



*Talanoa Pasifika is about telling the stories of the Pacific: sharing the stories from the churches and PCC.*



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**TALANOA**  
TOKTOK LONG



**PASIFIKA**  
HAUS BILONG GOD

## The Pacific Conference of Churches

NEWS OF THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT IN THE PACIFIC REGION

### Greetings from the Secretariat of the Pacific Conference of Churches

**Ni sa bula from the Secretariat of the Pacific Conference of Churches!**

The provocative title of this first issue is the challenge that the Secretariat places on the table: getting the member churches to know more about the life and work of the secretariat of the Pacific Conference of Churches.



Secondly, many of our partner organizations constantly cry out for more information and news from the Pacific region. Many of our partners are not well informed of the activities and life of PCC. It seems that the only time they hear from us is when their annual contribution is late.

Thirdly, this newsletter is an

avenue for you to be updated on the work of the staff at PCC. Many of staff will be reporting on the progress of their work through this newsletter.

Lastly, the newsletter is a channel for PCC to highlight issues that are of great concern to the regional non-government organizations. In this regard, we will give the opportunity to other regional organizations to share their programmes in the region in an effort to raise awareness on their activities.



*Talanoa Pasifika* is about telling the stories of the Pa-

cific. It is about sharing the stories from the churches and from PCC.



*Toktok long haus bilong God* from Pidgin means "sharing in the Church" to describe the sharing of stories and information about the work of the churches and about the activities of the PCC Secretariat.

This newsletter is a quarterly newsletter and will be the joint activity of the Secretariat and the member churches.

Happy reading!

**General Secretary**  
**Fe'iloakitau Kaho Tevi**





## New faces at the PCC secretariat

*New Climate Change Campaigns Officer Peter Hans Emberson and Communications Officer Julika Meinert*

Two new staff recently joined the PCC Secretariat in March: Peter Emberson is the newly appointed Climate Change Campaigns Officer and Julika Meinert is PCC's Communications Officer for a duration of seven months.



Emberson, 29, joins the PCC from the Pacific Concerns Resource Center, where he worked for six years. Emberson recently completed his

Masters Degree in International Politics with an emphasis on Peace and Conflict Resolution.

The immediate focus of

Emberson's work is to prepare Pacific civil society leaders to effectively lobby their position on climate change.

Julika Meinert, 23, comes from PCC's German partners, the Northelbian Mission Board and EMW (Association of Protestant Churches and Missions in Germany).

Meinert did her Bachelors Degree in Media and Communications, Lin-



guistics and Literature and is a trained journalist. Among other things she works on PCC's newsletter and website.

## A new partner in the region

*PCC and PLP sign partnership agreement*

*"The agreement frames the character of the organizations' partnership and specifies the benefits and risks for both PLP and PCC."*

As the result of negotiations and partnering sessions, which have been held since November 2008, PCC now signed a partnership agreement with the Pacific Leadership Program (PLP). PLP supports organizations in their efforts for good governance and improved leadership styles

for current and emerging leaders in the Pacific region. It is funded by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID).

The agreement, which was signed by PLP program director Angus MacDonald and PCC General Secretary

Fe'iloakitau Tevi in March, frames the character of the organizations' partnership and specifies the benefits and risks for both PLP and PCC. The first activity for PLP to support PCC's work will be the Pacific Church Leaders Meeting in April.



Allan Mua, Program Officer of the Pacific Leadership Program, and PCC's General Secretary

Fe'iloakitau Tevi after signing the partnership agreement in the PCC head office in Suva.





