



# USP Beat

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*USP's 90<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting in session*

## USP CONCLUDES ITS 90<sup>th</sup> COUNCIL MEETING

The 90th Council meeting of The University of the South Pacific successfully concluded on Thursday 19 November 2020. The two-day meeting was held at the Japan-Pacific ICT Centre from 18th November.

The USP Council is the highest decision-making body of the University and meets twice a year to discuss the affairs of the University. Membership comprises the Pro-Chancellor and Chair of Council, the Vice-Chancellor and President, representatives of the 12-member country governments, staff and students. One representative each from Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands Forum are also part of the Council.

The meeting was chaired by the Pro-Chancellor and Chair of Council, Mr Winston Thompson.

### **Pro-Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor and President's Reports**

The Council noted reports from the Pro-Chancellor and the Vice-Chancellor and

President on activities undertaken since their report at the last Council meeting in November 2019. The meeting scheduled to be held in May 2020 in Tuvalu was cancelled due to the Covid-19 border closures.

Key developments, achievements and challenges highlighted by the Vice-Chancellor and President included the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and how it had affected the University's operations.

Professor Ahluwalia informed the Council of a preceding partnership arrangement between USP and the New Zealand Government, which concluded on 31 March 2020. Through the new Interim Grant Funding Arrangement signed on 5 November 2020, the New Zealand Government provides NZD13 million by for a duration of 14 months, which expires at the end of February 2022.

The 2020 enrolment for Equivalent Full Time Student (EFTS) as at 22 September 2020, excluding Pacific TAFE is about

14,830 representing a headcount of 21,680 students. Comparing these figures to 2019, the head counts has increased by 7% and the EFTS by 8%. With Pacific TAFE included, the University's overall head count enrolment reported an increase of 1% and the EFTS enrolment reporting an increase of 5%.

The Council was also informed that the enrolment for Semester 2 as at 22 September 2020 was very encouraging as the target was exceeded by 23.2% of the total EFTS (excluding Pacific TAFE). More so, a majority of the students that account for the increase are from the regional member countries.

The Vice-Chancellor said despite the challenges faced because of the pandemic, enrolment for Semester 2 had been encouraging. USP's target was exceeded by 23.2% of total Equivalent Full Time Students (excluding Pacific TAFE).

There was also an increase of 17% of International Students compared to 2019.

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The indicative aid budget for USP as at 20 October 2020 stands at FJD31,994,947, showing a decline of 23% compared to the same period last year.

The Vice-Chancellor also informed the Council of a full research agreement signed by USP with the University of Strathclyde under the One Ocean Hub, worth £1,693,954 (approximately FJD\$4,718,023). Within the reporting period, USP has altogether signed 24 new MOUs and Agreements. This includes finances worth approximately FJD1,335,427. Twelve MOUs and Agreements are non-financial.

The Vice-Chancellor said the Solomon Islands Campus development will now begin on 30 January, 2021 in agreement with ADB. Work has been delayed due to the effects of Covid-19.

### Financial, Audit and Risk Matters

#### 1. Reorganisation Operations for a Sustainable and Stronger USP

The Council accepted Management's proposal and approved the re-organisation of USP. The implementation of the reorganisation will be carried out in stages over a six-month period to ensure minimal disruption to its core business. The key changes will see a reorganisation of academic sections and Pacific TAFE and rationalising programmes and courses.

#### 2. 2019 Annual Report, Annual Plan and Financial Plan for 2021

The Council approved the 2019 Annual Report and the 2021 Annual Plan. The Financial Plan for 2021 was also approved with total income of \$190m, total expenditure of \$180.6m and operating surplus of \$9.4m.

#### 3. Audited Financial Statements for Half Year Ended 30 June 2020

The Council adopted the Audited Financial Statements for the half year ended 30 June 2020.

