



Mo'ui Ke Fiefia

WOMEN AND CHILDREN CRISIS CENTRE NEWSLETTER

Creating a Kingdom that is Violence free

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Malo e Leleli!

'Ofakilevuka Guttenbeil Likiliki - WCCC Director

As Tongans we should be very proud of The Declaration of Freedom and the Same Law for All Classes under the Tongan Constitution - For rights such as these to be enacted in 1875 is something that was most definitely a huge progressive step forward in Tonga's political and constitutional history.

Unfortunately, more than one hundred and thirty six years later we haven't made much progress at all with regards to achieving human rights for all in Tonga. As we currently follow the land commission public consultations, it amazes me how negative reactions are towards women owning land in Tonga.

Surely we are doing an injustice to the ideas developed in 1875. By now we should be a nation that recognizes all its citizens as equal. Women in Tonga contribute to the economy in enormous ways, they tirelessly contrib-

ute to community development projects, church activities and peace keeping initiatives and yet we are still classified as second class citizens when it comes to land ownership and registration!

The unequal balance of power and ownership that men have over women in Tonga contributes in many ways towards the reinforcement of Violence Against Women, where the man always has the upper hand in the relationship and takes control over relation-

Statistics Feb 2011

In Feb 2011

21 Women

10 Children

(6 girls and 4 boys)

1 Man

= a total of 32 clients sought refuge from violence at WCCC

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Do you care about women's right to Land?

The new minister of Education, Women's Affairs and Culture, Dr. Ana Taufeu lungaki called for greater partnership between women's organizations and the Ministry in order to address the needs of women comprehensively.

One issue that has been raised unanimously by women's organizations is Tongan women's right to own land in Tonga. Currently women do not have the same privileges as men to own land, which has implications for accessing loans and the requirement to make alternative leasing ar-



rangements in order to establish stability of their land. The United Nations Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) promotes gender equality in terms of access to assets, including land.

A taskforce has been formed to write a submission to the Royal Lands

Commission in which the current land laws are under review. Taskforce members include Siale 'Ilolahia from the Civil Society Forum of Tonga, Polotu Paunga from the Women's Affairs Department at the Ministry of Education

and 'Ofa-ki-levuka Guttenbeil-Likiliki from the Women and Children Crisis Centre.

WCCC is now seeking women to come and tell their stories if they feel that the current land laws are disadvantaging them. WCCC will write up case studies for the submission to The Royal Land Commission. The case studies are confidential, with no identifying details of the

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Case Study ...

The land that I am living on at the moment belongs to my parents. They are both dead. I am the eldest in the family, I only have one brother. He is in New Zealand and he has overstayed his visa, he has a wife and his life is all there in New Zealand. I am the one who is staying at my parent's house, looking after the land. My husband and I built the house on the land many years ago, although I have not been in contact with my husband for almost 30 years now and he is overseas.

I am the eldest daughter but I am worried because the land does not belong to me, at the moment it belongs to my brother. I have to go to New Zealand to see my brother if there are any issues with the land, and I have to negotiate with the Ministry and Lands and Survey here in Tonga. If my brother was to die, the land would go to my Uncle's eldest son who lives in Tonga.

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It's not Ok!

WCCC launched the 'It's not Ok' campaign which says it is a crime to commit any violence against women and children. This includes domestic violence, child abuse, sexual harassment and rape.

WCCC counselor, Susana 'Uhatafe said "it is time for us to start talking about the fact that it is not ok to remain silent about the things that are causing us stress in our private lives. Domestic violence and child abuse are not matters to be sorted out privately. They are part of a problem that exists in our society - that each of us allows violence against women and children to take place."

Domestic violence is any abusive behavior used by one partner in a relationship to gain and maintain control over another's life. It can occur in any type of domestic relationship, including spousal relationships, intimate personal relationships, family relationships and informal care relationships. Under Tongan law, it is a crime to



commit any kind of assault - it is not ok to commit domestic violence. 'Uhatafe said "often in Tongan culture we hear that men feel they have the right to discipline their wives - it is not true. Men should never hit their wives, or feel that they have the right to ownership over their wives in any way." Child abuse and neglect occurs when a child is mistreated, resulting in injury or risk of harm. Abuse can be physical, verbal, emotional or sexual. Cases

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Police training - "victims of crime"

The WCCC was invited to do a session on the topic - "Victims of Crime" at the Police Training School at Longolongo on Wednesday the 9th of February. WCCC Counselors Team Leader Sūsana 'Uhatafe, Research Officer Lu'isa Sāmani, Communications Officer Leanne Torpey and Community Education Team

Leader Lēsila Tō'ia were there to do the presentation. Lēsila started the session by introducing the team. She continued talking about the Centre and the services it provides. She also talked about the structure of the Centre, referral system, networking with related stakeholders. Lu'isa then talked about the statistics and its analysis, revealing that there are a number of clients who are victims of crime that do not report directly to the Police. Then finally Sūsana talked about the role of counsellors and the 24 hours counseling services the Centre provides. She also emphasized the impacts of different forms of violence on the survivors and victims' lives.

There were 20 people altogether - 18 men and 2 women. Community Education Team Leader, Lesila To'ia said, "The



WCCC Community Education Team and the Police Staff that attended the training

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"I think to myself I am an adopted child"

First hand account of violence from a WCCC client

When I was 8 years old my father began to treat me in a way that is not right for a father to do to his daughter. He gave me money \$10 to \$20 and told me not to tell anyone, and most of the time I was scared and think to myself what I would do to overcome this and what will happen if someone knew.

All these things that happen to me were all done at our own house, and I think to myself maybe I am an adopted child of the family. Eventually my mother left the country and this is the saddest time in my life. I knew that my mother left me but she didn't even know what is happening to me. On the day she left I drew a picture of

an aero-plane when it departed at the airport.

I moved to stay with my older sister but my father still continued the same thing to me. Most of the time when my father came to pick me up from my sister's house I was very unhappy when seeing him, and sometimes my sister would get mad at me and ask why I didn't want to go with my dad, but she did not know what was happening, but because of her trust in him that he is our father, she told me to go. It was very hard for me, but at that time I didn't have the courage to tell her.

Now I am 14 and one day I was lying on my bed in my

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