



## **Fiji National Parent Workshop 27 – 30 July 2009**

**Venue – Fiji Society for the Blind, Nanuku Street, Vatuwaqa, Suva**

**BULA**

### **“Awareness Creation on Education”**

**A Report by Vilisi Nacei CBR Co-Ordinator, Fiji Society for the Blind and  
Paul Manning E.O. P.V.I. NZ**

#### **Day 1 Programme 28 July 2009**

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|------------------------|--|
| <b>8.45 – 9.00am</b>   | Registration   |
| <b>9.00 – 10.30am</b>  | Official Opening of National Parents Workshop<br>Opening Prayer<br>Welcome Address<br>Official Opening<br>Group Photograph   |
| <b>10.30 – 11.00am</b> | Morning Tea/Introduction of Parents  |
| <b>11.00 – 12.00pm</b> | Reconnecting past/present/future   |
| <b>12.00 – 1.00pm</b>  | Why a National Parents Group is Vital? (8) Fieldworkers presentation   |
| <b>1.00 – 2.00pm</b>   | Lunch  |
| <b>2.00 – 3.00pm</b>   | Discussion on Challenges: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How can parents overcome challenges in their district?</li><li>• How can they make it work better for them and their children?</li></ul> |
| <b>3.00- 4.00pm</b>    | A Strategic Plan 2010 – 2012 – a Vision for Our Future   |

#### **Day 2 Programme 29 July 2009**

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|------------------------|--|
| <b>8.45 – 9.00am</b>   | Registration – Prayer  |
| <b>9.00 – 10.30am</b>  | Early Identification/referral system, Dr. Ana Ophthalmologist CWM Hospital   |
| <b>10.30 – 11.00am</b> | Morning Tea  |
| <b>11.00 – 12.00pm</b> | Awareness for Parents of VIP Children <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sighted Guide</li><li>• White Cane Techniques</li><li>• Basic Braille Skills</li><li>• Public Transportation</li></ul> |
| <b>12.00 – 1.00pm</b>  | PVI New Zealand, Paul Manning Executive Officer  |

- 1.00 – 2.00pm** Lunch
- 2.00 – 4.00pm** "DRAFT DOCUMENT & APPOINTMENT of OFFICE BEARERS for FIJI NATIONAL PARENTS COMMITTEE  
Plan/Vision/Mission etc

### **Day 3 Programme 30 July 2009**

- 8.45 – 9.00am** Registration
- 9.00- 10.30am** Overview of 2 days workshop – a personal reflection
- Early Intervention: - Improving child detection
  - Supporting Parents/Parents Responsibilities
  - Improving Daily Living Skills
  - Advocacy
- 10.30 – 11.00am** Morning Tea
- 11.00 – 12.00pm** Rights of the Child
- 12.00 – 1.00pm** Evaluation  
Presentation of Certificates  
Lunch/Farewell

### **Vinaka**

### **Day 1**

- 8.45am** **Registration** time, parents and CBR Workers mixing and mingling. For me this was a time of catching up with old friends, a special time. The room had been set-up by Vilisi and myself the day prior. There was very impressive picture displays of the work Vilisi and the CBR workers had been doing. There were reminders/quotations on the wall encouraging CBR/Parents to work together. There were statements I had made at my last visit on the wall. A table displaying the Fijian, New Zealand and Australian flags together with gifts from New Zealand Royal New Zealand Foundation of the Blind and the general public, was a popular gathering place.
- 9.00am** **Official Opening Ceremony** commenced with an opening prayer. Here all were greeted and blessed with particular attention paid to parents. This was a humbling experience. I was so proud of the Fiji Society of the Blind, Vilisi and her team, the parents, Education Officials, ICEVI Pacific and of course PVI NZ.

We next heard from special guest Mr Naisoro, from Oz Aid/Ministry of Education. He spoke to the **Education For All** plan. He spoke of the support from the Ministry of Education and their intent to provide education for all children regardless of their disabilities. Of the importance of the need for Parents and CBR team from the Society of the Blind to work together. He was impressed with this type of approach, that is, to involve parents as key partners. He paid respects to myself as head of PVI NZ and thank the 2000 parents of New Zealand for allowing me to come.

