



Balance

"HELPING TO BALANCE THE SCALES"

SEPTEMBER

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Responsive aid requires gender equality

Research conducted in Papua New Guinea, Indonesia and Nepal, assessing concerns over how the Paris Declaration could be counterproductive to attempts of mainstreaming gender equality, has labelled the Declaration an "opportunity" rather than a threat.

The Paris Declaration, endorsed on 2 March 2005, is an international agreement to which over one hundred state representatives and donor agency heads adhere and committed their countries and organisations to continue to increase efforts in harmonisation, alignment and managing aid for results; the Declaration comes complete with monitorable actions and indicators.

The Declaration has been slated as gender-blind amongst other shortcomings; a disappointing aspect discussed in the recent research report is how it has failed to learn from the failures of the Millennium Development Goals.

"From this perspective, it is both surprising and disappointing that gender and women have received so little attention in the Paris Declaration," the Asia-Pacific Regional Report on Paris Declaration and Aid Effectiveness said.

"Both gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment are vital for aid effectiveness. Under normal circumstances, women and girls form slightly more than half the population.

"If the Paris Declaration and the new aid modalities that it promotes are not effective in delivering the benefits of development to half the population they can hardly be described as effective or efficient."

The report says aid programmes have largely failed because they have not been specifics-driven failing to either consider or address differences in situations.

The report uses, as an example, the underutilisation of a water project because women were not consulted about the facilities or their locations and were not trained in their maintenance.



Does the Paris Declaration help deliver the benefits of aid to women?

"Work is also urgently needed at the country, regional and global levels to convince governments that aid that is not efficient or effective for women is, by definition, neither efficient nor effective, period," the report said.

"At the global level, work is needed on a draft framework for gender-responsive indicators for aid efficiency and effectiveness that are consistent with and have the potential to contribute to further development of the Paris Declaration indicators.

"In the case of Papua New Guinea, lobbying and advocacy with donors and government to put gender equality into the Kavieng Declaration should be an urgent priority."

In February (2008) PNG's Kavieng Declaration on Aid Effectiveness "localised" the Paris Declaration with its own sets of monitorable targets and actions to improve aid effectiveness over 2007-2012 and beyond.

One of the best practices the report specifies is Nepal's Gender-Responsive Budgeting Committee which attempts to capture several

dimensions of gender-responsive outcomes that could contribute to gender equality – be it capacity building for women; women's participation in (budget) decision-making process; or benefits.

Warning that developing these sets of indicators would involve a lot of human resources and careful mapping of the processes involved, the report said such a committee "should also be linked to the specific cultural and institutional context, since gender equality is by definition cultural and gender mainstreaming..."

The Committee, Nepal's Finance Ministry and with technical assistance from UNIFEM developed a system and designed a process for measuring the gender responsiveness of all expenditure items in the annual budget.

The researchers however expressed concerns over certain aspects of the point system but acknowledged that it did mean constant pressure from the media and even

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From the Director's desk

It has been exciting three months for the Movement. In June – we hosted a sub regional Transitional Justice roundtable for representatives from Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea. The roundtable was co-hosted by European based NGO, No Peace without Justice. While the roundtable was a learning experience for FWRM and all involved – it also was an opportunity



for FWRM to have try and resolve some of the ideological conflicts which developed following the military take – over of 2006. It was the beginning of moving toward participative parliamentary democracy.

Some of the follow up activities from the transitional justice roundtable is a

Zealand

Another positive development at FWRM – is the training of another cadre of emerging leading feminists (otherwise known as the Emerging Leaders Forum). August saw 25 young women from various socio-economic back-ground, committing to learn new skills,

research on the socio-economic impact of the Dec 2006 coup on women, training for human rights defenders on the Declaration on human rights defenders, and three more roundtables on transitional justice, nationally. It's exciting work that will keep us busy until the end of the year. This has been supported financially by Ausaid, and Oxfam New

gain new knowledge and have fun – as well as advance women's rights in Fiji. Meeting the 2008 ELF brought a smile to my face because I can see that the women's movement becoming infused with new ideas, passion and commitment!

Speaking of ELF's – it was awesome to see one of our graduates, Filomena Tuivanualevu (2007 alumni) using the Hibiscus Festival pageant as a platform to raise awareness on the prevalence of sexual violence in Fiji. Filo – used every opportunity to talk about developmental issues and the impact it has on women, particularly young women. Thank you Filo for taking a stand and congratulations on becoming Miss Hibiscus 2008!

Enjoy reading this issue and please send us your comments – its always appreciated!

In solidarity,
Virisila Buadromo
Executive Director

Responsive aid requires gender equality

From page 1

donor partners on government departments to continue implementation.

"An important motivation for gender-responsive budgeting in Nepal is to create greater transparency and facilitate the accountability of both government and donors to women for implementation of their gender equality and women's empowerment commitments," the report said.

"The gender-responsive budgeting system will reward, through public recognition, departments and agencies that have adopted gender-responsive policies and programmes. Indirectly, this also applies pressure on other departments to do so."

The current gender-responsive budgeting system has been criticized because it only classifies existing expenditures and most of the programmes classified as gender-responsive are implemented through gender-blind processes and small allocations for gender-related components. The system does not seek to change resource allocations or directly increase the resources available for gender mainstreaming or for women beneficiaries.

But the Committee is satisfied that at the least, "... there is now visibility for gender and women in one of the most important economic management tools in the country".

The hope is that over time, consistent pressure from various quarters of society will see more gender-responsive budgeting; attitude changes from ministers wanting to improve their own visibility on women's issues is also expected to contribute to the gradual increase in allocations.

KEY MESSAGES:

For governments and donors: Aid that is not efficient or effective for women is, by definition, neither efficient nor effective, period!

For governments and donors: Alignment should be a dynamic not a static concept – funding should continue to be made available for developing and piloting innovative new approaches and for work on emerging issues;

For gender advocates: The Paris Declaration and the aid effectiveness agenda is an opportunity rather than a threat;

For gender advocates, donors, women's machineries and UNIFEM: Programme-based funding offers opportunities to increase the effectiveness and impact of limited gender expertise at country level;

For governments, donors and UNIFEM: Gender-responsive performance-oriented budgeting has the potential to make a significant contribution to the aid effectiveness agenda and promote gender-responsive programme implementation; and

For gender advocates and UNIFEM: Monitoring the impact of the aid effectiveness debate and the new aid modalities on funding and programming for gender equality and women's empowerment requires a set of gender indicators that have the potential to contribute to the Paris indicators while going beyond it. While a broad framework for the set of indicators could be defined, it would need to be tailored to the specific cultural and institutional context of each country.

