DID YOU KNOW?

If we could at this very moment shrink the Earth's population to a village of 100 precisely, but all human ratios remained the same it would look like this.

- **there would be 57 Asians, 21 Europeans, 14 North and South Americans and 8 Africans;**
- **70 of the 100 would be non-White, 30 would be white;**
- **70 of the 100 would be non-Christian, 30 would be Christian;**
- **50% of the world's wealth would be in the hands of only 6 people;**
- **70% would be unable to read, 50% would suffer from malnutrition;**
- **80% would live in substandard housing and only one would have a University education.**

When one considers our world from such a compressed perspective, the need for both tolerance and understanding becomes glaringly apparent.

Sources for Future of Fiji women Beyond SPARTECA.: Mark Halabe, Managing Director of Mark One Apparel and current president of the Fiji Textile, Clothing & Footwear Manufacturers Association. Mr Yogesh Punja is a managing director of Punja & Sons Company Ltd, a local manufacturing firm. Sakiusa Tuisolia works as a policy analyst for the Policy Analysis Unit of the Office of the Prime Minsiter of Fiji. Views expressed in this article are strictly his own and do not reflect the views of Government.

WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS AS LIBERATION THEOLOGY

The Methodist Women's Fellowship of Fiji, the largest women's NGO with 31,000 members invited FWRM's Legal Rights Training Officer Ema Tagicakibau to be a resource person at a 2-day seminar in Suva for Church Minister's wives and women leaders of the church . The Seminar was held on August 25th and 26th at the FTA Hall and was aimed at providing training including legal literacy for women who were in Suva during the annual Church Conference but were not part of the Conference proper. At the end of the sessions participants expressed the need for further training on the law as a tool of empowerment for the women in their communities.

Because of the current uproar regarding recent cases of Child Sexual Abuse and because of time limit, the session focused on the law regarding Violence Against Women. The first issue was Sexual Assault and discussion centred around how the law defines Rape, Defilement, Indecent Assault and Incest. This was followed by a discussion of some of the common myths associated with Rape/Sexual Assault which generated a lot of interest especially when facts were presented to challenge these myths.

Case studies were analysed in groups to highlight gender bias in the

Legal Rights Training Officer Ema Tagicakibau (with back turned towards camera) speaks to Methodist women on women's rights issues. Photo by FWRM.

application of the law in rape judgements. The same process was followed for Criminal Assault Against Women in the Home commonly known as Domestic Violence. Common myths and the effects of assault on victims/ survivors were also discussed. Questions ranged from how we can reconcile women's rights with culture and tradition, to whether FWRM network with church groups in dealing with such problems that women suffer. It was clarified that Crisis Centre conducts counselling for victims of violence who are directed to church groups if clients request whereas FWRM 's focus is the law which is why we conduct legal literacy training. However we do network with all women's church groups including Hindus, Muslims and Christians.

The women were challenged to think of the issue of women's rights as part of liberation theology and to break the "culture" of silence over the violation of our bodies so that the truth can set us free. The women admitted that these "personal" experiences and issues were rarely discussed but after this awareness it is now time for them to act to protect themselves and their children.

They thanked FWRM for the opportunity to share these issues openly and for making them understand how we can reconcile women's "rights" to

(Methodist Women conitnued)

adequate protection from the law to personal liberation from oppression. It was also heartening to note the interest and passion with which the women spoke about the issues raised. ■

HIV/AIDS - A Faceless Phenomena No More

Colleen Perez, a HIV positive 37 year old woman from Guam recently visited Fiji to attend a regional seminar organised by the Asia Pacific Council of AIDS Service Organisations(APCASO). The meeting was the first ever of its kind to be held in the South Pacific at which NGO participants from around the region came together to discuss and recommend strategies for combating AIDS and the provision of treatment, support and care for people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) in the South Pacific. She spoke to participants about the need to strengthen community support for people living with HIV/AIDS.

The mother of three spoke about her children with obvious affection and pride and she said that they are aware of her health situation. "I spoke to them about how one contracts it. We still live a normal affectionate life as a family and physical contact is not an issue, we still hug and kiss. She is optimistic about her future because she is aware that people who have are HIV positive and with AIDS are known to live normal and productive lives for long periods of time."

Ms Perez said that more than 100 people have been tested HIV positive or with AIDS in Guam.The most recent was a sixteen year old girl. She said that treatment, networking and community support in Guam of those with HIV+/AIDS people were widely available.

She attributes the high rate of AIDS/ HIV+ in Guam to excellent protesting campaigns, test friendly facilities, community support and confidentiality and empathy amongst medical staff. "Young couples go for testing when they decide to embark on a sexual relationship and this is good because it shows responsibility," she said.

Ms Perez said that Guam also provides specially trained HIV counselors who have been effective in dealing with PLWHA. "When first diagnosed, I was depressed and isolated. My HIV counselor approached me about attending a conference on positive women in Manila which changed the course of my life. I arrived at that first regional meeting of positive women not having met another positive woman. It was exhilarating to meet other women like myself who were coping with the virus inside them and being able to openly discuss the same ordeals we were experiencing in the light of day," she said.

Ms Perez said that on return to Guam, she was inspired to set up a positive women's support group in Guam, *Palao'an Plus* translated in English as positive women which is effectively running and giving support to other women who are living with HIV/AIDS. "We meet once a month to support and discuss strategies for the future. We recently finished working and submitted our first proposal for a project to secure funding for a Pacific Islands Positive Education Resource Network(PIPERN) to provide a library and access up-to-date medical and other information through state of the art technology via the internet," she said.

"because the earliest messages about AIDS implied immorality, moral judgement is integrally associated with the virus and most remain silent about their fear infection for fear of ostracization, abandonment, loss of income and starvation to name a few"

Ms Perez added that because the earliest messages about AIDS implied immorality, moral judgment is integrally associated with the virus and most remain silent about their infection for fear of ostracization, abandonment, loss of income and starvation to name a few. The attitude that AIDS equals death and one catches AIDS by having sex where sex is supposed to bring pleasure and life instead bringing pain and death is the reason why many people do not openly discuss the issues of HIV/ AIDS.

The stigma about silence prevalent in Pacific cultures means that the virus remains hidden and young people start families ignorant of the prevalence of HIV and of their own vulnerability to infection. Ms Perez has been the first positive South Pacific woman to represent the region at the international level as a representative of APCASO and APN+.

She adds that AIDS affects those in the prime of their lives, those who have acquired skills to live as productive adults, young mothers, fathers, care givers and providers. "Giving a face to AIDS breaks down the silence. People infected with AIDS come from all walks of life and have many skills to educate others. It is not a divine punishment for promiscuity, homosexuality or drug use and no group or class deserves AIDS. They deserve full civil rights , including the right to retain their jobs and homes and to travel freely. All people should be educated and assisted in avoiding infection and all Governments must commit to assuring their HIV infected citizens have access to comprehensive care." she said.

"The most difficult challenge I face today is fulfilling the dual role as a mother and activist and childcare is of course my daily dilemma as is it for mother all over the world," she said.

