

Child Protection – it's Everyone's Job.

Around the world child abuse and neglect is a serious and ongoing problem. Our children are not only the most vulnerable members of our society, they are also our future.

In the USA, statistics indicate that annually 6 million children are reported to welfare authorities for abuse or neglect. In Australia research has shown that rates of child abuse may be as high as 30% of children. Fiji Women's Crisis Centre recently released research which indicated that one in five Fijian children are sexually abused. What we know from our work in the community that many more are physically abused, emotionally abused (language and behavior which damages their self esteem and development) and more than half of the children of Fiji are witnessing violence in their homes.

A darker side to these numbers is that research suggests child abuse and neglect is often significantly under-reported, therefore it is reasonable to believe that the frequency of abuse is much higher than that recorded.

These issues are profoundly concerning for the future of Fiji. Beyond the massive burden of pain and suffering that is experienced by the children, the cost of child abuse and neglect is staggering once we take into account the salaries of the doctors, nurses, police officers, social welfare officers, counsellors, judges, teachers and other professionals who are required to try and protect and help children identified as being abused or neglected. Further, abuse harms a child's ability to learn and grow, meaning that abused children are less likely to do well in their careers and lives, and to be able to care for their own children.

Ms Rhianon Vichta, CEO of Empower Pacific, stated in a press release that "Children and young people who are abused and

neglected carry a heavy burden from the loss of their innocence and safety. It is often a price they will pay for years to come. Abuse and neglect impacts on their ability to trust other people – as unfortunately the perpetrator of abuse is often someone they know. It affects their self confidence as well as their ability to concentrate and build positive relationships with others. It can often have very negative long term consequences in the form of life-long depression, anxiety, alcohol and drug abuse, violence, anger and high risk of suicide".

Whilst it is acknowledged that Fiji has made significant improvements in the areas of responding to child abuse and neglect and improving child rights, particularly since the inception of the Child Welfare Decree in 2010, there is still much work to be done.

Ms Vichta commented that "As a national community we need to 'speak out' about child abuse as it is everyone's business. Every individual and community needs to take responsibility for sending the message that any harm to a child is unacceptable. Empower Pacific has trained and dedicated child protection counsellors, social workers and a Child Protection Specialist Volunteer from Australia. We are committed to working consistently to promote children's safety and wellbeing through counselling, social services, training and promotion of children's rights and needs." Empower Pacific provide education and awareness sessions across the county to children, young people, parents and professionals who work directly with vulnerable groups.

Providing treatment services in the aftermath of child abuse and neglect requires a child-centered, sensitive and collaborative approach, usually involving multiple parties.

"Responding to child abuse and neglect is a priority for our organization, but we cannot do it alone. Staff have been specifically trained in this area and have the advantage of years of experience within the organization to draw upon, but we need to work hand in hand with the families and communities whose responsibility it is to keep a child safe. We have to work closely with government and other non-government support services. If it takes a village to raise a child, it certainly takes many levels of cooperation and support to keep them safe and heal past abuses" said Ms Vichta.

If you are concerned for that a child is being abused or neglected, contact your local DSW or Police station. You can also contact your local Empower Pacific Counseling and Community Services by phone or through our branch offices, or go to Ministry of Health Hospitals in Suva (CWM), Nadi, Lautoka and Labasa to speak with a counsellor or social worker. If your organization or group would like training to raise awareness on child abuse and how to appropriately respond, please contact the Lautoka Head Office to speak with the Child Protection Specialist.

Don't turn your back on children in need of help... Don't wait until it's too late. Child protection is everyone's business!

Empower Pacific's Child Protection Services are funded by AusAID through the Fiji Community Development Program (FCDP) and the Ministry of Health Fiji Health Sector Support Program (FHSSP)

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR A CHANCE TO MAKE A REAL DIFFERENCE IN PEOPLE'S LIVES?

