

PACNEWS

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PAC - DIPLOMACY: ISLANDS BUSINESS

PACNEWS 2: Thu 26 Feb 2015

China's failure to provide loan details in Pacific highlighted

APIA, 26 FEBRUARY 2015 (ISLANDS BUSINESS) --- China's failure to provide clear details of its aid to the Pacific region was raised as a matter of concern at a summit today.

Also criticised was the reluctance or inability of Pacific island governments to release information on its loans, bilateral projects and grants from Beijing.

Lowy Institute researcher, Dr Philippa Brant, told the summit at the National University of Samoa that mapping Chinese aid in the region was a difficult task.

Next week she will launch an internet-based tool which will show the complexity of China's aid to the Pacific.

This will allow members of the public – particularly students, journalists and researchers - to have a clear view of Chinese aid by sector, country and type of assistance.

Dr Brant was speaking at a three-day summit organized by the Victoria University of Wellington, the Sun Yat-sen University of Guangzhou and the National University of Samoa to discuss China's role in the region.

Chinese Ambassador to Samoa, Li Yanduan, said the lack of credible information was sometimes due to China's policies which saw disbursement of aid and assistance from a number of different departments or ministries.

"At times there is no consolidated data on what each (department) is doing so it can be difficult to bring all the information together in one place," Li said.

The new tool designed by Dr Brant has taken information on Chinese aid and assistance from 500 sources including regional government departments, news reports, tender notices and public documents.

The tool – basically an interactive map – shows 169 individual aid projects across the Pacific listing the value of each project, the contractor, location and type of financing provided.

It will be available on Monday.

Meanwhile, China has become the third largest donor in the Pacific, outstripping Japan.

And it has become the largest donor to Fiji despite the fact that Australia continues to provide more than six times the amount of China's aid to the region.

A paper delivered by Dr Philippa Brant of the Australia-based Lowy Institute, showed that China became Fiji's largest donor in 2013 with various infrastructure projects including hydro-electricity dams and roads.

Participants at a three-day summit on China's increasing influence in the region voiced concern over the increasing number of concessional loans to Pacific governments.

Fiji's Opposition parliamentarian and economist, Dr Biman Prasad, said cost benefit analysis and priority setting exercise were essential before loans were taken.

"Many countries do not do this and they seldom realise the risks of taking soft loans," he said.

"It is very important that (governments) realise that these debts are huge and it is the next generation which will end up repaying these loans," said Dr Prasad...PACNEWS

SAMOA - CITIZENSHIP BILL: ISLANDS BUSINESS

PACNEWS 2: Thu 26 Feb 2015

Citizenship bill poses no threat to Samoa: PM Tuilaepa

APIA, 26 FEBRUARY 2015 (ISLANDS BUSINESS) ---- A citizenship and Investment Bill before Samoa's Parliament poses no threat to security, says the island nation's prime minister.

Tuilaepa Lupesoliai Sailele Malielagaoi said the legislation was designed to increase investment through enticing foreigners to developing businesses in Samoa.

Asked whether unscrupulous elements would attempt to use the proposed legislation to infiltrate the Pacific, Malielagaoi described the suggestion as stupid.

"No terrorist would want to come to Samoa," he said in an interview at the National University of Samoa on the sidelines of a summit on China and the Pacific.

Malielagaoi said Samoa had introduced the bill to boost the economy.

Asked to explain the focus on external investment, he responded: "We've done it for our own self-interest in the same way New Zealand and Australia open up their economies for foreign investment."
Much of the investment is expected to come from Asia, particularly China.

"We read and hear of the views of analysts and observers that point to colliding interests and inevitable rivalry between a rising China and the United States not to mention the other international players with the worrying prospects of confrontation and even conflict," Malielagaoi said at the summit attended by scholars and political commentators.

"It would be most interesting to receive the objective scholarly and expert examination that your conference will bring to bear on such gloomy forecasts particularly in the context of the economic and physical security of the Pacific."

Malielagaoi said there was little doubt about China's strong and increasing influence in the Pacific.

