



Balance

"HELPING TO BALANCE THE SCALES"

October

3/2012



Women's movement makes constitution presentations

THE Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC) and the Fiji Women's Rights Movement's (FWRM) made (separate) presentations to the Fiji Constitution Commission, outlining the key provisions envisioned in Fiji's next Constitution on October 12, 2012.

"While both the organisations sent in our full documents to the Commission on the 10th, as per the deadline for written documents, due to time constraints, we chose to highlight a few of the main points in our oral presentation," said FWCC Coordinator Shamima Ali.

Both FWCC and FWRM have concerns about the legitimacy of the 2012 constitution-making process. The Fiji Constitutional Process Decrees (Numbers 57 and 58), eliminate certain principles from discussion on the basis that they are "non-negotiable", and contain demands for immunity.

"As organisations that have consistently advocated for democracy, the rule of law and human rights, we uphold the 1997 Constitution Amendment Act 1997 and the 2009 Court of

Appeal Judgment of *Qarase v Bainimarama* ([2009] FJCA 9)," said Ali.

"We believe the issue of immunity for coup perpetrators can only be decided following a truth, reconciliation and justice process. We are also proposing a parallel citizens assembly, to support and expand the opinion base of the Constituent's Assembly, as we remain concerned how the official Constituent's Assembly will be formed and function. We are also troubled by the current environment in which this constitution-making process is taking place, in particular the continuing restrictive atmosphere in which citizens attempt to participate and the news media must operate," said FWRM Executive Director Virisila Buadromo.

"We also believe that to create an enabling environment for appropriate access to justice, the role and the independence of the judiciary needs to be addressed. We also feel that in order for these processes to proceed in earnest, there is a need for military personnel to withdraw from the structures of government so that people

may participate freely and fairly and without fear in any process which determines the future of our country," said Ali.

Nevertheless, the importance of this exercise and the hope it represents in this opportunity to start afresh is welcomed. We are taking part because of our responsibility to the women of

this country to speak for them and to advance the cause for meaningful gender equality. And so we embark on this journey with a fragile faith and a faint trust that, despite our deepest fears surrounding the Constitution Commission and the unfathomable intentions of those in power, a new Constitution will presage the restoration of the rule of law, democracy and free and fair elections by September, 2014.

We take the 1997 Constitution as the foundation from which we make our recommendations on the 13 areas.

In some cases we build upon the existing provisions of the 1997 Constitution, while in other recommendations we suggest alternatives, and in others entire new provisions.

CONSTITUTION
SPECIAL EDITION
PAGES 5-8

From the Director's desk

Greetings from FWRM!



IN the third quarter of this year, the Fiji Women's Rights Movement, was kept busy creating awareness and assisting women, especially those from marginalized groups, in making submissions to the Constitution Commission.

We undertook such a myriad of constitution-related activities that we decided make this a special constitution issue. Flipping through the pages you will read about: (1) FWRM's own constitution presentation (2) civic education training held Rakiraki, Labasa, Navua and Lakeba (3) constitution submission monitoring around Fiji and (4) through creative means, advocating for young women to make submissions.

Also during this quarter, the women's movement in Fiji and the Pacific lost two of its pioneering women's human rights activists. Ruth Lechte and Susan Parkinson, who shared a deep bond with FWRM, passed away within a month of each other. Ruth's partner Diane Goodwillie shares with us her tribute to both women on page 3.

On the international front, FWRM presented a paper on women's public and political participation in the context of an undemocratic military regime at the Asia Pacific Regional consultation with United Nations Special Procedures. This was organised by Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development and the Women's Rehabilitation Center Nepal. Research Officer Roshika Deo undertook the trip.

Take some time to read our Lookout! section (back page) where we give a detailed list of four important activities the Movement is undertaking in November and December, especially our plans for 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence.

We will also be launching several important publications in the next month, as well as a television public service announcement encouraging support for temporary special measures for women's political participation in Fiji in the constitution.

These are just some of the stories captured in this edition, as well as, highlights of activities planned in the next couple of weeks. As always, if you have any feedback, send it to info@fwr.org.fj.

Enjoy this edition!

In solidarity,

Virisila Buadromo



By **Bronwyn Tilbury**

IN a variety of formal and informal ways the Fiji Women's Rights Movement has been monitoring and evaluating (M&E) its work for over 26 years now - assessing and reassessing, reflecting, discussing, learning, building upon and improving the work that we do is a part of our everyday work. However, while this is true, the donor environment in which we work and the international standards to which we aspire, mean that we also recognize the need to systematically gather evidence to prove that the work that we do is having a positive impact.

For this reason the FWRM staff recently took two days out of our busy schedule to focus on developing our M&E skills. To do this, we enlisted the assistance of Tim Bryar, an expert in 'Outcome Mapping' - a new and exciting M&E framework that nongovernmental organisations in developing countries around the world have been embracing.

As Programme Development and Research Officer, I also assisted in the design and facilitation of the two-day workshop and with Tim took us

through the 'Intentional Design' step of the process, which helped us define the 'outcome challenges' and 'progress markers' of all our programmes. The workshop was a great success with all staff expressing a greater understanding of the importance of M&E and the process of Outcome Mapping.

FWRM hopes that this more systematic M&E framework will give the Movement a clearer picture of the long-term contributions we are making to attitudes and judgments towards women in Fiji and the Pacific.

It will make us more accountable to our recipients and to our donors and assist us in aligning our programmes with the overall purpose of the Movement. But, most importantly, it will help to create an environment of consistently sharing experiences and honestly reflecting on our performance, which will help FWRM to become a truly learning organisation which will ultimately facilitate more effective programmes and activities, contributing to greater respect for women's human rights in the Pacific.

Remembering Ruth and Susan

WOMEN'S movements in Fiji and across the Pacific mourned the loss, acknowledged the work and celebrated the lives of two amazing women – Ruth Lechte and Susan Parkinson – who passed away in September and October (respectively) this year.

Both women were affiliated with the Fiji Women's Rights Movement - Ruth assisted in the development of what is now the Movement's Young Women in Leadership Programme, while Susan was one of our trustee's from 1987 to 1995.

