



Balance

"HELPING TO BALANCE THE SCALES"

Women's Voice and Representation in Fiji's Legislature

Introduction

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement policy states that any staff or board member who wishes to stand as a candidate in municipal or national elections must inform the Executive Director and the Management Board. This formality needs to occur before any public declaration of candidature is made or immediately after the submission of writ of nomination. For FWRM, a public declaration of intention, whether explicitly or implicitly, electronically or otherwise, shall require that the member must take a temporary leave of absence without pay, until the election results are known. The policy also states that the FWRM staff or board member will resign within seven days if she is successful in the elections. If she is not successful, then she may resume her position. This policy was developed after consultations with staff members and drawing on experiences and policies of national, regional and international human rights and feminist organisations. We define a "standing down period" as taking a leave of absence without pay, for a short period.

The FWRM policy also indicates that:

- All staff and management board members must be aware of their responsibilities to FWRM if they are engaged in party political activity, either at a local or national level.
- Their employment and board membership with FWRM carries with it a requirement to act in a non-partisan manner with regard to matters relating to the business of the FWRM.

There is an important distinction between supporting the increase of a critical mass of women in the legislature and supporting individual women to win a seat in Parliament. The former is a public interest issue, whilst the latter is a personal interest matter. FWRM as an organisation supports the former, and not the latter. Supporting individual women as an organisation, whether staff or otherwise, runs the risk of FWRM being seen as party political partisan and, most importantly, runs the risk of having to choose between women, even between excellent women candidates, as an organisation.

In 2006, FWRM raised funds for all women candidates, regardless of ethnicity and party political affiliation, and shared the funds equally between all

of them. We lobbied and encouraged the electorate to vote for more women through a paid media campaign. In our respectful view this conclusively demonstrates our bona fides, that we do support getting more women into Parliament. The 2006 election saw an unprecedented number of women, 8 out of 71 or 11%, win seats in the national legislature. We also assisted some women members of parliament with research, and on request, would also assist in writing oral submissions on matters important to gender and human rights. The subsequent interruptions to lawful government put paid to that historic win for women.

In 1993 FWRM also hosted a Roundtable for Women in Politics (WIP), with the regional NGO, Asia Pacific Women in Politics (APWIP), with funds from The Asia Foundation. FWRM got the WIP project functioning as a project, and then handed it over to the National Council of Women (NCW), which then formed its NCW-WIP project with our initial support. This was a deliberate decision on our part, and was in recognition that we did not want to be a "women in politics" organisation, and that we wanted to focus on other aspects of women's rights. We wanted to do things that we were good at, and not spread ourselves out too thinly. Most importantly, we wished to retain our neutrality and non-partisanship, and our ability to work with, and lobby whichever political party won government. This neutrality has stood us in good stead, in 25 years of activism.

We note that the human rights framework is about rights as well as responsibilities, and write this opinion in the hope that it will be better understood once it is explained. It is entirely consistent with human rights principles to require a staff member or Board member to voluntarily stand down, in order to protect the human rights of a large mass of women. FWRM is a non-partisan organisation not aligned to any political party or candidate. It is not like Emily's List in the USA, which is a women's fundraising organisation,



In 2006, Fiji's Parliament was made up of 71 elected House of Representatives, of this total 8 were women

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement recognises that women's participation and leadership in decision making at all levels, starting in the home and extending to the highest levels of government, is a fundamental prerequisite for women's rights enjoyment, gender equality, sustainable development and genuine democracy

Our commitment: We will support any female candidate who pledges to advance gender equality in Fiji.

How have we done this in the past: In 2006, through its fundraiser, *Women in Politics* (WIP) appeal, FWRM was able to make equal financial contribution towards the campaign of the 30 women candidates vying for elections, regardless of party affiliation and mandate.

Our plans for 2014: FWRM, through the *Fiji Women's Forum* will create training opportunities for potential female candidates; assist them in developing fundraising strategies for their campaigns and provide mentoring.

dedicated to getting more Democratic Party women into the Senate. FWRM's independent and politically neutral stance allows us to work with all political parties and groups, and enables us to lobby and

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I AM VOTING CAMPAIGN SPECIAL EDITION

Greetings from FWRM!



The last two quarters of 2013 were both busy and thought-provoking for the Movement, hence the late release of this issue of *Balance*!

As a feminist movement, we have been negotiating the complex political terrain as best as we can, as the country moves closer to the national election deadline. As an organisation, we have also used this time to self-reflect on our political and non-partisan stance and have chosen to share these thoughts with you through an opinion piece (see p.1). Feel free to send us feedback on the piece on info@fwrn.org.fj

With assistance from our supportive donors and partners, namely the Australian Government, Conciliation Resource, the European Union, FLOW and the International Women's Development Agency, we carried out critical citizenship rights awareness in an effort to empower women voters (see our "I Am Voting Campaign" Special Edition p.5-8) in the last two quarters.

There has also been some significant staff and board transitions within the Movement in the last six months. On page 3 you will read about staffing changes - I take this opportunity to thank Roshika Deo, Filomena Tuivanualevu, Mereoni Tavakaturaga and Bronwyn Tilbury for their years of work and feminist solidarity. All the best for the future!

At our Annual General Meeting on November 14th, 2014, FWRM welcomed new members to its Management Board.

Current members include:

- Tamara Balenaveikau
- Daiana Buresova
- Patriona Dumar
- Florence Fenton
- Imrana Jalal
- Naemah Khan
- Neomai Maravuakula
- Sara Pene
- Shradha Sharma
- Priscilla Singh

The Management Board and staff thank outgoing Chairperson Gina Houng Lee for her many years of guidance and commitment to FWRM, as well as outgoing members Judy Compain, Avelina Rokoduru and Paulini Turagabeci for their unwavering support.

In 2014, FWRM will continue working with women voters, especially young women voters on citizenship rights awareness, via trainings, dialogue forums (including online forums), radio commercials and talkback shows and newspaper advertising.

We urge the State to release the Electoral Decree as soon as possible as that will assist us in devising more targeted and effective advocacy campaigns. Women are eager to learn how to vote but it is difficult for us to acquiesce to their request for specific voting information without confirmation from the State.

Also take some time out to read our Lookout! section (back page) where we give details on vacancies, dialogue forums for women and young women and our plans for International Women's Day on March 8th, 2014.

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

Enjoy this edition!