"The capacity of China's demonstrated economic power, if not quite yet its growing military might, to further project this influence would seem to warrant your conference's dedicated examination of the implications for the Pacific."

But he warned that the singling out of a country and its motives could create an impression that all was not quite what it seemed and there were conspiracies afoot.

The three-day summit is organized by the Victoria University of Wellington, the Sun Yat-sen University of Guangzhou and the National University of Samoa...PACNEWS

FIJI - UN CONVENTION: FIJI LIVE

PACNEWS 2: Thu 26 Feb 2015

Fiji Human Rights Commission reminds government on ratification obligations

SUVA, 26 FEBRUARY 2015 (FIJI LIVE) --- In welcoming the proposal by the Fijian Government to ratify UNCAT, the Fiji Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Commission reminds the State of the obligations that come with the ratification of such treaties.

As with the other conventions like the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Convention on All Forms of Racial Discrimination Against Woman (CEDAW), Convention on All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the State has responsibilities to carry out such as reporting obligations and monitoring obligations to ensure the ratification of UNCAT is reflected not only in domestic laws but in implementation as well.

Presenting the commission's submission before the Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence in Suva, Rajnesh Mishra said it would be a milestone achievement for the country and on its commitment towards the enhancement of human rights.

He said it would also pave the way forward to the capacity building of the Office of the Fiji Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Commission.

"The commission urges the state party to take immediate steps to ratify UNCAT in order to compliment the Bill of Rights provision enshrined in the 2013 Constitution which protects people from torture, cruel and degrading treatment," Mishra said.

The commission further submitted that all Fiji peacekeepers, members of the disciplined forces need to be aware of the contents and application of the national laws and international laws.

Manager Complaints at the Fiji Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Commission, Swasti Chand also emphasised on the need for local institutions that handle complaints and/or allegations of torture to be strengthened including police, the corrections services.

She also raised concerns on delay experienced by complainants waiting on their medical reports to lodge formal complaints - saying relevant stakeholders need to adhere to reasonable timelines.

Meanwhile, all 18 submissions received by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence so far concur with the Fijian Government's decision to ratify the United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT) treaty and the Montreal Convention.

Committee chairman Netani Rika says the response has been overwhelming.

Over four days of submissions, the committee received 12 on UNCAT and six in support of the Montreal Convention.

Submissions for the ratification of UNCAT were received from the UN Human Rights Office, the Fiji Women's Rights Movement and Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, Romulo Nayacalevu of SPC, from the Shri Pratinidhi Sabha, Fiji Red Cross Society, Fiji Police Force, Fiji Military Forces, Citizens Constitutional Forum (CCF), SODELPA Youth, Solicitor General, Fiji Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Council and the Fiji Native Tribal Congress....PACNEWS

PNG tops porn searches on Google, experts divided over link between pornography and violence

PORT MORESBY, 26 FEBRUARY 2015 (ABC) --- Australia's deeply Christian northern neighbour, Papua New Guinea, is the most pornography-obsessed country in the world, according to Google Trends.

PNG has a population of less than 8 million people and low rates of internet use, but has the greatest percentage of searches for the words "porn" and "pornography" compared to the nation's total searches.

Eight of the top 10 nations listed were developing countries in Africa, with Fiji ranking ninth.

"Working with young men, we find that porn is very accessible," said Thelma Kavanamur, communications officer with the youth organisation The Voice Inc.

"It's on their laptops at the universities, it's in their phone, they watch it in their rooms, they can be standing by on the streets and watching it — I have seen that personally."

In recent years, smart phones have allowed developing countries to leapfrog computer technologies and connect once-isolated communities to a new world of explicit images.

"What the internet has facilitated is the eclipsing of boundaries of time and space," said Dr Michael Flood, a senior lecturer in Sociology at the University of Wollongong who has published papers on pornography.

"So it's possible for people in any part of the world with an internet connection to view an extraordinarily large range of pornographic material, quite regardless of the laws or regulatory regimes in their own countries."