At the Movement's silver jubilee celebrations last year, both Ruth and Susan were part of the 25 recipients of FWRM's Women Human Rights Defenders Acknowledgments. While Ruth was unable to attend the function due to a stroke she had suffered earlier in the year, her partner and long-time FWRM supporter and activist Diane Goodwillie accepted the acknowledgement on her behalf. Susan, however, attended the function and it was wonderful for many of the younger members of the Movement to meet her for the first time.

Below are excerpts from an article written by Diane on both Ruth and Susan, for Islands Business magazine.

Ruth Lechte

Peace Activist, Feminist and Environmentalist

Compiled from papers by Anne Walker, Sharon RollsfemLINKPACIFC, Diane Goodwillie and Stephen Garrett

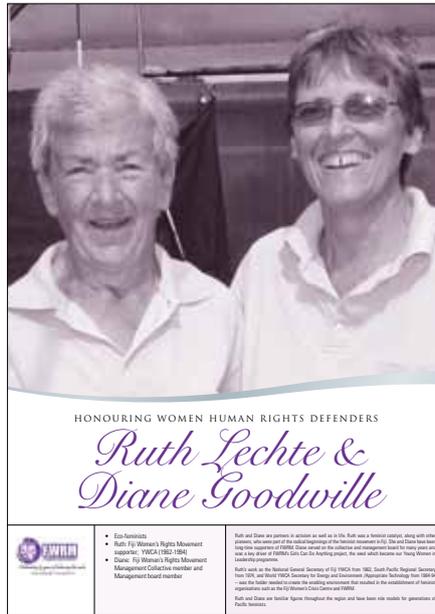
Born in Melbourne, Ruth Lechte attended the Methodist Ladies College, then taught science at Korowa Girls School before training as a youth worker at Selly Oak College, Birmingham, England.

In 1962, she and Anne Walker went to Fiji, at the invitation of a group of local women, to be organising secretary and kindergarten/programme director of the Fiji YWCA. Through the newly formed YWCA, many prominent women in today's society received their first leadership experiences. Ruth and Anne passionately fought for multi-racial women's sports teams.

Ruth gave voice to issues, spoke out fervently about injustices and questioned assumptions about everything. She made people laugh. She looked for fun and adventure and gave out confidence.

In 1974, the World YWCA appointed Ruth the South Pacific Area Secretary. She established a one person travelling office and advised women's groups, independence movements and youth initiatives throughout the Pacific. Because of Ruth's work, women in the Pacific were able to connect with overseas partners and find funding instrumental for fledgling initiatives for women's rural initiatives and independence struggles especially in Vanuatu, New Caledonia, Palau, Marshall Islands and French Polynesia.

In 1983, Ruth was appointed to the World YWCA international portfolio of Energy and Environment and



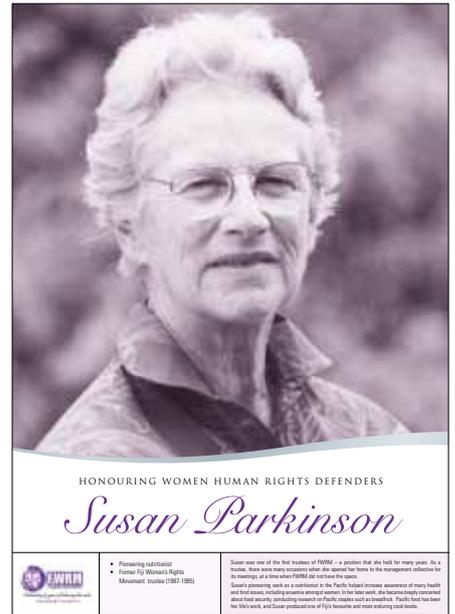
Appropriate Technology. During this phase of her life, Ruth worked from Nadi, Fiji but contributed to women's education and small business initiatives in over 80 different countries.

After Lechte's retirement from the World YWCA, she worked on an environment education programme for the Fiji Environment Department, was a trustee for Fiji Women's Crisis Centre and the Fiji Traditional Healers Association (Wainimate).

For many years Ruth assisted UNIFEM (now United Nations Women) in its Women and Politics regional training workshops in Fiji, Vanuatu, Bougainville, Solomon Islands and East Timor. She also helped edit the Women and Politics training manual and various resource materials used throughout the region to encourage and give skills to aspiring women political candidates.

Ruth was given the Fiji Independence Medal in 1970, and was awarded an Order of Fiji in 1995. The Government of Vanuatu gave Ruth the Order of Vanuatu in 2009 for "duties of great responsibility to the people of Vanuatu."

In Feb 2011, Ruth suffered a massive stroke that left her aphasic, unable to talk, a cruel blow for the person nicknamed fondly "The Voice". However with limited speech and facial expressions she made her views known and continued to be active in nurturing the environment, weeding, tree planting, noting birds, flowers and environmental pests. A second massive stroke in September led to a quick and painless death on 19 September 2012. In a characteristic Lechte gesture, she willed her body for medical research. Ruth is survived by Diane Goodwillie, her partner of 34 years as well as nieces, nephews and cousins in Melbourne and Queensland. Celebratory gatherings were conducted in Coolum and Suva and are to be held in Canberra and Melbourne in mid November.



Susan Parkinson

Nutritionist, Social Justice and Women's Rights Pioneer

Compiled from papers by Matt Wilson and Suliana Siwatibau

Susan Parkinson, was brought up on her family's sheep farm, TeHopai, in New Zealand's Wairarapa Valley.

Following graduation from Otago University in New Zealand, employment in Wellington and Leeds England, Susan received a scholarship for post graduate studies at Cornell University in the USA. Her thesis on the nutritional trends among Navajo Native Americans living on an arid reservation in Arizona provided her with an acute awareness of the dangers of rapidly changing diet amongst indigenous people and the need to combine the study of anthropology with public health.

Susan was recruited as a nutritionist with the South Pacific Health Service headquartered in Suva in 1950. For four years she travelled to regional countries studying and surveying food and nutrition issues in villages, schools, hospitals and other institutions. She developed educational material and specific programmes to promote healthy eating with an emphasis on infant and maternal nutrition. Susan travelled regularly by boat and canoe, and on foot and horseback where there were no roads. Later she said these were among her happiest times.

