



# Pacific Youth Voices

Commonwealth Youth Programme South Pacific

Issue 2, October 2008

## Welcome from CYP South Pacific

**Ms Nukutau Pokura is the Chair of CYP South Pacific Regional Youth Caucus.**



It's been a busy few months for many young people and youth advocates in the region, especially for the CYP South Pacific Regional Youth Caucus.

Tuvalu's Kalepo Vevea and myself were both involved in national youth forums; Solomon Islands' Mary Jionisi supported two provincial youth forums; in Tonga, Ebonie Fifita readied her youth group to attend the Pacific Arts Festival in American Samoa; and over in Kiribati, a Youth Week was celebrated.

Most of it happened in August, when the world's focus was on young people for International Youth Day, and you'll find in this issue of Pacific Youth Voices some of the activities that youth in the Pacific chose to celebrate IYD in 2008 (see pages 4-5).

Another important event was being discussed online through the Youth for a Sustainable Future network: Fiji has been announced as the host country for the 2009 Pacific Youth Festival (see pages 3 & 12).

Issues such as freedom of speech have been discussed and it remains a hot topic of discussion on the network – something worth thinking about as Pacific youth citizens.

In my opinion, there are many situations which are out of our control. However, as young people, we have an opportunity to voice our views on these events as they unfold and learn from any mistakes to ensure that we don't repeat them in adulthood, and that we "break the cycle".

We also need to heed the infamous words of John F. Kennedy: "Ask not what your country can do for you, but rather ask what you can do for your country."

Keep up the good work and don't forget to smile!

## IYD '08 prompts strong words

**International Youth Day '08 (IYD), August 12, allowed youth leaders a chance to reflect and speak out about progress on youth empowerment.**

Commonwealth Youth Programme South Pacific Regional Director Ms Afu Billy says Pacific leaders often pay 'lip service' to young people.

"Many of the sentiments we speak of are never realised. Young people need to be empowered – but empowerment does not just happen to young people. It is vital that adults – especially those in positions of power – work to create conditions, economic and social, which enable that empowerment to happen," said Ms Billy in a media statement on August 12.

The theme of this year's IYD was Youth and Climate Change: Time for Action, which prompted strong statements from youth leaders around the world, including Pan-Commonwealth Youth Caucus Chair and CYP South Pacific Regional Youth Caucus Australian rep Matthew Albert.

"As young people," Matthew said in a media statement on IYD, "We have a particular interest in a sustainable future and a sustainable Commonwealth. We are the inheritors of the actions of those who have come before and the innovators who can rectify the consequences."

On behalf of the Pan-Commonwealth Youth Caucus, Matthew highlighted the vulnerability of young people to the impacts of climate change, such as rising food prices, food shortages and conflict caused by competition over natural resources.

"Young people feel keenly the loss of environments for both livelihoods and recreation. For these reasons, we, as young people, seek to add our voices to the call for every effort to be made by governments and international bodies towards climate stabilisation."

The full statements from Ms Billy and the Pan-Commonwealth Youth Caucus are available on [www.thecommonwealth.org](http://www.thecommonwealth.org).

***"We, as young people, seek to add our voices to the call for every effort to be made by governments and international bodies towards climate stabilisation."***



Top, Ms Afu Billy;  
Above, Matthew Albert

Pacific Youth Voices is supported by the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP), which works to empower young people (15 – 29) to contribute to the development of their communities. CYP South Pacific (CYPSP) is one of four regional centres around the world, and works with the young people, governments and NGOs of its 14 member countries in the Pacific region. CYPSP supports a group of young leaders from the Pacific who advocate for Pacific young people's issues, the CYPSP Regional Youth Caucus (RYC). [www.thecommonwealth.org](http://www.thecommonwealth.org)

# DYD for Tonga and USP

**It's been a big couple of months for CYP's Diploma of Youth Development (DYD), with the diploma launched in Tonga and an MOU signed with University of the South Pacific (USP).**

The youth work diploma is endorsed and guided by CYP, and delivered by distance in partnership with tertiary institutions around the Pacific.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with USP was signed in Suva, Fiji last month by CYP Programme Officer Mr Rajkumar Bidla, and high-level representatives from USP.

A DYD launch was held in Nuku'alofa, Tonga in August.

CYP Programme Manager Mr Paul Peteru describes the launch of the training in Tonga as a "significant national development".

"Youth work will now be professionalised and Tongan youth workers who undertake this formal training will be achieving an academic qualification which will greatly complement their work experience with young people."

Tonga's Ministry of Training, Employment, Youth and Sports CEO Dr Taniela Fusimalohi says he's especially pleased to see the Tongan DYD students are not just from Tonga's capital, Nuku'alofa.

"About one third of them carry out youth work on the outer islands, which means that rural youths will also benefit from this," he said.

National Centre for Vocational Studies Principal Mr Fatuimoana Langilangi says he's extremely proud his institution will be delivering the DYD.