“We are not only fighting to save Tuvalu — we are fighting to save the world”

*Tafue Lusama (44) is not only a fisherman and father of seven children, but also a minister and Program Secretary for Peace and Justice in the Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu (Tuvalu Christian Church). And for all of these reasons he is most worried about his low-lying country meeting the impacts of Climate Change. The voluntary Chairman of the TU CAN (Tuvalu Climate Action Network) talks about Noah's part in Climate Change, today's challenges on the Tuvaluan islands and the deep urge to go home.*

### What is happening in Tuvalu?

There are a lot challenges, for example to the livelihood. The people in Tuvalu depend on land and sea for their survival. The majority of the population is unemployed, but people are landowners. And here a great change has happened since ten years. Our land is very small and most of the islands are longish. The coastal erosion eats up the islands from the ends and the sides. Landowners lose their property. It has really become a problem: On the one hand the places are overcrowded, on the other hand people have less and less place to plant.

### What other problems do you face?

As our soil is poor, we cannot plant a lot. Therefore people traditionally dig unto the groundwater to plant. The water in the plantations has been coming up and down for generations, but now it actually kills the crop: Sea-water has pushed the underground water and comes into the plantations.

### How do the people react?

Life becomes very hard and difficult under these conditions. There is a fear in the population. Our people have seen the changes for years, but they could not link it to Climate Change. Our task is to build this link.

### What are the challenges there?

First of all we need to approach the

issue from a theological perspective: The people do not believe in the threat of Tuvalu sinking because of God's covenant with Noah. The Bible says, there will never be a flood again. So people have heard about Climate Change, but they do not believe it.



### How do you, as a minister and a climate activist, react to that?

We have to explain the story from the Bible in a proper context. What I did in workshops is telling the participants to open their Bible and read Noah's story again carefully and see what each person in the text is saying. Who made a promise here? They answer: God did. And then I ask them: Did Noah, representing the humans, make a promise not to cause another flood?! He did not. God is faithful to his covenant, but we humans are acting to cause this disaster. The humans are acting towards Climate Change. So we have to take another look at the Bible, re-read it and come to a new interpretation of Noah's story.

### What can the people in Tuvalu do to deal with the new situation?

It is very hard for us. We depend on our traditional skills: They tell us, where and when to fish. Now that the climate has become unpredictable, it undermines the skills of the people and their ability to feed their families. If we do not catch fish, we have to go

to the market to buy some. The situation is forcing people to change from their traditional lifestyle to a market based lifestyle as the only option. And this creates even more poverty.

### What keeps you going in this struggle against Climate Change?

I believe that we are not only fighting to save the country. We are fighting to save the world. Tuvalu is just the starting point of the visible impacts. If we do not save Tuvalu today, Tuvalu will go down. Kiribati will follow, then it will hit other Pacific islands and this development continues on until it reaches Manhattan. If we can stop the problem before it comes to Tuvalu, we save the world. I look at the globe as a house for everybody to survive.

### If you could make a wish list for your country, what would be on it?

We ask the international community to reduce the emissions. The world has to feel responsible and meet the financial needs. And apart from that I want us to raise the level of the land. Our land is small, only 26 sq. km., and therefore the loss of every square meter is painful.

### How do you feel about the threatening danger of Tuvalu disappearing?

There is no place like home. I travel a lot, but the moment, I step out of the plane in Tuvalu, I know: I am home. There is always an urge to go home in every one of us. And if we lose Tuvalu, there will be 12,000 people on this planet without a place called home. We will be foreigners forever. Here in the Pacific our identity is very much bound to the land we were brought up on. With losing our land we would lose our history, our language, our culture – we would lose our identity.

*Interview: Julika Meinert*





## Engage Pacific peoples on Climate Change issue Australia told

*“The Pacific is vulnerable to the effects of climate change and larger greenhouse emitting countries, who have contributed much to today’s critical situation, must ensure that the concerns of Pacific peoples are accounted for and considered in all negotiations leading up to COP15.”*

*Fe’iloakitau Tevi*

Pacific civil society organisations have called on Australia, New Zealand and the international community to take into account the many challenges facing Pacific island peoples as they negotiate their national and regional positions on climate change.