Next to speak was Mrs Mareselina Tabalaili, SEO – Special Education, Ministry of Education Mareselina spoke of her 30 years experience in Special Education and the importance of her learning's' from a Vision Impaired

student in her training days. To this day she still valued what she learnt from the vision impaired pupils. Mareselina then went on to speak of the implications of the **Education For All** plan and what this meant in particular for the blind community. **Sept 2009 a Braille production unit will be established in Fiji.** This is a fantastic development and one that will impact in a positive way for all Braille users in Fiji.

**10.30:am** Morning Tea

**11.00am** A change to the intended programme as Mareselina wished to stay and spend more time with the parents. She spoke to a power point presentation re Parent Skills that explained the importance of the gestation period of the unborn child and how this impacted upon the child/family etc. Of how we as parents and particular mothers had responsibilities to nurture and love the unborn child, but this could only occur if the mother was loved and nurtured from her partner/husband and family etc. This she referred to as the circle of life. It was a moving presentation that really engaged the parents present. Many mothers stood and spoke of their respective pregnancies. It was a moving experience where raw emotions were exposed. Parents felt safe to share to this level so early in our workshop augers well for the remaining programme. It also reflects the facilitation skills of all involved. They would not have shared to this level unless they felt safe. This presentation lasted for 2.5 hours, such was the engagement of all concerned.

**1.45pm** Lunch

During the lunch break Vilisi and I decided to end the day shortly after lunch as one could see many were tired as they had travelled far to attend. Children were tiring, so with the intent of a good nights rest we would finish early, starting at 9.00am Wednesday.

My reflections as to how the day went were:

- **Venue:** - superb, there was a very warm and friendly feel to the room.
- **Numbers attending:** - good response especially from other regions
- **Food:** - Good quality and plenty of it
- **Learning's:** - Parents felt they had learned much from the opening ceremony and Mrs Tabalilai presentation.
- **Relationships:** - I felt The Society of the Blind was making very good attempts to further their relationship with Mareselina of Special Education. Mareselina obviously wished to learn more from the parents. She is returning for day 2!
- **Atmosphere:** - There was a genuine buzz of excitement in the room during breaks, much laughter and sharing..... a good start.

## **Day 2**

**9.00am** Begins with Prayer.

This is followed by a presentation from Dr Ana Cama, an Ophthalmologist from CWMH Hospital, Suva, Fiji.

- Dr Cama was delighted to be presenting to mainly parents as she had never done so before. She took much time to explain in simple language, respecting the parent knowledge (history of child sight loss condition)

- She explained definitions re Vision Impairment – Blindness.
- What happens with clinic assessments, the value of eye surgery and how important it was
- The value of prescription glasses and how important for the child to wear them....
- Follow up appointments, why so important etc
- Value of good vision and education....
- Fiji Society of the Blind and the CBR team how important they are etc.....
- Avoidable and Unavoidable eye infections (70% of Fiji Vision Impairments are preventable)
- Causation and relationship to economic development of country is real. **Poor country's** have **more** sight loss conditions that are avoidable. **Wealthy nations** have **less** avoidable conditions
- Causes and additional disabilities, Fiji statistic show 30% children are born with additional disabilities
- **Referral Systems:** - from either Parents, school or Health Workers to Eye Dept

**10.30am** Morning Tea

**10.45am** **PVI NZ:** - A picture story from Paul Manning on his journey as a Father with his daughter Jessica and family. Paul also shared of the value of forming/belonging to a National Parent Support Group

**12.10pm** Blindness Techniques Parents need to be aware of:

- Sighted guide techniques were taught
- Cane techniques – this involved inside and outside where parents were blind-folded to ensure some measure of understanding existed, this was well received
- Vilisi then spoke to Daily Living Skills, cleaning teeth, making bed, getting a cold drink without spilling etc. The strong message was teach our children to be as independent as possible. For the young woman lipstick and cosmetics' was well received esp. by the mothers!
- To start as early as possible teaching these skills, all part of the Early Intervention approach as taught in Fiji

Vilisi spoke of the importance and responsibility we as parents have in developing "Daily Living Skills" in our children, that this was as equally as important as the education taught at school.

