

# TALANOA TOKTOK

Official Publication of the Pacific Conference of Churches



Pacific portrait ..... regional university student paints her oceans message on a placard in Suva, Fiji

## Save the ocean

### Youth deliver strong, united message

REGIONAL youth have delivered an urgent plea for leaders to save the Pacific Ocean.

In a display of creativity and originality, the students painted murals, designed posters and created placards which called for all oceans to be protected.

This was part of a joint programme for World Oceans Week facilitated by the Pacific Conference of Churches and supported by the Pacific Regional NGO Alliance.

Some of the artwork was later displayed at the World Oceans Conference in Lisbon, Portugal.

A strong anti-nuclear sentiment shone through in many

of the art pieces and posters which were created with the help of university students from the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Nuclear waste seeping from United States testing facilities in the Marshalls is a major threat to the Pacific Ocean.

The murals created by the students have become part of the permanent display in the PCC Garden of Peace and Justice in Suva, Fiji.

The garden has become a safe gathering place for advocates against injustice to people and the environment.

[www.pcc.org.fj](http://www.pcc.org.fj)



# State stops posters



Pacific Disability Forum



FIJIAN authorities stopped peaceful marchers from carrying placards and posters on World Oceans Day.

The posters called for protection of the oceans, a ban on nuclear proliferation and a moratorium on seabed mining - issues ratified by the current Fijian government. But when members of the Pacific Regional NGO Alliance arrived for the World Oceans Day March in Suva, they were ordered to remove all banners and posters.

The Pacific Conference of Churches' General Secretary, Reverend James Bhagwan, said this was an unfortunate incident which highlighted the need for freedom of expression in Fiji.

"There was nothing provocative or dangerous about those messages. We all want to protect the ocean and ensure the sustainability of marine life," he said.

"We call on authorities throughout the region to take a common sense approach when it comes to messages about matters of national and regional importance.

"Let the cries of our people be heard so that those in authority can legislate with justice."



**Imminent danger ... some of the posters Fijian officials stopped marchers from carrying on World Oceans Day**

## A sail for ocean justice

MEMBERS of the Pacific Regional NGO Alliance joined theologians for a sail on a traditional voyaging canoe to mark World Oceans Day.

Aboard the Uto Ni Yalo - a partner of the Pacific Conference of Churches - the NGO family reflected on the importance of the ocean and their responsibility towards its protection. Solomon Islands theologian, Reverend Dr Cliff Bird, gave a Biblical reflection on the ocean and prayers were offered at sea. The canoe was joined by youth from the NGO community who paddled alongside in canoes. Throughout the week, the NGOs delivered a series of webinars on ocean themes and provided support for each other through guest speakers or panelists.

More than 30,000 people attended the webinars.

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# Status card to highlight challenges



**Sop it now .... Reverend Dr Cliff Bird speaks at the Gender Status Card launch in Suva**

## Church gender audit

A STATUS Card will help regional churches identify areas in which they must improve their involvement with women and children.

Designed by UN Women and the Pacific Conference of Churches, the card will be used to conduct a baseline survey before determining specific courses of action.

Using targeted questions, the card will classify the PCC's 33 member churches and eight national church councils as Red (below standard), Orange (needing improvement) or Green (achieved standard).

"Once we know what work needs to

be done we can work with individual churches and design programmes which improve their involvement with women and girls," said PCC Gender Programmes Team Leader, Reverend Sierra Bird.

"Based on the findings, we will also be able to help churches design policies which allow for increased participation of women in discussions and ensure their voices are heard."

In many Pacific churches, women are still not permitted to be ordained.

This was recently changed in Nauru and Tuvalu where women have

been ordained as ministers in equal standing with their male colleagues.

"These are encouraging moves and we congratulate the Nauru Congregational Church and the Ekalesia Kerisiano Tuvalu for their recognition of women," Bird said. "We pray that other churches will reflect on this and bring about similar changes."

The Status Card was launched by the EU's Deputy Head of Delegation, Dr Erja Askola, who thanked PCC for taking the initiative to highlight the important role of women in the region.



## We must report the rot

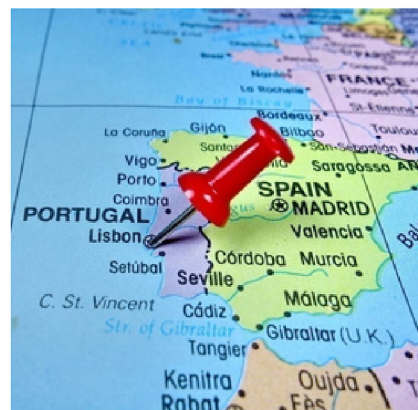
STAFF must report all instances of indecent treatment within the workplace.

After the implementation of a Staff Safeguarding Policy in May, members of the Pacific Conference of Churches secretariat were trained in methods of gathering and reporting of disclosure when the policy is breached. This included protection of the person making the disclosure, reporting lines and the dignity of people reporting offences. Gender Programme staff member, Anareta Apole (pictured), said it was important for the PCC to take the lead in this area. "We must lead by example and show member churches how to approach these issues," Apole said.





**About the UN Oceans Conference**  
**Theme - Save Our Oceans, Protect our future**  
**Priority - We must conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development**  
**PCC Delegation - Youth from Fiji and the Republic of the Marshall Islands**  
**Next step - Develop ocean programmes for churches**



**On the big screen ... PCC Representative Olivia Baro at a meeting on the Treaty of the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Vienna**

Pacific voices ring out loud on world stage

# No to Nukes, now

THE Pacific Conference of Churches has stood on the front line of the fight against nuclear weapons for five decades.

In Fiji and Maohi Nui (French Polynesia) these voices have been the loudest. But this year it was the young people of the Pacific - particularly the Republic of the Marshall Islands which has been loudest.

The PCC's Bedi Racule who is from RMI has been instrumental in harnessing Marshallese voices at home and the at the University of the South Pacific.

She was accompanied by PCC Youth Team Leader, Olivia Baroin Vienna, Austria, for the first Meeting of States Parties (MSP) to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

"We welcome this historic occasion and celebrate this milestone that moves us closer to a world without nuclear weapons," Baro said in a message from the interfaith community.

"We gather at a time when the threat of nuclear annihilation feels closer than before.

"So many more of us suffer from anxiety in response to the increasing threats by nuclear armed states. In the face of these urgent existential threats, we are more determined than ever to abolish nuclear weapons. We are acutely aware of the threats facing humanity and our beloved planet. From the devastating impacts of a global pandemic to the rising threat of climate catastrophe, the stakes for life on earth have never felt higher."

## Talanoa Toktok