



Balance

"HELPING TO BALANCE THE SCALES"

June

2/2012

Fiji Women's Forum

By **Shazia Usman**

WOMEN leaders' from all across the country united in April and June this year to take part in the Fiji Consultation on Women's Participation in National Democratic Processes (Women's Forum) to develop a series of time bound strategic actions to ensure that the upcoming political processes including the constitution consultation in the lead up to the return to parliamentary democracy takes into account conventions, treaties and commitments to women's human rights.

Over the last couple of months, we have had numerous queries from the public on what exactly is the FWF and how does it assist the women of Fiji. The key points below summarise everything you need to know about FWF.

1. What is the Fiji Women's Forum (FWF)?

The Fiji Women's Forum (short for the Fiji Consultation on Women's Participation in National Democratic Processes) is a national consultation to discuss the participation of women in national democratic processes. Women's full and meaningful engagement in all national processes is essential to human rights centred development, and to full and effective democratization. Women are already participants and decision-makers in all areas of state and civil society, but their views are minimized, blocked or tokenized when formal processes regarding constitutionality and governance are nationally debated and decided.

2. Who are conveners of the FWF?

The co-conveners of the FWF are the:

National Council of Women Fiji

The NCWF is a nongovernmental organisation, established in 1968 to be the focal point for the women of Fiji. Today it is one of the strongest bodies in the country that voices Fiji women's concerns. It is also the umbrella organisation of women NGO's in Fiji.

Soqosoqo Vakamarama

Established in 1924, this nongovernmental organisation focuses on uplifting the lives of all i Taukei women above the age of 16 in the 14 provinces; promising women's equal participation in decision-making; empowering women economically and socially; preserving and promoting indigenous heritage, culture and tradition including language, song, dance and handicraft.

femLINKPACIFIC

femLINKPACIFIC was established in September 2000 and is registered under the Charitable Trust Act in Fiji. The overarching focus of femLINKPACIFIC's range of community media initiatives is "women speaking to women for peace", a direct link with the women's peace initiatives during the May 2000 crisis, in particular the Blue Ribbon Peace Vigil, where femLINKpacific was "born".

Fiji Women's Rights Movement

FWRM is a 26-year-old multiethnic and multicultural feminist nongovernmental organisation that combines local concerns with a global perspective. It is committed to removing discrimination against women through institutional reforms and attitudinal changes. Our 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.

3. How many consultations have there been?

There have been two national consultations this year on the following dates:

- April 10th – 12th, 2012
- June 5th – 6th, 2012

A third consultation will be conducted in January 2013.

4. Who were the participants of the FWF?

The first consultation was attended by 60 women and the second by 62 women, coming from rich and diverse backgrounds – speaking with voices that represent women with disabilities and living with HIV, as well as different faiths, culture, sexualities, gender identities, ages, demographics and opinions.

5. What are the key principles of the FWF?

- Participation
- Transparency
- Accountability
- Respect for human rights
- Respect for the rule of law

6. What were the outcomes of the two FWF's held in April and June?

During the FWF held in April, the participants agreed on the following four priority areas:

- a. Respect for human rights.
- b. Defining the role of the security forces.
- c. Promotion of women's participation in decision-making and democratization processes including Temporary Special Measures.
- d. A rights based, respectful, open and participatory constitution making process.

During the second FWF held in June, the participants devised clear set of strategies on how they will work together to address the four priority areas including:

- a. Civic Education strategies such as the development of a rights based civic education curriculum and the use of a multi media and information sharing strategy.
- b. Addressing security sector governance including through enhancing and promoting a human security approach through collaborative research, policy advocacy and campaigns.
- c. Enhancing women's participation in decision-making and democratization processes including Temporary Special Measures especially as we recognise we are part of a national process of rebuilding political participation including local government and national parliamentary system.



Cont'd on page 5

FIJI
WOMEN'S
FORUM
SPECIAL EDITION

Greetings from FWRM!



ITS half-way through 2012 and the Fiji Women's Rights Movement is steaming ahead in meeting its objectives. Starting off with some good news, FWRM has been able to secure core funding for the next three years! The unique partnership between FWRM and its long time partner, the International Women's Development Agency (IWDA), is supported by AusAid. Through this new relationship, FWRM capitalizes on the existing long term relationship of trust which exists between FWRM and IWDA, organisations that have a shared philosophy, vision and historical relationship. This programme builds on a 24-year relationship between FWRM and IWDA and

will benefit from the deep understanding that exists between each other's organisational cultures, principles, programmes and practice. Through the support of AusAid – the outcomes include longevity and sustainability of FWRM with heightened profile and presence and leadership of constitutional dialogue that drives gender equality in Fiji.

The achievements include convening two national women's forums (see front cover story) alongside co-conveners, the National Council of Women, Soqosoqo Vakamarama and femLINKPACIFIC and supported by the IWDA and the United Nations Development Programme. Sixty-two women from around Fiji attended the two separate Women's Forum, representing different women's organisations, community groups, academics and government department.

On the international front, FWRM was represented on two commissions this year. The first was the 56th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) as part of the Asia Pacific Women's Watch delegation. While FWRM made three presentations at the NGO parallel event sessions, the overall CSW was a step backwards for women's rights because there was no agreement on the outcomes document.

In May, FWRM attended the UN Commission on Population and Development (CPD) where they adopted a landmark resolution on Adolescents and Youth, its first ever on this subject. The resolution provides a groundbreaking framework for action on the health and human rights of adolescents and youth, aged between 10-24. In addition, it sets an important precedent and creates a favorable climate for advancing the sexual and reproductive rights agenda in the context of the 20th anniversary of the ICPD in 2014 and the review of the Millennium Development Goals in 2015 (see page 3 for full story).

Also read about FWRM's feminist adventure at the Association for Women in Development International Forum in Istanbul, Turkey (pages 5-7).

These are just some of the stories captured in this edition. As always, if you have any feedback, send it to info@fwr.org.fj. Enjoy this edition!

In solidarity,

Virisila Buadromo



Democracy Triumphs

By **Kris Prasad**

THE Fiji Women's Rights Movement continued its annual tradition of participating in the Olympic Day Run with one of its teams – Team Democracy - winning the Team Category.

