distributed on request not only around Fiji but from around the region and beyond. An important lesson FWRM learnt from this was recognising the type of medium people enjoyed learning from which is the use of visual aids such as videos. We believe this is the main factor of why the production of the tape was a success.

It was also during this period that the Movement began to seriously consider the existing legislation and how it was negative in placing the blame on the victim than on the perpetrator. The Movement began to address flaws in the law more diligently. One of the activities identified was to devise a draft law reform to be put forward to Government through the Ministry of Women with whom FWRM has built a good relationship. Copies of the draft proposal were sent not only to all women's organisations around the country but to other relevant groups requesting their support for the draft reform.

At the end of this level, the Movement decided to hire a draftsperson to prepare the Reform in a more professional manner. A project proposal was designed and submitted to Canada Fund who had shown interest in supporting such an activity. With funds available, the Movement began searching for an appropriate person to assist in this work. By early 1995, Ms Ratna Kapoor, a woman lawyer from India was identified as the most suitable person for the job due to her experience. Materials were sent back and forth between Fiji and India to help her understand the situation in Fiji on the issue of rape. By May 1996, Ms Kapoor completed her objective handing over to FWRM the document that the Movement wished to share with women around the country and this was carried out from November 18 - 21, 1996.

Leaders of women's organisations around the country were invited to this meeting as representatives of their organisations. They discussed and debated upon the main components of the law reform e.g. changing the name of the title from **"Sexual Offences Against Morality"** to **"Sexual Offences Against Pesons"**.

It is our hope that as a result of this workshop our participants will not only acquaint themselves with the "Sexual Assault" legislation per se, but that they would be enlightened and empowered to challenge any behavior which perpetuates the subordination of women within their own communities.

(being involved with FWRM continued from pg 7)

Dr Mridula Sainath

My introduction to FWRM was "Doc, you should attend our meetings" - a friend quipped when we were discussing some women's sexual health issues - way back in late 1988, and believe me, I am hooked - it's like the right agenda for the right time. The Movement was slowly changing boundaries, breaking the culture of silence on various women's issues - and being a woman's health activist I found a platform where I could put an input and see the results.

(and the men on FWRM continued from pg 5).

Tony Chamberlain

As Karen's husband I have like many other men watched with some uneasiness as my partner became involved with FWRM. Are these a band of women not just striving for justice and equality but intent on the disempowerment of men - I asked myself. I must say however, that I have been impressed by the level-headiness, maturity and rationality of the objectives and approaches to the very real problems that affect Fijan women shown by FWRM. This was particularly noticable at the WCFWCR Forum held at the Fiji Club recently. I felt that the women presented rational, moral and sound arguements and I was dissapointed by those who suggested that the existing constitution was non-discriminatory with respect to women's citizenship rights. Well done for trying to help Fiji into the 21st Century and the professional manner that you have adopted.

Forum Theatre - Women's Action for Change (WAC)

What is Forum Theatre?

Forum Theatre is a type of theatre where the audience participates in a play to change the play's outcome. The audience participation is the most important part of the play. Forum Theatre allows people to explore situations, issues and problems that are important to them. Forum Theatre encourages people to think about and discuss these problems and take action to change things for the better.

Who can use Forum Theatre?

Forum Theatre can be used by many different groups including theatre groups, community groups, youth groups, school teachers and students. It can also be used to promote social change by getting people to see how they can create social changes by reacting and behaving differently.

How does Forum Theatre work?

Forum Theatre usually starts with a small group of actors performing a short play usually with few props. The play can be about a real-life situation or problem that is important to the audience. In every play there is *a p r o t a g o n i s t* (a person who is oppressed or disadvantaged), an *antagonist*, (a person who oppresses), a *joker* or facilitator (who explains the rules and encourages people to participate in the play) and the audience or Forum who are called *"spectators"* because they participate in the play as well as watch and discuss what is happening.

The play must show "problem situations" that demonstrate unsatisfactory ways of dealing with a problem or issue. Spec-tators" are encouraged to change the way of dealing with this situation by acting the part themselves. This encourages people to discuss solutions to these problem situations.

AIDS Voice - Global

Global Infection Rates

The World Health Organisation reports that 16 million adults and 1 million children had been infected with HIV by June 1994. The number of adult HIV infections has increased by 3 million (23%) in the 12 months since July 1993.. Of the adult total, more than 10 million people have been infected i n sub-Saharan Africa, 1.5 million in South and South-East Asia, 1.5 million in Latin America and the Carribean, 1 million in North America and 50, 000 in Oceania.

Women and HIV/AIDS

The focus of the epidemic is shifting increasingly to women. In 1980 an estimated 80% of HIV-infected people were men; today, over 40% of HIV infections are women. In sub-Saharan Africa, where 90% of HIV infections occur through heterosexual transmission, equal numbers of men and women are infected. In New York state nearly 50% of adolescents with AIDS are young women.

