale

(Behaviour Change Communication Specialist, SPC). Participants in the workshop represented a range of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in HIV/AIDS as well as Ministry of Health and NCHP programme staff. For the majority of participants, this was their first training in IEC development even though many had been involved in producing materials for their own organisation.

Content of the workshop included: understanding the key elements of behaviour change communication (BCC); identifying risk behaviours and attitudes in the Fiji community; skills in

facilitating focus group discussions; skills in developing IEC materials targeting vulnerable groups; tools/methods for undertaking pre-tests of BCC materials; and skills in monitoring and evaluation of IEC materials.

In addition to participant skill development, draft messages for IEC materials targeting various vulnerable groups were developed as one of the key outcomes of the workshop. After these draft messages were designed and typeset by the National Center for Health Promotion and Mataika House, workshop participants used their networks to pre-test the materials with target groups. The development process required a number of follow-up meetings to monitor the materials development, pre-testing of drafts, layout by the graphic artists and finalisation prior to printing.

Participant feedback on the workshop indicated that this was a timely and relevant workshop that developed both their knowledge and skills. "I thought I could produce IEC materials based on my knowledge but now I realise that there are a lot of steps and research taken to ensure that the IEC materials are effective", com-

mented one NGO participant. Many also stressed that the workshop had increased their confidence in their ability to develop effective IEC materials for behaviour change. As described by one participant, “My ability has definitely changed as a result of the workshop, it made me understand how people change and the importance of IECs in changing behaviour. And also that if the IECs are not readable or attractive they won’t be of any use.”

As a result of the workshop and the hard work and commitment of the participants, targeted materials have been developed for a number of vulnerable groups in Fiji including: young people; University of the South Pacific (USP) students; people in military and uniformed services; and those living in squatter settlements. These materials will be available in early February 2005 for all agencies in Fiji to access and distribute.

This initiative is part of the implementation of Fiji’s National HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan 2004–2006. In addition, it is a component of the Pacific Regional HIV/AIDS Project in ensuring that appropriate HIV/AIDS BCC methods and materials are available in Pacific Island countries and territories as well as a component of the Global Fund work plan to support the production of IEC materials in the



Dr Jiko Luveni with participants during the workshop

“

I thought I could produce IEC materials based on my knowledge but now I realise that there are a lot of steps and research taken to ensure that the IEC materials are effective



region. In developing and producing IEC methods and materials with behaviour change approaches, the workshop is also in line with the recommendations of the

Review of HIV/AIDS & STI Information Materials Report (SPC, September 2004, see page 29) to develop skills of workers and organisations in the region.

For further information on organising a workshop on behaviour change communication, contact:

Robyn Drysdale,
SPC Behaviour Change Communication Specialist
(HIV/AIDS & STIs);
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“Waiting for something to happen” — trade unions and HIV/AIDS

From Chris Chevalier, Pacific Projects Officer, Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA



During 2004, Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA conducted a needs analysis and survey of Pacific trade unions to examine their responses to HIV/AIDS. The survey was conducted on behalf of the South Pacific and Oceanic Council of Trade Unions (SPOCTU) and funded by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and Union Aid Abroad, which is the humanitarian overseas agency of the Australian Council of Trade Unions.

The survey comprised a questionnaire survey of national delegates attending the annual SPOCTU conference in 2003, plus field visits to PNG, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, New Caledonia and Fiji. The final report, “Waiting for something to happen”, was presented and discussed at the

SPOCTU conference held in Fiji in October 2004, with delegates from 14 South Pacific nations. SPOCTU delegates are hoping the existing programme with PNG trade unions can provide lessons for a regional HIV programme which will strengthen union responses in the countries and territories of the South Pacific.

The conclusions and recommendations of the report included the following:

- ▶ HIV is still perceived as a minimal threat to labour and not as a core issue for unions. In PNG, and to a lesser extent in Fiji, French Polynesia and New Caledonia, the threat is more visible but trade union

responses are still limited or just beginning.

- ▶ Unions need to assume responsibility for being informed and active on HIV/AIDS issues.
- ▶ Union leaders need to be better informed on HIV in the workplace and on issues of confidentiality, testing and discrimination against workers with HIV.
- ▶ Unions should identify staff members and peer educators for training on HIV/AIDS.
- ▶ Unions need to introduce preventive education programmes in the workplace for their members. Unions should also link with education programmes outside of the workplace where most members are exposed to risk.
- ▶ Unions need to adopt workplace HIV policies. Most unions are willing to adapt and adopt the ILO Code of Practice.
- ▶ Workplace policies need to be drafted with employers and governments in order to implement policies properly

and to cater for non-unionised labour. Policies need effective implementation and regular review.

- ▶ Unions need to create close links with care, support and treatment programmes so that infected members can receive appropriate care.
- ▶ Unions should play an advocacy role in national responses to HIV/AIDS, in particular on issues of gender, protection of human and

labour rights of people living with HIV/AIDS, and access to treatment.

