



# Balance

"HELPING TO BALANCE THE SCALES"

March

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## Feminist Fairytales

By **Bronwyn Tilbury**

INSTEAD of beauty and riches, Sleeping Beauty is blessed with a kind heart, wisdom, skills, courage, smartness and, of course, magical powers! Rapunzel escapes from her tower by using her wits to discover a secret hidden staircase and runs away to become a teacher. Cinderella buys her own house and invites the Prince over for a BBQ (where he loses his shoe on the way out of course!). And Snow White goes to magic school with a group of fairies to learn how to make spells and potions to help people in need. It's your beloved childhood fairytales, as you've never imagined them! It's the Fiji Women's Rights Movement's Feminist Fairytales Project!

This year's International Women's Day was celebrated across the world around the theme of "Connecting Girls, Inspiring Futures". In line with this theme, FWRM undertook a project for 10-12-year-olds (under its Young Women in Leadership Programme) to deconstruct the gender stereotypes in everyone's favorite fairytales.

FWRM's Young Women's Officers, Filomena Tuivanualevu and Bronwyn Tilbury, as well as Communications Office Shazia Usman identified a group of eight amazingly talented, smart and enthusiastic girls from around Suva to take part in the programme. The programme was held over two half-day workshops over the weekends leading up to International Women's Day on March 8th. The workshops explored the reasons why we tell stories and the important role that they play in shaping our ideas and perspectives on life. The girls learnt about gender roles and thought about stereotypes and the ways that, if left unquestioned, gender stereotypes can prevent young people from reaching their full potential. The concept of independence was explored in all its various aspects and the girls were encouraged to think about all the different ways they could be independent; in their thinking, their finances, their emotions and with their bodies.

Equipped with these new ideas the girls set to work in pairs to re-imagine and re-write the classic



fairytales from their childhoods to include strong female characters who did not conform to gender stereotypes and who exhibit independence in all aspects of their lives.

And what a result! After half a day of busily writing and re-writing, drawing, colouring, painting, sparkling and gluing, four beautiful, hilarious and inspiring feminist fairytales were produced.

When International Women's Day came around the girls gathered at the Suva City Library with other children from the library's after-school programme, family members and various other dignitaries and honored guests to present their books to the world. Chief guest Mereia Carling from UNICEF Pacific (and former host of Get Set!) gave the keynote address at the event, highlighting the lack of gender equality in the world today and

the vital importance of empowering stories for young people.

Then, to cries of laughter, giggles and hearty applause from the audience, our feminist fairytale authors read their stories aloud. The stories are now being held at the Suva City Library for the wider public to read and enjoy and FWRM would like to encourage anyone interested to pay a visit to the library to take a look. FWRM would also like to thank the Suva City Library, the International Women's Development Agency and the Dutch Government for its kind support and partnership, without which we would not have been able to run this programme or inspire such creative and empowering feminist fairytales.

You can also read them online on our Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/fwrwm1](http://www.facebook.com/fwrwm1)



## Greetings from FWRM!



THESE last three months have been very exciting for the Fiji Women's Rights Movement, especially with the March 9th announcement by the State regarding its plan for the proposed constitutional and electoral reform. Interestingly, on that very day, FWRM was strategically planning on whether or not we would be participating in the processes that was outlined by the State. The two-day strategic planning meeting culminated with FWRM outlining 10 principles by which it will be guided during the proposed democratisation processes. Overall, it was a great opportunity for staff and the management board members to be able to talk through, debate and strategize on our plans for the next five years.

In this issue – read about the Feminist Fairytale writing workshop and book launch on International Women's Day this year. This fantastic event, organised under our Young Women in Leadership Programme, brought back some of the Green Girls from last year's IWD event – and got them to start re-telling fairy tales from a feminist perspective. The stories were delightful – my favorite had to be the Princess who was more interested in her job and just "being friends" with the Prince! If you're in Suva, drop in at the Suva City Library where these homemade books are on display or read them online on our Facebook page. Each Balance issue this year will also feature one of the four stories in full.

On IWD, we also hosted Australia's Global Ambassador for Women and Girls, Penny Williams, at our office. It was an opportunity for her to hear about our work and meet some of the FWRM team. We were able to share with her our call for an increased and meaningful participation of women in all processes and decisions that affect their lives.

I take this opportunity to also congratulate the Emerging Leaders Forum Alumni (ELFA) on their new project which has received extensive media coverage and has been the 'hot' topic these last couple of weeks. Their 'Take Back the Streets' Fiji Project also kicked started on IWD. In collaboration with the Lands Transport Authority, ELFA has undertaken the initiative to make public service vehicles free of violence and all forms of harassment. The brave testimonies by several ELFA members during IWD at a press conference at LTA, has made it possible for other women and girls to share their stories. Two weeks on from IWD, the debate has sparked hotlines on local radio shows, countless letters to the newspapers and social networking sites.

As usual, some take the opportunity to focus the blame on the survivor/victim, rather than finding ways of stopping the violation. Sexual harassment and assault is a human rights violation and it is in our interest to stop these violations in a manner that does not bring further victimisation and infringe other rights. If you haven't guessed yet, the ELFA are graduates of FWRM's year long feminist leadership programme – we are both inspired and proud to be standing alongside them!

Also, on March 22nd, FWRM held its Annual General Meeting for the work done and accounts for 2010. Big thank you to all the members who came.

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](mailto:info@fwr.org.fj).

Enjoy this edition!

In solidarity,

Virisila Buadromo

## Good luck Ekta... welcome back Bronwyn and Tara!



Ekta Singh

DEPARTING the nest this year was our Finance Officer, Ekta Singh. Having joined in December 2008, Ekta had been a great asset to FWRM. In her time at the Movement, she successfully cleared our accounts and established much needed systems in the finance department. Ekta has moved to on another finance position with one of our partners, Pacific Centre for Peace-building – so she is not too far away.

