2000 Good Reasons to March!

The World March for Women 2000 Campaign is taking shape as countries all over the world collect signatures for women worldwide to present to the UN General Assembly Meeting in New York on the 17th of October 2000. Presentations will also be made to the IMF and the World Bank. The Campaign was initiated out of the Women's March Against Poverty, which took place in Quebec in 1995. This meeting realized the need for adopting International Demands aimed at reducing the poverty and violence affecting women the world over.

Despite major cultural, economic and political differences, the delegates managed to agree on common demands at the first prepatory meeting in Montreal, Canada. For example, that all states adopt a legal framework aimed at eliminating poverty; that the debt of all Third World Countries be cancelled; that the UN pressure all countries so that the many international instruments referring to women's and childrens rights be ratified and applied. By contrast, a compromise was reached on two proposed demands aimed at defending the rights of homosexual women after delegates from some parts of the world said they would not be able to get these demands accepted at home. Despite the solidarity they felt with women discriminated against because of their sexual orientation, it would be dangerous for some of them to show their support. In Pakistan and a number of other Muslim countries, for example, homosexuality is strongly condemned and even punishable by death. The final document, therefore, will specify which countries supported the two above-mentioned demands.

An International Liason Committee (ILC) was struck to carry on the organizing work leading up to the March in October 2000. Thirty women from six regions, as well as a representative of Native women, form the ILC. The ILC serves as the link between countries and the coordinating committee, which will continue to be composed of women from Quebec. Shelley Rao, FWRM active collective member and staff of the Fiji Council of Churches, sits on the ILC as one of the two Oceania Representatives.

The campaign includes the gathering of signatures throughout the world over in support of the International Demands. These will be presented to the Secretary General of the United Nations Kofi Annan on the 17th of October at the UN Headquarters in New York. Kofi Annan will meet with 200 delegates from around the world. The signatures will be gathered in postcards or whatever creative way the coordinating bodies have agreed on. In the build up to the New York Rally, organized public action is being planned throughout the World.

The coordinating body for Fiji is the Fiji Council of Churches. If your organization is interested in joining this campaign and can collect signatures through petition cards and so forth, please contact your countries or regions coordinating body or the World March for Women 2000 in Quebec, Canada, who will most likely refer you back to the coordinating body in your country. The website is www.ffq.qc.ca or email marche2000@ffq.qc.ca *B*

Concern about the Tuvalu Fire

A joint statement by the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC), Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM), Pacific Network of Violence Against Women, Aruna Gnanadason (World Council of Churches Women's Division) and Musimbi Kanyoro (General Secretary of the World YWCA), raised their concerns about the deaths of 18 Tuvalu School girls in a fire at the Nation's only secondary school. The Hostel was locked and the girls were trapped inside.

In particular, these organisations concerns were as follows:

"It is well known that in the Pacific many hostels lock in their female students to prevent them from being attacked and molested by males – both young and old. Some boarding schools also, through their puritanical and outdated ideas of female chastity, lock these girls up so they do not 'get up to mischief'. It is utterly shameful and condemnatory of this world that in this day and age we have to lock up young girls and that women have to make prisoners of themselves not only because of the constant threat of violence but also because of society's blatant discrimination with regard to adolescent sexuality.

We mourn for the loss of these lives, but we also must organise ourselves to bring about the changes that will ensure that this never happens again in the Pacific or anywhere else in the world. We must demand that:

- women of all ages are given the security they need to protect them from acts of violence, but that these security measures do not compromise their personal safety from other sources.
- a proper and well publicised investigation be carried out into this tragic incident, not just on the basis of buildings and accommodation, but on societal values which necessitate unsafe security measures
- all boarding school security is reviewed to ensure it conforms with internationally accepted occupational health and safety standards
- state, church and civil society recognise and work towards the total elimination of violence against women and children."

Legal Rights Expands its Outreach

The Legal Rights Project recently held two workshops in Labasa in the month of February. Conducted and resourced by the Assistant Legal Rights Training Officer, Zarina Begum, the workshop aimed to highlight and raise awareness amongst the women of Labasa of their legal rights in the area of Family Law.

The first workshop was held with the Labasa Women's Club from 14 – 19 February 2000. This workshop was conducted in the Hindi language at community level and was attended by women between the ages of 17 to 65 years. The Assistant Legal Rights Training Officer reported that the awareness brought about by the participants was based on experiences. In particular, they highlighted the fact that women were often victimised in the private sphere of the home. The family reform was thus a change that was most welcome. However, the participants felt that the legal age for marriage proposed in the reform was still too young. Rather they would prefer that the age be 25 for both females as well as males as opposed to the recommended 18 years in the reform, because 18 is still too young an age to be legally married. The participants reported that the radio programmes conducted by the Legal Literacy programmes provided a brief summary of what the law is about, but the workshop was a chance for them to know their legal rights more thoroughly.

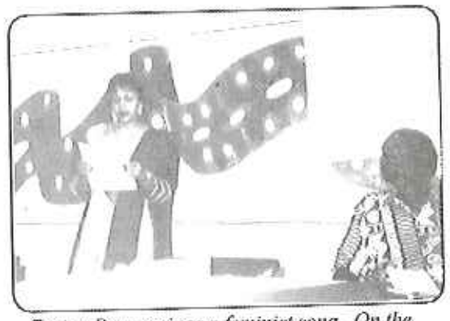
Participants in a group discussion at the night session.