The call was made at a recently convened regional meeting (March 11, 2009) to unite for a Pacific position on climate change in the lead up to the fifteenth Conference of Parties (COP15) meeting in Denmark in December 2009. The COP15 under the United Nations’ Climate Change Convention is the foremost frame-

work in a global attempt to stem the tide of climate change and its devastating impacts. At present negotiations are taking place internationally between all State parties to the climate change framework, to firm up new commitments to cushion the impacts and to negotiate a fairer deal on climate change related matters.

The Pacific Conference of Churches General Secretary Fe’iloakitau Tevi says it is imperative that Pacific peoples’ voice is accounted for in all the COP15 meeting processes.

“The Pacific is vulnerable to the effects of climate change and larger

greenhouse emitting countries, who have contributed much to today’s critical situation, must ensure that the concerns of Pacific peoples are accounted for and considered in all negotiations leading up to COP15,” Mr. Tevi said.

Tevi urged all Pacific Leaders to recognize the importance of all the preparatory COP15 processes and to take on board the joint position of Pacific civil society.

PCC was represented at the meeting by secretariat staff and Rev. Baranite Kirata from Kiribati Protestant Church and Rev. Tafue from Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu.

## Resettlement a dream?

*PCC intern Oiner Leutu Moa on her point of view*

Many Pacific Islanders, especially the most vulnerable countries, are thinking of resettling to other countries in order to survive. It is not an easy move, because there is a way of life and culture, Pacific Islanders grow up with and got used to. But what is the Pacific Island’s Forum waiting for? They are interested in adaptation and miti-

gation approaches, but there is no harm in putting in place a “proactive resettlement plan”. Out of those questions came many shorter, but serious ones like: When will they address the issue of resettlement? Are they waiting until a big tsunami or super cyclone wipes out atoll dwellers?! This reminds us, no matter how much the grass-

roots people value an issue, it all depends on the “big guns” to decide.

We should act now to address the resettlement issue, rather than waiting for something serious to happen. Remember it is our right to live and right to survive this reality we did not start. Recognize our voice! Or we shall dream on until the next life?



Children in Tuvalu.





## Reebo Biita: Good governance is the key

### Good governance – a topic for the church?

Good governance is one of the most important aspects in our family and community, but especially in the conduct of the government. Without caring for good governance, the relation between people and government will be chaotic and cause problems.

In the church the most important thing is to unite the members of the church through honest

governing of people. Good leadership in the church can empower the people to respond creatively to God's call.

Good governance and leadership are important in our lives, but they are also goals, which are not always easy to reach. Sometimes we may succeed, but at times we fail. So how can we overcome our failures and improve in our decision-making? This question challenges us. It will help us to look back and go to

the time, when Jesus was on earth: how he had empowered people in his actions and words. We know that Jesus was a kind and friendly person. He gave us a good example of good governance and leadership. This helps us today to think about what our best decision for the community, society and the church would be: a decision that can empower the people.

### Good governance – a topic for the church!



**Reebo Biita** from Kiribati, born in 1984, is our intern on Good governance and leadership.

He belongs to the Kiribati Protestant Church (KPC).

His internship is supported by the God's Pacific People Programme.

## Naatia Kiteon: Combat the virus



**Naatia Kiteon** from Kiribati, born in 1985, is our intern on HIV and Aids. She belongs to the Kiribati Protestant Church (KPC).

It has been the role of PCC for the last decade to work with member churches to bring awareness, to educate and to equip the people to combat the disease and to care for People living with HIV/Aids. HIV is a virus that can pass on through sexual relationship, when body fluids go from one partner to another – what we call unprotected sex (without

condom). It can also pass on from mother to child through breast-feeding or through blood transfusion. This virus cannot be cured, once someone is HIV positive, the virus stays in his/her body for life and can lead to the last stage called AIDS. The number of HIV cases in the Pacific islands keeps on increasing. Therefore, the Pacific Conference of

Churches and its member churches work together on implementing programs on the disease to prevent the number from increasing.

