



FIJI TEACHERS UNION

(THE CHILD OUR HOPE)

Headquarters: 1-3 Berry Road, Suva. P.O.Box 2203 Govt. Buildings, Suva, Fiji
Phone: (679) 331 4099 or (679) 331 4668 Fax: (679) 330 5962
Email: ftu@connect.com.fj Website: www.ftu.com.fj



Affiliated to EDUCATION INTERNATIONAL, FTUC, Fiji Teachers Confederation & COPE

President : Muniappa Goundar

Our Ref:

General Secretary: Agni Deo Singh

Your Ref:

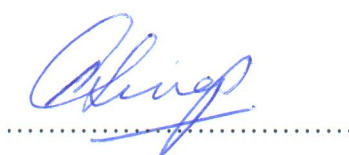
Press Release- World Teachers Day

Since 1994, World Teachers Day has been celebrated annually on October 5th. This celebration draws attention to the contributions of teachers in educating their communities in a bid to develop a more inclusive and sustainable society. The important role of teachers at the heart of the education system has been highlighted in 2020, as never before, by the leadership teachers demonstrated in ensuring the continuity of learning during the COVID-19 pandemic which had a massive impact on economies worldwide. Hence, this crucial achievement at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic is marked by the apt and thought-provoking theme on this year's World Teachers Day: "Teachers: Leading in crisis, reimagining the future". Like all other years, this year's World Teachers Day provides the perfect opportunity to celebrate the teaching profession, highlight teachers' accomplishments and draw attention to teachers needs and voices. Teachers are arguably the most important members of our society as they give our children a purpose, set them up for success as citizens of our world, and inspire in them a drive to do well and succeed in life. The children of today are the leaders of tomorrow, and teachers are that critical point that makes a child ready for the future. Children carry what they are taught at a young age throughout the rest of their lives. They will use what they have learned to influence society. Everyone knows that today's youth will become tomorrow's leaders, and teachers educate the youth in their most impressionable years- whether pre-school teaching, teaching extra-curricular, sports or traditional classes. Teachers have the ability to shape leaders of the future in the best way for a society to build positive and inspired future generations and therefore design society, both on a local and global scale. In reality, teachers have the most important job in the world. Those who have an impact on the children of society have the power to change lives. Not just for those children themselves, but for the lives of all. Great teachers have the ability to change lives for the better. Teachers have not only shaped lives inside the four walls of the classroom, but have also nurtured our students to be good sports ambassadors. According to Education International, World Teacher's Day commemorates the adoption of the 1966 ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers and the 1997 Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel. Since the adoption in 2015 of fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), which is "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all", World Teachers' Day has also provided an occasion to take stock

All correspondence to the General Secretary Fiji Teachers Union, Please.

Branches: Suva, Nasinu, Rewa, Tailevu, Ra, Tavua, Ba, Lautoka, Nadi, Sigatoka, Navua, Labasa, Bua, Taveuni, Savusavu, Levuka.

of progress towards SDG 4 on increasing the supply of qualified teachers and address the challenges faced by the teaching profession. These challenges have multiplied exponentially this year as the unprecedented situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic severely tested education systems that were already constrained. Teachers individually and collectively demonstrated leadership, innovation and creativity in the classroom, school and community levels while responding to the many challenges imposed on their work and working conditions. The COVID-19 pandemic also highlighted the importance of systemic and ministerial support for teacher leadership at times of crisis as the issue of teacher leadership in relation to crisis responses is not just timely, but critical in terms of the contribution's teachers have made to provide remote learning, support vulnerable populations, re-open schools, and ensure that learning gaps were mitigated. Therefore, the discussions surrounding this year's World Teachers Day must address the role of teachers in building resilience and shaping the future of education and the teaching profession. World Teachers Day will be celebrated today. Let us reflect on the teacher's importance on the lives of our children despite the environment that teachers work in. There can be no dispute that the behavior of children remains a huge challenge for many teachers who not only provide education but also act as counselors and mentors. In Fiji's context, the employees of the state, who are teachers, have suffered immensely in the manner that the terms and conditions of work have been watered down unilaterally. Teachers have been the worst victims considering the forced one-sided contracts and the draconian disciplinary procedures. Teachers were threatened with constant fear of job losses. Furthermore, the derogatory comments by some senior officials of the Education Ministry, excessive workloads and the denial of salary increments have affected the morale of teachers. The Education Budget has been reduced drastically in the past two years, including the non-provision of the merit increment for teachers. The denial of a hard-earned increment to the teachers is an act of gross cheating on the part of the Education Ministry and the State. The notorious Open Merit Recruitment System, a reform which was brought from off-shore and which was used for recruitment and promotions in the Education Ministry, created havoc in the entire school system, let alone the teaching profession. Experienced school heads, who had served the Ministry, for as long as three decades, were displaced and demoted and this further demoralized many. How does one expect teachers to provide quality education when their morale and self-esteem is low! Teachers are not magicians. They are educators and they must be provided the necessary support required to achieve quality education and Sustainable Development Goal 4. On this day, the Fiji Teachers Union wishes all our teachers a happy, vibrant and meaningful 2020 World Teachers Day celebration.



Agni Deo Singh

General Secretary