The Olympic Day Run is an international Olympic Movement activity promoting mass participation of sports, held on June 23 to mark the anniversary of the creation of the International Olympic Committee. The local event is organised by the Fiji Association of Sports and National Olympic Committee with runs held simultaneously in Suva and Nadi.

FWRM staff members were joined by board members, partners and friends and entered three teams this year- Team Democracy, Team Purple and Team Tara. Team Democracy made up of Virisila Buadromo, Kris Prasad, Arshad Daud, Gina HOUNG Lee and Marita Manley won the Team Category with the other dozen or so teams in the competition trailing behind.

This year the 8km run started at Albert Park at 7.30am and runners and walkers of all athletic abilities followed the Queen Elizabeth Drive up to the Muanikau Road via Ratu Sukuna Road and then back to the starting place.

FWRM runners were decked out in

Fiji Women's Crisis Centre's "2014 - Free and Fair 2014" t-shirts to promote the spirit of democracy and yours truly was the first person from Team Democracy to finish the race clocking in a time of 40 minutes and 32 seconds.

FWRM's success at the run is owed to its self-care policy which has been in place for the past 14 months and is followed (sometimes grudgingly) by all staff members, to promote personal health maintenance. One hour is set aside every Tuesday afternoon where staff members are to take up physical exercise either outdoors or at the gym.

To promote healthy eating habits and encourage its staff to exercise more, FWRM also has had Fitness Months during which staff avoid junk foods and earn stars on a Star Board for each half hour of physical activity. This has brought the competitive edge in everyone with many staff members clocking up an impressive 8-10 hours of exercise per week.

Self care is crucial for women's human rights defenders and the sustainability of social movements. Black lesbian poet and feminist said it perfectly: "Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare."

Victory For Youth At CPD: What Does It Mean?

By **Ani Colekessian**

On April 27, during its 45th Session, the United Nations Commission on Population and Development (CPD) adopted a landmark Resolution on the sexual and reproductive health and rights of adolescents and youth.

AWID spoke with RESURJ (Realizing Sexual and Reproductive Justice) founding members, Neha Sood (Consultant, women's rights, sexual and reproductive rights) and Alexandra Garita (IWHC Senior Program Officer, International Policy) about some of the implications of this resolution on the sexual and reproductive rights of young women and men.

AWID: What makes this a landmark resolution and why is it important to have such a document on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) that is specific to adolescents and youth?

Neha Sood (NS): The CPD is a United Nations (UN) body that monitors implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action, a blueprint for governments to implement population policies with full respect to women's reproductive rights. This session was the first time that this body discussed issues pertaining to

all matters related to their sexuality. In essence, this is what we would consider "sexual rights"—recognising their capacity to make informed decisions about if, when, how, and with whom to have sex and their right to say "yes" or "no" to any sexual activity, relationships, marriage, etc.

AWID: What were some of the challenges that emerged from the CPD and are there any important pieces that are missing from this resolution?

NS: Some governments continue to challenge concepts of reproductive rights and sexual rights established at Cairo and Beijing respectively, and limit their definition. There isn't consensus on issues such as abortion, sex work, sexual orientation, gender identity, and sexuality education. This means that national movements have to continue to build public discourse and advocate for policy and programs that affirm rights related to these issues. It would have been ideal for this resolution to recognise the discrimination and violence that Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex (LGBTQI) adolescents and youth face in the family, community, schools, health institutions and national policy; and to commit to providing protection, fighting discrimination, reviewing laws, and training State personnel on these issues.

AG: As with any inter-governmental negotiation, the challenges are the reluctance of the majority of governments to willingly talk about and take seriously issues relating to sex and sexuality. This is particularly the case with some conservative governments, which seek to "protect" the concept of the "natural family"—i.e. husband, wife, and children with traditional

programmes; that the United States Government was supportive; that the Chair of the negotiations (Indonesia) was supportive of a strong outcome document; and that European like-minded delegations were aligned in their strategy. During the negotiations themselves, we were able to mobilize women's and young people's rights activists to lobby their governments with key messages, work with the media to give the negotiations visibility, brought delegations together to present a united front on SRHR, and had daily morning strategy sessions that kept us all informed and strong throughout the week.

AWID: Despite recent events at the 2012 CSW where, for the first time in history, no Agreed Conclusions document was produced, neither of you are surprised by the outcome of the CPD, why is that?

NS: Governments, UN agencies and civil society were committed and worked hard to produce a strong outcome at the CPD that would deliver to adolescents and youth. Indonesia, the Chair of the CPD held preparatory meetings with other countries in the months before the CPD. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) reached out to a number of governments beforehand and provided technical advice. Youth groups, women's groups and other SRHR organizations advocated with governments, briefed them, and secured places on national delegations. Consequently, we expected a strong outcome and achieved it!

AG: The failure of the CSW was due to a lack of strategy on the part of women's rights organisations and equal lack of involvement in the negotiations and a very weak performance by UN Women, in addition to the conservative atmosphere. This put pressure on governments to uphold women's human rights at the CPD and not permit a few ideologues – who had no national instruction – to ignore their countries' positions in favor of their own personal beliefs.

AWID: What are the implications of this resolution going forward into the Rio+20 and ICPD+20 processes?

NS: This resolution is what we make of it. We have to use this resolution and build on it in upcoming processes, including Rio+20, CPD sessions and ICPD+20. At Rio+20, we have to use the ICPD Program of Action and this resolution to link SRHR with sustainable development, and we must delink population size and growth from discussions of various crises (water, food, energy, climate etc.) as this can progress to an argument to lower fertility rates rather than protect individuals' right to exercise their reproductive autonomy. In the ICPD+20 process, we must ensure that the adolescent and youth SRHR issues recognised in this resolution are included in the review and secure commitments for their achievement in a time-bound manner.

AG: We are already succeeding in securing the language from this CPD into the Rio+20 negotiations on the rights of women, men and adolescents to decide on their sexuality within the gender equality section and are working hard to make sure this is retained. We are also confident that this resolution gives governments and feminists alike the energy and mandate to retain the Cairo and Beijing agreements and go even further to secure SRHR in the +20s to come.