Despite long-standing warnings about HIV/AIDS, the number of cases is still regarded as insignificant in most countries and HIV remains a low priority for union attention compared with industrial relations, adverse trade relations, worsening socio-economic conditions and low employment levels. However, trade unions in the Pacific can no longer wait for something to happen. They need

to engage much more proactively with the regional and national HIV/AIDS programmes in the Pacific. Unions in the Pacific can play a special role in providing credible behaviour change education about sexual health and HIV to workers and their families. Unions must spearhead solidarity, support, care and treatment initiatives for workers with HIV or AIDS.

For the full report on the trade union survey, please contact Ken Davis at Union Aid Abroad, email:

Managing community-based HIV programmes in the Pacific

Regional Workshop organised and delivered by the Centre for International Health (Burnet Institute, Melbourne) in association with School of Public Health (Fiji School of Medicine), 6-11 December 2004

From Litiana Kuridrani & Cathy Vaughan

At an intensive six-day Regional Workshop, 31 participants from 11 countries in the region gained more knowledge and understanding of the context of HIV infection and effective community-based responses to the epidemic. The course was designed to enhance their knowledge about the risk and vulnerability of individuals and communities to HIV infection, and expand their skills in developing and managing a multi-sectoral response to the epidemic. It also covered the global and regional epidemiology of HIV/AIDS, described the relative successes of various approaches to

“
**It was great to be
 in such a diverse
 group of
 participants – from
 NGO, government,
 religious groups and
 organisations of
 people living with
 HIV**
 ”



the epidemic, examined the elements of a HIV/AIDS situation analysis and identified key components of a community-based response. Presenters included a range of Pacific Island and international speakers with diverse experience in responding to HIV/AIDS.

A key part of the course was a community study tour to a Fijian village along the Coral Coast in the Navosa Province, which provided an opportunity for participants to visit a community-based HIV programme in action. The Coral Coast Kainicola Youth, supported by the Fiji



Participants analyse the vulnerable groups in the Pacific

“We appreciated the respect accorded to each of our views on culture, tradition and other concepts. Participants and facilitators respect the Pacifica way”

School of Medicine, have been active partners in triggering community-based HIV/AIDS awareness programmes. The community has recognised their vulnerability to HIV and have taken steps to educate the local population about the risk of infection. Drama and role plays are used to provide HIV/AIDS education to church groups, youth and village communities and these are integrated into other community development programmes. HIV/AIDS is seen as an issue of productivity, community and national development and the youth participate in a variety of income-generating community projects to address poverty and unemployment.

Overall the programme was a valuable and intensive learning experience for participants. It maintained a practical focus on developing, implementing and evaluating community-based responses to HIV/AIDS in the Pacific. It also provided the NGOs and the community an opportunity for talking, learning

and sharing about HIV/AIDS and making relevant connections on how best they can all contribute to a much more aggressive response to HIV/AIDS. The greatest achievement is the connection made between the communities, the training institutions, the community workers and the funding agencies. This training promotes capacity building and institutional strengthening,

which are key components of sustainability of programmes and projects. It is planned that the course will be offered by the School of Public Health, Fiji School of Medicine, in future years.

The Regional Workshop was funded by the Pacific Regional HIV/AIDS Project.

“ Things like the presentation in the course on the role of the Church, and the visit to the community kept the programme real for us – very valuable ”



Giant condoms feature at SPC open day!

From Nathanaelle Soler, Intern, SPC HIV/AIDS Section

On Saturday 20 November 2004, SPC Noumea held its open day. Through this event, more than 1500 Caledonians learned about the organisation's work in the Pacific.

The HIV/AIDS Section took this opportunity to present its activities to the Caledonian audience — with the help of Solidarité SIDA Nouvelle-Calédonie, a local non-governmental organisation (NGO) that provides counselling to HIV-positive people — and to distribute prevention material. Information on HIV/AIDS in the Pacific and in New Caledonia was displayed, while the main materials distributed from the HIV/AIDS booth were condoms (male and female), fact cards and a booklet on HIV/AIDS in the Pacific (featuring Jeko the gecko), originally produced in English for the Palau Arts Festival, and translated and adapted for French territories in the Pacific.

The fact cards and the Jeko booklet on HIV/AIDS represented new materials, which were warmly welcomed by the Caledonian audience. Teenagers were happy to find simple answers, in basic language, to their questions. Some educators and nurses took a lot of these materials for use in



HIV/AIDS booth at the SPC open day

remote areas of the island where it is hard to find accurate prevention material. Solidarité SIDA provided demonstrations of female condoms to teenagers and other visitors intrigued by this prevention method that they had not heard of before. Women were happy to learn more about this new form of protection that gave them greater control over their reproductive health and greater power in negotiating condom use.

Ten volunteers were also distributing condoms and materials around the SPC venue, dressed up in giant condoms! People were amazed and surprised, and our volunteers faced many different reactions, from embarrassment to

laughter and curiosity. But the 'laughter tool' helped them to break people's shyness and to get round the taboo. Overall, around 1500 male condoms and about 100 female condoms were distrib-



Distributing condoms

uted on the day, thanks to the commitment of our volunteers.

As well as the distribution of education materials and condoms, two key HIV/AIDS-focused activities took place during the day.