The second workshop was conducted with the Labasa Soroptimists from 21 – 26 February. These were conducted in English as the participants were from a cross-section of society. This workshop had a difference in that the sessions were night workshops because all the participants were from the formal sector. They ranged in ages between 20 to 50 years. An important feedback that was gathered from the participants was that before the workshop they had no idea of the family laws or International Conventions. While they were educated, they were not literate in these areas. Another aspect that was raised was how society has so conditioned them to the notion that 'sex is a taboo', that matrimonial rape can be an issue. Overall, the participants were able to know about family law, the "Convention of the Rights of the Child" (CRC) and the "Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discriminations Against Women" (CEDAW). They were also able to grasp how one can go about applying the law in their lives e.g. how to file for maintenance and where they can have access to these services.

Upon completion of these two workshops the Honourable Muthu Swamy, a member of Parliament presented the participants with their certificates at a prize-giving ceremony held at the Labasa Civic Centre.

The legal literacy project has now expanded its outreach to Sigatoka. Zarina Begum held a session with PRIDE of Sigatoka. PRIDE is a national programme that is coordinated in areas around Fiji. It is a multiracial programme that seeks to develop skills of women so that they may be sustainable. Zarina spoke to the Sigatoka PRIDE group for about an hour because of the interest generated from the attendees. Zarina also used this opportunity to network to conduct further programmes for the Legal Literacy Project.

Upcoming is an awarenes- raising session with the St. John Ambulance, to be held over the Easter weekend She will speak on the roles and responsibility of Fiji Women's Rights Movement and in particular the importance of the Legal Literacy project.



Zarina Begum sings a feminist song. On the right is Hon. Muthu Swamy

Source: International Women's Tribune Centre

Where FWRM stands with the IR Bill

In the last issue of *Balance,* we ended with number 5, "Wages and Leave Records to be produced". This issue we begin with no. 6 on the powers of inspections of private dwellings and end with no. 10 on Employment of Children

6 Powers of Inspection of private dwellings

Under clause 15 of the Bill, inspectors may enter and examine workplaces and require the employer to produce documents or records, interview employers or other workers and seek information from anyone in relation to an employment matter. They must give 14 days notice of their visit and must notify the employer of their presence, unless that would prejudice their inspection and they must not enter a private dwelling house without the consent of the occupier.

These powers are very similar to those that currently exist in the *Employment Act* except that because of the wide coverage of the Bill they give rights of inspection to workplaces that have never before been subject to inspection.

The one curtailment on the power that existed under the *Employment Act* and is not contained in the Bill is the right of the employer to accompany the inspector during the inspection. There is no such right of accompaniment under the Bill.

Labouring under the Law was critical of the rights of approval, advance notification and escort vested in employers under *the Employment Act*. The Bill still enables a right of approval for private dwellings and advance notification.

The biggest concern for the rights of women workers would likely be right of approval. It must be of real concern that inspectors are prevented from entering a workplace where it is a private dwelling except with the consent of the occupier. As most domestic workers will work in private dwellings, it appears there is not to be a right of entry to their workplaces, despite the wording in clause 15(1)(a).

Recommendation

a). Remove 14 day notice requirement so as to allow for spot checks

b). Allow inspectors to enter private dwellings where 'workers' as defined under the Bill are employed but with prior notice and right of employer to be present.

c). Allow inspectors to remove samples or substances for purposes of analysis

d). Make it compulsory for the minimum conditions provisions in the Act, or Wages Council orders where they apply, to be displayed on walls in all workplaces in Fiji, and in a site where workers can easily read the information

7 Penalties

Conflict of interest or breach of confidentiality- Under the Act a government officer who has an interest in a workplace, makes use of information obtained in the course of their duties or breaches confidentiality commits an offence and incurs a fine of up to $1000 and 3 years imprisonment. Under the Bill the same behaviour incurs a fine up to $10,000 or 3 years imprisonment.

Obstruction - Under the Act obstruction of an inspector incurs a fine of up to $200 or up to $10 per day. (amended by s26 1970 Act) Under the Bill obstruction incurs a fine of $100 per day or $2000 and imprisonment for 6 months.

Wage protection - Under the Act an employer is liable for a fine of up to $200 or imprisonment not exceeding 6 months if he/she breaches the wage provisions.

Under the Bill the employer is liable for a fine of up to $50,000 for a corporation or $5000 in any other case, and to imprisonment for up to 6 months if he/she breaches wages provisions.

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement was highly critical of the discrepancy in penalties under the Act, as between employer contraventions and worker rights. The penalties to which employers are potentially subjected to have been significantly increased under the Bill, especially those where employers are in breach.

Recommendation

a) Increase the fine for obstruction of an officer to $10,000 or imprisonment for 3 years and make provision for increase in fine each time for repeat offending

b) Increase the fine for breaches of wages protections for repeat offenders to $80,000 for a corporation and $10,000 for an individual.

8 Law enforcement

Under the Act the powers of inspectors are extensive. The Bill has reworded them in simpler form so they are expressed in less words but appear to cover the same ground except that the power to take or remove material or substances for analysis does not appear to exist in the Bill.

