



**YOUTH PARLIAMENT ALUMNI OF THE FIJI ISLANDS
FUNDED BY UNESCO, MINISTRY OF YOUTH
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**REPORT OF THE WORKSHOP, LAUNCH & ACTIVITIES
OF THE
YOUTH PARLIAMENT ALUMNI OF THE FIJI ISLANDS.**



OCTOBER 28TH 2005 - MARCH 25TH 2006.

**Compiled by the Ministry of Youth Employment Opportunities & Sports
FIJI ISLANDS.**



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Dr. Setareki Vatucawaqa – UNFPA Regional Office, Suva

Mr. Jone Vakalalabure – UNAI DS Regional Office, Suva

Mr. Neil Netaf – Pacific Concerns Resource Center

Mr. Sereki Korocawiri – Director Youth for Christ Fiji.

Ms Vivian Koster – Coordinator CYP Diploma in Youth Work, USP, Suva.

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1. Background

The National Youth Parliament in the last three years since 2002 – 2004 had exposed 222 young participants to issues that affected them and to the principles of democracy and parliamentary processes. To be represented and heard at the Highest chambers of the land is an achievement in itself!

The programme had been made possible through funding support from AUSAID, UNICEF and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and corporate sponsorship from Telecom Fiji Ltd, Shell Fiji Ltd, Asia Pacific Management Fiji Ltd, Quality Print and to the Parliament of Fiji for the usage of the Parliament Chambers.

The experience of being 'parliamentarians' has placed long and lasting impact on these young lives particularly those that have continued to advocate on youth issues, participated in seminars, trainings and workshops at National, Regional and International level such as the International Youth Parliament, Commonwealth Youth Parliament, Mauritius SIDS Youth Visioning Forum, Ship of the World Youth Programme which has empowered and encouraged them to be catalysts for change in their communities.

The Ministry of Youth Employment Opportunities & Sports believes that 'Youth Parliament' is an effective empowerment strategy and therefore has found the importance of continuing the programme by mobilizing the past participants to continue to take ownership of their development.





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Such was the birth of the Youth Parliament Alumni which stemmed out of the Mauritius Small Island Developing States Youth Visioning process that had 3 broad themes:

1. Life and Love in islands
2. My island home
3. Money in my pocket

Fiji took on the theme: 'Life and love in the islands' in which the young leaders were invited to continue the visioning process whereby they can articulate how they want their islands to develop in the future and how they plan to make it happen.

2. Introduction

On October, Friday 28th 2005 the Youth Parliament Alumni of the Fiji Islands was launched by the Acting Secretary General to Parliament, Mr. Edward Blakelock. This was made possible through funding assistance from UNESCO, Ministry of Youth and corporate sponsors such as Ram Sami & Sons Fiji Ltd and ANZ Bank. The theme for the Alumni is '*Young Leaders for a Sustainable Fiji*' and has four key objectives:

1. To provide a Forum where the past participants of the National Youth Parliament programme can continue to 'voice' their concerns, discuss issues and formulate innovative ways to address issues that affect them at community, Provincial, National, Regional and International level.
2. To establish a network of empowered and motivated young leaders.
3. To play an influential role in decision-making process of policy formulation designed for young people and also for the nation as a whole.



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4. To instill in the young leaders, leadership qualities and skills that will enable them to aspire and actively participate in leadership roles and in decision-making processes.

The Alumni members then embarked on 3 youth campaigns, the beginning of many more to come in their efforts to collectively address their own issues. The campaigns were:

1. Clean-up and social interaction at the Suva Boys Center held on Saturday 19th November.
2. World Aids Day Awareness campaign & Sports, in partnership with the Support & Empowerment Network for Peer Educators in Fiji at the Raiwaqa ED's Court, a densely populated housing area, on the outskirts of the city of Suva. This was held on December 3rd.
3. Clean-up campaign at the Suva City Foreshore on February 25th 2006.

It is envisioned that the Youth Parliament Alumni will be a 'breeding place' for transformed leaders who will lead Fiji in the near future.