A short **HIV/AIDS panel discussion** gathered four doctors, each of whom tackled a different aspect of the epidemic, from HIV/AIDS in the Pacific to services available at the grassroots level in New Caledonia. This discussion allowed us to take stock of the situation in New Caledonia, a Pacific Island territory that benefits from all available services (from testing to free treatments) but conversely that has one of the highest prevalence rates of HIV/AIDS in the Pacific.

A **drama performance by Wan Smolbag** (WSB) from Vanuatu was one of the main events of the day. For this Caledonian audience, whose preoccupations may differ from those of audiences in Vanuatu, WSB decided to perform a play on the history of HIV/AIDS.

The performers denounced the lack of commitment of politicians, hypocrisy and discrimination, and they tackled common myths on HIV/AIDS. "Is it a white man's sickness?" asks one of the characters of the play, referring to a common belief that the Caledonian audience may



Wan Smolbag performing at the SPC open day

share.

Such a performance can help to change behaviour, even if it takes time. We hope that bringing WSB to Noumea has raised new ideas about using drama in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Many thanks to Solidarité SIDA and to Wan Smolbag for the energy and delight they brought to SPC and the broader New Caledonia public through this very successful event.



French fact cards



“Using your body to tell the story to the community” – an interview with Wan Smolbag
community theatre group. From Nathanaelle Soler, Intern, SPC HIV/AIDS Section

For those who don't know the group, WSB is a Vanuatu NGO that was created in 1989. Since then it has travelled throughout Vanuatu and other Pacific Island countries and territories to spread prevention messages through drama. Its messages include social issues such as reproductive health, but also environmental or political issues. The main goal of the group is “to spread messages and to make people aware” explains Annette, a WSB performer. WSB goes to places where people do not have access to basic communication or prevention services because they live in remote areas where radio transmissions are poor or because illiteracy rates are high. Theatre bypasses communication barriers and is a fantastic substitute for traditional ways of spreading prevention messages.

Even when there is a language barrier (WSB performs in English or Bislama), the messages are always easily spread through gestures and emotions. Indeed, drama – which is a word that comes from an ancient Greek term for “action” – is more than just showing and informing people: it is based on active change. By crystallising conflicts and polarising situations, drama clearly shows the kinds of dilemmas and contradictions some people might face, for example when negotiating condom use. In the performance, the spectator sees reality, and not just abstract speech that can be perceived as disconnected from reality. “Using drama in reproductive health, you use your body to tell the story to the community. It's different from teaching on a blackboard,” explains Noel, a performer with WSB since its early days.

Seeing the performances, people laugh and cry. WSB's visual comedy and stirring of emotion make it easier to overcome not only the language barrier but also the taboos that may exist when it comes to talking about sex, because drama opens a time and a space where it is permitted to talk about taboos, and to laugh about one's own fears and myths.

These ideal conditions facilitated by drama do not necessarily change behaviour immediately. “We can't change someone's behaviour overnight. It takes time, several times,” says Annette. When WSB started, some communities reacted negatively to the message it was spreading. But, little by little, respect for the group grew and its actions were acknowledged by the same communities who rejected it initially. Pouring just a little of the message into its drama or

the



Wan Smolbag performing a play on the history of AIDS



radio programme that WSB also leads (Famili Blong Serah) is a much more efficient process than sending one massive message. Taboo words such as

“sex” or “vagina” slowly get more and more familiar, and it becomes easier to use those words and to talk about issues related to them.

After a play, actors usually open a discussion with the audience: they then become facilitators of a prevention programme. People are invited to share their feelings and beliefs about the drama, and they are led to think about their own behaviour. They are encouraged to go for an HIV test which can be done in the clinic WSB set up in Port Vila. Indeed, WSB also provides concrete tools to change behaviour because it would not be fair just to raise questions and doubts in people's minds without giving them a practical way of changing their behaviour. Actors are trained in a way to answer questions correctly and to bring people to the right choices – to consult a doctor at the clinic, for example. Such a responsibility gives the actors an important status. “People of my family come to seek advice about AIDS. They always listen to me. WSB are much respected in their communities,” says Annette, who was unemployed before joining the team in 2000. By acting directly within their own communities, WSB actors have seen real changes: they can be proud of the decrease in teenage pregnancy since they set up their clinic. Their achievements are so amazing that they were even asked to become MPs! But they wisely refused, considering that their skills and their goal were focused on acting and continuing to take preventive action at the grassroots level.

Launch of World AIDS Day Forum Secretariat, Suva, 1 December 2004

From Greg Urwin, Secretary-General, Forum Secretariat

Global theme: Women, Girls, HIV and AIDS

Fiji theme: Women, Girls, HIV and AIDS – Protect the Future of Fiji

As part of World AIDS Day 2004, I agreed to launch the media package, *Faces and Voices of HIV*, produced by the Pacific Islands AIDS Foundation (PIAF) and our sister organisation, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), for many reasons.

First, Forum Leaders have over the last three years given their attention to this critically important global development problem, which is rapidly intensifying in our region. In 2003 they asked the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) to take the lead in developing a regional strategy on HIV/AIDS. And in 2004 at the Samoa Forum, our Leaders both approved the Regional HIV/AIDS Strategy and tasked the SPC to develop an implementation plan of the strategy. They also directed the PIFS to develop a Pacific Plan to strengthen regional cooperation and integration through a process of widespread consultation and to work more closely together with development partners on issues and problems that directly affect the people of the region.