The FWRM identifies problems with staffing and transport shortages as barriers to the full and effective exercise of those powers. Not unexpectedly the Bill does not address these issues – but they are important matters for FWRM to lobby for at the same time as the Bill is enacted. They undoubtedly affect the effectiveness of the law.

Labouring under the Law also criticizes the accountability of employers under the Act for compliance with wages legislation (that which does currently exist). It suggests the same high accountability that is placed on unions under the Trade Union Act should be applied to employers.

In conclusion, while the Bill standardizes employment law and sets minimum employment conditions it retains the same system of enforcement by inspection.

Recommendation

a) Require submission of records every 3 years by all employers in Fiji

b) Allow individual employees, unions or other representatives to inspect records on 7 days notice

c) Allow inspectors to take or remove samples of material and substances used or handled by employee for analysis.

d) Make non-compliance with record keeping a specific offence and institute deterrent penalties

e) Allow entry of inspectors to private dwellings where a worker, as defined under the Act, is employed

f) Make it explicit that on inspection of a workplace inspectors can require full access to employment records

9 Labour Advisory Board – representation of women's interests.

The Employment Act does not make any reference to representation of women. Clause 5(3) of the Bill provides for the Minister to ensure that the Board includes representatives of both men and women. In this sense the Bill is an advance on the

Barriers to women's involvement in decision-making need to be removed!

Following is UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's message for the United Nations Day for Women's Rights and International Peace, observed on 8 March of this year.

This first International Women's Day of the twenty-first century is devoted to the theme of women uniting for peace. It is a theme that brings together two vital parts of the United Nations mission. The Charter tells us that our Organization was created to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. It also proclaims the equal rights of men and women. We must live up to both challenges, or we shall fail in both.

The century that has just closed saw the age of large inter-State wars reach its apex and wane, only to be replaced by the age of ethnic conflict. Today's small wars are no less murderous than yesterday's big ones. Small arms may kill people one at a time, but they are still lethal. All too often, conflict happens in the societies that can least afford it, takes its toll on those who least deserve it and hits hardest those least equipped to defend themselves. Civilians have become the main targets of warfare. And women bear more than their fair share of the burden.

But women, who know the price of conflict so well, are also often better equipped than men to prevent or resolve it. When society collapses, women play a critical role in ensuring that life goes on. When ethnic tensions cause or exacerbate conflict, women tend to build bridges rather than walls. When considering the impact and implications of war and peace, women think first of their children and their future, before themselves.

We, in the United Nations know at first hand the invaluable support women provide to our peacekeepers – organizing committees, women's associations, non-governmental organizations and church groups to ease tensions and persuading their menfolk to accept peace. Partly for that reason, we are making special efforts to recruit more women for our own peacekeeping and peace-making missions, and to make all our operations more aware of gender issues. Several missions, — including those in Afghanistan, Kosovo and East Timor – now include civilian gender affairs units. We are redoubling our efforts to recruit more qualified women in peace operations, both in the field and at Headquarters. Once more, I appeal to Member States to include qualified women in the contingents they send us, and to nominate qualified women candidates for United Nations posts at all levels.

United Nations agencies work every day to assist the most vulnerable women, caring for refugees and setting legal norms for women's rights in armed conflict. They send special missions in countries affected by war. They provide health care and post-trauma assistance. They work with women in war-torn countries after the guns fall silent, helping them and their menfolk to rebuild their State and society.

We know there can be no enduring peace without development. We also know there can be no development unless women play their full part. This means removing the barriers to women's involvement in decision-making and giving them access to land. It means protecting their security and that of their families. It means ensuring that they enjoy full human and political rights. The United Nations is working with its partners in government and in civil society – locally and internationally – to achieve these objectives.

Five years ago, many of these goals were adopted by governments at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. This June, the General Assembly will hold a special session to review progress in implementing them. The Beijing Platform called for women and their human rights to be protected in conflict situations. It called for women to play a bigger part in the decisions which resolve conflict, and for more conflicts to be resolved in non-violent ways. In short, it summons us all to pave the way for a culture of peace.

Let us unite all our efforts to bring these pledges to life. Let us build on the work of women everywhere to achieve peace for succeeding generations. Let us harness the power of women uniting for peace. *B*

Kiribati celebrate IWD

Kiribati declared March 8 a public holiday in recognition of the contribution of women to nation building.

The declaration was hailed by women's organisations in Kiribati as a 'step forward for women in their struggles to have their contribution recognised."

President of the Aia Mwaea Ainen Kiribati (AMAK), Meree Riwata said that the public holiday coincided with the Micronesian Women's Caucus meeting held in Kiribati to discuss issues of concern to women in the region. AMAK is Kiribati's largest women's organisation

"The public holiday was one of our proposals to the Government last year. We are grateful to the Government of President Teburoro Tito for seeing fit to declare a national day for women. This is a day where women can celebrate and focus on what needs to be done in future for their development in relation to national development," Riwata said.

A big celebration was organised in South Tarawa to mark International Women's day. The chief guest was Kiribati's National Development Minister, Kataotika Tekee.