Excerpted from <http://www.awid.org/News-Analysis/Friday-Files/Victory-for-Youth-at-CPD-What-does-it-mean> on July 20, 2012.

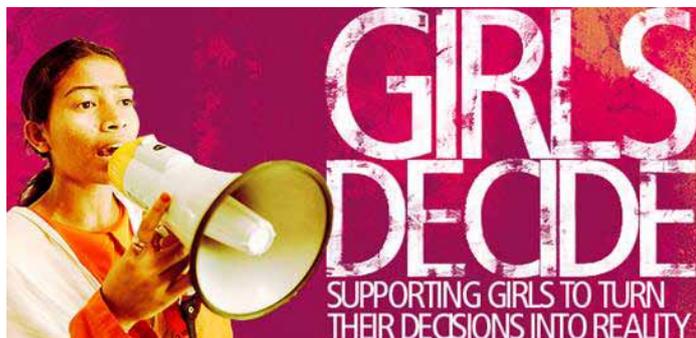


Image courtesy of www.yfa.awid.org

adolescents and youth, at a time when the world has the largest generation of adolescents and youth aged 10-24 years in history. Sexuality, sexual and reproductive health and rights are sensitive subjects in several parts of the world, and more so with regards to adolescents and youth, especially those who are unmarried, disabled or queer. Hence, it is important to make progress on these subjects in public discourse, national and international policy.

Alexandra Garita (AG): This Resolution is "landmark" because, for the first time in the history of the UN, governments agreed to prioritize the 1.8 billion adolescents and young people's human rights and health in development priorities. If used as guidance for development planning at country level, it could lead to significant progress. This resolution, in my opinion, is perhaps the most complete that exists to date on this particular population group. It contains key elements that can eliminate barriers to accessing comprehensive sexuality education for adolescents and young people; it instructs health care providers to respect their privacy and confidentiality and provide them with comprehensive health services, including contraception, male and female condoms, safe abortion services where legal, and HIV/STI prevention and treatment. Most importantly, this resolution recognises the right of adolescents (minors under the law) to have control over and decide freely on

divisions of labor, which continue to relegate women to their reproductive roles. The other challenge was agreeing to a clause in the text on national sovereignty, which in essence could trump everything contained in the resolution. The only thing "missing" was a provision we advocated for that would protect young people from discrimination based on their sexual orientation and gender identity.

AWID: Can you tell us a bit about the involvement of young activists and your organizations in the process toward and at the CPD?

NS: A number of youth organisations and activists engaged with the CPD, advocating with governments and using social media to inform and mobilize young people around the CPD. Some even represented their governments on national delegations.

AG: The IWHC, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), and members of RESURJ as well as Amnesty International colleagues all worked together over several months prior to the CPD, in order to make sure that we had strong feminist allies on national delegations of southern governments (Brazil, Philippines, Mexico, Uruguay, Argentina, Indonesia, among others); that the Zero Draft was strong to begin with; that governments had strong positions that were in accordance with their own countries' policies and



CEDAW Committee Asia Pacific Regional Consultation

THE Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Committee is working on a General Recommendation on the Protection of the Human Rights of Women in Conflict and Post-Conflict situations which it hopes to table for adoption by February 2014.

A two-day Consultation was organised in Bangkok to allow for engagement and dialogue between the CEDAW Committee Working Group members and stakeholders from Asia Pacific to highlight some of the regional perspectives on this issue.

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement represented by its Executive Director Virisila Buadromo, who was one of the four representatives from the Pacific. She was accompanied by Solomon Island's Ministry of Women, Youth and Children Affairs' Permanent Secretary, Ms. Ethel Sigimanu; UN Women Bougainville/PNG's Sub-national Coordinator (Gender Equality in Political Governance), Ms. Agnus Titus and Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat's Political Governance and Security Programme Director, Ms. Desna Solofa.

The first in a series of regional consultations was attended by Ms. Pramila Patten (Chair of the Working Group) and Ms. Zohra Rasekh - the two CEDAW experts from the CEDAW Committee's Working Group as key resource persons supported by regional experts, activists and staff of UN Women and the OHCHR.

A select group of 60 participants comprised of representatives from CSOs, NGOs and women's rights groups and networks, as well as representatives of government, NHRIs and regional mechanisms participated through presentations and interventions. The Consultation was organised with the support of the OHCHR, UN Women and facilitated by IWRAW Asia Pacific.

The programme of the Consultation was framed to take on four thematic areas:

- I. Dynamics of diverse conflict and impact on women and girls including Violence Against Women (VAW)

By Virisila Buadromo

- II. Women's access to justice and accountability mechanisms
- III. Peace-building and conflict transformation
- IV. Women as change agents

The presentations and interventions made around each of the above thematic areas were rich and engaging. The following are some of the highlights and recommendations made:

a) Dynamics of diverse conflict and impact on women and girls including VAW

The discussion raised the point that in reality the scope of conflict that needed to be acknowledged was much wider than provided for currently. There was a need to acknowledge the diversity of conflicts, the continuum of conflict (imminent, protracted conflict, transition and post-conflict), the range of actors involved (state, non-state, armed forces, private militia, transnationals, etc) and the various ways it might impact different groups of women. Issues of extraterritoriality were also raised along with concerns that the invocation of customary laws is potentially discriminatory and not transformatory for women.

b) Women's access to justice and accountability mechanisms

Transitional mechanisms for accountability need a strong gendered approach and there must be support for women and girls accessing justice. The use of non-judicial mechanisms was also discussed. The various ways perpetrators of gender based crimes are excluded from accountability were highlighted (e.g. bilateral agreements between state parties) and the narrow legal definitions given to such violations within domestic laws fail to reflect reality. Reparations need to be accompanied with acknowledgements

of violations committed and should also acknowledge economic loss, food insecurity, etc that occur as a result of conflict.

c) Peace-building and conflict transformation

Women must be at the peace table, participating at all stages of decision-making. It is important that women be supported in these roles and given opportunities to hold senior positions where they can make a difference. Effort should be made to remove the dichotomy between what are considered 'soft issues' and 'hard issues' and that peace efforts must bring positive transformation of gender relations and not merely look to establishing the status quo within a post-conflict setting.

d) Women as change agents

There was recognition that women need to be involved in meaningful ways in all stages of the conflict – pre-conflict, conflict and post-conflict and at both formal and informal levels. Criteria was suggested for the type of women needed including independence, a track record of engagement with gender justice, to ensure representation of women from marginalised sectors and young women. The state has an obligation to provide an enabling environment for women's participation through temporary special measures.

