

Fiji Women's Rights Movement

Helping to balance the scales

Annual Reports

2008 & 2009

Our Mission

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement is a multi-ethnic and multicultural non-governmental organisation committed to removing discrimination against women through institutional reforms and attitudinal changes. By means of core programmes, as well as innovative approaches, the FWRM practice promotes democracy, good governance, feminism and human rights. It strives to empower, unite and provide leadership opportunities for women in Fiji, especially for emerging young leaders.

Our Objectives

- To publicly address all issues affecting women's human rights, status and opportunity within Fiji including cultural, domestic, legal and social, health, economic, employment, religious and political situations;
- To advocate improved policy and legislation on issues affecting women's rights;
- To promote equal access to services by women and equal opportunity through appropriate enabling actions;
- To ensure the Movement remains a well-mannered and sustainable organisation, giving leadership opportunities to women, networking and sharing experience with others in the Pacific, regionally and internationally.

Our areas of work

- Human Rights Training
- Advocacy and Lobbying
- Young Women in Leadership
- Research

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Reflections

Executive Director – Virisila Buadromo



The year 2008 was challenging for the Movement.

In February, FWRM was summoned by the Court of Appeal for statements made against judicial appointments as well as critiquing public statements made by a judge. Along with FWRM, the editor of the newspaper, the *Fiji Sun*, was also summoned and reprimanded. FWRM was informed in court by a panel of three judges that its point of view was legally and factually incorrect. The *Fiji Sun*, in turn, was reprimanded for printing FWRM's press release.

In April, five FWRM staff members were among 17 people arrested for unlawful assembly following a peaceful vigil supporting the Tibetan people's call for independence from China. The 17 were released several hours later.

In November, FWRM joined 1500 women's rights leaders and activists from around the world in Cape Town, South Africa at the 11th AWID International Forum to discuss the power of movements. The International Forum on Women's Rights and Development was both a conference and a call to action. The largest recurring event of its kind, the AWID (Association for Women's Rights in Development) Forum brought together women's rights leaders and activists from around the world every three years to strategise, network, celebrate, and learn in a highly charged atmosphere that fosters deep discussions and truly transformative thinking.

FWRM & Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law & Development (APWLD) hosted a session entitled "*Tok-Talk: Nourishing an Asia Pacific Feminist Movement*". The session, which was voted one of the top 20 sessions by those who attended AWID, was an opportunity for the Pacific to be represented and heard. Representing the Pacific panelists was current Young Women's representative on the FWRM board, Paulini Turagabeci, and one of FWRM's long time partner's, Ofa Guttenbiel, who heads the Tonga Women's Crisis Centre.

Other than the FWRM panel, the other successful involvement created by FWRM's intervention was the establishment of a Pacific Working Group which was responsible for fundraising and ensuring the attendance of a large number of Pacific women. Funds, successfully secured from AUSAid, International Women's Development Agency, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and AWID, resulted in 60 women from the Pacific attending AWID and facilitating eight of the 120 sessions. Following on from AWID, both FWRM and APWLD were able to develop a *Tok-Talk* DVD – a tool is being used in the region as a catalyst for conversations on multi-generational movements.

An additional highlight of 2008 was the national consultation on women human rights defenders which saw the convergence of 30 activists from around Fiji. The event was an opportunity for FWRM to focus on those people who put themselves on the line to defend and protect human rights. One of the outcomes of the meeting was the realisation that many activists did not recognise themselves as women human rights defenders even though their daily human rights work put them at risk. These risks may involve physical harm to them and/or their families, in particular sexual violence, or other types of harm such as damage to their reputations or livelihood.

In 2009, after almost 10 years as an elected representative for the ratepayers in Suva, FWRM's sitting board member, Priscilla Singh, was removed from office. On January 31st, she was one of the 130 municipal councilors from around the country whose councils were dissolved. 18 of the deposed councilors were women, of which three were deputy mayors.