The presence of almost 100 women from Micronesian countries who are attending the Micronesian Women's Caucus added to the celebrations. They are from the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Marshall Islands and Palau. *B*

(Continued from page 5)

5. How strong was the Pacific Bloc?

Within the G77, the Pacific Bloc was quite small. G77 are developing countries and as such Asia is always dominating. In terms of numbers, the Pacific Bloc is weak. The Pacific Bloc was visible through some people. However I would say that they were strong because in the negotiating room, they proved to be a force to be reckoned with as many of us were called on to join the drafting team. But it would have been nice if the Pacific Islands representatives were a bit more active in the discussion or at least in one of the areas like nuclear disarmament or rights of the indigenous peoples or environmental protection and if they had participated on an equal footing.

6. What can be done to make sure the Pacific is heard at the CSW meeting?

The United Nations agencies can come in and could be instrumental in developing the right people for a good representation from the Pacific that is needed at the CSW meeting.

7. I understand that there wasn't any formal outcome at this PrepCom II. Why?

Yes there were no formal outcomes. The negotiation process was the frustrating part of the meeting. The major parts of the document were not discussed. While the smaller groups were able to, the G77 countries could not because there was no agreement on agreeing. The delay was not on women's issues but the political traditional religious lines were at play. Conservative groups, strong catholic groups and right wings were the restraints at the negotiations. It was clear towards the end of the first week that this was at play. The political differences between capitol and UN agencies were evident. The capitol were people from Ministry of Women who were in touch with ground work while UN missions were holding on to strong political lines. It was a play of skills and how to put the point across and not so much of what was believed. Thus no formal document was produced. However, there is now until June (when the CSW meeting will be held) for discussions to take place. *B*

The Youth Forum at the PrepComII

With Amanda Smith

The first time I came to learn anything about the Beijing + 5 review process was at the beginning of this year (2000) when I was approached by the Fiji Women's Rights Movement to take part in the Asia Pacific Youth Workshop on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Bangkok, Thailand held from 31 January 2000 to 3 February 2000.

A month later I found myself in New York for the first time, taking part in the Preparatory Committee meeting of the CSW. Having never been to the United Nations nor taken part in any of its Preparatory Meetings, the whole process at first was very overwhelming and challenging.

After the first few days I was able to fully understand the mechanics of the Preparatory meeting. With the constant guidance from those who had previously attended preparatory meetings as well as from the members of the Fiji delegation, I comfortably found my place in the process.

I had a dual role at the meeting; as a collective member of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement and as a member of the Network of Asia Pacific Youth (NAPY).

At the meeting there were 16 caucuses; the aim of the caucuses was to pull together collective strengths on a particular issue. I took part in a number of caucuses, which were in Youth, Media, and Health, as these are the issues that I am most familiar with and am also interested in.

Of the three caucuses I was most active in the Youth Caucus because that is where I felt I could be most effective.

As a member of NAPY, we tried to be as active as possible during the Preparatory Committee meeting. The activities I was involved in included from lobbying governments and non-government organisations for a stronger language reflecting our concerns not only as youths but also as youths in the Asia Pacific region.

Together with other members from NAPY we were active in international networking and linking with NGOs, GOs, stakeholders and other youth networks. We were also in close contact with the Asia Pacific Women Watch (APWW), attended Asia Pacific Caucus meetings and actively joined Asia Pacific women in making ourselves visible on the floor of the CSW prep com meeting during NGO briefings.

NAPY likewise actively collaborated in the formation of the Youth for Women's Rights, a convergence of youth networks in the Asia Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, of the Youth Coalition on ICPD and other young individuals from Africa. The Youth for Women's Rights became the progressive bloc in the Youth Caucus, which was practically swarmed by ultra conservative groups who were out to derail the entire discussions, especially on matters concerning sexual and reproductive health and rights.

In a panel sponsored by Youth for Women's Rights, NAPY presented a paper on the common problems and concerns of the youth in the region. We used the results of our Bangkok workshop as our reference data. The international audience warmly received the presentation.

It was evident that in the caucuses and all other activities organised during the PrepCom, it was very sad to see that the Pacific region was highly under-represented. This to me is a true reflection of the lack of resources in the Pacific to be able to send people to attend United Nations meetings where decisions are made that have a major impact on the lives of the Pacific people.

Due to the lack of participation of Pacific youth in the Youth Caucus (2 Pacific Islanders), I found it quite difficult to include issues that I felt were affecting youth in Fiji and the Pacific; such as the lack of information and the difficulty in accessing information on sexual and reproductive health and rights as well as highlighting the cultural barriers that Young people in the Pacific (especially young women) face in their everyday lives.

I was honoured to be made part of the Fiji Delegation as this gave me an opportunity to go behind close doors and witness the negotiations between the government delegations in the Group of 77. Many of the Non-governmental Organisations found this to be a very progressive decision on the part of the Fiji Government representatives attending the Preparatory Committee Meeting. The Fiji delegation in this step showed that they truly wanted to have an NGO perspective included in the outcome document.

The negotiations were a very slow and

(Continued on page 15)

current situation and one advocated for in Labouring under the Law.

However, under the Bill the appointment of only one woman would constitute compliance with law – or possibly not even this as it could be argued that the particular wording leaves it open for a man to be designated to be a 'representative of women'. It is noted that in Labouring under the Law the ratio of 6 women out of 30 was considered inadequate. There is nothing in the Bill to guarantee any greater number of women on the Board.

