



Balance

"HELPING TO BALANCE THE SCALES"

MARCH

1/2009

INTERNATIONAL Women's Day is celebrated in many countries around the world, usually on the 8th of March. It is a day when women are recognized for their achievements without regard to divisions, whether national, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic or political. It is an occasion for looking back on past struggles and accomplishments, and more importantly, for looking ahead to the untapped potential and opportunities that await future generations of women. (Source: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/iwd/>)

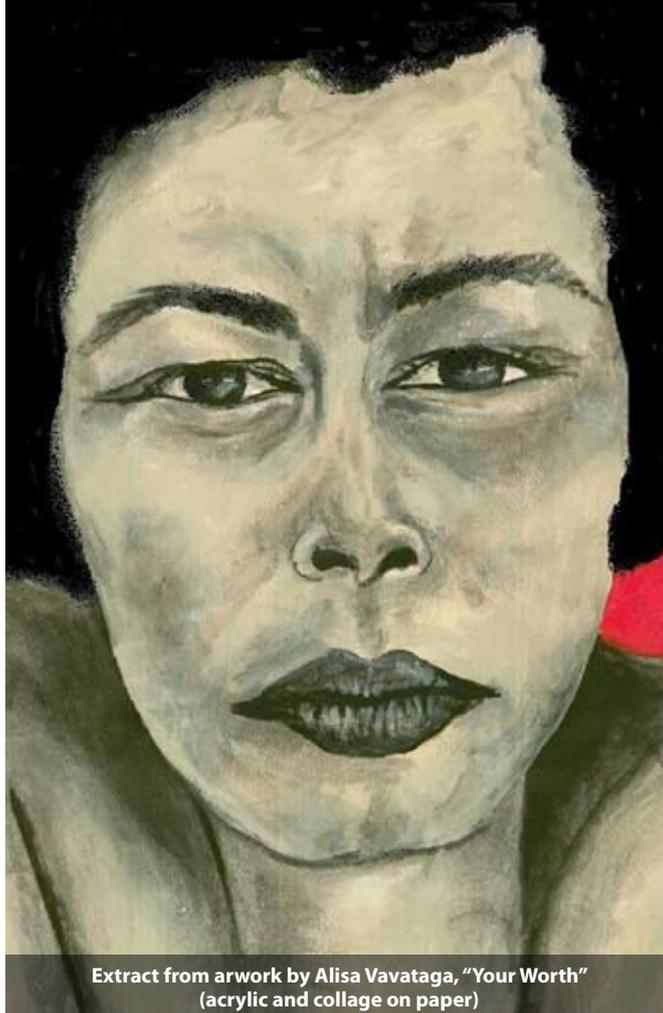
This year's theme of "Women and Men – United to End Violence Against Women" is looking at the positive involvement of men and boys in ending all forms of violence against women. One example of how men can help is the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre's Male Advocacy Programme, where men learn how to reach out to their peers and influence other men to change their behaviour. (Source: <http://www.fijiwomen.com/>)

We also need to involve younger men and boys in awareness programmes which can begin at home and at school. We need to reinforce the idea that women and men, girls and boys, are equals and deserve the same respect in both the private and public sphere. And it's not just communities and NGOs that need to do this – under domestic and international law it is the state's (government's) responsibility to ensure that policies and laws are adequate in addressing violence against women.

Mainstream media also have a responsibility in the portrayal of women and girls. Women and girls are continually bombarded with images from entertainment and advertising that help define our culture's gender roles and beauty ideal. Fashion magazines, celebrity blogs, musical videos and TV shows like America's Next Top Model continue to push girls and women to

Commemorating International Women's Day

By Michelle Reddy



Extract from artwork by Alisa Vavataga, "Your Worth"
(acrylic and collage on paper)

try and achieve unrealistic body types and remain in conservative gender roles. It is these sorts of images that leave a lasting impression on men and boys and shape both their beliefs and attitudes towards women and girls.

You can help create change by speaking out or joining an organization to advocate ending violence against women. You can start by attending the Fiji Women's Rights Movement Picture This! launch in celebration of International Women's Day.

What is the Fiji Women's Rights Movement doing?

In celebration of International Women's Day, the Fiji Women's Rights Movement is holding a photography exhibition and workshop for 22 girls, aged 14 to 15. The girls are being given basic training in photography, as well as some information on what International Women's Day is all about. They have taken photographs around the theme of this year's International Women's Day, "Women and Men – United to End Violence Against Women". A selection of their best photographs will be launched on International Women's Day, March 8th, at MHCC in downtown Suva. The exhibition will then run for two weeks at ANZ House, on Victoria Parade, Suva.

Picture This! has the dual objectives of using the celebration of International Women's Day as an innovative forum to highlight the artistic talent of young women and girls; as well as train young women and girls to channel their creativity and make their voices heard.

The photography training was conducted by Adi Nacola of Grasskirt Photography, who helped the girls with basic skills such as framing shots and general use of the camera. The disposable cameras have been donated by Caines Jannif Limited. For more information, go to www.Connectme.com.fj, and check out the International Women's Day page.



From the Director's desk

Welcome to the first issue of Balance for 2009!

THIS issue sees a few minor changes that will help you get a better idea of the work we do here at the Fiji Women's Rights Movement. On page 15 (the inside back cover), you will find a brief outline of our three major programmes. All our various projects and advocacy fall under these three programmes: Young Women in Leadership; CEDAW Monitoring and Implementation; and Transitional Justice for Fiji.

We have had a busy first quarter – with a lot more planned for the year to come. In January, we officially launched the FWRM Family Law Act brochures. The eight brochures, which simplify key provisions of the Family Law Act, were produced with



the support of the Asia Foundation and the assistance of the Fiji Young Lawyers Association (see page 4). Our TJF programme has also been busy, and we have developed a new partnership with the Pacific Centre for Peacebuilding to further our transitional justice work in the community. The YWL programme has also been a hive of activity, as the

participants of our fourth round of the Emerging Leaders' Forum (ELF) gear up for the ELF4 graduation in May (see page 11).

The year kicked off with FWRM annual planning for 2009; and it's going to be a busy twelve months. Despite the full calendar, the

FWRM team is facing the year ahead with new energy and commitment as we have a full complement of staff and renewed finance and administrative systems.

Some highlights of the year ahead include the regional FWRM/DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New era) feminist advocacy training, research on the impacts of the coup, a new video on feminist movement building, and a new-look website.

As always, our doors here at 21 Knollys Street are open to you, whether you'd like to utilise our newly reorganised resource centre, or if you need some basic legal advice from our fortnightly free legal clinic (see page 5), or even if you'd just like to drop by for an informal chat over a cup of tea.

We hope to see you soon!

In Solidarity,

Virisila Buadromo

ELFs take over!