My second reason is to reiterate the Secretariat's support for the



Women and girls perform for AIDS awareness in Fiji

Photo courtesy of Litiana Kuridrani

work of regional non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or non-state actors such as the Pacific Islands AIDS Foundation. And in my role as Chair of the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP), I am very aware of the support other CROP members provide.

The principles underlying the Regional HIV/AIDS Strategy and the Pacific Plan have much in common. Two of these are:

1. a concern that we give more consideration to how our work affects the people of the Pacific, and especially the effect on marginalised groups including women and girls. This media package, produced by PIAF-SPC, is the result of the efforts of a
2. recognition that we have a much better chance of being successful if we work together in partnership. Since Maire went public at the PINA meeting in Tahiti in 1998, the media has been covering her story and the

courageous young woman, Maire Bopp Dupont, and of many others. The package consists of interviews with HIV-positive people from Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Vanuatu in print, voice and video. Most of the voices are those of women. The production of these has already brought together and affected a diverse group of people including the AIDS Task Force of Fiji, UNAIDS, World Council of Churches, Pacific parliamentarians, Fiji's Great Council of Chiefs, to name only a few. I would be bound to miss someone if I attempted to name everyone. Suffice to say that the process has already made a difference in the region. It goes to the heart of the second principle shared by the Pacific Plan and the Regional HIV/AIDS Strategy. And that is ...

successes she has achieved nationally, internationally and regionally with the work of the Pacific Islands AIDS Foundation. Helping to bring together positive people in the Pacific is an important part of the work of the Pacific Islands AIDS Foundation. And it is an integral part of the Regional HIV/AIDS Strategy.

Some of the people featured in this media package have not spoken publicly yet. Others have. And there is no doubt that they are making a difference in the region. Tuberi and Emosi from Fiji have addressed community groups in Fiji and Tonga. Joanna has addressed Pacific parliamentarians. She talked with parliamentarians in Kiribati last week. I understand that a positive person in Kiribati has now gone public. Irene from Vanuatu has visited New Caledonia and Tahiti. Peati, another woman featured

in the materials, has been doing wonderful work in Samoa. And Helen is undertaking similar work in Papua New Guinea.

I salute these courageous people. And the others that will come forward to tell their stories as a result of this media package. Let us give them all the love we have. And I urge the media and youth, health and community workers to use these materials as fully as we can to help renew that caring sense of community in which we in the Pacific so pride ourselves.

Most people who have heard positive people tell their stories, agree that it is one of the most effective ways of changing attitudes. As Maire says, "There is no greater tool for touching people's hearts and bringing HIV/AIDS home to each individual than listening and learning from a person living with the virus herself and this is what the *Faces and Voices of HIV* is all about."

That a larger number of women are speaking out gives added point to the theme of World AIDS Campaign which is Women, Girls, HIV and AIDS. However, it also serves to remind us of the vulnerability of women and girls, and the need for men to be more considerate in their relationships.

Forum Leaders have charged this Secretariat with the responsibility of generating debate and discussions of issues that affect the region. HIV/AIDS is one such issue. The voices of positive people should do much to promote open discussion of the sensitive issues that must be discussed if we are to improve our region for future generations. I have much pleasure in launching the *Faces and Voices of HIV* in the Pacific.

Speech kindly provided to PASA
by Steven Vete,
Executive Liaison Officer,
Forum Secretariat

FIJI: World AIDS Day 2004

From Dr Jiko Luveni

Fiji joined with other countries in the global commemoration of World AIDS Day on 1 December 2004. The global theme, Women, Girls, HIV and AIDS, was adapted for Fiji to read "Women, Girls and HIV/AIDS — Protect the future of Fiji". A two-

week programme was implemented to raise the public's awareness of the theme. The events were widely covered by TV, radio and print media.

The programme was planned and implemented with the involve-

ment of government ministries, NGOs, church organisations, Fiji Red Cross Society, media and people living with HIV/AIDS. The purpose was to allow each of these groups to contribute and highlight their involvement with HIV/AIDS. Their inclusion also



FJN+ reps. Tuberi and Emosi speaking to school children in Fiji

Photo courtesy of Litiana Kuridrani

encouraged sharing of the tasks and resources for the scheduled events and enhanced future collaboration in HIV/AIDS work.

The World AIDS Day programme in Fiji began with the launching of the Red Ribbon Relay and of the manual titled *What Christian Leaders Can Do About HIV/AIDS*. The Minister for Health, Hon. Solomon Naivalu, launched the programme on 22 November. A good crowd of over 200 representatives of the government, NGOs, UNAIDS, Forum Secretariat, media, the church, women and young people attended the ceremony. The relay team of 10 young people dressed in their World AIDS Day T-shirts immediately began the relay by running the two specially designed, framed Red Ribbons to nearby schools and also distributing brochures on HIV/AIDS. The distribution of the manuals also began and the launch programme concluded with a press conference.

