



FIJI TEACHERS UNION

NEWSLETTER

(The Child Our Hope)

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Greetings

Warm greetings to all our valued members. It is indeed difficult times for our members and their families around the country as we rebuild our lives in the aftermath of TC Winston. Almost every family in the affected areas has a heart-wrenching story to share on the ordeal they went through. We pray for a speedy recovery for all.

SCHOOL TERMS 2016

- Term 1 – 18/01/16 – 29/04/16
- Term 2 – 09/05/16 – 12/08/16
- Term 3 – 29/08/16 – 25/11/16

(Please note that the dates of the terms may change as per the Ministry's plan)

86th ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2016

Please be advised that the 86th Annual Conference has been postponed to the August holidays. The shift is due to the disturbance brought about by Cyclone Winston.

More details of the 86th conference will be relayed later.

LAUNCHING OF THE FIJI TEACHERS UNION – SCHOOL REHABILITATION FUND (FTU-SRF)

TC Winston left a trail of severe devastation in its wake. Almost 50 lives were lost apart from

the damage to homes, schools, infrastructure and crops. The Government and indeed the people in unaffected areas responded with all that could be done to rebuild the lives of almost 40% of the population. FTU CTCL assisted hundreds of members through special loans.

The Union has also set up a fund (FTU-SRF) in the wake of Cyclone Winston. The fund was launched on Saturday 5th of March, 2016 at the FTU Hall.

The aim of the fund is for the specific purpose of funding a rehabilitation programme for schools and children affected by Cyclone Winston.

The major focus of FTU-SRF shall be primarily in the area of meeting stationery needs of schools affected by the cyclone.

As seed funding each member of FTU is expected to make an appropriate donation entirely on a voluntary basis. The Fiji Teachers Union has made an initial grant of \$20,000.00 to launch the programme.

The Principal office bearers of the FTU shall have the overall responsibility to manage the fund. The signatories to expenditure shall be the same as for FTU funds. The Working Committee shall supervise all collection and distribution.

Branch Executives have been requested to collect contribution from the members and deposit the funds in **Account No. 12652817 at ANZ Bank**. Proper receipts are to be

issued. The fundraising drive ends on 8th May. Members are urged to contribute generously to this noble cause.

BRANCH AGM's

The Union's Constitution requires that Branch AGM's be held in the month of March. Elections are also conducted at the AGM's as per the Union's constitution.

The Supervisor of Elections has, however decided not to conduct the elections citing the following reasons:

1. The FEO will not be able to send out postal ballots due to tight timelines.
2. Cyclone Winston will affect voter participation.

The National Executive meeting of 5th March decided that the AGM's be conducted as per the Union's constitution. The current Executives will continue as the Interim Executives and the elections be left to the Fijian Elections Office. The Union will abide by its Constitution as well as the National Law.

AMENDMENT TO THE ERP

Fiji Trades Union Congress pursued the matter of restoration of our fundamental right for several years. It was a long struggle. Many thought it was a lost cause.

The law has finally been passed by Parliament to restore collective bargaining and the Right of Representation. Full details are on the FTUC and FTU websites. The FTUC leadership (Bro Felix Anthony in particular) is thanked for fighting relentlessly to accomplish the milestone achievement.

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

HQ will once again embark on membership drive. Schools will be visited in Term One.

Branches are requested to assist the Secretariat by getting in touch with the School Reps and obtain the school member / non member list.

CHANGE OF BRANCH

Members who have changed districts are to notify the Secretariat immediately so that the membership records can be updated.

Also note that if you change schools or are posted out of the current district and which means a change in the branch, please have your records updated.

Note that your choice of a Branch can either be through residential qualification or the school in which you teach.

SCHOOL REP & SCHOOL MEMBERSHIP LIST

The School Rep should be elected by the members at school. The School Rep then becomes the link between the members at the school and the Branch / HQ. The School Rep is the live wire at the school level, ensuring that all the Union literature is distributed in time and members assisted as per need.

LOG OF CLAIMS

The FTA and FTU have submitted a joint Log of Claims to the Ministry of Education. The following are included:

→ ENTRY POINT SALARY

Members will recall that the Ministry had reduced the entry point salary to \$12360.00 in 2015. The Union continuously challenged this decision citing breach of E.R.P. as well as an act of exploitation at its worst.

At the beginning of 2016, these teachers were put on the correct salary. The Union maintains that they were discriminated and is continuing to pursue the case.

The 2016 recruits with Diplomas and Degrees have been put on \$16,600.00 which is also below the normal scales of \$18,000.00 and \$23,000.00 respectively. This is being pursued as well.

→ TRANSFER GUIDELINE

The Ministry has been reminded that 28 days notice is mandatory. This allows the affected officer to appeal to the Ministry if he or she wishes to. Affected members may seek the Union's assistance.

→ ACTING APPOINTMENTS

The Union has noted with concern that there is no consistency in the acting appointment criteria. The departure from the practice of appointing the most meritorious officer in the next lower grade has created chaos in the system. The Union has written to PS-MOE seeking clarification on this matter.

→ POST PROCESSING

The Union has noted with deep concern that the Ministry has been disregarding the MQR that was part of the J.E.R 1997 and had been in practice. The posts are advertised as per the agreed MQR but processed according to different criteria. It seems that the so-called "commendation" points are selectively used to promote candidates of choice. The Union has received numerous complaints of unfair promotions and has filed 6 cases in the Employment Court on behalf of aggrieved members.

DUTY HOURS OF TEACHERS

It is common knowledge that the duty hours of teachers is from 8.00am to 3.30pm. Any work they do after hours or on Saturdays is purely voluntary. The Union raised concern that the

Ministry last year instructed teachers to work extra hours.

The Union has now submitted that those teachers who were made to work overtime be compensated. This matter will be pursued through the industrial machinery. Heads of Schools are advised to refrain from forcing teachers to work beyond duty hours, as they could end up at the wrong end of the law.

SUBMISSION ON PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Union found it bemusing that the Minister personally conducted the consultations seeking people's views on the various reforms. Such a process does not encourage people to freely express their views. An independent consultation would have been much more helpful to the Ministry.

The Teacher Unions have made a submission on all the matters of concern and have made constructive recommendations.





Damaged Classroom – St. Johns College in Levuka



GS with FTU members in Taveuni as part of CTCL assistance



FTU-ILO Back to School drive



GS distributing stationery supplies to children in Tailevu.



Lavena Primary School Taveuni



Launching of FTU SRF on Saturday 5th March 2016