Ms Perez whose work requires her to travel constantly said that although her family has been very supportive in caring for her children during her absences, there needs to be a concerted effort in the support of people who are HIV positive and with AIDS locally and

A Faceless Phenomena No More - AIDS VOICE

regionally. "It takes efforts of many people to pull together so that I can attend meetings like this. I need the support of the community, the island, our region. For I believe that as long as there are women and children being infected with HIV/AIDS, a woman like myself with children needs to represent them." ■

APCASO Pacific Meeting

The Asia Pacific Council of AIDS Service Organisations (APCASO) is a regional community based organisation of the parent international network (ICASO). It exists primarily to strengthen community based responses and for people who are most affected by HIV/AIDS.

Because of varying and diverse needs of each region, the regional secretariat vary in terms of regional program plans and activities as well as in the development of regional network. However, responsibilities like networking, capacity building and advocacy are high on the agenda. Although ICASO was initially conceived in Vienna in March 1989, it gradually formalised and has been based in Ottawa since May 1991. It operates alongside the Canadian AIDS Society (CAS). The APCASO seed was planted in 1992 and gradually grew in strength by 1994. 1997 saw its first meeting held in Fiji.

The AIDS Taskforce of Fiji is on the Council of Representatives (COR) and is simultenously the focal point in Fiji. Representatives from Western Samoa, American Samoa, Cook Islands, Vanuatu, Tuvalu, Tonga, Papua New Guinea, New Caledonia and Fiji were invited. Resource people from Guam, Indonesia, India, Fiji and Australia completed the team. From the onset, it was stressed that each country came from its own very diverse backgrounds of HIV/AIDS related work.

Whilst the Pacific is at the crossroads of low prevalence, it is also at a unique position to hold the epidemic if appropriate measures are taken. Even among the representatives from Fiji, it was obvious that not enough networking is being done and there appeared to be a danger of duplication of work and resources.

The two day meeting had a mixture of participatory group discussions to basic skills building. On reflection, a participant very aptly put three faces to AIDS: (1) the face of the virus, (2) the human face and, (3) the scared face. We were very fortunate to have a person living with HIV/AIDS come and share her perspectives. To some participants who had never had an opportunity to relate with a person living with the virus, it really was a case of putting "a face to HIV/AIDS." The content of the workshop was not strictly structured allowing the group to explore in detail the issues they found more important to them. The session on project proposal writing, the South Pacific Commission Draft Regional Strategy, the UNAIDS perspectives contributed to make the workshop a very balanced one. A sensitive number was "the Game of Fire" where the vulnerability of all of us was well presented. Areas of concern in the Pacific included shared confidentiality vs breach of confidentiality, testing - availability, access etc, counseling,early intervention and treatment, home care, advocacy, PLWA (People Living With AIDS) and funding. It was highlighted that awareness raising was not enough and behavior change should be seen through the cultural context and be country specific.

The workshop was a good start for the region and capacity building needs to be sustained and evaluated constantly. Personally, what affected me most was the vulnerability of the Pacific women and the transparent inequalities in various countries. We just cannot lump the Pacific together. We must learn to accept our diversity and yet find common grounds to build partnerships.

I would like to be the devil's advocate and leave this message for readers, "my sexuality is a gift of God, if you have a problem with that, go talk to God."- *by Dr Mridula Sainath, FWRM Collective Member & Health Resource Person.*

If you have an interesting story to tell that you feel will be suitable for Balance, please do not hesitate to send it in for publication. We also urge members to write in about your views about what is being covered in this newsletter. We are still awaiting your letters to the Editor!!

FWRM Legal Rights Training Officer, Ema Tagicakibau with other participants at Rutger's Global Leadership Institute for Women, New Jersey, USA June, 1997.

FWRM AGM Report

Fundraising

Member Cynthia Naidu suggested the sale of training kits on women's advocating items for those organisations that requested our assistance with training.

She also suggested inviting women to participate in a Women's Share fundraising drive where formally employed women are required to allocate a portion of their pay to assist the Movement in its operations. This has been proven successful in Australia. Other suggestions included an Annual Breakfast Day.

In other matters Imrana reminded staff of FWRM of the importance of maintaining anecdotal evidences of work and activities carried out by staff. These include:- maintaining an Activities Book to assist in evaluating performance of staff and FWRM; maintaining the weekly column with the Fiji Times newspapers; utilizing the radio programs to raise awareness on the work that the Movement does.

Member Carolyn Jalal, Programs Director of Fiji's only television service, Fiji One suggested that FWRM utilize Fiji One's new chat show with Jane King-Lilo to raise issues of concern to the Movement. The AGM ended with a party held at Imrana's residence and a dinner at the New Peking Restaurant to farewell former Acting Coordinator/WEER Project Officer Praveen Sharma. Ms Sharma resigned from her position at FWRM to take up a position as Senior Project Assistant for the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) and she continues to be of valuable assistance to and an active member of the Movement. ■

WOMEN'S GLOBAL LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE
"Women's Human Rights : Realizing Our Vision"

FWRM's Legal Rights Training Officer Ema Tagicakibau was among 24 women who participated in the annual 2-week Leadership Training Institute conducted by the Centre for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL) at Douglass College, Rutgers the State University of New Jersey in U.S.A. The Institute was held from June 14-28 1997. The following is a brief introduction to the Centre and what the Leadership Institute involves, and later editions will focus on highlights of the Institute. The CWGL has been a key player in building and sustaining an international network on women's human rights. The Centre networks with a broad range of local, national, regional and international women's groups , NGOs, UN agencies and others in all its activities which include leadership development, public policy and strategic planning, and international collaboration and mobilization.

The Centre seeks to develop an understanding of the ways in which gender, as it interacts with race, class, culture, sexuality and geography - affects the exercise of power and the conduct of public policy globally. This has arisen out of the realization that historically women have been excluded from the creation and implementation of policies affecting them, their communities, and international relations. In order to remedy this situation, the Centre 's programs aim to: promote the effectiveness and visibility of women who are taking policy leadership at all levels through promoting and providing leadership development activities; develop international linkages among women in order to enhance their capacities, expand their global consciousness and build coordinated strategies for action; increase and make equitable women's participation in national and international governing bodies and processes; legitimize feminist perspectives in public policy decision-making and implementation around the world through international mobilization campaigns and public education; and deepen an understanding of the impact of global forces on women in the United States and build greater linkages between women in this country and in other parts of the world.

Leadership Development

The annual Women's Global Leadership Institute have become internationally recognized venues for advancing women's leadership in public policy particularly in the area of human rights. Towards the end of the year the Centre sends out invitations on e-mail or faxes to its international networks calling for applications and participants are chosen in consultation with a group of international advisors from particular regions of the world. A primary selection criterion is the participant's potential for multiplying the experience gained from participating in their regions after the Institute, thus enhancing women's NGO activity at the grassroots. The Institute theme for this year is " Women's Human Rights : Realizing our Vision" in which working groups seek to develop critical new thinking around human rights and its links to violence, health and economic justice. FWRM was proud to be associated with the Centre through Ema's selection as one of the 24 participants out of over two hundred applications to this year's global Leadership Institute. Her full story plus highlights of what she gained out of the Institute will be published in the next edition of **Balance.** ■

We will be introducing to you additional staff of FWRM. We now have a new Coordinaotr and will be appointing a WEER project officer.