The Red Ribbon Relay started its five-day journey around Viti Levu with a relay team of 30 young people led by the HIV/AIDS Project Officer of the Ministry of Health and a representative of the Methodist Church. The five nights were spent in five villages where HIV/AIDS educational shows were conducted. The show involved the relaying of the Red Ribbons into the venue, an official programme to receive the Red Ribbons, and talks on HIV/AIDS focusing on the theme of World AIDS Day (Women, Girls, HIV and AIDS) as well as testimonies by a couple who were HIV positive. The talk was followed by a very popular puppet show performed by the Fiji Red Cross Society to reinforce HIV/AIDS messages, as well as by distribution of HIV/AIDS brochures. Finally the message from the church focused on addressing discrimination and stigmatisation — the role of Christians. The programme was extremely popular, as evidenced by the more than 500 people who attended each show. In addition to the village shows, impromptu shows were conducted in market places in all the towns the team passed through as well as in a number of schools along the road. The programme achieved a thousand fold, its objective of taking the HIV/AIDS issue to villages and rural towns. The Red Ribbon Relay culminated in a lively programme performed in Suva on 1 December, involving the Red Ribbon Relay

team, finals of an oratory contest organised by the Fiji Red Cross Society and the Ministries of Women and Education. The Minister of Health presented the keynote statement.

In the evening, a Designers Dream Awards HIV/AIDS Awareness show was held at the FMF Sports Stadium. The event was opened by a keynote address delivered by Her Excellency The First Lady, Adi Salaseini Kavunono Uluivuda, after receiving the Red Ribbons taken by the relay team to its resting place within the Sports Dome. The evening programme treated guests to an array of clothing designs modelled by attractive young males and females as well as children with performances by professional dance groups.

World AIDS Day programmes were also conducted in the Northern, Western and Central/ Eastern Divisions of Fiji to expand geographical coverage and to reach the population not catered for by the Red Ribbon Relay team. T-shirts depicting the World AIDS Day theme were worn by hundreds of people on 1 December.

The media coverage of the two-week programme was excellent. It included the programme in TV spots, radio interviews and talkback shows as well as in daily newspaper articles. Even now, two weeks after World AIDS Day, HIV/AIDS is



Lighting the torches
in Guam

Photo: Masako Watanabe/
Pacific Daily

GUAM: Solemnity marks World AIDS Day

From: Natalie J. Quinata
Source: Pacific Daily News, December 2004

More than 200 Tiki torches were lit last night to the chants and voices of people who came to remember those whose lives have been affected by the deadly human immunodeficiency virus, which causes AIDS.

The Guam HIV/AIDS Network (GUAHAN) Project, Guam's nonprofit AIDS awareness organisation, led the lighting of 231 torches for World AIDS Day at the Palace Hotel last night, in remembrance of the 178 people on Guam who are living with the disease and the 53 who have died since 1985.

"We wanted to bring solemnity back to World AIDS Day," said Alex Silverio, president of the GUAHAN Project. Silverio said his organisation decided to take a different approach to the event this year and focus more on the people who have been affected by the disease. In previous years, Silverio said the event was much more commercialised and placed too much emphasis on religion as well as politics. "It's not about those things anymore — it's about people who have HIV," he said.

Obie Perez, a University of Guam student, said the event is important because it creates

more public awareness about the disease. "People are dying and it's something the public should be aware of," Perez said, adding that raising awareness is crucial to prevention of the disease. Senator-elect Benjamin Cruz said that because HIV and AIDS have no racial, gender, or age distinctions, everyone must be educated. "There is a huge number of people on island who are infected, and the community needs to know that this can be prevented," Cruz said. The GUAHAN Project's awareness workshops at the island's public schools are ongoing.

Silverio said last night's event was even more meaningful because everything was made possible through the work of volunteers and those who felt compelled to be part of the ceremony. The same week, the GUAHAN Project also held a fashion compassion show, a yoga wellness session, and a 5K AIDS Walk whose proceeds went to support the project. Awareness workshops at the island's public school were ongoing during the week as well.

*Posted on AIDSTOK,
2 December 2004,
by PIAF*

Positive voices:

**Mobilising the community in
support of positive people in Guam**

From Alex Silverio

The Guam HIV/AIDS Network (GUAHAN) Project is Guam's only nonprofit, community-based HIV/AIDS organisation. Founded in April 2003, the GUAHAN Project addresses issues of HIV education, awareness, prevention and care on Guam. It uses local and national resources to mobilise community involvement for quality delivery of programmes and services to HIV/AIDS on Guam. A key role is to support and advocate for people living with HIV/AIDS and those impacted by the epidemic.

The GUAHAN Project is also creating the beginnings of Tiger Poz, a formalised case management programme for people living with HIV/AIDS on the island. Tiger Poz offers support services to HIV-positive individuals, including home and hospital visits, supportive counselling interventions, and delivery of bottled water and nutritional supplements. In addition, Tiger Poz features support groups for people living with HIV and their families. The GUAHAN Project offers free HIV antibody screening and works in close collaboration with the Guam Department of Public Health and Social Services, other community organisations and governmental agencies.

A very special project of the Guam HIV/AIDS Network, especially at the end of the year, is the Gingerbread Tree Project. Living with HIV/AIDS can be particularly difficult during the Christmas season. The Gingerbread Tree Project provides Christmas gifts for children and families affected by HIV/AIDS on Guam. The HIV/AIDS Network community selects coded names of children along with a short "wish-list" of things they may enjoy receiving for Christmas. The community comes together just before Christmas to wrap the gifts. Santa Claus then delivers the gifts to families. The Gingerbread Tree Project has been operating for more than 10 years, relying on volunteers to make the Christmas season brighter for the positive community in Guam.