Include women in the political forum

By **Virisila Buadromo**

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) and the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC) have urged the Commonwealth Secretariat and the United Nations to ensure that the final terms of reference for the proposed political forum ensures the participation of civil society members, particularly women's organisations.

FWRM and FWCC made their views known through a letter which they sent to Commonwealth Special Envoy, Sir Paul Reeves in July when he was in Suva, meeting with members of the political parties. There has been no response from Sir Paul.

Both women's organisations have pointed out that if the political forum is to be effective, it must be truly inclusive of all members of society and must reflect a gender balance. It was stressed that the forum must uphold women's rights and the Interim-Government is obligated to ensure that it is conducted in compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

As Fiji is in the process of transitioning from a conflict situation to Parliamentary

democracy, it is all the more essential that women are actively involved in peace negotiations and in post conflict reconstruction. History has shown that the participation of women enhances the effectiveness of peace negotiations, conflict prevention and post-conflict rebuilding. Furthermore, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 urges women's equal and full participation as active agents in peace and security.[1]

Both FWRM and FWCC have emphasized to Sir Paul that any discussion on proposed electoral reform must include women and that as representatives of women the contribution of FWRM and FWCC are essential.

The political forum is being convened to bring together Government and political parties to discuss and agree on the way forward regarding the Electoral Reform that has been adopted and recommended by the National Council for Building a Better Fiji. This follows an invitation extended to the Commonwealth Secretariat and the United Nations by the President of Fiji, Ratu Josefa Iloilo earlier this year.

“Women continue to be at the forefront in political dialogue - in particular women's rights activists and should not be sidelined in these processes,”

Edwina Kotoisuva
Fiji Women's Crisis Centre



Democratic values stressed in Fiji meet on transitional justice

By **Virisila Buadromo**

“Transitional justice is a response to systematic or widespread violations of human rights. It seeks recognition for the victims and to promote possibilities for peace, reconciliation and democracy. Transitional justice is not a special form of justice but justice adapted to societies transforming themselves after a period of pervasive human rights abuse. In some cases, these transformations happen suddenly; in others, they may take place over many decades.”

According to the International Centre for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), this approach emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s, mainly in response to political changes in Latin America and Eastern Europe—and to demands in these regions for justice. The ICTJ says at the time, human rights activists and others wanted to address the systematic abuses by former regimes but without endangering the political transformations that were underway. Since these changes were popularly called “transitions to democracy,” people began calling this new multidisciplinary field “transitional justice.” The ICTJ, assists countries pursuing accountability for past mass atrocity or human rights abuse. It was set up in April 2000.



“Internationally respected human rights lawyer, **Geoffrey Robertson Q.C.** speaking at the Roundtable”.

Governments there adopted many of what became the basic approaches to transitional justice. They include the following initiatives:

- **Criminal prosecutions.** They are judicial investigations of those responsible for human rights violations. Prosecutors frequently emphasize investigations of the “big fish”: suspects considered most responsible for

massive or systematic crimes.

- **Truth commissions.** These commissions of inquiry have the primary purposes of investigating and reporting on key periods of recent past abuse. They are often official state bodies that make recommendations to remedy such abuse and to prevent its recurrence.
- **Reparations programs.** They are state-sponsored initiatives that help repair the material and moral damages of past abuse. They typically distribute a mix of material and symbolic benefits to victims, benefits which may include financial compensation and official apologies.
- **Security system reform.** These efforts seek to transform the military, police, judiciary and related state institutions from instruments of repression and corruption into instruments of public service and integrity.
- **Memorialization efforts.** They include museums and memorials that preserve public memory of the victims and raise moral consciousness about past abuse, in order to build a bulwark against its recurrence.



While these initiatives are widely understood to form a basis for transitional justice efforts, they do not represent an exclusive list. Many societies have developed other, creative approaches to past abuse—one reason why the field has gained both strength and diversity over the years.

At a roundtable held from June 23rd to 27th – the Fiji Women’s Rights Movement and Rome - based NGO, No Peace Without Justice brought together delegates from Tonga, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Fiji to discuss what transitional justice meant for them. They shared experiences with international speakers from Northern Ireland, Kenya, Sierra Leone and Timor Leste .

For most of the participants who attended the roundtable, transitional justice seemed a very new topic and many were clearly unsure of the content at the commencement of the discussion. However, as the Roundtable progressed, the concept became comprehensible for them. As indicated by these participants, the speakers provided detailed insight to help broaden the scope of participants pre-existing knowledge. For some participants, Transitional Justice was a new concept, and never heard of in their countries, and this Roundtable gave them the opportunity to take the knowledge back and apply it to their specific situations.

However, a small group of participants felt that more information is still needed on how to use the integrated approach in their countries, while some felt that the emphasis provided on Transitional Justice was insufficient for their understanding. In addition, some participants indicated that all stakeholders, including security forces, must participate in such discussions and strongly felt a need for Transitional Justice Mechanisms to be placed in conflict prone Pacific societies to ensure justice for all.

At the end of the three day roundtable an outcomes document was agreed upon by the participants. Some of the issues that were in the document included a commitment to the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights, and a commitment to work together for transitional justice.



Hard conversations at the roundtable

We the participants of the Transitional Justice Pacific Roundtable, held in Denarau, Fiji Islands, from 24 to 27 June 2008,

RECOGNISING the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family as the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

RECALLING the histories of our States and of the various communities within our States that have made us what we are,

VALUING the diversity and richness of the different cultures, traditions, faiths and languages within our States and the contributions of all communities and individuals to the welfare of our States,

TAKING PRIDE in our common heritage in belonging to this Region and acknowledging the legacy which we will bestow on future generations of our peoples,

CONVINCED of our role in educating our communities on the need to live in unity and harmony with each other and in assisting our States to transition into democratic states where the rule of law and human rights are recognised and protected,

Affirm

1. the fundamental importance and indivisibility of the principles of parliamentary democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the independence of the judiciary and the achievement of social justice for all;
2. that the constitution is the supreme law of the land and should be respected, upheld and adhered to;
3. that any amendments to the constitution must be made in conformity with the provisions therein, after the widest possible consultation and with democratic participation;
4. that only a democratically elected parliament is mandated to undertake constitutional changes;
5. that the independence of the judiciary should be protected and sustained;
6. that the holding of democratic, periodic, meaningful, fair and equal elections with participation of all persons of all communities, including women and young persons is a fundamental human right;
7. the need for meaningful, fair and equal participation of all persons of all communities, including women and young persons in all processes at all levels of governance and peace-building;