#### 4. Forecast to December 2020

The Council noted the forecast of Income and Expenditure, cash flows and financial position of the University as at 31st December 2020. It further noted the various management financial controls in place to protect the financial position and urged member countries and development partners to maintain their current levels of contributions and assistance.

### Academic and Quality Matters

The Council noted a report from the Senate on its work since the last Council Meeting and resolved to institute the following new programmes:

1. Postgraduate Diploma in Arts majoring in Gender Studies
2. Certificate in Cook Islands Maori
3. Doctorate in Business Administration
4. Certificate IV in Procurement and Supply

### Strategic Plan

Whilst noting the progress report of the 2019-2021 Strategic Plan, the Council approved the way forward for the preparation of next Strategic Plan 2022-2024.

### Human Resources

Three policies and procedures were approved by the Council. These are:

- Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedure
- Anti-Bullying Policy and Procedure
- Child Protection Policy and Procedure

### USP Staff Union proposals

The Council received a proposal by the Staff Union to approve an Equal Default Retirement Age of 65 years for all University staff including the Administrative Staff and Junior Staff Category. The Council noted this request and resolved that this matter be considered for approval at the Management level.

The Council also approved amendments to the 2009 Ordinances on Election of Staff to the Council. This change now allows

representation of the Intermediate and Junior Staff on Council.

### Appointments to Committees

A member from Nauru has been appointed to the Nominations Committee. The Council also approved and the re-appointment of two independent members of FIC for a term of two years.

### Delegation of powers - Chairs and Committees of Council

The Council resolved to approve delegation of powers of the following Committees for a further term of 2 years from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2022:

- Executive Committee
- Audit & Risk Committee
- Finance & Investments Committee
- Remuneration Committee
- Student Discipline Appeals Committee
- Search Committee
- Honorary Degrees Committee

With immediate effect, Alafua Campus will now be called USP Samoa Campus. This proposal was brought before the Council by the Government of Samoa.

In approving the dates for the 2021 Council Meetings, the Council also noted that the venue of the May meeting, which is usually held in one of the regional member countries, will be confirmed in due course subject to borders opening for travel.

The Council Meeting concluded on 19 November 2020.



Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Pal Ahluwalia (left) and Pro-Chancellor, Mr Winston Thomson at the 90<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting



## RELAYING SCIENTIFIC KAVA KNOWLEDGE TO FARMERS IN THE REGION

Kava farmers from Bua had the opportunity to learn from research carried out by The University of the South Pacific (USP) on kava to better care for their crops and improve revenue generated from their products.

USP's Institute of Applied Sciences (IAS) Laboratory has been involved in kava testing and product development for the last 15 years and hopes to continue to work with farmers and kava entrepreneurs to monitor and improve the quality of kava with farmers in the region.

IAS Laboratory Food Chemical Testing laboratory expert, Mr Jeremaia Koroiijuta trained the farmers on kava quality standards, value chain analysis, science of the kava plants, and the diversification and origin of kava varieties found here in Fiji and in the Pacific.

Farmers also had the opportunity to learn about kava diseases, new improved planting techniques including tissue culture, nurseries, effects of chemicals on farms, export regulatory requirements, exporters expectation of kava quality and forms of kava testing.

Mr Koroiijuta said it was a rewarding experience to discuss the kava testing procedures and results with those that are actually involved in the planting of kava.

"It was worthwhile to be able to effectively contribute to discussions on improving the quality of kava for local consumption and exports."

He also shared his scientific knowledge about kava during the Fiji National Kava Taskforce Committee (FNKTC) meeting that was held in Savusavu.

"As a member of the FNKTC, it was also pleasing to hear directly from the farmers on the issues that they were facing when trying to produce kava that meets the required export standards," Mr Koroiijuta added.

The events were organised by Fiji's Ministry of Agriculture and involved stakeholders from the Ministry of Health, Biosecurity of Fiji, Fiji National University, Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access (PHAMA), major kava exporters and farmers' representatives.