For more information please contact Alex Silverio at alexsilverio@hotmail.com or write to: GUAHAN Project, PO Box 20640 GMF, Barrigada, Guam 96921.

KIRIBATI:

HIV week, 25 November to 1 December

From Dr Kabwea Tiban, Ministry of Health

HIV week in Kiribati started on an impressive and promising note. On 24 November 2004, the day before the official opening, the Ministry of Health and Medical Services and the Kiribati HIV/AIDS–TB Task Force conducted an HIV advocacy meeting, at which they shared information with members of the Kiribati Parliament. The evening started at 8 p.m. after the day's parliamentary session was over. First, the Minister of Health made a PowerPoint presentation of the updated figures on the HIV/AIDS situation in Kiribati. It was a good introduction to the presentation by the three people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA); two of them were from the Fiji Network of Positive People (FJN+) and the third was from Kiribati — and in this way he became the first PLWHA in Kiribati to disclose his status.

The presentation by Luke was outstanding. He eloquently traced the reality of a PLWHA; beginning with the sense of invincibility and recklessness of youth that lead to high-risk activities. After that came the agony of learning of one's HIV-positive status, especially in Luke's case where this knowledge came only through the illness and death of



School in Kiribati

his first child. However, Luke ended his presentation in an uplifting and positive way by pointing out hopeful opportunities such as the prevention of maternal to child transmission and the availability of antiretroviral therapy. He also highlighted the Fiji Government's commitments to PLWHA and then issued a direct challenge to the Ministers and other parliamentarians who had stayed back for this extraordinary session, asking them to support PLWHA and HIV prevention in Kiribati.

The presentation of Buraua Itimwemwe, our first PLWHA to go public, was short but spoke volumes. The Chairman of the Kiribati HIV/AIDS–TB Task Force in his welcome speech remarked that for more than 10 years, Kiribati has been confronted with figures only and, no matter how the figures were presented, they were still figures! He went on to say that this had

changed now. For the first time, Kiribati would have a human face representing these figures. Itimwemwe's courage brought home to many people, including the parliamentarians, the reality and true nature of HIV in Kiribati.

In many ways, this presentation was highly strategic as the Ministry of Health's budget has, for the first time ever, included a separate budget line on HIV with a modest but not insignificant AUD 40,000 for the 2005 fiscal year. The priority item on the order paper for the following day's parliamentary session was for the Government's 2005 budget. It was passed on its first reading!

This evening address by the PLWHAs to the parliamentarians was the culmination of a tight visiting schedule for the Fiji friends who had braved the heat to visit:

- ▶ Kiribati Nursing School;
- ▶ King George 5th Secondary School;
- ▶ three junior secondary schools;
- ▶ Marine Training Center; and
- ▶ Tarawa Technical Institute.

Numerous other schools and church organisations asked for a visit but time was not on our side.

There was, however, good media coverage right from day one, from journalists who have benefited from HIV media workshops conducted years back under UNAIDS (Steven Vete and the lot, I think).

The following day, the three PLWHAs were again present at the National Stadium for the official opening of HIV week. It was low key with few dignitaries attending and, because the House of Assembly was in session, no parliamentarians. Nonetheless it was a sizeable crowd, with four to five schools among those who



HIV/AIDS awareness mural at Bonriki airport

were present, and the event went well.

For the rest of HIV week, there were daily activities at Bairiki Square by the various organisations associated with HIV prevention efforts in Kiribati. There was generous support by the business houses, individuals,

bigger corporations and diplomatic missions. UNAIDS Suva provided assistance with publicity, including media campaigns for the Red Ribbon Relay, while UNICEF donated three tents and one marquee to the task force. The roles of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, FJN+, AIDS Task Force of Fiji and our own Minister in bringing the two PLWHAs from Fiji have indeed been a blessing as it added the needed dimension to the World AIDS Week in Kiribati that we never had before.

Posted on AIDSTOK,

NEW CALEDONIA:

“Women and girls’ vulnerability towards HIV/AIDS”

From Nathanaelle Soler and Solidarité SIDA Nouvelle-Calédonie

Solidarité SIDA Nouvelle-Calédonie, one of the main community-based organisations dealing with HIV/AIDS in New Caledonia, organised a prevention week in 2004 on the theme of “women and girls’ vulnerability towards HIV/AIDS”. To fit with this issue, the organisation decided to work in close collaboration with civil society organisations and institutions fighting against alcohol and violence towards women. In the cultural centre where they chose to set up, about eight organisations were holding prevention activities for second-



ary school students. A “cyber-space” was set up, with computers where students could look for information about reproductive health and sexuality. People aged over 18 years could get an anonymous and confidential test in a room set up for that purpose, with doctors from the main Caledon-

ian screening centre to provide pre- and post-test counselling, in order to reproduce the exact conditions of a screening centre.