The Consultation ended with a synthesis of recommendations by the rapporteurs and Ms Patten which captured the many ground realities, regional specificities and concerns as expressed by participants from the region. The process of dialogue and identification of concerns and recommendations continue for the CEDAW Committee Members of the Working Group to four other regions after which a draft of the General Recommendation will be shared for further feedback by different stakeholders before being finalised and adopted.

FWRM at AWID 2012



My Economy

By **Roshika Deo**

Most of us think 'macroeconomics' is something relevant to only economists and consider it an abstract term. Well, at least I did, until I attended the economic justice training¹ at the Association for Women in Development International Forum in Istanbul, Turkey in April this year.

Macroeconomics is basically looking at the entire functioning of the economy and making economic institutions and policies work efficiently and sustainably for all of us.

Do we want jobs and investment opportunities, stable and growing economies, low interest rates for mortgages or for businesses, and affordable goods and services?

This simply means that we want better and effective macroeconomic policies, and for us to be able to have that would depend on the distribution and availability of resources. We all make decisions everyday that depends on how the economy is doing, so it matters to us what is happening at a macroeconomic level.

Simple decisions (microeconomics) on how much money to spend at the supermarket, which school to send our children to, whether to invest our money, what jobs to apply for, or whether to hire more staff, all depends on macroeconomics.

Macroeconomic policies, however, do not affect

all of us in the same way. Macroeconomic policies affect men and women differently.

When we think of how efficiently and sustainably macroeconomic policies are working we need to think whether it benefits both men and women. Does it consider the differing economic perspectives and behaviours of both men and women? Does the development of macroeconomic policies take into account the value of both men and women's contribution to the economy such as unpaid care work? Do these macroeconomic policies increase the inequalities and perpetuate discrimination and poverty among certain gender or groups? Does the allocation and distribution of resources for the realisation of economic and social human rights take into account these differing perspectives and behaviours, and the contributions made by women and men to the economy?

The current macroeconomic framework and policies are neither functioning efficiently nor sustainably as it excludes the differing realities of men and women's participation in the economy, and also ignores the value of women's contribution to the economy. We are all affected in one way or the other by macroeconomics hence, it is important that we participate actively so that the functioning of our economy promotes our social and economic rights, and promotes policies that are responsive to the needs of everyone.

Fiji Women's Forum

From page 1

- d. A rights based, respectful, open and participatory constitution making process through enhanced participatory learning and collaboration for submissions that are human rights based and promote gender equality. In particular, women leaders will be making submissions on a strengthened Bill of Rights that includes a definition of substantive equality and the full range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

7. What is the FWF position on the upholding of the 2009 Court of Appeal and the position that all other actions by the state is illegal?

The FWF is made up of diverse organisations with different positions on this issue; we however, as a coalition have respect for and promote the upholding the rule of law at all times.

8. What other activities is the FWF undertaking?

As part of the strategies formulated during the national FWF on the four priority areas, the following activities are being undertaken:

- a. FWF Civic Education Module Development
- b. FWF Civic Education Training of Trainers
- c. Implementation of FWF civic education programmes in communities
- d. Finalising a Women's Political Participation Policy Paper
- e. Finalising a FWF Constituent Assembly Policy Paper
- f. Preparing for the 3rd FWF on Security Sector Governance

9. Representatives of the FWF include:

- Amithi Project
- Citizen's Constitutional Forum
- Dialogue Fiji
- Emerging Leaders' Forum Alumni
- femLINKPACIFIC
- femLINKPACIFIC's Gold Foundation
- femLINKPACIFIC's Nausori Rural Women's Association
- Fiji Media Watch
- Fiji Muslim Women's League
- Fiji Rotuma Association
- Fiji Women's Crisis Centre
- Fiji Women's Rights Movement
- Fiji Network of people living with HIV (FJN+)
- Nasinu Sanatan Naari Sabha
- National Council of Women
- Pacific Centre for Peacebuilding
- Poor Relief Society (affiliate of the National Council of Women)
- Rainbow Women
- Shree Sanatan Dharam Naari Prathinidhi Sabha
- Soqosoqo Vakamarama
- Strategic Framework for Change Coordinating Office
- Survivor Advocacy Network
- TISI Sangam
- Women's Action for Change
- Women's Information Network (WINET-Fiji)
- Youth Champs for Mental Health

¹Applying Feminist Human Rights Perspectives to Macroeconomic Policy: An Economic Justice Training by ActionAid International and Center for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers University



FWRM at AWID 2012

AWID 2012 in Istanbul

THE Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) and the rest of the participants from the Pacific joined around 2200 feminist activists and women human rights defenders in Istanbul, Turkey at the 12th International Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) Forum! And what an amazing four days it was!

With this year's theme of 'Transforming Economic Power to Advance Women's Rights and Justice', participants spent their time exchanging ideas, sharing visions, debating and networking.

FWRM's journey to Istanbul began four days earlier with our Communications Officer Shazia Usman

attending a two-day Global Dialogue on Digital Security as well as a one-day Feminist Tech Exchange. Young Women's Officer, Filomena Tuivanualevu, and Human Training Officer, Neomai Maravauakula, who came a day before AWID to attend the Young Feminist Day, later joined her. Research Officer Roshika Deo attended the Economic Justice Training – applying a Feminist Human Rights Perspectives to Macroeconomic Policy

FWRM also hosted an informal pre- and post AWID meeting for Pacific participants which gave us an opportunity to touch-base with each other regarding some of our sessions as well as providing much needed solidarity.

