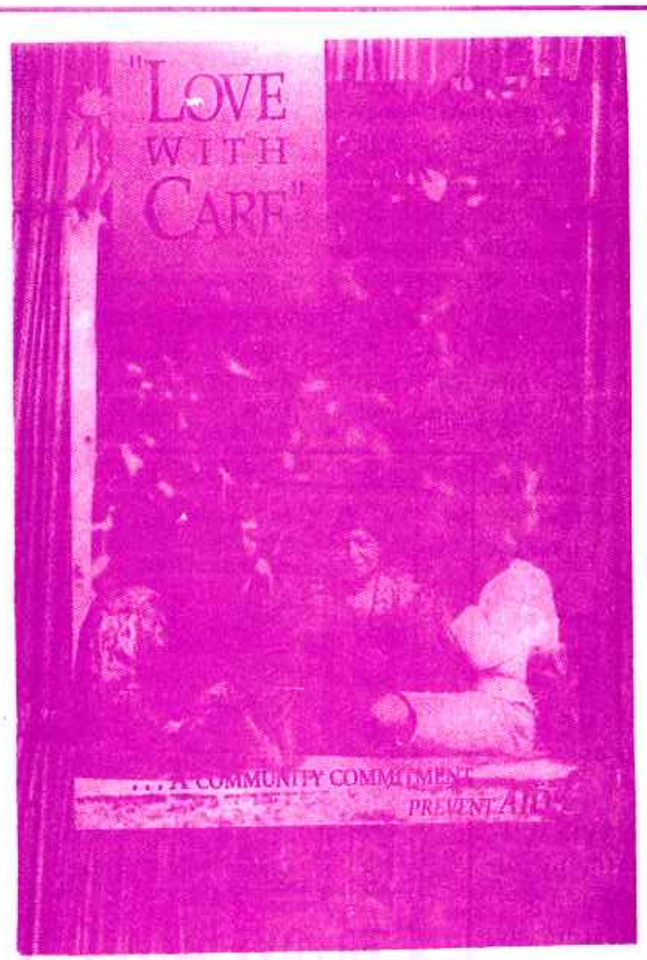
cumcision), genito-urinary tract infections and other common conditions, such as fistulas, arising from women's reproductive role. An estimated 84 million women and girls have been infibulated or circumcised worldwide, causing conditons of the genital area that could place them at high risk of infection if intercourse takes place with an infected man. More than one million women will suffer disabling illness and conditions from reproductive-related causes this year. These disabilities are higher among poor women everywhere and 99 percent occur in developing countries.



LOVE WITH CARE – A Community Committment. Share the facts, Share the Love, Share the Care, Share the Future. Poster launched by the SPC for World AIDS Day 1992

The social, sexual and economic subordination of women places them at risk of HIV infection in different ways to men. The curent prevention strategies have failed, particularly for young women who become infected immediately on commencing sexual activity. For those young women, the circumstances in which they become sexually active allow them little opportunity for choice or control. The unsafe behaviours are often determined or controlled by other people.

For prevention or behaviour changes strategies to protect women, they must fit their lives at two levels. On one hand, they must be based on the actual contexts of women's sexuality; at the individual level, they must be strategies women can exercise and control.

Few possible strategies fulfil these conditions. The diaphrams plus spermicide may protect both women and men from HIV infection and other STDs, and when necessary can be used privately and secretly by women. However, little research has been done in this area. Indeed, not enough is known about how the virus enters woman's genital tract, whether infection occurs at the level of the vagina, cervix or uterus, or about how infected women infect men.

The female condom effectively protects both women and men although it cannot be used without the man's knowledge. However, it has not yet been aggressively advocated and means to make it more affordable and accessible have not been explored.

All genital conditions that may facilitate HIV transmission

should become a focus of attention. Treatable conditions should be treated. Although many women have genital conditions that could be treated, an insignificant number of these women attend STD services. In fact, few women receive internal exams in their lifetime, despite repeated preganancies.

The protective strategy most widely adopted by women is talking to their sexual partners and trying to help them see the importance of protecting themselves from infection and the consequences for their families of not doing so. This strategy may best be undertaken by women collectively. Individually, women may feel and be powerless, but together women can change community norms for both women's and men's behaviours.

If these strategies are not available or effective, possibly the only other strategy is leaving the marriage. This is happening with increasing frequency in seriously affected areas. However, it is an effective strategy only if the woman is then able to support herself and her children (if able to take them with her) by means other than sex work.