Children and HIV/AIDS

The World Health Organisation estimates that during the 1990's, 10 million uninfected children will lose one or both parents to AIDS. Many of these children, without the protection from their mothers will die in infancy.

Transmission Patterns

Overall, global patterns of infection show that: 71 % of global infections are transmitted through heterosexual intercourse; homosexual transmission accounts for 15% of infection; 7% of infections have occurred through injecting drug use; and 5% of infections have occurred through b l o o d transfusions and other blood products.

- Heterosexual transmission ranges from 10% or less in North America, Oceania and Eastern Europe to 90% in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Homosexual transmission is more common in North America, Oceania (Australasia), Latin America, Latin America, Eastern Europe and the South-East Mediterranean
- The role of injecting drug use in HIV transmission ranges widely from a low 0.5% in sub-Saharan Africa to 20% or more in North America, Western Europe and Sout-East Asia.

AIDS Voice - the Pacific

As at 19 June 1995, a cumulative total of 43, 574 HIV infections, 8,358 cases of AIDS and 5,667 AIDS deaths have been notified to the Western Pacific Regional Office of the World Health Organisation.

American Samoa, Cook Islands, Nauru, Niue, Tokelau, Tuvalu and Vanuatu have yet to report any HIV infections or AIDS cases; Kiribati and the Solomon Islands have reported HIV but no AIDS cases. Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Northern Marianas, Marshall Islands, FSM, Palau, Samoa, Tonga and Wallis and Futuna are currently reporting less than ten HIV infections per annum. For many of these countries and areas, the numbers of reported HIV infections have changed little over the last decade.

The absence of any increase in the annually reported HIV infections suggests that these countries and areas may not have problems with a larger HIV epidemic for the next five years or so. However, it cannot be ruled out that the apparent lack of any increase in any HIV infections in some of these countries and areas is due to less than ideal surveillance, or that it simply reflects a relative geographical isolation which would delay the introduction of HIV into local at-risk populations.

AIDS Voice - National AIDS Committees

In most Pacific Island countries, ministries of health have developed national strategies to combat the HIV epidemic with assistance from WHO's Global Programme on AIDS. National AIDS committees have been set up to advise governments on HIV-related policies and help design programmes to counter the spread of HIV and provide care for people who are already infected.

With few known cases of AIDS in most countries, so far, HIV and AIDS programmes have concentrated on providing public information to prevent HIV infection - a few education programmes in schools and some limited promotion of safe sex methods and on medical interventions, such as early detection a n d management of other STDs, the screening of blood donors, and the control of infection within health care facilities. There has been some concern with protecting the rights of people living with HIV and AIDS and other vulnerable groups but little

Where Women Rule - men are used as breeding bulls

By Thomas Laird and Paul Andrews

In a small province in the midst of macho India, women hold the power. Owning land and livestock, they dominate the men who are little more than "servants". now in the name of progress, this traditional way of life is under attack from the men, who complain that they are nothing more than breeding bulls.

Why would they mistreat him? 'There's just no way a man living here can complain." Yet complain some do. As influences from the rest of India and the world seep into Meghalaya, many Khasi are making comparisons. But perhaps most surprising of all opponents of the tradition are those women who wish to abolish it. Among them is Lekieng Mauflang, a 46 year old who unusually, has taken her husband's surname.

'I would like things to change," she says. Some men, because they have no responsibility, no lineage, feel the father has nothing to do with the children. They take it lightly. And the mother is so weak she cannot take charge fully, as the father could if he felt responsible. A patrilinear system is more modern. We'll have to have it in the end, because of the influx of outsiders. If we had been here by ourselves, it would have been all right.

Until recently, conflict between the Indian government and regional separatists made Assam as a whole an unattractive destination. Since 1992, however, guerilla activity has abated and Meghalaya has become safer. Workers and businessmen from the rest of India have flooded into the Shillong area.

They are attracted by the region's comparative prosperity-as part of its policy to undermine support for the rebels, the Indian government poured money into the region, building roads and housing and supplying even the remotest villages with electricity. Not only does this 'invasion' encourage groups like the SRA, who link economic development with the culture of those who bring it, but mixed marriages are on the rise.

"This trend, Khasi women marrying non-Khasi, has been causing a lot of concern," asserts Paul Lyngdoh, who is the president of the Khasi Student Union (KSU, which campaigns against mixed marriages). "A Khasi woman inherits all the property of the family; however, if she decides to marry a non-Khasi, the husband takes over all her wealth. We are being exploited."

According to Lakyntiew Lyngdoh (no relation to Paul). 'The real reason the KSU want this change is because Khasi women don't fancy them. We have always 'married out', and it has never been a problem - never taboo. If that happens, the children are Khasi.

If men 'marry out', they often convince the wife to take a new Khasi cian name. They start a new clan which their children take. Either way, the children are Khasi."