In collaboration with Kava Korporesen Pte Limited, IAS has also recently signed a Master of Science Research scholarship award that is tenable from 2021. The Master of Science Research scholarship, a first for Fiji, award can focus its research on any areas: Kava chemistry; Kavalactone extraction; isolation; and purification for food grade application. You can access information on the scholarship by clicking on the link below: [http://belo.usp.ac.fj/fileadmin/files/Institutes/ias/flyer/Kava\\_Korporesen\\_Pte\\_Ltd\\_IAS\\_scholarship\\_2021.pdf](http://belo.usp.ac.fj/fileadmin/files/Institutes/ias/flyer/Kava_Korporesen_Pte_Ltd_IAS_scholarship_2021.pdf)

Mr Josaia Rayawa, Director Waisomo Farms Pte Limited said for Kava Korporesen to commence this partnership with IAS, from a farmer's perspective, is very

encouraging. The knowledge gained from this Research should help us collectively better position ourselves in this industry.

The USP-IAS laboratory consultations and the research through the Scholarship comes at an opportune time with the recent announcement by the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisations (UNFAO) Codex Alimentarius Commission that has established kava as a beverage, when mixed with water. This will greatly facilitate the regional exporting market.

Kava, known as yaqona in Fiji, is widely consumed as a beverage informally and in ceremonial settings. Bundles of the dried root are presented as a ceremonial offering *sevusevu* when entering villages or for other significant occasions.

According to research carried out by PHAMA, over 21,000 farms grow kava worth an estimated FJD66 million (AUD42 million) per year.

Exports in 2014 were valued at FJD7.5 million (AUD4.9 million).

Fiji exports yaqona to markets including other Pacific nations, New Zealand, to the European Union, USA, and some Asian nations. Some value added processing is done in Fiji including kava supplement drinks and kava capsules, but it is generally exported as powdered product made up of dried roots *waka* and chips *lewena*.

The domestic market is substantial and considered as valuable as the export market.



IAS Acting Director Dr Isoa Korovulavula (left) and Kava Korporesen Pte Ltd Director Mr John Sanday shake hands on the scholarship award. Mr Josaia Rayawa, Director Waisomo Farms Pte Ltd looks on

## USP HOLDS ITS FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE BUDDY AWARDS 2020



Ten 'Silent Heroes' were awarded the 'Outstanding Buddy Awards', sponsored by Vodafone Fiji

The Campus Life Office at USP held its *First Year Experience Buddy Awards 2020* on 7th November to acknowledge the hard work of First Year Experience (FYE) volunteers who buddy first year students at USP. The volunteers are students of USP. Close to 135 students, sponsors and Faculty staff attended the Awards Ceremony.

The Buddy Awards this year were sponsored by Vodafone Fiji and Westpac Banking Corporation. Vodafone has been sponsoring these Awards since the Programme's inception in 2016, and Westpac has sponsored the Buddy of the Year since 2017.

The Campus Life Section of The University of the South Pacific (USP) is a student support department that looks after the interest and well-being of USP students. An integral part of the Department's structure is the First Year Experience (FYE) Office, dedicated to specifically look after the interests and progress of first year students at USP.

In 2016, the FYE office introduced a non-academic, peer-to-peer assisted programme called the FYE Buddy Programme to assist first year students make the transition to university environment, as well as adjust better to being in a major metropolitan centre such as Suva.

The FYE Buddy Programme has been a great success and has received numerous positive feedback from various

stakeholders.

This year, to celebrate the Buddy Programme's 5th Anniversary, Campus Life invited Buddies from 2016 – 2019 as Guests of Honour. The 2016 Buddy of the Year, Sadaf Nisha Shameem, who is currently employed at the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions as a State Prosecutor, gave an inspiring speech. She said non-academic mentoring is more difficult than academic mentoring. In non-academic mentoring you don't know what the problem will be, nor do you know the type of people you will deal with. It takes a special kind of person to solve unknown problems and all you Buddies are very special. Sadaf told the Buddies if there was anything to be taken away from the programme, it was the development of interpersonal skills.