"We already deliver quality Diploma programmes and having the DYD delivered from our institution will be a pleasing addition."

Dr Robyn Broadbent, an external moderator who oversees the delivery of the DYD, from Melbourne's Victoria University, says she was impressed by the planning undertaken by Tonga's youth ministry.

"They worked very hard to establish a partnership with CYP to bring this excellent diploma to Tonga," says Dr Broadbent.



*Commonwealth Secretariat's Deputy Secretary-General Ms Mmasekgoa Masire-Mwamba with CYPSP Regional Youth Caucus Solomon Islands rep Mary Jionisi at a function hosted by His Excellency the Governor-General of the Solomon Islands Sir Nathaniel Waena in Honiara in July. Ms Masire-Mwamba was visiting Honiara on route to the King of Tonga's coronation. She met with several dignitaries and community leaders, including Prime Minister Derek Sikua and Leader of the Opposition Manasseh Sogavare.*

## Cook Islands Youth Council re-started

The Cook Islands' National Youth Council has been re-established following a three-day national youth forum held in Rarotonga in August.

The forum, attended by representatives from 21 Cook Islands youth organisations, saw office bearers elected and the structure slightly re-worked to be more youth-friendly.

CYPSP's Regional Youth Caucus Chair, Ms Nukutau Pokura, was elected as President of the youth council. "There is much to do," says Nukutau, "but with a dynamic team of young people I know that the way into the future looks brighter now for our country."

## Flying Finance visit

CYP South Pacific was also lucky enough to receive a visit from two staff from the Finance Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat: Chris Luswata, head of the Finance and Information Services Division and Finance Manager Matthew Lomerikan.

The two were in Honiara for one week to work with Finance Officer Patricia Anii and other staff to streamline accounting processes.

# Young entrepreneurs gain retail skills

**Young people in Honiara, Solomon Islands and Suva, Fiji had the opportunity to gain retail skills and build their confidence in business and entrepreneurship in a workshop being run by Commonwealth Youth Programme South Pacific in association with UNDP's Pacific Centre and The Body Shop in September.**

In Honiara, 45 people aged between 18 and 35 were selected from over 100 applicants to take part in the week-long training. In Suva, 30 youth were chosen to take part, including six from Tuvalu and Kiribati who were sponsored by the CYPSP to attend.

The aim of the workshop, which runs regularly around the Pacific, is to strengthen the retail skills of young entrepreneurs and managers in the Pacific.

It is conducted by consultant and business owner Steve Cordeiro with the training support of managers from natural cosmetics and beauty chain The Body Shop, and with logistical support from CYP South Pacific and UNDP's Pacific Centre.

*Right: Solomon Islands' Minister of Women, Youth and Children Mr Peter Tom samples some coconut cream at the Honiara workshop*



# First youth media workshop a success

**CYP South Pacific Centre was the first to hold the Pacific Youth Voices media workshop in July, with both success and learning.**

The workshop was coordinated and developed by CYPSP's Media Intern Tessa Johnstone, who worked with 16 local youth development and media volunteers to deliver the activities. Over 50 young people between 15 and 29 attended the workshop.

"We got really great feedback from the participants and most just asked that it could have been longer," says organiser Tessa Johnstone.

"For the volunteers I think it was a great learning opportunity – it can be an intimidating task to teach young people sometimes, and the volunteers here were very brave to take on the challenge. The participants really enjoying having professionals come in and teach them practical skills."

The experience and learning from the workshop will now be written up and put out to other youth workers in the Pacific to adapt for their own contexts. If you'd like to receive a copy please contact [pacificyouthvoices@gmail.com](mailto:pacificyouthvoices@gmail.com).



*Volunteer Peza Wickham talks with youth media workshop participants*

## Pacific youth represent at World Youth Congress

**Six Pacific youth were part of a 600-strong gathering, the fourth World Youth Congress, of young activists and change-makers held in Quebec, Canada recently.**

The World Youth Congress, held every two years, involves capacity building workshops and discussions, regional meetings with other youth, and a chance to get out into the community and volunteer.

Alex Su'a, Samoa, and Lisette Ogg, Australia, both 26 years old, were two of the youth representing at the Congress in Canada in August.

Although, according to both Lisette and Alex, the organisation of the Congress left something to be desired, the people and the learning made the experience.

"I met amazing people," says Lisette, "Passionate, intelligent, inspirational people from all over the globe; people with a sense of humour, grace and innate positivity. People that I discovered are more alike than different."

One of those people was Alex, who attended the Congress as a representative for the UN Youth Advisory Panel.

Alex says he also came away feeling like he'd made a lot of new friends and substantial contribution to the regional meetings.

Alex presented two papers: one on UN agencies and youth in the Pacific and one on sexual minorities from a Polynesian perspective.

He had an unexpected response to the papers – he had to take a step back and explain the basic geography of the Pacific region, and found himself defending the vulnerability of the Pacific on issues such as climate change and food shortages.