ELF 4 members (l-r) Mei Tikoi, Yashna Narayan and Gopika Dasi

ENTHUSIASM, fresh ideas and a source of new passion for women's rights: The cadre of young women leaders from the Fiji Women's Rights Movement's Emerging Leaders Forum (ELF) continue to provide important support to the Movement. Our office at 21 Knollys Street is alive with young voices as members of ELF 4 (the current round of the leadership training programme) and the ELF alumni drop by or lend their time as volunteers and relieving staff. Yashna Narayan, 19, is a member of ELF 4 and began volunteering with the Movement in January. Last month she began more formal employment with FWRM as our new receptionist, the first point of contact for visitors and callers.

"I find the work really interesting, and the staff are easy to get along with," said Yashna, who has also found her time at FWRM an opportunity to engage with issues affecting women.

"Of the issues that FWRM works on, it's all forms of violence against women that I'm most concerned about."

Twenty-two year old Mei Tikoi and Gopika Dasi, 23, are also members of ELF 4 and both view volunteering at FWRM as a learning opportunity.

"When I first joined FWRM, I just wanted to

do any volunteer work. But now, I've joined ELF too, and I want to learn more about women's rights, equality and discrimination against women," said Mei, who has been with FWRM for over six months.

Gopika began her stint as a volunteer in January this year, mainly for some experience in a working environment.

"But volunteering with FWRM is also in my interest area, and helps me learn more from the ELF programme. I'm most interested in women's rights, particularly FWRM's work in transitional justice and CEDAW," Gopika said.

The Emerging Leaders' Forum is a year-long leadership training programme for young women, aged 18 to 25. Yashna, Gopika and Mei are part of the fourth round of ELF, and will join the growing ranks of ELF alumni when they graduate from the programme in May this year.





Former Suva City councillor and serving member of the FWRM management board, Priscilla Singh with FWRM Executive Director, Virisila Buadromo

Council removal sets back women in leadership

AFTER almost 10 years as an elected representative for the ratepayers in Fiji's capital, Priscilla Singh was unceremoniously removed from office – along with 130 other municipal councillors from around the country. Fiji's councillors served their last day in office on 31st January, 2009; after all municipal councils were dissolved under a directive from the interim regime.

"We were elected representatives of the people. I think that we were removed because the interim administration did not want elected people," said Priscilla, who is also a serving member of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement management board.

Eighteen of the deposed councillors were women and three of these women were deputy mayors. As of February 2009, the interim regime has appointed administrators to act as the councils; none of these administrators are women.

"The Fiji Women's Rights Movement is extremely disappointed to see the last remaining element of democracy in Fiji disappear," said FWRM Executive Director, Virisila Buadromo.

"This is a blow for democracy. It is also a step back for women in decision-making, as local government is often the most accessible platform for women who face ongoing discrimination in

the political sphere."

Priscilla is also deeply concerned about the long-term implications for women in decision-making – which is already an uphill battle in Fiji.

"Women are just going to go back to the fringes; there's no avenue for them to have a say," she said.

The veteran people's representative has also raised fears about how a single administrator may struggle to cope with the varied concerns of Suva's large constituency. Under the Suva City Council, there were five councillors for each of the city's four wards.

"There are implications for women constituents as well – they now have to find some other way to bring up their concerns. We don't know yet if the new administrator is equipped to tend to [this many] people."

For now, Priscilla plans to keep pushing the women in decision-making agenda within her political party, the National Federation Party, as well as maintaining contact with her constituents in the community.

Despite the erosion of democracy in Fiji, Priscilla is committed to supporting women's voices in leadership: "What it really means is that we'll have to work twice as hard – which we will continue doing".

"The Fiji Women's Rights Movement is extremely disappointed to see the last remaining element of democracy in Fiji disappear"

Virisila Buadromo
FWRM Executive Director





Family Law made simple: FWRM launches user-friendly brochures

FYLA's Romulo Nayacalevu (left) with FWRM Executive Director, Virisila Buadromo, launch the brochures at the FWRM office in Suva

IN JANUARY, the Fiji Women's Rights Movement launched a series of user-friendly brochures on family law. The eight colourful brochures will help women and their families navigate our new Family Law Act (2003) and the Family Court. The pamphlets guide the reader through some of the processes of the Family Court when dealing with issues such as maintenance, child custody, property settlement, violence in the home, and divorce.

"Through our partner NGOs, we are distributing these brochures around the country, to help demystify family law for women and their communities," said FWRM Executive Director, Virisila Buadromo.

"Having this information readily available also means women don't have to waste

time and money coming back and forth to legal practitioners and the Family Court to answer basic questions. Instead, these brochures explain what forms they need to fill, what documents they need, as well a simple outline of how the Family Law Act can help them."

The brochures have already been distributed to Women's Crisis Centre branches around the country, as well as to the Legal Aid Commission and to the various Family Court locations.

"We invite other civil society organisations and government departments to contact us here at the Fiji Women's Rights Movement to obtain copies for distribution to the communities they work with," Buadromo said.

"The further we can spread this information, the better it will be for women and their families."

The brochures were developed with the assistance of the Fiji Young Lawyers Association (FYLA), who also conduct a fortnightly free legal clinic for women at the FWRM office. Most of the FWRM/FYLA clients enquire about Family Law matters, so the brochures will also be used at the clinic. The pamphlets, written in simple English, have already received positive feedback from lawyers, their clients and NGO partners.

FWRM also publicised the Family Law Act and the services available at the Family Court through a radio and television campaign last year. The newly-launched brochures are available at the FWRM office at 21 Knollys Street, Suva. For more information, email Unaisi@fwrn.org.fj.





Free legal clinic in the fight for women's rights

By **Romulo Nayacalevu** Coordinator Legal Clinic

FWRM and Pasifika Communications shoot a public awareness campaign at the Family Court last year

FOR many women, a community legal clinic is the first step towards realising their rights, including the fundamental right of access to justice. The Fiji Women's Rights Movement partners with the Fiji Young Lawyers' Association on a fortnightly free legal clinic, which has helped many women navigate their way through the court system, giving basic legal advice on a variety of issues.

The clinic is a community service which enables the young lawyers of the FYLA to share their legal knowledge on a pro-bono basis with the women who access the clinic. For the lawyers, there is the satisfaction of knowing that many of the women that use the clinic leave empowered about accessing the court system and their basic rights. It was Justice Michael Kirby of the Australian High Court who challenged young lawyers in Fiji to, "enjoy the profession of law. Remember it is a noble profession and we must be worthy of it. In whatever tiny ways we can we must, as lawyers and as human beings, seek to make the world a

better, kinder more just and equal place."