FWRM wishes Ekta well and thanks her for her contributions to the Movement.

This year, the Movement welcomes its new volunteer, Bronwyn Tilbury!

Bronwyn originates from Tasmania, Australia but has been based in Melbourne for the past nine years. She has a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Melbourne, majoring in Development Studies. She also has a Masters of Development Studies from the same university, where she graduated with first class honors.

Bronwyn has worked in a number of Melbourne-based human rights organisations including the Humanitarian Crisis Hub, Oxfam Australia and was the Coordinator of the Darfur Australia Network.

In 2010 she was chosen to become an Australian Youth Ambassador for Development and was posted to the Fijian town of Tavua to work with the Gold Foundation and assist in the development of more robust organisational planning, policies and processes. Following her year with the Gold Foundation, Bronwyn took up a consultancy with FWRM to produce an Impact Assessment Report for their Young Women's Leadership Program (YWLP).

She has now joined FWRM as an Australian Volunteer for International Development to work in a capacity building role with the Movement's Young Women's Officer to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation processes of the YWLP and to assist in the design of a leadership programme for rural young women in Fiji.

She will be with the Movement for a year and can be contacted via email [bronwyn@fwr.org.fj](mailto:bronwyn@fwr.org.fj)

Also returning to the nest this year is Tara Chetty - as FWRM'S new Programme Manager!



Tara Chetty

Tara is a feminist activist from Suva, who has a long history of engagement with FWRM. She is a former FWRM Management Board member, Young Women's Working Group member and the former Communications Officer.

Tara left the Movement in 2009 to pursue a Master of Arts in Women's and Gender Studies in the United States, on a Fulbright scholarship. In the course of her academic research, she worked with the Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition (WHRDIC), then based out of the Centre for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL) at Rutgers University.

After graduation in 2011, Tara returned to Fiji and human rights work in the Pacific, with a posting at the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Pacific Regional Office.

"I'm thrilled to be back at FWRM in this new capacity, working with old friends and talented new colleagues. I'm rejoining the Movement at a very exciting time in FWRM's and Fiji's history and I look forward to drawing on my experiences with regional and global organisations and academia as we continue the fight for a feminist future," says Tara.

You can contact Tara on email [tara@fwr.org.fj](mailto:tara@fwr.org.fj)

# Young women's economic realities

On International Women's Day's (IWD) this year, **Roshika Deo**, in her capacity as the Coordinator of the Emerging Leaders' Forum Alumni was invited by the Australian High Commission to speak on women's economic empowerment from a grassroots perspective. Roshika is also a Research Officer at the Fiji Women's Rights Movement and a strong women human rights defender and feminist. Below is an excerpt from her address:

The Emerging Leaders' Forum Alumni (ELFA) is made up of 83 members. Our ages range from 19-35 years old. We have all graduated from a young woman in leadership training programme organised by FWRM.

The objective of ELFA is "creating awareness and advocating for human rights and sustainable living based on the principles of feminism and humanity."

We are all from very different and diverse social, racial and cultural backgrounds. We are all involved in many facets of our communities – in urban and rural, in squatter and informal settlement. We are involved as students, professionals and as volunteers. We are involved as mothers, as wives and partners, as gay women, as transgender women and as single women.

This evening, in recognition of the theme of IWD which is centric around economic empowerment of women, I would like to share with you the realities and experiences of several members of the Alumni – the realities and experiences of us young women in Fiji.

I bring to you the alumni members realities - our shared realities. One of the members of ELFA said:

*"I am a qualified IT technician and was working for a big ISP company. Despite being qualified I was continuously given desk duties. When I wanted to do networking and servicing I was told that I can't climb chairs and do wiring high up...let the boys do that. Eventually I was terminated."*

This is an example of gender stereotypes and work discrimination. This is an example of the inadequate protections provided to women by labour and employment laws.

Another member from the group said:

*"...from my village four women were sponsored to go to Suva last year and get a certificate on [sic] sewing. The women are young, uneducated and have children. They left school at class 8 and got married young. They make some money sewing. It's not enough. They learnt sewing because as women they are expected to learn that."*

This is an illustration that girls and women still do not have access to education, are married off young and continue to dominate low paying and "stereotypical" jobs for women.

For some of us, in our family, including our extended family, decisions on where and what kind of work women do are made by our parents. What we study is also decided by our parents. For most of us and in our family, who women marry is also decided by parents. Culture and tradition are imposed on us. Culture and tradition limits our choices and removes our right to make decisions for ourselves.

Another reality for some of us is that when microenterprise loans or ventures are offered to women, preference is given to older women because



they are usually the ones with a bigger family to look after or with more children or assumed to have more expertise. Younger women are not given this same opportunity. Age discrimination and discrimination against young women continue and this affects the economic opportunities available to us.

One of the members shared the concern that women cannot own land and have no or very limited access to resources. If we wanted to take a loan to do business we have no security to give to the bank because we cannot use the land as security. But a man can use the same land as security to get the loan, because men can own land. Women do not have access to land or resources – we work hard on the land, either farming, building a house, making a home, but we do not benefit economically from this.

Another alumni member said that in informal settlements we do not have electricity, we do not have proper sanitation or even access to clean water. This means that our burden is increased- we spend more time in doing household duties and in looking after family members.

Where would we get the inspiration, the time and the energy to pursue other opportunities?

Poverty, unshared and heavy household and care-giving responsibilities, lack of infrastructure, all impact our lives – it impacts the lives of women.

An alumni member who is a mother said "...the day I became pregnant, my life changed. It was unplanned. My partner wanted me to have the baby.