"It made me realise that the Pacific must be fairly represented to these forums, to clear this ignorance of the South Pacific's vulnerable status to the world," says Alex.

The next World Youth Congress will be held in Istanbul, Turkey in 2010. Go to [www.turkiye2010.org](http://www.turkiye2010.org) for more info.



*Alex Su'a, middle, and Lisette Ogg, right, at the WYC '08*

## Fiji to host Pacific Youth Fest 2009

**The second Pacific Youth Festival will be held in Fiji, July 2009, organisers announced in late July.**

The news was met with a mixture of reactions due to Fiji's current political situation.

Fiji is currently under the leadership of Interim Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama, who took control of the government by coup in late 2006. Fiji is currently suspended from the Commonwealth.

The Pacific Youth Council and Secretariat of the Pacific Community organises the tri-annual Pacific Youth Festival in partnership with Pacific youth stakeholders and governments.

Papua New Guinea youth leader Rex Paura, while expressing no doubt in Fiji's ability to host the festival, says he is concerned about the message it sends.

"I have absolute faith in Fiji as hosts," Mr Paura said recently in an email discussion group, "but I do not think that it would be in the spirit of democracy to hold the next festival under a dictatorship."

Cook Islands' Director of Youth and Sport Ms Vania Kenning also expressed concern.

"I would like to see this event held in Fiji under democratic rule – I know that Fiji would do an amazing job of hosting this event! But will the participants be at risk? Will they feel free to discuss political issues without fear of being reprimanded?"

However, organisers say there is nothing to worry about.

"Despite the picture painted by the local and international media tainting the perception of individuals outside of Fiji, this country remains as safe and normal as any other Pacific Island nation," says Fiji Ministry of Youth and Sports spokesperson Ms Vani Catanasiga.

"The Fiji Cabinet endorsement of PYF 2009 essentially affirms our Government's commitment to a secure and safe Festival for the region's youth."

Fiji's youth ministry is currently laying the groundwork for the first meeting of an organising committee, which will be held in November, and seeking ideas for festival themes.

## International Youth Day '08 - Pacific style

International Youth Day was celebrated around the world on August 12 with the theme 'Youth and Climate Change: Time for Action' and Pacific youth made the most of it.



### Fiji

In Fiji, almost 200 young people from Lautoka, Suva and Sigatoka converged on Sigatoka, a tourist town an hour from Nadi, for a major clean-up and awareness campaign on August 9. Clean-up coordinator and Ministry of Youth and Sports Youth Officer Ms Tarusila Bradburgh says the global theme was very relevant to Fiji. "Fiji is a small island country and is one of the most vulnerable to climate change. IYD's theme reminds young people to take action and take ownership of their own livelihood now and for the future."



### The Rock

Niue had to delay their celebrations because its young people were busy with the 39th Pacific Islands Forum meet; Alofi South's Latter Day Saints youth planted trees and flowers around the Forum venue, picked up rubbish throughout, and made decorations for the venue. Other young people provided entertainment for the opening ceremony of the Forum and were involved in a Wearable Arts show and Climate Change Trade Fair during the Forum. They still managed to do some of their own celebrating though with a youth summit called Winds of Change, focussed on alcohol abuse and sexual health awareness.



### Vanuatu

In Port Vila, they started with a city clean up, and then gathered at Wan Smol Bag Theatre where they treated the youth volunteers to a day of fun sports and arts activities. They also had a couple of speakers come along for the celebrations, including newly-elected MP Ralph Regenvanu.



### Samoa

Samoa got their young people experimenting and creating with a science fair. More than 200 students from primary and secondary schools competed for cash prizes in the environment-themed science fair. It was opened with a ceremony in which a number of youth stakeholder spoke, including Samoa's Prime Minister Hon. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, who challenged young people to continue to share their knowledge and raise awareness of environmental issues and concerns.



### Cook Islands

The Cook Islands held a gathering on August 8 at the Punanga Nui Market where community, youth and government got to showcase all their youth and climate change work. A few days later, on IYD itself, they held a Cook Islands' National Youth Forum organised by the interim National Youth Council. See story page 2.



## Tonga

In Tonga, Ocean of Light International High School held a special IYD assembly with statements from CYP South Pacific, songs and a youth pledge to do better for the environment. They're currently working on a few tasks such as planting trees and reducing paper use to stay true to the pledge. Tonga's Ministry of Youth arranged a youth seminar with speeches, discussion and performances.



## Solomon Islands

In Honiara, youth got started early with a city-wide clean-up campaign in the weekend before, and a climate change-themed speech contest. IYD itself was celebrated with a massive festival organised by youth volunteers, which included stalls from youth stakeholders, bands and cultural performances, art competitions and quizzes – the whole town turned up for it! The day has also generated a desire to keep the work on environment going, and a youth and climate change forum is currently in the pipeline...



