



MEDIA RELEASE

‘WITH HUMAN RIGHTS COME RESPONSIBILITIES’, REGIONAL HIV MEETING TOLD

For Immediate Release

Nadave, Fiji (23 November, 2010) — The legal response has been identified as one of the most effective responses to HIV in the Pacific region as it defines the obligations of the State to protect those living with HIV and vulnerable groups such as women.

“Sometimes the protection of HIV sufferers is based on emotions and this does not offer effective protection. The legal response therefore creates an enabling environment in which we can respond better,” said Mr Laitia Tamata, a lawyer with the Pacific Islands AIDS Foundation (PIAF).

Mr Tamata made the comments at a regional retreat on HIV and sexual reproductive health currently underway at the Centre for Appropriate Technology and Development (CATD) in Nadave. The retreat is organised by the Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific (FSPI).

Explaining the basic human rights of those living with HIV in the context of responsibilities, he said: “In discussing human rights, people often tend to overlook responsibilities to themselves and others. The tendency has been for citizens to claim their rights without being responsible. Responsibility determines the amount of rights one enjoys. A peaceful, loving society is made up of responsible citizens. When there are responsibilities, there are very few violations of human rights,” he said.

“For example, those living with HIV have the capacity to study their options such as the right to having sex and having children, however, responsibility comes into play when one determines whether or not HIV positive children should be born into the world. Having sex is not the only means of having children. There are also other means such as artificial insemination which could be considered for those living with HIV who wish to have a family.”

Mr Tamata also told the retreat that in the Pacific, custom has been argued to justify discrimination and unjust practices.

“However, when custom goes against human rights it can no longer be considered beneficial or good,” he said.

The regional retreat is part of the FSPI-administered *Stepping Stones* programme which works with peer group community facilitators and communities to facilitate community conversations to address reproductive sexual health, gender based violence in the context of STIs, HIV and teen pregnancies; discrimination and stigma; promote the protection of human rights and encourage positive and responsible behaviour. (ENDS)

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