If no strategies adequately fulfil the two conditions, the focus of behaviour change strategies must be sought elsewhere: in men's sexuality and life situations or in communities. Changing men's behaviour and changing community standards to support the required behaviour changes are the most effective ways to protect women and their children from infection.

Unfortunately a limited perspective has dominated the HIV research and program agendas. There are three contributing factors. First, the early research populations were infected men; second, male researchers have predominated in all disciplines; and third, because of the severe inequalities of wealth between the industrialised and developing worlds, all early research populations were drawn from industrialised countries. It should be remembered that there were more infected women than gay men or men with hemophilia in the world at every stage of the epidemic. Women have been missing from clinical trials; they have been tested without consent and denied access to the results; they have not been informed that their husbands are infected; their clinical conditions have not been included in case definitions or research priorities; stereotype of prostitutes or wives have closed off possibilities or communication or understanding.

Most HIV research touches experiences that are gender specific - sexuality, reproduction, labour, domestic responsibilities and oppression. But because research and policy agendas are drawn up on the basis of men's experiences, the relevance of women's perspectives may not be realised and gender specificity may not be seen as critical to the outcome.

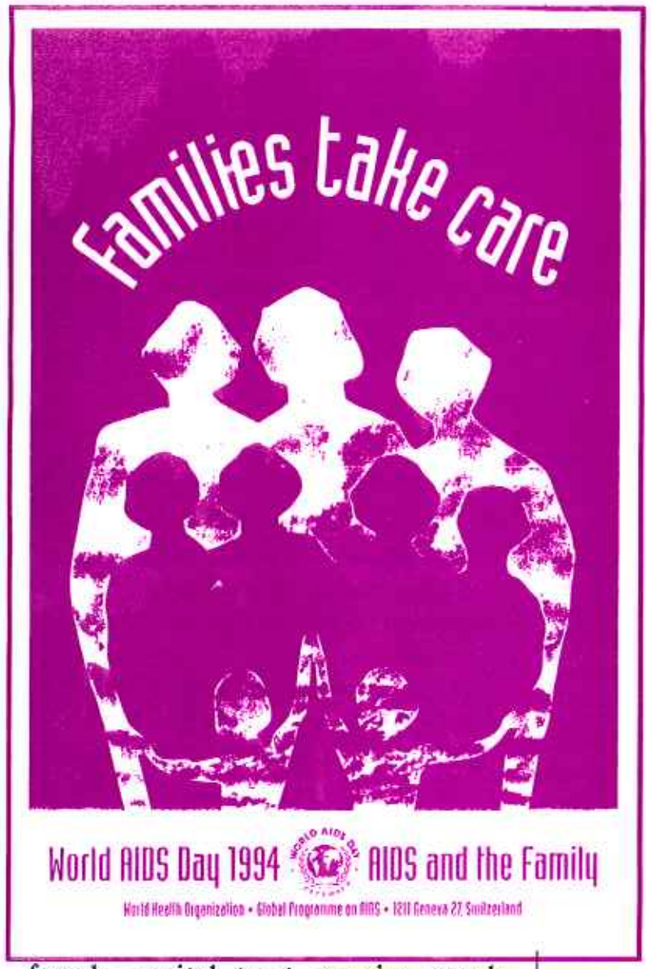
This can lead to a failure to search further in the face of dissonant facts, to set aside stereotypes and to search for knowledge. For example, the prevalence of HIV infection is highest in young women aged 15 to 25 but peaks in men about 10 years later. This difference was known as early as 1986, but only rarely have the possible causes of this difference been explored. Some argue it is due to the fact that sexual partnerships are usually formed between older men and younger women. This is likely a contributing factor, but not the complete explanation.

Why do young women between 15 and 25 have significantly higher rates of HIV infection than young men in the same age group? Both groups are sexually active, young men moreso than young women. Both groups have sexually

transmitted infections, again young men more than women. It is highly probable that the condition of the genital tract in young women significantly increases the likelihood of transmission whenever unprotected sexual contact with an infected partner occurs. The efficacy of HIV transmissions to young women may be increased by factors such as hormonal changes at the onset of menstruation or changes in the anatomy of the genital tract as young women reach puberty. Yet, the biology of the female genital tract remains poorly undestood. In young women, the explanation for their shocki ing rates of HIV infection may be a combination of many factors. The research agenda is in urgent need of realignment.

Because so many facets of the HIV epidemic are gender specific, gender-specific experience and knowledge must be made accessible so it can shape and reshape theory and practice. Women's experiences and knowledge can be accessible by ensuring that women as well as men, shape and determine the agendas, through first person narratives - women telling their own stories - and through devolving responsibility for program development and delivery to women.