**1.00pm** Lunch Break

**2.00pm** Human Development "Infancy Birth – 2 years" by Mareselina Tabalaili, SEO – Special Education, Ministry of Education

**3.00pm** Break...

**3.20pm** Meeting to establish "Fiji Parents Support Group"

### **BOARD MEMBERS COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

President – Alesi Tikowaraka Alivina

Assistant President – Ilaitia Kumicaucou Bukani

Secretary – Vishwa Nadan Mudaliar Merelita  
Assistant Secretary – Lavenia Laukata Aporosa Regeci  
Treasurer – Kitioni Rasalato  
Assistant Treasurer – Mrs Rasalato

**ALL THE CBR FIELDWORKERS WILL BE THE SECRETARY OF THEIR OWN REGION WHO WILL BE CONDUCTING MEETINGS WITH THEIR PARENTS AND FORWARDING REPORT TO THE NATIONAL SECRETARY**

### **ADVOCATES**

Mereoni – Northern Division  
Manjula Sharma – Western Division  
Lanieta Laukata – Central division

**Reflections of Day 2:** An outstanding day, to be witness to the establishment of 'Fiji Parent Support Group' an amazing experience.

Day closed with prayer and many thanks!

### **Day 3**

Vanua Levu/Rabi/Taveuni: - Province of Cakaudrove which includes Rabi Island, Kioa Island, Taveuni, Qamea Island Parent Support Group in existence, 5 active parents. April 2010 Regional Workshop (Funding required \$2-3,000.00)

Tavua – Rakaraki and Interior: - Parent support group in existence. Plan to hold regional parent workshop early April 2010

Lautoka – Ba: Vaa spoke no parent group in Lautoka/Ba believes the need is there for a workshop and a parent support group. Vaa has contacts, working on establishing PSG with a view of a Regional Conference in early April 2010 also.

### **10.45am** Planning Session

This involved discussion in small groups to clarify name of group, a mission statement, and plans for the future both short term and medium term.

Outcomes of discussions were: -

**NAME:** Fiji Parent Support Group (Fiji PSG)

**Mission Statement:** Education For All/Supporting Parents and Families

## **Fiji Parent Support Group Plan for 2009 and 2010**

### **Goal 1**

**Ensure as many Fijian parents as possible understand "Education For All" is a right for their vision impaired/disabled child**

#### **Objective**

Through Community Rehab Workers (CRWs) and Regional Parent Groups the Fiji PSG will encourage parents to send their children to school

CRWs and Parents will work with Community Health Workers to ensure EFA is targeted at all children with disabilities

### **Goal 2**

**Establish a National and Regional Fundraising Plan**

#### **Objective**

Each region to commence its own fundraising plan and work with the national body of Fiji PSG's national fundraising plan

### **Goal 3**

**Ensure the Fiji Society for the Blind CRWs support each of the regional parent support groups**

#### **Objective**

Each CRW will act as secretary for the regional parent support groups and as such report to the National Secretary and Board of the Fiji PSG

### **Goal 4**

**Run Regional Workshops April 2010**

#### **Objective**

Reach as many parents as possible in Fiji by conducting Regional Workshops

### **Goal 5**

**Grow the Fiji PSG**

#### **Objective**

When you support other parents, you will grow and gain confidence

The above were the key points from our planning discussion Thursday morning.

At approx 12.00pm on Thursday we held our closing ceremony and presentation of certificates. This was a very happy time.

Following lunch we had a traditional leaving ceremony in my honour, much cava was drunk with many songs. This was a very special.

I am constantly humbled by the love and generosity of the Fijian people, through Vilisi, I have made many friends no friends is the wrong term, I feel I have another family, my Fijian family.....



**The Fijian Parent Support Group, Alesi, front centre is the President**

We wish to extend our sincerest thanks to ICEVI Pacific and in particular Francis Gentle for allowing this work with parents to take place. As a result of the support from ICEVI Pacific, Fiji now has a national Parent Support Group and as a result Education For All has a much better chance to succeed.

**Vinaka**

**Paul Manning**

Executive Officer  
Parent of Vision Impaired NZ Inc

**Vilisi Nacei**

CBR Co-Ordinator  
Fiji Society for the Blind