WEER Project Report continued

FWRM;

- To conduct three separate in-depth research studies on trade agreements, migrant workers and women in the sex industry. One research paper will be conducted in each year of the project with the final research being completed by December 1994;
- To lobby for changes in policy with respect to migrant workers, trade/aid agreements and women in the sex industry. The research will prepare the ground work for follow up action;
- To conduct an extensive mass media awareness campaign on issues highlighted through the draft legislation and to encourage public debate on the urgent need for reform in the labour legislation of Fiji;
- To conduct grass roots and community awareness raising workshops on different issues pertaining to women and the workforce;
- To publish and disseminate information relating to women and work issues and;

* To organise and conduct a national roundtable discussion/consultation on migrant workers and issues relating to trade and aid agreements. The latter one is in respect to GATT, WTO trade polices which will see a marked reduction in preferential access and may have an effect on Fiji's manufacturing sector. FWRM is currently working towards securing further funding for the continuation of the WEER project and we appeal to funders for support to this very important work that FWRM does. ■

- Report written by Praveen Sharma

FWRM Holds Annual General Meeting

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement held its Annual General Meeting on Saturday, July 19th at the Zanana Muslim Women's League Hall. The meeting was chaired by Interim Management Committee member Viniana Seeto and well attended by regular collective members.

Current chairperson of the IMC, Imrana Jalal spoke on the activities of FWRM since its establishment. She said that the membership base was broad with a current number of close to 300 people. She said that the first major project that FWRM was involved in was the Anti-Rape Campaign. The project duration was 11 years, out of which the last three was spent educating people on a woman's right to say no to sex.

FWRM members attend annual general meeting. Photo by FWRM.

The project culminated in the drafting of a Sexual Offenses Legislation now with the Fiji Law Reform Commission. *(Refer to back story)* The draft legislation was realistically put together with the recommendations based on the problems faced by women victims.

The FWRM IMC chairperson concluded by commending the work carried out by the existing and former staff of FWRM. She also explained how the expansion of activities carried out at FWRM is reflected in a constitution that has been altered to better represent the vision of the Movement. The current Constitution also aims to safeguard the interests of members - women and friends of the Movement from Fiji, the region and globally with multi-racial and multi-skilled background who are challenged to take FWRM to greater heights in fulfilling its mission as a women's rights organisation in Fiji.

TREASURER'S REPORT

FWRM Treasurer, Sheetal Shah gave a short summary on the state of finances of FWRM making reference to the financial audit carried out by chartered accountants Price Waterhouse. She highlighted the decrease in membership fees received by the Movement for the current year as opposed to previous years' stressing the need for members to be reminded update subscription fees particularly for those members receiving *Balance*. This was one way we can prove our sustainability. However, this was by no means a major discrepancy.

Imrana mentioned that donors were becoming increasingly concerned about the sustainability of an organisation at the end of a project duration.

Price Waterhouse had recommeded in its annual audit report of FWRM that business houses be approached as corporate members. Charging of consultation fees was also explored as a means of generating income.

The Plight of Domestic Workers

In Fiji, they are referred to as housegirls like the Colonials called their male domestic servants in Africa, houseboys. In other parts of the world they are called hired help in the home, houseworkers, housekeepers, domestic help, home aids and companions. They are domestic workers but unlike other paid employees, their work environment is in the home. In Fiji, they are sometimes a blood relative of the family to whom they serve but in most situations, they are workers in their own rights who either choose to live with the family or live outside their work environment.

The definition of domestic workers under the Employment Act includes cooks, house servants, child nurses, gardeners, washerwomen, watchmen and drivers.

They are the ones who clean up after your mess, make the beds, mop, scrub and do the laundry. They have your food ready and steaming in the oven when you get back home after a tiring day at work, they bathe and feed the children ensuring that the boss is happy after a hard day at the office.

But why is it that although domestic workers are one of the highly demanding form of employment, Fiji's employment laws fails to give them the protection and the equal status to other paid employees that they rightfully deserve. Domestic workers are the most underprivileged employees in this country because they are neither protected nor entitled to any form of rights under Fiji's existing labour laws.

Simply put, a domestic worker is basically at the mercy and whim of the employer. Domestic workers do not enjoy basic employment entitlements such as annual leave, maternity leave and are not included under the minimum wage Act. According to Claire Slatter and Atu Emberson Bain, in a FWRM funded research paper titled *Laboring Under the Law*, domestic workers are among the certain categories of women workers excluded from the benefits of maternity leave. Others are casual workers (i.e. workers employed on a 24 hourly basis) and those who have not been employed for at least five months prior to "confinement". "In respect of domestic workers, many of whom work for a single employer for several years, there appears no moral justification for their exclusion from this basic right of women workers," Slatter and Bain write.

Given the evolving economic situation of families in Fiji where an increasing number of women are joining the paid workforce to supplement the income of husbands or to support their family as single parents, domestic workers are increasingly in demand in Fiji. With the limited availability and additional costs of crèches, most mothers are hiring other women to assist them in the home. This demand for domestic workers is exercebated by the recent manufacturing boom which is providing alternative forms of employment to women who lack the educational and professional backgrounds to be absorbed into the mainstream labour market.

The reality is that well paid expatriates are undeniably in a better economic position than locals to pay better wages to domestic workers thus their preference is to work for expatriates. And the turnover of employment in local families tend to be rather high. In addition, domestic workers are often subject to sexual harrassment from employers.According to *Laboring Under the Law*, domestic workers were also excluded from the Fiji National Provident Fund and Factories Act. FWRM has been pushing and encouraging employers of domestic workers through media campaigns to pay for employees' FNPF through the Domestic Employees Scheme. Aside from their exclusion in the above mentioned Acts, "it is interesting to note that what is virtually the same definition of worker under the Wages Council Act is being used to deny domestic workers the right to minimum wage protection."

The report states that gender discrimination sanctioned since 1996 under the FNPF Act covering domestic servants has been amended to include voluntary payments of FNPF by employers. This means that domestic workers have been denied any form of financial security in old age or in circumstances of incapacitation resulting from physical or mental illness and they are inaccessible to housing finance and state subsidized special death benefits available to Fund members.

The report further reveals that very little is known about the nature and extent of occupational health problems facing domestic workers. Some illnesses have been identified as common to domestic workers which can be said to be work related such as skin problems resulting from constant exposure to household chemicals and detergents, athiritis and bone/joint ailments as a result of scrubbing and being exposed to wet and cold conditions.

"Unless there is a miraculous about-turn in the long standing tradition of paying below subsistence wages to women domestics, the benefits of voluntary membership are likely to be enjoyed by only a small minority of women. For this minority more over, saving will not necessarily amount to more than $48 a year, the minimum saving permissible. Under such circumstances, a domestic worker could find herself having accumulated a mere $1,440 after thirty years of dedicated employment," Bain and Slatter write.

FWRM envisages the establishment of a Wages Council to cover domestic workers and thereby extend to them, as a matter of right, minimum pay conditions with respect to hours of work, annual and sick leave, paid public holidays and overtime rates, superannuation (FNPF) and maternity leave. Until that happens, domestic workers will remain a downtrodden group of workers with limited rights and scope of a chance at a better standard of living. ■

ACTIVISTS STILL FUSS AS BILL ENTERS HOUSE

After more than a year of controversy, the much awaited bill proposed to give women equal rights including the much denied parental property has finally found its way into Parliament in Kathmandu, Nepal. However, as anticipated by all, this has not smoothened the feathers of dissatisfied women advocating for equality. On the contrary, it has again activated them into action. Amidst much furore in parliament premises today, the activists were found working overtime to lobby all the 205 MPs on their side.