In solidarity,
Virisila Buadromo

Women's Voice and Representation in Fiji's Legislature

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advocate for Fiji women as a group, beyond elections. Aligning with any political party or political candidate would gravely jeopardize this non-partisan stance.

Simply put, the greater goal of getting more women into Parliament, would be at risk if FWRM specifically, whether directly or indirectly, supported staff or Board members in their pursuit of getting into the national legislature.

Rationale for the Policy

There are several very practical and ethical reasons why FWRM, Amnesty International Australia, the International Commission of Jurists, amongst other human rights organisations, require their staff to resign or step down when a staff member decides to stand for elections. FWRM went a further step and allowed, *Leave Without Pay* and the extremely generous option of resumption of employment if unsuccessful, in our policy. It is a clear, human rights position based on past experiences and sound gender equality and human rights theory.

First, gender equality and feminism is about dealing with the structural and systemic inequality, and the oppression, of women. The greater goal of gender equality and having women's voices heard in the public domain and decision making is a higher goal than that of an individual woman's right to stand for elections (which is a personal interest goal). In order to decide between potential conflicting rights, it is necessary to adopt a human rights analysis. This analysis requires one to assess the perceived relative harm to both the individual and the organisation. There is greater harm to the organisation in being seen to support an individual's campaign, as it will be to the greater detriment of the wider group of women the organisation purports to represent. To illustrate this human rights analysis down to a very basic level consider the following scenarios:

1. Two women staff members of FWRM belonging to 2 different political parties decide to stand. In the Fiji case with the proposed electoral seat system, women will be competing against each other, and with other men, for the one vote. If we were to keep both women employed until the elections finish, apart from the very real danger of splitting the organisation into several competing factions, whom should FWRM support? Should FWRM choose between them? Or should FWRM maintain its rational policy of keeping a distance, requiring a staff member to step down thereby keeping its political integrity and its support of women in general intact? Which position is most likely to enable the sustainability of the organisation, and to enable it to carry on its overall work for Fiji women?
2. FWRM has a variety of women staff, Board members and members. They belong to all political persuasions and they support a wide variety of political parties. We believe in free political expression and freedoms as allowed by the International Bill of Human Rights. However we do not support, directly or indirectly, political parties or even independent candidates, to enable all kinds of women to continue to be members of FWRM, so that we can garner support across all racial, ethnic, cultural and political lines. That is political non-partisanship.

If we chose to support a single staff member we would therefore run the risk of losing other members. Again, the greater detriment and harm would be to the organisation as a whole.

3. Suppose for example, we were to directly or indirectly support a staff member, continue to employ her whilst she campaigned (and possibly run the risk of her making a variety of statements to win, which FWRM may or may not agree with), who then went on to lose? Suppose her opposing candidate or opposing party member wins, perhaps becomes a Minister (of Women?) and then refuses to meet with FWRM or support a policy or law that we need to pass for women, because we supported the rival opposing candidate? That is human nature. By displaying partisanship we would have naively jeopardized a law or policy that promotes the human rights of all Fiji women, because we were ill advised and supported an individual staff candidate.

We trust that these 3 scenarios well illustrate the potentially disastrous consequences of political partisanship.

Second, from a human rights perspective, the right to political participation is not an absolute right as are the right to life, liberty, security, fair trial of the person etc. It is a relative right and needs to be balanced against the rights of others, and against other rights potentially in conflict. An FWRM staff member's individual right to political participation is not superior to FWRM's collective right to act on behalf of thousands of women/our constituency or the rights of thousands of women for whom we act, to have unbiased and non-partisan representation (whether real or perceived). Rights end up being in conflict with each other all the time, and they need to be reasoned out according to whether they are absolute or relative rights and according to a set of rules, about harmonization, reasonableness, the greater good, greater harm and so on, outlined above and below.

Third, a staff member's right is predicated on the deliberate choice one makes to stand for elections. An employer has no obligation to pay or retain a staff member when he/she declares their candidacy and campaigns. But it is good practice for employers to offer women a standing down period that may include several options such as a "taking leave without pay", and the right to return to work if he/she were unsuccessful in the elections. This is clearly articulated in the FWRM policy. The right to participate as a candidate in elections is not synonymous with an obligation on an employer to "support" the means for exercising that right. We need to clearly distinguish between a right exercisable in a public space, and the rights extant in the private sphere.

Fourth, one has to, as far as possible, give effect to both rights adopting an interpretation that allows both to co-exist as much as possible without doing harm to either, or at least the minimum amount of harm. So the solution is to allow a staff member/employee to be able to stand and campaign without prejudice to an employer's private right to terminate or suspend that employment, because the former is not dependent on the latter and while universal its exercise is dependent on choice. Once that is made,

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STAFF MOVEMENT

THE end of the year saw the Fiji Women's Rights Movement saying goodbye to some key staff members and welcoming on board new ones.

Goodbye

We bid to the following staff who contributed immensely to the development of FWRM's work over the last couple of years:

Roshika Deo

After graduating from FWRM's Emerging Leaders' Forum the year before, Roshika joined the Movement in 2008 as a Research Officer and progressed to leading the Movement's Gender and Transitional Justice (GTJ) Programme in the last year. Over the years Roshika successfully undertook many research projects, requiring critical documentation and analysis. As Team Leader she worked with a diverse team of colleagues to ensure FWRM's target constituency were well represented in the organisation's many advocacy programmes.

She is currently pursuing a political career and intends to stand for national elections in 2014 as an independent candidate through her Be The Change campaign. We wish her all the best with her campaign and hope to see more women stand for elections alongside her.

Bronwyn Tilbury

Bronwyn was first affiliated with FWRM when she took up a consultancy to produce an Impact Assessment Report for our Young Women's Leadership Programme (YWLP) in 2011. She joined us a year later 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.

In the year before her term ended, Bronwyn took up the challenge of being the YWLP's first Team Leader and set in place many efficient systems and control for the four-member team – no small feat, as the organisation expanded projects targeted at young women and girls in Fiji, as well as being the inaugural Secretariat for the Pacific Young Women's Leadership Alliance.

We wish Bronwyn all the best and hope to see her continuing her work in gender development.

Transitions

By **Shazia Usman**

Former GIRLS Officer **Maraia Tabunakawai** replaces her as Team Leader.

Mereoni Tavakaturaga

Mereoni joined FWRM in 2010 as a Research Officer and was part of a two-member team providing research and documentation support to the organisation. She was also instrumental in providing support to FWRM in its various human rights-related reporting efforts, such as the Universal Periodic Review, CEDAW, etc.