Despite the challenges, it seems that matrilinearism will survive for the foreseeable future, at least, as 'incomers' marrying into the community are drawn into its ways. Even more importantly, Khasi traditionalists, who include many strong, educated and articulate men and women, are supremely confident that their way is right. Lakyntiew Lyngdoh is adamant who should change. :"Frankly, it seems to me that most of the world could learn something from the sensible system we have preserved here."

An estimated 85 to 114 million girls suffer forced genital mutilation world wide. (Most live in Africa, a few in Asia and, in recent years, cases have been reported in Europe, Canada, and the US where several immigrant African population have settled).

More than 10 million people are engaged in prostitution in the world today, at least 2 million are children.

145 million of the world's children lived in the streets in 1992 worldwide.

Fiji Constitution Review Commission Report - What now?

The Constitution Review Commission Report was presented to the President Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara on 6 September, 1996. This was a culmination of an appointment made some 18 months work by the three dedicated Commissioners Sir Paul Reeves, Tomasi Vakatora and Dr Brij Lal. The Constitution Review Commission Report titled "Towards A United Future" is a well written document which has to be read in its entirely to get the full impact.

On the whole the Movement feels that women have been treated extremely well in the Report. Our concerns have been taken into account in the Document and we now appeal to the Parliamentary Select Committee to see the document with an open mind and engage in constructive dialogue to enable Fiji to have a progressive Constitution which will see our country grow socially, economically and

Karen Chamberlain

I first became aware of FWRM in June 1996 when I had a phone call from Praveen. Since I signed the dotted line, I have been a regular member of the Collective and I have become increasingly familiar with the current situation of women's rights in Fiji and the great work carried out by the FWRM team. Since joining, I have writen a letter to a newspaper expressing my views on abortion. My involvement with FWRM has increased my confidence both to form and express my own views about a varity of topics that have a direct relevance to my life and to the lives of other women. I would like to congratulate FWRM on their 10th Anniversary.

Penny Moore

If the coup had not happened I am sure that FWRM would have been a different organisation than what it is today. At the beginning, the women who called for the first meeting and had the idea of starting the Movement were experienced, highly educated feminists with a few of us taggers-on who agreed with the concept. But it was early days of understanding for us. With the coup, many of the first women had to leave the country, had to support their husbands' political problems whilst others had pressure from their communities not to get involved.

But it set FWRM on the path of lobbying for political and human rights. Due to our close association with the Women's Crisis Center and the fact that most of us left felt more connected to the violence against women issue than the more abstract concept of "Women's Rights," we then directed our work to an anti-rape campaign.

This proved to be a very good strategy. By using rape as an issue, we brought the concepts of women's rights to a very wide range of women in Fiji. When Arieta Matalomani, Kara Sewale and myself travelled throughout Fiji holding workshops on rape, it was the women participants themselves that would identify their problems - that their oppression was the result of the assault and the reason men got away with rape. In this way, they then began to identify with Women's Rights.

Ten years on I still meet the women who remember the workshops relating to me stories of what they have done since or how it has changed their lives, if not drastically but just by making them aware that it is not their fault but the problem of being a women. They are assured they are not alone and that this problem is common amongst women in Fiji.

It is always important that a people's movement must be part of the people, must make them feel part of the movement and the Anti-Rape Campaign managed that - giving FWRM a high profile in the media and recognition amongst NGOs and Government for its work. A good start!

And the men on FWRM.....

Leonard Chan

Recently I spent two months working at the FWRM on a consultancy. I had a choice of either working out of its office or from another location. I was told then that only one other man had actually physically worked in the FWRM office and if I chose to do the same then I would be the second man to do so.

The organisation is nothing like what the media portrays women's activist organisations to be and far from reflecting the views of men who write letters to the editors in our dailies accusing the FWRM of being anti-one thing or another. On the other hand I believe the FRWM Collective was very accomodating in allowing me to work in its office. It was utilising a resource to help its cause and did not make gender an issue. If a woman's organisation becomes exclusive to the extent of making it out of bounds for men, then it is every bit as guilty of sexual discrimination as men-only entities. Sometimes those blinkers need to be removed for one to take a wider look at the world. I congratulate the FWRM on its 10th Anniversary and wish it well in its endevavours for the next decade.

Every **Mother** is a **WORKING WOMAN!**

in our country. I am proud to be part of a close-knit group of women who inspite their cultural, professional and religious differences are focused in their agenda to promote the status of women to a level where we are considered by Law, by our Employers and by Society as equal to men.

Being associated with a women's organisation which advocates equality for women can sometimes be a daunting experience. Often I am asked, "why are you people (FWRM) fighting for equality? You are treated better than women in most countries," so my reply has always been one and the same. We don't just want better treatment, we want to be treated equally - in the eyes of the Law, in the eyes of our Employers, in the eyes of our Society.

Getting involved with the Movement has not only enlightened me but more importantly, has empowered me to become more active in assisting to eliminate discrimination against women and as such elevate the status of women in the home, in the workplace in society.