*I couldn't do further education, I stopped working in my small business that I had. I stopped attending social groups that I was part of. My partner's life did not change at all. He continued doing everything he did before I was pregnant. I didn't have any options but to continue the pregnancy".*

This is an indication that even today, our bodies do not belong to us. Our sexual and reproductive rights and choices are limited in many ways, and this affects our economic well being as well as hindering our fair and equal contribution to the economy.

This evening, some of the stories and experiences that I have shared is our lived realities. Economic empowerment for us means so much more – it encompasses all our human rights. For many of us, after graduating, empowered and as agents of change from trainings like ELF, comes the realisation that in the real world we are still forced to revert and conform to societal expectations. In the real world we are still forced to accept decisions made by others including the government. Decisions made for us that do not include us, that do not reflect our actual needs and wants.

And in this real world, if we do not conform or accept then there is a real likelihood that we will experience violence and abuse and/or, we will be stigmatised or isolated.

However, as ELFAs, as members of the Emerging Leaders' Forum Alumni we continue to...INSIST, PERSIST, RESIST and EXISIT.



# Legislative lobbying in the Pacific

Continuing the momentum from last year, the Fiji Women's Rights Movement, in partnership with the Secretariat of the Pacific Community/Pacific Regional Rights Resource Team (SPC/RRRT), co-facilitated training in the Solomon Islands (SI) and Tonga, this first quarter.

"The training shares elements from our Legislative Lobbying Toolkit, which is a publication we co-produced with SPC/RRRT in 2010. Earlier this year we conducted similar training in Vanuatu and Kiribati. FWRM also undertook training in Fiji, having just held one for the Central division this month," said FWRM Executive Director Virisila Buadromo.

The training shares 'tools' which assist both civil society as well as government partners on how legislature reform takes place and how to play a role in it. Some of the tools that participants take away from this training include: problem analysis; research/data analysis; working on campaign plans and identifying strategies to address issues; the importance of coalition building and devising communications strategies.

In SI and Tonga, the facilitators shared experiences from their respective organisations with relation to lobbying for different legislatures. It was interesting to note that in both countries, the current campaigns that were being initiated were towards essential pieces of legislation. These are the Family Protection Bill in SI, and initial work being carried out towards a comprehensive legislation on Violence against Women in Tonga.

Participants for the training included representatives from government departments as well as from civil society organisations. The training in the respective countries provided the opportunity

By **Neomai Maravuakula**  
and **Shazia Usman**

for experienced persons and organisations to share how they worked on different campaigns.

At the end of the training participants had completed campaign plans that they would work towards. These included campaigns on a proposed Child Protection Bill and lobbying for Temporary Special Measures for women in SI. In Tonga, groups identified the following areas for legislative reform: addressing violence between schools; support to address all forms of discrimination; and legislation on violence against women and children.

The training also highlighted the importance of coalition building in undertaking a campaign. As a result of the training, participants have begun planning their campaigns in informal coalition groups.

The final regional training will be undertaken in Tuvalu later in the year.

At the local level, twenty participants completed a three-day *Legislative Lobbying, Building Skills in Governance and Leadership Training* in Suva, with the FWRM on March 22.

From the Central/Eastern Division, the participants were a mixture of civil society and civil service representatives, as well as community leaders.

"After holding one of the trainings in the Northern division in November last year, FWRM has conducted this much needed second training," said Buadromo.

Present at the workshop were participants from the Catholic Women's League, Drodrolagi Movement, Fiji Police, Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, Pacific Islands

AIDS Foundation, Rainbow Women's Network, Reproductive and Family Health Association of Fiji, Rotuman Women's Association Suva, Sanatan Dharm Pratinidhi Sabha Fiji - Nari Sabha, Soqosoqo Vakamarama and their Cakudrove division.

For Rainbow Women's Network's Administration Coordinator, Lorraine Foster, the training enabled her to start advocating for a change in laws for the better protection of marginalised women.

"As a member of the LGBTQI community, I believe that the training will provide our Association with the necessary information on how to start campaigning. I know it will take time for reforms to take place but we need to start acting now," she said.

Creating awareness in rural communities on the country's laws is something that Malakai Raceva deals with every day. As the Manager of Community Policing - Northern Division, Mr Raceva always deals with questions relating to human rights, children's rights in particular.

"This training has helped me understand how to identify problems and how to come up with solutions and this is something that will definitely help me in my work," he said.

Similar sentiments were shared by the President of the Soqosoqo Vakamarama Cakudrove, Siliva Leweniqila.

"This is my first workshop with a women's NGO. The skills that I learnt here, I will take back to the women in the communities who need assistance," she said.

A third training is being planned for participants in the Western Division with the date to be confirmed soon.





FWRM's Shabina Khan (right) with Chair of NGO/CSW Geneva and Secretary General of World YWCA, Nyaradzai Gumbonzvanda

# Journey to CSW

By **Shabina Khan**

TRAVELLING thousands of miles with fear and anticipation of being in New York (NY), and the excitement to be part of such a grand feminist event, was some of the emotions I felt when this journey began.

To be part of the two-week long sessions and lobbying amongst the prominent feminists and representatives from Non Governmental Organisations (NGO) was an exhilarating experience. It took a couple of days getting used to the cold but all was forgotten in the rush to get registered, organising passes and meeting women from around the world.

The journey to the 56th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), began last year when members of the Asia Pacific Women's Watch (APWW) agreed to carry out a research on the impacts of conflicts on women in the Asia Pacific region. The Joining the Dots research used the human rights legal frameworks to link the economic experiences of women in conflict areas. While presenting the findings from Fiji, Sri Lanka, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan and Indonesia, common thematic issues such as violence against women and need for gender disaggregated data were highlighted.

