

April Bulletin

Number 4 | April 2009

Transparency International

Fiji

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Bula Vinaka! Namaste! and Welcome to the fifth issue of TI Fiji's new monthly bulletin. In this edition you can expect monthly updates and information regarding what is happening at TI Fiji, current and upcoming events, as well as general topics affecting TI Fiji.

You can read more in the upcoming quarterly newsletter, *TI Fiji Update*, that will soon be available!

Local Updates

TI Fiji AGM

The scheduled TI Fiji AGM for Wednesday the 29th of April has been moved to the 17th of June. The rescheduled meeting was to see the election of new members to the TI Fiji Board that will serve the remainder of 2009 through to 2010.

However, despite the extension, the current board and its members will serve as normal.

ALAC's Vacant Positions Filled

The selection and interviews of shortlisted applicants for the Legal Officer and Programme Assistant posts was carried in early April.

The criterion for the appointed Officers was prepared by Director ALAC. Michael Cokanasiga has been selected as Legal Officer and Tokasa Ramaqa as the Programme Assistant.

Both have already jumped into the thick of things joining the Programme Director and Communications Officer in preparations for the launch and the running of its programme.

Open Budget Transparency

TI Fiji has been vocal over the years about the need for greater accountability, transparency and equality by the state in its budget allocation processes.

In advocating these needs, TI Fiji will be working with the Centre on Budget and Policy Priorities based in Washington DC as it did in 2007.

Programme officer, Zena Sherani will be representing our local chapter to the three day Open Budget Training Initiative (OBI) workshop from the 4, 5 and 6 May.

The workshop is intended to revise the OBI methodology to complete the Open Budget Survey and to think through potential advocacy strategies that can be implemented by Open Budget Survey researchers to promote greater transparency practices in their respective governments.

The research for the next round of the OBS will begin in June 2009.

ALAC Launch

The Advocacy and Legal Advice Centre was officially launched by the British High Commissioner, His Excellency, Mr. Malcolm McLachlan on the 30th of April.

Held at the Reserve Bank's Tower 11 Boardroom, the workshop followed by the launch was attended by the Japanese Ambassador, representatives from the Police, the Director of Public Prosecutions Office, FICAC and various relevant Civil Society Organisations.

In launching the programme, Mr McLachlan said: "Corruption affects the country politically, economically, depletes national wealth and undermines people's trust, it thrives where institutional checks on power are inadequate."

"We believe (British Government) believe that Transparency International does a fantastic job around the world and that is why the British Department for International Development is prepared to provide a considerable amount for funding."

Programme Director, Koila Kabu says that the ALAC programme will commence its public awareness and advocacy campaigns around Fiji soon after.

FCOSS Tripartite Meeting

The CSO Forum committee, chaired by SEO TI Fiji, met at FCOSS on 15/04/09 to consider plans for the CSO Forum to be held

in Suva.

This is where CSO's in the country will deal with civil society response to the current global economic crisis as well as address CSO sector coordination and development for Fiji.

Some funding has been received and preparations can progress aiming to attract up to 40 organisations from around the country later in the year.

Grassroots Budgetary Workshops

Senior Executive Officer (SEO) and the Programme Officer, Zena Sherani represented TI Fiji to the Citizens and Constitutional Forum (CCF) facilitated workshop on government budgets.

The theme of the workshop was "*Monitoring Government Budget*" and as part of TI Fiji's mandate, the SEO spoke to participants on the activities that TI Fiji is involved with, reference to transparent budgeting.

The two workshops were held on the 23rd-24th in Korovou, Tailevu and the second at Sigatoka on the 28th-29th.

PAG Teleconference:

The Pacific Advisory Group for the TINZ Pacific Support Programme held their regular teleconference mid-day on the 16/04/09 which considered the draft report and generally endorsed the consultant's recommendations on the review of this NZAID funded programme.