Westpac Banking Corporation sponsored the prestigious *Buddy of the Year* Award. This was presented to Aniket Prasad. For

the past four years, the Westpac Buddy of the Year has had an opportunity to visit an overseas University. However, due to the pandemic and the travel ban, the Westpac Buddy of the Year was this year presented with a cash prize of \$2,500.00 instead. The cheque was presented by Mr Gavin Shing, Head of Corporate and Business Banking, Westpac Fiji.

Ten 'Silent Heroes' were awarded the *Outstanding Buddy Awards*, sponsored by Vodafone Fiji. They were presented with computer tablets and Pocket WIFIs to honour and acknowledge their hard work as First Year Experience (FYE) Buddies and who have helped the department in its various activities.

The Group Manager Campus Life, Mr Glenn Pope thanked the Buddies for their dedication and commitment towards the programme. He also thanked the sponsors, Vodafone and Westpac, for their continued generous support towards the programme.



'Buddy of the Year', Aniket Prasad (centre) with the Campus Life Team

## USP TONGA CAMPUS DIRECTOR HOSTS SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS CONSULTATION SESSION

In the follow-up to USP's Principal and Career Teacher's Consultation that was held in Fiji in September, USP Tonga Campus Director, Dr. Robin S. Havea and staff met with Principals of all secondary schools in Tongatapu on 29 October.

The two-hour session gave an opportunity for staff to highlight and share first-hand information about the pathways and opportunities that USP can offer here in the Kingdom.

Welcoming the Principals, Dr. Havea said, "although we visit and talk to senior students at secondary schools, we feel that it is equally important that we hold a talanoa session with the school principals so we can strengthen our existing working relationship with a reminder that through its Vision and Mission, USP is here to serve."

All 13 principals and/or their representatives attended the event. Secondary Schools across Tonga consist of Government, Mission and one International School owned schools.

The programme included presentations from the Pacific TAFE (PacTAFE) Coordinator on Campus, Lofan Tupou and Student Administrative Services (SAS) Office, 'Ana Ve'ehala.

Mr. Tupou and Ms. Ve'ehala are key staff who oversee the admission and registration process at the Tonga Campus. Mr. Tupou's presentation focused on Preliminary & Foundation Programmes and Enrolment & Admissions to PTAFE. Ms Ve'ehala's presentation covered graduate programmes, especially at undergraduate degree level and Enrolment & Admissions processes at the three Faculties.

A Question and Answer session followed which saw the school principals engage actively in seeking answers on a wide range of questions, including admissions to preliminary, foundation and graduate level programmes, consolidating the need for Tonga Campus to conduct presentation to senior students at their respective schools at the end of external examinations in a few weeks' time.

Co-Director of Ocean of Light International School, Kalolaine Koluse said, "the presentation was very informative and worth attending. It helps us as a school to make sure that there is ongoing counselling of the students on the importance of subject choices. These choices will enable students to pursue their desired field of study locally and internationally."

Ms. Oketi 'Akau'ola, Principal of Tonga High School said that she was happy to attend the consultation programme, the presentations were clear and very informative. "The information will be very useful to our students and our teachers too, so they will have full awareness of the requirements for the various pathways," she said.

Ms. 'Ana Haupeakui, Principal of St. Andrews High School said, "I am glad I came to your 2020 Career and Pathway consultation on Thursday. It was like an eye-opener for me, especially to see the importance and to be part of the career path consultations.

"I was also glad of how clear your pathway to the future especially with the unclassified and classified programmes. A few students have repeated Form 5 & 6 which I agree is a waste of their time. I am

sure if they can be convinced to come to USP to continue, that would be awesomely helpful."