8. the critical role of civil society in the promotion of democracy and accountable government;
9. the need to establish effective governance, oversight and accountability of the security sector, improve and ensure the sustainability of the delivery of security services and build trust, relationships and confidence between security and non-security stakeholders. Further, any reform efforts must have local leadership and ownership;
10. the critical continuing support, including technical and financial assistance, provided by international and regional partners in national efforts to promote transitional justice;

Commit

11. to work towards transitional justice, including ensuring justice according to law, restoring the dignity of all and the preservation of the integrity of truth;
12. to create and sustain institutions and processes which will strengthen democracy and justice for all, including an independent human rights commission, the freedom of speech and media, freedom of information and transparent governance;
13. to strengthen the economy to provide just opportunities for all;
14. to explore and sustain regional processes and mechanisms in the interests of the region as a whole, to secure democracy according to law;
15. to pursue and foster linkages with international mechanisms, such as the United Nations and the International Criminal Court and others, including international civil society, in order to address human rights violations;

Undertake

to continue the work begun at this roundtable together and work with all other organisations and individuals, and within other processes, to promote the above affirmations and commitments in order to implement strategic plans and actions to bring about their realisation;

This 27th day of June, 2008

Denarau, Fiji

PATICIPANTS TO THE TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE PACIFIC ROUNDTABLE, FIJI.

Respect young women's offerings: Nabulivou

Fiji must introduce more young women-specific programmes from a human rights perspective exemplified by the Fiji Women's Rights' Movement's Emerging Leaders' Forum, participants of which are affectionately referred to as ELFs.

Noelene Nabulivou, a constant resource person for the programme says, she was encouraged by the ELF programme as it allowed knowledge passing between resource persons and the participants rather than the "top-down" approach.

"The approach of exchanging knowledge, of accepting the voices of the young generation is vital to ensure an inter-generational exchange that can only be mutually beneficial," Nabulivou said.

Nabulivou spoke on community building, networking and advocating for women's rights in their homes, educational institutions and at the national and regional level, at the opening of the 2008 ELF programme.

Nabulivou said a lot of unnecessary work

could be avoided if young women and those who have been in the movement for decades collaborated more.

"There are programmes for young women but they are not respectful of the knowledge the young women have to offer, it is a top-down approach," she said.

"Women already in the movement will need to be revitalized every now and then because sooner or later, fatigue in whatever form will catch up on us and a programme like ELF is an ideal in terms of preparing the next generation of women leaders."

FWRM Young Women's Officer Michelle Reddy explained the history of the ELF programme to the participants; the programme is unique in that it develops participants' analytical skills and encourages young women to think outside the box when it came to their ambition or careers. This is the fourth time FWRM is running the year long programme.



This year's ELFS with Michelle Reddy (front left) and Virisila Buadromo (at back)

Name: **Salaseini Malani**

Age: **20**

"Women are often left-out of decision-making whether it is just plain discrimination or sometimes cultural and I want to have some background in this societal issues and how it will affect me as a young woman. I believe whatever I learn from here will also be very helpful with my intended profession, an environmentalist"



(Bsc Student, University of the South Pacific, Suva.)

Name: **Nazura Begum**

Age: **18**

"I see a lot of sexual assault and domestic violence in my neighborhood. I have always wanted to be an ELF ever since I heard about the programme. I hope to learn as much as I can about contemporary issues and how they affect us, girls and women. But I also want to become more confident."



(Form 5, Suva Muslim College)

EFL speaks out at Hibiscus

Undeterred by the general perception that pageants are exploitative of women, Filomena Tuivanualevu preferred to see it as a vehicle to reach thousands about societal, contemporary issues where, we all have a role to play, in reaching solutions.

And she did wow the crowd with her responses, composure and as an articulate speaker, Tuivanualevu appeared to be the winner from the beginning of the week.

For the contestants' talent night, the young woman from Bua who is a final year Tourism & Hospitality student at the University of the South Pacific wrote the song she performed and submitted a painting: her theme was an issue that has become close to her heart, violence against women and girls.

At the public judging in Albert Park,



Tuivanualevu continued to shine when she tied in the Millenium Development Goals in her response.

"I think it was my content," the confident 23-year-old said when asked what she thought won her the 2008 crown.

"And I owe it all to my experience with FWRM's ELF (Emerging Leaders Forum) programme. The issues we cover empowers us with knowledge of contemporary issues and makes

us more confident, more vocal."

Tuivanualevu reckons that the contribution of women to development is not as recognised still as it should be; and with the increase in sexual assault, Tuivanualevu says she wants women to start realising their 'worth'.

"These heinous crimes increased in the last year and sadly with children as young as three

years old and incest cases are on the increase as well – women need to rise up and claim their worth," she said. "Women should be paid their due respect."

Tuivanualevu is an ELF 2007 graduate. Always an avid reader, Tuivanualevu says ELF taught her to be more selective about the books she read. She admits that before ELFs, she was pretty much "ignorant...all over the place".

"But ELF discussions with Ana (Padarath, former Young Women's Officer) allowed me to contribute effectively to community development, in a more organised way," she said.

"One of the things I took from ELFs and which I will never forget is how we were told that as young women, it was time for us to step up." Another advantage of ELF says the teenager is friendships made during the programme.

Of her fellow contestants, Tuivanualevu was generous: We were all queens at the end of it," she said quietly. "It was a grueling week and we all worked hard to help make this year's festival a memorable one. She intends to 'take a break' before graduating in April (2009).

CEDAW ammendment to deal with backlog

Pacific island countries are being lobbied to initiate acceptance processes towards the amendment of a provision within the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) that will ensure a more realistic and effective meeting schedule of the United Nations body that scrutinizes CEDAW country reports. NGO CEDAW secretariat, Fiji Women's Rights Movement urges Pacific nations which have ratified CEDAW to Action the acceptance of the proposed amendment by their UN representatives.

The submission was sent to countries yet to accept the amendment – Papua New Guinea, Tuvalu, Kiribati and Samoa, non-government organisations and copied to Pacific island countries which have accepted the amendment - Australia, New Zealand, Vanuatu, Cook Islands and the Solomon Islands.

Article 20(1) of CEDAW currently limits the period over which the CEDAW Committee may meet to consider reports submitted by States parties to not more than two weeks.

While the CEDAW Committee awaits the two-thirds majority required for such an amendment, the General Assembly has allowed them three sessions annually of three-week review meetings, preceded by week-long pre-sessionals.

If accepted, state parties to CEDAW will be able to determine the duration of the meetings (subject to the approval of the General Assembly) to accommodate the workload of the CEDAW Committee.

A two-thirds majority of state parties is presently 123; as at May 23 (2008), 53 state parties had accepted. The NGO CEDAW Advisory Committee argues that acceptance would only mean a much more efficient implementation process for the convention.