Gaylene Osbourne

The other day I was reading some material on victorian Women and I thanked the heavens that I am a woman of this era. I am also fortunate to belong to an organisation that facilitates, encourages and empowers women of all ages to know their rights as human beings of this era, generation, country and if you want to be extravagant - globe and even universe (phew!!).

I have enjoyed the time spent rushing to make the 1pm Wednesday collective meetings and the atmosphere of friendship and congeniality in which they are conducted, the friendships made and networks strenghtened - not to mention the steep learning curve that I climbed informing myself of certain laws of this country.

To the hardworking women who have contributed in the past to the success of FWRM today, to the hardworking women of the present who have contributed so much" to FWRM and to the women of the future who will continue the process - I salute you for the sweat, strains and GAINS !!!

FWRM is a survivor and will be here for many more decades to come. So good on you and a Happy 10th Anniversary.

Gina Houng Lee

I first heard of FWRM in 1986 when I was a Form 6 student at St Joseph's Secondary School. Imrana spoke to us brighteyed high school students about what FWRM was doing with their Anti-Rape Campaign (which is now, 10 years later called the Sexual Assault Bill and has been presented to Government). I would have to say that was the start of the activism spark in me as I listened to her presentation.

At that time, what irritiated me most and still irritates me today is the lack of respect women receive in the streets. I recall as a young student how insulted and scared I usually felt at the prospect of walking past a group of boys and being subjected to crude, obscene remarks. Why, I used to wonder did this happen? Of course this shows the overall lack of respect that young boys have towards women. This highlighted to me the very important work that FWRM is doing in trying to change attitudes - this of course is a long term educational process and I wanted to be part of this change. By the way, the boys/men that call out remarks to me in the streets these days get an earful!!

Since my return from Auckland in 1993, I officially joined the Movement and have been a part of it ever since. The Movement has enriched me personally in many ways - it has given me a sense of solidarity and friendship among women as well as empowering me to trust my beliefs and convictions and has also been a source of strength. I have witnessed very positive changes in Fiji along the way that has made me very proud to be a member of FWRM as well a s incidents that make me think we have taken a step back. However, all the members are forward looking and the setbacks only increase our determination to do better. My dream is for FWRM to be a stronger group with a wider membership and this can only happen with committed women from all walks of life who demand more from the community. Remember, as the saying goes, "only with numbers can we move mountains." We are looking at ways to build this membership so to all women out there - join up and show your support so that women get the recognition they deserve.

"Violence against women emerges as a truly universal issue, cutting cultural, geographical, racial, class, religious and ethnic boundaries. Existing laws in many countries offer limited protection for women. Domestic violence is often regarded as a "private family matter".

politically.

We appeal to those of our readers who have access to the Report to educate their family members and colleagues on the Report in its totality. Balance will also bring you the Constitution Review Report in future issue. Listed below are FWRM's specific Responses to some of the changes recommended for Fiji women:

1. Changes to citizenship clauses so as to allow the foreign husband of a local woman the same rights to citizenship as foreign wives to local men:

FWRM was delighted that the Constitution Review Commission (CRC) heard the voices of Fiji women and has put forward these recommendations. These recommendations effectively remove the discrimination faced by our women on the grounds of citizenship over the years. Now the husband of a local woman will be able to enter and reside in Fiji. By the same token the children of a Fiji woman born outside of Fiji will have the same rights to citizenship to Fiji as a child of a Fiji man born outside of Fiji. These changes if included in the Constitution will allow women the choice to reside in Fiji whether they marry a local or foreign men. Under the current provisions this choice is taken away from women. Effectively this change will recognise women as legitimate citizens of Fiji.

Isikeli Mataitoga, former Solicitor General and current Fiji Ambassador to Australia opening the FWRM Sexual Offences Draft Legislation Endorsement Workshop. November, 1996.

2. How would changes to the citizenship laws affect the Vola ni Kawa Bula?

These changes do not affect the current provisions for registration in the VKB. The VKB is contained in a separate Act which the Report recommends should be constitutionally entrenched. This means that to change this Act, it will require the support of the majority of both houses and the Great Council of Chiefs will also have the power to reject any proposed changes. The report does not state anywhere about changes in registration of the VKB so the recommendation regarding citizenship will not effect the VKB.

3. The Report has recommended that Discrimination based on Gender be also included in the preamble to the Constitution:

The CRC report states that they included discrimination based on gender as well as sex because the term gender takes into account the different attributes associated with a particular sex while the term sex is restricted to only the biological interpretation. So in this way we welcome the addition as it takes into account the female and male stereo types which tend to be used to discriminate against them.