While there is no academic research focusing on PNG's internet porn habits, the situation in other parts of the world suggests conservative Christian values might actually be driving the desire for pornography.

"For example in the US, Utah, which is a very conservative state, is the number one state to request pornography," said Dr Milton Diamond, emeritus professor at the University of Hawaii's Pacific Centre for Sex and Society.

PNG has some of the highest rates of sexual and domestic violence in the world.

A study published in the scientific journal *The Lancet*, found 59 per cent of men in PNG's Autonomous Region of Bougainville had raped their partner and 41 per cent had raped a woman who was not their partner.

Other studies used by the government suggest a third of PNG women are raped, with two-thirds of women experiencing physical or sexual violence.

But the link between pornography and sexual violence remains hotly debated by researchers.

"I really don't think they're related, I think there are other causes for violence and aggression," Dr Diamond said.

"Most pornography does not have aggression — yes there is *Fifty Shades of Grey* or whatever... but most [websites] are plain old vanilla type of sex."

However, Dr Flood thinks there is a link between porn and rape.

"There's good evidence that using pornography — and particular violent pornography — is associated with a tolerance for sexual violence, a tolerance for rape," he said.

"Not only that but [pornography is] associated with an increased participation in sexual violence, an increased rate of perpetration."

But Dr Flood said pornography was by no means the only cause of sexual violence, especially in a country like PNG.

He said wider gender inequalities, cultural attitudes towards sex and overall levels of violence were contributing factors.

"PNG is a country with high levels of all forms of violence, inter-personal violence... so you'd expect also to see high levels of violence against women," Dr Flood said.

"Then [with] high pornography use thrown into that mix, I think it's likely to increase or shape those forms of sexual violence in various ways, but pornography itself is not the only determinant of rates of sexual violence."

The PNG government is planning to introduce an internet filter to block pornographic websites.

"We are not trying to control the medium of communication but we are trying to filter the rubbish that is supplied free online which spoils the mindset of the young children of Papua New Guinea," the country's chief censor, Steven Mala, said.

Mala said the internet filter was expected to cost almost AUD\$2 million (US\$1.57 million) but it was not clear when it would be introduced.

This month, the Censorship Office banned the movie Fifty Shades of Grey in Port Moresby cinemas because of concerns about scenes of bondage and explicit sex.

An online campaign against the film called "Fifty Kina, Not 50 Shades" had been encouraging people to donate the money they might have used to see the film to help victims of domestic abuse instead.

"I really saw that there was a movie glamorising or suggesting that it's OK to be in a relationship like this," campaign coordinator Kari Taviri said.

"It isn't just something that we read about or a statistic or a number that we see, for everyday Papua New Guineans it's the reality," said Kaviri....PACNEWS

NEW | CALE - POLITICS: RNZI

PACNEWS 2: Thu 26 Feb 2015

Call for urgent New Caledonia meeting

NOUMEA, 26 FEBRUARY 2015 (RNZI) --- There are calls for urgent action to end New Caledonia's political crisis which has left the territory without a president for now more than two months.

One of the territory's members of the French Senate, Pierre Frogier, has called for an extraordinary meeting of the signatories of the Noumea Accord to overcome the impasse.

The collegial government, which has been set up in accordance with the Accord, has been unable to agree on who should be the president after a power-sharing deal among the dominant anti-independence parties collapsed in December.

The pro-independence Caledonian Union says the crisis could be resolved if a consensus government programme was put in place reflecting the positions of the five groups making up the collegial administration.

The French government has repeatedly called on New Caledonia's leaders to assume their responsibilities and iron out their differences..PACNEWS

PACNEWS BIZ

COOKS - TELECOMUNICATION SALE: COOK ISLANDS NEWS

PACNEWS BIZ: Thu 26 Feb 2015

Cook Islands Telecom sale 'disappointing'

RAROTONGA, 26 FEBRUARY 2015 (COOK ISLANDS NEWS) ----The Democratic Party is 'disappointed' the Government did not fight harder to keep Telecom Cook Islands locally owned.