Such an initiative is the first for the Pacific Region, as island countries organize and implement Youth Parliament programmes it is also imperative to continue the empowerment by having this network of young leaders that can impact development policies for young people in Fiji and also at Regional and International level.

3. Workshop & Launch of the Youth Parliament Alumni - Friday October 28th 2005.

Venue - Southern Cross Hotel, Suva

Number of participants - 26 participants

The day began with registration where the young participants were each given an information file and a t-shirt.

Before the actual thematic sessions began, the young leaders began with a 'Time of Reflection' . There was a 2 minute silence as everyone in the room reflected on their own individual lives and thanked the Great Creator for the 'gift of life and friendship'. A soft and sweet music filled the room themed 'Lord make me an instrument of your peace' as the current Chairperson of the Alumni, Miss Jacque Koroi lit the main candle stand and read a short message of reflection.



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Then three young leaders representing each participating year, 2002, 2003 and 2004 held candles and took turns to light theirs from the main candle stand and read their reflection.

The fourth person that lit his candle was the Director of Youth for Christ Fiji, Mr. Sereki Korocawiri a great youth mentor who then challenged the young leaders that Fiji is at a point in time where it needs good quality leaders and the onus was on the members of the Alumni to be actively involved in 'shaping' the future of Fiji. He also spoke on a 'life of service' and that everywhere around us there is someone in need or there is something that needed to be done.

Mr. Korocawiri shared the experience when he took his six-year old son to watch the movie 'Hotel Rwanda' and he could not stop crying from what he saw. After the movie he quietly asked; 'Dad how can the world sit back and not know what is happening in Rwanda'. He then challenged the young leaders to take the time to respond to the needs of society and to make a difference in their day-to-day livelihood. He closed his reflection with a prayer to sought divine blessing for the 1-day workshop and launch.



Jacque - 'The lighting of the candle is symbolic for the hope we share of realizing the dreams, aspirations and a brighter future for our youths'.

YP 02 - 'As I light this candle may we remember all the children & young people in Fiji, the Region and the world who are infected with HIV/AIDS a every day and who have been orphaned by the pandemic. As young leaders may we be faithful in this campaign to overcome HIV/AIDS and the stigma attached to it. May we be inspired to inspire. To talk the talk and walk the walk. To act justly, to have mercy and to serve humbly'.

YP 03 - 'This candle is a light of hope for all the children and young people affected by natural disasters in Fiji, the Region and the world. In the face of pain, sorrow, lost and despair, may we be instruments of peace, love and compassion. That as young leaders we will be good custodians of mother earth for now and for the generations to come'.

YP 04 - 'Let us strengthen each other to change and change people and society around us. As we journey on may we learn from our mistakes and improve and expand our successes. That we will grow in health, love and justice for all. That we will be young leaders for a sustainable Fiji '.



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To break the ice as not all of the young leaders knew each other, a Team Building exercise was done. This was facilitated by Ms Vivian Koster one of the Steering Committee members of the Youth Parliament programme who is the Coordinator of the Commonwealth Youth Programme Diploma in Youth & Development Work at the University of the South Pacific.

The Team building exercise handout was in their information files and they were to follow the required instructions. From a silent room to what became a loud and happy one as everyone moved around to meet each other and even reminisced on their youth parliament experiences. A few of the young leaders were asked to read out their findings from the short exercise.

4. Thematic Sessions

**Session 1 - The Roles & Functions of the National Youth Advisory Board
Facilitated by Mrs. Vani Samuwai - Principal Youth Officer
Ministry of Youth Employment Opportunities & Sports.**



Mrs.Vani Samuwai presenting to the young leaders.

In 2004 the National Youth Advisory Board was established through cabinet endorsement to create more awareness at the government level on issues affecting young people in Fiji today which included education, employment, health (HIV/AIDS), drug abuse, juvenile delinquency and crime. The Board serves to encourage a participatory role of youths in decision making ensuring that they are involved in the formulation of policies and programmes that directly affect them.



