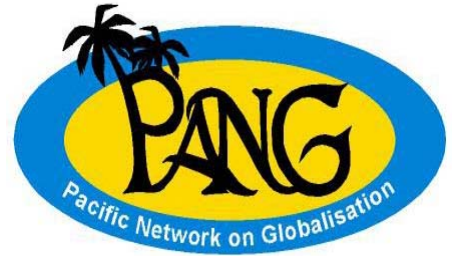


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Pacific Network on Globalisation Report January – September 2006

PANG'S WORKING AREAS

PANG has been one of the most outspoken civil society organisations in the Pacific on free trade, economic reform policies, regional policy-making processes, and the agendas of multilateral and bilateral donors. On some issues, it has been the only voice.

PANG has assumed an important watchdog role on Pacific Island states and on the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) and has been looked to by other civil society organisations (CSOs) for leadership in taking on regional governments and the PIFS on economic and trade issues.

PANG's success in this role can be seen from the feedback of other CSOs and the public from around the region, and the range of issues and concerns that have been highlighted, campaigned and provoked. The value of an organisation like PANG has been expressed across the region.

PANG provides a leading alternative voice on globalisation issues in the Pacific, as well as providing alternative research, information and analysis. A positive aspect of the work has been the level of discussion and debate that has been provoked on development issues. A major strength of PANG has been advocacy, campaigns and visibility, and a strong media input. PANG has succeeded in addressing some of the issues that no other CSO in the Pacific has addressed in terms of campaigns and advocacy, such as Pacific free trade agreements and Transnational Corporations.

PANG has been involved in advocacy, networking, and disseminating information on globalisation and trade. Information has been sent out on a variety of issues. For example, PANG sent out information on the GATS position of the European Union (EU) and its impact on the Pacific, the struggle of the Kananam people of PNG against impact of tuna operators, the struggle of women working in fish factories in Fiji, the dangers of genetically modified food, progress on the Pacific free trade area agreements, the growth of rural poverty, and articles and information on globalisation and its impacts on

the Pacific in general. This has generated greater awareness and much discussion and debate, not only in Fiji, but also in the region.

The information produced by PANG has influenced other groups in the region, such as the PNG National Council of Churches, National Community Development Trust (NKDT) in Vanuatu, the Civil Society Network in the Solomon Islands, Ole Siosiomaga in Samoa, Consumer Council of Fiji, Council for International Development in NZ. As an example NKDT in Vanuatu wrote an article in the national newspaper after receiving information on the EU position on GATS from PANG. The article challenged their government to respond strongly to the demands from the EU.

PANG's views have often been sought by journalists in Fiji on a number of economic and social issues. Some of the articles have been republished in other country newspapers such as the Vanuatu Trading Post (the biggest newspaper in Vanuatu) and the PNG National, the second largest newspaper in Papua New Guinea. In addition, interviews by prominent regional radio stations such as Radio Australia's Pacific Beat, Radio New Zealand International, Pacnews, and Radio Fiji have broadened PANG's scope outside of the Pacific region as well.

In the last three years, PANG's major research and advocacy project has been focused on the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER). Following its critique in 2002 of a social impact assessment of the Pacific Islands Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA) commissioned by the Forum Secretariat, PANG focused on a substantive analysis of PACER. To undertake the research and analysis work PANG commissioned Professor Jane Kelsey of the Law Faculty at Auckland University. The two resulting publications "Big Brothers Behaving Badly: The Implications for the Pacific Islands of the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER)", released in April 2004, and "A People's Guide to PACER: The Implications for the Pacific Islands of the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER)", released in August 2004, generated much media coverage (feature articles, opinion columns, radio and TV interviews and talk-back shows etc), as well as public discussion and debate.

Requests for copies of the reports came from a wide range of organisations and people; diplomats, consultants, academics, students, government departments, CSOs and community groups, Foreign Embassy officials and inter-governmental agencies. A public lecture/seminar by Jane Kelsey co-organised by PANG and the University of the South Pacific Economics Department likewise generated much discussion and debate.

A Peoples Guide to PACER was specifically designed to inform and stimulate debate and discussion among Pacific people, including non-government organisations, trade unions, churches, media and other communities. It was launched at the Pacific Civil Society Forum meeting in Samoa on 3 August, which was held in parallel with the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting. Designed as a basic educational resource and training tool, the Guide was welcomed by partner CSOs.

Another hugely effective advocacy and research project was the draunisalato award for the worst company operating in the Fiji Islands in 2003. It generated much publicity, discussion and debate and captured the public's imagination. It was also controversial.

The story of the awards made the main headline news in Fiji and there were numerous letters to the editors of the newspapers from the public in support for the award.