Father 'Ekuasi, Principal of 'Apifo'ou College, the biggest Catholic School in Tonga, before the closing prayer, said he found the session quite significant. He wants to ensure that other schools take advantage of these consultations and offered to bring this to the attention of other secondary school principals at the next Secondary School's Principals association meeting.

Dr. Robin S. Havea delivered the closing remarks with an emphasis on the effects COVID-19 had brought to Tonga and its effect on education, saying, "the COVID-19 Pandemic has taken its toll on all of us in many ways and, as far as what the future holds, the elements of uncertainty cannot be overstated."

Dr. Havea said USP values the continued support it receives from its stakeholders and Development Partners in Tonga and the secondary schools are no exception.

"As a responsible academic institution, we make sure that we continue to deliver and promote quality education even during such trying times where the borders are closed and travelling abroad is very limited. The year 2021 comes with challenges that we all must be prepared to face and this consultation session with the school principals is part of our preparation," he said.

The Tonga Campus Director and staff thanked the Principals and representatives from all secondary schools in Tongatapu for availing themselves from their busy schedules to attend the Consultation.



USP Tonga Campus Director, Dr. Robin S. Havea and staff with principals of secondary schools in Tongatapu

## “WOMEN DURING COVID-19”

“There is a need to encourage more women in the participation in leadership roles,” said Honorable Mereseini Rakuita Vuniwaqa, Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation while officiating at the “Women during COVID-19” seminar hosted by The University of the South Pacific Faculty of Business & Economics.

The seminar was organised by The Fiji Institute of Accountants (FIA) as part of their Women in Leadership 2020 series at the Post Graduate Theatre, Laucala Bay Campus.

Hon Vuniwaqa shared her professional and personal experiences in working through COVID-19 and spoke on the need for women’s involvement in leadership and that women themselves need to take the initiative to challenge themselves into taking up leadership roles at their workplace or in any other facets of their lives.

Mrs Vuniwaqa said the forum was important as it gave chance to interact with women and men to share experiences and journeys as leaders.

“It is an opportunity for all of us in the room to interact, enhance, improve and learn from each other and from the panelist on what we can do individually and as a collective to empower women and to contribute to our national plan,” she said.

Hon Vuniwaqa emphasised that FIA’s Women in Leadership 2020 Series provides women with opportunities to listen and



*Honorable Mereseini Rakuita Vuniwaqa, Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation officiating at the “Women during COVID-19” seminar*

interact with other women and men and share their experiences and journey as leaders.

“And to discuss the theme like ‘Women during COVID 19’ with inspiring women and men is an opportunity to raise the bar to effectively continue creating strong women leaders in the journey of COVID-19,” she said.

“Empowering women and girls effectively translates to greater economic growth and development, she said.

While addressing the audience, FIA President Ravinesh Singh said as the premier accounting body in Fiji and within the region the FIA recognises the need for more women leaders in all fields.

“The Women’s Initiatives Committee has an important mission and that is to promote an environment of equal opportunity and engagement of both genders with a focus of advancing women to leadership positions. With the lack of women in senior positions here in Fiji it is

essential to consider that women and men often approach life differently,” he said.

Mr Singh said that since the establishment of the Institute in 1972 to date we have had 37 Presidents of which 5 have been women.

“FIA looks forward to improving these statistics in the future by encouraging women to aspire to be leaders in their respective fields.

He added the Institute acknowledges the continuing collaboration between the FIA and the University of the South Pacific.

Panelists were Jenny Seeto, Retired Managing Partner PricewaterhouseCoopers & Consultant; Andrew Thompson, Human Resources Manager, South Pacific Commission; Liliwaimanu Vuiyasawa a Solicitor, Munro Leys.

Women were especially encouraged to develop and take up leadership roles in their personal and professional lives and embrace the new norm post COVID-19.