Spark New Zealand has sold its 60 per cent interest in Telecom Cook Islands for \$23 million (US\$17 million) to Bluesky Samoa, but Opposition leader William 'Smiley' Heather says he is disappointed the Government did not use its first right of refusal to keep Spark's shareholding within Cook Islands ownership.

"This is a strategic asset and we should at all times try to keep this valuable asset in the Cook Islands," he said.

"On the question of shares being sold to Telecom staff and the private sector, that's fine and I support local ownership. However the larger share of TCI shares has sold to a foreign company, Bluesky from Samoa."

Heather said it appears that Minister of Finance Mark Brown did not want to keep the telecommunications asset for the people of the Cook Islands.

"If the Government had not spent most of our reserves we could have purchased the 60 per cent shares back."

However, Brown said he was happy the sale had finally gone through.

"In our 50th year of self-government, telecommunications will be a key to linking up our celebrations here on Rarotonga with all our communities in the outer islands and to the rest of the world. ...PACNEWS

PAC - LOAN: RNZI

PACNEWS BIZ: Thu 26 Feb 2015

Pacific finance firm prefers to loan to women

SUVA, 26 FEBRUARY 2015 (RNZI) --- The head of a microfinance organisation in the region says investing in women has produced better results than loaning money to men.

Ajay Verma of the South Pacific Business Development or SPBD says they believe empowering women has been one of the most effective ways to eradicate poverty.

The SPBD network works in Fiji, Samoa and Solomon Islands and gives small loans to women in rural villages to help them grow and maintain small sustainable businesses.

Verma says ninety percent of microfinance loans are given to women because they have proven to handle finances more responsibly.

"When you give a livelihood opportunity to the woman of the house, she usually would take better care of the family. She would reinvest the surplus that is generated from the business. In the good of the family she would want to improve her house. You know women tend to handle the household budgets much better," said Verma...PACNEWS

Qantas posts \$203m half-year net profit in massive turnaround

SYDNEY, 26 FEBRUARY 2015 (ABC) --- Qantas has released its latest financial results, showing the airline is back in the black.

The half-year net profit of \$203 million (US\$159 million) is in stark contrast to the airline's other recent results.

Qantas posted a record full-year loss of \$2.8 billion (US\$2.2 billion) in the 2013-14 financial year and a half-year loss of \$235m (US\$184 million) for the six months to December 2013.

Underlying earnings, which strip out one-off items, came in at \$367m (US\$288 million) for the six months to December - beating market expectations of a \$350m (US\$275 million) profit.

The turnaround has been driven by cost savings from a \$2billion (US\$1.57 billion) transformation programme, lower fuel prices, and stronger returns in Qantas' domestic and international businesses.

The program aims to cut costs, freeze capacity and remove 5,000 jobs.

Qantas is forecasting total benefits from the restructuring will reach \$875m (US\$687 million) by the end of June, 16 months into the three-year program.

"The decisive factor in our best half-year result for four years was our complete focus on the Qantas transformation program," Qantas chief executive Alan Joyce said.

"Our financial position is significantly stronger because of the actions we've taken, and we are giving Qantas a solid foundation for growth in earnings."

UBS estimates Qantas could save \$1.4b (US\$1.1 billion) on its fuel bill this financial year, assuming a jet fuel price of \$US70 a barrel.

Qantas says all operating segments were profitable during the half year.

The international division returned to profitability for the first time since the global financial crisis, posting underlying earnings of \$59m (US\$46 million), compared to a loss of \$321m (US\$252 million) in the prior year.

Domestic earnings also grew from \$57m (US\$44 million) in the December 2013 half year to \$227m (US\$178 million) for the six months to December 2014.

Qantas said it also saved \$59m (US\$46 million) from the removal of the carbon tax.

The airline did not provide full-year profit guidance, citing the high degree of volatility in economic conditions, fuel prices, and foreign exchange rates.

However, the company said overall demand is stable, while demand is mixed in the domestic market, and market capacity is moderating both in Australia and internationally.