"This is an opportunity for Pacific Island States parties to CEDAW to take a lead by uniting in our acceptance of this amendment and encouraging others to follow," the letter by FWRM executive director Virisila Buadromo said.

"States parties may accept the proposed amendment by depositing with the Secretary-General an instrument of acceptance.

"This amendment is essential to enable the CEDAW Committee to realize its workload, which has increased because of the growing number of States parties. The increasing number of States parties has seen an increasing backlog of States parties reports waiting for consideration by the CEDAW Committee, necessitating this amendment."

Since its adoption in 1979, there has been rapid ratification of CEDAW. Currently, 185 countries – over 90% of members of the United Nations – are party to CEDAW.

The NGO CEDAW Advisory Committee is a coalition of Fiji-based NGOs committed to enhancing the human rights of women through advancing the implementation of CEDAW. This NGO Committee developed out of an informal coalition formed in 1993 to lobby the Fiji Government to ratify CEDAW.



Members of the NGO CEDAW Advisory Committee meeting at the FWRM office

Budget should reflect CEDAW commitments

As the interim administration prepares for another national budget in November, Media Initiatives for Women (femLINKPACIFIC) has reiterated that only a return to democratic rule would effect the advancement of gender equality, urging the state to ensure the budget is compliant with the Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

The Fiji Government ratified CEDAW and also adopted the Beijing Platform for Action (BPA) after the UN Fourth World Conference for Women in 1995.

"femLINKPACIFIC wishes to remind the Interim Administration of its responsibilities to ensure state compliance to international standards and commitments it has made regarding women's rights," coordinator,

femLINKPACIFIC

Sharon Bhagwan-Rolls, said in a submission to the Finance ministry.

"Despite years of policy development and commitment to gender equality and to mainstreaming of gender and development, including through the National Women's Plan of Action, experience indicates the translation of policy into outcomes remains a challenge."

The theme of the 15-page submission is My life, My Issues, My Peace and Security. It makes 12 key recommendations the interim Government should consider in drawing up the national budget, to be announced in November. "femLINKPACIFIC recommends a national budget that is compliant with CEDAW," Bhagwan-Rolls

said in a statement.

"It also recommends a budget that is focused on human security needs such as better access to education, better roads and transportation, more employment opportunities and ensuring that social and economic development do not negatively impact on women. We also call on the interim Government to provide women's spaces for dialogue, peace- and trust-building activities."

In support of the Fiji Disabled People Association, femLINKPACIFIC calls for an improvement in services for disabled people. Another of the six recommendations dealing with disabled people includes improvement in access to public buildings and ensuring training and micro-enterprise schemes have a minimum standard to enable the participation of disabled people.



Picture: Fiji Women's Crisis Centre

CEDAW Committee elections

Results of the CEDAW (Convention of the Elimination of all Forms Discrimination against Women) Committee elections have been released.

The July (2008) elections sought to fill 11 positions that will become vacant on 31 December 2008: Nicole Ameline (France); Magalys Arocha Dominguez (Cuba); Violet Tsisiga Awori (Kenya); Barbara Evelyn Bailey (Jamaica); Niklas Bruun (Finland);

UN CEDAW

Indira Jaising (India); Soledad Murillo de la Vega (Spain); Silvia Pimentel (Brazil); Victoria Popescu (Romania); Zohra Rasekh (Afghanistan); and Xiaoqiao Zou (China).

They will serve a four-year term beginning January 1, 2009.

All Committee members serve in

their personal capacities, and not as representatives of the States parties.

The CEDAW Committee, composed of 23 experts on women's rights from around the world, is responsible for reviewing the country reports submitted by the countries that are party to the treaty. 185 countries are party to the treaty, the United States being the only industrialized country that has not ratified the convention.

UNIFEM continues CEDAW tech support

The cross-cutting issues that gender equality can address has allowed for the oft-heard argument: resolve women challenges and half the battle is won – be it poverty, HIV/AIDS, reproductive health, etc

One of the first steps in working towards this ideal is ensuring an environment that is conducive to such rights-based initiatives like a legislative framework that protects the interests of women specifically.

And this is an area provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of the all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) have been utilised effectively. Most women's organisations work towards the general goals set out by the Convention.

Capacity has always been an issue in the region and in this particular sector, UNIFEM Pacific to continue emphasis on the application of CEDAW as a tool for mobilising government and civil society to stimulate action and track country progress on the gendered aspects of development.

Supporting legislative reform to promote enforcement of laws important for the realisation of women's human rights is another focus area for the office. CEDAW is the overall framework of UNIFEM and specific activities fall under the thematic area of Advancing Gender Justice in Democratic Governance.

For the UNIFEM Office in Suva, which serves 15 countries, 2008 key activities include: the development of a CEDAW concept design proposal that takes into account the UNIFEM Pacific Sub-Regional Strategy 2008-2011 and the UNIFEM Human Rights and CEDAW Strategy.

UNIFEM

Support for UNIFEM Suva's priority countries - Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Kiribati – include activities related to the implementation of CEDAW such as reporting, legislative review and implementation of CEDAW Articles and recommendations.

Current technical assistance is in place with support to PNG in preparing their initial state report, support to Kiribati national women's machinery on organisational restructuring and support on drafting the initial state report.

UNIFEM Pacific is working with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Pacific Centre and the Pacific Regional Rights Resource Team on using CEDAW legislative indicators to progress gender equality law reform.

Twelve Pacific island countries (PICs) have ratified CEDAW. Most states in the Pacific region have had difficulty in meeting their reporting obligations to CEDAW and have taken decades to submit their initial and periodic reports. To date only four countries have reported to UN CEDAW (Fiji, Samoa, Vanuatu and Cook Islands) with PNG in the process of writing its first long overdue report, Solomon Islands preparing to write its report, and Tuvalu finally submitting its report at the end of June 2008. While Fiji was the first PIC to report to the CEDAW Committee, it took 7 years to file its initial report. Samoa presented its combined report in 2005 almost 15 years after ratification. Vanuatu presented their combined report in 2005. PNG has let 13 years pass before making a determined effort to complete the first

state and shadow reports.

Long delays in CEDAW reporting by PICs are indicative of capacity issues as well as low levels of political will to change the status quo and invest human and financial resources in promoting gender equality.

The Concluding Comments to the CEDAW reports highlight a wide range of concerns relating to the legal and regulatory framework within the ratifying countries like the unclear definition of discrimination against women in the Constitution and domestic legislation (Fiji, Samoa, Vanuatu, Cook Islands).

Other concerns were the prevalence of domestic violence and gender based violence against women (Fiji, Vanuatu, Samoa) cultural patterns of conduct that are discriminatory to women (Fiji, Samoa, Vanuatu, Cook Islands), segregation in employment and unequal wages for women and men (Fiji) and the negative impacts of economic growth and privatization (Cook Islands).

