

# STEPPING STONES

n e w s l e t t e r



Issue 3

“keeping you in touch with the rest of the region”

September 2010

Warm Pacific greetings to you all and welcome to our third issue for this quarter! It has been an eventful quarter which has seen the implementation of a lot of SS work. But first we must farewell a much loved member of the SS family, Emily, who will be taking up a position based in Melbourne with the International Women's Development Agency (IWDA). With her departure, the co-ordination part of the programme has largely been handed over to myself and the FSPI Regional Health Programme Manager, Margaret Leniston (who is profiled on page 4) will continue in her leadership role as being responsible for the overall project management of SS and its connectedness to FSPI in terms of technical assistance and strengthening the work of SS across the region.

In this issue we feature articles from our SS sisters in the North Pacific and Central America. Their articles can be found on pages 2 and 3 respectively. Also featured is an article from Ms Nelly Hano. Nelly, a Solomon Island SS facilitator currently based in Fiji, was funded through the Response fund as part of its cross Pacific sharing to co facilitate the Solomon Island national facilitator training. Nelly co-facilitated the Solomon Islands National facilitator training with Henry and the rest of the Solomon Islands SS team. She was part of the regions first trainings in 2006. You can find her article on page 2.

Since its facilitator training, Fiji has been busy with SS implementation. This quarter saw the implementation of SS in 3 communities in Fiji, namely Naitutu, Waikete and Matata. I have received great

feedback from the SS support people and have been excited to read through their community facilitator journals. There has been positive feedback from the communities on the initial SS sessions that have already been conducted. A big stepping stones clap to our Fiji SS team!

Tura, one of our male advocates who we profiled in our last issue, has an exciting story for us. Tura choreographed and produced Mr Joeli Colati's talent piece as part of his participation as a King contestant in this year's Fiji Hibiscus Festival. Turn to page 4 to read about the successful outcome that Tura championed.

Margaret gives us a snapshot review of the newly published report out by International Family Planning. The report 'Integrating HIV & Sexual and Reproductive Health: A Pacific Specific Mapping', highlights some key recommendations for policy makers, programmers and regional stakeholders in the area of Pacific specific HIV and Sexual Reproductive Health.

Don't forget about our Pacific stepping stones e-forum group! We would love to hear about your SS experiences or any other related issues that you would like to discuss. Register today if you haven't!

I look forward to working more closely with each of you and I will do my best to continue the great work that Emily has done for SS in the Pacific!

Thanks to everyone for their hard work this quarter, *Leaine*.

## Stepping Stones says *Isa lei* to Emily!

As most of you will know by now Emily will be leaving Fiji and the SS programme. After four and a half years in the Pacific Emily will return to her native Australia to join the International Women's Development Agency as Programme Manager for the Pacific based in Melbourne.

With her skills and experience, Emily has done invaluable work on the SS programme in the region and has been at the forefront of many of the successes that the programme has witnessed. To name a few, the production of user friendly M&E resources, toolkit and facilitator journals and her co-ordination and support that has led to key partnerships and outcomes across SS countries and the translation of the SS manuals into Bislama and I Kiribati. As facilitators, the at times, begrudging task of reporting and monitoring is a challenge that is faced many a time. Having usable and relevant resources and strong supportive networks and relationships have made the challenge of implementing SS a bit more bearable! There are many more contributions that Emily has made and great work that she has inspired within the programme and will no doubt continue to do so.

Though involved in a slightly different capacity, Emily will still have contact with SS and will return to be present at the November retreat and in future remain available for technical assistance. Certainly her passion and commitment to the programme will continue. Emily's new job will also require quite a few visits back to the Pacific so this is certainly not the end or goodbye to our dear colleague!

We will all have our fond memories of Emily and we at FSPI will miss the energy, personality and professionalism that she brought to our workplace. In this issue, I'd like to thank Emily for her dedication, hard work and passion to the SS programme, the personality she brought to SS and the wealth of knowledge and skills that she has passed on to the SS family.

So while we bid a much loved *isa lei* (a sentimental way of saying farewell in Fijian) to Emily, we will see her back on the Pacific shores in November for the SS retreat!

*Malo aupito, tanku tumas, koraba and vinaka vaka levu* Emily Miller, from the SS family across the Pacific!



# News from the other side of the Pacific

Greetings from Ecuador in Latin America!

Here, Stepping Stones is called Paso a Paso. Ecuador is the country where Stepping Stones was first implemented in the Americas continent thanks to Plan International and Ayuda en Acción. It was then introduced in Central America (Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua). The manual was adapted to the local context -three sessions were added to address issues around migration and homosexuality.