In 2008, the international community celebrated the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), considered the "mother of human rights". However, the aspirations within the UDHR are yet to be fully realized. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Ms Navi Pillay in her statement on the 60th anniversary said "many people around the world are still unaware that they have rights that they can demand, and that their governments are accountable to them, and to a wide-ranging body of rights-based national and international law. Despite all our efforts over the past 60 years, this anniversary will pass many people by, and it is essential that we keep up the momentum, thereby enabling more and more people to stand up and claim their rights."

Our own Constitution provides that every person is equal before the law, but we see every day the injustice and inequalities women face. Lack of access to justice ultimately affects other

rights such as property rights, and family law provisions such as maintenance for children, to cover education and living expenses (clothes, food, medical expenses). On many occasions, the women who attend our clinic are doing it not for themselves but for their children. The legal clinic is an avenue where women in Fiji are able to access their rights as well as their children's rights through the legal system, - be it the opportunity to talk to a lawyer and receiving legal advice or assistance in filing court papers.

The clinic is not just about giving women legal advice and facilitating access to justice. It is also about empowering women to realise that their rights are equally important and that the law should be there to protect and promote their fundamental human rights and dignity. Women's rights are human rights, and it's time we all realised that despite our differences, we are equal under the law.

Pacific NGOs participate in CSW 53

THE FIFTY-THIRD session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is held at the United Nations headquarters in New York from 2nd to 13th March 2009.

This year the Commission reflects on the theme: "The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including care-giving in the context of HIV/AIDS".

Eight non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations representatives from the Pacific are participating in this year's session of the CSW. This includes the Pacific Disability Forum, femLINKPACIFIC, Anglicare STOPAIDS PNG, Samoa AIDS Foundation, Cook Islands Women's Counselling Centre, Tonga National Council of Women and Palau's Voices. The delegation includes two graduates of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement/DAWN regional feminist advocacy training, Nani Samuela of the Cook Islands and 'Ofa Guttenbeil-Likiliki of Tonga. Veena Singh-Bryar, part of the femLINK PACIFIC team, is also a graduate of FWRM's Emerging Leaders' Forum.

The 8 Pacific NGOs will be working throughout CSW 53 to assist Pacific delegations and to raise the profile of the Pacific at this important meeting. They have begun contacting their respective Missions in hopes of making courtesy calls and to offer their individual and collective support. As part of their efforts in New York, the Pacific NGOs will also be convening an NGO side event on Thursday 12 March; "Raising the Profile of the Pacific at CSW 53: Pacific realities, perspectives, & preparations".

The active participation of NGOs is a critical element in the work of the CSW. NGOs have been influential in shaping the current global policy framework

This year the Commission reflects on the theme:

"The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including care-giving in the context of HIV/AIDS"



on women's empowerment and gender equality – the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. They continue to play an important role in holding international and national leaders accountable for the commitments they made in the Platform for Action.

The Commission on the Status of Women is a functional commission of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), dedicated exclusively to gender equality and advancement of women. It is the principal global policy-making body. Every year, representatives of member States gather at United Nations Headquarters in New York to evaluate progress on gender equality, identify challenges, set global standards and formulate concrete policies to promote gender equality and advancement of women worldwide.

The Commission was established by ECOSOC resolution 11(II) of 21 June 1946 with the aim of preparing recommendations and reports to the Council on promoting women's rights in political, economic, civil, social and educational fields. The Commission also makes recommendations to the Council on urgent problems requiring immediate attention in the field of women's rights.

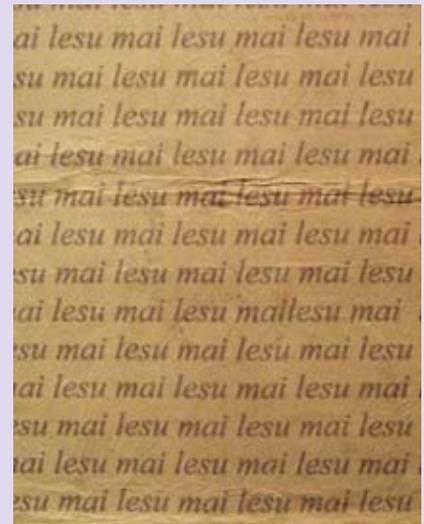
In 1996, the CSW adopted agreed conclusions on "Child and dependent care, including sharing of work and family responsibilities". The Commission has focused on the equal sharing of responsibilities for women and men and care-giving as part of many of the other priority themes since the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995.

The 53rd session provides a unique opportunity to identify and address critical issues related to sharing of responsibilities.



Nani, Peone and Ofa at CSW and Veena (inset)

Photo: femLINK PACIFIC



Forever VASU

By **Emma Tavola**

On display in Otago (clockwise from bottom left): Margaret Aull, *Ko Au from Beulah Land* (2009); Torika Bolatagici, *Buli Vacu* (to clench the fists to fight) from the "Security/Threat" (2007) series; Filani Filina Macassey, *Lesu mai III* (2009); Emma Tavola (left) and Cresantia Koya with a piece by Luisa Tora; Kate Vusoniwailala, Tarisi Vunidilo and Gina Cole at the exhibition opening (centre) Photos: Emma Tavola

VASU: *Pacific Women of Power* was Fiji's first platform for contemporary women artists practising across a range of media to have their work recognised, valued and celebrated. The four women curators, Cresantia Koya, Jakki Leota-Ete, Ann Tarte and Luisa Tora, did an impressive and commendable job developing an exciting visual arts exhibition and a robust public programme that included poetry, music and dance; in all showcasing the work of over 45 artists. The Fiji Women's Rights Movement was a Vasu partner, and held an Activist Art: Speak Up! workshop for girls, as well as a women's poetry night, also called Speak Up! Both events examined art as activism, harnessing our creativity towards feminist goals.

As an artist and curator, it was a joy to be part of such an historic event and contribute to the excellent publication; managing a multifaceted project of this nature and scale, inspires great respect. Artists supported by the New Zealand arts funding agency, Creative New Zealand, have expressed that they are keen to continue contributing to the movement and to create a New Zealand platform for Fiji women artists.

The exhibition, *For Fiji, Ever Fiji* came about as a collaborative concept by the five artists involved. As the title suggests, the work provides commentary

on ideas about nationalism, identity and being of Fiji. Beyond commercial art-making, the artists were selected on the basis of producing work embedded in socio-political enquiry. Within a New Zealand context, the exhibition would provide an alternative perspective to what people commonly know about Fiji: rugby, coup d'état and beachside holidays.

Taking place at Fresh Gallery Otago in South Auckland, the gallery's primary audience is largely Pacific young people. But, *For Fiji, Ever Fiji* has also generated far-reaching interest from the wider Auckland and international arts community and despite its non-commercial agenda, two of the artists have generated sales.