By 2009, it was becoming clear that global economic melt-down was going to have a serious impact on the full realisation of gender equality.

At the time, the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination on Women (UNCEDAW) Committee stated that while the scale of the crisis was still largely unmeasured, it expected that women and girls in both developed and developing countries would be particularly affected by the potential social and economic consequences. These include unemployment, increase in responsibilities both at work and at home, decrease of income and potential increase in societal and domestic violence.

During the same year, on Good Friday, the then President Josefa Iloilo, purportedly abrogated the country's Constitution, appointed himself head of state, dissolved all judicial appointments, ruled out any elections for the next five years and reappointed military commander, Commodore Frank Bainimarama as caretaker Prime Minister.

Several decrees were issued. The decreed Public Emergency Regulations 2009 (PER) effectively put the country under a state of emergency rule, with wide ranging police and military powers and has since been extended every month.

Part of the PER was the placement of Government censors in media newsrooms across the country. As a result FWRM resorted to self-censoring its public statements as the media would completely disregard any statement/analysis that carried critiques, if it did not. This meant that FWRM had to find innovative and creative ways to continue with its work. One creative avenue, which was also an extremely important work of advocacy, was the submission of the CEDAW Shadow Report. The report was the collaborative work of 16 NGOs and individuals. In the report, the link between women's civil and political rights, as well as their economic, social and cultural rights was clearly articulated.

Another avenue for advocacy at the regional level was a five-day Feminist Legal Theory and Practice Training held in Nadi. The training, which involved 24 activists and lawyers from five Pacific Island countries, was a collaborative event that was co-organised and facilitated by FWRM, APWLD and RRRT/SPC. The training was the fourth to be held in the region since 2003 and provided participants with knowledge on feminist legal theory, women's human rights and feminist litigation strategies.

During this reporting period, we were also able to secure new funding for our CEDAW programme, as well as our Human Rights programme from AUSAID. This was an indication of the continued support that donors had for FWRM's work and credibility. Other partners who continued to pledge their support were Oxfam New Zealand, Global Fund for Women and the Asia Foundation. FWRM thanks our partners for their continued support and belief in our work and mandate.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank outgoing staff members - Michelle Reddy, Susan Naidu and Yashna Narayan for their service, dedication and commitment to the advancement of women's rights and equality.

We also welcome our new Young Women's Officer Filomena Tuivanulevu, Research Officer Mereoni Tavakaturaga-Robinson, Administration Assistant Kameli Tuitoga and Communications Officer Shazia Usman to the FWRM team!

I would also like to thank all the volunteers and interns who have been part of the Movement - a big *vinaka vakalevu* to all the staff and members of the management board who provided us with support and guidance during the last two years. Special appreciation is extended towards Board Chair Gina Houg Lee and founding member Imrana Jalal for their mentorship and support.

In solidarity

Virisila Buadromo

Executive Director

Reflections

FWRM Board Chairperson – Gina Houg Lee



The FWRM Board met monthly during the reporting period and since October 2009 has met approximately four times. However, intermittent meetings are conducted to approve or discuss urgent policy matters.

In June this year, FWRM’s founding member Imrana Jalal left Fiji to join the Asian Development Bank. Imrana remains a founding member and continues to be kept informed of board decisions via email.

In December 2009, Imrana was charged for allegedly operating a restaurant without obtaining a business license. It is usual practice to file civil administrative malfeasance cases, such as this, in the magistrate’s court. In Imrana’s case, however, the charge was taken on by the Fiji Independent Commission against Corruption and transferred to the high court. Imrana spent the first six months of 2010 dealing with this case, as well as her husband’s case for the last four years. It was of course, pleasing to hear that her case was dismissed and permanently stayed. Her husband has also been acquitted.

I would like it to be noted the immense work, mentoring and support provided by Imrana to each one of us and to the vision of advancing the human rights of women in Fiji and the Pacific.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend Imrana and her and wish her all the best in her future endeavours at ADB.