Many people from the region migrate to the United States to look for a job and a better situation but they enter illegally and end up having a very difficult life, often earning little money and being exploited by greedy employers. This situation creates a lot of political and social tensions. For example last week 150 migrants were killed in Mexico at United States border - maybe the news has reached you in Fiji? One exercise of Stepping Stones was designed to allow people to think about the dangers and loneliness of migrating. People watch a video on the subject and share experiences. This is a very popular session because almost everyone here has either migrated to the US, or has family who have migrated or are thinking of migrating.

Countries in Central and Latin America are extremely religious. The Church is very powerful. Sexuality is a taboo subject, which leads to thousands of young girls getting pregnant very early (often from 12-13 years old) and then facing rejection both by their families. Stepping Stones helps young people to learn about their sexual and reproductive health and rights, at the same time providing the same information to their parents. It has resulted in less teenage pregnancies and better communication within families. Other important changes observed have been reduction of gender inequalities, violence and alcohol use.

One of the strongest prejudices here is against gay people. The session that addresses this issue is very popular because it has allowed some people to come out in safe spaces about their sexual

orientation and has helped communities to understand what it is to love another person of the same sex. People have opened up to the idea that gay people also deserve respect and support as human beings.

The important news I wanted to share with you is that for about a year now, we have been working on a monitoring system at a regional level of the use of Stepping Stones. We have decided to use the Outcome Mapping approach, which identifies desired outcomes of the programme and looks at the progress markers to reach them. We have shared monitoring experiences of Stepping Stones from over the world, and have decided to integrate the work done in Fiji, since it's definitely one of the most detailed and strongest! This will also allow us to start being able to make comparisons across countries starting from one side of the Pacific to another one. The process will take a couple of years, but we will keep you informed on our progress.

For now, an 'abracito' to all, which in Spanish is a warm little hug.  
Amandine Bollinger



## National Community Facilitator Training in the Solomon Islands

A 10 day community stepping stones facilitators training was held in Honiara, Solomon Islands, from 23<sup>rd</sup> August to 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2010. The Stepping Stones approach was introduced in the Solomon Islands to be used as a tool to address HIV and AIDS and issues relating to HIV and AIDS.

The five trainers, Ben Angoa, Henry Oti, Julia Fationa, Helena Tomasi and Nelly Hano, are community facilitators from Solomon Islands Planned Parenthood, Oxfam International and the Ministry of Health HIV unit. They were the first community facilitators trained in the region's first trainings in 2006.

The aim of the training was to train community facilitators to facilitate stepping stones sessions in their various communities. The 44 participants were from Save the Children, World Vision and the Solomon Islands Development Trust (SIDT) and came from the provinces of Malaita, Western and Honiara. The training was funded by Save the Children and supported by MOH, World Vision and FSPI.

During the training, the participants were divided into peer groups based on gender and age. In each session, issues which affect community people in their daily lives were covered. These included conversations on communication & relationships, behaviors & practices, gender, exploring sexuality and HIV and AIDS. At the peer group meetings, specific issues raised by each peer group were discussed and addressed collectively.

As one of the trainers, I found the training intensive. Though tiring, participants expressed satisfaction and found they learned a lot. They said that what they learned was based on issues affecting them on a daily basis. And they found that the stepping stones approach

is ideal for community usage.

The training was particularly empowering for women in terms of increasing their confidence and ability to communicate assertively.

*'the training has given me confidence to talk with people...especially with my parents' young women participant*

*'I am always a judgmental person...this training has helped me to be more understanding, to look at things in a different way' older woman participant*

At the closure of the training all participants were awarded with certificates. In the closing speeches representatives from MOH, Save the Children and World Vision SI, encouraged the graduating stepping stones facilitators to go back to their communities and start implementing this important programme.

Nelly Hano- Solomon Islands



# Stepping Stones in the North Pacific



With a complete team of facilitators, the Guam SS Team are now ready to implement SS to Chuukese Communities in Guam.

The team has set goals which include increasing community knowledge on issues of HIV and AIDS, STIs, gender, sexual health, domestic violence and other related issues. As facilitators, they want to empower their communities to speak about these issues which are considered taboo. This is seen as one way of reducing STIs, addressing HIV and AIDS, stigma and discrimination, domestic violence, and to enhance understanding on sexual health and gender. Another goal is to use the SS approach of facilitating community ownership and to work with communities so that they are able to find their own solutions to issues affecting them.