The artists have varying connections to Fiji: from *kailoma* or mixed race Fijian, to indigenous and Indo-Fijian; from diaspora to local to global. They depict Fiji experience as investigations into belonging and longing, security and militarism, miscegenation, gender and sexuality.

Fiji-born, New Zealand-raised multimedia artist Filani Macassey's triptych, *Lesu mai III* is made of three pieces of Fijian masi or bark cloth, heat printed with text and imagery. Macassey depicts a repetitive and ordered mantra of 'lesu mai' or 'come back' juxtaposed with the first image of planet Earth taken from the moon or "the first time we saw

ourselves". Margaret Aull reworks a recycled Totara wood carving to reveal her dual heritage as a proud Maori-Fijian. Macassey and Aull effectively weave out of intercultural tension a new platform that articulates *kailoma* New Zealand Fijian experience.

Australian-born-and-raised photo media artist Torika Bolatagici presents three works from her 2007 *Security/Threat* series. Juxtaposed imagery from Melbourne and Suva depict Bolatagici's ongoing study into the war economy, Fijian masculinity, security and the representation of the black body.

Whilst Fijian artists in diaspora articulate an experience rooted in and informed by the connections and process of returning to Fiji, Suva-based artists and performers, Sangeeta Singh and partner Luisa Tora present an insight into Fiji-based lived realities. Tora's arresting and large-scale painting on builder's paper, *These Boots Were Made For Walking* was created during a workshop at the University of the South Pacific (USP) in 1998. *The Homecoming*, a short film written and directed by Tora was also made there. Sangeeta Singh's 2008 painting, *4 Women* is a fitting tribute to the movement that this exhibition has emerged from and to the four curators who made it all happen.

More information can be found at: www.ColourMeFiji.com

Men behaving badly

Testosterone had its role in the lost billions

If women had control of the financial reins things might have been different, posit Kevin Sullivan and Mary Jordan in London.

FRED, Tom, Andy, Dennis, Eric, John, Stephen, Antonio and Paul ran British banks that lost billions of dollars.

So they were called in for a grilling by Nick, Graham, Colin, Jim, Stephen, Michael, Andrew, George, Mark, Peter, three Johns — and a single, solitary Sally.

The interrogation of the lions of British banking, many of whom have lost their jobs, began on television on Tuesday before the financial overseers of the British Parliament's Treasury Select Committee. And in line with the usual maths of the financial world, 18 of the 19 key people in the room were men.

"Clearly, something needs to change," said Howard Archer, the managing director of European Forecasting and Analysis at IHS Global Insight in London. "You can argue that the men have made a right mess of it, and now the ladies should have a go."

As the global financial downturn deepens, the first rumblings of a gender revolution are under way in an industry long controlled by men. Banks, hedge funds and other financial organisations that have led the international economy's downward spiral are overwhelmingly male-dominated. The regulators and legislators assigned to oversee the financiers are also mostly men.

"There are quite a lot of alpha males with testosterone steaming out their ears," said Stuart Fraser, one of the top financial sector officials in London.

In Britain, women account for just 12 per cent of corporate directorships of companies on the FTSE 100 stock exchange index. In the US, women hold 17 per cent of the corporate directorships. "Maybe if we had more women in the boardrooms, we might not have seen as much

risk-taking behaviour," said Hazel Blears, one of two female members of the cabinet of the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown.

Harriet Harman, the minister for women and equality, blasted the banking world for "discrimination and harassment" against women, including using lap-dancing clubs for corporate entertainment.

Amid the debate about whether the financial crisis would have happened, or been as severe, if more women had been in charge, there are signs that more women will be taking part in the global rescue.

Iceland, which suffered a humiliating economic collapse, has turned over key levers of finance to women. It now has a female prime minister, and women lead two of its major banks. The Prime Minister, Johanna Sigurdardottir, 66, has vowed to exercise "prudence and responsibility" as she cleans up the male-dominated system that sank the national economy.

"Men, especially young men, made a mess of things," said Kristjan Kristjansson, the Prime Minister's spokesman. "There is a strong discussion that women would have taken a more cautious approach in the financial sector. You could call the financial sector almost like a men's club."

Einar Mar Gudmundsson, an influential Icelandic writer, said: "These financial vikings who made the country bankrupt were in a way like little boys playing with toys." He said he would like both men and women to be involved in reconstructing the nation's financial sector.

In France, Michel Ferrary, a professor at the business school Ceram, recently conducted a study that concluded that French companies with the greatest percentage of women in management have performed the best during the crisis.

For example, he said, BNP Paribas bank, whose management team is nearly 39 per cent female, has weathered the crisis far better than Credit Agricole, where women make up just 16 per cent of managers.

John Coates, a researcher at Cambridge University who once ran a trading desk on Wall Street, recently conducted a novel survey that analysed saliva from 17 male traders in London's financial district. Coates concluded that traders made the highest profits when they had the highest levels of testosterone in their spit. The downside, he said, was that elevated testosterone also led to riskier behaviour, a formula for disaster as well as profit. "If you had more women on the trading floors, you would probably eliminate some of this instability," Coates said.

For three hours on Tuesday morning, four elite bankers sat before the Treasury Select Committee: Tom McKillop and Fred Goodwin, who ran the Royal Bank of Scotland, and Andy Hornby and Dennis Stevenson of HBOS. One after another, under often hostile questioning from the politicians, they apologised for presiding over bank collapses that have cost billions in taxpayer-funded bail-outs.

The legislators accused the bankers of being "arrogant" and "in denial" about their responsibility for the crisis. "It's an old boy's network," Sally Keeble, the committee's only female member, said after the hearing. She said she was most disturbed that the top echelons of British banking seemed to rely on a "cozy consensus of like-minded people" unwilling to listen to those who might challenge their views.

John Thurso, also part of the committee, said: "If there were more women, there might have been more of a reality check."

Source: The Washington Post





Women must be included in solving global economic meltdown, UN says

GOVERNMENTS must give women a key role in making decisions aimed at resolving the current global economic crisis, which is likely have a serious impact on the full realization of gender equality, a United Nations committee warned in February.

“While the scale of the current crisis is still largely unmeasured, it is expected that women and girls in both developed and developing countries will be particularly affected by the potential social and economic consequences, such as unemployment, increase of responsibilities both at work and at home, decrease of income and potential increase in societal and domestic violence,” the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women said.

“In such a context, it is necessary to identify

and respond to specific needs of women and girls. Gender perspectives should be taken into account in relation to the impacts of the crisis on both a long and short-term basis, including in relation to education, health, security and livelihoods,” it added in a statement issued in Geneva.

It stressed that particular attention must be paid to providing women with access to programmes aimed at immediately alleviating poverty and hunger, so as to guarantee that national and international efforts effectively reach those most in need and that funding of programmes for women’s empowerment is not eroded.