Along with members of Justice Equality Rights Access (International) Australia, and APWW, the team established the Asia Pacific's spot in the discussions and sessions. Particular support was provided by the Australian delegates who provided

technical and personal support to the team.

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) played a significant role in bringing a Pacific NGO voice to CSW, with four representatives from the region. It was crucial to highlight the challenges faced by rural women in the Pacific as many attending CSW were unaware of them. Many only view the Pacific as just a pristine holiday destination.

FWRM participated in a number of sessions and highlighted the economic status of women in Fiji, as well as the status of youths and sexuality in country, and women's voices in disaster management. In addition, FWRM also inputted into APWW Caucus meetings and in the drafting of the Caucus Statement. I was honored to be selected to deliver the Asia Pacific statement to the United Nations General Assembly<sup>1</sup>.

Another highlight of the trip for me was celebrating International Women's Day in a country where there are no restrictions on freedom of assembly and expression. Women representing all regions of the world gathered at the Church Centre and printed their messages on a bright yellow sash, equipped with drums, pots/spoons, and shakers, marched the streets of NY.

Chanting and dancing to messages and songs of freedom, peace and equality, the feeling of being united in the greater fight for gender equality, was the epitome of my experience.

FWRM wishes to thank JERA (International) Australia, for supporting its participation at the 56th CSW.

## Ready for AWID

By **Shazia Usman**

EXCITEMENT is building up at the Fiji Women's Rights Movement as six staff members and one board member prepare to attend the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) Forum in Istanbul, Turkey.

Transforming Economic Power to Advance Women's Rights and Justice, the 12th AWID International Forum, will gather up to 2000 women's rights leaders and activists from around the world at the Halic Congress Centre.

Attending AWID are Board Chair Gina Houg Lee, Programme Manager Tara Chetty, Communications Officer Shazia Usman, Research Officer Roshika Deo, Human Rights Training Officer Neomai Maravuakula and Young Women Officers Filomena Tuivanualevu and Bronwyn Tilbury.

The Forum is from April 19th to 22nd during which FWRM will host a session on the *Implementation of Gender Responsive Laws – Who Decides Allocation of Resources* (Moderator: Tara Chetty Participants: Fiji's Neomai Maravuakula and Gina Houg Lee and Cook Island's Kairangi Samuela).

FWRM will also co-host a session with AWID and NGO's from other regions on *Trends Affecting Women's and Rights Funding: Global and Regional Perspectives* (FWRM is represented by Tara Chetty).

There will also be session called the Economic Toolbox run by Yardana Tankel and Ofa Guttenbeil-Likiliki, with support from Yvonne Underhill-Sem

Shazia Usman will also be attending a Global Strategic Dialogue on Digital Security and a Feminist Tech Exchange from April 16th to 18th – hosted by the Association for Progressive Communications.

A day before the Forum starts, Roshika Deo will be attending an Economic Justice Training which applies a Feminist Human Rights Perspective to Macroeconomic Policy, on the 18th of April.

Also on the 18th, Filomena Tuivanualevu and Neomai Maravuakula will be attending the Young Feminist Day.

FWRM is also planning to host informal pre and post AWID meetings in Istanbul to share ideas and thoughts. If you are Pacific participant and would like to be involved, do not hesitate to contact us.

For other updates on our activities and thoughts during AWID, follow FWRM's Facebook page – [www.facebook.com/fwrm1](http://www.facebook.com/fwrm1) and Twitter account.

1. <http://www.unmultimedia.org/tv/webcast/2012/03/56th-session-of-csw-general-discussion-part-7.html>



# Ella and the Prince

By **Fredrica Nagan** and **Hannah Divya**



Once upon a time, there lived a beautiful, young, brave and funny girl, far beyond the forest. On the day she was born a witch appeared before the King and Queen and took the little girl away from them.

She lived far away from the castle, so she took the baby there with her. Everyday the little girl worked for a living and in the evenings she would sit by the cinders and sing. That's why the witch named her Cinderella.

When the witch went out to work, Cinderella would often sneak out and go and buy stuff for herself, like food and sometimes new clothes.

The witch would often scold her or take some/most of her money away from her. Then, often, Cinderella would go to her room and cry, but she was also a brave girl so she would also often hold it in.

One day, Cinderella decided to run away, but on that same day there was a party for a prince on the hills, so she thought it was a good time to escape. When the town was full of people, she snuck out the back door and ran away to another town far, far away from the witch's house. While she was there she worked as a waitress in a restaurant called Samson's restaurant. She also changed her name to Ella. She made a lot of money, so she bought herself a house.

One day Ella sent an invitation to the Prince who lived on the hills, it was an invitation for him to attend a BBQ. Some of the girls, who didn't like Ella, said that she wasn't cool enough to invite a Prince to her house, but she didn't listen and made up her own mind and she was able to get the Prince to come to her BBQ.

Ella was very happy. Ella had a special friend who came to see her. The friend's name was Sally.

Sally said: "why are you so happy Ella?"

Ella said: "I am happy because I made up her own mind to have a BBQ. I have everything I need to put on the BBQ and I invited the Prince".

Sally said "Good, I'm glad you are so happy about this".

Sally was concerned about Ella being in bed before midnight, but Ella said "I will certainly have the people go home by midnight, as I have to have a good sleep so I can get up to work tomorrow".

Ella told Sally that she would come along to the BBQ. Ella held the BBQ, and her friends and the Prince came along.

The Prince fell in love with Ella because she was so smart and kind in holding a BBQ for her good friends and the Prince.

The Prince and Ella danced the night away. When Ella saw that it was getting near midnight, she told the guests that they had to leave. This included the Prince, so he left so quickly that one of his shoes fell off.