The team does not only focus on campaigning and implementing SS in Guam but also on providing assistance and services to the Guam STI and HIV Program such as providing Chuukese language translation and interpretation for program staff. The SS team also assists in coordinating and networking with the Chuukese; as well as identifying Micronesian venues to promote STI and HIV testing and prevention services among Chuukese. Additionally, the team is also helping the STI and HIV staff in developing Chuukese IEC materials to promote STI and HIV testing, referral services and safer behavior as well addressing stigma and

Stepping Stones has made its way to the Northern Pacific Country of Chuuk and Guam. The first training occurred in Chhuk, one of the states in the Federated States of Micronesia. Two Chuukese females residing in Guam attended the Stepping Stones training in November, 2010. The two female facilitators were tasked to implement SS on Guam to the Chuukese communities. However they were not able to do so without male facilitators. Fortunately, thanks to the FSPI and SPC, two Chuukese male participants from Guam were able to attend the Fiji facilitator training in April.



discrimination Chuukese living with HIV and AIDS are facing in Guam.



The SS team is also very thankful to Mary Enciso, the Programme Development Officer, from SPC Pohnpei, for conducting M & E training with the SS team in May. The team learned and practiced how to use the three evaluation tools (Gender (G) Scale, Community Assessment, and MSC). During the training the team also developed the Guam team's M & E logframe and SS Workplan. With the implementation plan done, the team has started conducting campaigns to promote and introduce SS to the communities. One of the challenges the team faced besides SS as a new approach, was the support at the community level at the SS workshop. Communities are not as organized and do not have a community supported leader to help organize and get the people's participation. However the team has decided to start off with a more organized group such as a church group or other Chuukese organizations that expressed interest in participating in SS, as a way forward.

SS Guam team

## Stepping Stones stepping out at PIJAAG

In the latest efforts to promote Stepping Stones in the North Pacific, representatives from Chuuk's SS core team and SPC were invited to conduct a 90 minute presentation highlighting the achievements and challenges of SS implementation at the Pacific Island Jurisdictions AIDS Action Group (PIJAAG) Summit 2010 in the Marshall Islands.

In a packed conference venue, SPC's HIV and STI section provided an introduction to SS, its methodology, history and implementation in the South Pacific and current plans to pilot SS in the North Pacific. Then Chuuk took center stage as members of the SS Chuuk core team presented their successes, challenges, and lessons learned piloting SS in four communities on Weno.

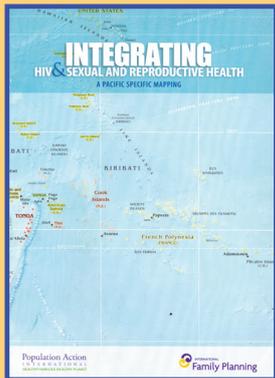
Formed in 2001, PIJAAG aims to increase information sharing, collaboration opportunities and capacity for HIV prevention and care in the United States-affiliated Pacific Island jurisdictions and the Pacific region. It was an important SS presentation as US donors, US-based capacity building organization, and island jurisdictions, who are unfamiliar with SS, were on-hand to learn about the tools, participatory methods, and the progress and impact of SS in the south, and the current roll out plans in the north.

In order to give the audience a taste of SS, at the presentation's conclusion, with all the chairs out of the way, participants formed a large circle in the venue and together, they learned to sing the Watermelon song-laughing and having a good time!

Mary Enciso



# Integrating HIV & Sexual Health and Reproductive Health – A Pacific Mapping report



There is a hot off the press publication 'Integrating HIV & Sexual Health and Reproductive Health: a Pacific Specific Mapping' 2010 carried out by International Family Planning with support from Population Action International.

During the research period many of you and your organisations engaged with Stepping Stones and HIV- Reproductive Sexual Health (RSH) work in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Kiribati, were consulted. The report challenges the disconnected nature of HIV related activities from the broader RSH. It calls for action to support and build services so that they are available to a greater number of people and provided in an integrated way. It recognizes Stepping Stones as an existing Integrated Behaviour Change (SIC communication) approach as it includes community members to address topics on STIs and HIV, gender and violence, drugs and alcohol abuse, sexuality and gender relations and communications relationships.

It makes a number of other recommendations on the importance of removing barriers to an integrated approach, it identifies key entry points to advancing an integrated approach. These include research and health information systems which encourage linkages to an integrated HIV and SRH services. It calls for improved leadership, governance and stewardship with increased need for political support, an informed civil society, promotion of a regional focus to build primary health care systems and a harmonizing of health institutions and coordination of funding, workforce and services. Such commitments will advance the International Convention on Population and Development (ICDP) Plan of Action (PoA), by strengthening health systems, improving people's health and enabling the realization of human rights. Indeed this is a challenge!