“The Committee underscores the importance of recognizing the unique contribution that women can make in the timely resolution of the crisis. It

calls upon States parties to include women in the dialogue and decision-making processes around these issues,” the statement said.

It called on all States parties to the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), often described as an international bill of rights for women, to comply with all their obligations under the treaty in spite of the financial crisis.

Under the Convention, ratified by almost the entire international community, States parties are legally committed to take the necessary steps to end all forms of discrimination against women in any field – whether political, economic, social, cultural or civic.

Source: UN News Centre



Fiji may soon submit State CEDAW Report to UN

By **Susan Naidu** Research Officer

Fiji hopes to submit its combined second, third and fourth periodic CEDAW State report to the UNCEDAW Committee soon, after being endorsed by the interim regime in October 2008. The combined report was due last year. Fiji has only reported once so far to the UNCEDAW Committee, in 2000. The Fiji Government ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1995. The periodic reporting on the status of women has been interrupted by Fiji's repeated political crises and the ensuing economic and social upheaval.

The State Report provides information on the current status of women in Fiji. It covers issues such as human trafficking and the sexual exploitation of women and children, the limited representation of women in decision making, the socio-economic gap between rural and urban women, and women's limited access to credit.

The report also mentions the impact of Fiji's current political situation, as a "significant shock to the economy observed through declining tourist arrivals, retail and wholesale trade, reductions in working hours and labourers made redundant, postponement of investment projects and declining business confidence; all these having adverse impact on women and their livelihoods".

Internal migration is also identified as one of the emerging issues facing Fiji's women. Health and livelihood challenges are further exacerbated



by an increasing population living in urban and peri-urban informal settlements - putting a lot of pressure on utilities and government services in these urban areas.

The report also indicates that there are no temporary special measures in place to accelerate equality between men and women in Fiji. The international standard goal of having at least 30% representation of women in decision making has not been achieved.

Some of the key challenges identified as restricting the full implementation of CEDAW in Fiji are: Lack of CEDAW expertise within national

women's machinery; mainstreaming of gender concerns into government policies, plans and programmes; limited use and non availability of sex disaggregated data; stereotypical attitudes that discriminate against women; and perceived traditional and cultural barriers to women's empowerment. The report identifies the need to build capacity within the national women's machinery as a critical area to be addressed.

The new state report, currently awaiting final approval before being sent to UNCEDAW Committee for scrutiny, was compiled by the Department for Women with the assistance of hired consultants. The report has been released to civil society groups, but will be publicized further once it is finalized and submitted. Once the report has been reviewed by the experts on the UNCEDAW Committee, Fiji will be invited to present before the Committee in New York or Geneva and answer their questions. Fiji last appeared before the Committee in 2002.

The NGO CEDAW Secretariat is currently compiling a shadow or parallel CEDAW report, which helps add depth and further information for the UNCEDAW Committee deliberations. NGO parallel reports provide an alternative point of view, particularly in nations where there has been some political upheaval or crisis, and in areas where the state may feel reluctant to provide a fuller picture of the status of women.

Tuvalu Meets Reporting Obligation

TUVALU is the fifth Pacific Island Country to report on the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, behind Fiji, Samoa, Vanuatu and the Cook Islands.

Tuvalu's Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs and Labour Enele Sopoaga presented his government's report to the newly formed UN Human Rights Council in December 2008.

Tuvalu ratified CEDAW in 1999, the fifth Pacific Island nation to commit to the Convention.

The Permanent Secretary reported on Tuvalu's progress on human rights through state laws, regulations and national plans. He said Tuvalu aims to achieve substantive progress under CEDAW through the implementation of its National Sustainable Development Strategy, Te Kakeega II, the Educational Master Plan of Action and its policy for women.

Together with the national efforts on human rights, Tuvalu is also committed to the Pacific Plan, which aims to promote the protection of human

rights in the Pacific.

However, Tuvalu's representative said his government needs financial and technical assistance to implement action on international obligations.

Mr. Sopoaga headed Tuvalu's four member delegation which included Attorney General Eselealofa Apinelu, Multilateral and International Affairs Officer Manaema Saitai Takashi and Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs and Rural Development Seve Lausaveve.



Young women call for human rights & the rule of law

YOUNG women advocates are calling for greater respect and protection of human rights and the rule of law, after a training retreat in February. Sixteen participants of this year's Emerging Leaders' Forum (ELF) took part in their second retreat, which focused on human rights and the law. The retreat was facilitated by Filipino Masaurua, Senior Trainer from the Pacific Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT) and Unaisi Valenitabua, Human Rights Training Officer, Fiji Women's Rights Movement.

Filipo and Una covered human rights, what the law is, discrimination and different types of equality. There was a lot of discussion around the current political climate and the legality of the proposed People's Charter for Change. The young advocates finished off the weekend at Nadave with a fiery debate on whether the right to employment should be included in the Constitution and whether the voting age should be lowered to 18. They showed great skill in using international human rights conventions and the Fiji Constitution to argue their points.

The Emerging Leaders' Forum is a project of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement. The year-long leadership training programme is designed for young women aged 18 to 25. This is the fourth round of ELF, and when this year's participants graduate in May, they will join the growing ranks of the ELF alumni network.

ELF4 Participants on the Retreat

"One concept that struck me was that whilst everyone are considered "equal" under the International Bill of Rights and Fiji's Constitution, this is not really the case in everyday life. To rectify the historical discrimination that women have faced over the centuries it is important to use a substantive equality approach to ensure equality of opportunities, equality of access which will lead to equality of benefit."

Seema Prasad

"Enlightening! I learned that I love arguing!!! I was able to see Human Rights laws and conventions as more than just these ingenious documents that countries aspire to and to begin to see them as tools and resources that can be used to bring awareness, to support your arguments, and to in the end improve the quality of life for people...real people. Amazing experience!"

Calli Roche

Interview with Filipino Masaurua

What do you think of the ELF programme and its content?



Professionally I think that the ELF programme has gone from strength to strength. I have noticed over the years how the programme

/ modules have been adapted to suit the changing environment in which the ELF participants live in. The content of the programme is great in that the modules cover a range of topics and issues that are very relevant to young women – from empowerment to the environment. The content of the programme has in more ways challenging to the ELF participants in that they not only read about the issue but they debate, discuss and are given an opportunity to have hands on experience on the particular issue. It's in fact very empowering - the young women are given space to discuss issues that are relevant to them, they are given an opportunity to agree to disagree, ultimately they are given an opportunity to freely express themselves - creatively, intellectually amongst their peers.

How should advocacy be built into the programme?