Ella saw the man's shoe and wondered whose it was. She was amazed to find it belonged to the Prince. Ella was quite happy about this as she was quite keen on this Prince and wanted to get to know him more. Before long, they decided to be best friends.

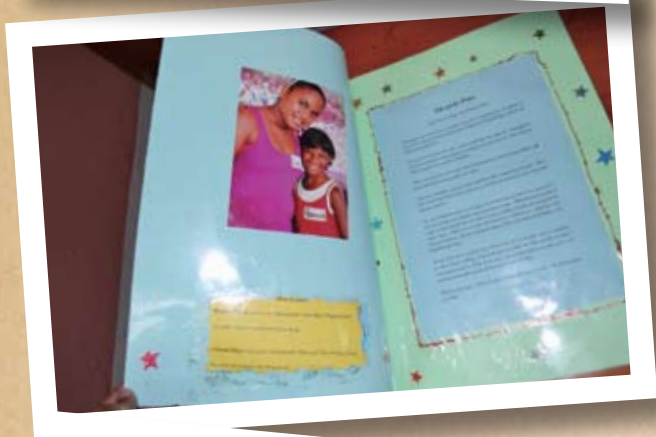
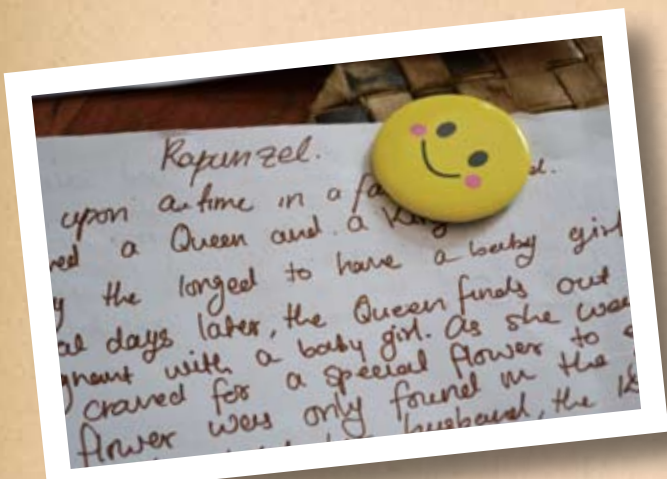


## About the authors

Fredrica Nagan is twelve-years-old and attends Saint Agnes Primary School. She wants to be an accountant when she grows up.

Hannah Divya is eleven-years-old and attends Homes of Hope Primary School. She wants to be a lawyer when she grows up.

Each *Balance* issue this year will feature a traditional fairytale re-written with a feminist twist by eight budding authors. As mentioned in the cover story, these stories were re-written by 10-12 year-old girls, part of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement's Young Women in Leadership Programme.



# Globalisation, Mining and Women

IN the last century, the world's population has multiplied by four, putting adverse pressure on the earth. This has resulted in climate change and growing scarcity in natural resources and energy. Another change in the global scene is the scarcity and costs of resources and energy such as minerals. This has resulted in the new boom in the extractive industry sector globally. According to CATAPA, a sustainable development movement in Latin America, between 1999 and 2006 the average raw materials price of metals has multiplied by three while the net gains of the mining industry has increased from five billion dollars in 2002 to 45 billion dollars in 2006. In response to the scarcity of resources the developed economies of the North have once again turned their attentions to the South to extract resources such as bauxite, silver and copper from countries such as Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Jamaica, Brazil, Africa and the Philippines, to satisfy the need for these resources in regions such as America and the United Kingdom.

This global economic interaction, which is often conducted under the guise of free trade, has key players such as the International Monetary Fund and World Bank which are global institutions where representation and voting rights depend on how much money a country can bring to the table. The outcome of negotiations for those countries that do not have much to bring to the table in the first place is highly likely to be bleak. These countries who are often of the southern hemisphere remain mere exporters of raw materials such as mineral resources that at the same time have not been used to further develop their own economies. Most of these economies remain agrarian, existing only to export primary products such as minerals as well as some labor intensive services to the countries in the North.

According to Oxfam Australia the extractive sector is rife in countries where political instability is prevalent or in high risk of occurring as the mechanisms to hold those in power accountable as well as to ensure transparency in decision making are absent. The absence of a constitution and a democratically elected government in Fiji is a classic example where in a short time span since the 2000 and 2006 coup two mining companies, Newcrest Mining Limited and Aurum Limited, have both begun the process of mining in Fiji, while other companies have received licenses to begin exploratory work. Statistics publicised by Investment Fiji show that in 2001 Aurum Explorations Limited had received a total of six exploration licenses to sites in the North West part of Vanua Levu such as Naibulu, Nasarawaqa, Lekutu, Navakasobu, Tabia, Koroinasolo, Saivou, Seqaqa and Nawailevu where mining began in December 2011. In 2007 the special prospecting license covering the Namosi project was renewed by the state to Newcrest Mining.

One of the concerns for women's human rights arises from the high levels of poverty that emerge from the economies of the South due to the unequal playing field that exists in global trade negotiations, in a world where two thirds of the poor are women.

By **Filomena  
Tuivanualevu**

Also related to women and poverty is the issue of the types of industries that emerge as a result of these global trends such as the extractive industry. The development of this industry in countries does very little to curb the rate of unemployment, according to Victoria Corpuz, the Executive Director for Indigenous People's Center for Policy and Research, Philippines. This is due to automation, mechanization and labor contracting methods.

Women's participation although crucial is often not included in global and local negotiations due to gender roles and the institutionalization of these roles. In Fiji for example, discussions at the community level are attended by men and negotiations concerning mining are no different. Additionally land ownership is a male-only domain in reference to native land and women are further marginalised.