## Still want more?

There are plenty more photos on our Bebo site: [www.bebo.com/PacificY](http://www.bebo.com/PacificY) - go look!

And if you'd like to send us your International Youth Day photos and news to add, please do, just send everything you have to us at [pacifiicyouthvoices@gmail.com](mailto:pacifiicyouthvoices@gmail.com).

Now, start planning for next year!

[www.un.org/youth](http://www.un.org/youth)



# The Drifters

## Urbanisation and Pacific youth

**Urbanisation, or urban drift, is a big issue for Pacific peoples. Increasing numbers of youth are moving to cities in search of jobs and education, and many cities just can't keep up, leaving the streets overflowing with young people with no cash and nothing to do. KATE MORIOKA gives us a snapshot of the way Pacific youth are experiencing urbanisation.**

Step out into any capital city in the Pacific and the first thing you will notice are the crowds of young people; young people looking for work or other opportunities that will improve their quality of life.

While many young people in other, more developed parts of the world, tend to 'hang out' with their friends in town for the fun of it, young people in the Pacific find themselves in the city for different reasons.

In most cases, young people living in rural areas are sent by their families to look for work in the cities, where they have access to cash and jobs.

Take, for example, Honiara, the capital city of the Solomon Islands. The young people crowding the streets in Honiara are searching for employment or educational opportunities. But, of course, the opportunities are scarce. What young people lack is the means of getting a job – assistance with finishing school, obtaining a qualification, finding a job and preparing for interviews.

Director of Pacifica Youth Courtney Seeto suggests two reasons young people can't find work when they get to the cities.

"Firstly, the image of Pacific youth in the cities today as 'uncouth' and 'irresponsible' pushes employers to take strict precautions when giving out opportunities to youth for work.

"And secondly, the absent and much-needed market for youth career development. There is now a high demand for job-related skills when entering the workforce and this definitely hinders any young people from rural areas who are trying to find work opportunities," says Courtney.

Let's look at another example of urban drift, this time in Fiji. In urban centres such as Suva, Nadi and Latoka you will find young people arriving from rural villages in the back of trucks at the crack of dawn.

They work long hours (sometimes without a permit) as shoe shine boys, wheel-barrow pushers and, in some unfortunate cases, as sex workers. At the end of the day, they jump back on the back of the trucks and return to their villages and what they had earned that day is shared with their family members.

Joel Kalpram, a Vanuatu youth activist, says there a lot of different reasons young people drift to the centres for work.

"One reason, and for most, is education. Not many parents have the motivation to strongly encourage their kids to go to school, not enough financial resources to sustain the kids' schooling," says Joel.

"In Vanuatu," continues Joel, "most of the country's population lives out in the remote islands, 56 per cent are young people and when young people then drift to the main town thinking they can find jobs, that's where other issues occur."

Just over half of the population in the Pacific is under the age of 25. As more and more young people go to the capital



*Top: Young people in Solomon Islands' Western province; Above: A young man tries his luck as a shoe shiner in Suva, Fiji. Photos: Kate Morioka*

cities to look for work, considerations must be given to how to effectively managing the cities' infrastructure and ensuring that the needs of urban drifters are met.

Not responding to the pressures caused by urbanisation could lead to the sprawl of squatter settlements like those seen in Suva and ultimately have an impact on public health within the city.

In urban conditions where appropriate infrastructure is not provided, young people are likely to become vulnerable to things like homelessness, drug and alcohol abuse, physical and sexual abuse and mental illness. Some young urban drifters may engage in criminal activity in order to maintain their survival as well as the survival of their families.

Although the recent release of the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Report revealed that the Pacific Islands have experienced improvements in literacy, per capita income and access to essential infrastructure, the real barriers to the region's social and economic progress are corruption and lack of institutional policy frameworks.

Tulano Toloa from Tokelau agrees: "The important thing I

believe is the need for good governance; governance that can provide opportunities for youth to develop, education a chief factor. Poorly-led governments lead to poorly developed infrastructures.

“Island governments cannot achieve sustainable growth for youth unless its policies change to counter the issues which affect overpopulation of urban centres and a growing population. We cannot entirely remove the negative aspects of urbanisation, such as prostitution and cheap labour.

“But the least governments could do is provide decent education and scholarships for students and deliver effective programmes in sports, arts, science and agriculture to rural areas and provide ways of sustaining them. The application of those methods involves time, traditional knowledge and effort of the local governance.”

Joel suggests that there are local, community solutions to the problem as well.

“One way that could help is to educate young people about how they can develop themselves by using their own local resources back in their home communities and societies in their islands.

“For example, planting kava and food crops and selling them in the town. It would stop young people moving just randomly to towns but also it enables development in their home, communities and islands. I guess it may also enable community chiefs, leaders and elders to still have the authority and control over their own people, within their communities.