As a lecturer at the Fiji School of Medicine (FSM) from 1954 until 1972, she developed dietetic and public health nutrition training most likely a first for developing countries. After 1972 Susan took on voluntary work with a wide range of organisations,

Cont'd on page 5

In the heart of the Himalayas



THE Himalayan range and the constant changing landscape was the backdrop of the Asia Pacific Regional consultation with United Nations Special Procedures, organised by Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development and the Women's Rehabilitation Center Nepal. A group of around 35 feminist and women human rights defenders met on the September 19th-20th to consult on women's public and political life: towards substantive equality, human rights, democracy and development.

Kamala Chandrakiranan, member of the UN working group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and practise, together with Heisoo Shin (former member of Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women member) an expert member of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, were present to engage with the group.

The UN working group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and practise are looking particularly at political transitions and their thematic report will be presented to the Human Rights Council in 2013.

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement presented a paper

By Roshika Deo

on women's public and political participation in the context of an undemocratic military regime. FWRM also presented and facilitated roundtable discussions with smaller groups on Fiji's experience with the Universal Periodic Review process.

The consultation was enriching and timely given that Fiji is undergoing a political transition. Most of the countries represented at the consultation, expressed support and solidarity as they have also experienced or are experiencing political transitions from military dictatorships.

The political transition experience in Burma; free and fair election movements to shape democratic discourses in Malaysia; women's economic participation in Nepal; and a critical feminist perspective on public participation in the network age, were some of the major discussions.

Sharing of experiences and discussions also allowed for the human rights defenders and feminists to look at the enabling environments that are required in order for women to gain political voices. The experiences from the different

countries also revealed how women's voices, representation and participation are suppressed by fundamentalism and militarisation. There were also discussions on how economic policies are shaped and influenced by militarisation and conflicts.

For Fiji and the Pacific these are some of the own current concerns which are reflected in the average proportion of women in parliament at 3.1%, poverty levels and the high prevalence of gender based violence.

Inspiration was also drawn from side conversations with GABRIELA (General Assembly Binding Women for Reforms, Integrity, Equality, Leadership, and Action) women's movement and political party in Philippines, a women political prisoner from Burma, an International Labour Organisation governing body member and a Nepali unionist, the Tanzanian legal experience and stimulating meetings with the renowned feminist Kamla Bhasin.

The consultation ended with a peace rally to commemorate International Day of Peace on September 21. The group joined local women's groups in Kathmandu to show solidarity.

Can we learn?

Background

Nepal – a country with over 100 minority groups and nearly 100 languages had a monarchy system of governance then transitioned to a parliamentary monarchy and now is a federal multi party system.

FWRM met with key people to synthesize its findings: - the Secretary General of Nepal Constituent Assembly; Nepal Congress political party Constituent Assembly speakers and both women and men party members; female State Minister; women Constituent Assembly members from the Communist Party of Nepal, the Maoist Party and General Federation of the Nepalese Trade Unions; women's NGOs; and Mandira Sharma who works on cases and matters involving the security forces and militants.

Process

Through great civil unrest and war, in 2006 the mass people's movement caused the collapse of the parliamentary monarchy government. An interim constitution and a transitory government were put in place, as Nepal proceeded to make its permanent constitution representative of its people.

The interim constitution provided for a Constituent Assembly (CA) to draft the permanent constitution and

would be in place for two years from 2008. The work was not completed and it was extended for two years. Due to failure to reach consensus on contentious issues, the CA was dissolved in May 2012.

The CA members were elected by the people through a mixed electoral system of First Past the Post (FPTP) and Proportional Representation (PR) election, and some members are nominated (members on the group of intellectual and academics). There are 601 members - 240 members elected through FPTP system (single seat constituencies), 335 elected through the PR system and 26 nominated members. The major functions of the CA is to prepare a constitution and ratify it after discussion; conform the issues to be decided through referendum; take decision on republic through the first meeting of the CA; decide state's restructures in accordance with the federal form and to work as legislative parliament.

Members of the committees were chosen based on the representation of the political parties in the CA. Consideration was given to minority groups, women, indigenous nationalities, those from underdeveloped regions, and Muslims. 33% quota for women was mandated to political parties.

The next steps are not certain however political parties have indicated that there will be mass public agitation if the interim government does not make a timely decision.

Learning

According to the women CA members including the

State minister the quota system was a good way for them to overcome certain patriarchal barriers in order to be able to participate. The women revealed that the challenges were greater and institutionalised especially when all the political party leaders were men and they made decisions among themselves. The group also mentioned that international experts were used as advisors when people required and that the process was locally driven and represented. The women also shared that during the civil unrest women were on the frontline and were critical in the formation of the CA - but political parties failed to include them substantially afterwards. The women's caucus in the CA had a unified voice on the contentious issues however decisions were made in exclusion. The women shared that the reason for the failure of the CA was because women's viewpoints were not taken into consideration on the contentious issues and the men were just "fighting" among themselves. Constitutional committee leaders stopped attending meetings when it got too hard to handle the tension disrupting the consensus process. The Nepal experience with a culture of impunity, militarisation and truth, reconciliation and justice process was shared too.

The women strongly echoed that the Fiji constitution making process is flawed as the military government remains in power - an interim government should have been put in place first then the constitution making process to have commenced.

Empowering women through the constitutional process

By **Neomai Maravuakula** and **Shabina Khan**

IN October, the Fiji Women's Rights Movement completed its first round of civic education training and assisting women to share their views with the Constitution Commission through their submissions.

FWRM began this journey with the women in Rakiraki during a two-day consultation in September. Around 53 women from Ba, Tavua, Vatukoula and Rakiraki met for two days to discuss issues that they would like to highlight in their submissions to the commission.

A similar exercise, which built on the previous consultation, was carried out in Labasa in the first week of October. FWRM met with women in Lajonia and then undertook a two-day consultation in Labasa where other women from areas such as Vunivicui, Siberia, Waiqele and other nearby communities were also able to participate.