UNIFEM's six-country CEDAW project between 2004 and 2007 was successful in enabling four countries' national women's machinery and CSOs to take the lead in spearheading their governments CEDAW implementation and reporting. (Fiji, Samoa, Tuvalu and Vanuatu).

Many lessons were learned, including the value of South/South exchange as a strategy for utilizing knowledge and experience from one Pacific Island to assist leaders in other islands. At the end of the project the constitutions and legislation of 12 countries had been comprehensively assessed against a set of CEDAW Legislative Indicators.

DVD boosts CEDAW training

The challenges Pacific countries face in the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women is no secret.

One only has to look at concluding remarks by the CEDAW Committee in response to country reports to realise how the key basics – data, legislative framework, expertise, etc – need to be addressed before our defaulting countries can meet their reporting obligations.

To date only four countries have reported to the UN CEDAW (Fiji, Samoa, Vanuatu and Cook Islands); it took Fiji seven years to submit

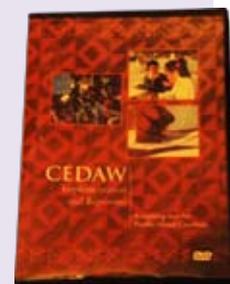
SPC/RRRT/UNIFEM

its initial report. Samoa presented its combined report in 2005 almost 15 years after ratification. Vanuatu presented their combined report in 2005. PNG has let 13 years pass before making a determined effort to complete the first state and shadow reports.

In recognition of the need to assist countries meet standards expected by the CEDAW Committee, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, UNIFEM Pacific and the Regional Rights Resource Team

have produced some training tools to guide countries as they attempt to meet their CEDAW reporting obligations.

A DVD compliments traditional training resources this time; it has two parts: the first component is a short film on the progress made by Pacific island nations when using and reporting on CEDAW; the second component is a training video looking at the introduction of the CEDAW mock sessions in the region and how it has helped delegates in their preparations.



Regional preparation for CSW

Pacific non-government organisations who have a chance of attending next year's Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) will be much better prepared if things go as planned for a proposed workshop organised by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Pacific Centre for September.

The training marks the first time for the Pacific Centre to hold such a regional civil society or non-government organisation training on the CSW.

"The training and strategy session for CSW 53 is part of the Pacific Centre's work to strengthen the capacity of Pacific CSOs/NGOs to engage with international human rights mechanisms, which began earlier this year," the Centre's Human Rights Specialist Suki Beavers told Pacwin recently.

"We supported the participation of four Pacific NGOs at CSW 52 in February-March 2008, and this regional training and strategy session results from some of the lessons learned from

UNDP-PC

that process.

"In particular, we hope this training and strategy will assist with: expanding the range of Pacific NGOs/CSOs involved; providing training in advance of the CSW itself; and providing a space for Pacific NGOs/CSOs to begin their respective and collaborative priority setting and advocacy work for CSW 53."

The September training/strategy session will cover general information on the CSW (What is it? How is it organized? What of the Outcomes? etc); information on the NGO ECOSOC accreditation process (A requirement for NGOs to participate at UN meetings); sharing the experiences and lessons learned from the four Pacific NGOs which attended CSW 52; and specific training on how NGOs can participate at the CSW.

Beavers said the training and strategy sessions would be designed both for Pacific NGOs/CSOs who wanted to build skills to attend the CSW (and other intergovernmental processes as many of the skills will be transferable); and also for those who would not be attending the CSW but was a vital component of advocacy at home.

"In this regard, time will be allocated for Pacific NGOs/CSOs to initiate discussions about priorities and various options for domestic (and sub-regional or regional) advocacy campaigns for CSW 53. Following the September meeting, there will still be lots of time left for interested NGOs/CSOs to go back home and continue their national priority setting, organizing and advocacy before the CSW in March 2009.

Following the September training and strategy session, the Pacific Centre will invite Pacific NGOs/CSOs to express their interest in participating in CSW 53, which will be held in New York in March 2009.

Region talks special measures

Discussions over legislating increased participation of women largely centre on two main arguments – the need to speed-up work in this area and the argument that women should be legislators on merit.

But one does not have to look far to see how special measures like the quota system or reserved seats, that's put women in Parliament, ensures, at the least, a woman's perspective in whatever's before the legislature.

And in September this year, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat are hosting a two-day sub-regional workshop (25-26) in Port Moresby on temporary special measures.

The workshop will bring together representatives from the various offices of Attorney-Generals, electoral commissions and national women's machineries from Fiji, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu.

SPC & PIFS

The meeting will discuss the need for and benefits of special measures. Options that countries or political parties have in terms of special measures will also be discussed to allow a base upon which participants could develop country strategies for improving gender balanced political participation.

SPC's Human Development Programme is also in the process of stock-taking national women's machineries across the region to assess the enabling environment for gender mainstreaming across the 'whole of government'.

"This will entail interviews and focus group sessions with national women's machineries, central and line ministries, and development partners," a spokesperson said.

"And this will be followed up by national and regional analysis and strategic interventions to

help Pacific island countries and territories (PICTs) reduce the barriers to and strengthen the supports for gender mainstreaming.

"We have been developing a set of core gender indicators for PICTs to improve the collection, organization and analysis of gender data in furtherance of improved policy making, planning and accountability."

Plans are in the pipeline for CSO training workshops to assist planning offices and national women's machineries better understand and use gender statistics.

SPC recently hosted a three-day development partners' workshop in Nadi to discuss improved collaboration on gender and development initiatives in the region; it was extremely well-attended by a range of UN, CROP and donor agencies. There was strong support for improved collaborative efforts in areas like institutional capacity building for gender mainstreaming, economic empowerment of women and strengthening the women's movement.

Study focuses on women and girls with disabilities

By Matelita Ragogo



Vulnerability of women and girls with disabilities to sexual exploitation or abuse, among other things, will be discussed in detail in a new research into challenges and issues women and girls with disabilities, face.

The baseline information research project, the report of which is yet to be published, has also confirmed fears that people with disabilities are still very much marginalised in all sections of society, at all levels.

Challenges remain in the most basic need to access buildings to inaccessibility to a good quality basic education – teachers who are trained to work with children with disabilities are either unemployed or are employed as teachers but not in position where they could provide such specialized teaching.

Legislative reform is suggested which, among other things, must ensure laws are in-line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; that the general trend now of lumping disability laws without

specific provisions for women and girls, is reversed.

An approach that can be strengthened is legislating the percentage of women with disabilities in the workplace.

An attitude change is needed for the general populace, the study has evaluated. A consistent and widespread awareness campaign also hopes to, among other things, shift focus from the 'disability' to the 'person'.