While no longer a fulltime staff member, Mereoni remains affiliated with us in a consultant position for the next few months, undertaking the drafting of a few reports.

Filomena Tuivanualevu

Like Roshika, Filo, as everyone calls her, became affiliated with FWRM through the Movement's Emerging Leaders' Forum in 2007. After interning with us for some time, she formally joined the staff as our Young Women's Officer, where she made significant contributions to the development of a 4-member Young Women's Leadership Programme.

She is currently residing in Germany with her husband and intends to pursue graduate studies in the UK. We wish her all the best in all her endeavors.

Welcome

The latest additions to FWRM's staff include a new Training Officer and a Communications Support Officer.

Alanieta Veilulu

Alanieta will work closely with fellow Training Officer Shabina Khan in undertaking majority of the women's human rights training-related activities for the Movement.



She worked as a Legal Officer with the Fiji Commerce Commission and was responsible for providing legal advice, drafting orders and attending court matters.

In joining FWRM, she shares: "I wanted to try something new and be part of an organisation that has a huge impact on people's lives. I am sure working at FWRM will be a challenge since the work I am required to do is totally different from being a legal officer but it will be a learning curve for me. I am sure that FWRM will provide me with the right environment to develop in my career".

She joins the six-member Gender and Transitional Justice Team and has already started working on its European Union-funded citizenship rights awareness campaign.

Faranisese Ratu

Faranisese joins FWRM as its Communications Support Officer and will be working with the Gender and Transitional Justice Team on its European Union-funded citizenship rights awareness campaign.

Faranisese has experience working as a weekend radio announcer with Communications Fiji Ltd and is a contributing writer for Bertelsmann Future Challenges, a network of authors from around the world who share a common interest in exploring the personal and community-level impacts of economic globalisation.

"I have always been a vocal person. I have always tried to fight against injustices and discriminations of all sorts; and working at FWRM will enable me to take a more active role in supporting women human rights in Fiji. This job is a commitment I take very seriously. I look forward to working with a great team at FWRM and making contributions to the development of women rights issues".

Other changes

Maraia Tabunakawai – Team Leader – YWLP (former FWRM GIRLS Officer)

Lillian Delana – GIRLS Officer (former FWRM Admin Assistant)

Both are looking forward to the challenge in 2014.



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an employer is under no further obligation to provide employment and an employee must accept the consequences of his/her choice.

Fifth, as an organisation reliant on donor funding and members' contributions, we have duty of accountability to our donors to demonstrate that our funds are being used for the purposes for which they have been granted. This includes being as a non-partisan organisation, and that there is no perceived or real conflict that the funds we receive are being used for carrying out our work on gender equality, and without any perceived or real bias towards any political party or candidate. Continuing to employ a candidate would put that independence and accountability at risk.

Conclusion

It is clear from the backlash against FWRM that the human rights framework needs more elucidation, and that our role as an organisation is not clear to many. FWRM is not a partisan NGO dedicated to getting more women into parliament. Even Asia-Pacific Women in Politics (APWIP) and the Center for Asia Pacific Women in Politics (CAPWIP), support all women, and not individual women. Emily's List supports only women from the US Democratic Party; the same way that Emily's List Australia supports only women from the Labour Party. These are different types of women's organisations. We are none of these. Giving women voice in the national legislature is only one of many human rights that FWRM seeks

to protect, promote and defend. We do not give it precedence over any other human rights of women. If we did, we would have mobilized around this issue differently, and been a different type of women's rights organisation.

FWRM as a public interest women's organisation strongly supports all aspiring female candidates. Our overriding duty is to the large numbers of women FWRM purports to represent, who have a right to expect non-partisanship from us.

We wish all women who will stand in the upcoming general national elections the best of luck!



Women invisible in Fiji Constitution

On September 6, 2013 Fiji's Constitution was assented by the State President Ratu Epeli Nailaitkau and came into effect the following day. This legal document of the land enshrines all rights and legal obligations entitled to all individuals

By **Mereoni Tavakaturaga**

women and girls' rights and equality. Therefore a robust and effective legal system based on the rule of law is central to assisting women in

previous administration.

Below is an excerpt from the Citizen's Constitutional Forum (CCF) analysis of the Constitution: Table 2

	Problem	Suggested change
A Common and Equal Citizenry	No provisions to address historical exclusion of women	Include at least temporary special measures to promote women in parliament.
A Secular State		
The removal of systematic corruption	Concentration of power in the executive (especially in the offices of the Prime Minister and Attorney General), the limited independence of the judiciary, the politicization of the Public Service through vesting appointment powers in permanent secretaries, etc.	Include an enforceable code of conduct; make COC and other bodies truly independent and not under the Prime Ministers exclusive control.
An independent judiciary	Prime Minister controls judicial appointment and removal processes	Reintroduce bipartisan appointment process: alter the composition of the Judicial Services Commission to ensure that it is not dominated by the Prime Minister
Elimination of Discrimination	The 'Limitation of Rights' clause undermines the anti-discrimination rights; the human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Commission is not independent	Remove the 'Limitation of Rights' clause; provide for an independent appointment process for the Human Rights and Anti-discrimination Commission
Good and transparent governance	Political control of appointment and removal processes in relation to key accountability institutions, and the remarkably limited scope for amendment of the constitution	Provide for gender balance; a reflection on Fiji's diversity in the composition of public offices; and a maximum number of 15 Cabinet ministers; clarify the overall responsibility of the RFMF and its relations to civilian authority; introduce a more flexible amendment process.
Social Justice	The 'Limitation of Rights' clause undermines the positive new socioeconomic rights	Remove the Limitation of Rights
One person, One Vote, One value	Undermined by a threshold figure of 5 per cent in the PR electoral system	Reduce the threshold to no more than 2.5 per cent; include temporary special measures promoting the inclusion of women into Parliament
Elimination of ethnic voting	Not best achieved by an open list PR system	Provide measures to prevent voters and parties from replicating 'ethnic' preferences in the open list system
Proportional representation		
Voting Age of 18 years		

regardless of race, age, gender, sexual orientation, religious or political affiliations and so forth. One may observe after a closer read of the legalistic document that explicit provisions pertaining to women's participation in public life is invisible.

Fiji ratified the UN Conventions on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1995 therefore obligating the State to incorporate standards therein into domestic laws; needless to say this Constitution would have been an ideal stage to capture those principles for the substantive protection of women's rights. Women make up half the population of Fiji and contribute significantly to the economy and development of Fiji through both paid and unpaid labor; despite women's vast majority in the country's population the rule of law continue to mean very little for them.