The danger with simple female representation on a general board is that the women appointed may have no special interest or commitment to represent women's specific employment needs. It may be useful to require the establishment of a special advisory sub-committee of the Board, which has a specific agenda to monitor and recommend changes and improvements to women's employment.

Recommendations

a) Require a statutory minimum of 30% female representation on the Board

b) Establish a goal, that the Minister must take account of equal male and female representation on the Board when making appointments to the Board.

c) Establish a sub-committee of the Board with a specific purpose of being an advisory sub-committee on the employment of women, which can report directly to the Minister. It will be drawn from Board members but may also include members co-opted because of their special expertise on women's employment issues.

10 Employment of Children

Definitions - The Act defines a child as a person who has not attained the age of 15 years. The Bill defines a child as a person who has not attained the age of 18 Years.

Absolute ban on employment of children

The Act provides that no child under the age of 12 years can be employed in any capacity whatsoever, except if the child is employed in light work suitable to the child's capacity in a workplace owned and operated by the child's family.

The Bill contains this same provision but raises the age to 14 years.

Comment - Both the Act and the Bill define family in a very narrow way – it is the spouse of the worker and the unmarried dependent children, if any, under the age of 18 years. Hence, the concerns expressed in Labouring under the Law about the potential for abuse when the extended family in Fiji (as opposed to the Western nuclear model) is considered are not addressed by this definition.

This increase in age, both in the definition of child and in the absolute work ban is a very significant advance in the protection of children and one strongly advocated for in Labouring under the Law. The exception for family is not as wide as feared and there is a further qualification on this in both the Act and the Bill, which is where the life, health or morals of the persons employed in the family make it dangerous to be so employed.

Employment of children over absolute ban age - The Act provides that children between 12 and 15 can only be employed under certain conditions e.g. that they have a daily wage and day to day work and return to parents each night.

The Bill has the same provisions but the ages are lifted to 14 – 18.

Again this lifting of the ages is a significant advance and one advocated for strongly in Labouring under the Law.

School attendance of children able to be employed under Bill

The Act can be interpreted as sanctioning only one hour a day of schoolwork for children who can be lawfully employed under the Act. This was criticized in Labouring under the Law. The Bill clearly provides that a child must not be employed or permitted to be employed during a period when the child is required to be at school.

This new provision appears to fully address the concerns expressed in Labouring under the Law's concerns, especially when set against the increased age at which children gain employment protections.

Hours of work of children

Under the Act, a child cannot be employed for more that 6 hours a day, nor for more than 2 without a rest of 30 minutes, nor if the child attends school and works for more than 7 hours total.

Under the Bill, a child cannot be employed for more than 5 hours a day without a rest period of 30 minutes or for more than 8 hours a day.

This provision is in contrast to others in the Bill. It actually decreases the 'protections' to children by allowing them to work longer hours. The Bill of course only applies to children between 14 – 18 whereas the extra protections in the Act were for children aged 12 – 15 years, who presumably needed more protection.

However, again the school leaving age will have some impact here. A child who is no longer at school should presumably be able to be fully employed if she or he desires.

Minimum wages - It should be noted in respect to minimum wages that there is facility for the Minister to set minimum wages for 'child workers' i.e. those aged between 14 and 18 at a lower level than adults. Persons under the age of 18 would be considered a 'class of persons' in the meaning of Clause 74.

However, this must be done only following consultation with the Labour Advisory Board and the payment of wages to child workers will be regulated. These factors are a major advance.

Exemptions - Under section 58 of the Act the Minister may approve exemptions from this part of the Act for the employment in industrial undertakings and hence the provisions with respect to child workers do not apply to them.

There is no equivalent provision in the Bill.

Recommendations in Labouring under the Law that do not appear in the Bill:

a) A minimum age of 8 years for children helping out on farms

No reference at all appears to be made to child workers on farms. They would therefore seem to be covered by the same provisions as other categories of child workers and are banned from employment if under 14 years except for light employment in family workplaces.

b) Explicit amendment of definition of employment to cover child workers so as to ensure greater legal safeguards.

Though the definition of employment and worker does not explicitly include child workers clause 100(1) in my opinion, means that they have the same protections in terms of leave, pay slips, the keeping by the employer of leave and wage records and other matters covered in the Bill as adult workers have. No explicit coverage is therefore needed.

The prohibition of employment of children under the age of 15 in a workplace involving attendance on machinery appears to have no exception or possible derogation. This is positive.

After workshop discussion no amendments are recommended to this provision. *B*

FWRM's in-house Training

By Reema Naresh

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement wishes to inform all its members of the successful in-house training weekend that was conducted at the Raintree Lodge from 28 – 30 January, 2000. The essence of the weekend was captured at the Saturday evening celebratory dinner of women's achievements. The dinner was attended by over 50 women, including Mrs. Chaudhry, members of parliament and judiciary, university, United Nations and other organisations. Several women recalled stories of earlier times, of memorable moments, and women's experiences. It was an occasion for recognising the many milestones that Fiji women have achieved, renewing friendships, making new ones, and pledging solidarity and support to the continued progress of women.

The workshops conducted on Saturday and Sunday were also highly successful with 30 participants and resource persons attending. We were able to review our objectives and past history, become better informed about issues affecting women in Fiji and prioritize future plans for generating new leadership and direction.