Major involvement came from Caledonian artists, who created about 20 beautiful works, paintings and sculptures to be sold for the benefit of Solidarité SIDA NC. The other main artistic event was the launch of a drama based on texts written by people living with HIV/AIDS in New Caledonia. This drama received a warm welcome from the audience, who were moved by the



HIV awareness stall in Noumea

emotions transmitted by the actors and who learned about the reality of stigma and discrimination. Solidarité SIDA NC decided to buy the rights of the drama in order to bring it to remote areas of the island, where prevention activities are hard to implement.

SPC also took part in this prevention week, hosting a conference organised by Solidarité SIDA NC in the SPC Conference Centre. Dr Iniakwala, SPC's Regional HIV/AIDS Adviser, gave an overview of the epidemic situation of HIV/AIDS and women in the Pacific. Results of two major studies were also issued. First, Ms Hamelin, a sociologist, and Ms Salomon, an anthropologist, presented their findings on "Health, lifestyle and safety of Caledonian women". Second, Dr Demory and Dr Barny presented the results of a survey on "Not medically fol-

owed pregnancy in New Caledonia". The important information provided raised many questions from the participants at the conference, some of whom decided to constitute a task force to address these problems through recommendations to be issued in March 2005.

Results of the week were very positive. Despite the difficulty of reaching students at this late stage of the year, a lot of them came to the cultural centre to gain information. Solidarité SIDA NC also managed to involve most of the NGOs working on issues related to women and health, and in this way took a multi-sectoral approach that will help strengthen the existing network. Last but not least, the organisation managed to involve a wide range of leaders and health workers who committed themselves to work together in addressing women's vulnerability

HAWAII: Local HIV/AIDS groups rally

Source: Honolulu Advertiser online.

1 December 2004

Local HIV/AIDS organisations held a rally for World AIDS Day at 5:30 p.m. at Queen Emma Square outside St Andrews Cathedral on Beretania Street.

This year's World AIDS Day theme is "Women, Girls, HIV and AIDS". A UN report says young women and girls are more susceptible to HIV than males due to inadequate knowledge about AIDS, insufficient access to HIV prevention services, inability to negotiate safer sex and a lack of female-controlled HIV prevention methods.

A proclamation recognising World AIDS Day by Gov. Linda Lingle was read by Olena Rubin, Miss Hawai'i 2004. Rubin has volunteered with AIDS organisations for more than a decade.



Behaviour Change Communication: Training needs assessment report, SPC, August 2004

Needs for training in behaviour change communication (BCC) among governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) involved in HIV prevention programmes were analysed to assess the current level of BCC knowledge and skills in the region and to guide the development of a training programme in BCC. This training needs analysis also provides data on training and capacity development needs in areas other than BCC for the Pacific Regional HIV/AIDS Initiative and other technical and regional agencies.

Increases in reported cases of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and of HIV/AIDS, indicate that despite awareness and preventative education pro-

grammes, unsafe sex continues to be practised and the risk of HIV continues to increase in most countries and territories. To date in the Pacific region there has been only limited development of interventions that support sustained changes in sexual behaviour and attitudes, as distinct from interventions that provide information about HIV/AIDS and STIs.

Regional training needs in behaviour change communication therefore encompass all areas of BCC, starting with the need to increase knowledge and understanding of approaches, strategies and activities that best facilitate behavioural change and, more specifically, training in skills for implementing behaviour change



interventions. The need for community participation and collaboration is central to BCC; therefore training must strengthen skills in this area to enable a community-based focus and ownership.

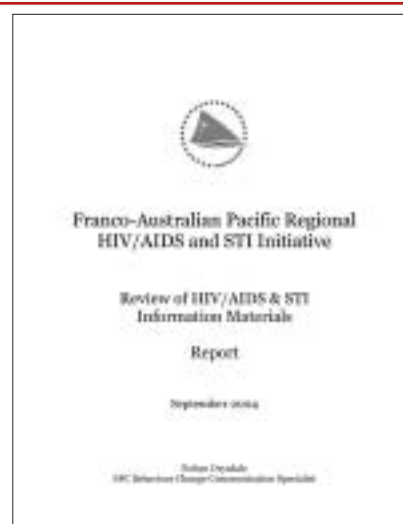
The report is available at: <http://www.spc.int/aids> or by emailing: gildam@spc.int or by faxing SPC on: (+ 687) 263818

Review of HIV/AIDS and STI information materials in the Pacific, SPC, September 2004

A review of the HIV/AIDS and STI information, education and communication (IEC) materials available in the Pacific region was undertaken to determine the range and quality of currently available IEC materials that are used in HIV prevention programmes, as well as to assess the need to develop new materials. The review also provided complementary data on training and capacity development needs in areas other than IEC materials, for the Pacific Regional

HIV/AIDS Initiative and other technical and regional agencies.

Key issues and areas of need outlined in the report include: collaboration and coordination; increased access to information materials including condoms; increased skills in IEC material development and production; increased range of IEC materials and mediums; monitoring and evaluation of IEC materials; and generic materials produced at the regional level.