Despite the improved result, Qantas has decided to not pay an interim dividend.....PACNEWS

PACNEWS *In Focus*

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Tomorrow's climate refugees struggle to access water today

In fifty years the Pacific Islanders may be climate refugees, but today the more immediate challenge is to harvest enough water to live

FUNAFUTI, 26 FEBRUARY 2015 (THE GUARDIAN) --- Among the Pacific islands, Tuvalu is among the most dependent on rainwater harvesting. Rainfall hasn't traditionally been a problem in the Pacific island state; the problem has been capturing it. Tuvalu is scattered across over 500,000 square kilometres, yet its nine low-lying islands only comprise 27km² of land area.

Tuvalu's water problems are shared across Oceania, where – at one in four – fewer people have access to piped water than in sub-Saharan Africa. Over 3.2m of the region's 10.3m population, meanwhile, has no access to surface water.

According to the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), a regional intergovernmental organisation based in Fiji, the Pacific Islands' 22 nations and territories are "significantly off track" to meet water improvement targets set under the Millennium Development Goals .

"If current trajectories persist," says Peter Sinclair, water resources assessment coordinator in SPC's Geoscience Division, "millions of Pacific islanders will continue to endure unsafe water and sanitation for generations to come, with profound implications for economic growth, public health, the environment and human rights."

Making the most of rainwater

While desalination plants and other large-scale infrastructure projects can be found scattered through these islands, lack of economic resources and an absence of fuel for generating power to run such facilities restricts their widespread uptake.

As such, the area continues to maintain a strong focus of catching what falls from the sky. On Tuvalu, rainwater is seen as a cheaper and more environmental alternative to imported bottled water, a primary water source for many of the island's 11,000 or so residents.

Helping promote rainwater harvesting there is the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, a Samoa-based intergovernmental organisation. The Programme's Pacific Adaptation to Climate Change project (PACC) just inaugurated a 288,000 litre cistern in Tekavatoetoe, on the Tuvaluan island of Funafuti. This follows a new 700,000 litre cistern in the nearby community of Lofeagai.

The cisterns are closed in so as to avoid contamination by salt water or water-borne diseases, such as e-coli. In both cases, the units are attached to church buildings, which, along with schools, hospitals and government offices, are widely used for communal rainwater harvesting.

"The roof surfaces of the island's largest buildings would be wasted if they're not used to collect water", says Netatua Pelesikoti, programme manager at PACC.

Technological innovation

As well as helping with everyday water needs, rainwater harvesting is seen as an important defence against climate change, which Pelesikoti says is causing shorter wet seasons and more erratic weather patterns. One of the consequences is a higher risk of drought, the last major instance of which occurred in 2011 (also

a La Niña year), causing Tuvalu to introduce emergency water rationing. Samoa, Tokelau and Tonga suffered similar drastic water shortages.

"Other approaches [to rainwater harvesting] do not work in these low-lying atoll environments due to space, land issues and high energy wave environments on both the ocean and lagoon sides of Tuvalu atolls", says Peniamina Leavai, PACC's adaptation planning officer.

Rainwater harvesting is by no means new, but technological innovations are helping drive improvements. So-called 'first flush diverters' mark one notable example. Using a ball float system, the low-tech solution essentially isolates the first flows of rainwater in a separate chamber as these often contain bacteria and other pollutants collected in roof guttering. The technology is widely used in Niue, Samoa, Tonga, Fiji and Nauru, as well as Tuvalu.

The island of Niue boasts another notable innovation. With the assistance of New Zealand-based water tank manufacturer Galloway International, the island has built a tank moulding facility. The home-grown 5,000 litre tanks are made from high-density polyethylene, which is lighter weight and more durable than the imported tanks habitually used. The facility also has capacity to build septic tanks and waste bins.

Business lagging behind

In general, however, the region's business community has taken a back seat in promoting water collection efforts. Local firms, particularly in the tourist sector, may well donate tanks, pumps or other equipment, but such efforts are uncoordinated and sporadic. The charitable foundation of Fiji Water, a bottled water company, is one of the few to do so systematically and at scale.