It is important that every ELF session have an advocacy component to it. It's important that the young girls are given an opportunity to develop their own strategies on issues they are discussing. The last ELF Programme saw the participants discuss issues relating to the age of voting and the inclusion of right to work in the Constitution – it was amazing. The participants debated the issue and the level of debate was high! Debates allow for the participants to freely articulate their thoughts and opinions and it also gives the girls an opportunity to be who they are – independent, intelligent and out spoken individuals.

What was your experience like as a facilitator at many ELF sessions?

As one of the many facilitators, I'm humbled at being able to help the ELF participants know about issues relevant to them. It's a great feeling seeing how the participants can take an issue and analyze it from different perspective. I have also noticed that the caliber of the ELF participants have gone from strength to strength. When the programme started the girls were curious to know about the issues but shy to ask, and compared to the recent intake of ELF participants – who are not only curious but will take you on . The recent intake of ELF participants is very vocal, intelligent. I think that the ELF Programme is fantastic. One would need to look at where all the former participants are now working and studying to know how important this programme is. It has allowed young girls to feel that they do have a positive contribution to make regardless of race, sex, gender, ethnicity, etc. The ELF programme is also empowering on young women – it has allowed the young women to develop good communication skills, confidence, build networking skills, and increase knowledge on issues.

Purging the Forum Secretariat

Australia and NZ push trade agenda in the region

IN 2004, the Pacific Network on Globalisation released an interim report to look at the implications of the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER). PACER is an agreement that paves the way for a free trade agreement between the Forum Island Countries and Australia and NZ. That report found disturbing evidence of pressure by Australian and New Zealand officials to push through their free trade agenda in the region. One NZ official quoted in the report confirmed with disarming frankness: “When it comes to trade there is no ‘special relationship’ with the Pacific”. The implications are clear – when it comes to trade, international trade strategy takes priority over the views of Pacific governments and the needs of their people.

With a recent changing of the guard in both Australia and New Zealand there was much hope that Forum Island Countries would see improved relations with their ‘big brothers’. Kevin Rudd’s Labor government in particular has launched a major public relations exercise since winning office to assure the region that it has Pacific interests at heart (including in the area of trade). Australian and NZ government officials have been quick to assert that a free trade agreement under PACER (called PACER-Plus) is designed to benefit the Pacific – while down-playing potential negative impacts for the Islands and benefits to their own countries.¹

These assurances have a hollow ring to them. Several developments in the past two years indicate Australia and NZ are not primarily interested in making PACER-Plus meaningful for the Pacific. These developments should give pause to Pacific trade ministers, government officials and the wider public, because both countries have pursued aggressive strategies (mainly behind closed doors) to stack the deck in their favour even before negotiations even start.

Island Countries: Pawns in a power game

Pacific Island Countries have had a dismal experience negotiating a free trade agreement (an ‘Economic Partnership Agreement’ – EPA) with the European Union (EU) in recent years. In those negotiations, the Pacific failed to secure meaningful concessions from the EU, and few countries are interested in signing a new deal. Recognising this, Forum Island Country trade ministers decided that a new Office of the Chief Trade Advisor (CTA)

Governments in Australia and New Zealand are keen to assure Pacific nations that relations with the region are marked by ‘shared development goals’, but as *Maureen Penjueli* writes, the Islands’ ‘big brothers’ have been pushing an agenda of their own – especially when it comes to negotiating a regional free trade agreement.

should be established separately from the Forum Secretariat to help in negotiations with Australia and NZ.

In March 2008, Pacific trade ministers decided the CTA should be “the only point of contact between ANZ and the FIC’s for PACER-Plus” and that “the CTA takes responsibility for the PACER-Plus negotiations with ANZ on the basis of mandates and negotiating instructions from the FIC Trade Ministers”.

However, Australian and NZ officials are resisting attempts to have in place, well before negotiations begin, a new Chief Trade Advisor to help organise the region’s negotiating positions — critical, given the diversity of Pacific countries, and national-level capacity issues. This resistance from Australia and NZ officials is both unhelpful and unreasonable. After all, we are talking about negotiations between two very unequal partners.

Instead of supporting the Pacific’s CTA proposal, Australia announced (in April 2008) a “trade fellowship program” whereby Pacific trade officials travel to Australia to learn how good PACER-Plus could be for the Pacific, and are trained by Australians to negotiate with them. Australian officials also announced money would be provided at the national level for Forum Island Countries to undertake studies on PACER – a far cry from a regional office that can guide research and establish strong negotiating positions.

At the Forum Trade Ministers’ Meeting in the Cook Islands in July 2008, Pacific trade officials reported bullying tactics, a divide and rule strategy and explicit threats to remove key Forum Secretariat staff. This behaviour was exhibited by both Australian and NZ officials, who pushed for Pacific Trade Ministers to agree to begin negotiations on a wide-ranging free trade agreement during 2009. Officials from several countries put up a fierce resistance to attempts to fast-track PACER-Plus – attempts made by ANZ officials and their key Pacific allies, namely Tonga and Nauru, at that meeting.

Australian officials were so disappointed with FIC Trade Ministers’ refusal to fast-track the negotiations that they told Pacific media Australia would not commit funds to set up the CTA office because “it did not regard the outcomes of the July 2008 Forum Trade Ministers’ Meeting as constituting an adequate commitment to negotiations that will lead them to fund the CTA”.²

¹ For example, when Australian officials presented an AusAID funded report on PACER-Plus to Pacific trade ministers in mid-2008 it was highlighted that a new free trade deal could lead to big increases in trade volumes (up to 30 per cent increases) though they neglected to mention that the overwhelming majority of this increase would be exports from Australia and NZ.

² http://www.islandsbusiness.com/news/index_dynamic/contentainerNameToReplace=MiddleMiddle/focusModuleID=130/focusContentID=13583/tableName=mediaRelease/overrideSkinName=newsArticle-full.tpl

Having failed to get their way at the Forum Trade Ministers' meeting Australian and NZ officials took their battle to the annual Forum Leaders' meeting in Niue to secure favourable language. During that meeting, Pacific leaders met separately from Australia and New Zealand, and issued a press release which stressed the need for "careful preparations by Forum Island Countries (FICs), both individually and collectively, before consultations began with Australia and New Zealand"³ and for the early appointment of a Chief Trade Advisor to assist the FICs in realising their shared objectives.

However, such caution about entering PACER-Plus negotiations with Australia and NZ was not reflected in the outcomes document of the Niue meeting – where Australia and NZ leaders were present. This reflects the position of Australia and NZ as major donors in the region, and the importance that Pacific leaders place on maintaining good relations with Australia and NZ. It is not the 'Pacific way' to confront such partners directly.

The Niue meeting indicated that Forum leaders would direct trade officials to "formulate a detailed road map on PACER Plus, with the view to Leaders agreeing at the 2009 Forum to the commencement of negotiations". This is an outcome Australian officials are happy with, especially as Canberra will host the 2009 Forum Leader's meeting.