As an intern at PCC my task is to study and research on HIV/Aids in the Pacific and to encourage our churches to continue to combat it to help our people to be free and prevented from being affected by it.



### Oiner Moa: The threat of climate change



**Oiner Leutu Moa**  
from Samoa, born in 1984, is our intern on Environment and Climate Change. She belongs to the Congregational Christian Church Samoa (CCCS).

The Pacific Conference of Churches is active on combating environmental and climate change issues. It is highly involved and merged with non governmental organisations in the region and abroad on conducting awareness programs, campaigns, advocacy, lobbying and it continues to pressure the industrialised nations through its church partnership members overseas on environ-

mental and climatic issues that have affected our fragile islands.

In November 2008 there was a regional workshop on church-state covenants on the environment, which we organized in a group. My research consists of two parts: One is a film, which will visually capture people's perceptions on climate change. The second part is document-

ing these perceptions on a research paper.

As an intern and a youth myself I feel that we, the younger generations, should have our voices be heard, because climate change will be at the expense of our lives. The effects that it will have on our environment in the years to come can cost us our land, human rights and our culture, which is our identity.

### Andrew Kaloa: The seek for true justice in trade

Around the pacific islands the rapid abuse and exploitation of natural resources such as logging has left our green hills barren with little royalty received. Likewise our minerals and marine resources have been excessively harvested by foreign companies without preservation for our future posterity. As a pacific islander, where survival and pride depend entirely on our natural

heritage, it is a great concern for awareness.

Hence it is highly demanded to combat this issue, PCC made Globalisation and Trade one of its strategic thematic programs. My prime focus is activism and advocacy on fair trade policies enhanced and awareness on the negative and positive impacts of economic globalisation. PCC has introduced alternatives, that are based on principles commonly practiced in our pacific islands and

that cannot be marginalised. I get involved in in-country workshops on globalisation and trade and regional seminars on current trade agreements. By advocating on this issue we want to bring understanding on the impacts of globalisation to our Pacific people from grassroots to government level. And we hope to empower people to seek for true justice with regard to fair trade policies and the wise use of natural resources.



**Andrew Kaloa**  
from the Solomon Islands, born in 1984, is our intern on Globalisation and Trade. He belongs to the Church of Melanesia.

PCC is thankful to the God's Pacific People Programme for supporting him and the Internship Programme.





## Update on the PCC programmes

There are six thematic programme areas and the two sectoral programmes for PCC to work on for the next five years. These programme areas were mandated by the 9<sup>th</sup> General Assembly at Pago Pago in 2007. The eight programme areas are allocated among the three Ecumenical Animators and the Finance Officer to implement.

**Mr. Makoni Pulu:** Globalisation and Trade, Youth Empowerment

**Rev. François Pihatae:** Environment – Climate change, Good Governance and Leadership

**Mr. Aisake Casimira:** Ecumenism in the Pacific, Coordinates the programmes

**Mr. Raju Fong:** Human Rights

The Programmes on Women Development and HIV and AIDS do not have an Executive Staff to coordinate.

### Work done to date:

- **Ecumenism in the Pacific:** a survey on spirituality has been sent to the churches, awaiting their responses. The scheduled conference on theology of hope is being re-scheduled for July 2009. However, in its place and contingent on availability of funds, a review of this programme is scheduled for late November or early December this year. The dates are yet to be finalised.
- **Environment:** Research on the concept of “church-state covenant on the environment” is well under way and should be completed by the end of September. The results of the research will feed into the workshop scheduled for November 24 – 28 this year.
- **Human Rights:** The regional workshop on Human Rights was conducted in October, 2008. The workshop targeted the member churches in Kiribati, Fiji, Tonga, Solomon Islands and Samoa
- **Youth Empowerment:** A regional youth convention was conducted in Fiji which brought together youth from the main Christian traditions in the Pacific – Methodists, Presbyterian and Congregational. Two national youth conventions were deferred for 2009.
- **Good Governance - Leadership:** a successful workshop on Christian Leadership was conducted with the United Church of Christ in the Marshall Islands. A workshop scheduled with the Church of Melanesia in the Solomon Islands was re-scheduled for November, 2008. The Church leaders meeting with the United Church of Christ in Pohnpei was re-scheduled to June, 2009.
- **HIV and AIDS:** Preparation work to put together a series of bible studies on human sexuality is currently being