Women and girls with disabilities in the Pacific, as worldwide, experience discrimination based on both disability and gender, referred to intersectional discrimination; the study acknowledges that responses need to be targeted to the specific issues and needs of women and girls with disabilities.

In essence, the report identifies several "urgent" actions like developing and implementing laws, policies and programs; raising the educational attainment of girls with disabilities; increase access to comprehensive

and quality healthcare for women and girls with disabilities; reduce their rates of unemployment; and improve access to all buildings and transportation.

The study's objectives were to identify: the challenges faced by women and girls with disabilities in the Pacific; the social and economic factors leading to these challenges; existing policies and programmes by national and local governments, civil society and the private sector as well as development partners to address the challenges faced by women with disabilities; and recommendations for regional and national action by all partners.

The study encompassed a desk review of published and unpublished studies and the analysis of national and regional data on women with disabilities in the Pacific from existing sources. Best practices from the region – national, regional and international – were also scrutinised.

Poverty stats prove women poor suffer more

Statistics and analysis of a new baseline study on poverty in Fiji has confirmed what has until now, remained largely an assumption: that females suffer far more from poverty than males.

The recently published *The Quantitative Analysis of Poverty in Fiji* devoted a chapter on Gender Issues in The Incidence of Poverty Amongst Income Earners; that a chapter is insufficient is debatable, that it was included at all is commendable but not surprising considering its author, Professor Wadan Narsey of the University of the South Pacific.

Professor Narsey discussed gender issues in poverty based on a basic needs poverty line of \$60 per week for individuals.

Of his 10 recommendation that amongst other things called for the state to encourage through media campaigns, that people eat locally and more nutritious food, Dr Narsey suggested the state remove all ethically-discriminatory policies on public sector

employment, education and other areas which constitute ethnic discrimination. Such policies were allowing the existence of the avoidable, non-food poverty lines.

Dr Narsey said: “Stakeholders focus national economic policies in an attempt to foster pro-poor and women friendly economic growth strategies based on Fiji’s comparative advantages such that employment created will be World Trade Organisation compatible and incomes well above the poverty lines.”

What Dr Narsey’s book will hopefully mean is stated succinctly by Government Statistician, Timoci Bainimarama: “The provision of solid data on poverty is an extremely important part of the nation’s attempts to discuss our development problems in an objective manner, guided by facts rather than prejudices.”

Dr Narsey will assist the Bureau of Statistics in its “national dialogue on poverty” – a good sign for activists engaged in fostering women’s economic security.

Did you know?

32% of the population earns less than \$60 per week; women constitute 40%, men 29%.

47% of women employers are below the basic needs poverty line (BNPL); men 3%.

If unpaid domestic workers are included in the labour force, women ‘in poverty’ would increase to 75%.

55,000 wage earners & 2400 salary earners do not pay FNPF: the bulk of whom are women

67% of our women do not pay FNPF & are in poverty; men 48%

Rural dwellers below the basic needs poverty line comprise 48%; urban incidences are 24%. Of this (rural rate), 61% are females, 43% male.

Fijian females ‘in poverty’: 46%; Indo-Fijian: 42%.

The highest incidence of poverty was for female workers in the Northern Division with 68%, 28% higher than those for men at 53%.



A woman washes her clothes at a well just outside Labasa

Picture courtesy of Matelita Ragogo

Demanding trade justice now!

By **Wesley Morgan**

Australia and NZ are pushing hard for Pacific Island Countries to begin negotiations for a new free trade agreement in 2009 – amid concern such a deal will undermine development in the region.

Pacific civil society organisations (CSOs) met in Auckland NZ in mid-August to discuss issues relating to a new trade agreement with the Pacific's big-brother neighbours under the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER).

Concern was raised that pursuing a free trade agreement (FTA) with Australia and NZ will lead to rising inequality, losses in government revenue, job losses, a reduction in the quality and supply of essential services and the closing off of 'policy space' that governments use to stimulate development.

It was also noted that a new FTA will restrict forever the ability of Pacific governments to favour local firms and service suppliers, or regulate foreign investment to help stimulate local industry and employment.

Australian and NZ trade officials are interested in securing new access to Pacific markets for their exports, service suppliers and potential new investors.

Businesses in Australia and NZ want to see tariffs reduced on their exports to the Pacific, and changes to laws in the region to allow corporations to establish new enterprises (and remove profits) with reduced obligations to the countries in which they invest.

Australian and NZ exports to the region are already worth well over \$AUD5 billion each year, and an FTA could add to that value considerably.

Meeting participants decided it was vital that CSOs, unions and church groups be actively involved in trade debates in the Pacific – including assessing the suitability of FTAs for meeting goals of human security and social development.

The meeting issued a Pacific Civil Society Organisations Statement on Trade Justice listing key demands in relation to any negotiations under PACER.

Fei Tevi, General Secretary of the Pacific Conference of Churches said trade could help to promote development, but he said Australia and NZ had only one model of trade for the Pacific in mind. "That model, of a new World Trade Organisation compatible FTA with Australia and NZ could potentially be a disaster for the Pacific, said Mr Tevi. "Even supporters of a new FTA acknowledge there will be high costs – like job losses and reductions in government revenue.

"This joint statement is calling on our

leaders to ensure that there are alternatives and that trade arrangements with Australia and NZ should be based on justice and should enhance social development in the Pacific."

Mr Tevi said Pacific churches and civil society organisations were especially concerned that Australia looks likely to link a new labour mobility scheme to negotiations for a new FTA under the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER).

Australia's Prime Minister Kevin Rudd announced a pilot seasonal workers' scheme, allowing workers from Pacific Island Countries to enter Australia to work in the horticulture sector, at this years' Pacific Islands Forum leaders meeting.

As Pacific exports already receive duty-free entry into Australia, Australia has little to offer in terms of trade concessions, and may be tempted to use such a labour mobility scheme as a 'concession' in trade negotiations.

Mr Tevi said Australia and NZ both faced a shortfall of labour, especially in their horticulture sectors. "We know country towns in Australia and NZ are hurting because they can't find workers," said Mr Tevi. "And in our island countries we have willing workers. "Temporary labour mobility schemes are mutually beneficial – they're a win-win situation for Australia, NZ and the Pacific island countries." "They shouldn't be offered as a 'concession' in free trade deals that will benefit Australia and NZ far more than the Pacific Island Countries."

The Pacific Conference of Churches, in partnership with member churches in the Pacific from concerned countries and the Uniting Church of Australia, is working to ensure there are proper accompaniments and pastoral care provided for Pacific workers entering into new labour mobility schemes.