Interventions at the Forum Secretariat

Perhaps the most damaging of aspect of recent Australian and NZ interventions, is a blatant attempt to undermine technical advisors and senior management positions in the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat (PIFS). At the Niue Leaders' meeting, Australian and NZ officials openly advocated for either an Australian or a NZ national to be appointed as a permanent Deputy Secretary General (DSG) of the Forum. Many regional commentators have commented on the increasing influence of Australia and NZ in the Forum over recent years and in particular in redefining of Pacific priorities. USP academic Sandra Tarte suggests that the ownership of the Forum is increasingly at risk. She writes that this "sense of ownership has been eroded in recent years as economic, political and security initiatives of the Forum seem to be increasingly driven by Australia and New Zealand (who also control the purse strings)". If Australia and NZ secure a permanent DSG position, this raises questions about whether PIFS is on the verge of becoming a diluted organisation unable to serve the interest of the Pacific Island Countries.

In another move that raises questions about the ability of the Forum to advocate on behalf of PICs, it appears that the axe has fallen on one of the region's most respected trade advisors, Dr. Roman Grynberg, whose contract with the Forum is conveniently not being extended. Those that follow international trade negotiations will know Dr. Grynberg is not a popular figure amongst trade officials from developed countries, who often see him as a key stumbling block

for advancing their trade priorities. In 2003, The Guardian newspaper highlighted a letter between the NZ Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the British Government colluding to get rid of "unsympathetic" trade officials within the Commonwealth Secretariat. One such unsympathetic trade official was Dr. Grynberg – whose work advocating on behalf of poor developing countries was seen as derailing free trade discussions. Reasons for his contract not being extended with the Forum Secretariat were based on a performance review that found him to 'lack leadership' and not being 'client focused'. The question that begs to be asked is, which client(s) is unhappy with Dr. Grynberg's work? Whatever the reasons for his removal, his absence means that the PIC's have lost an important critical voice prior to going into negotiations for a free trade agreement with the Islands' most important trading partners.

An alternative approach?

The approach taken by Australia and NZ to discussions about PACER-Plus during 2008 indicates a strong willingness by those countries to fast-track the process (to ensure negotiations begin at the 2009 Forum Leaders' Meeting), to derail any effective regional negotiating machinery (by refusing to support the Pacific's CTA proposal and funding national-level training and research) and to manipulate Forum Secretariat meetings to secure their priorities. This approach from Australia and NZ has been possible partly because Forum processes (such as the Forum Trade Ministers' Meeting and the Pacific Leaders' Forum) are often conducted behind closed doors – with very little outside scrutiny from media or civil society groups.

PACER-Plus negotiations could lead to a free trade agreement that will have radical implications for Pacific Island economies and societies. Any agreement will have a much smaller impact on Australia and NZ. A bad agreement could lead to a closing off of policy options that are used to stimulate development in the Islands, increased pressure for privatisation and an undermining of access to basic services. Certainly, PACER-Plus will lead to business closures and job losses in Pacific countries – problems that will be exacerbated because many Pacific states are reliant on tariffs to raise much-needed government revenue. It is vitally important for Pacific governments to "get this right". Being rushed into negotiations without appropriate research on the implications of PACER-Plus and without a strong regional negotiating body monitored by public oversight – could lead to a complete disaster.

Australia and NZ are keen to rush ahead with a far reaching free trade agreement partly because their trade officials are adamant that any pain caused by a new FTA will be short term, and that increased trade as a result of a new deal will help the Pacific to grow. Australian and NZ officials are also concerned that any EPA with the EU will offer better market access to European companies in the region.

In June 2007, both Australian and New

Zealand governments confirmed this view. The then Australian Trade Minister Warren Truss stated that, "it's obviously in Australia and New Zealand's interest that any new deal that the South Pacific countries may do with the European Union doesn't disadvantage Australian exporters into those countries". New Zealand's [then] Trade Minister Phil Goff noted that a free trade agreement between Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific was necessary to ensure that New Zealand "is not disadvantaged by preferential access to Pacific markets being given to European countries."

However, the Australian and NZ governments don't have to approach trade relations with the Pacific from such a position of narrow self-interest. If they are really genuine about the region they could acknowledge the special and different circumstance of the Pacific Island Countries (PICs), and offer real alternatives to the kind of reciprocal free trade agreement that is being pushed by the EU.

These alternatives could include improvements to the current South Pacific Regional Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement (SPARTECA), with a focus on enabling Pacific Island Countries and their peoples to access Australian and New Zealand markets to overcome poverty. Improvements in Rules of Origin requirements, removal of trade barriers (including Australia's kava ban) and assistance with meeting necessary sanitary and phytosanitary rules in Australia and NZ are all initiatives that would expand Pacific export opportunities — without requiring a new FTA.

Pacific Way must now be the ANZ Way?

The late Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara coined the term the 'Pacific Way' – a term that reflects a Pacific way of development based on conversation, respect and mutual consensus. In recent years, Australia and NZ have moved from strength to strength in their quest to replace the Pacific way with their way. It appears that their goal is to impose their ideology, their free trade agenda, their institutions and operatives, their economic interests, their political authority and their strategic influence on the islands of the Pacific.

If the approach taken by Australia and NZ to PACER-Plus in 2008 is an indication of things to come, then pressure is now on Pacific leaders to take back the initiative and demand an approach to trade relations that reflects Pacific concerns. PIC Trade Ministers and their officials, and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat Secretary General Neroni Slade are more than ever faced with the task of stemming the tide of ANZ influence. If they are not able to, we could see the beginning of the demise of the Pacific Way and the reign of the ANZ Way.

Maureen Penjueli is Coordinator of the Pacific Network on Globalisation.

³ <http://www.forumsec.org.fj/pages.cfm/newsroom/press-statements/2008/pacific-acp-leaders-committed-beneficial-epa-with-eu.html>



The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities

Compiled by **Shabina Khan**, FWRM Human Rights Training Officer

Local advocates for persons living with disabilities, such as Anaseini Vakadia, hope the new Convention will help make changes for the better.

THE UNITED Nations estimates that 10% of the world's population are persons living with disabilities, with most living in developing countries. However, this group is constantly left out of development objectives. To help address the particular vulnerabilities of this marginalised group and monitor the realisation of their rights, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities came into force last year.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is an international human rights instrument of the United Nations intended to protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. Parties to the Convention are required to promote, protect, and ensure the full enjoyment of human rights by persons with disabilities and ensure that they enjoy full equality under the law.