FWRM co-hosted a session on Trends Affecting





AWID

Comments from Participants

AWID Forum 2012 was an exciting event to be a part of as a participant and also as an organizer of a panel discussion. The Forum was a culmination of year long preparation and discussions with other sister organizations from the around the Pacific. My session was one of the two sessions that was being organised by FWRM specifically looking at the "Implementation of Gender responsive Laws – Who Decides the Allocation of Resources." It was an interesting experience to be part of the process, from the drafting of the proposal to navigating the online application to nervously awaiting the final decision of from the AWID Forum 2012 organisers.

Being in the midst of thousands of feminist activists from around the world was a very surreal experience that added to the motivation of the work that we do. It was heartening as well to be able to re-connect as well as to finally meet up with the rest of the Pacific group (many of whom I had only heard of through articles and through Pacwin).

What I take away from the Forum is a renewed feeling of solidarity - being able to appreciate the great work and achievements of women human rights defenders that are no longer with us. In addition knowing that there is still much more to be done and being able to stand with sisters around the world and continue to fight for women's human rights.

Neomai Maravauakula

It had always been a dream of mine to attend an AWID Forum and I am happy to say that attending it in Istanbul, Turkey this year was beyond epic.

To be surrounded by hundreds of diverse feminists, all with the focus of bettering the lives of and empowering women is something every single feminist should experience one day.

I attended a lot of the sessions on digital security for women's human rights defenders, which is something that FWRM is focussing on strengthening this year.

My most memorable moment of the Forum is marching in solidarity with hundreds of other feminists in Istanbul's Taksim Square and demanding equal rights for all women.

Shazia Usman

The AWID conference is an experience like no other. When women both young and old converge in one place to share experiences, reflections, build capacities, networks, and both professional and personal relationships not only are movements built but there's always going to be a party. And in a nutshell that was what AWID was for me, a balance of the fun and the serious, and an experience I have FWRM and FRIDA to thank for.

Paulini Turagabeci

The venue, the women, the experiences shared and connections made were wonderful. Things that could be improved for the next Forum:

- A number of plenary session and larger sessions could have been better if the facilitator had been prepped better about how to deal with challenging situations whilst allowing for dialogue, new ideas and experience sharing. A general prep session(s) as a condition for speaking would have been useful in "professionalizing" some of the presentations.
- In-depth sessions are an AMAZING idea but the two I went to quickly got off track/ went to deep without bring issues back to larger context.
- It would be great to have some sort of 1st timers guide.

Sharon Davis

The forum focused on exploring issues on economic power and development from a feminist perspective. So, why go all the way to Istanbul to hear women's economic discourse? I've found AWID a safe space where women from all walks of life share their breadth of experience whether you are an executive, an academic, an advocate or a women from a rural remote region who has lived and experienced her rights being desecrated from reproductive and sexual rights to violence against women, education, political participation and health. This is a place where young and old can reconnect; all in the name of equality, to reflect and review the nature of economic empowerment and development for women across many regions; as I witnessed from the youth of the Arab Spring; young women and girls using new information and communication technologies in diverse and creative ways to mobilize and bring about social change.

Rosette Silva

Women's and Rights Funding: Global and Regional Perspectives with three other international organisations. Representing FWRM was Programme Manager Tara Chetty who highlighted trends in the Pacific and shared FWRM's experience in trying to secure funding from year to year to continue its work towards eliminating all forms of discrimination against women in Fiji.

FWRM also hosted a Pacific based session on "Implementation of Gender Responsive Laws: Who Decides Allocation of Resources". Panelists in this session were FWRM's Neomai Maravauakula and board Chair Gina Houng Lee, as well as Cook Islands Kairangi Samuela. Tara Chetty moderated the interesting discussions.

THE PRINCESS AND THE SEVEN GUARDIANS

By **Tiare Chang** and **Shareen Subbaiya**

Once upon a time there lived a couple in a palace. The couple was King Richard and Queen Gregorina and they had no children.

One night when Queen Gregorina was on the palace porch she saw a shooting star. When she saw that, she wished that she would have a baby.

The next month they had a daughter and they named her Aurora. The next day the King and Queen sent invitations to everyone in the city. It was an invitation to a feast at the palace to celebrate the new born princess. They also invited the fairies and the King's friend who was also a king, who had a son called Prince Albert.

Just before the blessing, the seven guardians came, they were special guests. They were the ones who were going to do the blessings because they had special powers.

The first blessing was done by the first guardian, he blessed Aurora to have a kind heart. The second blessing was done by the second and third guardian, they blessed her for wisdom and skills.

The fourth, fifth and sixth blessed her for song, courage and smartness. Just before the seventh guardian could bless the Princess, a fairy that hadn't been invited because they all thought that she had died twenty years ago, arrived. When she came into the room it was dark, only the candles lit the ballroom. She was very angry because she wasn't invited to the feast, but since the Princess had been blessed with wisdom she cursed the evil fairy to live in the prison in the underworld for eternity.

So the seven guardians blessed the Princess with magical powers. After that everyone had a happy life.

But during the happy years of the Princess, the evil fairy mastered new spells while she was in prison. She was able to break out of prison because she had mastered strong and new spells. She wanted to take revenge on Aurora for what she had done to her.

Meanwhile, the Princess was always helping the people in the city. She was also learning new spells like the evil fairy. The guardians taught her new and powerful spells and they also taught her to read and write.

On Aurora's 16th birthday the evil fairy magiced herself to Aurora's room. When Aurora walked into her room after her training with the guardians the evil fairy was waiting there for her. When Aurora walked in, the evil fairy threw a great big ball of lightening at Aurora. But since she had been training with the guardians, Aurora made a force shield and the lightening ball hit the evil fairy, and she fell to the ground.

Then Aurora chanted a spell that made all the evil fairy's powers, hers. Then she turned the evil fairy into a fish and threw her into the sea.

Then they all lived happily ever after



About the authors

Tiare Chang turns eleven-years-old this year and attends Stella Maris School. She wants to be an author when she grows up.

Shareen Subbaiya is ten-years-old and attends Nasouri Baptist Christian Academy School.

Her favorite subjects at school are social studies and science.



Image courtesy of www.2.bp.blogspot.com

Rio+20 Agreement Fails Women, and the World

(Women and Climate Change Foundation; Realizing Sexual and Reproductive Justice)

BRAZIL, a country that in the past has championed women’s human rights, including reproductive rights, at the global level, has failed women in both Brazil and the world over.

