



FIJI AND OTHER WORK

Working with the Citizens' Constitutional Forum

In another year dominated by strained political and inter-communal relations, CR continued our partnership with the Citizens' Constitutional Forum (CCF).

Progress in Fiji on key issues of land and sugar was blocked, and evictions of tenant farmers by indigenous landowners persisted. In its leading role as defenders of civil liberties and human rights, CCF continued its public education work and support for the Constitution.

Working with Fiji's parliamentarians, the media, rural communities, women and young people, CCF's European Union-supported programme focused on indigenous and minority rights; democracy and the rule of law; housing and social exclusion; and resource and land rights.

CR played a part in two CCF strategic planning retreats and provided support for European visits by its Executive Director, Akuila Yabaki, and other members. We also supported relations with donor agencies.

Fiji's national election in mid-2006 has tested the Constitution once again. This means that CCF will continue to play an important role in promoting public accountability.

"Coups have set Fiji's development back by 20 years – no one wants the coup culture to continue", says Vijay Naidu, former CCF chairperson. "The way to stop it is to send the strongest message to the nation that violence is not an acceptable means of effecting political or constitutional change."

Photo: CCF member Ponipate Ravula is interviewed at a protest in 2005 against the Fiji government's reconciliation bill, which proposed to grant amnesty to the perpetrators of the 2000 military coup.

Extending our influence

CR takes part in peacebuilding networks around the world to help improve practice by sharing lessons learned from our work. These include the Coordinating Committee for Conflict Transformation Support (CCTS), the Peace and Security Liaison Group and other working groups in the UK. We are also an affiliate with the US-based Alliance for Peacebuilding, and the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict.

CR is also often invited to bid for governmental and intergovernmental projects. We see these as opportunities to influence government policy and usually involve our programme associates.

CR enjoys a fruitful relationship with the International Working Group on Sri Lanka (IWG), which is based in our London office. We also played a modest role in sharing experiences with visitors from different conflicts in 2005, most notably colleagues from Nepal.

"The way to stop the coup culture is to send the strongest possible message to the nation that violence is not an acceptable means of effecting political or constitutional change."