The population of male transient workers that develop around mining communities and the disproportionate effects of this on women's sexual reproductive health rights are also of concern. In her analysis of bauxite mining in Fiji, feminist activist Noelene Nabulivou, highlights how small communities around in the world have experienced an increase

in Sexually Transmitted Infections including HIV as well as the risk of the trafficking of local and foreign women as sex workers.

Women's livelihoods are further compromised with the environmental and health impacts of mining. In most rural communities in the Pacific, women access the rivers, sea and forests daily as they are the main food gatherers. The depletion of natural food sources as a result of mining activity results in the added burden of work for women to look for alternative sources. Additionally as women are likely to be regular users of polluted rivers, wells and food sources, they are likely to be affected the most.

The links to the new boom in the extraction industry in Fiji and the global scarcity in minerals as well as the inequality in global trade negotiations is evident. It is also evident that a gender analysis needs to be conducted prior to any set up of a mining project. In addition, transparent and meaningful consultations are necessary for the protection of women's human rights in instances such as the setting up of a mining project. Proper consultation processes will ensure that issues such as the differences between women's and men's access to and control of resources are considered as well as the influencing roles of state, market, global and community institutions and how they may perpetuate gender inequality.



Image courtesy of [www.korotopais.com](http://www.korotopais.com)





ELFA with LTA officials on International Women's Day

How many times have you walked down a street amidst catcalls – the classic uro or maal? Ever feel scared when travelling alone in a taxi or bus and the driver starts asking you personal questions? How safe do you feel going out at night?

These are just a few of the questions that many women have asked themselves at one point. Women should not feel scared or unsafe on the streets, when travelling in public service vehicles (PSV), in their own homes, schools, workplaces and countries.

After sharing personal stories (and the stories of female/transgender relatives and friends) of being constantly sexually harassed by some public service vehicles drivers, the Emerging Leaders Forum Alumni (ELFA) decided it was time to take action.

Our Take Back the Streets Fiji Project was officially launched on International Women's Day on March 8th this year. ELFA is collaborating with the Land Transport Authority (LTA) on this project. On the day of the launch, a group from ELFA shared incidences of sexual harassment with LTA's Chief Executive Officer Naisa Tuinaceva and Manager Road Safety and Education Timoci Satakala, at a press conference.

During the press conference LTA pledged its support to ELFA and assured all girls, women and trans gender women in Fiji, that it will do its utmost to assist in eradicating this problem.

Following the conference, the project received extensive media coverage and the issue of sexual harassment by some PSV drivers became a hotly debated national issue for three straight weeks.

### By Shazia Usman

Aside from it being a very important issue which deserved attention, one of the other reasons why the issue remained in the public eye after the launch of the project was because of the negative and sexist comments made by the General Secretary of the Fiji Taxi Association (FTA) Rishi Ram.

On national radio, Ram stated that young girls and women should not wear short skirts as this provoked men into sexually harassing them. He further stated that if the "door is locked then no thieves will come".

Ram received wide-spread condemnation for his comments. In separate statements, both the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) and the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC), criticized Ram for abusing his position as a public figure to issue personal comments (Ram kept insisting later on that his comments were personal and not FTA's). They also called for an apology, while both FWRM and ELFA offered to provide gender sensitising training to Ram and FTA.

Ram comments also saw the creation of many discussions and debates on social networking site, Facebook. While there were many who condemned him, there were those that actually supported his comments and view. In many of these discussions, the issue of sexually harassment was shafted to the side and women's clothing and dressing-style came to the forefront.

There were also a couple of radio talkback shows during the day which highlighted the issue. FWCC Coordinator Shamima Ali appeared on Fiji Broadcasting Corporation's Hindi show Aaina with Rishi Ram while ELFA Coordinator and FWRM Research Officer Roshika Deo appeared on the English language on the next day (Rishi Ram pulled out at the last minute).

A day after his initial comments Ram was asked to resign by FTA. He was later reinstated but asked to remain on leave for a month. It seems unclear as to what actually happened within FTA for the initial decision to be rescinded.

ELFA continues to work on this project. Sexual harassment is not about women's clothing. It is just used as an excuse to perpetuate further violence against women and to suppress them and control them. It also used as a justification to excuse this unacceptable behaviour by some PSV drivers.

Current ELFA activities include providing gender sensitisation to LTA officials (with plans to work with PSV drivers and the police), in partnership with FWCC; suggesting amendments to the LTA Code of Conduct and the Land Transport Act, which is currently under review; creating jurisprudence on sex and gender discrimination and creating a Facebook page and a blog on ELFA so members of the public are more aware of our activities.

For any queries, email Shazia Usman on usman.shazia@gmail.com or Roshika Deo fj.elf.alumni@gmail or call 3312711.

## Advanced Gender Training

### By Rosie Catherine

At the Fiji Women's Rights Movement's silver jubilee celebrations last year, founding member and Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC) Coordinator Shamima Ali, highlighted the importance of mentoring young women.

With this in mind, the Emerging Leaders' Forum Alumni (ELFA) collaborated with FWCC on March 3rd, to hold an Advanced Gender Training for 20 interested members.

Facilitated by both Shamima and Deputy Coordinator Edwina Kotoisuva, the training added to

the current knowledge of some of the ELF'ers on gender and feminism, while also serving as a refresher course for others.

There were many opportunities for intergenerational discussions during the day, well as discussions on the different kinds of support systems within the women's movement. Topics ranged from non-judgmental approaches of feminism; using sex as a bargaining tool;

accountability; analysis of beauty pageants and religion/culture; as well as a discussion on body images.

The sharing of experiences enabled members to learn through some challenging and very personal stories.