SPC's Peter Sinclair is among those who would like to see greater input by the private sector, especially when it comes to developing affordable technologies. The scope here is "tremendous", he insists, although he strikes a word of caution: "In the Pacific, technological solutions need to be replicable and of low cost or they could well leave a community reliant on a solution that cannot be sustained over the long term."

Community involvement has to be a central feature of any such endeavour, he argues. He cites a €3.3m (£2.4m) project that SPC is currently rolling out in Kiribati. The initiative, which includes the construction of small-scale rainwater harvesting units, will be jointly managed by the community and follows a three year outreach programme among 16 of Kiribati's outer islands.

Pacific islanders have long looked to the sky's munificence for their water needs – an experience outside funders should be mindful of, even if modernisation and expansion of rainwater collection systems is keenly needed.

As Sinclair concludes: "Effective communication is essential to understand the needs of communities and their existing solutions, which may have been serving communities well for hundreds of years," he said....PACNEWS

PACNEWS DIGEST

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Mutual Recognition Framework to Facilitate Labour Mobility within the Pacific Region

SUVA, 26 FEBRUARY 2015 (PIFS) --- The need for an effective regional-wide mechanism for the recognition of qualifications to facilitate greater labour mobility among the countries negotiating the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER) Plus was discussed at a seminar on Mutual Recognition of Qualifications at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Auckland, New Zealand on 17-19 February 2015.

The seminar was organised by the Office of the Chief Trade Adviser with the financial support of Australia and New Zealand and the European Union, in collaboration with the South Pacific Board for Education Quality (SPBEQ) and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS). The objective of the seminar was to consider a regional framework that recognises the qualifications of and assures the mobility of qualified workers within the PACER Plus area and also to other international labour markets.

The seminar was attended by two representatives each from the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. They were mostly from Ministries of Education, National Qualification and Accreditation Authorities, Public Service Commissions and Labour and National Training Councils. Resource persons from SPBEQ, the Australian Qualifications Framework Council and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority were also present.

In his opening remarks, the Chief Trade Adviser of the PICs, Dr Edwini Kessie, highlighted the importance of having a credible framework for the recognition of qualifications to facilitate greater labour mobility within the region.

"There is acceptance among PACER Plus Parties that greater labour mobility within the region will confer significant benefits on the PICs, which currently have preferential access to limited segments of the labour markets of Australia and New Zealand," Dr Kessie said.

"An agreement on mutual recognition of qualifications among the PACER Plus Parties would provide a further boost to labour mobility across various occupational areas and enhance the participation of the PICs in international trade."

A representative from PNG, Kinsella Geoffrey, Director of the National Training Council Secretariat, said that the seminar has enabled him to learn about the best practices on the recognition of qualifications from other countries.

"I have been able to learn from other countries about the status of their National Qualifications and Quality Frameworks and determined how PNG's Framework can be improved," Geoffrey said.

"A Mutual Recognition Framework among PACER Plus Parties will significantly raise the confidence and trust levels of labour receiving countries. It will give some form of assurance that qualifications have met some verifiable standards which, in turn, would promote greater labour mobility among qualified workers in the Pacific region."

There were several regional and multilateral qualifications frameworks that were considered at the seminar, including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Qualifications Reference Framework and the Caribbean Community Qualifications Framework.

"Exploring options on a regional mutual recognition of qualifications framework for qualified workers in the region is an important initiative. This can facilitate their effective mobility into regional and international labour markets, thus contributing to inclusive growth and sustainable development. The Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA) labor mobility arrangement would also benefit from such framework," said Veniana Qalo, Trade Policy Adviser at PIFS.

PIFS participation in the seminar was funded by the European Union through the 10th European Development fund as a key activity under the Pacific Integration Technical Assistance Project (PITAP).