4. The Report has recommended Affirmative Action Policies for Women:

This is a definite plus for women as the report recognises women's low status in Fiji. Women have and continue to suffer discrimination based on their gender. Affirmative Action is necessary to rectify the discrimination faced by women over the years. Women have been relegated to a secondary status in the economic, social and political sphere. Women still face discrimination in the law; women continue to be assaulted and murdered in their homes; women have limited powers in decision making structures. Women's unpaid work and contribution to the economy is still not given recognition. In order to enable women gain equality in these spheres and participate fully in the development of the country and for the country to recognise women's contribution, they need to be accorded certain advantages to redress the gender imbalance. The Fiji Women's Rights Movement wholeheartedly welcomes the inclusion of affirmative action for women in the report.

5. The Report also raises the need for Affirmative action for women in the public service:

According to Women of Fiji - A statistical gender profile (page 18), women comprise of approximately 44% of all civil servants. Most are employed in the Ministry for Health (as nurses) and Ministry for Education (as teachers). Despite the large number of women in public service women hold only 8% of higher level positions, 20% of middle level and 48% of low level positions. This shows the uneven distribution of women (they are concentrated in low level positions and rare in high level positions) in Public service. Women are promoted less frequently to men, they hold very few positions of high

office. It is obvious that women are lagging behind not just in the public sector but also in private sector and hence there is a definite need for Affirmative action for women to give them a push start to achieving equality in all spheres of society.

6.What about women being appointed to the Bose e Cake (Senate)?

Ideally speaking we should have more women being elected into the Bose Lawa (House of Representatives). The appointments to the Bose e Cake (according to the report) will be made after looking at the gender representation of both houses so if women are in low numbers in the Bose Lawa, we will need to have women appointed into the Bose e Cake to ensure that women are not excluded from the decision making processes.

7.Do we need to have more women in Judiciary as suggested in the Report?

There is a definite need to have more women appointed to the judiciary to allow for a gender balance and also allow for more gender sensitive judgements. On the same token there should be continued gender sensitivity training for all judicial officers to ensure that judgements are gender sensitive.

8. FWRM on the Bill of Rights :

The Bill of rights is extremely progressive and allows for the human rights of women and men to be upheld in all circumstances. It takes into account the reality of Fiji and seeks to ensure that the citizens of Fiji enjoy the fundamental rights and freedoms accorded to them under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

9.How does FWRM feel about the fact that there is only one woman in Parliamentary Select Committee?

Ideally speaking, we would have liked more women to be on the Committee but by the same token, if three men (CRC) can come up with such a progressive and gender sensitive document, we pin high hopes on all members (male and female) of the Select Committee to look out for women's interests and come up with equally progressive and gender sensitive recommendations.

Global Facts- World of Women and Children

Job opportunities for women have generally been confined to clerks, sales persons, maids, household workers and to the informal sector. They receive lower wages than men for equal work and drop in and out of labour force because of child bearing and rearing responsibilities.

National institutions for the advancement of women lack financial and human resources to perform adequately, disseminate information, or develop educational programs in almost every nation.

Women's Lives Have Less Value

According to Halfdan Mahler, Secretary General of the International Planned Parenthood Federation, 'more than 15 million teenagers in the world give birth every year. About five million others have abortions. When a teenager becomes pregnant outside a settled partnership, it can result in her social, economic, educational and spiritual destruction. She may feel that the only way out is an abortion. Yet major religions turn a blind eye to this. Boys sexual adventures are often condoned; girls play a life-long price.'

The author underlines that the international community has been willing to acknowledge sexual and reproductive rights in the abstract. Too many governments have been slow to provide information, education and services women require. "Establishing sexual and reproductive health services costs money and often political capital, too. In many places, both kinds of currency have been in short supply."

Dramatic Inequality in Education

*of the world's nearly one billion illiterates, two thirds are women

*of the 130 million children without access to primary education,more than 80 million are girls

*on average, by the age of 18, girls have received 4.4 years less education than boys. (UNICEF)

How Girls Live and Die

Teenage girls make up 25% of the 500, 000 women who die each year from pregnancy and childbirth. The World Summit for Children (New York 1990) recognised the urgent situation of the girl child. It called for children to be given top priority in human development.

- more than 15 million girls aged 15 to 19 give birth each year (UNFPA 1994)
- a girl infant is often breastfed for shorter periods, is taken less often to the health care centre and has lower rates of immunisation and

weekly column in the largest national newspaper *(Fiji Times))* writing on women's issues under the banner of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement. Other members regularly have a voice on national radio in Fijian and Hindi in various programmes. One prominent member writes regularly for a regional magazine, *Pacific Islands Monthly*. These women have made it possible for women's voices to be heard publicly on a day-to-day basis and to access the public domain in a significant way.

FWRM is currently working on a project titled "Women, Work and Economic Rights" (WEER) to bring about an awareness of women's conditions of employment, to lobby for legislation to improve women's situation in paid labour, to obtain legal recognition for women's unpaid labour in the home, in subsistence farming and agriculture and to improve women's economic rights in general. The strategies adopted are similar to that employed in the Anti Rape Campaign. In February 1994, the FWRM hosted the first "Pacific Island Regional Roundtable Meeting on "Women and Politics" which brought together a cross-section of women politicians and women political activists to discuss ways of improving women's participation in politics in the Pacific Islands. In April 1994, in collaboration with the International Commission of Jurists, Vienna, FWRM hosted and conducted the first Regional Seminar on Women and the Law in the Pacific Islands bringing together over 40 women lawyers and activists from 16 Pacific Island nations.