"If no MP comes forward with suggestions to what changes are to be made in the bill in the next 48 hours after the bill is sent to the parliamentary committee, it will be passed as it is," says Sashi Shrestha who is completely dissatisfied with the proposed bill. "As the Bill is already sent to parliamentary committee, we are lobbying the MPs today to put forward our suggestions in Parliament." Shrestha and many other activists claim this bill is not what they wanted. It is very different from what they has asked for and their main argument: the bill gives from one hand and takes from another.

Another disgruntled activist, Sushila Shrethsa, a member of the Women's Security Pressure Group (WSPG) says, "the Ministry of Law and Justice which prepared the bill has given women the right to inheritance in Clause 10 but states in Clause 16 that women can use what they need but will have to return whatever is left at their time of marriage. We should reject it and demand for the one which doesn't have discriminatory clauses."

However, Dr Shanta Thalapaliya who has been one of the key persons in taking the issue to the height of the furore is ready to compromise and accept it if no MPs support their suggestions, "though it would be an ideal situation to have change it." Defending her views, Thalapaliya argues, "if women were at the zero level in the Muluki Ain earlier, the proposed bill at least raises the women's status for now." She says women can now pursue higher education from their share of property and also feel economically secure. But Shashi Shrestha rejects this argument downright, "our struggle wasn't for property alone. We demanded equal rights in parental property because it is one of the clauses of inequality. Our demand has been to give women equal citizenship status which this bill has clearly denied. Until and unless the terms like unmarried daughters aren't taken out and Clause 16 is not removed, women will remain second class citizens," she argues.

The much talked about controversial bill aimed at amending the Muluki Ain 1963 was tabled on 11th August at the House of Representatives and has been sent to the parliamentary committee. The women are busy lobbying MPs. "Many activist have already given their word to support our fight. We are optimistic that the MPs will be positive and the changes will be made," says Thapaliya. But adds Shrestha, "if it is passed as it is, we will continue our struggle." ■ *- Katmandu Post*

BABY DIES FOR COCAINE

A woman and her husband who live in Texas, the US planned a weekend trip across the Mexican border for a shopping spree. At the last minute their baby-sitter canceled, so they were stuck with having to take their two year old with them. They had been across the border for about an hour when the baby broke free and ran around a corner. The mother went chasing after him but the boy had disappeared. She found a police officer who told her to go to the gate and wait. Not really understanding the instructions, she did as she was told. About forty five minutes later, a man approached the border carrying the boy. The mother ran to him grateful that her son had been found. When the man realized that the woman was the boy's mother, he dropped the boy and ran but the police were waiting for him and he was caught. The boy was dead. In the forty five minutes that he was missing, he had been cut open, his insides had been removed and his body cavity was stuffed with cocaine. The man was going to carry him across the border as if he was asleep. A boy dead, discarded as if he were a piece of trash to satisfy the cocaine addiction of others. ■

- By a Foreign Correspondent

STOP OUR VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Month after month, year after year, the Fiji public is told of horrifying violent events involving women, events that scream out that our communities are sick to the depths. Not only are there all kinds of physical violence by men against women (of all ages), but women take the ultimate desperate action to end their misery by committing suicide and even more horrifically some mothers also kill their own children.

Often the methods chosen such as setting themselves on fire or drinking poison lead to physical and mental agony that lasts for days and weeks before death. Such deliberate deaths are a total contradiction of all that constitutes life. Yet they occur so frequently that they cannot be considered mere aberrations - our communities are sick.

No doubt there are social and individual factors which may explain some of the violence against women and suicides by women. However, there are two economic aspects - women's changing expectations and economic roles which are creating enormous stresses on the lives of women, leading to violence against them because men are not adapting their expectations and behavior.

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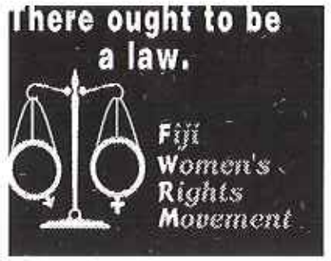


WEER Project Report

system.

FWRM concluded a one month media campaign in March 1997. The campaign was designed to raise awareness and encourage public debate on the lack of appropriate labour legislation in Fiji in relation to achieving equal employment opportunities in the workplace for bothe genders. In addition to this, FWRM has submitted a list of concerns relating to particular sections of the labour laws and polices which have been highlighted through cases dealt with the FWRM. The submission was made to the Department of Labour to assist them in preparing a case for law reform to the Fiji Law Reform Commission.

Phase 4

The aim of the final phase is to further raise awareness on women and work issues through research and lobbying. Lobbying for reforms to the labour laws of Fiji in relation to women worker's positions in the labour market is a major component of the final phase. The first year of Phase Four aims to complete draft legislation to be presented for endorsement by other women's organisations. A series of lobbying workshops have been planned for respective social partners (government,employers,trade unions and NGOs). The final phase is expected to incorporate all the activities carried out in the first three phases with a project duration of three years.

Objectives/Strategies of Phase 4

* To present draft legislation on the different labour laws affecting women in the workforce to the Fiji Law Reform Commission prior to the completion of Year One. (It should be noted that at the present moment the Government is only looking at the Employment Act while the WEER draft legislation will look at all the labour laws and their effect on women workers;
* To conduct an intensive lobbying campaign with the different social partners on the law reforms being advocated by

in the paid workforce. To avoid duplication, FWRM agreed to delete the submission of draft legislation from WEER Phase Three and made the necessary budget adjustments.

We retained the workshops with the Ministry of Labour as we believed that it would prove useful in lobbying for the submissions prepared by the Department for Women & Culture. Unfortunately due to unforeseen circumstances, the Department was unable to submit the legislation as envisaged. Government priorities for law reforms in the 1997-98 agenda of the Fiji Law Reform Commission (the Department responsible for drafting reforms to existing legislation) did not include labour legislation reforms. The consequence of this was that the labour reforms envisaged under Phase Three could not become a reality.

The other activities underPhase Three have been completed with the exception of ongoing work such as interacting with social partners and advocacy work for clients. Training on women and work issues has been conducted for the trade unions, employer organisations and for job seekers. Sexual harassment polices have been adopted by three employers to date following a workshop organised by FWRM.

The Curriculum Development Unit of the Ministry of Education is currently working towards reviewing the curriculum and career counseling in the education system in light of the gender disparity in vocational subjects within the school

WOMEN, EMPLOYMENT & ECONOMIC RIGHTS PROJECT REPORT

The "Women, Employment & Economic Rights (WEER)" Project commenced in 1993. The Project came about during the introduction of labour reforms which effectively undermined the trade union movements within the country. In the struggle between unions and government, issues that were considered pertinent to women workers became increasingly marginalised.

The prevailing attitudes of Government and trade unions during submissions for the setting up of a separate garment industry wages council became clear to the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM). FWRM and the Fiji Labour Party were the only two dissenting voices against the setting up of a separate council for garment workers (who were predominantly women).