Once it is recognised that knowledge of human experiences in general, and women's experiences in particular, is essential to developing effective responses to the epidemic and once people are more at ease and more skilled at acquiring or expressing that knowledge, we can face the coming decades with increased hope.



GENDER, KNOWLEDGE and RESPONSIBILITY

This is an edited version of a paper by: Elizabeth Reid, Director of the HIV and Development Program of the United Nation Development Program.

One of the most striking features of the response to the HIV epidemic to date is how few of the policies and programs are related to women's real-life situations. This article focuses on the urgent need to ensure that women's knowledge and their varying life situations are systematically taken into consideration in the formulation of responses to the HIV epidemic.

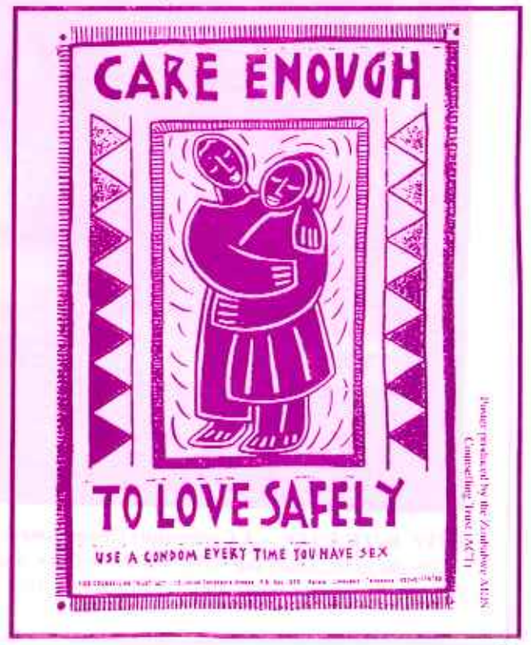
Most women are at risk of infection by sexual transmission, yet strategies advocating prevention of HIV via sexual transmission have offered women relatively little or no protection from infection. Prevention strategies generally have focused on reducing the number of sexual partners, fidelity within relationships, safer sexual practices (particularly the use of condoms). However, these measures, grounded in men's physique, lifestyles and experiences, provide inadequate means by which women can protect themselves from HIV infection.

Advocating a reduction in sexual partners is irrelevant to women who have no sexual partner other than their husband or regular partner. Where women do have multiple sexual partners, this may be a choice forced on them by economic necessity. As long as the socio-economic system gives women few opportunities for economic independence, women will not be able to adopt this strategy.

The second strategy, faithfulness within relationships, is not enforceable by women. Some people estimate that between 50 and 80 percent of all infected women in Africa have had no sexual partners other than their husbands. Whereas women may choose their own behaviour with regard to fidelity, their male partner's behaviour usually lies beyond their control. Condom use could be an important prevention strategy for women who cannot negotiate the nature of their relationships. However, condoms are used by men; women can only ask for their use.

Advocating treatment of STDs as a prevention strategy can be similarly faulted. Rarely are these services provided in culturally acceptable circumstances; they need to be paid for in cash and are usually neither easily accessible nor provided by women.

The probability of HIV infection during unprotected intercourse may be significantly increased when there are lesions, inflammation, secretions, or scarring of the genital area. In men's lives, such conditions are usually caused by the presence of sexually transmitted infections. For women the situation is more complex. Lesions, inflammations or scarring may be caused not only by transfered pathogens, but also by sexual practices, cultural practices (in particular infibulation and cir-



AIDS TASK FORCE OF FIJI

by: Jane Tyler - Co-odinator.

In March of this year, a new non- government organisation, the AIDS TASK FORCE OF FIJI opened the doors of its Drop-In Centre, the Ellery Street Centre, to the public. Since then more than 1,000 people have visited the Centre, including a rapidly growing small army of young volunteers and supporters, and people seeking information about HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases.

Resources are short - funds are sparse, materials are few, but what is not lacking is the enthusiasm and commitment of volunteers who see the urgent need for accessible information on sexual health issues, especially those involving young people.

At Ellery Street Centre, an information and resource library which includes video tapes has been established by the South Pacific Commission covering a wide range of topics relating to HIV/AIDS and STD issues. In the counselling room, video equipment is avaiiable so that tapes can be viewed at any time and more and more students are using the Centre to gather information for school projects. Groups of young people can often be found at the Centre at lunchtime - the atmosphere is informal and essentially user friendly.

The Centre also is the headquaters for an AIDAB funded community outreach project using Peer Educators to target young sexually active persons in nightclubs and bars in Suva for HIV/AIDS awareness activities. Also being developed is a programme to provide on-going support to persons living with HIV and AIDS.

