

peacemail

VOLUME 6 • ISSUE 8

POSTAGE PAID
OFF PEAK
AUSTRALIA

act for peace
reduce poverty | protect refugees
prevent conflicts | empower communities



Racial discrimination is one of the biggest forms of conflict in Fiji. The Ecumenical Centre for Research, Education and Advocacy's (ECREA) main involvement with young people in Fiji is through their Youth, Peace and Development Program (YDP). The program trains youth peace facilitators to empower other young people to explore ways of improving interethnic relationships in their own community and throughout Fiji.

The program's communication strategies place great importance on full understanding of cultural communication styles, as this helps bridge the gaps of ethnic divides in Fiji.

ECREA's peace-building workshops involve 16 young people, who are representatives of the different ethnic and religious backgrounds from around Fiji. Young people are skilled to be at the forefront of peace-building processes in their own communities and the whole country. Their creativity and energy transcend ethnic differences. They can make great changes in attitudes and be great catalysts to nation building.

\$200 can empower young people to work for peace in their own community and throughout Fiji.

\$1200 can train one young person as a peace facilitator for the full one year program.

Act for Peace is the international aid agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA).

actalliance



Act for Peace
National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA)
Locked Bag 199, Queen Victoria Building, NSW 1230
Free Call: 1800 025 101 E: actforpeace@ncca.org.au
Fax: (02) 9262 4514 W: www.actforpeace.org.au
ABN 64 493 941 795

THANK YOU Partners for your commitment to Act for Peace through your prayers and regular gifts. Through your generosity, we are making a real and lasting difference to the lives of many people affected by conflict or extreme poverty.

If you would like to upgrade your regular gift, simply free call Howard or Sarah on **1800 025 101** or email hgraham@ncca.org.au. Also, all feedback and suggestions are welcome, as we love to hear from you and to pass on comments to project partners.

On the other hand, if you are not yet an Act for Peace Partner and would like to be, or would just like to help this project, your call or email will be welcomed! *All gifts of \$2 or more are tax deductible.*

peacemail

VOLUME 6 • ISSUE 8

The Youth, Peace and Development Program Changed My Life

Dear Act for Peace Partner,

I am a young woman named Mere Vaseva in Fiji. The opportunity I found through the Youth, Peace and Development Program (YPDP) was beyond my wildest dreams. I read an article in a newspaper and sent in an application to the organising body, The Ecumenical Centre for Research, Education and Advocacy (ECREA). I received a call that I was one of the participants picked to attend the Annual Youth Forum.

Four months later, as one of 16 Trainee Youth Peace Facilitators and with four modules of training, I'm travelling to places in my country that I've never been before and I could not have afforded to visit. I've learnt the different themes for each module and identified myself with the various issues as a young person: the struggle, the impact and then finding solutions in the end.

Who could forget the bonding within my fellow trainees, the facilitators and, of course, the two heads of the Program?

There were so many highlights from the past three months that if I had to tell them all, I would have to write a book. The two that stood out most for me were the module on culture set in downtown Suva and the module on communication based on understanding ourselves and others.

The module on culture forced me to step outside of my comfort zone. I interviewed people who were just trying to make a living. For example, I sat with a beggar on a busy street and realised how it really feels to be one. Listening to her story moved me because it was genuine and this was the last resort for her. The shame of talking to her just vanished. I learnt a great lesson in humility that day.

The other module on communication gave me the chance to know my other trainees better, especially their personal stories. It required trust, confidentiality and respect on my part. I was inspired by all of them. Thank you!

The YPDP Program has given me the platform from which to share my story, especially through a phase in my life that I didn't think I could have survived. I have laughed, cried, got upset at times, been amazed and inspired as well as challenged all throughout. Thank you for giving me an opportunity of a lifetime when no one else did.

I hope to make an impact in my own everyday life in a little way, one step at a time. I hope to inspire other young people around me and tell them that yes, we can create a change, a voice, a difference through peace and unity. Together, we can move Fiji forward, regardless of status, ethnicity and religion. I will do my best to be the best Youth Peace Facilitator I can be.

I live by the saying peace is the fruit of action, not of sleep. I thank God always, my family, my friends and my YPDP family for never giving up on me.

Partner's Prayer Points:

Give thanks for the work of ECREA in developing peace and harmony in the troubled nation of Fiji.

Pray for the young people leading the way of communicating the need for inter-racial understanding and harmony.



Mere

act for peace
reduce poverty | protect refugees
prevent conflicts | empower communities