With the labour movement weakened by the labour reforms, FWRM began to take on a leading role as an advocate for women worker's rights. This led to the inception of the WEER Project. Phase One of the project began in 1993 (one year after the introduction of the labour reforms).

WEER Phase One

WEER Phase One was designed as the research stage of the project. Two research papers were commissioned by FWRM on labour legislation and the fish processing industry, the second largest employer of women in the private sector. FWRM did not see it as necessary at the time to conduct further research into the garment industry as academics of the University of the South Pacific had undertaken a major study of workers in this fledgling (but rapidly growing) industry in Fiji.

The first research paper titled *Laboring Under the Law* was published by FWRM in 1995. The second research paper titled *Fishing for Justice* (yet to be published) is an in- depth study of women workers of the Pacific Fishing Company (PAFCO) based in Levuka.

WEER Phase Two

Phase Two of the project began in April 1994 and this was an exciting successful yearwith the launch of a mass media campaign to raise awareness on issues relating to women workers.

The mass media campaign was designed with two objectives in mind: firstly, to provide women workers with the necessary knowledge and information regarding their rights under the existing employment legislation; and secondly to educate the wider community about the discrepancies within the employment legislation, the fallacies within the law and employment policies and how they affected women workers. WEER Phase Two also involved a series of workshops throughout the country. These were of two main types: to raise awareness on the legislation and policies affecting women workers in the country and to provide training for key women from different women's and non-government organisations on the laws and policies relevant to women workers. These trainings was conducted as a result of the increasing number of requests from women workers outside of the greater Suva area.

FWRM workshops trained leaders of women's organisations in various areas on the procedures for lodging and dealing with workers' complaints. Where women felt unable to lodge complaints or ask for advice from those in authority, they could access these women in the community who would be able to inform them on basic procedures and accompany them to the relevant authorities. The second phase of the WEER Project concluded in April 1996 with a workshop in Nadi.

Former WEER Project officer Praveen Sharma (standing) attending to Nadi workshop participants. Photo by FWRM.

WEER Phase Three

The third phase of the project began in 1996 and was designed to target policies and procedures affecting women workers. It had two main objectives - to change legislation regarding issues affecting women workers and to lobby for labour policy changes for women workers in the areas of: sexual harassment in the workplace; equal pay; discrimination during pregnancy; and the need for gender sensitive curriculum.

Upon consultation with the Department for Women & Culture, we learnt that the Department was looking at preparing a draft for submission to Cabinet dealing with labour laws affecting women

(Continued Overleaf)

If violence against women is to be significantly reduced, it is the men in our communities - the husbands, fathers, brothers and sons who need to adapt their attitudes and behavior to the changing economic expectations and roles that women rightfully have. And political, traditional and religious leaders in our communities (mostly men) must put pressure on men to bring about these changes.

The Gap Between Expectations and Life

At the heart of much violence against women (by others or themselves) is the gap between what societies (dominated by men) allow women to do in life, and women's own changing expectations of life. There is no doubt that our communities systematically discriminate (with double standards) against females in birth (and death), food, education, jobs and pay, promotions, wonership, sexual activity, friendships and entertainment, housework, sports, leisure, politics and even religion.

What is disturbing as the discrimination, however, is that most Fiji men still dispute this discrimination exists and therefore see no need to do anything about it. More than a decade ago when I included gender issues in my USP Micro-economics course, this was considered by some of my economics colleagues (and students) to be radical and "not really economics." Today, even the men-dominated World Bank, IMF and the American Economics Association have been forced to focus on gender issues. Whether Fiji men wish to admit it or not, discrimination against women exists and will not be denied. On the other side despite all the discrimination against them, women's expectations of life have been very rightly strengthening and enlarging from what may have been the case fifty years ago.

This change is taking place with Fiji women (as it is in other parts of the world) through education, through political and social organisations of women, through the increasingly international and cosmopolitan consciousness created by the various media, (despite the flood of trashy, allegedly "entertainment" programmes and movies which all too often create negative images of and for women). Fiji women are quite rightfully not tolerating the pressures created by the gap between their expectations and what life offers them. Yet if women actively resist the pressures and try to realise their legitimate expectations, they face violence from the men who expect them to behave differently. Or the women (espeacially Indo-Fijians) in total desperation and inability to cope with the pressure, commit violence against themselves through suicide.

When women prefer death to living, when nurturing mothers kill their own offsprings, this is surely the ultimate primevial scream that everything in life is stacked against them, their men, their families, their in-laws, their traditional leaders and even their Gods. Are our men leaders getting the message that our communities provide these women with no avenues other than death? Depsite the frequency of these screams of powerlessness, it is dismaying that there seems to be little happening to the attitudes of men, who are ultimately the source of much of this violence against women. This can be seen most clearly in the refusal of most men in Fiji to adjust fairly within their households to the dramatic changes that have taken place in the economic roles of women.

Changing Economic Roles

In recent years, one of the major changes taking place in Fiji's economy (as everywhere else in the world) has been the increasing participation of women in income earning employment. Over the last three decades, most of the new jobs have been taken by women. Women are rightfully improving their share of paid work as professionals, office workers, as factory workers, as market and street vendors and in most spheres of paid economic activities except notably in Parliament, Senate, in religious organisations and as captains of industry. This trend must eventually lead to higher demand for women's participation in paid employment. Women will require greater independence and broadening of their range of activities in all spheres, political and social.Despite this trend, however, women continue to be denied full participation in the economy and society, as they have historically been denied, because of the male-dominated traditions and social expectations.Take just one, but important example - the fact that men continue to expect women to do the bulk of the unpaid work in the household, despite earning cash

Dr Wadan Narsey

incomes and despite their education, abilities and potential to do other socially useful things.

- by Dr Wadan Narsey.

Dr Narsey is an economist who has just won an uncontested seat in Parliament last month as a Labour candidate. He was previously an economics lecturer at USP and he has been very vocal on women's issues and supports the work of FWRM. This article which also appeared in the Fiji Times and the Fiji Women's Crisis Center newsletter and will be continued in the next issue. This article is a direct contribution of the author to **Balance.**

Women & Fisheries in Fiji

Traditionally there were defined gender roles in fishing with women fishing the shallower coastal areas while men ventured out to the deeper seas. Thus women were associated with and more familiar with the immediate coastal and reef areas. Men on the other hand engaged mostly in ritualized fishing activities which were only occasionally practiced for specific traditional occasions. These traditional fishing ventures which were mostly practiced in deeper sea areas, only involved men from the master fishers clan, and at most times targeted certain species only (such as turtles and certain fish species).

Modern day women in Fiji increasingly fish into previously male-defined fishing areas, and male-related fishing activities, with fishing efforts becoming more pronounced to meet both consumption and market needs. Beche de mer is now also increasingly being dived for by women. Thus all these fishing activities place enormous pressure on reef resources. In Verata, women fish at times five days a week with Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays being commercial fishing days. Men whose wives are not fishers also fish specifically for market purposes on the same days. The areas had extensive foreshore flats, with prominent sheltered inshore and offshore reefs which provide the base for its rich diversity of species. With the current rate of exploitation, some important reef species may be totally lost. Apart from this, there may not be ample time for species to regenerate given the intense fishing activities. There would be the danger then of fishing out or over exploitation of certain species resulting in the loss of reef ecosystems.