For this training, FWRM chose to work with around 121 Indo-Fijian women and women from sexual minority groups specifically, as the Movement's monitoring and evaluation has indicated that these particular groups are heavily marginalised in political processes.

Women from various rural areas of Labasa showed overwhelming interest to express their issues to the Commission. With a feeling of hope amongst the women, this was another forum in which women from around the country were able to raise issues that they face daily.

Out of the 115 submissions that the Constitution

Commission received on Thursday October 4th, 2012 at the Labasa Civic Centre from 9am – 12pm, 67 of those were made by women!

A third training was carried out in Navua with 22 women. From this training, 20 submissions were made by the participants.

The experience has been an empowering one not only for the participants who have attended these consultations but also a learning exercise for those who facilitated these sessions. Through their submissions, women continued to express their daily plights and requests that are not heeded by various State departments.

The civic education training was a learning process for FWRM. The programme was adapted to suit the women in the different communities that were visited

and also to ensure that women were able to freely raise their concerns in a safe space. Women came with their children, grandchildren and were able to participate in the consultation and also observe and make their oral submissions to the constitution commissioner's.

The issues raised by women in their submissions ranged from environmental issues that were being faced by employee's and their families in Vatukoula, to inaccessible roads in areas that have led to women walking for hours to reach the nearest health center and children leaving their homes at 5am to make it to school at 9am. In addition women from Lajonia in Labasa, brought bottles of dirty tap water to show that access to clean drinking water is not a reality for them. For many of the participants that took part in these consultations it was the first time to learn about the Constitution and its importance in their lives. For many, it was also a first to find out how they could participate in this process of drafting a new Constitution for Fiji. Some also identified this to be their first time to speak in public and were exhilarated with the experience as it boosted their confidence to speak out.

It was an empowering exercise to witness women in Fiji taking the first step in Fiji's democratisation process. FWRM will take away lessons learnt through this process and begin its plan to working with these communities towards Fiji's 2014 elections.



Remembering Ruth and Susan

From page 3

and was closely involved in the formation of the Fiji National Nutrition Committee, which convinced the Fiji Government of the importance of nutrition in national development. This led to the adoption of a food and nutrition policy. She conducted and promoted research on Pacific islands food technology and nutritional values, anaemia in women and initiated a valuable ten yearly national nutrition survey still conducted today. Her research in association with the University of the South Pacific (USP), into traditional uses and preservation methods for staple crops attracted great interest at the 1989 Seventh World Congress of Food Science and Technology.

Susan wrote and taught on dietary issues, visited remote villages, made numerous radio broadcasts, delivered lectures and contributed to columns in the Fiji Times. She wrote and published the first handbook

on nutrition for the Pacific Islands which is still in use as important reference. She wrote several cook books using local foods in order to promote their wider use. The most well known of these "A Taste of the Pacific" was promoted jointly with the then Fiji National Marketing Authority in the hope of encouraging exportation of local food produce outside of Fiji.

Susan Parkinson was a pioneer in many ways, not least of which was her promotion and support for women's liberation. She was a strong supporter of the Fiji YWCA in its early days of advocacy for women's concerns over issues such as equal pay, sexual harassment, prostitution, girls' education, and violence against women to name a few. After analysis and discussions of the issue at hand she would say 'what do we do now?'

From the publicly vocal YWCA to which she remained a faithful member to her last day, she went on to support the growth of another activist women's

group – FWRM for which Susan was one of the first trustees. She frequently opened her home to the management collective for its meetings when it needed the space. She was as generous as she was determined.

Susan won many accolades and awards including the Order of the British Empire (OBE) and the Order of Fiji (OF). She also received an Honorary Degree from the USP.

In 1956, in Suva, Susan married Ray Parkinson, from Melbourne, the Fiji government statistician. For over 50 years, Susan lived in her beautiful spotless Vuya Road home with fresh flowers and delicious meals created from mundane ingredients such as her rourousoufflé. The carefully tended fertile gardens, and her pets, were an important part of her life. She was an instinctive environmentalist with an intense dislike of litter.

Susan Parkinson (nee Holmes) died in Suva on Sunday October 7, 2012, after a short illness. She was 92. She leaves a son William, daughter-in-law Sufi and grandchildren Farah and Shavez, as well as many relatives in New Zealand and Australia.

Monitoring around Fiji

By **Siga Tanuku** and **Praneeta Chand**

IN early October we started interning at the Fiji Women's Rights Movement. Our internship involved monitoring submissions made to the Constitution Commission across the country. At the end of our internship, a month later, we had attended a total of 23 sessions.

Below are some of the main issues raised during various submissions in the different divisions of Fiji:

- Western Division** - land-related issues; the issue of same sex marriages; and village by-laws
- Central Division** - mainly political issues; land-related issues; gender equality; education and pension
- Northern Division** - village by-laws; ownership mineral resources (6 feet law) human rights issues; corporal punishment for children
- Generally** - other issues frequently discussed were on the electoral systems; criteria for the selection of Fiji's Prime Minister and President; our common identity; dual citizenship; education system and the voting age.

During the month we travelled to villages that were along the coast to the ones that were way up in the interior of the island, from the rural settlements to the

urban areas. We also went to submission centres that were in informal settlements.

Our experience helped us realise how controversial human rights, especially women rights, is to people. Many people are threatened by empowered women and the idea of women's empowerment.

The internship also helped us broaden our network of friends and acquaintances and assisted us in gaining more knowledge on women's rights, civil rights and why it's important to stand up against gender discrimination. It's humbling to follow in the footsteps of those women who fought for the rights we enjoy today.

Our work experience was awesome and we enjoyed working closely with Research Officers Mereoni Tavakaturaga and Roshika Deo as well as the rest of the amazing staff at FWRM who make the work environment fun and easy to work in.

We met so many kinds of people from all walks of life, each with a different outlook on life, their beliefs, ethnicity, background and aspirations. Despite a few hiccups that was expected on such a journey as ours, the experience we gained, the friends we made is one we would cherish in our memories. FWRM has taught us values and ethics re-enforced by motivational inspirations that we will carry with us into the future. Our heart-felt appreciation and gratitude goes out to the executive director and staff for making our internship not only a life changing one but also a memorable one.