The text was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 13th December 2006, and opened for signature on 30th March 2007. Following ratification by the 20th party, it came into force on 3rd May, 2008. To date, 50 countries are parties to the convention, while a further 87 have signed but have not yet ratified. The Convention is monitored by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

One significant paradigm shift that the Convention is intending to achieve is that it is

not the person who is disabled; rather it is the environmental barriers which create that disability. This calls for a change in the attitude of society towards treating people living with disabilities as subjects with rights. This means calling for the State to take measures to ensure accessibility of the physical environment, information and technology so that persons with disabilities are able to enjoy real equality in society.

Article 6 of the Convention is of particular importance as it focuses on women and girls with disabilities, recognising these women and girls experience multiple-discrimination. While gender equality remains a challenge for all women, women with disabilities are especially marginalised and vulnerable. In many developing countries, including Fiji, women living with disabilities are the poorest, often experience some form of physical, emotional or sexual abuse and are significantly underrepresented in the employment sector. Additionally, they have less access to education and are disempowered from making decisions over their own lives. They may also face multiple other forms of discrimination based on being young, gay/lesbian or coloured, on top of being marginalised because they are women, disabled and live in a developing country.

Another important feature of this Convention

is Article 26 which focuses on habilitation and rehabilitation services in the areas of health, employment and education. This stresses the role of the State in providing assistance to people when they first realise their disability, to enable them to live independently. This includes: Raising awareness on living with disability, promoting access to justice, ensuring personal mobility, and collection of disaggregated data relevant to the Convention.

However, while the adoption of the Convention can be viewed as a milestone in the advocacy against discrimination towards persons with disabilities, other challenges lie ahead. These include constant lobbying for education and awareness on the rights highlighted in the Convention, and fighting for the limited pool of funds to realise these rights. For the Pacific, this fight can be more daunting amidst the fight for political stability or democratic governance. The roles and effectiveness of civil society lobbying will be critical in ensuring that the rights in the Convention are known to all and that governments fulfil their legal responsibilities in the implementation and enforcement of these rights. Fiji has yet to sign or ratify the Convention.



Women distribute food rations to flood victims

THE JANUARY 2009 floods had a devastating effect on communities all over Fiji. The Women's Information Network (WINET) -Fiji heard from its membership about the effects of flooding in the greater Nausori area, in places such as Koronivia, Navuso, Waila, and Wainibukasi. Even though these areas did suffer as much heavy rain as the Western Division, they are among the lowest-lying areas in the Central division. The thunderstorms and heavy rain thus led to flash flooding in these places.

"Instead of just doing a survey and hence going empty-handed, members decided to collect some goods and make packs to take with them when visiting these areas," said WINET-Fiji president, Dr Rajni Chand.

"Within a week, a collection drive resulted in donations of cash, dry goods and clothes."

WINET-Fiji members and their friends and families got together at a member's house and

managed to make 45 ration packs worth \$30 each. Items in the packs included rice, sugar, tea, salt, dhal, noodles, biscuits, canned food, cooking oil, toilet paper, matches, candles, mosquito coils, bathing soap, and tooth paste.

On Sunday 18th January, WINET-Fiji president Dr. Rajni Chand, secretary Rajini Lata, treasurer Gyan Prasad, along with members from Nausori, visited these affected areas in Nausori to distribute the ration packs. People affected in these areas had not yet been visited by any other organisations and had received very little help from outsiders. They were in need of food, dry clothes and drinking water. Even items such as bundles of old newspapers and flattened cartons were all appreciated. Some homes along Jalim Road in Nausori were still under water. WINET-Fiji members also noticed the lack of proper drainage and sanitation, and poor links to the main road and amenities.

Reflecting on the experience, members of the network felt the ration collection prior to the survey visit was a good idea, as it meant there were no feelings of uneasiness as there would have been if they had gone empty-handed to conduct a survey. Similar ration distribution and other activities are planned for the Western Division as well.

WINET-Fiji is a non-government charitable trust organisation formed in 2001, with the mission to inform and educate women on the issues that affect their lives. It began with a small group of women who got together to provide reproductive health information to women, and has grown to include community outreach programmes on the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), violence against women, suicide prevention, HIV/AIDS and other reproductive health issues. For more information, contact the secretary on email rajinilata@yahoo.com.

What is the Fiji Women's Rights Movement doing?

Young Women in Leadership Programme

FWRM's Young Women in Leadership Programme works closely with young women and girls in developing leadership and advocacy skills. Some of the projects that fall under the YWLP include a year-long leadership training programme called the Emerging Leaders' Forum (ELF), and the regional DAWN/FWRM Young Feminist Advocacy Training. The Movement is also developing a leadership programme for girls aged 10 to 14. The YWLP 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. This work is supported by Oxfam New Zealand.

Transitional Justice for Fiji

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. TJF 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 Movement's strategy includes increasing awareness of the importance and indivisibility of democracy, rule of law and human rights; strengthening partnerships within civil society that support these principles; and monitoring human rights violations. This work is supported by Oxfam New Zealand and AusAID.

CEDAW Monitoring and Implementation Programme

The CEDAW programme aims to assist Fiji in complying with the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which Fiji ratified in 1995. The key objective of the programme is to advance the status of women in Fiji in the economic, social, cultural, political and civil environment, while promoting human rights and international standards in the CEDAW implementation and monitoring process. This work is supported by AusAID.

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

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Address: _____

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LOOKOUT!

FWRM AGM

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement will be holding its annual general meeting in April. Members will have the chance to hear what FWRM has been working on and contribute suggestions for the year ahead. FWRM's membership will also elect new Management Board members to oversee the direction of the Movement. Keep an eye out for email updates on the confirmed date for the AGM. Email info@fwr.org.fj for more information.

ELF Graduation

Close to 20 young women will graduate from the Emerging Leaders' Forum (ELF) in May this year. This is the fourth round of ELF facilitated by the Fiji Women's Rights Movement. By graduation day on the 29th of May, the young advocates would have completed an intensive training programme over several months, covering topics such as feminism, globalisation, livelihoods, the media, fundamentalisms and sexual rights. For more information contact the Young Women's Officer by email michelle@fwr.org.fj.

Tok Talk DVD

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement will screen its new video production in June. *Tok Talk: Nourishing an Asia-Pacific feminist movement* is being produced in partnership with the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD). The video tracks a conversation that has been happening around the region: Do we have an Asia-Pacific women's movement? How do we share power in the movement? How can we build momentum for a more effective feminist movement? For more information, contact the Communications Officer by email tara@fwr.org.fj

FWRM back in the PNG highlands

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement will be back in the PNG Highlands in June this year, to conduct a second young women's leadership workshop in partnership with Kup Women for Peace. The training, to be held in Kup from 20 to 28 June, will focus on human rights, women's rights and feminism. FWRM and KWP will be assisted by the Oxfam Highlands Office in Goroka.