Overall impressions and feedback of the workshop were very positive. The written evaluation confirmed that the workshop objectives were met. Everyone was stimulated and inspired. There was lively conversations and discussions everywhere.

Many recommendations were made during the workshop. Some of the significant ones: more work was needed on FWRM's image, since there are many misconceptions about who we are and what we do in the general public. It was also felt that media monitoring was needed. Sessions about globalisation and United Nations Conventions were notable and a real eye opener for everyone. There were a number of young women who were invited to this workshop; from this an Emerging Young Leaders Program was born. It is an exciting program which aims to seek out and educate young women about feminism and issues that affect women.

The workshop was a real fun experience for me. I met a lot of very inspirational women. My learning curve was very steep, I was introduced to topics and issues that I had never thought of before. For example globalisation and its effects in Fiji. The small group discussions were particularly fun and very thought-provoking. In addition they allowed me to get to know the workshop participants better. I am very excited about the Emerging Leader Program and I hope that many young women participate and get involved.

We would like to thank all those who attended the workshops and dinner, as well as those businesses who assisted in making the weekend a success. We appreciate your contributions and look forward to your continued support. *B*

FWRM in particular would like to thank the following businesses for their contribution to this successful event:

Sunflower Airlines
Telecom Fiji
Flour Mills of Fiji
Mechanical Services
Standss (South Pacific) Ltd
Suva Market Vendors

Above: *Claire Slatter of DAWN talks to members about Globalization.* ***Right:*** *Zarina Begum elaborates on the Legal Literacy Project.*

Above: Collective members at the In-house training held in January.

Reema Naresh is a volunteer member of FWRM and a very active collective member at present.

The outcomes of PrepCom II

Raijeli Nicole, Women's Employment and Economic Rights (WEER) Project Officer attended Prep Com II, held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 28 February to 17 March 2000.

The negotiations were slow and many of the most difficult issues remain 'bracketed'. No formal outcome was produced. The 'outcome document' as it is called, remains largely untouched. "The traditional tangle between Headquarters delegations reflecting worn diplomatic positions and freshmen from the field with untempered enthusiasm and consensus-unfriendly language did nothing to help." Progress negotiations have been uniformly slow, but the obstacles encountered during the process have at times been insuperable. The end of the process is now clear to most participants. The review will at least reaffirm the core ideas of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Cairo Programme of Action. On women's human rights, the Declaration (put out by JUSCANZ) simply reaffirms "commitment to accelerate the achievement of universal ratification of CEDAW". CEDAW as we all know has of course been with us since 1979 (and should by now have achieved maturity having reached the age of 21!). But the Political Declaration makes no mention, howsoever weak, of the CEDAW Optional Protocol, which only a few countries have ratified to date. However, intersession discussions will take place from now until June. As Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) states, despite the obstacles we currently face, we know we can succeed. Women's rights and gender equality can no longer be suppressed or made pawns in other games. We have prevailed before and we will prevail again.

(Adapted from UNFPA's ERLB Newsletter, International Women's Tribune Centre Newsletter, DAWN's Editorial and excerpts from Raijeli Nicole)

Note: CSW - Commission on the Status of Women
PFA - Platform for Action
CEDAW - Convention of the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women.

Raijeli Nicole

"It was an incredible experience!"

Women's Employment and Economic Rights (WEER) Project Officer, Raijeli Nicole was present at the PrepCom II meeting at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. Katalaini Duaibe interviewed her on her experience at the PrepCom II meeting:

1. As a first timer to the PrepCom meeting, what was this experience like?

It was an incredible experience to be part of the negotiation process. The first day was chaotic in the sense that there were people everywhere. When the main meeting was going on, the NGO Forum had parallel meetings. It was so much work trying to figure out which one is which and which one to go to. There were so few Pacific People and we were trying to figure out where to make the most effective input, which we eventually did because we were fast learners. We made sure the PFA was our guide and were basically lobbying to ensure the main essence is kept on course. It was incredible because I met up with people I had only read about whom we could contact for our own purposes; for example, meeting up with the Public Service International, which we could communicate with regarding 'Enterprise Bargaining'.

2. What is the NGO forum?

The NGO forum began on the first Saturday, which was 3rd March 2000. There were presentations from a few key speakers including Charlotte Bunch. They discussed NGO participation at the CSW. First we were broken up into areas of focus in the region, where we discussed the areas of concern and strategies for this area. Then we formed groups in the 12 critical areas of concern and this was the basis for PrepCom II. Then there were various regional caucus meetings at which we shared our concerns.

3. What was being part of the Pacific Voice at the NGO forum like?

As part of the Pacific Voice, firstly we were small in numbers. The countries represented were Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. We also lacked experience, but we made up for it because we were fast learners and once we were on the government team, we were very effective. I was the only NGO representative alongside one from Tonga on the government side. The rest were all government people. However, we also effectively used people that have worked in the Pacific and had more experience.