AVI Programme activities:

New AVI Country Director Ms Tracey Johns visited the office on 21/04/09 to discuss operational policy and future plans for the programme and the assignment of our Finance Officer Ms Lina Scalzo, reaffirming AVI's commitment to this partnership and expansion proposals.

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DID YOU KNOW?

That a recent survey by TI Fiji on Fiji's systems of governance revealed that corruption in its various forms exists at all levels of society. Unfortunately, many people perceive corrupt practices as part of business and general life. The problem of corruption is a national issue and every person in Fiji has a role to play in eradicating corruption and in promoting integrity.

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International Developments

Anti-corruption is vital for prosperity in the Americas

As the world faces a prolonged economic crisis the 34 heads of state meeting this week at the summit of the Americas must ensure that transparency and accountability are an integral part of future actions to ensure prosperity in the hemisphere, according to Transparency International (TI).

Recent research conducted by TI shows that states' promises to fight corruption are not being effectively translated into action. States do not report sufficiently on actions taken to implement mandates and as there is no standard reporting format, monitoring anti-corruption progress makes it a daunting task.

Furthermore, civil society participation is not integrated into implementation reviews and is even dependent on domestic legislation in some countries, severely limiting independent and critical monitoring.

The TI analysis found serious gaps in the implementation of anti-corruption commitments, particularly as there is a lack of coordination among regional and national authorities responsible for the follow-up of Summit mandates and the implementation of the Inter-American Convention.

Nine countries were evaluated (Argentina, Bolivia, Canada, El Salvador, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru and Trinidad and Tobago) on actions taken to fulfill goals set out during the previous four summits of the Americas

Increase in the Global Expansion of ALAC

The total number of ALAC's globally has increased to 42 centres in 32 TI National Chapters.

Started in 2003 by three National Chapters – Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Romania the ALACs have received well over 15,000 contacts from citizens. It is anticipated that the number of National Chapters operating ALACs will increase significantly in the next year or two, as the power of the approach becomes apparent.

Time for Transparency: the G-20 and the Financial Crisis

Trust in the financial markets vanished when a lack of transparency became apparent and it is only through transparency that investor confidence and public trust can be restored.

As leaders from the Group of 20 nations prepare to meet on 2 April to determine steps to counter the economic crisis, Transparency International (TI) seeks to ensure that transparency, accountability and integrity are at the top of their agenda.

In a letter to UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown, TI proposes a thorough approach to address the roots of the crisis, the systemic risks created over the years, the nefarious role of tax havens and the rise in global poverty resulting from the meltdown.

TI urges Introduction of Mandatory EU Lobbying Register

TI calls for a total review of the EU voluntary register of lobbyists, following the very disappointing results of the current register launched in June 2008.

TI urged the inter-institutional working group between the Commission and Parliament to agree on a fully-fledged mandatory register.

To be effective - i.e. to provide transparency on who is lobbying whom, with which financial means and for what purpose.

TI Bangladesh Signs MOU with Bilateral Donors

Four leading bilateral development organisations – DFID of the UK, SIDA of Sweden, SDC of Switzerland and the Danish Embassy today signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) to support TIB's new initiative titled **Paribartan – Driving Change**.

The goal of the project is to achieve positive changes in policies and practices conducive to accountable and transparent governance in Bangladesh.

HAVE YOUR SAY!

Welcome to TI Fiji's new addition. In this section, individuals have the opportunity to write and express their opinions and views on topics that TI Fiji is advocating. Every month TI Fiji has a different topic so make sure to keep a lookout!

TI Fiji was recently granted an



audience with a high level UNCAC fact finding team to Fiji. TI Fiji Board Members Mr Dave Aidney, Mrs Prudence Rouse and the ALAC Programme

Director, Koila Kabu attended the meeting and this is what Mrs Rouse had to say about the meeting:

"It was a most important opportunity to reveal to the UNCAC Team the seriousness of the situation in Fiji with regard to corruption at all levels of Fiji society and in all manner of Fiji institutions."

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2009

Say "No"
to
Corruption



& "Yes"
to
Integrity