“I say this because in Port Vila town today, when young people move to the city and don’t have jobs become involved in activities that will put them in jail or prison, sometimes its really hard for the police to deal with these issues also, so its best to have their own community leaders or even their own parents to have the direct authority over them instead of having a random justice maker trying to discipline their kids in a different place and not back in their islands or communities.”

Courtney believes that the problem of young people drifting to the cities is not a problem just for young people.

“More investment, not just monetary, but time and effort as well from young people’s family members, from communities, and government bodies into young people’s futures is needed.

“This includes forming a solid market for life skills and career development. It is vital to the survival of not only youth and their families, but also for the national economy as well.”

The challenge for Pacific Island countries is to provide sustainable solutions in managing the urbanisation process, including developing integrated and transparent governance structures for urban centres that involve individuals and groups from all level of society.

As urbanisation of youth unfolds, young people should also be given the opportunity to participate in deciding what governance structures should be in place and be part of the discussion in dealing with the social and economic implications of urbanisation.

**Kate Morioka, 29, is a social planning and development consultant living in Redcliffe, Australia. Her World Bank report on youth participation in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu is shortly due to be released. She is a former executive director of Youth for a Sustainable Future Pacifika.**

## What do you think?



**Nelly Willy**  
Vanuatu

*“Urban drift is becoming a problem in Vanuatu as people look for better opportunities in the towns. To better deal with it the government needs to invest more in other towns – not just Port Vila – in terms of infrastructure, and creating more jobs available for young people.”*



**Vincent Faafo**  
Samoa

*“Urban drift is a big problem. Most of the youths are not using their time wisely as they shift to urban areas. I recommend providing some trainings or youth forums emphasising this issue, and showing youths that time management is very important in their lives so they can focus on their future endeavour.”*



**Nukutau Pokura**  
Cook Islands

*“Urbanisation, in my opinion, is inevitable – I see it as a necessity to develop but we need to ensure that young people who migrate to urban areas are prepared properly to ensure that the issues that arise and are experienced in these areas are minimised as much as possible.”*

## Links

[www.spc.int](http://www.spc.int)

For up-to-date statistics on urban and rural populations in the Pacific

[www.abc.net.au/ra/carvingout/issues/urbanisation](http://www.abc.net.au/ra/carvingout/issues/urbanisation)

Background info on urbanisation in the Pacific

**Samiuela 'Ofa, 24, writes on his experiences of going from village life to city life in Tonga.**



***"I lived with my Dad's parents in a small wooden house on Hunga Island in the Vava'u group, while my parents and siblings lived and went to school in the main town of Vava'u. I didn't enjoy school much because my brothers and sisters were not with me.***

"After school every day I had chores in the bush, such as hoeing the plantation or collecting coconuts. On Saturdays we all went to the bush to collect food for Sunday and the rest of the week.

"Some Saturdays I would also go fishing; I taught myself how to spearfish. There wasn't much else to do on the island and I grew to love going fishing by myself. I loved it so much that I got really good at it.

"I also remember that we ate local root crops every day on our small island, but then sometimes a boat would come with bread and other Western foods and toys. I especially remember how special the bread was; it was like having McDonalds or expensive chocolate. Now I eat bread almost every day.

"Because we had little use for money – 15 cents or a dollar was a lot of money. I also remember riding and racing horses and feeding the pigs coconut.

"Now it's only distant relatives in Hunga; my grandparents passed away and the rest of my family have moved overseas or are staying in other parts of Tonga.

"I've been living in Tongatapu since the end of 2000, but in different places. I'm now in Ngele'ia village, close to Nuku'alofa, with my Dad's cousins, who are my age.

"I moved to complete my studies, as there was only primary and secondary education available in Vava'u. I went to teachers' training college for three years, even though they didn't have the subjects I was hoping to take such as electronics, computers and IT. I completed it anyway and learnt a lot from the experience.

"I didn't want to be teacher so ended up doing nothing for a year, just mucking around, drinking, partying, and roaming around with friends – wasting time and my education.

"Then I decided to find a job; I wrote my own job application and now I work for the Ministry of Works and am studying architecture.

"When I moved here, I realised I had certain responsibilities and couldn't rely on my family for all my needs as I did in Vava'u. In Vava'u, my parents always took care of my needs for school and supported me, but in Tongatapu – even though I was living with an aunty – I had to develop a certain independence and learn to take care of myself and make my own decisions. Only in very desperate situations would I call back to my parents for assistance.

"I remember some nights if I stayed out late, when I came back, there would be no food left on the table (as I was used to in my island life). These sorts of lessons taught me to contribute for food.

"I decided to get a job so I could eat whatever I wanted.

"It was especially difficult in the year following teachers' training college, because my family judged me for not working, for being a burden and not making any money but eating the food they worked for and wasting three years of education. It made me ashamed of myself during this year, but I really could not see myself being a teacher.

"Only in the last two years have I managed to be independent. I earn my own money, study, and for awhile I rented a house and supported my brother and his wife.