There has also been improved dialogue with the Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre (FWCC) with whom we have partnered with in many initiatives. FWRM and FWCC’s joint strategy and appearance before the CEDAW Committee in New York in July 2010, is one just example.

Due to the shifting donor priorities, FWRM will have to manage and maneuver in the current climate in the coming months. NZAID has significantly changed their funding policies which resulted in a redirection of long term partnership funding away from human rights organisations and civil society. FWRM has to be strategically ready for this shift and once again widen the pool of funding outside the traditional donors - AusAID and NZ AID Program MFAT.

Thank you for all your hard work in delivering the 2009 program and my complements on your detailed reports and activities.

May the light shine on all of us and the light does not go out for the rule of law and democracy.

Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Thank you,

Gina Houg Lee

Chairperson

Young Women in Leadership Programme

Leadership/ Training & Awareness

National

Emerging Leaders Forum (ELF)

The Emerging Leaders Forum is a year-long component of the FWRM *Young Women in Leadership Programme*, which aims to introduce emerging leaders to issues facing young women in Fiji and internationally.

During the course of the reporting period, the overarching theme of ELF 4 programme 2008 - 2009 was *Sexual & Reproductive Health Rights*. With this theme in mind and after being divided into two groups, participants formulated and implemented advocacy plans. The first group worked closely with the Fiji Breast Cancer Society in encouraging their friends, families and members of the public to undergo breast examinations. The second group collaborated with the Suva based Oxfam Clinic in creating awareness on cervical cancer among women.



ELF participants during one of their training sessions

Similar to the first group, they encouraged their friends, families and members of the public to get pap smears taken at the Oxfam Clinic at the end of their advocacy programme.

Members of ELF 4 were also instrumental in the setting up of Pacific Youth Climate Change Network (PYCCN), a group advocating on the effects of climate change. PYCCN members elected their first president Nainasa Utona (ELF 4) who coordinated the group's efforts. When Nainasa first joined, one of her expectations of the programme was for it to assist her in becoming involved in advocacy work. Her participation in the ELF Programme allowed her to explore her leadership abilities and to also influence her fellow ELF 4 participants to join the PYCCN and become more involved in creating awareness on the effects of climate change.

ELF was also instrumental in the designing and collating of articles for the publication of the 2009 Information Education and Communication material titled *Unveiled*. *Unveiled* is a journal

designed for high school/tertiary students that features briefs on the various topics covered in the ELF programme by graduates such as sexual and reproductive health rights, violence against women, and women and the environment. The journal also features artwork by local female artists and were then launched and distributed around interested high schools in Fiji.

The ELF Alumni (ELFA)

The year 2008 and 2009 saw a noticeable increase in the number of ELFA joining FWRM as staff.

Members of the Alumni were actively writing letters to the editor of the local dailies, as well as articles in *Mailife*, a local lifestyle magazine.

Members of the Alumni (along with some of their friends and families) were also present and actively participated in the Human Rights Day and International Women's Day marches.

Letters, articles and radio shows by the ELFA regarding violence against women and the social responsibility of the corporate sector were also featured in the media. Members of the Alumni collectively sent a letter that created awareness on the *Thursday in Black Campaign* and urged members of the public to join the protest on violence against women. Patrina Fong (ELF 3) in a



Snap! A participant explores her creative side during the Picture This! project

letter dated May 2nd 2009 called on all private companies and the media to be more responsible in the portrayal of women in their marketing and campaign strategies.

Picture This! Young Women Photography Project

Picture This! is a creative way in which FWRM celebrates International Women's Day (IWD) by bringing participants together to snap their ideas into film. FWRM partnered with Marie Stopes in selecting girls aged 12 – 19 years from the informal settlements in Suva to undergo critical women's rights training as well as basic photography training before going out to photograph things that were related to the IWD theme "*Ending Violence Against Women*".

On IWD photographs taken by participants were launched and displayed at the ANZ bank in Suva. They were eventually sold and all proceeds were directed into an account to fund future activities for young women.