In August 1993, due to internal administrative problems, primarily due to the fact that the previous organisational structure, set up by the first Constitution of FWRM, did not adequately cater for the size and breadth of it projects, the organisation had to restructure itself. Simply speaking, the organisation had not envisaged how effective it would become nor the amount of funding it would have access to nor the size of projects it would conduct. The initial administrative structure envisaged a small group of women doing primarily voluntary activities and the FWRM Constitution provided little accountability in so far as its paid staff was concerned. This restructuring included the departure of its former Coordinator and the setting up of a Management Committee to more closely coordinate the activities of paid staff and monitor project activities. At this writing the FWRM is about to gain a full complement of paid staff which will enable it to continue with its current projects, temporarily brought to a halt by the restructuring.

The FWRM's views are constantly sought on all women's issues aired in the media. The Beattie Commission, set up recently to inquire into the necessity for improvements in the judiciary and legal system, wrote to the organisation requesting the FWRM to make both oral and written submissions. The organisation is regarded as a legitimate mouth piece for women and is regularly referred to by public personalities and members of the judiciary. Allusions to FWRM are not always in a positive manner, indeed, sometimes its members have been openly threatened but this has been regarded by its members as a way of measuring that the organisation is a force to be reckoned with. FWRM has enormous potential to mobilise women across race and class lines on the basis of gender and has significant potential to promote women's status.

The tenth anniversary was celebrated in November of last year (1996) and we have reserved issuing the anniversary newsletter for the two months ending April, 1997. We apologise for the delay. Happy reading!!

Being involved with FWRM and what it means for me

Imrana Jalal

Being a member of FWRM has been a driving force for me personally and on another level, it has been the source of tremendous satisfaction to have seen FWRM grow from a nascent Movement into a powerful political force. Yes, alright, we are political but not in the party political sense - only in the sense that the personal is political and that women's issues belong firmly in the public domain and not only in the home. It has been perhaps the strongest focus of my life, even though it has meant many personal sacrifices for me over the years.

Viniana Seeto

My association with the Movement is very much the result of a heartfelt conviction to join other sisters in the national and global struggle to eliminate the suborbination of women in every area of human activity. Being part of the Movement gives me the opportunity to partake in programmes and activities and to some extent, contribute to the processes which facilitate and advocate positive changes to the status of women

The coups d'etat of 1987 temporarily brought the activities of FWRM to a halt. The euphoria of the Movement's many new accomplishments and its success in influencing political parties to address women's issues quickly dissipated with the military regime's racial policies and restrictions on political activities. The regime's racial policies also had a destructive effect on the Movement's potential ability to mobilise women on the basis of gender rather than to race as had hitherto always been the case. The FWRM's membership was across class and race lines and the coups initially turned away women who were attracted to the multiracialism of the organisation. The FWRM has been able to recover from the initial racial polarisation that had occurred after the coups.

During and after the coups many FWRM members were involved in pro-democracy activities and some were arrested, imprisoned and convicted for these activities. The organisation chose not to deal with the post-coup Government until the first quash- democratic Government was elected in 1992. As a result of this hiatus, the various rape and anti-violence law reforms that the FWRM were working on from 1987 to 1992 did not get presented to Government for some years. It did however make substantial submissions to the post-coup Constitutional Review Committees set up by Government to elicit the views of the public on the new Constitution. Although it was not successful in getting discriminatory provisions on citizenship and other rights removed from the draft Constitution, it was partly responsible for forcing Government to include gender discrimination in Article 16 of the 1990 Constitution.

The newly published Reeves Constitutional Report includes recommendations to remove sexual discrimination from the Consitution, a move initiated by FWRM and supported by the Women's Coalition for Women's Citizenship Rights (WCWCR) spearheaded by FWRM.

The FWRM officially launched its Anti-Rape campaign in the later part of 1988. Its aims were to educate the public and law associated agencies about the social and cultural aspects of rape and to push for law reforms. The project included researching the socio-cultural and legal aspects of violence - a nation wide outreach programme, the publishing of mass media articles in newspapers and radio in the three major languages, the production of pamphlets and posters, the production of a video titled "Forceline" (a local term implying that rape is an acceptable cultural practice), street drama and education workshops with schools, medical personnel, police officers and judicial personnel. The FWRM also conducted workshops and seminars for rural women's groups in an attempt to educate women about rape and to obtain their support for its law reforms. The video, "Forceline" was aired on public television for the first time in 1992.

Women marching in protest against sexual assault in the streets of Suva. November, 1996.