Social Control on Fishing

There is limited evidence of direct monitoring or conservation systems within the traditional set up, but there were in place social systems or institutions which checked or controlled marine resource use. In Verata, a province on the main island of Viti Levu, as in most villages in Fiji, people belong to different clan groupings which have specifically designated roles. Therefore in a village organisation, there would be a chiefly clan, warrior clan, carpenters and fishers clan (*gonedau* or *kai wai*). Master fisheries or *gonedau* were considered the authority on fishing skills and knowledge and they would be most involved with fishing. These roles then restricted fishing participation. For example, women from the chiefly clan did not normally partake in fishing activities. There were also traditional restrictions on fishing activities. Such restrictions were implemented on the death of a high chief, the birth of a first born in a chiefly family or periodic taboos on certain fishing grounds.

Women's Fishing Methods

Basically women's fishing activities are simple, with tools and technologies primarily traditional. Fishing methods include gleaning, trapping, stupefying, netting and fishing. For most of these methods, women use their bare hands, sticks, rods, kitchen knives, scoop nets and hand lines. In most instances specific methods were employed for different species with the fishing pattern basically seasonal.

Fishing methods utilized by women usually require dexterity with keen eyesight and skill with the use of the hand and feet. In addition, the intimate knowledge and understanding that women have of their immediate environment enable them to easily identify and catch prey. Women's fishing methods may sound and look simple but they are really complicated and require extremely adroit use of their senses and skillful utilization of fisheries knowledge. Thus women, in their every day interaction with their coastal marine habitats possess a "bank" or resource which had never been fully utilized because of traditional and societal constraints. ■

By Aliti Vunisea, a tutor in Geograpgy at the University of the South Pacific. To be continued.

A New Brand of Sexism at Work

As more women enter management, their work environment may be getting less secure, according to a study at the University of Ottawa in Ontario, US. Researchers surveyed 123 male managers and found that as the men's estimate of the number of female colleagues increased, they felt more threatened. This led to what the researchers call neosexism; prejudices against women that are more subtle than blatant. These prejudices include women being viewed as less competent than men and men being unwilling to offer women monitoring support or networking opportunities.

Apparently it is not enough for companies to recruit women, they also need to do a better job of getting male employees to back (or at least accept) their efforts, says Anne Beaton, Ph.D. who led the study. Women meanwhile are advised to research a company before accepting a managerial job. Find out how other women managers are faring and evaluate the company's commitment to keeping them there (for example by offering employee education and diversity training). ■

- By Janet Bailey, Glamour Magazine, September 1997 issue

MEMBERS ARE REQUESTED TO KEEP AN EYE & EAR OUT FOR OUR FUNDRAISING DRIVE WHICH IS EXPECTED TO START SOON. SAVE YOUR OLD CLOTHES & ANY OTHER ITEMS AND SEND IT IN TO THE OFFICE FOR SALE TO RAISE FUNDS FOR THE MOVEMENT!!!

Australia and New Zealand, the biggest downfall has been the loss of competitiveness due to the inefficiency of the public sector and the phenomenal cost of doing business in Fiji - factors hindering local manufacturers from effectively competing in the global market. He adds that on the other hand, deregulation has made the company lose out heavily on margins further reducing funds for future expansion.

Goverment introduced new economic policies in 1987 in a bid to provide a conducive environment for foreign investors. Punja was critical of Government's lack of vision in safeguarding the interests of local investors. Typifying Governments going through transition, it appears to have made many short term decisions that have long term negative implications and this has particularly been felt by local manufacturing companies.

Under the current scheme, tariff rates are expected to fall from 34 per cent to only 25 per cent by the year 2000 which could be further reduced to 5 per cent and it has been forecasted that locally based Australian companies operating in Fiji will pack up and leave when this happens. But the argument remains that Fiji may attract Australian and New Zealand manufacturers who will relocate to the Pacific because of the difficulties in competing with importing countries in their host countries. However, investors will be mindful of Fiji's isolation to the global markets therefore future re-employment of women employed in manufacturing industries who suffer job losses remains bleak.

Tuisolia stated that whilst the garment industry has come under strong criticisms because of alleged exploitation of women workers, these preoccupations are becoming secondary as the uncertain future of the garment industry emerges as a more predominant and immediate concern. "In the wider collective interest, it is not wise for those in positions of authority to just sit back and let garment workers suffer. The year 2000 is just around the corner and Fiji needs to start thinking of its options now," he said. However he is quick to add that Fiji is not in a position to reverse or influence global trade and economic liberalisation. "But looking ahead towards post 2000, Fiji can make certain adjustments to help save the garment industry.

He recommended that Fiji should start looking at diversifying its trade links and looking at other sectors for potential re-employment of women losing their jobs from garment factories. However, he remains sceptical about the opportunities available for the women saying that employment potential needed to mitigate the loss of jobs from the garment sector is still very minimal.

Australian Foreign Affairs Minister, Downer stressed on the importance of Fiji diversifying its trade links and he cautioned Fiji about being too reliant on just country.

With the scrapping of SPARTECA, it is expected that Fiji will be assisted through bilateral trade agreements which will see the education and training of its workforce to improve efficiency and enable its effective participation in a competitive global market.

As for our women in the garment industry, they have had many issues to contend with such as competing with migrant workers from Asian countries, minimal wages, unrecognised worker's rights and now the propect of job losses.

As GATT Watchdog says, another NGO concern over APEC is the *Declaration of Human Resources Development* which divides the region's workers into a high-skilled elite of entrepreneurs, managers, technical workers, educators and future economic leaders and a "flexible" low wage labour force to service foreign investors needs. "Workers are not commodities to be harnessed for economic growth, but have internationally recognized rights and legitimate expectations for a fair share of the wealth they create and to create that wealth in conditions of economic and political security."

The Standing Economic Committee for APEC focuses economic growth and coordination of macro and micro economic policies through deregulation, interdependence and foreign investment. This ignores recent lessons learnt from structural adjustments and regional integration. Large corporations and a small local elite have reaped the benefits whilst most people remain impoverished, resources depleted and democratic governments disempowered and such development would be considered unsustainable. One only has to look at our neighbouring countries of Southeast Asia to see the effects of the structural adjustments, changes to economic global policies and its effect on the people and the environment.

As Tuisolia says, "Australia can value the need to facilitate Fiji's requests and the arguement for its policy on SPARTECA will fall apart when examined against the strong economic and moral reasons for Fiji's asking.

Halabe is also optomistic that things will not deteriorate as they appear and that the garment industry may still have hope. "The leaders have not yet given up on the TCF industry and feel that the requests from Fiji will eventually be conceded from Australia and New Zealand." This remains to occur and Fiji should not be too optimistic if Downer's words is anything to go by.