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The National Youth Advisory Board (NYAB) comprised of 10 youth representatives nominated by the Honourable Minister for Youth Employment Opportunities & Sports which included 6 from the Provincial Youth Forum and 4 each represented the Uniform Groups (Girl Guides, Scouts, Red Cross etc), Faith Based Organizations, Non-Government Youth Organizations and the Youth Parliament Group.



Jone Rasi (West) & Mobin Khan (North), 2003 youth parliamentarians



Elizabeth Bucknell, Leader of Opposition in the 2003 youth parliament.

Mrs. Samuwai emphasized that the 'Youth Parliament' had a permanent seat on the Board, it was important that they strengthened their network and the need to have a formal set-up such as the Alumni. The current representatives will have their term completed at the end of this year and the onus is on the Alumni to choose amongst themselves as to whom they want to represent them in 2007 - 2009. Ms Jacque Koroi is the Alumni's current rep to the NYAB. **(Power point presentation attached as Appendix 1)**

Jacque then shared her role and experience on the National Youth Advisory Board. This was an impromptu speech. Then she read out her vision which was very inspirational. **(Full text in Appendix 4)**



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**Jacque posing at a recent NYAB meeting.
She was the 1st Youth Prime Minister in the 2002 Youth Parliament.**

Session 2: How can Young People make a difference in Environment Sustainability? Facilitated by Mr. Neil Netaf, Acting Director for Environment, Pacific Concerns Resource Centre (PCRC)

The session was a learning and empowering one as many times young people are often ignorant of the importance of safe-guarding our natural resources.

Mr. Netaf gave a brief history on the need for environment awareness and conservation since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992. It has since been a long road until the 2005 Mauritius Youth Visioning for Island Living where young people were again challenged that they need to take proactive approach in calling on their island governments to act on their commitments made at these Environment conferences.

It was interesting to note that Mr. Netaf had also attended the Youth Visioning Forum and shared what motivated him more was when he saw the passion in the young participants particularly when they handed their 'Declaration' and 'Country Commitments' to the UN Secretary General Mr. Kofi Annan and the General Assembly. This was a clear indication that young people were committed to take ownership of their development in which he challenged the young leaders that such commitment must trickle down to them as they launch their Alumni today.

Mr. Netaf ended his presentation with some helpful tips to make a difference.
(Power point presentation attached as Appendix 2)



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Mr. Netaf presenting to the young people

Session 3: Impact of HIV/AIDS in the Region and how can young people make a difference? Facilitated by Dr. Setareki Vatucawaqa, UNFPA Regional Office Suva.

As much as there has been on-going awareness on the issue of Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS, young people continue to have burning questions on the issue which is a clear indication on the kind of messages they are receiving. The need to be well-informed and be equipped with the right information is so vital at a time when young people are bombarded with the 'mass-media' from TV and internet right in the homes, magazines and newspapers portraying pictures and stories that 'confuse' our young minds and challenge their morals and values of which they were being taught.

These were the opening words of Dr Setareki Vatucawaqa as he began his lively and motivating session. He also was grateful for the opportunity to talk with the young leaders as we continue to carry out the country commitment made in Mauritius on HIV/AIDS prevention and awareness. Dr Seta as he is commonly addressed challenged the participants that as young leaders they have an important role to play in disseminating the 'correct' information to their peers. Many young people are going through 'identity crisis' because they are easily influenced by what the 'materialistic world' had to offer them. Dr Seta said this was evident in the increasing STI infections and HIV/AIDS of which the highest target group were young people between the ages of 20-29 years old - 'your very own peers'!



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The presentation had very basic information from definitions to data, challenges facing young people in the Region, ARH issues and also on ICPD + 5 and the MDGs. He also did a condom demonstration that gave out a clear signal that as we are faced with a 'sexually active youthful population', young leaders when encounter such a situation must be able to boldly tell his/her friend to use a condom and show how to use one! He challenged the young leaders to live and preach responsible behavioural lifestyles. **(Power point presentation attached as Appendix 3)**



Salote Tagivakatini, Youth Parliament participant in 2002.