At its first presentation of the rape law reform package to Government, the FWRM was told to obtain the support of the majority of the population, in effect to obtain a referendum for its law reforms. The FWRM refused to comply, justifiably pointing out that no other law reforms require a referendum. At this writing, the FWRM has obtained the signatures and support of the majority of women's organisations and other human rights type organisations in Fiji.

It has submitted its recomendations to the Fiji Law Reform Commssion. One FWRM member has been newly appointed by Government as the Family Law Reform Commisioner.

It has just obtained funding to launch a short-term project to lobby members of Parliament, other powerful lobby groups and the judiciary to convince these persons and bodies to support the law reforms.

The FWRM conducted the first training of women para-legals in March 1993 on law and women. If further funding becomes available, the FWRM intends to train women who have the most potential to become effective para-legals on an on-going basis on more detailed aspects of the law. The FWRM has also been asked by women's groups in other Pacific Island states to assist in the setting up of similar para-legal training programmes.

One member of the FWRM had a monthly column in a local women's magazine, *Fiji Women*, until 1993 when the magazine closed down. Since March 1994, the same member has a

Prayer of Solidarity

We believe in the goodness and value of women;
our strength ad our willingness to weep;
our capacity to support each other, instead of being rivals
our ability to cope with children's demands and the burden's of life;
our willingness and ability to get on with the job;
our spirituality and our earthiness, flowing with life, birth and death.

We affirm the story of women as the story of humankind;
food gather and farmers
child bearers and teachers
pioneers and policy makers
needle workers and textile makers
homemakers and factory workers
parents, scientists, doctors
housekeepers and economists
givers of life and creators of art and thought
unpaid hidden workers at home and paid members of the workforce outside.
We rejoice in our diversity and versatility,
our intuition and our logic.

We confess our failures and imperfection
including our past acceptance of violence and injustice
in relationship between women and men

We look forward to the future in faith and hope
working for the day when we and all our sisters
no longer have to fit the stereotype but are free to use all our gifts
and to share in all the benefits of human life and work
when violence is banished,
both women and men are able to love and be loved,
and the work and wealth of our world is justly shared.

We believe that our future depends on us,
but that all the forces of good, love, peace and justice,
all the creative powers of the universe,
work with us to achieve that vision.
May come soon.
AMEN.

receives less care than her brothers

- uneducated girls will continue to swell the ranks of the world's one billion illiterate adults, two thirds of whom are women

- young girls employed as domestic servants in most developing countries have no legal protection and are subjected to slave-like conditions and sexual abuse.

Fiji Women in Fisheries

Women in Fiji dominate in the subsistence sector of fisheries with a substantial proportion of their catches supporting household dietary needs. The majority of their fishing activities are concentrated on reefs and near reef areas (sand flats, mangrove areas, lagoons). Currently women are increasingly involved in the local commercial or village artisanal fishery though their harvesting, processing, preservation and marketing activities.

Women's involvement in the local commercial fishery has been through either their own, their husband's or other male relatives' efforts. Thus at the village level (and this is especially true for areas which have transportation access to the main urban centers), women increasingly sell part of or most of their catches at nearby municipal markets or along roadsides.

Women's commercial involvement although small scale, is regular consisting of weekly selling of mollusks, crustaceans and a diverse range of coastal edible species. For example, women from the Verata (an area in the south eastern side of Viti Levu, the main island of Fiji) sell ark shells (andara, kaikoso) almost weekly (at an average of about 10 bags per week, 30 kg per bag), at the same time sending 6-8 bags of kaikoso to buyers from the Western division fortnightly. Women's rate of fishing and subsequent selling, occurring at most times on a weekly and during seasons on an almost daily basis is more regular than men's fishing activities. They also harvest a diverse range of species when compared to men whose efforts are focused on a narrower range of more lucrative species such as bech de mer, octopus, lobsters and large finfish.

Official statistics and documentation however, do not portray women's fishing and local commercial activities as important because their fishing participation are usually interpreted as basically subsistence and without monetary significance. The changing face of the subsistence sector and the gradual commercialisation of basic marine food sources have been substantially overlooked. The Verata area for example is a major weekly supplier of seafood to the Suva market. Suva is the capital city of Fiji and is situated about 40 kilometers away from Verata. The influence of commercialisation is evident in the increased effort in fishing and in households having their own smoking sheds, the presence of middlebuyers in the village and selling within the community. With the minimal acknowledgment of women's fishing participation, the impact of their fishing activities on the reef systems are at the same time bypassed.

*- An abstract from Ms Aliti Vunisea's paper on **Women's Changing Fishing Participation** presented at a recent symposium on **Sustainable Harvest of Fiji's Marine Resources** organised by a local environmental NGO, the South Pacific Action Committee for Human Ecology & Environment (SPACHEE). Ms Vunsiea is currently a tutor in Geography at the University of the South Pacific. She holds a Masters Degree in Arts and Marine Studies from USP. More on her paper in future issues of Balance.*

From the Desk!!