The law is an essential tool for advancing

becoming equal partners in decision making and development. One may ask; why should there be special provisions accorded to women only? In essence a study by the International Development Law Organization (IDLO) shows that women face structural and cultural barriers to accessing their rights even if it is enshrined in laws within the country. This may be attributed to insufficient knowledge of rights and remedies, illiteracy or poor literacy, lack of resources and time to justice processes. All the more so as women usually have intensive family responsibilities, even where women have access to formal legal systems, the outcomes of the process often fall far short of those envisaged by international standards.

The State had endorsed a list of non-negotiable principles by which the Constitution is to be based upon with the aim of addressing the gap by bridging the divide that has continued from

While the state legal system alone cannot cure gender injustice, it is still a key avenue for the achievement of gender equality. The law has the ability to deter discriminatory practices against women and has the capacity to influence and guide the behavioural norms and social interactions between men and women. It can also serve as an accountability mechanism to ensure the compliance with international conventions as well as informal practices with basic human rights standards to prevent power abuses. Ensuring that systems whether formal or informal are in line with international laws and standards pertaining to gender equality.

This is immensely possible in the presence of a supportive constitution and national laws that play a critical role in ensuring the effectiveness of legal empowerment interventions for all especially women and vulnerable groups.



Women say it like it is

By **RoshikaDeo**

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) carried out a scoping research earlier in 2013, as part of a European Union funded programme titled "Enhancing the Political Participation of Marginalised Women Voters." The overall objective of this programme is enhanced political participation of women, particularly women from minority and marginalised groups, in national democratic processes.

The scoping research was to provide a general guideline to determine the level of citizenship rights awareness among Indo-Fijian and young women, and an effective medium through which to provide accessible information on citizenship rights.

Indo-Fijian and young women from different divisions were part of either focus group discussions or responded to questionnaire-based surveys. Six informal partners of the Movement, who work with the target group, also provided information and feedback based on their experiences and work.

The scoping research findings and recommendations have been used as a planning tool for the development of an effective campaign to enhance the political participation of Indo-Fijian and young women.

Findings show that younger women (aged 17-35 years) in the Central/Eastern Division were the least aware of their citizenship rights compared to the other Northern and Western Divisions. For instance, 65% younger women in the Northern Division were aware that 18 years was the voting age, 50% in the Western and 28% in the Central/Eastern Division.

With Indo-Fijian women 36 years+, there was a mix of awareness on citizenship rights across the Divisions, however 50% of women in the Northern Division were aware that the voting age is 18 years old, compared to 38% in the Western Division and 30% in the Central/Eastern Division.

Both younger women and Indo-Fijian women 36 years+ currently access information on voting and elections mostly via radio. Younger women however, in all the Divisions identified radio and newspaper as their preferred source of information. Indo-Fijian women 36 years+ in the Central/Eastern and Western Divisions mainly identified radio as their preferred choice of medium to receive information on voting and elections. In the Northern Division, 67% of Indo-Fijian women 36 years+ identified person-to-person delivery of information such as trainings and workshops as

the medium to receive information on voting and elections.

Both the target groups appeared confused over the current electoral and democratisation process, feeling a sense of isolation from the developments that are happening at national levels.

There was a general sense of apathy between both the target groups in relation to elections and voting, however for different reasons. Aside from coups as a contributor, Indo-Fijian women 36years+ are additionally disheartened by the fact that little or no change has transpired despite voting previously in elections. For Indo-Fijian women of all age groups, cultural barriers compounded their apathy toward elections and voting, where visibility in public spaces is not encouraged and is generally unacceptable.

Recommendations were based on the combined results of all the data and information gathered, taking into consideration available resources and the timelines. An outline of the recommendations for all the Divisions on the themes for increasing citizenship rights awareness were:

- Why women should vote;
- Women making their own decisions on whom to vote for;
- Qualities of a leader;
- How women can acquire information to make informed decisions on voting;
- How to hold politicians and political parties accountable;
- The new electoral system - how it works and how to vote

Recommendation for the most effective way to implement the campaign are:- radio as the main medium for dissemination of general information on elections and voting; television and newspaper to be used for specific campaign strategies; social networking site Facebook to target young women, and substantial interactive training workshops.

Since the third quarter of 2013, FWRM has been implementing the media campaign and trainings with women from the communities. The media advocacy and trainings have been divided into two phases with the Phase 1 dealing with the importance of women's participation in the electoral process and access to information to make decisions and the Phase 2 focusing on the mechanics of voting.

I AM VOTING CAMPAIGN



As part of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement's I Am Voting campaign promoting the participation of marginalised women in Fiji's electoral process, the Movement continues to undertake several key research and advocacy projects through its various programmes.

Pages 5-8 will give you a brief glimpse of months of work the Movement has put in, through critical funding from the European Union (and other donors) in empowering women, especially young women, in Fiji.



Supported by the European Union





I Am Voting Media Campaign

FOLLOWING recommendations from FWRM's *Scoping Research: Citizenship Rights Awareness among Marginalised and Vulnerable Groups of Women*, a media campaign was devised to encourage Indo-Fijian women 36+ and young women (target group) to take part in the electoral process.

Radio

As radio was identified as the main medium of information on issues related to elections and voting, FWRM worked with Communications Fiji Limited (CFL) and the Fiji Broadcasting Corporation to produce commercials in the three main languages. These commercials played during the times when the target audience was most likely to listen in.

Aside from commercials, the Indo-Fijian women 36+ research respondents had asked for a more interactive and substantial manner of receiving information, such as talkback shows. Thus FWRM,

By Shazia Usman

sought investment packages with both radio broadcasters to speak on its Hindi talkback shows on Radio Sargam (CFL) with popular radio host and former journalist Sneha Chaudary and Radio Fiji 2 (FBC) with experienced host Nur Jahan.

FWRM teamed up with women leaders part of the Fiji Women's Forum and other network members to speak on the show and talk about issues related to voting, as well as empower women to vote/stand from elections, from diverse points of view.

Phase 1 included eight shows (4 on each station) and during one of the last shows FWRM received the following important feedback on-air from Radio Sargam's Sneha Chaudary:

"While I was in Ba Town during the Christmas period, selling promotional items for the radio station, some women came up to me and told me

that our talkback shows on voting have motivated them to vote in the next elections. They said that none of them had voted previously".