Ishaad Hussain, Viliame N & Paula Ragede, 2003 YPs.

All the three sessions were done on power point and were very participatory as the young leaders asked questions and shared the experiences that they have gone through with regards to the three issues being discussed; **young people in decision-making processes, environmental sustainability and HIV/AIDS.**



Group activity at a 5-minute break during presentations



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5. Elections on Divisional Steering Committee members & Divisional Discussions.

The young leaders that were present were representative of the three Divisions in Fiji, North, West and the Central Eastern and as such were divided into the Divisional groupings to nominate their Steering Committee members who were to organize their activities, programmes and the venue of the upcoming three campaigns and also to begin to discuss the 2006 activities. In the young leader's information files were a calendar of the UN and International commemorated days where they can also consider organizing youth advocacy campaigns and programmes.

The Steering committee members that were nominated:

- i) North – Tevita Rokoqiqi and Mobin Khan.
- ii) West – Elizabeth Bucknell and I shaad Hussain
- iii) Central Eastern – Shazaih Acraman and Paula Ragede,

They then facilitated their Divisional discussions and encouraged one another on the need to work together as they return to their Divisions.

6. Official Launching of the Youth Parliament Alumni of the Fiji Islands.

The 1-day workshop culminated with the official launching of the Youth Parliament Alumni of the Fiji Islands.

Invited guests, corporate sponsors, Ministry of Youth staff, the media, families and friends were all present to support this worthy cause.

The ceremony began with the singing of the National Anthem. This instilled patriotism and a sense of pride in the young leaders.

The Chief Guest, Acting Secretary to Parliament Mr. Edward Blakelock in his speech challenged the young people to take stock of their achievements and move forward with a greater sense of passion and commitment to build a better Fiji.

Mr. Blakelock also reminded them that the 'role-plays' at the Parliament Chambers must not be mere speeches but bear fruits in the kind of programmes and projects that they engage themselves with in the communities.



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Mr. Blakelock delivering his speech.

He also reaffirmed the young leaders and the Ministry of Youth Employment Opportunities and Sports that the Parliament of Fiji would always be ready to fully support such a 'youth empowerment initiative'.

(Full Text in Appendix 5)

As a token of appreciation for financial support and commitment rendered to the programme since 2002 up until the Alumni launch, all donor agencies and corporate sponsors were awarded a framed Certificate of Recognition and considered a '**Friend of the Alumni**'.





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7. Conclusion

As the one-day event ended, it was the beginning of both exciting and challenging times to come, exciting in the sense that young people will continue to be seen, visible and heard in the public arena and challenging in the sense that the 'voice' of young people are still not heard and often forgotten. The young leaders will have to pave the way for youth centered and youth driven projects and programmes, share the empowerment with their peers and continue to make a difference in the communities they live in.

The Alumni is ready to be at the forefront of youth development, build partnerships and networks with existing stakeholders and youth groups and build communities for a prosperous, progressive and peaceful Fiji.

Two great universal sayings reminded the Alumni as it embarked on a new journey particularly with the three youth campaigns ahead:

"Ask not what your country can do for you--ask what you can do for your country" - President John F Kennedy, 1961.

&

"You must be the change you want to see in the world" - Mahatma Gandhi, Indian ascetic & nationalist leader, 1869 - 1948.

8. Youth Campaigns

The Alumni members agreed that whenever they were to engage themselves in any type of programmes and projects to invite their friends and young people. It was about 'sharing the empowerment'.

- Clean-up and social interaction at the Suva Boys Center held on Saturday 19th November from 9am - 11:00am.

The activity took place on a rainy Saturday morning which did not deter the spirits of the young leaders particularly for those that were able to attend. The Center which is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Women & Social Welfare looks after young juveniles and young boys between the ages of 9 - 17 who have been abused or neglected by their parents or guardians.