During meetings to finalize the Rio+20 document, Heads of State will [have] adopt[ed] in the next few days at Rio+20, delegates agreed on a plan short on vision and big on compromises. After three days of long, drawn-out negotiations, marked with lack of clarity about the process, a document to be signed off by heads of government was presented. Quickly gavelled through by the Brazilian chair, one after another government thanked Brazil for facilitating this document and largely expressed how this was the best they could do. By all accounts, despite the attempts to spin the outcome as a success, this document is neither “the future we want” nor what future generations deserve. In an effort to get consensus at whatever cost, Brazil forgot Rio: the vision and commitments of the Rio Earth Summit held 20 years ago.

From the start of the negotiations, gender equality and women’s human rights, including reproductive rights, have continuously been challenged by a few governments, claiming that [these] had “nothing to do with sustainable development”.

This debate continued until the last few hours of the negotiations. In the end, the text includes a re-affirmation of both the Cairo and Beijing agreements, but it falls short by failing to

By **Zonibel Woods**

recognize that reproductive rights are also critical to the achievement of sustainable development. If a woman cannot decide if and when to have children and if she is not provided with the reproductive health care that is her human right, it is challenging to contribute to sustainable solutions for the planet.

Opposition to women’s human rights per se was concentrated among a few countries, with the un-holy alliance of the Holy See and oppressive governments such as Syria and Egypt insisting on marginalizing women. And since there was so much at stake for “more important issues,” such as trade, financing for sustainable development, and the green economy, other governments in the end traded away women’s reproductive rights, giving the Vatican what it wanted in the first place. But even if reproductive rights had been reaffirmed, the lack of real commitment by the international community to eradicate poverty, address urgent environmental concerns, and to chart a clear path for implementation of sustainable development, makes it difficult for women-- and for the world -- to achieve gender equality and women’s empowerment in this context.

Norway, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Peru, Bolivia, Uruguay, Mexico, Iceland, Switzerland, Israel and many others fought to the end to retain the reference to reproductive rights and expressed disappointment

that this was not incorporated in the final text. However, it is expected that they will speak of their continued commitment through their leaders during the High Level Segment that begins today.

The Brazilian failure: selling out women’s human rights in this negotiation, has not gone unnoticed. Brazilian feminists quickly mobilized and demanded an explanation from their government. In an interview with local media following the agreement on the text, the Brazilian Foreign Minister expressed disappointment that “reproductive rights” had been kept out of the document, but went on to explain that this was done out of the need to reach a compromise. Immediately following the adoption of the text, women gathered and protested at Rio Centro, the main venue for the conference, chanting “reproductive rights are not for sale”, “governments have failed women and the planet” and “women’s rights are human rights.” Finally, in a meeting with Michelle Bachelet, the head of UNWomen, and the Brazilian Minister for the Environment, Brazilian Women presented their declaration to Rio+20 which fittingly ended with these words:

“We defend women’s rights to equality, autonomy and freedom in all the territories where we live, particularly in our bodies, which are our first territory.”

For now, governments attending Rio+20 have failed both territories.

Excerpted from <http://www.rhrealitycheck.org/>





Drodrolagi Movement marks International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia

By **Kris Prasad**

The Drodrolagi Movement (droMo), in partnership with the University of the South Pacific's School of Government, Development and International Affairs marked the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT) with a panel discussion on Thursday, May 17.

Over 140 people, including students, academic staff, development representatives and activists attended the event held at USP's Oceania Centre for Arts, Culture and Pacific Studies.

In her welcome address, the Deputy Vice Chancellor of USP, Professor Susan Kelly, highlighted the recent support for lesbian and gay rights by United States' President Obama. Professor Kelly also emphasised how solidarity, support and advocacy from a wide range of individuals and groups is critical to the recognition of lesbian, gay bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) rights.

In a video message by the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights Navi Pillay, screened before the panel discussion, she talked about the human cost of homophobia and transphobia and called on States to punish violence and hatred, not love.

The four panellists, Kris Prasad, Tessa McKenzie, Ashwin Raj and the Fiji Women's Rights Movement's (FWRM) Programme Manager Tara Chetty, moderated by Mereia Carling, spoke on the 2012 IDAHOT theme 'Combating Homophobia and Transphobia in Education and through Education.'

LGBTIQ youth activist, President of the Drodrolagi Movement and FWRM administration assistant Kris Prasad, spoke on the significance of the Pink Triangle symbol from the Holocaust and the slogan 'Silence Equals Death' from the early days of the gay rights movement. He said "we must all break the silence

on homophobia and transphobia as they are still killing people, and not just bodies, but hearts and minds also."

Schools and tertiary institutions should have comprehensive anti-bullying policies that also address homophobic and transphobic bullying. Human rights should be integrated in education and this can help create a culture of respect and appreciation of diversity to allow all young people to reach their full potential.

Lay Minister in the Anglican Church Tessa Mackenzie, spoke of the need for religions to review their interpretations of scriptures to enable their application to today's realities. She highlighted the nature of religion being a continual process of managing change, prompting at times, spiritual, emotional and intellectual struggles. She advised a change in religious understanding of human gender is needed. According to her "religions get trapped in certainties and miss the rich variety of the Divine Creator's creation." She asked "what does it really mean to be human?" and called for further dialogue.

FWRM's Tara Chetty, spoke on the importance of building alliances across movements to challenge homophobia and transphobia and make progress on LGBTIQ rights. Such alliances are built on nuanced analysis of the issues, and Chetty charted how FWRM experienced this process – moving towards the inclusion of transwomen in their programming. She said the Movement will now be strengthening alliances with LGBTIQ allies, working on protecting and expanding sexual orientation and gender identity rights in the Bill of Rights during the upcoming review

of Fiji's Constitution.

USP academic and activist Ashwin Raj, spoke about the future of democracy. While reminding us that those who espouse to sexual values other than compulsory heterosexuality constitute the world's largest and oldest diaspora, he said that democracy has much to learn from sexuality. They are both at home and in exile. Since sexual identities can never be reduced to sexual acts, so should democracy strive to be more than free and fair elections and the performative conventions of constitutionalism? He said the Left movement will have to plant the first seeds of democracy by allowing for difference to flourish. Since 'law' is not the same as 'justice', education, exercising reason and the training of the imagination by entering the protocols of others will play a critical role in compelling law to engage with our material conditions.