Yet the biggest challenge HIV/AIDS poses, is that to women. We know that HIV/AIDS is a real risk to women, and we know that women's sexual health is still a site of battle. Witness the on-going international debates over women's reproductive health issues such as abortion and female circumsision. Look at the recent fiasco in Cairo at the Conference on World Population. Whilst providing information on sexual health issues is one thing, what can change women's lack of autonomy in determining the circumstances of their lives, in particular the circumstances under which they have sexual intercourse which places them in danger of infection.

How do we help a woman whose partner continues to have unprotected sex with other women and men, how does she tell him to use a condom? We cannot forget that HIV and STD's are infectious diseases and transmission requires a shared experience. This then necessitates the involvement of both women and men in partnership against the further spread of HIV and STD's. New patterns of communication and sharing of responsibilities must emerge. In the long term the only true and lasting HIV and STD prevention strategies for women must address the imbalance of power between women and men.

Ellery Street Centre

Aids Task Force of Fiji

2nd Floor Narsey Building, Ellery Street

GPO Box 12718, Suva, Fiji.

Phone: (679) 313 844 Fax: (679) 313 844

ELLERY STREET CENTRE

Pacific Women's Documentation Project
BENEATH PARADISE

by: Vani Dulaki

The Pasifc Women's Documentation Project is an initiative of the International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) and have been supported by the Community Aid Abroad (CAA). Both are Non-Government organisations which are based in Australia and funding has been made available by the Australian International Development Assistance Bureau (AIDAB). Organisations partipating in this project are those that have been involved with the two Australian NGO's - IWDA and CAA.

Merilyn Tahi

Tina Takash

The main aim of the project is to enable grassroots women to document their experiences, their work and issues of greatest concern to them - for their own work at home, and for their presentation and participation at the NGO Forum in Beijing in September, 1995. Documentation activities will focus on four themes, which have been confirmed by Pacific women at the first workshop which was held here in Fiji in 1993. These are: VIOLENCE, the ENVIRONMENT and WOMEN, POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN, HEALTH.

Lusey Goro

The first regional workshop on this project was held in 1993 and was hosted by the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre. The main aim of this workshop was to enhance or train women new documentation skills, discuss approaches to documentation, discuss approaches to advocacy with home governments and to engage in international fora, including regional preparatory meetings and the NGO Forum to be held in Beijing in 1995.

From August 8 - 23, 1995 the project had it's second regional workshop/ meeting and this was hosted by the Vanuatu Women's Centre and was held at the USP Centre in Port Vila Vanuatu. Fifteen organisations working in nine countries of the Region took part in this 2 weeks regional production workshop. Program for these 2 weeks was mainly to share experiences and progress in planned documentation activities; review and finalise documentation; discuss and plan for presentation and attendance at Beijing NGO Forum, including the selection of women to attend on behalf of the group and of course discuss advocacy strategies with home governments.

Sussan Onnei

The IWDA and CAA have allocated funds for the expenses of five women to be representative of the group to the upcoming NGO Forum which will be held in Beijing in 1995 parallel to the UN Conference.

Vani Dulaki

HOW ARE THE BEIJING EVENTS RELEVANT TO GRASS-ROOTS WOMEN?

The NGO Forum is an opportunity for Pacific grass-roots women to be seen and heard by the world, even if they cannot go to Beijing themselves.

The Platform of Action from the 4th World Conference on Women will be the major international document on women beyond the Year 2000.

The Beijing events and the Platform of Action can only be useful:

- **if women know about them,** and if they help women to think and talk about their rights
- if women's leaders and activists **use them to lobby for change at home** - before and after Beijing - to achieve true and lasting equality for women
- if they help everyone understand both the **hardships** that women face, and **their great strengths**
- if they promote solidarity, sharing, understanding and information exchange between women

" Not all women can go to Beijing, but those who do must be representatives. They must work hard to get a mandate, for their work will only be credible if their preparation and participation does not marginalise women at grass-roots level. ...

All those involved in preparations for Beijing must reach out to grass-roots women and NGOs, communicate with them and feedback their needs, aspirations and concerns back into the national or regional preparations."