The report can be requested by you! It will be available on the FSPI website and our pacificsteppingstones@yahoo.com. Copies will also be available at the Stepping Stones Retreat in Fiji, 22nd - 26th November. Margaret Leniston

## Margaret Leniston FSPI Regional Health Programme Manager

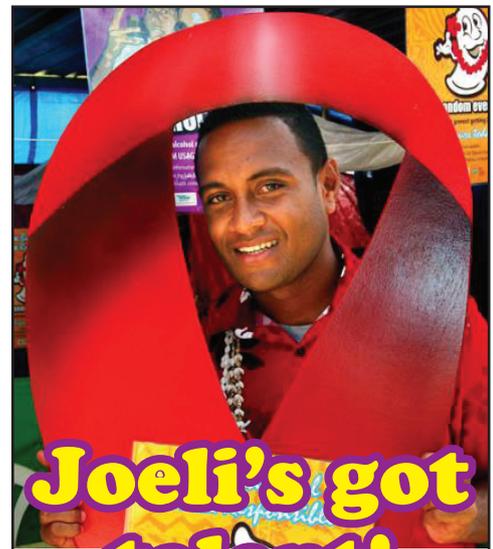


Margaret (often referred to as Marg) holds Masters Degree in Political Science and Development/Gender Studies, Victoria University, Wellington New Zealand. She also trained as a General and Maternity Nurse in NZ. Her many years of work experience includes health and social development policy and planning. She held position of Gender Adviser at the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat and was contracted as Social Development Adviser with RRRT. She studied Teaching English as a Second Language (Dip TESOL) qualification at USP, before taking up the position as the FSPI

Regional Health Programme Manager. She has 20 years of development policy, planning, gender analysis and training, community development and research experience in New Zealand and internationally (Africa, Asia and the Pacific). Over the last eighteen years she has worked in Tanzania, Indonesia and Cambodia. But more recently, she has spent eight years in across the South Pacific with communities in Kiribati, Vanuatu, PNG, Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Tonga, Samoa and Fiji.

One of her main tasks has been to build the FSPI Regional Health Programme. The Health strategy has revealed two strategic areas for development. (1) Sustainable livelihoods – Youth and Mental Health with inclusions of reduction of risk (STIs, HIV/AIDS/RSH, Violence reduction particularly against women and children and (2) Environmental Health (water, sanitation and hygiene – WASH) and the health impacts of climate change.

Margaret will be supporting the strategic management of the SS Technical Assistance (TA) and SPC. She attended the Stepping Stones Training organized by FSPI, in collaboration with SPC and the Fiji Ministry of Health in June 2010. She currently provides support and TA to the Project Officers working with Stepping Stones. She continues to support the development of the 'R U Man Enuf' drama for social change work with the FSPI Male advocates through the 'Linking HIV to Gender Inequity'. She is committed, through this work to aim to contribute to the reduction of Gender Based Violence (GBV), promotion of women's rights as human rights and to increase male responsibility for reducing GBV (register on <http://www.engagingmen.net/> to access resources on engaging boys and men in gender equality). She is actively engaged with supporting the FSPI work in collaboration with PIAF and the FSP network partners to develop HIV Workplace Policies so FSP partners can increase their capacity to contribute to Stepping Stones work over the coming years.



## Joeli's got talent!

"I am the testimony and also the example". Joeli Colati created history in Fiji and in the Pacific by being the first person living with HIV to use a pageant as a platform to try and change public perception, with his message "People living with HIV are just like you and me".

Joeli is one of the trained community facilitators for the Stepping Stones Program and continues to be at the forefront in advocacy and challenging perception about people living with HIV.

On Wednesday the 25<sup>th</sup> of August on the talent night for the King Contestants of the Fiji Hibiscus festival, Joeli, Mr. FJN+ sponsored by Rentokil, and mentored by the FSPI Stepping Stones Male Advocate, Tura Lewai on his performance, won the Best Talent of the night. From the thundering chants of the traditional Fijian vucu (chants), to the contemporary Pacific sounds of the drums to the elegance of interpretive dance, Joeli took all of the audience in attendance and the millions watching throughout the region through his story of one once filled with anger, to one of acceptance, to one that now focused on advocacy for those living with and affected by HIV. The sharp and violent movements in the traditional meke was testament to the anger. The contemporary Pacific dance portrayed his acceptance and finally his elegance in the interpretive dance, a testimony to the advocacy that he does in his work at the Fiji Network of People Living with HIV (FJN+). At the end of the performance there was not a heart untouched by his message, again testifying to the influence that the arts hold in being a catalyst to reach out to people to create change.

Tura Lewai

**For more information on any articles in this issue of your STEPPING STONES newsletter please contact:**

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