The panel discussion concluded with a one and half hour open forum where the audience actively participated by continuing the dialogue on LGBTIQ rights, religion, culture, education, media, family, respect and love.

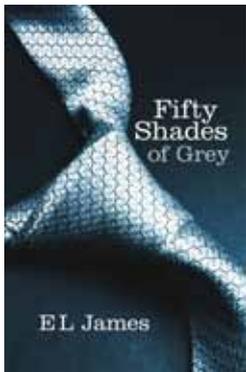
IDAHOT is the commemoration of the May 17, 1992 decision by the World Health Organization to de-pathologize homosexuality. The main purpose of the Day is to create a moment, a space that local groups can use as an opportunity to take action and harness to engage into dialogue with the media, policy makers, public opinion, NGOs, civil society and religious groups. This year, droMo joined tens of thousands of activists from Fiji and around the world to mark the event.

Excerpted from Drodrolagi Movement's press statement released on Tuesday May 22, 2012

Fifty Shades of Grey

Excerpted from www.hercircleezine.com on July 20, 2012

Review by **Marina DelVecchio**



In the past year, E.L. James' *Fifty Shades of Grey* (Vintage, 2012) has taken female audiences by storm. Considered equal in consumption to Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* series, *Fifty Shades of Grey* has become the series that women are obsessed with. The paradoxical issue with this ravenous consumption is that the book is centered on bondage, discipline, sadism, and masochism (BDSM). And as much as this is how the book is sold to the public, the story is more erotic than sexually deviant as these BDSM activities imply.

But the question remains, why do housewives and mommies rave as much as they do about this particular book, when it supports the objectification and submission of women?

Here are some dangerous myths perpetuated in this book about men and women:

The Virgin vs. the Deviant: An age-old concept, historically, women have been forced to remain virgins until they are wed or find true love, never being allowed to become sexually aware of their personal likes or dislikes. I find Margaret Atwood's words in her essay "Pornography" radiating throughout my reading of these texts. She observes that while boys are raised on porn, girls are raised on romance novels, and when the two meet, violence ensues. He expects the whore, and the young girl expects the gentle

prince. This pair meets expecting different things: he attacks, and she submits, waiting for the romance. It's violent, rape, and irreversible.

In this trilogy, Anastasia Steele, the first-person protagonist, is a twenty-four-year old virgin. She's beautiful, smart, and a literature major, although the only story she can conjure up in her narrative is *Wuthering Heights* and a few other novels wherein the girl is a virgin and the guy is experienced. And when she falls in love with Christian Grey, a beautiful and successful businessman, she expects love and romance. Instead, he gives her a contract to sign, as to her limits and expectations for a BDSM relationship. Steele has to be a virgin in this book, because another experienced woman, like her roommate, Kathryn, would never give in to BDSM willingly. And as she's a blank slate, he can teach her a kind of sex that she had never been aware of, a kind of sex that is deviant and submissive and offensive. But because she doesn't know any better—hasn't had any other kind of sex—virtue and intrigue can be discovered in the sex that he offers her. If deviant sex is all a woman knows—all a man knows, since Christian Grey had only been exposed to this kind of sex himself at the age of fifteen—then that is the only kind of sex that will appeal to her until she can discover the other.

A Woman's Love Can Change Men: One of the many reasons women don't leave abusive relationships is because the women believe that the men will change. If a woman is patient enough, kind enough, forgiving enough, then the man will be altered by her love for him. This is not how it really is in abusive relationships. People are how they are designed, and abuse is abuse. Fifty shades of "fucked up," as Anastasia frequently refers to him, Christian Grey has a troubled past: his mother was a crack whore and her pimp used Christian's toddler chest as his ashtray. Haunted by these memories, Grey is a man who doesn't feel worthy of love—the nice kind of love that doesn't require bondage, whips, and chains. E.L. James asks that we forgive him for this. Anastasia asks us to forgive him for this, since she uses this history as a means of softening his moody and dark side. E.L. James also asks us to believe that we, as women, because we are innocent, soft, and inherently maternal and loving, have the power to alter a man's history, to change him. If we show him real love—that he is worthy of love—he will become virtuous. Christian Grey is not a villain, but he has a dark side that only therapy will change, not a woman. "He objectifies her, don't get me wrong," one educated woman said to me about this book, "but he changes, because of Anastasia and the love she has for him." No one has the power to change anyone, but this trilogy offers us the stereotype that women are virtuous and self-sacrificing by nature, willing to give up their needs and wants in order to appease their men.

The Female Submissive: What both *Twilight* and *Fifty Shades of Grey* accomplish is to perpetuate the ideal of the "angel in the house," as Virginia Woolf penned in regards to the submissive woman in her era. Both *Twilight*'s Bella and *Fifty Shades of Grey*'s Anastasia are virgins. Both of them find themselves overcome by the experienced and brooding heroes with dark histories. This idea that the good girl is intoxicated by the bad boy is a motif in movies and literature, but why is it so intoxicating? Why cannot our heroines be strong, experienced, and not so easily overcome by bad boys and by the darkness they embody? These romances reinforce an ideology that continues to place women beneath men—literally and symbolically. It shows how men perceive women, not how we perceive ourselves. Feminist theory teaches that women's bodies and place in society have been defined by men, since we all live in patriarchal societies ruled by them. Even though two women have written these books, they are reinforcing the erotic representation of women as men would portray them. Men love the sweetness and innocence of women, but they also want to see that innocence turn to a dark and erotic form. Both Bella and Anastasia do turn. In *Twilight*, we see Bella's sexual desire for her vampire hero, Edward. She tries to have sex with him for a few books, but he denies her because he may hurt her in his passion. With Anastasia, we see another virgin chained to a rack, being introduced to an anal plug and one orgasm after another. But she loves it. They're both innocent "submissives" with sweet and quiet strength; and they are both turned, by the men they love, into dark mistresses intoxicated by sex.