Gertrude Mongella, Secretary-General, 4th World Conference on Women

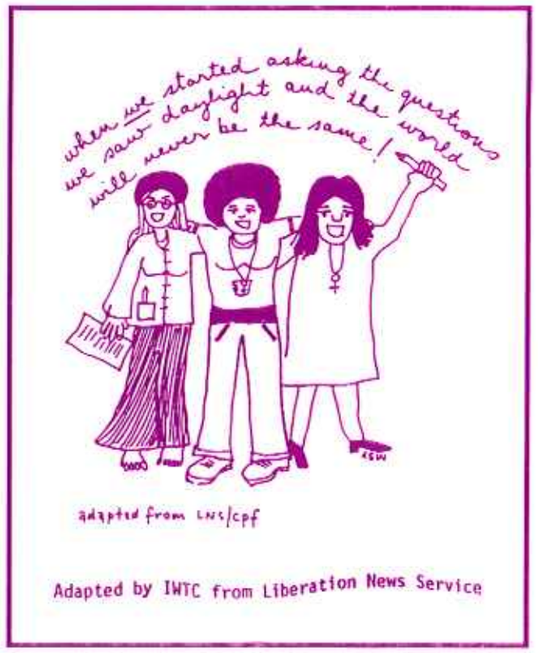
Prepared by Juliet Hunt for "Beneath Paradise: Documentation by Women in Pacific NGOs" July 1994
Graphic from "Taim Bipo" Sogeri National High School, Papua New Guinea, 1980

I.C.J. Land Rights Brainstorming Session 30-31 April 1994.

by: P. Sharma.

The ICJ Land rights project began is September 1993 after it was realised that land rights was an issue that impinged on all other issues pertaining to economic and social well being. During the Brainstorming session organised for the women of the Pacific islands, representatives shared their concerns regarding land rights in their respective countries.

It became blatantly obvious that women were more disadvantaged in their rights to land; women have little or no access to land due to financial and cultural constraints. Although women may have the ability to use land, their right to own land was minimal. This was even true for those matrilineal societies where although women owned land, when it came to access to credit in order to improve the land men had greater priority. It became clear that although customary law did entitle women some rights, the current modern legal system did not acknowledge such rights.



Since most women in the Pacific Islands are employed in the informal/ unpaid sector, they do not have much access to finances. The law as it currently stands only recognises monetary contributions thus belittling the work of the women in areas of subsistence agriculture and domestic work. There was a major collective desire to have women's non-economic contribution to be given the same status as economic contribution so as to improve women's ability to acquire land. Financial institutions while requiring men to be signatories to loans only included women as a form of collateral. This eliminated those women who were not in the paid workforce.

Within the session, indigenous rights, the right for people to use land, the conflict between customary and modern laws was also addressed. The need to recognise and protect women's rights to land was supreme. Certain cultural practises in respective countries undermined women's rights to land and it was believed that it is essential to educate women on these practices so as to overcome these cultural constraints.

Although the time available for this brainstorming session was minimal, participants were able to conduct indepth discussions on issues affecting land rights in their respective countries. The final recommendations that arose from this meeting portrayed the collective desire to ensure that women's rights to land are secured since in the Pacific, land is a scarce commodity and the right to land is an essential requirement in the pursuit of equal rights for women.

Women Employment and Economic Rights

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement's (FWRM) current project "Women, Employment & Economic Rights (WEER) has just entered it's second phase. The primary concern here will be to raise community awareness on issues facing women workers in Fiji. FWRM will be publishing articles in the newspapers, as well as undertaking radio programs in the three languages based on research that has been already done and research that is continuing.

Violence against women is not just physical but economic as well. Women in Fiji are subject to economic oppression since their need for income is desperate. This urgent need of income makes them more vulnerable to low wages, poor working conditions, sexual harassement without the ability to protest or to improve their situation.

Our current labour laws reflect the persisting view of society regarding the desired gender division of labour and the subordinate status for women. Our society places a lot of importance on women being good mothers, wives but unfortunately our labour laws do not reflect this. Our law does not place any value on the unpaid work most of us do in home and community.

In addition to the above, although the medical profession continuously highlights the importance of breastfeeding, one usually does not spare a thought for the working mother who has to leave her 42 day old child and return to work. Unlike countries like Papua New Guinea, Fiji laws do not make any provisions for nursing breaks. These breaks are of usual one and a half or two hours duration and are given daily with pay to enable the mother to take time off and breastfeed her child.

On the issue of nursing breaks there is also a question of mobility, the question arises here of the mother who works some distance away from her home, Will 2 hours be enough for her? The subject of child care at the workplace arises here. If factories/companies did set up child care centres for mothers, these mums could feed their child and return to work promptly thus reducing the need for 2 hours nursing breaks. Unfortunately, our government has not taken any steps to encourage employers to set up this worthy service.