"At the moment I move around a lot staying with other friends (such as my Dad's cousins) – but am able to contribute to living expenses and help out many of my friends too. I am looking for my own place, but maybe not till next year as I have a lot of family commitments to save up for and contribute to at the end of this year.

"The greatest thing about moving here is being exposed to so many opportunities that I did not have in the outer islands. Not only have I been able to continue education and get a job but I have also been able to pursue my talent and love of music and was recently able to record my first album, play with various bands, and tour with the On The Spot youth group to the 10th Pacific Arts Festival in Samoa.

"I'm planning to complete my diploma here then go for further studies in Australia and start up my own architecture business there.

"I also want to record more albums, help to support other young artists and promote music as a channel for young people to develop confidence in themselves.

"I also want to reconnect young people with our traditional music and famous compositions so that have an understanding of the past and can develop their own ways of expressing their Tongan identity.

"There are many old songs that are lost or not played by people anymore but unlike much of the trashy music today it has a lot of meaning, poetry and history in their lyrics and beautiful melodies that I am hoping to revive."

*Special thanks to Ebonie Fifita for translating this interview.*

**David Ephraim, 26, from Papua New Guinea talks about why it's important for young people to be involved in decision-making now that we're facing an HIV and AIDS epidemic in the Pacific.**



**It's a reality that we are born into a world of HIV and AIDS; we are faced with the real fate of this. With a growing number of HIV infections among young people, decision-makers should be challenged to start including youth in their approach to the epidemic.**

Papua New Guinea (PNG) is the largest and most densely populated nation in the Pacific and is already faced with a 'generalised' HIV epidemic – up to 2.5 percent of the population were infected in 2002; the leading cause of death in Port Moresby hospitals in 2006 was AIDS-related illnesses. One report estimates that up to 25 percent of the population will have HIV by 2020.

The crisis has drawn multi-million dollar projects which aim to prevent a generation from being wiped out in this little part of the world. Over years, billions of dollars have been pumped by donors to this corner of the world – workshops, seminars, conferences, etc, all to draw up steps to contain this epidemic. But the reality is the HIV and AIDS epidemic still manages to grow.

PNG's response is quite clear – prevention. A number of policies, legislation and plans have been developed to minimise this epidemic. But the question we ask often as youth is why, when we are such a large contributors to the epidemic, do we still feel marginalised?

In 2006, the Global Youth Coalition Against AIDS was created to advocate for youth integration in decision-making. This has helped strengthen the adult-youth dialogue for some nations, but others are still being marginalised.

At the close of the 8th International Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific in Sri Lanka last August, an Indonesian youth asked all the young people to stand up. He then asked: what is it like to live in a world without AIDS? If you know, sit down. The entire group stayed standing – all of them born after the pandemic. We do not know a world without AIDS.

But we are responding in our own ways to HIV and AIDS – we are running programs, peer education, pushing for social change and uniting this fight around the world.

*The value of our response has to be recognised as necessary and mainstreamed. We strongly urge you to begin viewing us as equal partners in the response to HIV and AIDS and to move beyond the rhetoric of youth participation by funding youth-led initiatives, engaging in true youth-adult partnerships and meaningfully involving young people in policy that affects our lives – A statement from youth at the 8th International Congress on AIDS.*

We are now faced with the reality of HIV but we can help minimise this epidemic if we all work together. **David's blog: <http://asiapasifika.ning.com/>**

## A very special fellow

**A UNAIDS fellowship is offering youth from developing countries a unique opportunity to learn from experts in Europe and then bring the knowledge back home.**



*Twenty-five year old Tamara Babao, Papua New Guinea, is currently in Geneva, Switzerland*

Tamara Babao, 25, from Papua New Guinea, has become one of the first young people to take part in a new fellowship programme with UNAIDS.

The nine-month paid fellowship includes six months with the UNAIDS office in Geneva, Switzerland and three months in the fellow's UNAIDS's country office. The fellowship is open to 20 – 24 year olds from developing countries.

It was the chance to work and learn overseas, with a respected organisation that is addressing HIV and AIDS that motivated Tamara to apply.

"We are all affected by HIV and AIDS, no matter where we live in this world," says Tamara.

Tamara has, however, been focussed Pacific-relevant projects: looking at National Strategic Plans in the Pacific and UN reports on the region; writing a national youth profile for Papua New Guinea; and doing some work on TB/HIV co-infection.

"People need to stop thinking about HIV and AIDS as just a health problem – it's also a social and economic problem for all the countries in the Pacific region. HIV and AIDS are affecting all of us," says Tamara.

"Young people should play a major role in the fight against HIV and AIDS as they very vulnerable to it. We as young people have to dream and fight for a world without HIV and AIDS because we have never known the world without it."

Applications for the UNAIDS Special Youth Programme Fellowship will be open in January 2009. Keep an eye on [www.unaids.org](http://www.unaids.org) or email UNAIDS Programme Management Advisor Sarita Seghal at [seghals@unaids.org](mailto:seghals@unaids.org).