Submissions on Lakeba Island

By **Mereoni Tavakaturaga**

THE Fiji Women's Rights Movement conducted a civic education training and guided interested women on Lakeba Island to make submissions to the Constitution Commission on issues important to them.

The FWRM team arrived three days prior to the scheduled constitution hearing on October 15 and had its first training with women from all the eight villages. This meeting was organised through the Tubou Methodist Church.

During the training FWRM informed the women on the importance of participating in the submission process and provided them with a simple template devised by the Movement.

Women openly and heatedly discussed their

issues and even called for more women in parliament. This provided FWRM an opportunity to discuss the concept of Temporary Special Measures (TSM) for increasing the number of women in political participation, with them. The facilitators were happy to note that subsequently some of the women asked for the provision of TSM's to be included in the constitution in their submission.

To ensure maximum participation of women on the day of the submission, FWRM funded travel expenses for women from seven villages to Tubou. The presence of women dominated the meeting hall where the submissions were being heard!

Unfortunately, due to time constraints, the villagers were only given two hours by the Commissioners to make oral submissions. At the end of two hours those who were unable to speak put in written submissions.

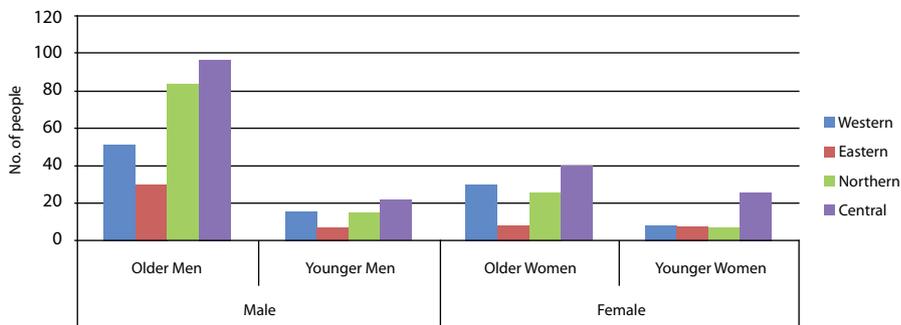
A total of 13 submissions were made – nine by men and four by women.





FWRM's monitoring team visited 31 venues and observed a total of 397 submission presentations. From this, 155 women and 320 men made submission presentations. Some women and men presented as a group.

Bar Graph Representing the Submissions by Gender and Age from the Various Divisions

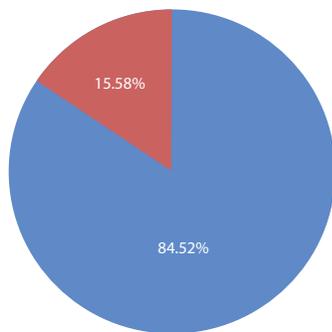


Divisions	Male		Female	
	Older Men	Younger Men	Older Women	Younger Women
Western	51	16	30	9
Eastern	30	7	9	8
Northern	83	15	26	7
Central	96	22	40	26

Women brought in by FWRM:

These 24 people had financial assistance and training from FWRM which enabled them to make their submissions

Percentage of Women brought in by FWRM



■ Women not from FWRM ■ FWRM Women

Divisions	Women brought by FWRM	Women not brought by FWRM
Western	10	29
Eastern	5	12
Northern	9	24
Central	0	66
Total	24	131

Young women's voices unheard

By **Roshika Deo**

The Emerging Leaders Forum Alumni (ELFA) prepared a comprehensive written submission, made from the standpoint of amendments to the 1997 Constitution.

We asked for the recognition of patriarchy as a form of oppression and inequality; and recognition of same sex unions/marriage and civil rights; sex education in schools; tertiary student loan scheme; water and health to be free from corporatisation and privatisation; paternity leave rights for fathers; disability justice and accommodation rights; environmental rights; and temporary special measures for 50% women representation in national bodies, including parliament.

We also prepared an oral submission, with a short summary of the written submission. It highlighted the marginalisation that young women faced, and ironically we never got to present our oral submission because of this discrimination. We were not given time to make our presentation before the Constitution Commission in Suva, despite seeking space and time to do so – even though we observed others getting more than the allocated time to speak.

ELFA has resolved to even fight harder to ensure that women, especially young women, are visible in the public political spheres so we can change this culture and attitudes that do not give us the same recognition as it gives to men, who continue to dominate the political and public spheres.

Tiuanualevu.

Among other things they recommended human rights, environmental protection rights, animal rights, reform of Fiji's education system, and TSM's for women in political participation to be part of the new constitution.

Personal is political

A number of the staff at the Fiji Women's Rights Movement also made personal submissions to the Constitution Commission. Amongst those were Communications Officer Shazia Usman, Human Rights Training Officers Neomai and Shabina Khan, as well as Young Women's Officer Filomena



My Constitution Must Include Me!

University Open Days

In order to create more awareness on Fiji's constitution-making process amongst young people in high school and in tertiary institutions, the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (with funding from the British High Commission) took part in the Fiji National University's Open Day on July 13, 2012 and the University of the South Pacific's Open Day on August 10, 2012.

The objective of FWRM's participation was not only to create awareness on the constitution-making process and encourage young people to make submissions but to also have interactive discussions with students coming to the booth to gauge their knowledge on Fiji democratisation process.

To encourage young people, especially young women to take part in the constitutional-making process, FWRM designed, produced and distributed t-shirts and bags with the slogan *My Constitution Must Include Me* and gave them away as prizes to students who correctly answered questions related to Fiji's democratisation process.

While the enthusiasm from the students to know more about the process was evident, even if it was mainly based on winning prizes, it was quite disappointing to note the lack of knowledge on current affairs/news that existed amongst these students.

The majority of the students were unable to answer any questions related to the makeup of the Constitutional Commission, despite it being reported in Fiji's news media nearly every day for the last two months. Nor were they able to answer any questions related to the 1997 Constitution. There were however, quite a large number of students, who knew about the old and new voting age and when the next elections were going to be held.