The success of the award – and the publicity, discussions and awareness it created for consumers and the public – reinforced the belief that having an award nominated by the public to scrutinize the operations of companies is a positive thing. The award was a method of taking companies to task for the way they operate, and suggest or demand procedures, processes or actions for them to undertake to improve their operations. PANG's work has contributed significantly to extending public understanding of the implications of regional trade agreements, and given CSOs a resource and training tool to assist them work further on these issues.

The Pacific Civil Society Forum in Samoa mandated PANG in August 2004 to organise actions and events towards the launch of negotiations for an Economic Partnership Agreement between the EU and Pacific ACP countries on 10 September 2004 in Fiji. PANG organized and hosted a well-attended and engaging workshop on 7 September in Fiji. Meetings between national and regional CSOs and Unions were facilitated in preparation for the workshop, and this brought often rival organizations together to get the workshop off the ground. It was a success story of CSOs putting aside differences and working together to face a common issue. The workshop and the following CSO statement to the regional negotiator were well covered by the media. It also raised awareness and the profile of CSO concerns with regards to trade negotiations.

In 2005, PANG also launched Jane Kelsey's report "A People's Guide to the Pacific's Economic Partnership Agreement", a study that was commissioned by the World Council of Churches Pacific Office. On that occasion PANG also organised a workshop, press conferences and a panel discussion on the Pacific EPA. These events caught the attention of the media, and this revived the EPA debate. At the panel discussion representatives from the Government and the EU were present, and this led to heated discussion. The EU was confronted directly on its agenda in the Pacific – maybe for the first time?

INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING

In 2006, PANG put main emphasis on institutional strengthening and has focused on the formulation of policies in regards to human resources, assets and finances. The following policies and regulations have been developed for PANG:

- The Constitution of PANG and governance structures
- Human resources policies
- Selection and recruitment procedures
- Disciplinary procedures
- Grievance procedures
- A filing system
- Financial management policies
- Asset management policies

OFFICE

In April PANG moved its office to another room in the same building. This reduced the rental costs from FJD 600 to FJD 400. This office space also provided a better working environment.

REGISTRATION

PANG's application for registration under the Charitable Trusts Act was lodged in May. The application was approved in September, and PANG is now registered under Fiji's Charitable Trusts Act.

FINANCES

Geoffrey Nainoca, an accountant of ECREA, has completed the finance records until September 2006 and has run through basic familiarisation with the new Coordinator. We have also discussed purchasing an accounting package though decided this will not be required until PANG grows and takes on more staff and begins new projects.

OXFAM CONFERENCE

The current situation

Pacific governments are currently facing multiple negotiations on trade agreements, including the Pacific Regional Economic Partnership Agreement with the EU (the EPA)¹, the Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA) and the Pacific Area Closer Economic Relations (PACER) with New Zealand and Australia. Ongoing negotiations at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) also affect some Pacific Island countries directly, and most others indirectly.

The region is currently undertaking negotiations on the Pacific EPA with the EU. The EU has promised to support development in the region, but CSOs in the region and in other parts of the world agree that the EPA in its current form is not development oriented, and will lead to adverse social impacts for developing countries. The Pacific region is also posed by an even greater threat – PACER². Governments and CSOs both acknowledge that a free trade agreement with Australia and New Zealand in the

¹ Negotiations for EPAs started in September 2002 between the EU and 77 ACP (Africa, Caribbean, Pacific) countries and are expected to be implemented on 1 January 2008. The EPAs replace non-reciprocal trading arrangements between the ACPs and the EU through the Lomé system with WTO-compatible reciprocal trading arrangements.

² PACER is *not* a free trade agreement, but a framework for setting up such an agreement and obliges Forum Island countries to enter into negotiations on a free trade agreement by 2011.

framework of PACER will have massive impacts on the region, something that PANG's work has contributed greatly to.

Oxfam Australia and New Zealand jointly held a Conference in Nadi on Trade Negotiations and Pacific Civil Society from 13-16 June 2006 with the main purpose of getting Pacific Civil Society Organisations more involved in current trade negotiations. The Conference produced a Communiqué addressing the concerns and needs of the Pacific CSOs.

The Communiqué had five main points:

- **Social impact studies**
There must be independent and extensive studies on the social, cultural and environmental impacts of regional trade agreements before commitments are made.
- **Public consultation**
The lack of meaningful consultation on the EPA process is a concern for civil society. Governments should involve CSOs more.
- **Transparency and information sharing**
There must be greater transparency and information sharing between governments and CSOs about the process.
- **Regional and international solidarity**
There is a need for Pacific countries to unite to protect common interests.
- **Non-negotiable issues**
There are issues that should not be liberalised through trade agreements, such as land, key public services, and issues that have been rejected by developing countries in the WTO.