FWRM is currently designing strategies for the Phase 2.

Television

Two 60-second commercials were produced encouraging Indo-Fijian women 36+ and young women to vote in the national elections. These commercials were aired on Fiji Television and FBC, as well shared on FWRM's YouTube channel. FWRM received much positive feedback regarding representation, some of which included, the use of Fiji-Hindi instead of standard Hindi, as well as using diverse Indo-Fijian women as talents. The Movement was also praised for ensuring the commercials were focused on just voting, as opposed to trying to incorporate a lot of themes in just 60-seconds.



Radio Talkback Show
on
Why Women Should Vote

MY VOTE VOICE FIJI

CFL - Sargam
with host Sneh Chaudhry
Tuesday November 12 2013
8.00pm – 9.00pm

Frequencies 103.2 103.4 103.8

Guests

1) Nirmala Sharma
Vice President of
Vunucuicui Multiracial
Women's group; Treasurer
for the Vanualevu Arya
Mahila Mandal and
Spokesperson for Nasoni
Electricity Settlement

2) Shazia Usman
Communications Officer
FWRM

These radio talkback shows, in
Fiji-Hindi, are part of a 4-part
series on women's citizenship
rights, brought to you by the Fiji
Women's Rights Movement

FWRM
FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Supported by the European Union

Who makes the news?

By **Angelyn Singh**

WHO makes the news is a question we women's rights activists ask ourselves all the time. Do women make the news? If they do, what part do they play? How will women appear in the news, if at all, towards elections?

Part of the 2005 Global Media Monitoring Project "Who Makes the News?" research carried out by the Fiji Media Watch and femLINKPACIFIC showed that only 20% of people featuring in Fiji newspapers and news broadcasts were women and too often they were portrayed using a "victim stereotype" narrative - according to the research report compiled as part of a worldwide survey published in 2006.

According to the report, the marginalisation of women in the news media is still very much a reality.

In 2010 the Fiji Media Watch discovered that males again were dominant or were overrepresented in more than half of news story topics after they conducted monitoring of the mainstream media organisations in Fiji.

FWRM has modeled a matrix based on the GMMP to monitor the mainstream media coverage allocated to women, noting how many men as opposed to women are sought to comment on political matters and how many women are actually mentioned in election stories, the monitoring also detects stories that challenge stereotypes and highlight inequalities between men and women in society. The monitoring team also records all Indo-Fijian and young women who are given mainstream media coverage in relation to the upcoming 2014 elections.

Through this monitoring, FWRM intends to produce a toolkit in collaboration with the news media to assist in creating an environment that fosters gender and human rights election reporting.



Equality (DIVA), the Emerging Leaders Forum Alumni (ELFA), femLINKPACIFIC - Generation Next and the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), the Fiji Young Women's Forum (held in November 8-10, 2013) intended to up-skill a diverse group of young Fijian women in the fundamental tenants of the democratisation process & the specifics of Fiji's electoral process.

An outcome of the Fiji Young Women's Forum is the *My Guide to Voting* which is expected to be discussed during the second Fiji Young Women's Forum.

The Fiji Young Women's Forum already had an existing Facebook discussion group with 83 members as at October 25, 2013 (and 491 as at January, 2014) and FWRM shares administrator privileges, which has enabled both the co-convenors of the Fiji Young Women's Forum and FWRM to manage the robust discussions by the young women on their voting rights.

Social Media

FWRM collaborated with the Fiji Young Women's Forum to create an online space/forum for young women to engage citizenship rights discussions on social networking site Facebook.

Objectives:

- To increase the political participation and empowerment of young women in the national democratic processes and decision making.
- To create a space for young women to actively engage in discussions on their citizenship rights.
- To instigate discussions about electoral processes and democracy.
- To form an online solidarity network of young women interested in citizenship rights.

PHASE 1:

For the *I Am Voting* social media campaign, FWRM worked with the Young Women's Forum to undertake a similar dialogue forum to engage young Fijian women to actively discuss issues related to their citizenship rights.

Co-convened by Diverse Voices and Action for



Fiji Young Women's Forum

It was a bright, loud, energetic space occupied by the participants of the Fiji Young Women's Forum, at Novotel Lami from November 8th to 10th, 2013.

Post the Fiji Women's Forum in 2012, the Fiji Women's Rights Movement recognised that young women need an independent and motivating space to collaborate, discover, form an alliance and share perspectives on the national democratisation process.

The progression of democracy with comprehensive, meaningful and active participation of young women is critical and with this thought, the Fiji Young Women's Forum was convened.

The objectives of the inaugural Forum, attended by 40 young women from diverse background, was to:

1. Up skill a diverse group of young Fijian women on the fundamental tenants of the democratisation process and Fiji's electoral process;
2. Map current work undertaken by young women on the political process and identify barriers to young women's substantive political participation; and
3. Develop key strategies to lobby key policy/decision-makers, candidates and political parties for the inclusion of young women's priority issues/concerns and recommendations in their agenda

The Forum was co-convened by Diverse Voices and Action for Equality (DIVA), the Emerging Leaders

By Mamta Chand

Forum Alumni (ELFA), femLINKPACIFIC - Generation Next and the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA). Only young women from these organisations/groups were part of the decision-making process.

The Forum saw the active participation of young women, between the ages of 18- 35 - many already engaged in the democratisation process in a variety of ways. These included young women with disabilities, young rural women and young women of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity.

The co-conveners ensured the creation of a safe space, enabling participants to discuss and articulate their specific needs and perspectives in relation to Fiji's political transition and strategise for moving Fiji towards a sustainable democracy.

Participants eagerly took part in sessions around Fiji's political history and the role that women played in shaping it; Temporary Special Measures to enhance women's political participation; contributions of keywomen activists in different spheres; holding leaders accountable; and the importance of the rule of law, women's human rights, political parties/elections and media in a democracy.

Various political parties and independent candidates intending to stand for the 2014 elections were also given a space to interact with the young women.

The Forum also provided young women an

opportunity to learn, share, discuss, strategise, build networks and create space for future communication. This encompassed the work of a Communications Hub, setup and run by young women. During the three-day event, the Hub provided constant updates to its cyber network via its various social networking pages, including, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.

At the end of the Forum an Outcome Statement was released, clearly articulating the concerns, key advocacy messages and strategies by the young women. The Statement will be used as a lobbying tool for various national, regional and international forums.