# Your Youth Advocates

The Commonwealth Youth Programme South Pacific take advice from their Regional Youth Caucus, a group of youth advocates from all around the South Pacific region who are working with and for young people. These are just a couple of them - for a full list go to [www.thecommonwealth.org/Internal/154773/pacific](http://www.thecommonwealth.org/Internal/154773/pacific).



**Vincent Faafo**  
*CYP South Pacific  
Regional Youth  
Caucus Vice-Chair  
SAMOA*

Vincent Faafo, 23, is a young man of many talents.

By day, Vincent is a fair trading officer with Samoa's Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour, which means he investigates consumer complaints and looks at fair trading policy. Also by day – and sometimes by night – Vincent is a youth representative for Samoa.

Vincent was already representing Samoan youth when he was selected to represent the South Pacific as a Regional Youth Caucus member. As a youth manaia or 'Mr Youth for Samoa', Vince's job was to represent young people in forums and events both in Samoa and overseas. So when the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development was looking for a Regional Youth Caucus rep, Vincent was the obvious choice.

Vince is passionate about youth, and believes they're valuable members of any society.

"They have strong leadership and innovative skills for building a better future for a country as well as in the Pacific. They are a talented age group with great skills for advocacy," says Vincent.

Vincent himself has been working for his community a number of years. He's a peer educator and gets called in to talk about issues as varied as HIV and AIDS, youth justice, and development.

In his role as a RYC representative, he wants to learn more about youth issues and start contributing to some changes in the Pacific region.

"I hope in our time as RYC representatives we can make a good change for the young people of our region, and our goals and plans are achieved."

Vincent is proud as punch to be representing the Pacific as well.

"It is a great pleasure, and makes me very proud to be in this important role. What makes me proud is that this will be a good challenge for me to represent or speak on behalf of many young people in my country, from other countries, as well as the whole region. I believe that I will gain better skills and knowledge as the journey goes on."

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**Carthy Lavini**  
*CYP South Pacific  
Regional Youth  
Caucus Rep  
NIUE*

Carthy Lavini, 22, is Niue's new representative for the CYP South Pacific Regional Youth Caucus and comes with a fresh bundle of optimism.

"There's so much in store for our youth today; we have bright futures."

But, says Carthy, we're going to have to work for it.

"Our youth today can achieve their fullest potential if we engage them in activities that will lead them to it; if we provide enabling environments for this to be achieved. For example, if we advocate for issues like no under-age drinking and yet alcohol is within reach of our young people, then we're just preaching in vain," asserts Carthy.

"Flowery speeches and talking about plans don't go so well with me – talk is good, but coupled with actions."

Carthy works for the Department of Justice, Lands and Survey as a Properties Officer and Lease Administrator, but keeps her passion for youth issues alive through her volunteer roles.

Carthy first heard about the South Pacific Regional Youth Caucus through her work as Secretary and Media Officer with the Niue Youth Council and says she's now very proud to be representing Pacific young people at a regional and international level.

"Being born and raised in the South Pacific, knowing first-hand what Pacific youth face and knowing the opportunities and aspirations that are often stifled by certain limitations... being able to participate at the regional level in voicing concerns and contributing to the betterment of our Pacific communities makes me totally proud."

Growing up, Carthy says, she appreciated the effort that adults and leaders made to create learning experiences for herself and other young people and she now feels it's important to give that back to others.

"It's led me to try to be actively involved in youth work, to be engaged in making a difference, to be an active participant rather than a passive one and to make my contributions worthwhile. A great leader once said: 'Tomorrow's blessings and opportunities depend on the choices we make today'. I want to contribute to the welfare of our youth by putting emphasis on the choices they have – even if my contribution is only but a little."

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## Forgotten Diaries

[www.forgottendiaries.org](http://www.forgottendiaries.org)

A youth-driven online project is aiming to shed light on the most under-reported conflicts, crisis and issues by giving a voice to those most affected – children and young people.

Forgotten Diaries, with the support of Youth Action for Change, has selected five young people from 10 conflict zones, including Timor Leste, and is providing the training and platforms for those youth to start writing about what's going on in their countries.

On the website you can find background information about the conflicts, and info about the participants in the Forgotten Voices project. Most importantly, you'll find links to the participants' blogs.

One post from Dili, Timor Leste, talks about a peaceful protest staged by students against the government's proposal to buy 65 new luxury cars, when Dili citizens were struggling to buy even the basics, such as rice.

From Serbia and Kosovo you can read about religious tolerance, and from Nigeria comes news of struggles over natural resources.

Go, read, learn and start interacting with the participants!



## Online Media Training

<http://mediasnackers.com/services/pacificyouth>

An online media training programme put together by UK-based MediaSnackers and trialled by Tongan and Papua New Guinean (PNG) youth is now online and available free for use.

