

Pacific People are Building Peace

Marilyn Tahi, Coordinator, Vanuatu Women's Centre in Vanuatu: "You know violence against women is a form of conflicts in families and also in the communities. Our peace work is everyday with our women...we want to work with the government and we want to work with any leaders whether traditional leaders, church leaders, youth leaders or any men, in order to find that space for the successfulness of our work... so in order to build peace you need to build to hold the strings, all the connections, all the communication that you can have with all, with everybody that is within the community. And I think if you can take it on the principle of human rights then we respect that everybody has their rights

Leonard Pai'a, Winds of Change Solomon Islands: "...and I must say that we are pleased to see that now the Ministry of Peace and Reconciliation of Solomon Islands is beginning to recognize the role of Winds of Change in trying to bring national reconciliation in Solomon Islands and number of workshop that we hired with rehabilitation ex-militants were actually funded by the Ministry of Peace and Reconciliation and in that way we can see that the Government starting to see the importance of the role of civil society in the country."
"...I would like to see that all families that the process will begin with the family level where families live happily together they enjoy life before moving in to the community and the country where different ethnic groups within the country they respect each other they live happily together and in the regional level seeing that this all...that the Government, NGO's and people of the region respecting each other, working together towards this common goal living happily and enjoying life in the region."

Po'oi Pohiva, Acting Director of the Friendly Islands Human Rights Democracy Movement: "Peace is very broad but we in our work we do Advocacy and Training in Democracy because we believe that Democracy is associated with Peace and Democracy and it's components such as transparency and accountability in leaderships lead to Peace and Prosperity and that is why we are working on Peace"
"I believe that open dialogue is very important and the voices of the people at the grassroots level are heard not only are their voices heard but also their rights and work is done to remedy the concerns, despite the challenges I do believe and positively believe that Tonga will live in peace and prosperity"

Waisele Ramoce, ECREA Fiji: "We need peace and until we live together for peace there are some of the areas... no violence... and share the resources and try to make this place one where people will love to come and visit and a place where we can claim to be prosperous and therefore it is important to us all here in Fiji and it is our responsibility to a peaceful and a brighter home."

Gary McPherson, Peace Foundation Melanesia: "After the course a lot of nice things happen. People return to their communities. They started re-growing their gardens. Communities house were rebuilt, the grass is cut and the kids went back to school. So a lot of good positive things took place. We have recently received AUSAID funding to start a project in the Western Highlands Province, which has been wrecked by the ongoing tribal fighting for the last thirty years. So we are going to attempt to make a difference there and to change the attitude of people and to seek some sort of peace between the two warring parties."

Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, femLINKPACIFIC: "... I think the Pacific has the potential to really make a difference at the international level, where we can bring a lot of the unique pacific realities to issues that have been discussed. Too often we are getting sidelined... we are being distracted by the conflicts and the political struggles in our region. For our region I hope that we can come to a place where we have peace for everyone and that will also require us taking into account that people are still not independent. We need to consider the growing militarization within our region. So we need to work for peace in our countries but we can't lose sight of the peace that is also needed in our pacific region which affects each of our countries in very different ways."

The Pacific People Building Peace network (PPBP) brings together members of a diverse range of civil society groups in a regional network of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) a network of civil society organizations around the world that all work on conflict prevention and peace building.

In order to ensure there is sustainable peace we believe partnerships are critical to plant and nurture the seeds of peace. These partnerships include those within our own communities and civil society networks which are an opportunity to build on our collective desire for peace and provide a practical process to acknowledge and value our diversities.

The Pacific People Building Peace network builds on a rich history of Pacific People, Pacific women and men, contributions to peacebuilding dating back to the anti nuclear and independence movement, with a specific focus on working to harness and strengthen civil society's role in conflict prevention and where necessary to strengthen and sustain peace.

Efforts (of the network) since 2005 has involved representatives of civil society organisations from Fiji, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Bougainville, Tonga, Tuvalu, Kiribati, Samoa, Cook Islands and Australia has been the platform of building upon our experiences to assist Pacific governments and international partners to shift our national and regional development strategies from reacting to violent conflict after they have broken out, to preventing them from happening.

The PPBP network is an opportunity to build on international commitments to human rights and peace including the Geneva Declaration on Armed Conflict which since its adoption in 2006 has been recognized as a viable option to strengthen cooperation between CSOs and governments in order to work together towards a shift from reaction to conflict prevention.; to date the Geneva Declaration has been adopted by a number of Pacific Governments including Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Nauru, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu. In doing so they have agreed in particular to strengthen their efforts to integrate armed violence reduction and conflict prevention programmes into national, regional and multilateral development frameworks and strategies, as well as into humanitarian assistance, emergency and crisis management initiatives. Participants to the summit emphasized that the principles and goals of the Geneva Declaration should not remain empty words but be followed by concrete measures.

For updates on both past and future activities, please check out www.gppac.org and www.peoplebuildingpeace.org.



A femLINKPACIFIC Media Initiative produced with funding assistance from the European Centre for Conflict Prevention