Another intended outcome of the Forum is the development of a guide to voting, aimed at informing a broader community of young women about voting and active citizenship pre and post elections. This Guide will be designed for young women by young women; an effective best practice methodology used by FWRM's Young Women in Leadership Programme, and distributed using the networks and reach of the Young Women's Forum participants in their communities.

This is the first, of what is hoped be, many linked activities and initiatives developed by the Young Women's Forum, and implemented by co-conveners and their networks.

The second Forum is planned for March 2014 and will focus on the importance of young women voting and how vote (if the Electoral Decree is released by then).



Pacific Young Women's Leadership Dialogue

Introduction

The *Pacific Young Women's Dialogue* was one of the first projects of the newly established Pacific Young Women's Leadership Alliance (PYWLA). The PYWLA is composed of regional and UN organizations, including: Fiji Women's Rights Movement (secretariat), Commonwealth Youth Programme South Pacific Center, FemLink Pacific, International Planned Parenthood Federation, International Women's Development Agency, Pacific Youth Council, Secretariat of the Pacific Community, YWCA, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women. For the purposes of the Pacific Young Women's Dialogue the PYWLA also partnered with Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) and Punanga Tauturu Incorporated (Cook Islands Women's Counselling Centre).

The Dialogue brought together 26 young women leaders (between 18-30yrs old) from 13 different countries from around the Pacific, including Fiji (6 participants), PNG (1 participant), Samoa (2 participants), Solomon Islands (2 participants), Kiribati (1 participant), Niue (1 participant), Tonga (1 participant), Nauru (1 participant), Vanuatu (1 participant), Federated States of Micronesia (1 participant), Republic of the Marshall Islands (1 participant), Tuvalu (1 participant) and the Cook Islands (7 participants).

The Pre-Triennial Dialogue was held in the lead-up to the 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women in the Cook Islands from the 18th to the 20th of October. The Dialogue was designed to bring these young women together to learn, share information, connect and further develop a regional advocacy agenda for the five key themes of the Pacific Young Women's Leadership Strategy: Safe, Respected, Included, Connected and Skilled.

Specifically the Pacific Young Women's Dialogue had the following objectives:

1. Building the capacity of a critical mass of young women leaders in the Pacific to contribute in a substantive way to a variety of regional platforms, including the 12th Triennial Conference, through:
 - Capacity building of young women to initiate social change through presentations and skills-building workshops.
 - Gaining practical lobbying skills to use when interacting with delegates of the Triennial Conference on Pacific Women and other international decision makers.
 - Developing an advocacy agenda to be pursued by the Pacific Young Women's Leadership Alliance.
2. The Young Women gain valuable networks and leadership skills, by:
 - Creating a safe space for young women to discuss successes and challenges they face as young women leaders and offer support and practical advice.
 - Identifying good practice on young women's leadership development and issues affecting

By Bronwyn Tilbury

young women that may be replicable in other areas/locations.

- Developing networks between emerging young women leaders and activities as well as with women's ministers from around the Pacific.
3. The PYWLA's position will be strengthened as a platform with an established network of women leaders and a representative voice in the Pacific region, in order to:
 - Lobby for the inclusion of young women's perspectives around the five key themes of the Pacific Young Women's Leadership Strategy at the 12th Triennial Conference on Pacific Women.
 - Inform the development of the Pacific Youth Development Framework.
 - Provide Pacific input during the ICPD Beyond 2014 process.
 - Encourage engagement and participation in the Say No to Violence UNiTE Campaign.

As a lead up to the physical Dialogue held in the Cook Islands, the PYWLA hosted an "Online Dialogue" around the themes of the PYWLA Strategy between June and October, 2013. Nearly 100 young women from across the Pacific region contributed their thoughts and experiences via Facebook. The topics discussed included participation, transformational leadership, sexual and reproductive health and rights, peer to peer learning, bodily security, the post 2015 development agenda and peace and security.

In order to understand best how to support young women to attain leadership positions, we need a better understanding of their concerns, the barriers and challenges they face, and the topics which are important to them. The purpose of the dialogues was to provide an opportunity for young women to express their opinions, and to meet and network with each other. The Facebook group is an ongoing platform for the young women who participated in the Online Dialogue to network with each other, provide support and share ideas.

Participants were asked explicit questions, which they answered online; they were then provided feedback by moderators, who were selected from the members of the PYWLA. The young women were given two weeks to discuss each topic. Their responses were collected, and the moderators analysed and summarised the discussions for each topic into key ideas and themes. The summaries were then developed into a booklet entitled "Pacific Young Women's Leadership Dialogue - Online Dialogue Issues Series". These booklets were printed and distributed to Women's Ministers and other delegates at the Triennial Conference.

There were a number of common ideas which emerged across every topic discussed, which suggest key entry points for interventions aiming to



assist young women to realize their potential and their human rights. These include:

- the need for comprehensive sexual education in schools;
- the barriers which young women face as a result of traditional and cultural ideas about young women's roles and the worth of their skills, knowledge, and contributions;
- the importance of religion, family, and community as either a barrier to leadership or a much needed support network;
- the importance of access to quality education for young women;
- the multiple barriers of intersecting discrimination for young women who are LGBTI, living with disability, living in poverty, or members of other minority groups; and
- the need for women young and old to support each other and work collaboratively to advocate for change.

Participants flew into Rarotonga for the 3-day Pre-Triennial Dialogue which was held at the University of the South Pacific Rarotonga Campus. The 3-day program was facilitated collaboratively by members of the PYWLA as well as our partner organisations DAWN and Punanga Tauturu Incorporated.

From the 21st to the 24th the PYWLA delegates took part in the 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women hosted by SPC in Rarotonga, Cook Islands. Key interventions of the PYWLA throughout the week included:

Opening night speech (20th October)

One of the opening night speeches was presented by PYWLA participant Inangaro Vakaafi from Niue, representing the Pacific Youth Council. Inangaro had been voted by the PYWLA group to represent the group. Her speech was based on the PYWLA Outcomes Document. She spoke alongside other Pacific personalities such as Imrana Jalal and Dame Carol Kidu.

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GIRLS perform for *Time to Tell*

By **Maraia Tabunakawai**

TO commemorate the global 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence, the Fiji Women's Rights Movement's GIRLS performed *Time to Tell*, a social-issue based theatrical performance at the John Wesley Primary School (Raiwaqa) and Ahmadiyya Muslim Primary School (Nakasi).

Through the play, participants of GIRLS - Grow Inspire Relate Lead and Succeed – a group of enthusiastic 10-14-year-olds FWRM has been working with for a year, raised awareness on child sexual violence, bullying and other forms of abuse commonly experienced by children.