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The young leaders interacted well with their peers at the home as there was loud music and laughter as they all joined together to scrub the footpaths and steps in the rain. The young girls swept the dormitories, wiped the walls and took time to rake the compound.

After all the clean up, both groups shared the snacks and juice that was brought by the young leaders. It was an opportune time to mingle and really sit and talk to one another. It was also 'mentoring' taking place as some of the young leaders are currently at Tertiary institutions and encouraged their peers to work hard in the schools they have been placed in by Government and 'reverse' their situation by working hard and be successful in life.

The young boys and the Welfare Officers at the Center requested the Alumni that this be an on-going programme and thanked the leaders present for taking the time to visit them.

The Alumni members that were present: Males - Paula Ragede, Arish Naresh, Samuela Ralawa & Females - Shaziah Acraman, Krisheena Kumar, Jacque Koro and Ministry of Youth staff, Tarusila Bradburgh. Jacque invited along a 15 year old male friend who had dropped out of school. He was keen to continue to be part of the Alumni's activities.

As we were not able to take pictures of the clean up due to the unavailability of one, Jacque, Paula & Samuela shared their individual experiences:

J - "The clean up & interaction was an eye opener for me, as I went just expecting to clean up the building, but not expecting to see notices up with court dates for the young offenders. The clean up was a fulfilling moment for me to work with the boys and hear their experiences that brought them to the center. It also allowed the boys to hear of what other alternatives there were to crime and delinquency from peers in our group".

P - " It was my first time to the center. I did not like the condition of the home as it was too old and was not very motivating where the young boys would feel a sense of belonging. I also disagreed with how the boys were treated as two of the boys I was scrubbing with decided to have a fight. The one that caused the fight was then locked inside his room. I believe there should be other ways of dealing with the situations as such so that the boys will really learn from their wrongdoings. Being a boy, it was an emotional experience".



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S - " I was frustrated at the center when everyone is talking about OHS compliance, the center was non-compliant. It is a center for rehabilitation and it just did not seem to be. Nevertheless I had a wonderful time chatting and joking with the boys. I could sense and see that they missed being with their peers and just being casual and free".

- World Aids Day Awareness campaign & Sports, in partnership with the Support & Empowerment Network for Peer Educators in Fiji at the Raiwaqa ED's Court, a densely populated housing area, on the outskirts of the city of Suva. This was held on December 3rd.

During the World Aids Day on December 1st the Alumni members volunteered their time and service at the commemoration held at the Flour Mills of Fiji Sports Dome. The day's was organized by the National Advisory Committee on Aids of the Ministry of Health. UNICEF requested for a young person to be the 'voice' for young people as the 'Stop Aids-Keep the Promise' campaign was also launched. Edward Boydell a 17 year old male Alumni member represented the young people when he delivered his speech together with the President of the Senate of Fiji, Honourable Senator Ratu Taito Waqavakatoga, World Health Organization Representative in Fiji, Mr. Ken Chi and UNICEF Representative, Ms Gillian Melssop.



Edward Boydell, YP 2004



From L-R, YPs, Samu, Jacque, Ritchie & Edward with young People on World Aids Day.

On Saturday 3rd, the Alumni members together with the Support & Empowerment Network for Peer Educators in Fiji converged at the Raiwaqa ED's basketball courts, a densely populated housing area, on the outskirts of the city



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of Suva. Jacque Koroi was the only member of the Alumni that was able to attend with Ministry of Youth staff, Tarusila Bradburgh.

The activities ranged from both volleyball and basketball competition, treasure hunt and quiz. Jacque and Tarusila assisted in the treasure hunt and quiz. The quiz questions and the treasure hunt were centered on HIV/AIDS and the whole issue surrounding it. There were IEC materials and condoms displayed on the tables which interestingly were picked up by young people on the day. Prizes also ranged from sports equipment, movie passes, variety of stationeries and World Aids day t-shirts.

Jacque, Tarusila with the Peer Educators during the quiz.



Volleyball & the Peer Educators.



- Clean-up campaign at the Suva City Foreshore on February 25th 2006.