Public Service Announcements

In a comment to the news media in mid August, the Chair of the Constitution Commission, Yash Ghai, stated that the Commission had not received many submissions from women and youth. This was quite worrying, as it is imperative that women's voices and opinions, especially those of young women and women from marginalised groups, be part of Fiji's next constitution.

So with funding assistance from AusAID, FWRM developed and broadcasted television and radio public service announcements (PSA) for three weeks from Tuesday September 18th to October 10th, 2012, in a bid to create more awareness on Fiji's constitution-making process and to encourage young women to make submissions

The target audience were young women between the ages of 18 – 30; and to ensure a nationwide reach that was accessible by young women from different ethnicities and socio-economic background, FWRM advertised with the following national broadcasters:



By Shazia Usman

- Fiji Broadcasting Corporation's English, Hindi and Fijian stations (which has the widest reach in Fiji)
- Communication Fiji Limited's English, Hindi and Fijian stations
- Fiji Broadcasting Corporation's TV station
- Fiji TV
- MaiTV
- On a massive LED screen located in Suva City

These PSA's were also uploaded on to FWRM's website, Facebook and YouTube accounts. They were also shared with some of FWRM's partner organisations Facebook pages, especially with the Citizen's Constitutional Forum.

The eight talents used for the PSA's were from FWRM's Emerging Leaders' Forum Alumni. One talent of indigenous Fijian descent chose to speak in Fiji Hindi. Similarly, we also had an Indo-Fijian alumnus, who is also a LGBTQI activist, speaking in Fijian.

All talents were wearing FWRM's eye-catching *My Constitution Must Include Me* t-shirts.

All three PSA's in English, Fiji Hindi and Fijian can be viewed on FWRM's YouTube page - <http://www.youtube.com/fwrmm2011>

Panel Discussion on Fiji's Constitution

In September this year, FWRM, in collaboration with the University of the South Pacific's (USP) School of Government, Development and International Affairs and the Faculty of Business and Economics, organised a panel discussion on Fiji's Constitution.

For FWRM, the objective of this panel discussion was to create more awareness amongst members of the public on the importance of women's participation in Fiji's constitution-making process. The British High Commission funded this activity.

A little more than 300 people attended the panel discussion and this was mainly due to sharing information with FWRM's and USP's extensive networks, as well as advertising on three separate days in national newspaper, the *Fiji Times*.

The complete list of panellists and the topics they spoke on:

1. Women's participation in Constitution making process: the South African experience – **Christina Murray**
2. 'Cruel Optimism': 1997 Constitution or Not? – **Ashwin Raj**
3. A young person's vision for Fiji – **Jope Tarai**
4. Sustainable Democracy – **Sandra Tarte**
5. Alternative approaches to citizenship – on unity and diversity in Fiji – **Noelene Nabulivou**
6. Engaging youth - **Tura Lewai**
7. Local government – **Alisi Daurewa**

Each panellist was given five minutes to speak after which there was a 30 minute question and answer (Q&A) session. Some of the questions were based on the following issues:

- Importance of civic education and why have the Fiji Constitution Commission not done more outreach, especially in the rural areas?
- How to encourage the participation of young people and women in the process?
- The importance of recognising people's different identities in the new constitution.

On December 5th FWRM, in collaboration with the Citizen's Constitutional Forum and USP, will be organising a public lecture on the *Nature of a Constituent Assembly*. The lecture will be delivered by Laureate Professor of Melbourne Law School, Cheryl Saunders (see back page for more details on lecture).

Fredrica for Prime Minister!

In early September the Fiji Women's Rights Movement received an appeal for help from Fredrica Nagan that we just could not refuse.

Fredrica, has been involved with FWRM from an early age. She has been an eager and gifted participant in a number of our 'Girls' programmes, including most recently Green Girls in 2011 (under our Gender Justice and Climate Change project) and the Feminist Fairytales Project in this year.

So when we found out that Fredrica had been nominated to be part of a 35 member Fiji Girl Guides contingent headed for the Australian Jamboree in 2013, and that she needed help raising funds for airfares and registration, well, we couldn't say no!

We decided to throw a little afternoon tea at the FWRM office to try to raise some funds so that Fredrica could take advantage of this amazing opportunity. The afternoon tea fell on September 27th, as did a lot of rain! But around 25 of FWRM's loyal friends and supporters braved the downpour to join us for a fun afternoon of delicious cupcakes, fresh fruit and warm drinks.

The highlight of the afternoon came, however, when Fredrica, who we remembered as a cute little girl, stood up as a confident young woman to wow us all with a well prepared, articulate and inspiring speech.

Her list of achievements put us all to shame - environmental activism, survival skills badges with the Girl Guides, provincial and national oratory contest champion two years running as well as being elected Head Girl of Saint Agnes Primary this year! What a stellar career, and only 13 years old!

The afternoon tea raised around \$300 to contribute to the trip and we would like to sincerely thank everyone who came to support Fredrica.

Here's what Fredrica had to say:

"Being selected to be part of the 35 member Fiji girl guides contingent to the Australian national Jamboree is an amazing achievement. It would be a challenge to expose myself outside of Fiji and be able to meet new girls from other countries with the same commitment I have. It will also enhance building relationship with other girls and broaden my knowledge on girl guiding and being a teenager as a whole. The principles of girl guiding is dynamic and will build my character individually as a girl. Given this opportunity is a life time experience, being out of Fiji for the first time, leaving my parents and my friends during the school holidays but I believe it is worth the sacrifice and will build me as person and to become a better decision maker in the future. The Tasmanian tour would be a chance to learn about another country and their culture and will enable me to interact and understand my colleagues with the same goal. I am really looking

By **Bronwyn Tilbury**

forward to the activities that are offered - activities on, women's issues, the MDGs, Badge swapping, environmental activities. FWRM has been a pillar of strength during my fundraising and their support is warmly engraved in my heart. To Viri, Filo, Bronwyn, Shazia and the FWRM team, thank you once again for the generous gesture and support you showed me today. I will never forget this and it would be part of my sharing with friends from overseas and to one and all thank you, danya vad and vinaka vakalevu."

We couldn't be prouder of the passionate and intelligent young woman that Fredrica has become and we wish her all the best at the Girl Guides Jamboree next year. We look forward to voting for you as Prime Minister of Fiji one day Fredrica!