While on the topic of children, currently if your 3 years old in ill, there is no legal provision for leave to look after your child. Sick leave for children is hard to come by as it is, but do you realise the number of women workers who have no sick leave provisions in their workplace. This is due to the fact that sick leave is not provided for in our Employment act. Domestic workers and casual workers do not have any maternity leave or annual leave entitlements currently. One can say that our law discriminates on the basis of your sex but also on the basis of your class, the poor are more disadvatanged than the more affluent workers.

Hopefully the above prove to be food for thought for our readers; from the next issue of Blance we will highlight other issues that concern our women wokers. Keep a lookout for our radio programs and news articles on the WEER project.

Radio Program Schedule

1. Hindi	- Radio Fiji 2	- 9:30am	- Monday.
	- 98.8 FM	- 10:30am	- Monday.
	- Navtarang	- 9:30am	- Tuesday.
	- 98.8	- 6.30pm	- Wednesday.
2. English	- Radio Fiji 1	- 10:30am	- Wednesday.
	- Radio Fiji 1	- 8.45pm	- Thursday.

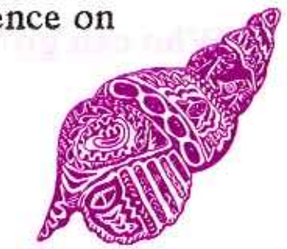
Until the next issue.....

We will introduce our new Project Officer for WEER who has been able to put together the above information for you on this major project and whos voice you are hearing or will be hearing on the above radio programmes.

NGO FORUM ON WOMEN, BEIJING '95

When, Where & What?

* 31 August - 12 September 1995, Beijing, China.
* A parallel event to the 4th World Conference on Women, **organised by & for NGOs.**



Who can go?

* NGO Forum '95 is open to everyone who can get there.

Who can present their work?

* Anyone who requests & gets physical or workshop space can present or display their views & work.

What types of activities will there be?

* Workshops, plenary & panel discussions
* Displays, exhibitions, film & video showings
* Daily briefings/newspaper, to share information from NGO Forum '95 & the World Conference
* Strategy meetings, training sessions, demonstrations
* Lobbying official delegates to the World Conference
* Cultural events, theatre & drama presentations
* Spontaneous activities

What preparations are there?

* All over the world, women are preparing visual, audio, written, drama & workshop material to take to Beijing, to represent the status & struggles of women.
* NGO Planning Committee Consultations (the last is in New York in March 1995) are open to all who can get funding to go. The Secretariat & Coordinator for NGO Forum '95 are in New York.

"The NGO Forum '95 is a forum for women from all walks of life ... where they can take pride in their achievements of the past, and use them as a springboard for the next steps of action."

Gertrude Mongella, Secretary-General, 4th World Conference on Women, March 1994

Prepared by Juliet Hunt for "Beneath Paradise: Documentation by Women in Pacific NGOs" July 1994
Graphic from "Kalamimi: Poetry from Sogeri" Sogeri National High School, Papua New Guinea, 1988

THE 4th WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

When & Where?

4 - 15 September 1995, Beijing, China

Who can go?

* **Attendance is restricted to official Government delegates.** Many countries will send men. Some NGO representatives may be included in official delegations from their country, to support the Government position.
* A few NGOs will go as observers.
* **The women who go to Beijing should represent the concerns of all women from their country.**

What will they do?

* Review progress for women since 1985, when the 3rd United Nations World Conference for Women adopted **The Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women.**
* Adopt a **Platform of Action**, which will outline what needs to be done by Governments, NGOs, and women and men to achieve true equality for women.

Who is organising this and why?

The United Nations, to try to raise the status of women. Conference Secretary-General is Gertrude Mongella.

What preparations are there?

* Asian and Pacific Governments have adopted the **Jakarta Declaration, a regional Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women.**
* Each country should establish a **national committee,** and prepare a national report.
* **National reports** should say what progress has been made for women over the last 10 years, and how Governments plan to improve the situation of women.
* NGOs are lobbying the official Government process.

Prepared by Juliet Hunt for "Beneath Paradise: Documentation by Women in Pacific NGOs" July 1994

Family Law Workshop

by: Gina Houng Lee.

35 Women attended the Family Law workshop that was held from March 24 to March 26 1994. The workshop was part of the Family Law Legal Literacy project funded by the United Nations Economic & Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP). Participants included community workers and activists. Legal literacy is the gaining of some form of useful knowledge or skill. Promoting legal literacy is aimed at dispelling ignorance about basic legal rights.