done. In addition, the re-scheduled workshop on Teenage Pregnancy and HIV and AIDS with the United Church of Christ in Pohnpei was deferred to 2009. The dates are yet to be finalised.

Apart from the programme work there are other programme related activities that we had undertaken over the past three months. These are:

- **Programme Reference committees:** the establishment of this committee on the mandate of the Finance and General Business Committee in November, 2008. The objective is to engage the member churches and executive members as much as possible in the planning and monitoring of PCC programmes. It had its first meeting in February, 2009 under the terms of reference it was established.
  - **Review of programme structure:** The review as completed and tabled and endorsed at the Finance and General Business Committee meeting in February, 2009. The objective is to re-organise our programme work and review the current programme structure so that all the programme work will be better reflected.
  - **The internship programme** started in August with four interns: one each for the Good Governance and Leadership; HIV and AIDS; Globalisation and Trade and Climate Change.
  - The animators have also visited and attended workshops conducted by the member churches in the Solomon Islands and the Marshall Islands.
- For the next three to four months, the following programme activities will be implemented:
- The completion of the survey on women in ministries among the member churches in December
  - The bible study series on human sexuality
  - Planning for the Pacific Day of Prayer for May, 2009
  - The implementation of the workshop on Church-State covenant on the environment in November
  - The completion of the research project on the Church-State covenant on the environment in September
  - The Regional youth convention in Fiji in December
  - The Programme Review and Planning in December

In conclusion, we the animators wish to thank the General Secretary, the interns and administration staff for their support. Also, we wish to extend our gratitude to the member churches, especially those who hosted us at their workshops and those who responded to our requests.

*Ecumenical Animators Team*







Comments, questions, suggestions for improvement and contributions of information, pictures or stories to the *Talanoa Pasifika* are most welcome. Please contact Julika Meinert, call + 679 3311 277 or email to [pacific@pcc.org.fj](mailto:pacific@pcc.org.fj).



## Current and upcoming events

Date	Event	Location
30/3 - 2/4	Executive Committee Meeting	Suva, Fiji
20/4- 24/4	Oikoumene Pasifika 2009	Nadi, Fiji
April (tbc)	Globalisation and Trade Workshop	Solomon Islands
May 1st	Pacific Day of Prayer	Pacific
May (tbc)	Training and teaching on HIV / Aids Workshop	Fiji
6/5 - 12/5	Regional Human Rights Workshop	Kiribati
8/6 - 14/6	Good governance and Leadership Workshop	Samoa
June (tbc)	Regional Human Rights Workshop	Tonga
June (tbc)	Good governance and Leadership Workshop	Pohnpei
June (tbc)	Workshop: Media & the Environment	Fiji
14/6- 25/6	Youth Convention	Marshall Islands

## About the Pacific Conference of Churches

The Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC) seeks to pursue the visible unity of the member churches of the Pacific Conference of Churches and promote the ecumenical movement in the Pacific region.

The Pacific Conference of Churches is the Regional Ecumenical Organisation (REO) representing the churches at all levels in the Pacific region. It seeks the visible unity of the Church on issues of justice, peace and integrity of creation, initiatives on capacity building, and solidarity with its members during times of natural disasters and internal social upheavals.

It was founded in 1961 after the first meeting held at Malua Theological Seminary in Samoa. From very modest beginnings in the early 1960s, its membership is now numbered at about 27 Pacific member Churches and 11 National Council of Churches (NCCs).



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