The Suva City Foreshore is at many times an eye-sore and indeed not a pleasant sight when it is being used as a rubbish dump with all kinds of rubbish particularly plastic and broken bottles.



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The morning began at 8:00am and ended at 10:00am. With rubbish bags and gloves the Alumni members began their clean up from the nearby children's park, around a reclaimed land which is used for training by young people from nearby housing areas and along the shore line.

Alumni members that participated were: Males - Jone Samuwai, Kolinio Musudroka and Sakeasi Tawaketini. Females - Jacque Koroï and Salote Tagivakatini. Ministry staff were Mrs. Vani Samuwai and Tarusila Bradburgh. We also had three young people that were invited by Salote, Kolinio and Jone; they were Abigail, Anaseini and Inoke.

After the clean-up, the group had snacks and refreshment as we waited for the Suva City Council rubbish truck to collect all the bags of rubbish to be transported to the rubbish dump.

As the group sat and reflected on the job well done, they were filled with a sense of civic pride and achievement. The group realized on the need to mobilize the young people to have this clean up campaign twice or three times a year and to also include corporate businesses.



Nothing beats the power & energy of young people



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From a dirty to a clean environment



Rubbish bags ready for loading onto the truck straight for the dump.

Northern Division.

The group was able to organize a clean-up campaign and interaction at the Labasa Old People's Home. The Alumni members that were present were Tevita Rokoqiqi, Mobin Khan and Vandhana Lal who invited interested young people to join them.

Western Division.

I shaad Hussain and Viliame Naulivou organized a clean-up campaign with youths at the Natokowaqa Housing Area in Lautoka. It is a densely populated area often labeled as a 'notorious' housing area as many of the young people in the area get caught in the cycle of crime and deviance. It is envisaged that the Alumni will target such populated areas for future activities and programmes.



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9. Challenges - 'Way Forward'.

When working and mobilizing young people, we will always be faced with challenges. Some of the challenges that was faced after the Launch as the members returned to their communities and be engaged in the 3 planned campaigns:

- i) Breakdown in communication - not everyone was reading their e-mails when notices for meetings were sent out. It was agreed that phone calls, text messaging, and the radio be used as a medium for communication.
- ii) Time for the campaigns was not a good time as it was both school and semester break and members were going to their villages and overseas for the Holidays. The month of November and December should be months for evaluation and planning for the New Year. Only activities to be considered are the World Aids Day on December 1st.
- iii) Level of commitment - the members will continue to strengthen each other to continue the spirit of the programmes. Time and service is the only 'essence' that will see the Alumni grow and be a 'best practice' for youth development in Fiji and both at Regional and International level.
- iv) Strengthening of networks and partnerships with other existing youth groups and youth organizations.
- v) Being actively involved in youth activities, seminars, workshops outside of the Alumni.
- vi) Proper equipment for documentary of activities and programmes such as video camera, digital camera as we had to request the Ministry's equipment. It would be ideal to have such equipment for documentation of the Alumni activities. Something for consideration as the Alumni slowly grows.
- vii) Preparation and submission of proposals to potential donor and corporate agencies for on-going programmes and projects. As financial constraints is a hindering factor, as echoed by some of the youth parliamentarians must not deter them from moving forward with their theme in mind.
- viii) Despite the challenges, the Alumni has great potentials, one of this is the anticipation that it will become a platform for 'National Youth Forum' , where young people from all 'walks' of life will be empowered to maximize their potentials and be better utilized in society.
- ix) This 'Forum' will encourage the participation, allowance for flexibility to cater for their needs and provide opportunities for young people.
- x) Finally that it is a voluntary membership.



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10. Snapshots



Jaque and two young women, Rangeeta on left and Alitia, right. Rangeeta is a youth volunteer and Alitia a Duke of Edinburgh award student at International School. With the Youth Parliament Alumni banner marching on International Volunteers Day on December 5th 2005.



The recent Alumni meeting on March 10th 2006 to discuss some upcoming activities such as International Youth Day on August 12th.