EMPOWER PACIFIC IS SEEKING DYNAMIC PASSIONATE AND HIGHLY SKILLED COMMUNITY SERVICES PROFESSIONALS FOR THESE SERVICE DELIVERY POSITIONS

Further information about Empower Pacific and the application form is available at www.empowerpacific.com

To apply for any of these positions please email your detailed CV with referees, a cover letter addressing the list of required experience and skills and a completed application form to headoffice@empowerpacific.com, or post to CEO Empower Pacific, P O Box 5693 Lautoka, by COB Friday 8th March 2013.

Professional Psychosocial Counsellor

Empower Pacific is seeking a suitably experienced and qualified professional counsellor. Applicants MUST have formal qualifications in counselling at a minimum standard of a Diploma in Counselling or equivalent.

Essential :

- Diploma in Counselling or equivalent/ higher level tertiary qualifications.
- 1-3 years demonstrated professional experience working in the community sector/counselling field
- Demonstrated appropriate awareness of local issues related to HIV/STI's, Violence against women, child protection, suicide and other social issues affecting Fiji.
- Open non-judgmental attitude and ability to work closely and respectfully with a wide range of people regardless of race, religion, gender, sexuality, age, ability or any other personal characteristic.
- Hard working, accountable, reliable, honest and a strong team player

- Excellent written and spoken English and Fijian/Hindi
- Basic computer skills (word, emails etc)

The position is full time, 35 hours a week.

See www.empowerpacific.com/come-work-for-us for further information. Written applications MUST include a letter which addresses each of the selection criteria, a completed application form from our website, and a detailed CV and references. Send to PO Box 5693, Lautoka or email to headoffice@empowerpacific.com

Note : Empower Pacific is a non-denominational organization and this work is done in a religiously neutral manner to ensure equal access by all people. All employees must be committed to the core values of the organization including respect for diversity and inclusiveness, being non-judgmental and respecting people of all cultures, religions, abilities, ages, genders and sexualities.

Antenatal Health Screening Practitioner

Empower Pacific is seeking suitably experienced health/welfare professionals for this challenging role. Practitioners provide HIV pre and post test counselling, as well as screening and referral for violence, mental health issues, non-communicable disease risks and other vital health concerns. These services are offered in Antenatal clinics across the country and this position is based at our Nadi Hospital Branch Office, however the successful applicant must be prepared to also work in Lautoka and/or other service delivery sites if required.

Essential :

- Demonstrated professional experience working in the community sector/ counselling field
- Demonstrated appropriate awareness of local issues related to HIV/STI's, Violence against women, child protection,
- Open non-judgmental attitude and ability to work closely with a wide range of people regardless of race, religion, gender, sexuality, age, ability or any other personal characteristic.
- Demonstrated experience/awareness of working in a health setting
- Accurate collection of information and

- file keeping
- Hard working, accountable, reliable, honest and a strong team player
- Excellent written and spoken English and Fijian/Hindi
- Basic computer skills (word, emails etc)
- Desirable :
- Previous training in HIV VCCT

The position is full time, 35 hours a week.

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Social Worker

Empower Pacific is seeking a suitably experienced and qualified professional Social Worker. Applicants MUST have a Degree in Social Work or equivalent.

Essential :

- Degree in Social Work or equivalent/higher level tertiary qualifications.
- 1-3 years demonstrated professional experience working in the community/welfare field
- Demonstrated appropriate awareness of local issues related to HIV/STI's, Violence against women, child protection, suicide and other social issues affecting Fiji.
- Open non-judgmental attitude and ability to work closely and respectfully with a wide range of people regardless of race, religion, gender, sexuality, age, ability or any other personal characteristic.
- Hard working, accountable, reliable, honest and a strong team player
- Excellent written and spoken English and Fijian/Hindi
- Basic computer skills (word, emails etc)

The current vacancy is based in Suva however applicants may wish to be considered for future positions in the west.

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