4. Is it useful for NGO's to be part of Government? Does that compromise NGOs?

Yes its quite useful, speaking for Fiji that is. Because NGOs are put on the agenda this way and thus we are able to give our side of the argument, since we have the practical experience and the basic groundwork. Our goals are the same since we have the same objective in mind, which is to improve the status of women. Fiji made headway because due to NGO presence on the government side, Fiji was able to resist some of the conservative blocs. However there were some issues which we let lie because the government are reserved on those issues. E.g. In women and health, the particular issues of 'sexual orientation' and 'abortion' were two of the most delicate areas. As these were delicate areas, NGOs respected this but there were no grounds lost because other areas of concern were forthcoming.

(Continued on page 6)

Preparations underway for UN Special Session on CSW

In September 1995, approximately 50,000 women – and some men – gathered in Beijing, China to attend the UN Fourth World Conference on Women and/or the NGO Forum on Women. The Platform for Action (PFA), the major policy document agreed upon at the UN conference, calls upon governments to take action in 12 critical areas of concern. Its development was the result of a two year prepatory process that included meetings at the community, country and international level and engaged thousands of women in a policy shaping process, the majority for the first time. As a result of this Beijing process, women gained new confidence, honed new skills, claimed ownership of a policy document and, in the aftermath, moved into the public arena at the national level in unprecedented numbers.

This year, five years after the Beijing conferences, women have an opportunity to hold their governments accountable for action on the Platform for Action. Referred to as the Beijing Plus Five Special Session, and officially known as Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the twenty-first century, the special session will take place June 5-9, 2000 at UN headquarters in New York.

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the official UN body responsible for monitoring progress on the PFA, initiated preparations for the review process during the week March 15 – 19 1999 when it met as the Preparatory Committee 1 (PrepCom1) for Women 2000, and then again in March this year for PrepCom II. The 1995 conferences clearly accelerated a process of profound social, economic and political changes that were sparked by the first International Women's Year conference in 1975.

The outcomes of Prep Com I in 1999

1. Review Process Focus

It was decided that the focus of the review process would be on:

- Best practices
- Obstacles encountered
- Vision for the future
- Identification of new and emerging trends

In a draft proposal prepared by the UN Division for the Advancement of Women (UN/DAW) for the PrepCom, four issues had been suggested as cross cutting themes for the review process. However, government delegates and NGOs alike argued that new emerging issues should come from the review process itself, especially from the regional meetings, and should not be decided upon before the process had begun.

2. No going back on Beijing Agreements

It was unanimously agreed that the review process would be undertaken on the basis of, and with full respect for the PFA and that there would be no renegotiation of the existing agreements contained therein.

3. National Action Plans

Governments that have not yet done so were invited to prepare national action plans for implementing the PFA. As of March 9, 1999, 112 of 189 Member and Observer States had sent these plans to UN/DAW. The importance of involving relevant actors of civil society, especially NGOs, in the process of developing national action plans was underlined.

4. Regional Preparatory Meetings

All UN regional commissions and other intergovernmental regional organisations were encouraged to hold preparatory meetings to ensure a regional perspective on implementation, further actions and initiatives, and new and emerging trends.

5. NGO Participation and Access

The draft resolution from the PrepCom specified that NGOs in consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), as well as NGOs that were accredited to the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing 1995, might participate in the Special Session. Questions were raised with regard to the participation of NGOS without consultative status that have been actively involved in Beijing +5 activities since 1995 but who did not attend the Beijing conference and/or were not accredited to ECOSOC. This question and others regarding NGO access and participation were further considered at PrepCom II.

Other recommendations concerning NGOS included:

- The UN system should hold discussions with "relevant actors of civil society" in the exchange of views regarding the review and appraisal process.
- Governments should ensure NGO representation at the Special Session at a high political level.
- NGOs should be included in national preparatory processes as well as in government delegations to PrepCom II and the Special Session in 2000.

6. Plans for PrepCom II, March 6-24, 2000

It was decided that the UN Commission on the Status of Women (UN/CSW) meet for three weeks from March 6-24, 2000, with the majority of the time given over to the work of preparing for Special Session, June 5-9 2000.

7. Provisional Agenda for the Special Session

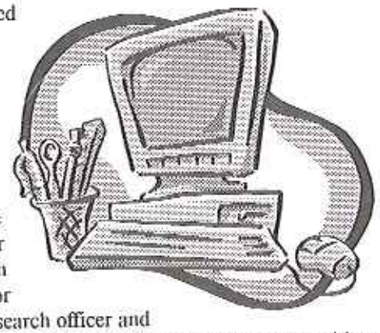
It was decided that the agenda would include:

- Review and appraisal of progress made on the implementation of the 12 critical areas of concern in the PFA
- Further action and initiatives for overcoming obstacles to implementation of the PFA.

Click on to www.fijiwomen.com

By Katalaini Duaibe

With the dawn of a new century, some organisations have ventured into new fields of disseminating information. As such is the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC) who launched into the Internet world, taking the feminist movement in Fiji to new heights. Click onto www.fijiwomen.com - it will take you to a site that's so rich in information. If you were a student doing your research on gender issues especially in the area of domestic violence in Fiji, you will have stumbled onto a gold mine. The site contains well-researched information and statistics on domestic violence, the socio-economic status of children, the corporate profile of FWCC, their services and most of all it will set right any misconception you might have about the Crisis Centre.



What? When? Why? This was exactly, my reaction when I was told to attend the launching of their website. So after attending the launching I sat down with Edwina Kotoisuva, the deputy coordinator of FWCC alongside Sarah Pene, their research officer and had a sort of informal interview with them to talk about the setting up of such a structure. And I sure was impressed with the idea behind putting 'Fiji women' on the Internet.