Mr Tevi said that, provided they are well managed to minimise the social costs, labour mobility schemes could have positive development outcomes for Pacific people – helping to ease unemployment pressures, providing remittances for Pacific communities, and providing training for returning workers.

Mr Tevi's comments were echoed by Pacific Network on Globalisation Coordinator Maureen Penjueli, who said including labour mobility in PACER-Plus negotiations would make a free



**MAKE
TRADE
FAIR**

IN THE PACIFIC 

trade deal that is bad for the Pacific Island Countries look better than it really is.

The Pacific Civil Society Statement on Trade Justice demands that an adequate structure for trade negotiations must be established well before the Pacific Island Countries engage in any new trade negotiations with Australia and NZ – and that research and training related to a new FTA must be Pacific driven.

"For too long we've had studies from Australia and NZ focussing narrowly on the 'benefits' of a new FTA and ways to overcome the acknowledged 'adjustment costs,'" said Ms Penjueli. "We need new research to assess potential alternatives to a WTO compatible FTA, to assess the implications of a new FTA for the Pacific's environment, natural resources, land and cultures, to assess the implications of a new FTA for Pacific legislation, and to assess the loss of policy space available to Pacific governments on signing a new FTA.

Ms Penjueli said research of this kind would enable Pacific governments and trade officials to make more considered decisions in relation to trade and development policy – and the suitability of new FTAs in the Pacific.

The Pacific Civil Society Statement on Trade Justice was endorsed by the following organisations: Pacific Island Association of NGOs, Pacific Conference of Churches, Pacific Network on Globalisation, South Pacific and Oceanic Council of Trade Unions, Oxfam New Zealand, Vanuatu Association of NGOs, O Le Siosiomaga Society Incorporated (Samoa), Samoa Umbrella for NGOs (SUNGO), Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, PACFAW, Fiji Council of Social Services, Tuvalu Association of NGOs (TANGO), Federated States of Micronesia Alliance of NGOs (FANGO), and the Development Resource Centre (NZ) and Council for International Development (NZ).

*For a full copy of The Pacific Civil Society Statement on Trade Justice see www.pang.org.fj
Wesley Morgan is Communications Officer for the Pacific Network on Globalisation (PANG).*



Nicaragua radio women: *Mission Observatorio*

With several national elections imminent in the region, the role of the media is beginning to gain centrestage as dialogue starts on initiatives to ensure increased women's participation – be it be in the lead up to the elections in terms of advocacy for women's issues or as actual candidates.

The broadcast media, in particular radio, is understandably the preferred mode of communicating such initiatives with the geographical, logistical and even support (or the lack of it) challenges women's organisations' face.

A similar discussions was initiated after a posting on the Pacific Women's Network (PACWIN) about how a group of women across Nicaragua followed the elections with commentaries, sitting in front of sets of microphones in makeshift radio stations as polling stations opened on November 5 (2006).

The story underlined the power of information technology, moreso radio; the women's broadcast was supported by a national station that transported the women's voices out of the 'community' and onto the national and world stage through the internet.

Referred to as an observatorio, the women gathered in the public plazas and polling stations of the capital city of Managua and smaller townships and shared experiences and aspirations, their voices carried in Spanish and English via radio and internet by the Costa Rica-based Radio Internacional Feminista (FIRE) and its initiative, Radio Petatera.

The women were responding to being shut out of political participation for nearly two decades and to eroding women's rights due to persistent economic insecurity, political corruption, authoritarian rule and the transformation of the once-progressive Sandanistas into a conservative movement.

The last straw was when in 2005, a ban on therapeutic abortion was effected, making it illegal to terminate a pregnancy even when the mother's life is in danger; it reversed a protective law that had been in place for more than 100 years. The 2006 observatorio in Nicaragua was the first. Since then there have been two more: women mobilizing against state repression in Oaxaca, Mexico in April of 2007 and women mobilizing against the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) in Costa Rica in September of 2007.

The observatorio has become an established



and effective form of political response. A suggestion made during the PACWIN discussion was the possibility of working with Pacific women to sharpen their analytical and critical skills – and a Pacific observatorio perhaps?

When a crisis occurs on a local level, the call for solidarity is put out through the communications network and people and resources are mobilized. Radio and internet technologies allow testimony-givers to transcend the boundaries of geography and engage non-locals as virtual observers, building solidarity and increasing the scope and numbers of those who bear witness.

The November 2006 elections were the first in ten years in which opposing political parties were recognized and allowed to put forth candidates. An autonomous feminist movement (MAM) had been building and forming for more than a decade and had recently allied with, Movimiento Revolucionario Sandinista (MRS), a leftist alternative to the increasingly

conservative Sandanistas. The MRS was fielding numerous candidates in this election, including some women who also affiliated with MAM.

According to Malena de Montis, a leader in MAM, "For the first time in our country, women have established a new way of doing politics. Women are participating more, and a new force of young women is emerging. This is a very important. An outstanding moment in our history is taking place."

In spite of the women's efforts, the 2006 elections were not free and fair. To date, one and a half years after elections took place, the final official outcomes have not been released; only the results from 92% of total votes. Daniel Ortega remains in power and the ban on therapeutic abortion stills stands.

Municipal elections will take place in Nicaragua in November of 2008. Women are both hopeful and skeptical that these elections will reverse political trends that have slowly and systemically eroded human rights.

Source: Pacwin

The idea for an observatorio is rooted in Latin American political culture and history, a tradition whereby people speak of their experiences and their visions for change. Testimonies themselves are a vehicle of political participation. Solidarity and change can come about after people have had a chance to speak - and be heard.

The name "petatera" refers to the petate, or Mesoamerican sleeping mat woven of plant fibers. In invoking the woven petate, the women equated their intertwined efforts as weaving a fabric of their own voices - and social justice - in Nicaragua.

Civil society change approach to Forum

By **Matelita Ragogo**

The region's civil society non-government organisations now known as the Pacific Regional Non Government Organisations (PRNGOs) Alliance has changed tactic in engaging the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS).

At its eighth pre-forum leaders' meeting in Auckland last month, the Alliance did not present to the Forum an outcome document which usually outlined recommendations for Forum member countries.

The Auckland meeting acknowledged that issues and recommendations the CSO pre-Forum meeting were never reflected on the Leaders' final communiqué.

The meeting heard that it would be more effective if Alliance members lobbied their respective state targets, depending on what the issue was, during the various Forum ministerial meetings.

The NGO representatives agreed that they needed to resolve issues of "clarity in mandates, accountability, understanding our roles as civil society" adding they need to improve communications at all levels as opposed to processes which almost replicated the

bureaucracy of the Forum.

The Forum made recommendations on climate; peace and security; health; human rights and self-determination; sustainable livelihoods; education; trade justice; and governance.