The report is available at <http://www.spc.int/aids> or by emailing gildam@spc.int or by faxing SPC on (+ 687) 263818

Community Action on HIV: A resource manual for prevention, care & support (2nd edition)

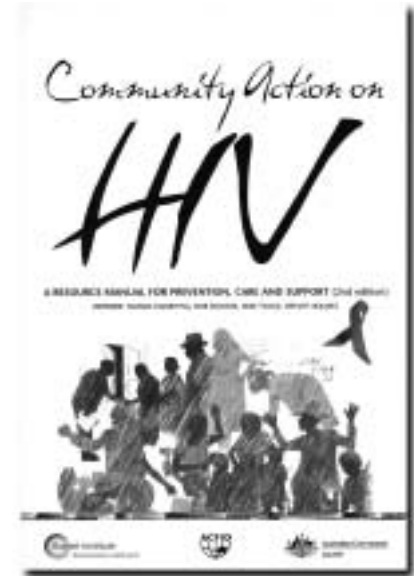
Eds T. Kwarteng, R. Moodie, M. Toole, W. Holmes, Centre for International Health, Macfarlane Burnet Institute 2005

Community Action on HIV is the second edition of a manual designed to help people plan effective, community-based HIV responses. Community action is an essential ingredient of effective HIV responses.

The manual consists of five sections: understanding HIV; planning a response; strategies for action; focusing action; and implementing a response. The manual can be used as a reference to check information or to find relevant

resources to assist in research about HIV to help in planning community-based HIV responses and writing proposals for funding. It can also be a source of ideas for ways to incorporate HIV prevention and care activities into your work if you are already working in HIV prevention and care, and to find suggestions about other strategies that can be used in your community.

The manual is available from:
Centre for International Health



Macfarlane Burnet Institute for
Medical Research and Public
Health, GPO Box 2284,
Melbourne VIC 3001, Australia
Email: cihcontact@burnet.edu.au
Fax: (+ 61 3) 928 22144

Pacific Islands AIDS Foundation website: www.pacificaids.org

Like the Pacific Islands AIDS Foundation itself, the PIAF website is unique in the region, as the only website dedicated solely to HIV/AIDS.

PIAF founder and CEO Maire Bopp has drawn a huge response as the first Pacific Islander to go public across the region with her HIV status. Few Pacific Islands leaders have gained as much international exposure or as much high-level contact as Bopp has with her calls for positive awareness and action on HIV/AIDS. Here is an excerpt from an interview given by Maire to the Australian Broadcasting

Corporation about what is on the website:

“We present the Foundation but we also have different links to the different organisations who do work on HIV, whether they’re organisations, agencies, institutions or groups. For us, however, the most important part of the website is to give an opportunity for positive people to have access to a network that allows them to communicate with any other positive person around their country, around the region and around the world. Now for us in the islands, we know that a website is not yet something that is very friendly to



the largest part of our community. So it’s going to be one of our tasks to identify the positive people around our countries and be able to provide them with the minimum training that can allow them to use this kind of tool. The website is only a tool — now we need to bring people into being able to use it.” (PIAF *Nius* Oct–Dec 2004)

Faces and Voices of HIV

Pacific Islands AIDS Foundation & SPC media package

Pacific Islanders living with HIV/AIDS speak out about their lives and their experiences. This media package features the faces and voices of people living with HIV/AIDS from a range of Pacific Islands, including Fiji, Samoa, Vanuatu and PNG. Some faces will be familiar as they have already spoken publicly; others featured in the package have not spoken publicly before and remain anonymous in this resource.

Most who have heard positive people tell their stories agree that it is one of the most effective ways of changing attitudes. As Maire Bopp, CEO of PIAF, says, "There is no greater tool for touching people's hearts and bringing HIV/AIDS home to each individual than listening and learning from a person living with the virus herself and this is what the *Faces and Voices of HIV* is all about."

The package is aimed at the media and youth, health and community workers to use to help renew the caring sense of community on which the Pacific so prides itself.

Nine positive people are taking part in the first regional multimedia production aimed at TV, radio and print audiences.

"Some are still anonymous so we aren't releasing their identity," says Maire Bopp.

"But the others have come out publicly, a brave step that we applaud.

"It's encouraging to see more positive people speaking out. It brings great personal reward and it's a great asset for the Pacific!"

Faces and Voices of HIV/AIDS displays the testimony of nine people living with HIV/AIDS, seven of whom participated in the first AIDS Ambassadors training, sponsored by the Global Fund, in December 2003. The package includes television and radio short series in French, English, Bislama and Fijian, as well as profiles for print audiences.

Faces and Voices of HIV/AIDS was a PIAF initiative for the 2004 World AIDS Day. PINA and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat assisted promotion as did the Secretariat for the Pacific Community, for production and distribution.

Faces and Voices of HIV was officially launched by Greg Urwin, Secretary General, Forum Secretariat on World AIDS Day 2004.

Photo courtesy
of PIAF Niue

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"But the others have come out publicly, a brave step that we applaud.

"It's encouraging to see more positive people speaking out. It brings great personal reward and it's a great asset for the Pacific!"

Copies of the media package are available from:

Regional Media Centre,
Secretariat of the Pacific
Community,
Private Bag,
Suva, Fiji
Phone: (+ 679) 370 033
Fax: (+ 679) 370 021

World AIDS day at SPC



Pacific materials displayed and distributed during World AIDS day 2004

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