The course is in five parts, covering new media literacy, digital storytelling, vodcasting, social networking and other online tools. Through slideshows, videos and other resources young people can learn about new media and get started on creating their own.

Chris Clark, 22, from Tonga says although striving to meet deadlines was sometimes a bit challenging, he got a lot out of the course.

"I got a whole new outlook on the power of online media! I'm convinced that it's a great way of communicating your ideas to the world."

Ruha Fifita, 18, also from Tonga, agrees with Chris.

"Media, especially the internet, has had such a significant impact on our society and how we communicate. Through this training, we learnt how to analyse and use this increasingly powerful tool."



## Graff Workshop

[www.bebo.com/PacificY](http://www.bebo.com/PacificY)

The internet is a wonderful place – there are literally thousands of videos online that we wanna share with you.

So we don't overload you though (and because we know how long 'broadband' takes in the Pacific) we've linked just a few of the videos to our Bebo site.

Our favourite this month is from Youth Fest in Taranaki, Aotearoa New Zealand. A very energetic presenter talks us through a graff workshop being held by Triple S Crew for a group of young people in Taranaki. Everything you wanted to know about sketching, outlines and filling is right there!

Other highlights are a series of profiles of young people in Papua New Guinea, a collection of Tongan youth views on where their country is headed, and Haoto Paora College students doing the haka!

Go on, go look – and help us get to 100 friends!



## Youth Marketplace

[www.youthactionnet.org](http://www.youthactionnet.org)

Youth Action Net is about connecting youth with resources and tools which help them to make changes in their lives and communities.

Youth Action Net's marketplace is an online space where you can learn, access resources, tools and knowledge; connect and network with other youth from around the world and hopefully be inspired to make (or keep making!) positive changes in your community.

You'll find everything from how to include young people in decision-making to how to make more environmentally-friendly consumer choices; and such daring questions as 'Is social enterprise the solution to the credit crisis'... Well, is it?





## Connect with other Pacific youth

Youth for a Sustainable Future are a youth-led Pacific network which works to engage communities in development and achievement of the UN Millennium Development Goals.

Their email group connects together young people, youth workers, youth organisations and other youth stakeholders from all around the Pacific. They share news of training opportunities, conferences, resources, events and discuss Pacific youth issues.

You can find out more at [www.pacifikayouth.org](http://www.pacifikayouth.org), or if it sounds like you and you'd like to sign up to the network, send an email to [ysfuture2005-subscribe@yahoo.com](mailto:ysfuture2005-subscribe@yahoo.com).



## Youth leaders for HIV and AIDS wanted

Youth Visioning is about supporting young people living in small islands to imagine a better future for their community, and then support them to implement the changes they want to see.

They are currently looking for young people who are determined to educate their community or country about HIV and AIDS. They're still to finalise their selection process, but they're on the lookout for active HIV and AIDS projects that use exciting, innovative ideas and methods.

If you're interested, email to Natalia Pereira at UNESCO – [n.pereira@unesco.org](mailto:n.pereira@unesco.org) – or have a look at [www.youthvisioning.org](http://www.youthvisioning.org) for more info.



## Get cash for your short film ideas

The Commonwealth Vision Awards are offering cash prizes for short film ideas from young people.

The theme of this year's contest is 'Global challenges and the new generation', and youth in Commonwealth countries are being asked to submit short film (between three and four minutes) proposals on the topic.

Filmmakers can be up to 35 years of age.

Up to 15 entries will be chosen and awarded UK£1,000 to assist in the production of the film. The films will be broadcast internationally.

The closing date for the film proposals is Monday, October 20, 2008.

You can get an application form from [visionawards@rcsint.org](mailto:visionawards@rcsint.org), or by faxing +44 (0)20 7930 9705, or online at [www.rcsint.org/vision](http://www.rcsint.org/vision).

**CORRECTION: The last newsletter's feature on youth and mental health supplied a link to the website of World Mental Health Day. Unfortunately, we got the address wrong! The correct address is [www.wfmh.org/02WFMHDay08.htm](http://www.wfmh.org/02WFMHDay08.htm). And remember - October 10th!**

## About Us

Pacific Youth Voices is supported by the Commonwealth Youth Programme South Pacific. We make sure the voices of Pacific young people are heard by governments, NGOs, youth organisations and media so they can take a more meaningful role in the development and governance in the Pacific. We highlight positive youth stories, projects and people throughout the Pacific.

We are supported by the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP), which works to empower young people (15 – 29) to contribute to the development of their communities. CYP South Pacific (CYPSP) is one of four regional centres around the world, and works with the young people, governments and NGOs of its 14 member countries in the Pacific region. CYPSP supports a group of young leaders from the Pacific who advocate for Pacific young people's issues.

CYPSP works with Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.



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*This newsletter was put together by CYPSP Media Intern Tessa Johnstone. Special thanks to contributors Kate Moraika, Ebonie Fifita, David Ephraim and everyone who was good enough to give their time to talk and write.*

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