

The background features several large, overlapping, colorful swirls in shades of green, purple, and blue. Scattered throughout are numerous small, yellow, triangular shapes, some pointing upwards and some downwards, resembling confetti or starbursts. The overall aesthetic is bright and celebratory.

# **Alternative Care for children without primary care givers in Fiji**

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# UNICEF Pacific

- **Child Protection section established in April 2005**
- **UNICEF Pacific works with 14 Pacific Island country governments**
- **Focus countries are Kiribati, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands, being the three least developed countries**

# **Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu**

- **No residential or institutional care centres exist for children without primary care givers in Kiribati, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands**
- **Children without primary care givers are cared for by extended family and community networks through informal fostering or adoption**

# **Fiji - Country Background**

- **Archipelago of over 300 islands with a population of approximately 861,927**
- **52% of the population are Indigenous Fijians; and 48% are Indo-Fijians**
- **Westminster model of governance**
- **Department of Social Welfare is mandated under the Juveniles Act 1978 to address child protection issues**



# Situation of Children

- **Legal age definition is 17 years old (Juveniles Act)**
- **Recent estimated figures for number of children between the age of 0-17yrs is 324 280 (37%)**
- **143, 858 students (6-13yrs) enrolled in Primary Schools in 2004**
- **68,774 students (13 – 19yrs) enrolled in Secondary Schools in 2004**
- **145 juveniles (all males) formally charged with offences in 2004**
- **Child welfare cases referred to the Department in the last 3 years are: 2002 – 458, 2003 – 595, 2004 - 532**

# Children in Need of Alternative Care

**Number of children in residential homes for the past four years:**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
2001	119	105	224
2002	71	113	184
2003	63	89	152
2004	60	86	146

**Note: these figures include children under care and protection of the State and children who are serving custodial sentences**

# Description of Residential Care Centres

- **1 boys home (12 – 17yrs) that is directly managed by the State (accommodates both children in detention and children in need of care and protection)**
- **1 girls home (12-17yrs) run by the Salvation Army and funded by the Government**
- **4 children's home (0 – 12yrs) run by faith based organisations and partly funded by the Government**

# **Assessment of Residential Care Centres**

- **2003 – Dept. of Social Welfare & AusAID Law and Justice Sector Program conducted a Needs Assessment of existing child welfare services provided by the state**
- **2004 - Needs Assessment recommended development and implementation of a Charter of Minimum Standards.**
- **Charter incorporates standards in Juveniles Act and relevant international Conventions and encourages “best practice” in residential homes.**
- **2005 - Charter is now in the final process of being formally endorsed by Cabinet.**



# Charter of Minimum Stds

*Every child and young person the right to :*

- i. Live in a safe, secure and abuse free environment*
- ii. Live in an environment that encourages the development of their intellectual, physical, spiritual and emotional needs*
- iii. Access to good quality health and dental care*
- iv. The best education and training opportunities available*
- v. Equality of opportunity where every child and young person is able to develop their full potential; by improving self-esteem, gaining self-confidence and developing an awareness of self and others*



# Charter of Minimum Stds

- vi. Support and preparation into adulthood and independence; with a clear plan leading to higher education or skills training and employment***
- vii. Maintain regular contact with their families and where appropriate, support to return home***
- viii. Have a voice in the decisions that affect their lives***
- ix. Be cared for and supported by skilled and trained care workers***



# **Description of Care Programs**

- **Education Program – Children are enrolled in schools to further their education**
- **Agricultural Based Programs**
- **Basic Automotive Programs**
- **Basic Carpentry Programs**
- **Family Links Program**
- **Spiritual, Cultural, Social and Life Skills Program**
- **Sports and Recreational Programs**



# **Description of Non-Residential Care**

## **1. Extended Family Support Network**

- Family kinship and ties are very strong indigenous Fijian communities. Extended families provide alternative care for children who are in need of care and protection**

## **2. Adoption**

- 307 formal adoptions in 2001; 345 in 2002; 263 in 2003; and 261 in 2004**

## **3. Fostering**

- Foster care or “boarding out”, is provided for under the Juveniles Act but is not used**



# **Problems and Lessons Learnt**

- **Problems**

- **Inadequate or sub-standard facilities**
- **Unskilled Staff**
  - **Poor Record Management**
  - **Inappropriate treatment of children**
- **Lack of data**

- **Lessons Learnt**

- **Need for proper Data Base System for access to information**
- **Untrained staff lead to poor service delivery**

A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide features a large green balloon at the top, a blue balloon in the middle, and a purple balloon at the bottom. Yellow streamers and small triangular flags are scattered around the balloons.

# Proposed Solutions

- **Relocation of the Juvenile Boys Centre and separation of children in need of care and protection**
- **Computerised Care Planning System for standardization of information**
- **Implementation of Minimum Standards to lift the quality of service in residential homes**
- **Specialized training for staff in residential care centers which started in 2005**
- **Restructure of Department of Social Welfare (including establishment of Child Welfare Division in 2005)**



# Recommendations

- **Increase knowledge and information on how extended families and communities care for children without primary caregivers (Pacific)**
- **Program to strengthen capacity of families and communities to care for children without primary caregivers (National)**
- **Strengthen channels for identification/reporting of children without primary care givers or otherwise in need of alternative care (National)**
- **Review of outdated legislation (National)**