(Note: In mid-December you'll be seeing Fredrica on Fiji TV, as she, along with FWRM's Vice Board Chair Priscilla Singh promote Temporary Special Measures for women in political participation in Fiji!)



Each Balance issue this year will feature a traditional fairytale re-written with a feminist twist by eight budding authors. 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.

Bella and the Witch

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

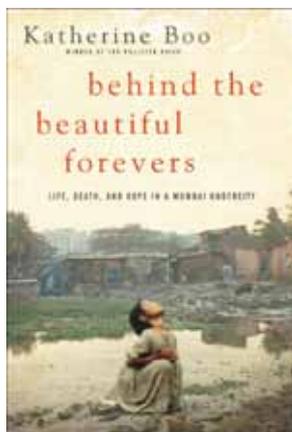
Tiare Chang turns eleven-years-old this year and attends Stella Maris School. She wants to be an author when she grows up.

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

Her favorite subjects at school are social studies and science.

Behind the Beautiful Forever

Author: **Katherine Boo**
 Review by **Ian Thomson**



Katherine Boo's 'Behind the Beautiful Forever' is a fearless dispatch from the slum underworld of contemporary Mumbai

In 1971, at the height of the Indo-Pakistan war, my parents took me with them to Bombay. I was 10 and it was my first trip abroad. My father worked for Brooke Bond India, and had "tea business" to attend. Outside our hotel – the swank Taj – beggar children with lurid deformities were shaking tins at passers-by. I felt myself a voyeur of misery.

I was reminded of my schoolboy visit while reading Katherine Boo's magnificent investigation into the slum underworld of the Indian city known today by its Hindi name of Mumbai. Boo, an American journalist, does not flinch from addressing the city's social inequalities and, in particular, the plight of its rubbish-sorting underclass. Behind the L'Oréal hoardings and billboard adverts for the perfect home ("Beautiful Forever. Forever Beautiful")

lie the shacks and squatter colonies of Mumbai's dispossessed. Even the vilest and most crime-infested refuse sites are no deterrent to the author as she seeks out waste-pickers and other social strays to interview.

Boo's book is the product of four years spent in the Mumbai slum of Annawadi, built in the early Nineties in the shadow of shining luxury hotels. It is written with a novelist's ear for dialogue and narrative pace, and could almost pass for a collection of non-fiction short stories. In the guise of reportage, Boo tells a riveting story, yet she displays no crass sympathy for the social wretchedness she describes. Boo has set down the humiliations and deprivations of the inhabitants of Annawadi not in order to horrify the reader – though it does – but in order to bear witness. To give way to glib moral outrage would tarnish her credibility as a reporter.

In the author's account, Annawadi grew around the city's international airport when Tamil construction workers began to squat on government land there. They scraped a pittance by sifting through the trash spewed out daily from the hotels. Rotting food, beer bottle tops and plastic bottles could be sold in bulk to the neighbourhood's many recycling plants. Runaway teenage girls, too, were drawn to Annawadi's waste business as it promised the hope of a better and more remunerative way of life.

Many of them had been raped back home in the countryside, or sold to pimps in the city. Sexual abuse of girls remains a shameful commonplace of 21st-century Mumbai, says Boo. Seeking help from the police is often seen as an act of betrayal; Indian girls are expected to bear their abuse. Among the slum's estimated 3,000 inhabitants are girls who have been sold by their parents to the local constabulary, and serially raped by them.

During her residency in the slum, from 2007 to 2011, Boo videotaped all that she saw and heard. Public records and official documents (especially those of the Mumbai police) were scrutinised; hospitals, morgues and law courts were visited. The author was nothing if not scrupulous. Yet her book contains no footnotes or bibliography as the research has been absorbed invisibly into the narrative.

One of the book's unforgettable real-life characters is Abdul Husain, a refuse-sorting worker from Uttar Pradesh in the north. As a Muslim, Abdul is looked down on by the slum's Hindu majority, and feels keenly his lack of social mobility in Mumbai generally. Even in disease-ridden Annawadi, complex caste separations and petty snobberies abound; a sense of hierarchy seems to lie beneath all social interaction.

In the end, Boo seems to be saying, poverty makes criminals of everyone in Mumbai. The law is enforced merely as a means to extort money; police detainees are obliged to forsake their savings to have a false criminal charge dropped. As an ethnology of Indian slum life, Behind the Beautiful Forever is a masterpiece that ranks with Sonia Faleiro's study of Mumbai's red-light district, Beautiful Thing. Useless to describe the singular power of this book; it is, quite simply, one of the finest works on contemporary India yet written.

Excerpted from "<http://www.telegraph.co.uk>" www.telegraph.co.uk on November 17, 2012

Bollywood's Heroines

Review by **Shazia Usman**

I grew up watching Bollywood. Do I love it? Not really. Do I hate it? Of course not! But over the years I could feel myself getting frustrated with the sexist portrayals of women; unoriginal storylines and cheap humour, in many of its commercial productions.

It was only recently, with the release of ground-breaking films such as *Life in a Metro*, *Dor*, *No One Killed Jessica*, *Dhobi Ghat*, *Dev D*, *Black and Barfi*, a medley of indie, arthouse and commercial films, that I felt that, yes, I could watch Hindi films and be inspired.

Like Hollywood, Bollywood is notorious for producing mainly male-centric films. So you can only imagine how pleasantly surprised and excited I was, when in October, Bollywood released three films with female actors as the main protagonists or heroine-centric films.

Heroine

Out first was Madhur Bhandarkar's *Heroine*. Bhandarkar's films attempt to be an exposé on different industries with the story's lead always a woman. His last film *Fashion* was on the Indian fashion industry and while quite tabloid-ish in nature and slightly longwinded, was pretty good. Sadly, *Heroine* did not live up to the hype that it had been generating over the last couple of months. Playing the role of wild child, pill-popping, alcoholic, prone to temper tantrums actress Mahi Arora, is the talented Kareena Kapoor. Uncertain of her status in the film industry and her relationship with a fellow actor (played by Arjun Rampal), Mahi constantly suffers from anxiety and mental health issues. While Kareena tries her best to give Mahi's character some substance, she can only do so much. You can clearly tell that Mahi's characterisation was constructed poorly, as was the entire storyline. While visually appealing, the films leaves you confused as to what it was trying to portray.