The PACER Plus Parties are expected to further discuss the issue of mutual recognition of qualifications at the tenth intercessional meeting, which is scheduled to take place in Port Vila, Vanuatu in the week of 23 March.....PACNEWS

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Nurturing relationship for correct and timely information

SUVA, 26 FEBRUARY 2015 (UNFPA PACIFIC) --- With her own sons and daughters, Marica Turaga (not her real name), said she nurtured a friendship with her children which created an enabling environment for open discussions. Sensitive issues like sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) slid into this "safe space" by default.

"Obviously there was always a line that they never crossed with me, I was still their mother and I know that there were things they hid from me, but because we were friends first, there was always the understanding that they could talk about anything with me," Turaga said.

While most of her contemporaries were quite open and jovial with her, Turaga says a completely different set of dynamics defined their relationship with their own children, and most times, it was contrary to her approach.

Turaga and her husband, are an iTaukei couple who enjoyed full-time careers while bringing up their children, and the many other "cousins" who needed a home while pursuing higher education in the capital.

The Turagas now enjoy playing grandparents. Turaga, though, continues to enjoy a professional life, believes parenting styles are repeated by children when they become parents themselves.

"Children for the most part have only one example of parenting and they are more likely to do exactly the same. But children who rebelled, especially against the parenting style their parents preferred are most likely to change the status quo because they would have grown up thinking they would never do parenting the way their parents did," Turaga said.

"Mothers are usually closer to their children and vice-versa, we have an opportunity to ensure open discussions at home if we nurture a relationship from their childhood.

"And it (SRHR discussions) becomes easier as they grow older. Generally speaking it is harder in the more traditional set-up but even iTaukei families in urban areas still do not talk about SRHR openly."

Reproductive rights and reproductive health is defined as a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity, in all matters relating to the reproductive system, its functions and processes. Reproductive health therefore implies people are able to have a safe and satisfying sex life, couples have the capacity to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so.

Therefore SRHR issues, which is one of the mandate areas of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), range from the prevention of sexually-transmitted infections including HIV (commodities like condoms), to ensuring that mothers experience a safe child birth (maternal health) to creating an enabling environment for the accessibility of contraceptives to all people without fear or prejudice (the right to choose the number of children you have and when to have them).

The world is now home to 1.8 billion young people between the ages of 10 and 24, and the youth population is growing fastest in the poorest nations. Within this generation are 600 million adolescent girls with specific needs, challenges and aspirations for the future they want.

Apart from education, investment in health especially sexual and reproductive health will be central to a common future of sustainable growth. A healthy populace is a prerequisite to the realization of our full potential in both economic and social progress, both as individuals and as a nation.

Yet as I write, one in seven of all new HIV infections occur during adolescence. Today, up to half of all sexual assaults are committed against girls below the age of 16 while one in three girls in developing countries is married before the age of 18, threatening her health, education and future prospects.

Apart from socio-cultural realities which continue to be a barrier to frank discussions around sexual and reproductive health issues, more often than not, the lack of effective communication between parents and children to ensure adolescents receive correct and timely information (trusted sources) on SRHR remain one of the most damaging of all cultural barriers, globally.

UNFPA Pacific high-level champion Dr Jiko Luveni says parents today are more likely to have reached higher education, who know the issues and what their children may be going through, and are a lot more willing to talk about things.

Dr Jiko said she believed there was a willingness from women to educate their own children on issues related to sexual and reproductive health and rights. She added these were indeed areas which couldn't be left to teachers, faith-based or even traditional leaders.

"What they need however is what to communicate, particularly our mothers, they are more willing to be the ones who help their children but we do need to ensure that they have the information and the confidence to communicate such issues to their children," Dr Jiko said.

"Young people are more likely to listen to their peers than their parents if parents have not developed a relationship that will enable children to communicate such issues with them. If they don't have that relationship, they (youth) will turn to their peers."

UNFPA Pacific Sub-Regional Office director and representative Dr Laurent Zessler said it was indeed critical that the correct, timely and age-appropriate information was shared to children and youth.

"We are giving our children a very good start in life already just by empowering them with correct and timely information," Dr Zessler said.....PACNEWS