In the meantime, garment workers will just have to sit back and wait whilst the region's superpowers haggle and negotiate over the deals that will affect the very core of their existence, their livelihoods. All we can hope to do right now is to educate them about what is in store for them and to aspire to indetify alternatives for future employment before the axe falls. ■

Profile of sources on page 8

an Australian garment manufacturing company operating locally says that the garment industry is already feeling the pinch of the declining preferences and it is expected to worsen in the coming years. He says that the concern of the Textile, Clothing and Footwear (TCF) industry is the Asia Pacific Economic Corporation (APEC) Agreement of which Fiji is not a member country. "APEC will allow tariff free goods and services into the developed members by the year 2010 with reciprocal rights given 10 years later. An example of this is that China will have tariff free entry into Australia in 2010. Australia will need to wait 10 more years before its goods and services have tariff free entry into China," Mr Halabe said.

Tuisolia confirms Halabe's statement regarding SPARTECA and APEC saying that the end result will be a huge increase in apparel imports from other competing developing countries particularly from Asia.

Apparel exporters from China, Thailand and Indonesia stand to make significant gains. "The inevitable loss of preferences will trigger the flooding in of cheap Asian garment exports into Australia and consequently the possible closure for many garment firms in Fiji. The reality is that in terms of costs, capacity and raw materials, Fiji simply cannot compete with the giants of Asia as it lacks the economies of scale," Tuisolia adds.

Halabe said that the garment industry would be crippled with the current rules of origin (ROO) stating, "having to cope with annually reducing prices from our competitors (the reduction of tariffs) and still holding on to a restrictive ROO under SPARTECA, our customers will be looking away from Fiji to source production and they will be placing their orders in South East Asia."

Fiji Times print news reports quoted Australian Foreign Affairs Minister, Alexander Downer during a recent visit to Fiji as saying that although Australia was looking into the possibility of bilateral trade agreements beyond the year 2000, "consideration does not include a lowering of the rules of origin requirements under SPARTECA nor does it include a change to using substantial transformation as the measure of origin."

GATT Wachtdog, a New Zealand publication monitoring global trade economic policies and its effect in the region says, "it is becoming increasingly clear that APEC serves the political and economic interests of the USA and Japan more than less powerful member states. In the name of "cooperation" and free trade, APEC's primary function is to extend US and Japanese economic and political control over the region, at

"Having to cope annually with reducing prices from our competitors and still holding on to a restrictive rule of origin under SPARTECA, our customers will be looking away from Fiji to source production and they will be placing their orders in South East Asia."

the same time as they scrap with each other for economic control."Current APEC members include Australia, New Zealand, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand and the United States of America. Its main objective is to abolish international barriers to trade and investment and the region alone comprises a formidable 40 per cent of the world's total population and over 40 per cent of world trade.

Extreme views but from a layman's perspective, one has to wonder what is on the agenda of big brothers New Zealand and particularly Australia in what appears to be a sell out of their regional members albeit their very own own to a cut throat economic and trade global environment.

GATT Watchdog's extreme stance on APEC stems from concerns raised by NGOs at the APEC 1994 Summit in Jakarta. It's *Statement of Investment Principle* seeks to open the region to free movement of capital and investment and concerns were raised as to how foreign investment without adequate protection would lead to social, economic, environmental and political disaster.

"Major social impact," agrees Yogesh Punja of Punja & Sons, a local manufacturing company. Punja confirms that the scrapping of SPARTECA will marginalise Fiji's exports to Australia and New Zealand. "Out of our existing exports to Australia and New Zealand under SPARTECA, our soap products may not be able to enter hence our soap packers who are women will probably lose their jobs. At least their take home pay will be reduced proportionally with their job/work being shared."

He says that the majority of women who work for the company are employed as packers, lab technicians, wrappers, "and we employ women simply because they are more articulate and better at this type of work. We do have men but the ladies have proven to be faster and better." However, he argues that the garment sector will retain its market share and as a former President of the Fiji Local Manufacturers Association, he knows all too well the difficulties that local manufacturers face.

"The more the private sector invests, the more money goes into the market place and the more taxes get paid. It is obvious that the Government does not intend to resolve the crisis that it has created. We have a country that is bogged down with domestic problems and has not been able to focus on international treaties and negotiations to take forward this country to the new millennium," Mr Punja concluded.

The company currently exports almost all their products and lines to the Pacific and whilst they have lost this market share imports from

Balance sent a list of questions to the Director of the Fiji Law Reform Commission, Florence Fenton asking her about her views and the role of FLRC in reforming legislation in Fiji. Below are her replies to our queries:

FWRM: How does the Fiji Law Reform Commission contribute to laws which address the rising "law and order" problem in Fiji?

FF: The task of FLRC is to study existing laws and review their appropriateness through research and discussion with the public. Its final report and recommendations are formally presented to the Attorney General who then presents the report to Cabinet, Government and finally the Legislature. The report should eventually be released to the public; having been consulted, the public expects this to happen.

The Commission has as one of the references of the Reform of the Criminal Justice System. This would indicate that there is a general public and specific concern by the AG and Government that all is not well in the Fiji Criminal System. It would be presumptuous and unrealistic for the Commission to think that its report and recommendations would solve the "law breaking' or law and order in this country. However, it is hoped that if the Commission's reports are accepted, it would go some way towards improving and achieving efficiency within the criminal justice system and therefore a speedier, fairer and just criminal justice system.

The Commission's work procedure involves those affected and effected by its recommendations. Of necessity this involves all the stakeholders, judges and magistrates, legal practitioners, NGOs, women's groups, prisoner support groups, religious groups etc. It is obvious that the Commission's recommendations or proposed legislative measures can only be acceptable, effective and efficient if there has been consultation with the sections of the community which will most likely be affected by the changes. It is also worth stating that such consultation can also materially enhance public compliance with any new law.

FWRM: FWRM has made submissions to certain FLRC references, including the draft sexual offences law in Fiji. Is there any progress on draft sexual offences laws?

FF: The Commission is extremely grateful for the contribution and submission by the FWRM. The Commission is particularly grateful as there is lack of research and date collection on sexual offenses and any appropriate response is therefore limited by this; the FWRM as an important law reform participant has helped fill this vacuum.

At this point in time the Commission is still discussing, considering and debating its position. However, the reform of Fiji's sexual offenses law is undertaken against the background of Government recognition and commitment to international conventions particularly CEDAW and CRC. The Commission aims to promote the following objectives:

- the law should protect the sexual integrity and personal autonomy of all members of the community. A person should not be forced to submit to a sexual act to which she or he does not consent;
- sexual offenders cannot be considered in a vacuum. Legal principles such as the presumption of innocence and the requirement that the prosecution must prove all elements of a case beyond reasonable doubt must be observed;
- the vast majority of sexual offenses are against females and the law should address and reflect this social reality. At the same time, the law must not be discriminatory in its application;
- the law should protect children and those who are particularly vulnerable from sexual abuse and exploitation;
- as far as possible, the law should be simple and precise to enable the just and speedy disposition of cases and be accessible to all citizens.

FWRM:In its work to reform family law, does FLRC propose to address domestic and family violence?

The family law reference concerns this very fundamental social and economic unit of society. This area of law has not seen any real change for more than 2 decades although in Fiji, as elsewhere, rapid, even bewildering forces of social change have affected not only moral values, but the very conditions of every day life. These new pressures pose new social and legal problems and this is the challenge facing the Commission when it seeks to update some 10 different statutes affecting family relationships.