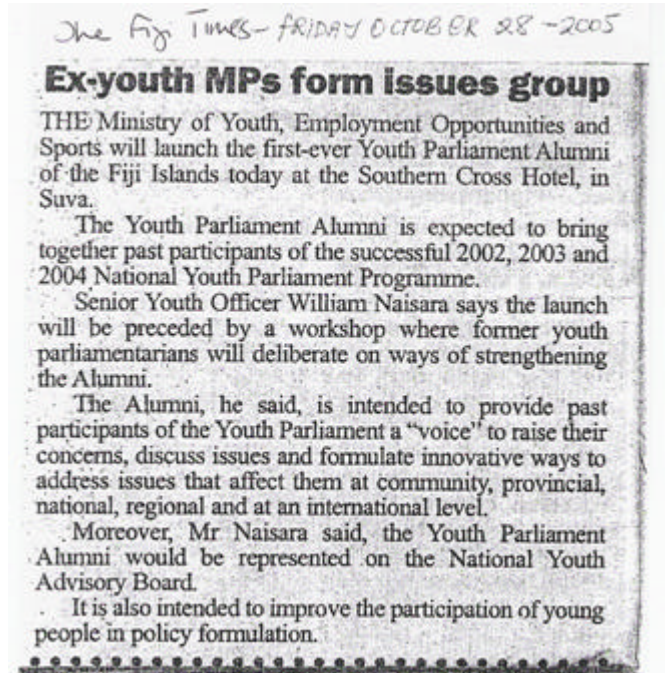
Jaque chairing the March 10th meeting.



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11. Publicity





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12. Appendices.

Appendix 4

Jacque Koro'i's speech & her VISION.

I have a vision.

To see the potentials and talents of our youths nurtured. To see the dreams and aspirations of our youth expressed in songs, poems, art, vibrant conversations, sports and non-formal job careers.

I have a vision.

To hear the voice of our youth say that "in our community drug abuse or low self-esteem is a problem we are faced with, and give a reason as to why the issue exists and suggest strategies that can be put in place as effective solutions that we use dialogue as the first means of expressing the issues affecting us.

I have a vision.

To empower our youths to be trustworthy, humbled hearted, truthful, visionary and informed citizens. To engage ourselves in the policy making and consultation process that involves us, these are just a few ones I have come up with, I'm waiting for yours.

But to fulfill such an ambitious vision takes thoughtful planning, having a selfless attitude, teamwork and a deeply rooted passion to help those around us regardless the challenges, trials, failures and struggles that may come. Today we are hoping to establish the National Youth Alumni, not for the sake of it, but we who have had the privilege of going through the parliamentary system and giving our views pertaining to youth issues should continue in this path. That we voice out the problems we are faced with and continue voicing it till it exists no more.

You have heard in the last session of the National Youth Advisory Board, and its functions. The National Youth Alumni has a place on that Board; hence it has the opportunity to advise the Minister for Youth, Employment Opportunities and Sports of current problems we face in our various communities. Let's make use of this great opportunity.

How? You must wonder? The first basic step is by being observant of the challenges and struggles of the youth in our community face, and by community, I don't mean Fiji in general, but the villages, settlements and residential areas we dwell in.



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The Alumni aims to have empowerment programs, workshops discussing key youth issues, skills workshop, camps and concerts, constant networking, and strengthening our community work amongst so many other things that we can do. Let's not limit ourselves, let's engage ourselves in activities we thought were beyond us. Lets be of service to those around us in the hope that they to may realize their potential to succeed.

Let's think up activities, and discussions, debates that will provide a youthful atmosphere that will give us the confidence to be who we are. We become advocates on certain issues. That is our challenge today?

A steering committee will be selected, that will responsible in putting together the groundwork for the Alumni, a vision, the objectives, constitution and potential activities for the year.

From here we become a collective voice to the National Youth Advisory Board, where the representative is our channel in airing out certain grievances and issues on national level.

We're not only going to raise the issues we face we will also put forward new initiatives of having a more youth friendly environment.