For ELF'er Lucy Delaivalu, some of the discussions during the training helped her "to put things in perspective".

"It was exciting to meet and interact with the ELF'ers. Some of the topics highlighted were issues of concern in my life. I felt safe and secure to share my experiences within the group. Sharing with my fellow ELF'ers helped me internally and overall the training was quite empowering for me," she expressed.

ELFA thanks FWCC for their valuable time and expertise and also for contributing towards the mentoring of young feminists.





### Historic report launched at the UN on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

On March 7th this year, a historic moment was marked at the United Nations (UN) as the first ever report on violence and discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people was launched at the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

The report entitled Discriminatory Laws and Practices and Acts of Violence against Individuals Based on their Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity was prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and launched at a panel discussion in Geneva.

The report and panel discussion arose out of the UN Human Rights Council Resolution 17/19 (June 2011) expressing “grave concern” at acts of violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The resolution initiated by South Africa and titled Human Rights, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity requested the High Commissioner for Human Rights to prepare a report on “how international human rights law can be used to end violence and related human rights violations based on sexual orientation and gender identity”, and called for a panel discussion at the 19th session of the Human Rights Council.

A video message from UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, opened the event in which he said he understood that sexual orientation and gender identity were sensitive subjects, but there was a need to speak out because lives were at stake. The Secretary-General told those who were lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons that they were not alone, that he stood beside them, and that the struggle to end violence and discrimination was a shared one.

In an opening statement, High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay said a clear pattern had emerged of targeted violence and discrimination, in all regions of the world, directed at people because they either were, or were perceived to be, lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, and the High Commissioner gave examples of violations which include – but are not limited to – killings, rape and physical attacks, torture, arbitrary detention, the denial of rights to assembly, expression and information, and discrimination in employment, health and education.

“Today we all have an opportunity to begin together a new chapter dedicated to ending violence and discrimination against all people, irrespective of their sexual orientation and gender identity,” Pillay added.

Other panellists included LGBT activists and human rights defenders from around the world who commended the report and noted that abuses on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity occur in every country.

Linda Baumann, an LGBT activist from Namibia delivered a statement, welcoming the report on behalf of ILGA’s 917 members worldwide and jointly endorsed by 284 NGOs and civil society groups from 90 countries, including Fiji - Pacific- Citizens’ Constitutional Forum, Drodrolagi Movement, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), Pacific Sexual Diversity Network and Survival Advocacy Network.

While the Council’s first panel on discrimination against LGBT people was heralded as a “milestone”, it was also opposed by the

57-country Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) who said it had “nothing to do with fundamental human rights”. Members of the OIC walked out before the 47-member Council began its discussion.

In her earlier remarks, Pillay underlined that “the balance between tradition and culture, on the one hand, and universal human rights, on the other, must be struck in favour of rights,” adding that “no personal opinion, no religious belief, no matter how deeply held or widely shared, can ever justify depriving another human being of his or her basic rights.”

The report provided several recommendations for Member States to address the issue including calling on States to improve their investigation and prosecution of homophobic and transphobic violence, to bring perpetrators to justice, and to “change discriminatory laws that treat people as criminals on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity”.

In addition, it urges them to recognize that this violence is a result of prejudice, which must be combated with education and information campaigns that challenge homophobia, transphobia and negative stereotypes.

The report reminds the Human Rights Council and Member States that they are all mandated to promote “universal respect for the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction of any kind and in a fair and equal manner” in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

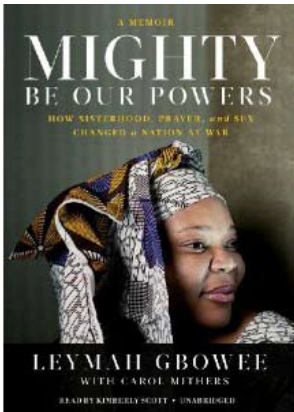
*(Adapted by Kris Prasad from a March 7, 2012, press release issued by ARC International, Geneva, Switzerland).*

# Mighty Be Our Powers

Excerpted from [www.boldcafe.org](http://www.boldcafe.org) on April 2nd, 2012

Review by **Rev. Julia Seymour**

Author : **Leymah Gbowee**  
Year : **2012**



## Before the fighting

Leymah Gbowee's story is powerful and moves at a rapid pace. It opens with her graduation from high school and her plans to go to college. Since scenes of war-torn Liberia have prevailed for many years, it is hard to grasp the contrast of the opening scene of peace, celebration, and plans for a future at a local university. People have plenty to eat and drink, to wear, and to share. Gbowee receives a nice pair of boots among her gifts. Later, when the fighting breaks out, a few weeks after her graduation party, her family has to flee their home to safety in a church. They only have time to grab a few things, but they assume they'll be returning soon. Gbowee notes, "If I had known what was coming, I would have taken those boots."

That quote stuck with me as I read the book. The details of the war - seeing people dead in the streets, recognising boys she knew who became fighters, feeding a family on two cups of rice a day - are hard to read and somewhat hard to comprehend. It is the rare person in the developed world who knows the fear and material poverty of the developing world, particularly in war-torn countries. Fear is constant - with the threat of rape, injury, starvation, and death ever-present in each household.

Mighty Be Our Powers is both Gbowee's memoir and the story of women struggling for peace in Liberia. The reader is on the emotional roller coaster with Gbowee. She tells of the father of her children, a married man who has left his wife. Gbowee lays out the details of the relationship and how it harmed her. She then points out how it led to her children, who are her greatest joy. She would do it all again, in order to have those children.

As the reader processes the joys and pain of her personal life, Gbowee is moving ahead into the education she always wanted and into making a difference for her country. The book contains an alphabet soup of the acronyms of different peace-making organizations.