Regional

Young Women's Leadership Training – Kup Women for Peace (KWP)

The Young Women in Leadership Programme is also working with regional partners in PNG (Kup Women for Peace), Solomon Islands (YWCA) and Tonga (Tonga National Centre for Women and Children) to help these organisations develop their own young women's programming.

FWRM held its first workshop in Kup on September 15th-19th 2008. This was the first of the three training sessions to be held between 2008 and 2009. Michelle Reddy, the Young Women's Officer at the time, assisted in the formulation and implementation of the workshop programme which was designed to suit their local context. The first training featured on *Principles of Feminist Leadership*.



The second round of training in Kup was held from June 29th-July 3rd 2009 and was conducted by Michelle and FWRM's Human Rights Training Officer Shabina Khan. They noted that the most significant change as a result of the training was the mobilisation of four of the participants (from the first training in 2008) in undertaking leadership positions in their schools.

Participants at a training held in Kup, PNG

They also noted that participants were more vocal during classes and also during breaks with their peers.

The third round of training which was scheduled for 2010 was unfortunately cancelled due to an outbreak of tribal fighting in Kup which resulted in the disruption of the KWP Programme and the destruction of their facilities and resources. FWRM is currently awaiting correspondence from the women of the KWP on their progress and the planning of the third round of trainings.

Transitional Justice for Fiji Project (TJF)

The TJF programme encompasses much of FWRM's work towards peace and security in Fiji, and ending the conflict cycle of the last two decades. TFJ activities work toward the enhanced recognition of democracy, the rule of law and human rights principles, particularly women's rights, among rights holders and duty bearers. The movements strategy includes increasing awareness of the importance of and indivisibility of democracy, rule of law and human rights; strengthening partnerships within civil society that support these principles; and human rights violations.

2007

In 2007 FWRM's two Human Rights Training Officers (HRTO) attended an information session that was jointly organized by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Pacific Centre and Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT) on 26th January at the Tanoa Plaza.

The aim of the session was to provide members of Fiji's civil society with basic information on both the treaty based and charter based human rights mechanisms that exist within the overall UN human rights framework that is designed to enhance the enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms for all people everywhere.

The information session gave the HRTOs an opportunity to strengthen their capacity on UN Human Rights Mechanisms. It also meant that FWRM could foster relationships with other national NGOs.

The HRTO's also facilitated the ELF Retreat on April 14th-15th which focused on Human Rights, Democracy and Feminism. In addition the HRTO's conducted the third awareness training on the Family Law Act in Labasa. There were 22 participants (15 women and 7 men) who were selected based on:

- the type of work undertaken as part of their affiliation with an NGO,
- their involvement in creating awareness and providing support for marginalised groups,
- having helped voice their community concerns through their network and,
- their potential and ability to create awareness on the new law in their respective communities.

Also in 2007 the Ministry for Women organised a CEDAW training in preparation for the state's periodic report. The workshop was funded by UNIFEM and resourced by Pacific Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT). The key participants were Ministry of Women field officers and divisional heads of ministries from the respective departments and ministries. The HRTO made a presentation on the CEDAW Shadow reporting process.

RRRT collaborated with FWRM on a training session with the Fiji Police Academy for their CID Qualifying Course at the School of Investigation & Intelligence Unit. The HRTOs facilitated the Gender, Discrimination and Stigma sessions on July 3rd. The sessions conducted included Discrimination, Stigma and Gender session which was a basic introduction to gender but also focused on gender stereotyping and impacts.

The HRTO's also conducted training in the Solomon Islands under World Vision Solomon Islands HIV and AIDS Prevention Program (SIPP), which aims to enhance the leadership skills of the peer educators. Participants were chosen on the premise that they will have the capacity to play significant roles in leading and influencing their communities. The overall aim was to provide three advocacy skills for successful peer educators and community leaders. There were 12 participants from different organisations that were selected by World Vision Solomon Islands.