Greeting to you from the editorial desk!! We will be sending out reminders for further renewal of membership subscriptions with the next edition of Balance. What to look forward to next: there has been some controversy on gender issues in the Fiji media lately and we will be reporting to you from our editorial desk what FWRM thinks about these issues. We will also be introducing to you new staff members of FWRM. To allow members' participation in the editorial of Balance, we will be opening up a Letters to the Editor column. We hope you will fully utilise this column to get your views across to readers. We will publish letters from paid members only. Another addition to Balance will be the New Members and Activities Update pages in which we will be introducing to you members who have just joined the movement and keep you updated on the activities we, here at the FRWM office in Suva have been involved in. Please write in about your views (and send photographs) on whatever subject you wish to highlight and bring to others' attention and we (the editorial team) are open to criticisms and contributions to Balance. Please keep us posted on happenings from your side of the world.

Membership

To become a member, it is necessary for you to pay a subscription fee of $5.00. Men are welcome to join as Friends of the Movement and will receive the newsletter. For overseas friends, a subscription fee of F$10 (Pacific Islands), F$15 (Australia and New Zealand), F$20 (USA) and F$25 (Europe) will be required to enable us to mail copies of Balance to you. Please forward cheque and money order to the postal address provided below: Do not forget to include a forwarding address.

Fiji Women's Rights Movement, P O Box 14194, Suva, Fiji Islands.
Tel: (679) 313156, Fax: (679) 313466

Remember those days?

Early days yet and the begining of FWRM? Alafua , Shamima , Imrana and Penny during an early meeting for the Movement..

Collective members of FWRM in another brain storming session. Facing camera: Praveen , Sohpia, Gaylene and Karalaini Sewale.

Partygoers with a sense of purpose. FWRM Collective members Viniana , Helen and Gaylene at Vani Dulaki and Helen Sutherland's farewell party held at Imrana's residence.

To:.....

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Please return to FWRM, P O Box 14194, Suva, Fiji Islands.

FWRM

Balance

Fiji Women's Rights Movement
10th Anniversary Edition 1986-1996

Movement Remembers 10 years of Service to Women in Fiji

The Movement is a women's non-government organisation (NGO) dedicated to improving women's status with an emphasis on women's legal and political status. The FWRM was formed by a group of women associated with the Women's Crisis Centre, the Young Women's Christian Association and a woman lawyer. This organisation was formed some 12 month before the coups d'etat of 1987 in response to dissatisfaction about women's status in the law and at the treatment of women workers in the garment industry.

FWRM aims to lobby Parliament and Government bodies for progressive legislative and policy changes primarily in the areas of Constitutional rights, citizenship laws, family and rape laws, and employment legislation - to target questions of women's in equality in the workplace (in paid labour) and in the home (in unpaid labour and subsistence agriculture and fishing), and to campaign against violence in the home and the community together with organisations like the WCC.

One of FWRM's first activities was to make detailed submissions to the newly established Garment Industry Tribunal set up by the Government to inquire into the conditions of women workers in the garment industry. The Movement outlined the plight of nonunionised women workers and demanded minimum wages and improved working conditions for them. Although the Tribunal did set a minimum wage, the amount was far from adequate. The situation of some 12,000 women garment workers has in fact deteriorated since the coups. This is one of the areas being addressed by the FWRM in its current project, "Women, Work and Economic Rights" (WEER).

A further activity was a petition against discriminatory rape laws and the harsh treatment of rape victims. Five thousand signatures were collected and presented to the Minister for Justice after Fiji's first historic women's march through the streets of the capital, Suva in February 1987.

From its inception, the organisation had a very public monitoring role commenting on media attitudes towards women and using the media to highlight Government and judicial attitudes towards women. It was directly responsible for the progressive but short lived rape sentencing guidelines promulgated by the Chief Justice in February 1988 commanding longer sentences for rape and an improvement in judicial attitude.

Immediately prior to the May 1987 general election, the FWRM sent questionnaires to all 150 candidates inviting their responses to policies and attitudes on women's issues and discriminatory laws. Although only a small minority from the three political parties responsed, the results of the survey were published in the national newspapers. The analysis and publication of the responses effectively "grading" candidates on their attitudes to women (with its concomitant implication that those whom had not answered simply did not care about women) caused widespread consternation and quickly forced all political parties to include women's issues on the national agenda for the first time in Fiji's political history. All political parties formulated tangible policies on women's issues and the only multi-racial party, the Fiji Labour Party went so far as to promise a Department of Women's Affairs, an Anti-Sex Discrimination Bill, equal pay legislation, minimum wage regulations for garment and domestic workers and funding for the Women's Crisis Centre. The Fiji Labour Party only ruled for two months before the military ousted it so is was not possible to put their promises to the test.

.....*continued overleaf*

Inside this issue

* coverage of FWRM 10th anniversary celebrations
* what FWRM members have to say
* a peek into the Constitutional Review Report
* three pages of AIDS update
* plus more!