Time to Tell also promotes the need for young girls to "tell" or report any form of abuse they face and shares information which may inspire girls to reach out for help.

In partnership with FWRM, Women's Action for Change (WAC) helped facilitate a question and answer session with the student audience following the play. Students shared thoughts based on the questions below:

1. What did you learn from the play?
2. Whom should you tell if someone abuses you?
3. How do you want your parents to treat you better?

Some responses included:

Responses from Question 1 included that girls are normally abused by their own families, never to be silent when something bad happens to you, girls have equal rights as everyone; and children don't deserve to be harmed.

Responses to Question 2 included; telling someone they trust, teachers, friends, families, police officers; and or FWRM if someone abuses them.

Responses to questions 3 included showing more interest in us and in what we do; to be able to share our problems without being judged; and parents to be more respectful.

A total of 20 girls participated in the mini road show to build their capacity to raise awareness and advocate the rights of the girl child in the public sphere.

The school performances was held in front of approximately 200 students on the last week of the school term.



Protests, arrests and activists

By **Angelyn Singh**

INTERSECTIONALITY in feminism has been around for years yet people are still trying to grasp what it means. It is simply the intersection of the discrimination that women face based on their multiple identities. Intersectional discrimination leads to marginalization of people. When the human rights of marginalized women are violated and/or denied the importance of human rights defenders and of human rights awareness is felt most keenly.

Many cling to the idea that democracy and human rights are foreign concepts and reject them in favour of religion which in a lot of cases is also a foreign concept. Without human rights awareness, how can we know what we are entitled to and when we are being denied what is rightfully ours?

Entitlement has a negative connotation due to those who have a conservative worldview - there is nothing wrong with demanding your human rights.

Earlier on in the year there were two separate detentions of civil society members. On September 6th, 14 people were taken in for questioning for protesting the constitution assent in front of the President's residence. On November 8th, another group of people were taken in for questioning for having a picnic at the Nasese seawall, during National Budget announcement, wearing "C'mon Fiji make budgets public Now!"

Rounding off 2013 for human rights in Fiji and to mark 16 days of Activism Against Gender Violence, FWRM's GIRLS undertook theatrical performances with school children; the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, launched their national research on women's health and life experiences, entitled "Somebody's Life, Everybody's Business," - exploring the prevalence, incidence and attitudes to intimate partner violence in Fiji; and the NGO Coalition on Human Rights and human rights supporters marched on the streets of Suva.

The march started from the Suva Flea Market and culminated at the Suva Civic Centre, where there was a tribute to the inspirational human rights activist Nelson Mandela.

FWRM's human rights booth (co-shared with Emerging Leaders Forum Alumni) was capably w-manned by staff and displayed items FWRM's I Am Voting Campaign, supported by the European Union.



I Am Malala

Author: **Malala Yousafzai**

Review by **Yvonne Roberts**

A year after she was shot by the Taliban, this extraordinary schoolgirl's words are a reminder of all that is best in human nature

Like many Pashtun girls in the Swat valley in Pakistan, Tor Pekai attended school briefly at the age of six. Many years later, in her 30s, on Tuesday 9 October 2012, she went back to restart her education. In a terrible irony, it was also the day that her 15-year-old daughter, Malala Yousafzai, who had campaigned passionately since the age of 11 for the right of girls to have an education, was shot in the head at point-blank range by the Taliban. "Who is Malala?" the gunman had demanded of the pupils on the school bus. A year later, there cannot be many in the world who do not know.

On her 16th birthday in July this year, having been hours from death and endured several operations, deafness and facial paralysis, Malala addressed the United Nations Youth Assembly in New York. "Here I stand, one girl among many," she said. "I raise my voice... so that those without a voice can be heard."

The UN reports that 57 million children were denied an education in 2011. In Malala, who began by keeping a diary of life under the Taliban for BBC Urdu and who went on to speak out fearlessly, in spite of threats and intimidation, they have a crusader who has the

composure, fluency and wisdom of far more mature years, yet she also remains a fun-loving teenager of modesty, spirit, humour and charm. "I think they may be regretting that they shot Malala," she said wittily of the Taliban in a recent interview, relishing that a joy in learning can prove such powerful propaganda.

I Am Malala is skilfully ghosted by Christina Lamb, the highly respected foreign correspondent. The teenager's voice is never lost. The youngest-ever nominee for the Nobel peace prize is, of course, extraordinary. However, the book also reveals that she is the daughter of a man of exceptional courage with a profound belief in the right of every child to fulfil his or her potential. In a land that esteems boys and commiserates with the family when a girl is born, Ziauddin was the exception. "Malala will be free as a bird," he vowed. He named his daughter after Malalai of Maiwand, the Pashtun's own Joan of Arc, who rallied Afghan men in 1880 to defeat the

British, losing her own life in the process.

Ziauddin, poverty stricken, fought for his own education and went on to found schools for boys and girls. He had a love marriage with Tor Pekai and continued his student activism into adult life.

Then came the Taliban. Led by a school drop-out, Maulana Fazlullah, the men in black turbans wearing badges pledging "sharia law or martyrdom" banned dancing, DVDs (Ugly Betty is a Malala favourite), CDs and beauty parlours. Public whippings, executions and injustice became rife. Malala refers to a 13-year-old girl raped and imprisoned for adultery.

By the end of 2008, the Taliban had destroyed 400 schools. Malala, 11 years old and mostly top of her class, tried to occupy herself with Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time*. Rida, a girl from a destroyed school, joined Malala and her best friend, Moniba – "Three is a tricky number," Malala comments, not helped by others "putting masala in the situation".

On 14 January 2009, all the girls' schools were permanently closed. Eleven days earlier, Malala had begun blogging for the BBC, under the pseudonym Gul Makai (cornflower). She gave television interviews. "They can stop me going to school but they can't stop me learning," she said defiantly. Nobody believed the Taliban would kill a child.

Almost 2 million people fled the Swat valley that spring. In May, the Yousafzai family locked up their house and joined the exodus, moving to four cities in two months.

Floods, an earthquake, the Taliban – Malala resolved to become a politician because "there are so many crises and no real leaders". Aged 14, she reflects: "Sometimes I think it's easier to be a Twilight vampire than a girl in Swat." Then came her would-be assassin.