2008

In 2008, FWRM began working in the area of transitional justice. Transitional justice aims to promote possibilities of peace, reconciliation and democracy in societies which are transforming. The programme is based on the rationale that attainment of women's human rights is impossible without respect of the rule of law and human rights and the institutions that promote them. Additionally, women's voices are not recognised in the conflict and post conflict situations and this programme intends to create an environment that is inclusive of women. This also includes women being rarely adequately represented at formal peace negotiations. Transitional justice mechanisms offer women opportunities to participate in and influence the peace-building process.



Participants at training for Security Forces

As part of setting up the ground work, FWRM in partnership with No Peace Without Justice organised the *Transitional Justice Pacific Roundtable* where the experiences of the region was shared with participants from Fiji.

This roundtable also had speakers from the international organisations who shared their expertise and experiences. The recommendations from this discussion led up to the four divisional dialogues. (The four divisional dialogues were conducted from February 2009 – February 2010.) As a follow up event, a review of the transitional justice roundtable was conducted.

Further to this, to strengthen the Coalition on Human Rights, the CSO members coordinated to organise the Human Rights march to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the UDHR. In order to commemorate the Women Human Rights Day, a consultation workshop was carried on where the local NGO network was invited.

2009

In 2009, the TJF project entered its second phase and FWRM continued its work on raising awareness on democracy, rule of law and human rights. This was carried out through the community dialogues conducted in partnership with Dialogue Fiji and Pacific Centre for Peace-building.

A media campaign was also carried out as part of this project. The media campaigns intention was clarify misconceptions on concepts of human rights, democracy and the rule of law on a



Former FWRM board member Luisa Tora sharing her musing at the Poetry Night

personal level by highlighting the inter linkages between these three concepts which is vital in establishing the foundation of the future that people want for Fiji.

In addition to this, FWRM intended to carry out a research on the Economic Status of Women in Fiji and the ground work had begun in looking for the researcher. However, this research could not be carried out as the consultant could not be hired due to unforeseen circumstances. This research will now be carried out early 2011.

As part of the strengthening the NGO Coalition on Human Rights, the members organised activities to commemorate the Human Rights Day march on the 10th of December and participating in a Poetry Night that was organised in conjunction with Pacific Writing Forum, which is part of the University of the South Pacific's Department of Language and Literature.

Human Rights Documentation (HRD)

The HRVD project is an activity of the transitional justice program. The project commenced in May 2007.

The project entails monitoring and documenting human rights violations. It aims to reinforce the State's responsibility to protect human rights as well enhance the recognition of the interrelationship between democracy, the rule of law and human rights

Our efforts lay the legal and moral groundwork for deep-rooted changes in policy, law, and public opinion.

The systematic monitoring and documentation of human rights violations will enhance people's understanding of the consequences of a coup cycle and the documentation will assist significantly in creating awareness about the relationship between democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

This project contributes to the core work of the organizations in terms of providing evidence based resource for FWRM's lobbying and advocacy and other activities/projects of the organization.

Management & Staff

as at November 2010

Management Board

Gina Houngh Lee (Chairperson)

Judy Compain (Treasurer)

Imrana Jalal

Avelina Rokoduru,

Priscilla Singh

Daiana Buresova

Paulini Turagabeci

Christina Paanikar (co-opted as a temporary member)

Trustees

Helen Tavola

Lisa Apted

Wame Baravilala

Staff

Virisila Buadromo - Executive Director

Naeemah Khan - Programme Manager

Neomai Maravuakula - Human Rights Training Officer

Shabina Khan	-	Human Rights Training Officer
Roshika Deo	-	Research Officer
Mereoni Tavakaturaga	-	Research Officer
Filomena Tuivanualevu	-	Young Women's Officer
Shazia Usman	-	Communications Officer
Ekta Singh	-	Finance Officer
Kameli Tikoitoga	-	Administrative Assistant

Financials (2008 & 2009)