These books tell women that they want not only to be objectified, their bodies ravaged by objects and men for whom they will attach themselves to the rack to please, but also that they want to be dominated—in the bedroom and outside of it. It's pornography in its purest form, and pornography thrives because men demand it. In this case, Both Meyer and James are helping to the contribution of it, enabling the industry and patriarchy, and indoctrinating the idea that women want to be subjugated for the sake of love. One mom said to me, "This book has saved my marriage," which proves that women now must bring handcuffs to the bedroom and assume the submissive and servile position in bed to keep the romance alive in their marriage. These books are not helping us form our own identities as women, or helping us locate our own sexual desires exclusive to what pleases men in bed. They like the school girl in the parochial uniform, as we have seen in *Glee*, Britney Spears' "Oops... I Did it Again" music video, *Kill Bill*'s Gogo Yubari, the 17-year-old sadistic girl, who also reeks of sexual appeal. Women don't find this kind of demure image of girlhood tainted with darkness; men do. But Meyer and James have successfully "turned" the mainstream female reader into the housewife who can only save her marriage by putting on a school uniform while being handcuffed to a rack. There is nothing feminist in this. There is nothing empowering or progressive about these women writers, who reinforce stereotypical ideals of womanhood, and it is sad that we are buying into it.

Image courtesy of www.amazon.com

Passionate Politics

- the Life and Work of Charlotte Bunch

Review by **Mereoni Tavakaturaga Robinson**



"Women's Rights are Human Rights" - Charlotte Bunch

On June 26, around 30 members of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement's network, as well interested members of the public, joined the Movement at the Fiji and Pacific premier of *Passionate Politics*, an hour long documentary on the life and work of civic rights and lesbian feminist activist, Charlotte Bunch.

The documentary chronicles Charlotte Bunch's life from an idealistic young civil rights activist, to lesbian separatist, to an internationally-recognised leader of a campaign in promoting the recognition of women's rights on the global human rights agenda.

Passionate Politics begins in a small town of New Mexico where Charlotte is brought up by Methodist church activist parents. As a child she was raised to see that "part of being human is being active in one's community" and this saw the birth of a life of activism within the civil rights movement which culminated into the beginning of her life as a feminist.

As a young bride in the 70s, Charlotte was also part of the first women's consciousness raising groups and lesbian political ephemera. During the documentary, she recalls the pain of her divorce, coming out as a lesbian, a whirlwind romance with renowned author Rita Mae Brown and finally, life in *The Furies* - the legendary Washington DC lesbian separatist collective.

The early 1980s found Charlotte getting older and broke and feeling that the women's movement in the United States was stagnating. This "crisis of purpose" segues into a present-day sequence highlighting the frenzy of her contemporary life as a global organizer.

Charlotte's next chapter in life was working with women's groups in Latin America and Asia. This was brought to life via photographs and interviews with fellow activists including the woman who became her life partner, Roxanna Carrillo from Peru. With Roxanna, Charlotte reconnects with feminism, but on a global scale.

The Centre for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL) at Rutgers University in New Jersey was founded and run by Charlotte Bunch. At first she was reluctant to take on the role but later embraces and uses the opportunity to create CWGL as "a base of power" for herself and other women. In the 1990s, Charlotte along with a coalition of women from across the world took the United Nations by storm. Crowds of women from Latin America, Asia, Africa, and the West gather at the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna and again in 1995 at the Beijing World Conference on Women. Their mission was to deliver the message to world leaders to address gender based violence, to acknowledge once and for all, as Charlotte has repeatedly said, that "women's rights are human rights."

The documentary reaches a rousing climax with a South African event for the "Sixteen Days of Activism, Against Gender Violence", a multi-national campaign observed between November 25- December 10 which Charlotte helped create. Along with women and men from around the world, FWRM also observes this designated period of activism. The 16 Days of Activism commences on the International Day of Violence against Women and spans other internationally recognised days commemorating/promoting human rights, with International Human Rights Day which ends the sixteen days of activism.

The documentary ends with an inspiring reflection from Charlotte Bunch where she states that "This revolution is a symphony of liberations, and I am happy to have been one part of that orchestra."

About us

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural non-governmental organisation 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 in Fiji, 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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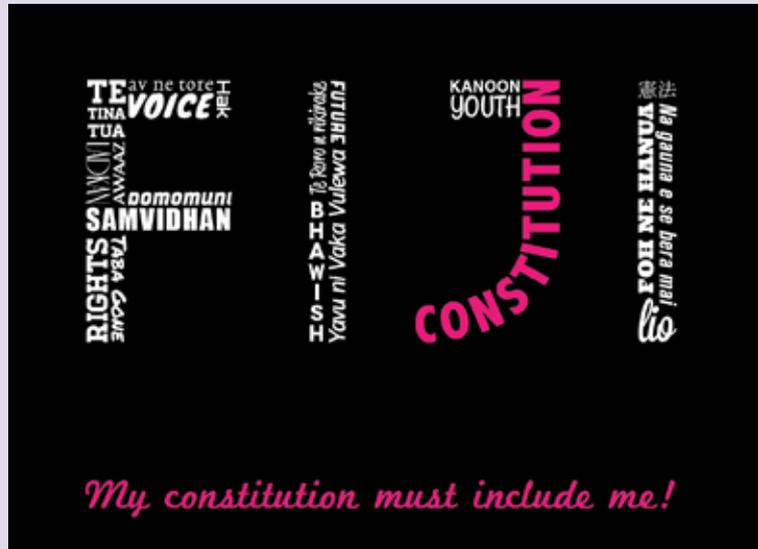
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LOOKOUT!



One of the objectives of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement over the next few months is to create awareness on Fiji's constitution-making process and encourage women, especially young women and men, to make submissions to the Constitutional Commission. To do this effectively, FWRM will be participating in university Open Days, workshops, and advertising in the media.

FWRM has also designed and is giving out for FREE our new "My Constitution Must Include Me" t-shirts and bags (see design above). So if you know of any youth groups interested in putting in a submission to the Constitutional Commission, contact FWRM via telephone 3312711 and/or email info@fwrmm.org.fj for assistance and also receive our free t-shirts and bags!