In opening the workshop, the Legal Adviser of FWRM, Ms P. Imrana Jalal stressed the importance of sharing and understanding the way our courts interpret the law as opposed to what is actually stated in the written laws. Furthermore she stressed the paramount need to work together to make changes so that it benefit everyone.

The objectives of the worksop were for participants to go away afterwards with a better understanding of the Family Law in Fiji and how matters are dealt with by the court and specifically participants were hoped to:

- *acquire a basic knowledge and under standing of family law.*
- *be able to identify where the law adversely affect women.*
- *be able to inform other women of their rights and how to access them*
- *support and assist in the process of seeking changes in the law.*

Topics that were discussed included Marriage and Affiliation, Custody and Access, Divorce, Seperation, Maintenance and Matrimonial Property. These were discussed in reference to the written laws and then the practice of the Court in Fiji. Seeing this difference was important as by knowing the law, we could then be able to insist upon our rights and a move for change.

Mr Kim Stanford-Smith, who is the Regional, Legal Adviser and Judicial, Legal, and Rights Education Program Officer with the British Aid conducted the technical sessions and Imrana chaired the Saturday morning session on how the practice of the courts varied from the writen laws. This was an interesting session and different case scenarios were presented and analysed. Furthermore participant discussed their own experiences in relation to Family Law practises and procedures.

The workshop was informative and we only wished that we had more time to have group discussions. One participant felt a session was needed to discuss procedures.

You might have seen the newspaper articles on Family Law. This was part of the Legal Literacy Project Brochures on the topics covered at the workshop have also been printed. Information leads to knowledge and having basic knowledge leads to empowerment and change.

come proactive social agents who act upon the law to make it relevant, who know how to use and direct the law to shape more adequate and realistic forms of social organisation that better meet women's needs.

Any legal literacy programme must in addition to teaching the law also address the discriminatory aspects of the law. An uncritical understanding of the law carries with it a danger that the corrupt status quo of women in the legal system will be presented and reinforced.

By informing women about their legal and human right, and translating difficult legal terms and procedures into information that can be understood and used by women, the law can be an effective tool of change for the better. Changes which affect the way the law is formulated and administered by future law professionals and lobby groups will be extremely significant in changing this male bias in the law. The demystification of the law can thus represent a challenge to the established and elitist legal system.

Training community level educators is the best method for carrying out legal education that truly empowers women because it builds the leadership skills of grassroots women and provides them with tools to access the legal system independently. Educating women about the law and providing them with skills to better use the legal system assists them to comprehend the kind of justice that the system dispenses. Legal Literacy will make aware of the flaws of the system so that the groundwork is laid for challenging the structures. It also assists them to develop quasi-legal and extralegal solutions which can eventually become practical forms of justice.

Acquiring knowledge of the law is a means to an end. It is not an end in itself. It is a tool that may be used advance women's interest. It is a weapon for empowerment.

NAZHAT SHAMEEM

(DPP) DIRECTOR PUBLIC PROSCUTION

CURRICULUM VITAE

Date of birth: 16.11.60

Country of birth & Residence: Fiji

Education:

Primary and Sec. Education
Suva Grammer School;
Auckland Girls Grammer Sch.

Degreees
BA (Law) (Hons) 1981-Sussex University, United Kingdom;
LL.M (1982); - University of Cambridge, United Kingdom.

Professional Institutions: Inn of Court School of Law Ba
Finals 1983.
Barrister (Inner Temple) 198
Barrister & Solicitor, High Court of Fiji (1984).

Professional Experience Legal Officer, DPP's Office: 1984-1985; Senior Legal Officer: 1985-1988; Principal Legal Officer: 1988-1990; Assistant DPP: 1993; DPP: 1994.

International Solidaity For Three Thai Women Victims of Modern Slavery Shimodate Court Case, Japan.

Three Thai women were promised work in restaurants and factories in Japan. However, soon after their arrival they were sold and forced to work in prostitution. Each woman was burdened with a debt of US$28,000 and they were physically and mentally abused. All their earnings from prostitution was taken away by their boss, a Thai woman.

"Many women cried at night time", one of the women wrote. "Some of them had worked for more than five or six months, and were able to pay back only US$8,000."

"We were her slaves. Why did we let her treat us like animals? Even cattles after hard work, they had time to rest. When they fell sick, they got medical care. But we are human beings, we feel pain and misery like any other."

On the night of 28 September 1994, the prosecutor argued to the judge hearing the case that the three women be sentenced to life imprionment on the charge of pre-meditate murder and robbery. The prosecuter said that "it is necessary to give them a severe penalty in consideration of preventive measures against increasing crimes caused by foreigners."