*Panelists, (left to right) Honourable Mereseini Rakuita Vuniwaqa, Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation; Liliwaimanu Vuiyasawa, Solicitor, Munro Leys; Andrew Thompson, Human Resources Manager, South Pacific Commission and Jenny Seeto, Consultant & Retired Managing Partner PricewaterhouseCoopers*



**Name:** Arti Reddy  
**Occupation:** Teaching Assistant  
**Faculty:** Science, Technology and Environment  
**Year Joined:** 2014 as a student and 2019 as a staff  
**Campus:** Lower Campus, Laucala, Fiji  
**Home Country:** Fiji

## STAFF PROFILE

### *Most memorable moment at USP?*

Meeting Professor Randy Thaman and Dr Konai Helu Thaman as they are my local role models.

### *Best part about your job?*

Being able to teach and learn from various students / colleagues from around the Pacific about their geology and culture.

### *What do you like most about your Campus?*

I love that it's just beside the sea and it's comparably smaller so everyone knows everyone and it's like we have a small family here at lower campus.

### *What motivates you?*

My mother is my motivation as she is a strong, independent woman who never gives up despite the challenges she faces.

### *Best remedy for work stress?*

Having a few beers.

### *What has been your greatest career achievement?*

My biggest career achievement has been the opportunity to get an internship with CSIRO and to be provided training in Blue carbon analysis in Adelaide which was a milestone for my research.

### *What advice do you have for students?*

When there are hurdles, pause, but never stop moving forward because there is a bigger picture at the end.

### *How has COVID-19 affected you and your section?*

Most of the research I do and units I teach has a large field based component and due to Covid-19 restrictions for the first semester we were not able to do any field work. This affected me as if delayed my thesis timeline and as for the students, they missed on the field aspect of their course.

### *Best advice you have ever been given?*

Treat others the way you want to be treated.

### *Where did you receive your qualifications?*

I have received my qualifications from USP (undergraduate and postgraduate)

“*Usp is a hub for a diverse group of individuals, culture and knowledge. My role of a tutor and a researcher provides me with the opportunity to visit all around Fiji and meet people and learn about their personal experiences, culture and knowledge and these visits always adds to my knowledge and provides me new perspectives on certain aspect of social/human geography. Apart from this, I teach Earth Science and this is a unit which comprises of students from all around the region so every day is a new learning experience. I am glad that I choose USP as it has been the source of many wonderful experiences in my life.*”



**Name:** Senivalati Waqanivalagi (Wendy)  
**Programme:** Post Graduate Diploma in Tourism and Hospitality Management  
**Faculty:** Business and Economics  
**Year Joined:** 2015  
**Home Country:** Fiji  
**Campus:** Laucala, Fiji

## STUDENT PROFILE

My journey at USP was not an easy one especially when I am faced with the thought of work and study. I started in 2015, anyone for that matter can imagine the nervousness and fear that I had back then especially when I did not attend my orientation that year. I was so nervous and scared during class especially when everyone is new and strange to me but was glad that lecturers, tutors and students were so friendly. As an indigenous trans, I always feared of not being accepted, being victimised and discriminated against however, I barely got any. I was amazed and delighted that I was accepted for who I am!

As the years go by, I have become more familiar with the facilities, services, programs, courses and activities that are offered at USP. I had become more comfortable and enjoyed my studies.

### *Why did you choose USP?*

I chose USP because it is the only academic institute that gives me an opportunity as a working individual to come back to school and upgrade myself to a new level and also to better equip me for the competitive world that we live in.

### *What are your career goals?*

I was actually planning to pursue further into the tourism industry; however, since Covid -19 struck, I decided to venture out into the 'international diplomacy' arena hoping to get an opportunity in a regional organisation.