PANG Steering Committee member Claire Slatter contributed greatly to this conference by producing and presenting case studies demonstrating the damaging effects of trade liberalisation and trade agreements. The work that Slatter undertook in Tonga for one of the case studies inspired and empowered the Tongan CSOs to take action on Tonga's accession package to the WTO. This later led to the Tongan Government deferring its WTO accession.

The Oxfam Conference made it clear that trade agreements affect the lives of all Pacific people in some way. It also became clear that PANG has an important role to play in continuing to promote wider public awareness and debate around these issues. PANG can play a vital role in engaging with national governments, regional institutions and international institutions on behalf of stakeholders, to ensure that the rights of all Pacific people are taken into account alongside the wider development aspirations of Pacific communities.

STAFF

Coordinator

This position has been vacant since the Interim Coordinator left office in February. The PANG researcher therefore took a temporary responsibility for the duties of the Coordinator and increased the effort to get a permanent Coordinator in place.

Researcher

In the period March to September the Researcher was the only staff member, and took on the responsibilities of the Coordinator. The researcher:

- Worked to strengthen the donor relationship with Kairos and responded to issues and concerns raised by Kairos. The researcher submitted the 2005 report, and continued to dialogue with Connie Sorio until her visit to Fiji in September 2006.
- Took the responsibility of the registration of PANG under the Charitable Trusts Act.
- Continued the work on the documentary on rural poverty in Fiji, and wrote an article on farming in Fiji that was published in *Landmark* (Issue 60: April 2006).
- Attended meetings with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade and the Forum Secretariat on the EPA.
- Undertook important groundwork on trade, especially on the Pacific EPA. This work will be useful for PANG in the coming months. Particular areas of interest are: EPAs, PACER, Investment, Services, TRIPS Plus, and alternative trade agreements. The overall work of the researcher continues to focus on how trade liberalisation affects poverty.
- Strategised PANG's work through developing project proposals. Three main areas of importance have been identified: PACER, EPA and the WTO.
- Worked to facilitate the employment of Roshni Sami as Coordinator.
- Produced a project proposal for 2006 in partnership with Sami.

KAIROS VISIT

The researcher helped coordinate Connie Sorio's visit to Fiji and PANG, and organised a meeting with the PANG Steering Committee on 23 September 2006. This meeting was very fruitful and gave the partners the opportunity to assess the three-year term that came to an end on 30 September 2006, evaluate the working experience of the Steering Committee and consider PANG's role and future work. The meeting concluded that there is a strong need for PANG in the region, since PANG was initially set up to address concerns that other CSOs in the region did not have the capacity to address. The need is particularly strong in the area of trade, and CSOs in the region need an organisation such as PANG to take the leading responsibility in this area. The meeting further pointed out that there is a considerable need for work to be undertaken in improving the governance structures of PANG. Sorio expressed her willingness to work with the

Committee to improve PANG's function. PANG staff and Committee members also got the chance to make a commitment towards building PANG's capacity and reaching the goals that it sets.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The Steering Committee held a meeting on 29 September, which produced important outcomes:

- PANG will hold a Strategic Planning Meeting 3-4 November 2006. This meeting will address the following:
 - Governance structures
 - Future strategic direction
 - Government representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade will be invited to share information about their work and point out how PANG can be useful to them

- A key way of consolidating PANG is by extending the Steering Committee by including more members. The Committee identified seven persons that represent different sectors and expertise that will be asked to become members. A larger group of representatives directing PANG will give the organisation more expertise to draw on and provide strength through diversity and flexibility, as these members are selected based on need or expertise unlike the existing Steering Committee members whose positions are due to their leadership positions in ECREA, WCC, PIANGO, and DAWN.

- The Committee dealt with the practical issues of hiring Roshni Sami as Coordinator, and Sami was hired effectively from 2 October 2006.

CONCLUSION

PANG has addressed major shortcomings and initiated a process of strengthening, capacity building, increased efficiency, and initiated a process of internal governance review. Three factors fundamental to PANG's future work have been achieved this year. Firstly, after consultation with our funder PANG has secured funding for a further three years of operation. Secondly, PANG now has two committed staff that are qualified, able and motivated to achieve PANG's project objectives. Thirdly, the Steering Committee has taken the first steps to addressing institutional strengthening and governance issues that have handicapped PANG's performance over the last two years. PANG's future now depends on our ability to learn from the past and work conscientiously to achieve real outcomes for economic justice in the Pacific.