The prosecutor did not consider that the three women are victims of human trafficking, the modern form of slavery. The prosecutor was of the opinion that the three defenders knew that they would work in prostitution and that they had work as prostitutes before coming to Japan, therefore they were not forced into prostitution.

Japan is a State Party to both the United Nations Convention for the Suppression of Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of Prostitution of Others (1949) and the Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, CEDAW (1979).

Article 6 of CEDAW states: " States Parties shall take all measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women."

The UN Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery concluded in 1991 that traffic in person is serious crime and must be treated as such. The Working Group proposed that severe penalties should be imposed on procurers, intermediaries and accomplices; that legislation to protect women and children against trafficking and sexual exploitation should be developed; that treatment and support systems should focus more on the victims; and that methods should be devised to secure testimony from women and children who have been the victims of such abuses, without further traumatizing them.

APOLOGIES !!!.....APOLOGIES !!!.....

We sincerely apologise to all readers for the delay of this edition of BALANCE due to circumstances which were beyond our control. We promise that this will not be repeated and please expect an edition in every two months.

We would also like to invite you to comment or make some suggestions on how you would like to see our BALANCE and would be very delighted to receive any story, poems or any other that you would like to have included and shared to other readers.

Reminder : Membership is due for renewal..!

Membership.
To become a member of the FWRM it is necessary for you to fill our membership form and pay $5.00 to receive our newsletter. Men are welcome to join as Friends of the Movement and will receive our newsletter. For overseas friends, a subcription of F$10.00 will be rquired to enable us to send copies of the **Balance** to you. Please fill & return the form to our postal address.

As a Member or Friend of the Movement you may participate actively or be supportive.

Postal Address:
Fiji Women's Rights Movement,
P.O.Box 14194, Suva, Fiji Island.

Membership Form

I agree to abide by the rules of the Movement and support it's aims and objectives.

Name----------
Postal Adress----------

Telephone----------

Signature----------

Upon payment of membership & completion of this form you will be eligible for membership.

To : _____

Sender: Fiji Women's Rights Movement
P.O.Box 14194
Suva, Fiji Islands.

1994

FIJI WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT
P.O BOX 14194, SUVA, FIJI.
TEL: (679) 313 156, FAX: (679) 313 466

BALANCE

Editorial Comments...

by: P. Imrana Jalal

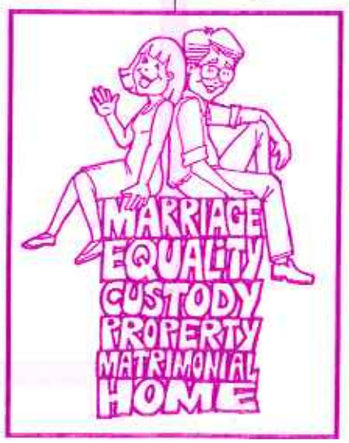
At a recent Seminar held at the Fijian Hotel, (April 1994) hosted by the International Commission of Jurists in collaboration with the Fiji Women's Rights Movement delegates from the Pacific Island countries agreed that women in the Pacific had very little information about the law; that the extent of discrimination that women suffer under the law has significant consequences on their ability to obtain some basic services and exercise their human rights; and, their access to legal literacy, legal aid and therefore justice is severely restricted which in turn has severe implications on women's participation in development.

The United Nation Convention on the Elimination Of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women which has been signed in the Pacific Islands by Western Samoa, Papua New Guines, the Cook Islands and Niue has become the model for review and analysis of the situation of women globally. A primary purpose of the Convention is to encourage national action for the enactment and enforcement of laws to provide women with legal protection and access to the Courts of law. Clearly, however legal provisions cannot be useful to women and disadvantaged groups unless the target groups are aware of their legal rights. Furthermore women cannot take effective action to realise these rights unless they become aware of the options available to them. Legal literacy programmes have been identified as of foremost importance in achieving the goals of the Convention.

A programme to promote "legal literacy" is about dispelling illiteracy about basic rights. Legal literacy is therefore

" The process of acquiring:
- critical awareness about rights and the law,
- the ability to asssert rights, and
- the capacity to mobilise for changes." (Schuler, 1992)

The overall objective of a legal literacy programme is to upgrade women's legal status through literacy. Ultimately it is about using one of many strategies to improve women's overall status. The overall purpose of a legal literacy programme is to increase general awareness of human rights and the legal status of women and encourage actions to eliminate discriminatory legal provisions against women. Legal literacy is a significant strategic concern and one of the bases by securing their human rights. That is not to say that acquiring legal knowledge of itself empowers women but that once empowered, women be-



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