Any recommendations will have to take into account Fiji's multicultural and religious community as well as limitations on resources, including financial and personnel. The issue of domestic violence (or family protection) is one that has been discussed and debated within the public arena as well as being the subject of legal discourse. What has become increasingly evident is that society is no longer tolerant or prepared to ignore violence aimed at women and children. The defiency in the law and legal remedies (procedures) are apparent. The reform trends of more liberal societies suggest that an integrated strategy for change is needed. Legal responses will need to be coordinated at an inter-departmental level with the police, support services and other relevant family violence networks.

Ms Fenton also wrote about her views on partriachy and what we should be expecting about law reforms. To be continued in the next edition of Balance.

Place your orders for FWRM cards which are available here at our office at F$7.50 per packs of 10. Members may also borrow library books and video tapes from the library. Labouring Under the Law is available for sale at F$10.00.

From the Editorial Desk!!

FWRM staff and members convey their sincere gratitude to Ms Elizabeth Clayton, Managing Director of Clayton Howard Enterprises (CHE) International for her kind donation of shelves to be used in the library. We would also like to thank Johnsons and Johnson Pacific for the generous donation of F$200 as payments of FWRM signboards which have been put up for the benefit of members of the public who wish to visit our office in the heart of Suva. We would also like to thank Pasifika Communications for donating $200 to the Movement. The money was won as an award for the WEER commercial winning the Best Commercial in the recent Fiji Media Awards.

Membership:

To become a member, it is necessary for you to pay a subscription fee of FS5 for within Fiji, FS10 for Pacific islands, FS15 for Australia and New Zealand, F$20 for USA and $25 for Europe. Men are also welcome to join up as Friends of the Movement. Please forward cheque or money order to the address below. Do not forget to include a forwarding address:

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

Editorial Team:

FWRM Communication/Editorial Officer - Rosemary Naivalurua
Editors - Viniana Seeto, Gaylene Osborne (Collective Members)

SUPPORT THE FIJI WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT AND JOIN UP NOW!!!

Attention Members!!!

We are no longer sending copies of *Balance* to those members who have not updated their subscription fees because of funding constraints. Your subscriptions go a long way towards the sustainability of FWRM and the activities that we carry out such as the publishing and sending you copies of this publication. Please urge others to join us in our struggle to achieve gender equality in Fiji.

Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law & Development

invites applications to the following positions:

Regional Coordinator

Degree in Law a must; theoretical and practical understanding and grasp of women, law and development approach necessary. Advance studies in the field of law, human rights and feminism is an advantage. Five years experience in legal work and women's rights-human rights activism at the national or regional level required; two (2) years experience in the coordination and management work required. Excellent command of written and spoken English needed.

Programme Officer

Degree in social sciences required. Advanced studies in the field of social sciences, human rights activism at the national or regional level required. Experience in legal literacy and legal research necessary. Excellent command of written and spoken English a necessity.

Resource Officer

Degree in social sciences required. Advanced studies in the field of social sciences, human rights and feminism an advantage. Minimum of three (3) years actual work experience in data-base management, documentation, research and publication a must. Competency in information-needs assessment and database systems installation necessary. Excellent computer skills needed, ability to manage website needed.

All positions to be based in Chiangmai, Thailand. Salary commensurate with qualifications, experience and skills.

Send in application on or before September 20th, 1997 to:

The Regional Coordinator
APWLD Secretariat
6th Floor, APDC Building
Pesiaran Duta
P O Box 12224, 50770 Kuala Lumpur
Malaysia

Telephone: (603) 6511649/6510648
Fax: (603) 6511371

(APWLD is a regional network of non-government organisations in the Asia Pacific working in the area of women's rights - human rights).

FWRM staff and members would like to remember Diana, Princess of Wales and Mother Theresa. We wish to share with others their deepest sorrow in losing two remarkable women who have contributed immensely to the recognition of women in the work that they were involved in.

Women's Employment & Economic Rights

Balance

FWRM

Newsletter of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement

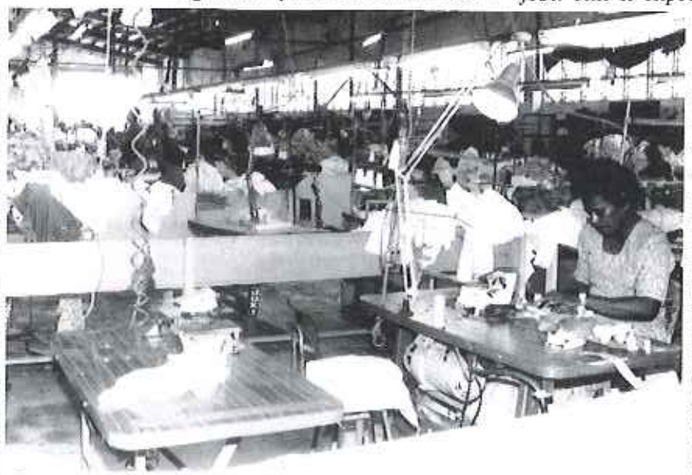
Balancing the Scales

July-August Issue 1997

THE FUTURE OF WOMEN IN FIJI BEYOND SPARTECA

The end of the 13 year "tax free holday" and the proposed winding down of the South Pacific and Regional Trade & Economic Cooperation Agreement (SPARTECA) in the year 2000 signifies just one of the many economic changes envisaged for Fiji beyond the turn of the century.

It is a well documented fact that the majority of foreign investments in Fiji are established as manufacturing outfits. These investors (many of whom are transational corporations) have been lured across the Pacific because of the unique arrangement provided by SPARTECA, the abundance of cheap labour and other tax incentives to name a few.



Garment workers face loss of jobs in the near future. What is Government doing to safeguard loss of income for these workers? Photo by Fiji Times.

The fact that women make up the majority of the labour force in the manufacturing industry leaves no doubt in people's minds as to who would be most affected in terms of economic viability once SPARTECA seizes to exist. One can only speculate on the possible "domino" effect at the national and community levels. The financial and social repurcussions on individual households that have become accustomed to their women, (mothers, sisters) contributing to the financial welfare of the family is beyond our comprehension. What then does the future hold for our women workers in the manufacturing industry? *Balance* sent faxed questions to policy analyst Sakiusa Tuisolia and entreprenuers Mark Halabe and Yogesh Punja about their views on this dilemna.

The garment sector alone is by far the largest employer of women in Fiji with around 15,000 women drafted into its workforce. Policy analyst Sakiusa Tuisolia says it is a known fact that SPARTECA's days are

"We simply cannot compete with the giants of Asia."

numbered and the worst case scenario is that garment factory workers will be forced out of their jobs. This is expected to have an enormous detrimental impact on women and urban families exercebating the current poverty situation in Fiji. In a recent report released by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 30 per cent of the population in Fiji live beneath the poverty line. "The end result can be catastrophic for the thousands of women employed in the garment industry and their dependents," writes Tuisolia. He adds that chances for their re-employment in the short term is almost nil.

Mark Halabe, of Mark One Apparel,

(Continued overleaf)

What's in this issue:

*** Beyond SPARTECA * WEER Project Report - what's in store for the final phase * HIV/AIDS Updates * Domestic Workers in Fiji * Methodist Women Learn women's rights * Fiji Law Reform Commission - what and who is behind it? And more!!!**