



EMPOWER PACIFIC NEWS

WE ARE FOR EVERYONE

Empower Pacific is for everyone as far as the provision of counselling services and psychosocial support are concerned.

At a press conference on June 17, our Chief Executive Officer, Patrick Morgam said people can even report the abuse of older persons by calling the toll-free helpline 5626.

Mr Morgam said Empower Pacific would work with the Department of Social Welfare, the Fiji Police Force and other stakeholders to ensure that our senior citizens receive support or any service which they need.

The Assistant Minister for Women, Children & Poverty Alleviation, Sashi Kiran said at the press conference that one good thing about today's age is that we have a lot of people who have access to mobile phones.

“So, if our seniors have phones or people that witness this abuse, we encourage them to call the Empower Pacific helpline 5626,” she said.

“They have a strong partnership with our social welfare officers, they work very closely with the police and with other service providers that can help.”

EMPOWER PACIFIC NEWSLETTER

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MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

Empower Pacific was privileged to be part of the Mental Health Awareness Month celebration organised by the Australia Pacific Training Coalition in May.

The APTC organised awareness program gave us the platform to advocate about the importance of good mental health and our services.

Empower Pacific Suva branch counsellor, Demesi Seruvatu, represented our NGO at the celebrations and spoke about psychological and mental health wellbeing.

Due to the sensitivity of the topic, confidentiality was explained to those present to create a conducive and trusting environment for the participants to share their experience.

The presentation was done in an interactive manner that would allow the participants to ask questions or talk about their experience, if any, on the topic.

Discussions centred on:-

- what is mental health?
- the effects of mental health issues.
- factors that affect our mental health.
- the symptoms of mental health issues.
- what is wellbeing.
- ways to wellbeing.
- challenges.
- how to cope with stress in life.
- the support available



TRAINING FOR CANE PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION



A two-day training program was conducted by Empower Pacific for the Fiji Cane Producers' Association. The training was organised by Fairtrade International and focused on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and reporting. Represented at the training program were the representatives of Lautoka Cane Producers Association, Labasa Cane Producers Association, and the Rarawai & Penang Cane Producers Association. The training was for the three associations managers and other key staff who provide awareness to farmers. The training was held from June 20-21.

THE TRIP TO MOALA ISLAND

It was something new for villagers living in eight villages on Moala Island in the Lau Group when Empower Pacific general counsellor, Vika Lumuni visited them.

Being a key player in providing counselling and social services, Empower Pacific was invited to be part of a 10-day program on the island in early May.

The program was organised by the Australian Humanitarian Partnership (AHP) in collaboration with Partners in Community Development Fiji (PCDF).

Apart from creating awareness on our services, we provided Mental Health & Psychosocial Support to the people there.

Ms Lumuni said it was the first time for majority of the villagers on the island to meet a counsellor and to also know about Empower Pacific.

Youths and villagers aged between 40 and 70 years attended the awareness sessions which she conducted in the eight villages.

The villagers did not come up with any mental health issue affecting them but they did have a lot of questions about the organisation and what we do.

Infant packs and dignity packs were also given out by Ms Lumuni to the needy villagers, who were grateful for the assistance rendered to them by Empower Pacific.



MEETING WITH HOSPITAL MANAGEMENT

Empower Pacific met with the management of Labasa Hospital in early June and discussed the provision of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services (MHPSS) to the hospital's staff and patients. Our Fiji Facility Health Project Manager, Mr Keli Koroi met with the hospital's Medical Superintendent, Dr Jaoji Vulibeci and other staff members. Mr Koroi said the visit was a great opportunity to network, identify gaps, work out possible pathways, discuss our services in the hospital from a holistic perspective and also work on areas of improvement. The key activities of the project are hospital-based counselling/social support services for in-patients and out-patients, including family therapy and counselling as needed. Also, part of the project are social work support services, including case management, psycho-social assessment, home visits, family facilitations and advocacy, further referrals outside the hospital and in the community as part of multidisciplinary service provision. Mr Koroi said the project also includes professional development awareness sessions, counselling and social work support for the Ministry of Health & Medical Services staff.



Pictured are our Fiji Facility Health Project Manager, Keli Koroi (right) with Labasa Hospital's Medical Superintendent, Dr Jaoji Vulibeci (middle) and some senior hospital staff after their discussions.

BASIC ER TRAINING



Empower Pacific's Social Worker, Ms Ruci Sekitoga (left) and General Counsellor, Ms Vika Lumuni at the training program in Suva.