Gbowee begins working the Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Program (through the Lutheran Church in Liberia/Lutheran World Federation) and there she learns some of the techniques that will help her (and others) give women a voice. Part of the deep realization of the book (and of the world at this time) is that women may not seem to have material power, but they have emotional power.

That power, when claimed, helps women to speak up about their experiences and their expectations. They tell their stories to one another in an exercise called "The Shedding of the Weight." For many, including Gbowee, this is the first time they speak out loud of their experiences of rape, hunger, poverty, anguish, depression, death, and fear.

## An agreement is made

This book tells a powerful story, but its impact goes beyond information about women and war. The book calls attention to the cultural biases that come with relief workers from the United Nations and other international programs. It draws attention to behaviours that Westerners might consider spiritual "norms," but that are simply not possible in non-Western cultures. Often it is assumed that rebuilding a country means re-making it to American or European standards and with the same ideals. This isn't necessarily so.

## Renewed trust

I finished the book without tears, but with a renewed trust in God's action in the world. At any point along the way, Gbowee could have given up and quit. In wrestling with alcoholism, doubt, and fear, she could have given into the darkness that seemed so overwhelming. Great success also has great costs and Gbowee paid many of those. Yet, she and others continued to fight what they knew to be the good fight.

It is too easy to give into the culture of fear, war, and destruction that we see so frequently. A story like this reminds us all that goodness is stronger than evil. God's work in the world continues. Light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not, cannot, and will not overcome it.

\*Rev. Julia Seymour is pastor of Lutheran Church of Hope in Anchorage, Alaska.

# Iron Lady

Review by **Roshika Deo**



Image courtesy of [www.static.guim.co.uk](http://www.static.guim.co.uk)

*Iron Lady* is a 2012 biographical film based on the life of former British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher. I personally did not know much about the politics of Margaret Thatcher except that she was the first and the only female Prime Minister in Britain's history. I had a lot of expectations of film but was left extremely disappointed or somewhat disappointed - I cannot decide.

The film begins with an elderly Margaret Thatcher being rudely treated by other customers whilst buying milk at a supermarket. There are 'flashback' scenes throughout the film - firstly showing her as a young girl listening to her father's political ideologies; then as an election candidate; followed by her selection as prime minister; and culminating in her resignation after 11 years.

The film, however, is about the Margaret Thatcher who is ailing and 'powerless' due to her diminished mental and physical capacity. The portrayal of the elderly Thatcher made me start thinking how the dignity of an elderly person can actually start disappearing when what one knows as life gradually erodes with illness and mental, physical or emotional disabilities. And the loss of dignity is further exacerbated when elderly people are not treated well by family members and the state.

After she loses her first election, Dennis Thatcher proposes marriage to her and says, by marrying him, she will have a better chance at winning. He is a rich businessman and she is from the working class - a grocer's daughter. She is shown to be intelligent, committed, hardworking and a persistent young woman but apparently that is not enough - she needs to be married too.

Margaret in response says that she will never be the woman who stays silent, and will not die washing a tea cup. She says "ones life must matter, beyond all the cooking and the cleaning and the children". I loved it when she said that - most probably my favourite line. But then at the end of the film, I was heartbroken. She was shown washing a cup. What were the filmmakers trying to depict? Despite being one of the most powerful people at one time in your life, in the end you will be lonely and still a "woman"? Or was it that her place ultimately was in the kitchen? Or that her life as an elderly woman did not matter anymore?

There was also a scene in the film where she is shown driving to go to the House of Commons, and her children are running after her car and banging on the car windows, begging her not to go. She does not stop nor looks at them and is seen shoving all the toys in the dashboard. Now again I am confused with what the filmmaker was trying to convey. Was she a bad mother because she was pursuing her political career and ambition? Her husband Dennis is shown as supportive in the film - then is it not possible that her children would have also been supportive or maybe Dennis would be a supportive father as well?

Now maybe this is how things worked back then, but the manner in which it is portrayed does not help advance women's political status today.

I liked aspects of the film which highlighted her unwavering commitment and perseverance to enter a male dominated profession and the support she received from her father and her husband.

But juxtaposing the film with the context of current times, where women remain highly invisible in parliament and at national leadership roles, I believe the film did not really do justice to Margaret Thatcher's political leadership in a male dominated arena.

I, however, would still recommend for people to watch this film as decades after Margaret Thatcher's reign, women continue to face the same barriers and gender stereotyping that she faced then.

## 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  
Non-waged/Student - \$5

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Ph: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_



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Mail: GPO Box 14194, Suva, Fiji Is

# LOOKOUT!

## Women's Forum

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement, National Council of Women, Soqosoqo Vakamarama, and femLINKpacific are co-convening a Fiji Consultation on Women's Participation in National Democratic Processes (Women's Forum), with the support of the United Nations Development Programme, Pacific Centre from April 10th to 12th, 2012.

For more information contact us via telephone 3312711 and/or email [info@fwrn.org.fj](mailto:info@fwrn.org.fj)

## AWID 2012

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement will be attending the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) Forum from April 19-22, 2012 in Istanbul, Turkey.

Aside from hosting (and co-hosting) two sessions, some staff members will also be attending dialogues on digital security for women human rights defenders; the Young Feminist Day; as well as a feminist macroeconomic justice training.

For updates on our activities and thoughts during AWID, follow FWRM's Facebook page – [www.facebook.com/fwrn1](http://www.facebook.com/fwrn1) and Twitter account. Email [info@fwrn.org.fj](mailto:info@fwrn.org.fj) for any other queries.

## Herstory

In the second quarter of the year, the Fiji Women's Rights Movement will launch its 25-year Herstory. This important publication chronicles significant triumphs and challenges of the Movement.