We all know female actors have a much harder time in film industries as opposed to males, what with sexism rife in all levels of the industry but really, if you are going to depict that, which I believe is what Bhandarkar was trying to do in his own warped way, please do it with some integrity. For the record, I did not go to watch the film expecting a happy ending with the 'heroine' triumphing over all - not as naive as that. But I did go to see a film with a script that was written with some integrity, originality and focus. I came out of the cinema thinking, "Madhur Bhandarkar, with a subject as sensational as that, you could have done so much better, bro".

Aiyyaa

After watching *Aiyyaa*, I walked out of the cinema grinning from ear to ear; and a month later, I am still quoting dialogues from the film and listening to its suggestive yet humorous songs. That is how much I liked the Rani Mukerji starrer. Directed by Sachin Kundalkar, this film celebrates women's sexuality without the usual sexist trappings. The relationship between a female character and sex in Bollywood is mostly full of clichés. Films that actually overtly acknowledge that women have sex depict those characters as either vamps, sluts, desperate and/or going against societal notions of what a good woman should be. Then there are those films that just sexually objectify women for the 'male gaze'. While there are films these days that do show female characters in sexual relationships, they do not do a 'celebration' of women's sexuality as they do with many films about men's sexuality. Take a lot of films that have actor John Abraham in it, for example. His recent *Desi Boys* with fellow actor Akshay Kumar was all about the male libido.

Aiyyaa, is the first Bollywood film I have seen that openly acknowledges the female libido (and if there are any others, do let me know). Rani's character Meenaxi Deshpande, a middle class Maharashtrian girl often escapes from her rather eccentric family and mundane lifestyle by "retreating into a nebulous dreamscape inspired by her favourite Bollywood divas".*

Her daydreaming goes into overdrive when she sees or should I say, 'catches a whiff off', the mysterious (and very sexy) Tamil-speaking art student Surya (played by Prithviraj, of the Malayalam and Tamil film industry fame). This follows several songs with some very 'creative' lyrics full of sexual innuendoes, showcasing Rani's fantastic dance skills.

Meenaxi's maniacal colleague and confidante, Maina (played by Anita Date), a Lady Gaga wannabe referred to by one character as Gaga-bai, has you in stitches. Both Meenaxi and Maina's dialogues are delivered with such spot-on humour that it's hard to imagine any other actresses doing the roles justice.

I read an interview online where Rani claims that *Aiyyaa* is not a 'woman-centric' film. Her comments are obviously an attempt to dissuade audiences from taking the film lightly because according to a popular, yet completely erroneous belief, stories about women can only be for women (and will result in low viewership). Pretty pathetic, coming from a female actor (and the team) who did such an excellent job in mainstreaming women's sexuality in Bollywood cinema, especially via a commercial film.

English Vignish

How can you miss a film that brought the Sri Devi out of a 15-year hiatus?

Set in India and the United States, this film is about Shashi (played by Sri Devi) for whom life becomes very challenging and heartbreaking when her family, especially her husband and young daughter, constantly tease her, quite cruelly at times, for not being able to speak English.

Despite being a good person, successful entrepreneur (she sells delicious laddoos in her home-based business), a great mother, caring wife and daughter-in-law, it seems that her whole existence is questioned simply because she cannot communicate in another language.

Circumstances take to her New York to assist and attend her niece's wedding. It's here that we see Shashi taking more control over her language-situation and enrolling in a 4-week English course in a rather *Mind Your Language* type of class setting.

You can tell what writer and director Gauri Shinde had in mind when she made this film. Each scene and line delivered by Sri Devi will resonate with audiences who have ever been in similar situations. And those who speak English fluently would pause and reflect if they had ever spoken superiorly to a less fluent person.

What I liked best about this film is how effortlessly a woman's personal struggle to gain self-respect and to prove herself capable of learning new things, was portrayed in this film. No need for glitz and glamour – just an important story told in a simple and beautiful way.

*Quote from http://movies.ndtv.com/movie_Review.aspx?id=749

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: _____

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Twitter - #fwr1

LOOKOUT!

16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement has several activities planned for the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence this year:

1. On November 29, 2012, we will be launching our *Herstory* publication to acknowledge Women Human Rights Defenders Day. This document, which took over a year to compile, chronicles FWRM's triumphs and challenges over the last quarter century.
2. Along with our *Herstory*, FWRM will also be launching a position paper on Temporary Special Measures entitled *Balancing the Powers: Promoting Women's Political Participation in Fiji Through TSM's*, with co-publishers, the Fiji Women's Forum.
3. FWRM is lending support to its Emerging Leaders' Forum Alumni who are designing an exciting workshop and creative expression evening in Labasa to increase awareness on violence against women. This is scheduled for December 8, 2012.

For more information contact us via telephone 3312711 and/or email info@fwr.org.fj

Public Lecture on the Constituent Assembly (CA)

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement, along with the Citizens' Constitutional Forum and the University of the South Pacific, will be organising a public lecture on the *Nature of a Constituent Assembly*, in the lead up to the formation of Fiji's own CA.

The lecture will be delivered by Laureate Professor Cheryl Saunders, Associate Dean of Melbourne Law School

The panel is scheduled for December 5th, 2012 from 6-9pm at the Holiday Inn in Suva.

All welcome

For more information contact us via telephone 3312711 and/or email info@fwr.org.fj

Support TSM's

In a bid to create awareness on and garner support for the inclusion of Temporary Special Measures to promote women's political participation in Fiji in the constitution, the Fiji Women's Rights Movement will be running a public service announcement on national television stations in December.

For more information contact us via telephone 3312711
and/or email info@fwr.org.fj

Women's Forum 3

The co-conveners of the Fiji Women's Forum will be holding its third national forum from December 3 to 4, 2012, at the Novotel Convention Centre in Lami.

For more information contact us via telephone 3312711
and/or email vosita@fwr.org.fj