### *Preferred mode(s) of study?*

I prefer face to face or blended mode because it gives me the opportunity to interact more with lecturers, tutors and students

### *Which course have you enjoyed the most? Why?*

I have enjoyed Tourism courses the most as it gives me an opportunity to travel and to visit hotels and resorts around Fiji. During this we use the same services that are provided to guests, like food & beverage, activities, entertainment and we get to learn & observe while engaged with guests and staff. Also in my diplomacy units which was challenging at first, but now I find it interesting as it deals with political issues in the region and how political leaders come together in solidarity to respond to issues that prioritise sovereignty, self-determination and good governance.

### *Favourite hangout at USP?*

The Green tables & Campus Life.

### *Where do you see yourself 5-10 years from now?*

I see myself associated with NGOs such as the UN or NGOs aiming at achieving gender equality and rights of children. On the latter, I see myself established with my own law firm where I take matters for the vulnerable and ensure justice is attained.

### *How is USP preparing you for the future?*

USP gives me excellent exposure!! It gives the tourism students the opportunity to build connections with USP Alumni and be motivated to continue to strive for the best!!

“*USP is unique in celebrating different cultural diversity, internationally recognised institution, promoting quality education & inclusion and also providing an academic resource to any students in the region.*”



## USP FILM LAUNCH TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY

The prevalence of violence against women in the Pacific region is among the highest in the world, whilst women's parliamentary participation is amongst the lowest.

To address gender inequality and encourage women leaders in the region, the Pacific Community Filmmaking Consortium (PaCiFIC), is working with communities through films to create awareness on these issues.

The University of the South Pacific has launched seven films that feature stories from the Pacific in support of gender equality and showcased responses to gender based violence in the Pacific.

The films were produced during the global Covid-19 pandemic, and documents the impact of local restrictions on Pacific Islanders' lives, especially for women.

The collection of 7 short films were from six Pacific countries – Papua New Guinea, Bougainville, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Samoa and Fiji.

Fiji's contribution including "Weaving the Streets" a transgender story from Fiji, directed by Larry Thomas and Joji Nabalarua.

Mr Thomas said they decided on highlighting issues on transgender in Fiji because of the distinctiveness of the subject in the Pacific.

"We wanted to 'push' the boundaries of gender and challenge ourselves to look at this issue," he said.

"We pitched the idea to the coordinators of the project and they were very supportive."

Weaving the Streets depicts a story of a transgender, Rani Ravudi who is open about her identity.

"We see and hear throughout the film as she recounts her story. In order to illustrate certain memories of her story, in particular when she was a kid, we re-enacted those scenes. We selected, with Rani's help, a few children from her village and similarly the adults were also from her village."

For the film directors, working on the film was a great learning experience as they got to learn more about issues affecting transgender in our communities.

"While we were generally aware of trans people, we discovered that we know very little,



Larry Thomas filming "Weaving the Streets"

and more so the plight of trans people and what they have to put up with," Mr Thomas said.

"We take it for granted, and because it doesn't concern us, we don't pay attention. For me personally, I consider myself very privileged to hear Rani's story and to be part of the process of bringing her story to the public."

### Pacific Film4Gender project

The PaCiFIC consortium allows Pacific community based filmmakers to use film production as a way to open up alternative routes to understand and influence gender inequality in the Pacific.

The PaCiFIC project titled, Film4Gender, aims to enhance filmmaker visibility through screenings, online events and a website to showcase their work and highlights the potential of community media to effect social change.

Film4Gender is a UK Arts and Humanities Research Council funded project supporting community-based filmmakers across the Pacific to produce films that support gender equality and highlight local community-led responses to gender based violence.

Pacific Film4Gender builds on previous Pacific and European events, networking and publications (Arts & Humanities Research Council Networking Project, Exploring Participatory Filmmaking as a Development Method to address Gender Inequality in the Pacific and the Scottish Funding Council "Pacific Connections: Community Filmmaking and Gender Inequality in the Pacific.

For further information: <https://pacificfilm.net/>



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## USPBeat Magazine

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The views expressed in USP Beat are not necessarily the views of the University.

### Next issue

DECEMBER 2020



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