So please, let's all participate and have a collective result of what we would like the Alumni to be.

Thank you



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Appendix 5



**OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
PARLIAMENT OF THE FIJI ISLANDS**

**YOUTH PARLIAMENT ALUMNI
LAUNCHING ADDRESS**

4.00pm Friday 28 October 2005

**[BY THE ACTING SECRETARY -GENERAL TO PARLIAMENT]
[E. BLAKELOCK]**

On behalf of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Ratu Epeli Nailatikau and the Secretary General to Parliament Ms Mary Chapman, I have the humble and pleasant duty to launch the Youth Parliament Alumni this afternoon.

Both the Speaker and the Secretary General are not able to be here with you this afternoon, but have conveyed their best wishes for a successful day.

It is always good to meet again with our Youth Parliamentarians from past years.

The Parliament and the staff of the Legislature have always been honoured to be part of the annual National Youth Parliament programme.

A basic aim of that annual programme was to make you more aware of how Parliament works and on the practices and procedures used, so that issues are processed towards the enactment of laws. The constitutional role of Parliament, as



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you well know, is to make laws for the state. So, the emphasis in the role-playing exercise was on the procedures, rather than on the issues themselves.

We are even more honoured that your gathering today as an Alumni, is to reflect and take stock of the things you have achieved since the programme started in 2002 and how to progress from there.

We have come a long way since then. Most of you as former Youth Parliamentarian have become more aware of the parliamentary process and the role it plays in our society. Some of you I'm sure are aspiring to be politicians in the future. You also had the opportunity as Youth Parliamentarian to discuss issues relevant to youths today.

Today, you looked at ways to strengthen the Youth Parliament Alumni so that the objectives you have set out, are fully met in the years to come. Perhaps the proposed representation in the National Youth Advisory Board would be a start. I note from your programme, that you also considered ways in which to build networking and information-sharing arrangements with one another so that you have a forum to voice your concerns.

We hope that all this will have enabled you, as youth leaders to better participate in both the decision-making process, and policy-formulation, relating not only to young people, but also to the nation as a whole.

When you are doing this, our expectations is that, the necessary leadership qualities and the armour are being instilled in you, to help prepare you, as our future



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leaders. This will then enable you to participate effectively in leadership roles, and in the decision-making process in your communities and in our country.

Perhaps, as you reflect on what you discussed earlier today, may I just leave a thought with you which is in-keeping with your theme “Young Leaders for a Sustainable Fiji”.

As we look around our society in Fiji, and the global community today, we see how the things seem to be changing and evolving rapidly. The world around us, appears to become a smaller place and there is greater and regular interaction, between members of our global communities largely because of technological advancement, globalization and the evolution of the democratic process. It has therefore become increasingly difficult to hold on to some of our own basic, traditional and cultural values and obligations.

While some things are bound to change, I would still think that it would be important, that you as our future leaders, recognize, respect and try to understand, the cultural and traditional values that make life for us in Fiji, quite unique and something we want to cherish and pass on to our future generations.

We all know that some societies have already been overwhelmed by change and development, to a stage where some of them have lost their very essence and being. The challenge for you, as future leaders is to have the necessary knowledge, skills and the will, to ensure that there is an agreed balance, between the need for change, and the need to retain what our communities hold dear. Knowing very well that change and development, is unavoidable in our global community today.



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In conclusion, it would be remiss of me if I, on behalf of the Honourable Speaker, did not acknowledge the valuable and very generous assistance given by so many individuals, organizations, and donor agencies since this youth initiative commenced in 2002. I also especially thank those who also enabled this alumni gathering and launching today. The benefits and the success of your assistance will, I'm sure, unfold over the many years to come.

Once again to all our distinguished guests, facilitators and programme presenters, I thank you all for giving up your time to this worthy programme and for being here today. I also thank you, our former Youth Parliamentarians for participating in today's programmes.

I now have much pleasure in officially launching the National Youth Parliament 2005 Alumni.

Thank you.