The medical team that saved Malala; her own stoicism and resilience; the support of her family, now, again in exile, this time in Birmingham; Malala's level-headed resolve to continue to champion education and children's rights – these are all powerful reminders of the best in human nature. Much of the money Malala has been awarded has gone to the Malala fund. "Please join my mission," she asks. It's vital that those of us who can, do.

Excerpted from <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2013>

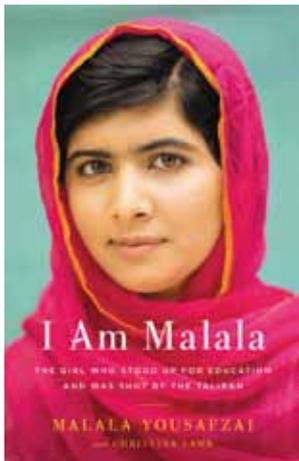


Image courtesy of: <http://msmagazine.com>

What Really Makes Katniss Stand Out? Peeta, Her Movie Girlfriend

Review by **Linda Holmes**

Much has been said, and rightly so, about Katniss Everdeen and the way she challenges a lot of traditional narratives about girls. She carries a bow, she fights, she kills, she survives, she's emotionally unavailable, she'd rather act than talk, and .. did we mention she kills?

But one of the most unusual things about Katniss isn't the way she defies typical gender roles for heroines, but the way Peeta, her arena partner and one of her two love interests, defies typical Hollywood versions of gender roles for boyfriends.

Consider the evidence: Peeta's family runs a bakery. He can literally bake a cherry pie, as the old song says.

He is physically tough, but markedly less so than she is. He's got a good firm spine, but he lacks her disconnected approach to killing. Over and over, she finds herself screaming "PEETA!", not calling for help but going to help, and then running, because he's gone and done some damn fool thing like gotten himself electrocuted.

Her larger mission — her war against the Capitol — often drifts out of focus behind her smaller, more immediate mission: saving Peeta. She lets others know that if it's down to the two of them, he should be saved because of his goodness. She is unsurprised when she's told she doesn't deserve him.

He encourages her to talk about her feelings. He encourages her to share herself with others. He promises her, falsely but selflessly, that her indifference doesn't hurt him and she owes him nothing. If she ever wants to come to her senses, come down from those fences, he'll be there.

He's better than she is, but softer. He's less knowing than she is. He's less cynical than she is. He's just as tough and as brave as he can possibly be with the skill set he has, and she's responsible for mopping up when that's not enough. To fail to protect him is to betray her, because that may well be the only job she gives up.

She kisses him sometimes, but she keeps him on a need-to-know basis, and she decides what he needs to know.

He loves her as she is, while knowing he'll never change her and parts of her will always be mysterious and out of reach.

Don't get me wrong: In real life, we all know couples of all gender alignments who operate in this way and in lots of other ways, whether they're male-female or two guys or two women or whatever; there's absolutely nothing about baking, physical strength, or emotional accessibility that is inherently gendered in real life for real humans with any consistency. But the movies, or at least the big movies, are different. Going by the traditional Hollywood rules, make no mistake: Peeta is a Movie Girlfriend.

Peeta is Pepper Potts and Gwen Stacy, helping and helping and helping until the very end, when it's time for the stakes, and the stakes are: NEEDS RESCUE. Peeta is Annie in *Speed*, who drives that bus like a champ right up until she winds up handcuffed to a pole covered with explosives. Peeta is Holly in *Die Hard*, who holds down the fort against the terrorists until John McClane can come and find her (and she can give back her maiden name).

In fact, you could argue that Katniss' conflict between Peeta and Gale is effectively a choice between a traditional Movie Girlfriend and a traditional Movie Boyfriend. Gale, after all, is the one whose bed she winds up steadfastly sitting beside after she helps bind his wounds. Gale explains the revolution to her. She puts up a plan to run; Gale rebuffs it because he presumes himself to know better. Gale is jealous and brooding about his standing with her; Peeta is just sad and contemplative.

Gale works in the mines, not in a bakery. He's a hunter. He grabs her and kisses her because he simply must. He's taller.

There's more to the unusual gender dynamics in these stories, in other words — particularly, I think, in the films — than the idea of a girl who fights. There's also a rather delightful mishing and mashing of the ideas of what's expected from young men in movies where everybody is running around shooting and bleeding.

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



Image courtesy of: <http://www.hachettebookgroup.com>

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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Facebook - www.facebook.com/FWRM1
Twitter - @fwr1

LOOKOUT!

Research Officer Vacancy

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement will shortly be accepting applications for the above post. We encourage you to keep a lookout for the announcement on our website, Facebook & Twitter page and in The Fiji Times.

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

International Women's Day (IWD)

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement will be acknowledging International Women's Day on March 8th, 2014 with participants of our GIRLS project.

An exciting outdoor event is being planned for the 10-12-year-olds!

For more information contact our GIRLS Officer via telephone 3312711 and/or email

Fiji Young Women's Forum 2

Following the success of the inaugural Forum, the co-conveners of the Fiji Young Women's Forum will be holding its second national forum from March 14th – 16th, 2014 at Novotel, Lami.

Pacific Young Women's Leadership Dialogue

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Young Women's Perspectives Side Event (21st October)

The Side Event was designed and run by the PYWLA young women themselves. It included interpretive dance performed by the PYWLA group based on the sign language for "Safe. Respected. Included. Connected. Skilled" followed by participants Yoshiko Yamaguchi (RMI), Tamara Mandengat (PNG), Cherelle Fruean (Samoa), Ana File (Cook Islands) and Kaisarina Salea (Samoa) speaking on their perspectives on the themes from their work in their home countries. The event was well attended and questions from the floor after the formal presentation engendered an interesting discussion on teen pregnancy and other young women's issues.

Upcoming Regional and International Processes Panel (24th October)

Tamara Mandengat (PNG) was asked to represent her country and the PYWLA on this

panel during the formal proceedings of the fourth day of the Triennial Conference. Of the experience she said "I was nervous about being on the emerging issues panel, but after I went through it I felt very confident that I can do this again"

Interventions from the floor

- Miliikini Failautusi (Tuvalu) asked a question at the Side Panel on the Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development, asking for greater representation of Young Women on the PWSPD Advisory Board
- Jasmine Kaur (Fiji) made an intervention on Comprehensive Sexuality Education for young people during the Health Panel and an intervention on abortion during the report back from the Working Group session.
- Yoshiko Yamaguchi (RMI) was called on to read her poem "So What?" on teen pregnancy to close the event Triennial Conference.

