

Remarks by the High Commissioner during the signing of an MoU with Ministry of iTaukei Affairs

It gives the British High Commission great pleasure in hosting the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs.

The British Government through its International Programme has provided around £10,000 to the Ministry to assist in its Training Programme for Rural Economic Empowerment.

This training programme will assist in raising awareness on financial literacy in 14 provinces around Fiji by using the Westpac Banking Corporation (WBC) training curriculum.

The programme will also offer basic business skills, which will aim at strengthening economic security and livelihoods through better finance literacy, improved business competencies, market access and improved access to financial services.

Why is the British High Commission funding this programme? There are two main reasons:

- Firstly, inclusive growth means reaching out to rural communities as well as urban areas;
- Secondly, gender is a key area of focus for us internationally – this programme includes a specific focus on reaching women in rural areas.

We are honoured with this opportunity to work with the iTaukei Affairs Board in aiding this cause, as rural communities often remain the largest unserved market for financial services. Ensuring their financial inclusion can unlock the considerable economic potential of rural areas, as it will empower them to take informed financial decisions in their businesses. Household decisions will also improve – the increase in their income and well-being will extend to their family's nutrition, education and healthcare.

I would also like to acknowledge the collaboration amongst the financial stakeholders and the various line Ministries who will be engaging with the iTaukei Affairs Board to further the success of this training programme. This is an important partnership of key agencies involved and it reflects their shared commitment to improving the livelihoods of the Fijian people through inclusive financial training and services.

The best financial strategy is close and effective partnerships of key agencies, working together in ensuring that all Fijians have the

understanding and the competency to utilise the various financial services that are available to them. The British High Commission is proud to be a part of this partnership.

On behalf of the United Kingdom, we wish the iTaukei Affairs Board the best of luck and commend the efforts of all those who have prepared for, and will participate in what we anticipate will be a fruitful 4 months programme.

We very much look forward to joining the iTaukei Affairs Board and various stakeholders involved in the upcoming financial literacy training.

Thank you & Vinaka Vaka Levu