On itself as a collective group, the Alliance committed themselves to: Build national CSO capacity on the benefits and advantages of utilising Forum and CROP processes, ways to engage, the roles of CROP agencies and their accountability mechanisms; Obtain feedback from Pacific regional CSOs that have Consultative Status in Pacific Island Forum processes of their experiences in seeking accreditation; Advocate for meaningful engagement in regional processes in particular in relation to accreditation processes including the disclosure policies of CROP agencies; Ensure Pacific regional CSOs continue to seek accreditation to CROP meetings and further develop dialogue with CROP agencies; Develop mechanisms for better information sharing at all levels ensuring that appropriate facilities are in place; Consolidate national-regional CSO interfacing and partnership with the general aim of making timely and relevant regional interventions in Forum and CROP

processes; Establish issue-focused CSO platforms at national level and strengthen smart partnerships for advocacy and change, and build linkages with the PRNGOs' Alliance on activities related to regular CSO Forum meetings and interventions in national and regional Pacific Island Forum and CROP processes; Formulate an action plan of all Forum meetings to be targeted in the next year and assess the timing of the CSO Forum in view of the Pre Forum Officials Committee Meeting (FOC), the Pacific Plan Action Committee (PPAC) meetings including Ministerial meetings and the Pacific Forum Leaders' annual meetings; Utilise the media and explore additional and effective means of communication and advocacy to influence Forum governments' positions; Lobby CROP agencies to establish a post of CSO Liaison Officer to assist in ensuring CSO concerns are included and implemented at regional level and support CSOs in understanding the processes of regional agencies; Assess/audit actions agreed from 2008 CSO Forum Meeting at the next meeting; and Develop a mechanism to enable the NSA representative at the Forum Secretariat to provide ongoing feedback to the CSO Forum and its Members.

Get into GEAR international

A campaign for stronger gender equality architecture (GEAR) will, it is argued, better enable the United Nations and governments to deliver on promises made to advance gender equality and women's human rights, which are essential components of development at the global and country levels.

For the past three decades, women have seen the United Nations as a galvanizing force for our efforts to define a comprehensive global agenda for peace and security, human rights, gender equality, women's empowerment, poverty eradication and sustainable development.

The UN reform process is important to women because we need the organizational structures, high level leadership and necessary resources to enable governments and the UN system to increase significantly their efforts to fulfill their promises on women's human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment.

Strengthening the UN's gender equality machinery is a crucial part of financing for development.

Arguments for GEAR include the fact that it was initiated by women's groups around the world as opposed to governments; a strong women's entity will help to integrate gender throughout the UN system; creating a strong women's entity will not detract from other development goals; a stronger UN gender entity will make financing for gender equality and financing for development more efficient and effective; there has been no substantive resistance mounted against strengthening the UN's gender architecture; a new women's entity must have core responsibilities at national/operational and global/policy levels; and that a new women's entity must be "built to win" - it must be adequately funded or it simply will not be able to do the work it needs to do.



About us

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural non-governmental organization committed to removing discrimination against women through institutional reforms and attitudinal changes.

By means of core programmes and innovative approaches, FWRM practices and promotes feminism, democracy, good governance and human rights.

We strive to empower, unite and provide leadership opportunities for women in Fiji, especially for emerging young leaders, indigenous and locally-born women.

The FWRM vision is for the women of Fiji to be free from all forms of discrimination, have equal access to opportunities and to live in a healthy environment where the principles of feminism, democracy, good governance, multiculturalism and human rights prevail.

Join us

YES! I want to support the Fiji Women's Rights Movement

ANNUAL FEE:

Waged - \$10 • Organisation - \$30

Non-waged/Student - \$5

Name: _____

Address: _____

Ph: _____

Email: _____



Fiji Women's Rights Movement

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Email: info@fwr.org.fj

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LOOKOUT!

Vasu: Pacific Women of Power

Upon first meeting, Fijians will ask each other 'Where are you from?' The answer refers to that person's father's place of origin. The person might then add that they are 'vasu' from another place. This refers to their mother's place of origin. 'Vasu' is sometimes used to refer to Fijian people of mixed heritage. The 'Vasu: Pacific Women of Power' initiative reclaims the word 'vasu' as being the seat of women's mana; a credible and legitimate place of power in its own right.

The 'Vasu: Pacific Women of Power' initiative provides a platform for female artists to come together to share their work, to find community and a collective voice. The Fiji Women's Rights Movement is partner in this initiative, which reflects the Movement's commitment to the creative arts as an important space for women's advocacy and empowerment.

The project takes creativity to a whole new level where female artists can collaborate to exchange ideas on a platform that is open to women from all walks of life from across the Pacific.

'Vasu' hopes to promote awareness amongst girls and women that the Arts are an alternative employment option. Students

are encouraged to visit the exhibit and to attend workshops facilitated by the artists of the initiative.

This unique exhibition, which showcases around 40 female artists, writers, singers, choreographers, photographers, multimedia artists and short film makers, is co-curated by Jakki Leota-Ete (NZ), Ann Tarte (Fiji), Frances Koya (Fiji) and Luisa Tora (Fiji).

Pacific connections explored in the show include Fiji, New Zealand, Australia, Solomon Islands, Samoa, Kiribati and Vanuatu.

VASU: Pacific Women of Power will be open to the public from Thursday 25 to Saturday 27 September, from 9am to 5pm, Oceania Centre for Arts and Culture, USP Laucala Campus, Suva. It then moves to the Fiji Museum for the month of October.

The exhibition is sponsored by the New Zealand High Commission and Creative

New Zealand, the Embassy of France, the SPC Pacific Women's Bureau and Oceania Printers, the University of the South Pacific, the Fiji Times, Legend FM and the Fiji Women's Rights Movement.

For more information call Luisa Tora on (679) 903 7202

Free Legal Clinic

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement, in partnership with the Fiji Young Lawyers Association, is continuing to host the Free Legal Clinic. Every fortnight, women who cannot afford a lawyer, can get free legal advice from members of the FYLA at the FWRM Office, 21 Knollys Street, Suva. The Clinic is held every second Wednesday, from 5.30pm. Please call FWRM on 3312711 or 3313156 to make an appointment, or email Unaisi@fwr.org.fj.

Tok Talk

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement will be hosting an intergenerational dialogue, in partnership with the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD), at the upcoming AWID Forum. The 11th AWID International Forum on Women's Rights and Development will be held in Capetown, South Africa, in November. The FWRM/APWLD session is titled Tok Talk: Nourishing an Asia-Pacific feminist movement. Email michelle@fwr.org.fj or tara@fwr.org.fj for more information.