Empower Pacific was part of a four-day training program focused on developing, empowering and enhancing skills for better, efficient and effective emergency response. The Basic Emergency Response (ER) Training was organised by Plan International Fiji. It was held at the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat in Suva from June 12-15 and was attended by our General Counsellor, Ms Vika Lumuni and Social Worker, Ms Ruci Sekitoga. Plan International Regional Emergency Preparedness and Response Specialist for Asia-Pacific, Angelo Melencio facilitated the training program.

Photo Credit: Plan International Pacific (Fiji)

PFA TRAINING FOR HEALTH STAFF

A three-day Psychological First Aid (PFA) training was organised by Empower Pacific for the Ministry of Health & Medical Services staff in the Western Division.

The training was held at the Commissioner Western's conference room in Lautoka from April 3-5.

It was organised by Empower Pacific under our New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (NZ MFAT) COVID-19 Response Fiji program.

Acting Divisional Medical Officer Western, Dr Abdul Shah opened the training program and Empower Pacific Chief Executive Officer, Mr Patrick Morgam presented certificates to the participants.

Those who attended the training said it was very beneficial to them and they are looking forward to more such programs to be organised by Empower Pacific.



PFA TRAINING IN SUVA

The Ministry of Health & Medical Services staff in the Central Division had a three-day Psychological First Aid (PFA) training organised by Empower Pacific. The training was held at the Salvation Army hall in Suva from May 17-19 and was attended by 24 staff from the ministry.

It started with defining PFA, different types of crisis events and disasters, core ethics of PFA, cultural considerations and discussions on the PFA Action principles.

Participants engaged well in the session as it taught them what to do and not to do as a first responder during crisis intervention in terms of PFA.

Discussions evolved around the preparation stages in identifying the various government ministries involved during an emergency response and the roles they play.

Sub-topics that were also shared was Child Protection and Gender Based Violence.

Participants noted that gender was always a sensitive topic of discussion. They were able to

differentiate and understand the difference between gender and sex.

The participants found the three-day training well organised with relevant materials, a lot of group activities, a very interactive discussion and sharing of individual experiences.



COUNSELLING HUB FOR STUDENTS

Empower Pacific was invited to the launch of the Western Counselling Hub for students and also a symposium in April.

The events were organised by the Fiji Education Programme Facility and were held at Natabua High School in Lautoka on April 15.

The objectives for the symposium were to further discuss the provision of psychosocial support in schools and present the findings of a research conducted by USP on the Pilot Student Support funded by the Facility.

This is the first student support hub which was launched by the Minister for Education, Aseri Radrodro and Australia's Deputy High Commissioner, Sophie Temby and there are others planned.

The counselling hubs will offer confidential counselling in a secure environment and has disability friendly accessibility.



CHILD PROTECTION IN EMERGENCIES (CPiE) WORKSHOP

Empower Pacific participated in the Child Protection in Emergencies (CPiE) workshop in May.

Held at the Southern Cross Hotel in Suva from May 8-9, the workshop was to reinforce stakeholder capacity to prepare and respond to child protection needs in an emergency.

Its purpose was also to:-

- reinforce learning through refresher sessions on child protection in emergencies to child protection focal points in the Department of Social Welfare, Ministry of Education and civil society
- partners (Empower Pacific, Save the Children Fiji).
- to promote evidence-based practice for planning and delivering child protection in emergencies programming, including effective implementation of child friendly safe spaces.
- to coordinate planning to support an integrated and resilient referral pathway to facilitate access to needed child and family support services in an emergency.
- to facilitate the development of coordinated multisectoral action plans to facilitate multisectoral

disaster risk reduction planning and awareness raising.

Camille Evans, the Child Protection in Education consultant for UNICEF, facilitated the workshop which was attended by our counsellor, Emi Ucanibaravi and volunteer, Miliakere Naua.

MEN CAN SEEK COUNSELLING TOO

MEN who are in or going through some crisis in their lives should not hesitate to call the Empower Pacific toll-free helpline for counselling assistance.

While a few do call to seek counselling for some issues, there are some in particular who maybe victims of domestic violence but do not tell anyone.

This is mainly because of the stigma attached to it, as there is a perception that only women are victims of domestic violence.

Empower Pacific chief executive officer, Mr Patrick Morgam said the Non-Government Organisation and its toll-free counselling helpline 5626 was for everyone.

Mr Morgam said at a press conference on June 17 that like others, men were also free to call the helpline and discuss their problems with our qualified counsellors.

Every counselling session is treated with a high level of confidentiality, in that, the discussion is between the client and the counsellor only.

So, all you have to do if you are a man and a victim of domestic violence or some form of abuse is pick up your phone and dial 5626.