FWCC, through their work in the fifteen or so years they have been in existence have come to be known for their work in the area of violence against women not only in Fiji but also in the Pacific. Thus it was only progressive that they launch onto the web, putting Fiji women onto the cyber highway. I must say they have done a good job out of it. There were many reasons for the site. Firstly to promote the work of FWCC in Fiji (they have centers in Lautoka, Ba and Labasa and Mobile counseling throughtout Fiji) and internationally; and the issue of violence against women not only in Fiji but in the Pacific, which is why they have online corporate profiles of their other network members in the Pacific. These include Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Samoa.

Secondly, being online allows for easier access and information sharing, heightens the education of people and is envisaged to counter paedophile issues. Being on the net allows them to archive information of their past productions. They have also stated their stances on certain issues, for example on 'abortion'. As much as I would like to yak on about what their stand is, I would rather not say, to get you to surf their site yourself. Furthermore, you will also find submissions made by FWCC pertaining to certain issues in Fiji.

I was a bit concerned about the availability of online counseling. But be reassured that it is only preliminary counseling. So don't waste your time hoaxing them with made up stories of events (I mean it happens, people play sick jokes online, keep track of you and get a kick out of it). Edwina said that at first they were a bit hesitant about online counselling because it then becomes impersonal, but then again there are people who would rather not seek counselling in person so online counseling well suits their needs.

Finally I asked them how did they come up with such a catchy name for a website. It's a promotional approach, 'women' is what most people will search for and Fiji when they want to narrow it down. So there you have it - the first of its kind www.fijiwomen.com. Click on today if you haven't already done so! *B*

Reclaim the Night!

The FWCC lead the "Reclaim the Night March" through the streets of Suva. (Source: Fiji Times)

This year the reclaim the night march amassed close to 1000 women, men and children. The concerned public all marched together for a common cause: to reclaim the night and to calm fears of walking the streets at night because of fear from the dangers that surround our women and girls. The march was headed by the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre and included the likes of Minister for Women, Culture and Social Welfare, Hon. Lavenia Padarath and other members of parliament. Feminist organisations and other NGOs all got together to make clear that we want our safe streets, in particular at night. The 'Reclaim the Night' March ended with solidarity speeches at the Government Buildings. *B*

HERSTORY: A profile of Fiji Women's Rights Movement.

By Mereoni

A booklet profiling the Fiji Women's Rights Movement from its birth to the current status. A thirty-six paged booklet, this is the first formal publication about the Fiji Women's Rights Movement. It is easy to read colorfully covered, and has a catchy title. The book covers a brief history of the movement, its objectives, the services provided, current projects, future plans and involvement locally and internationally.

Interestingly the book was planned two years ago in 1998 and was finally published in the Year 2000.

The objectives of the movement are as follows: to eradicate workforce discrimination against women, to eliminate discriminatory practices in the area of family law, to develop effective legal protection, to support and provide women in Fiji with opportunities to participate in the formulation of Government Policies.

Described as a non-governmental feminist movement, the movement has grown from 1986 to redress the imbalances of women's socio-economic and political status. Projects in progress give a relatively good idea of the current status of the movement: Women's Employment & Economic Rights, National Legal Literacy Project, Communications Project, Women's Health Network, Pacific Human Rights Center, NGO Coalition on Human Rights.

The book is a basic guide to the objectives of the movement. Future publications need to be better planned and thoroughly researched before publication. Published by: Fiji Women's Rights Movement c2000. Softcover. Cost: Free of Charge. Funded by Canada Fund.

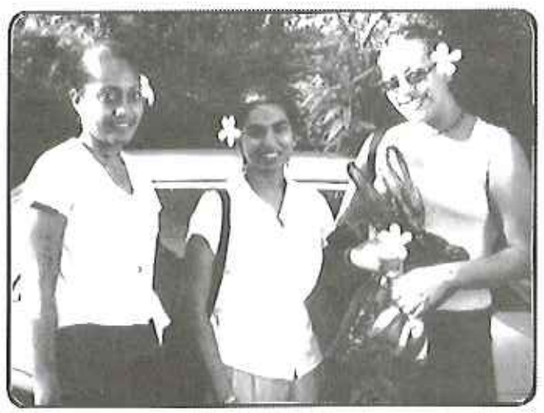
(Continued from cover page)

Social Welfare, various members of parliament, the diplomatic corps and the judiciary; NGOs and regional organisations; friends of FWRM, members and staff.

Late that morning the Soqosoqo Vakamarama held a panel discussion on "Nation Building: Our Women & Children on the Streets". The panel consisted of representatives from the Department of Social Welfare; Fiji Police, the Methodist Church in Fiji – Department of Social Services; Chevalier Home and the Seventh Day Adventists Church. The discussion was opened by Minister for Women, Lavenia Padarath while Mrs. Virmati Chaudhry, the spouse of the Honorable Prime Minister, gave the key opening address.

The events of International Women's Day concluded with a reclaim the night march through the streets of Suva. The March drew a crowd of about 1000 people and was well attended by Members of Parliament and NGOS, women, men and children. The march was an event that highlighted the need for safer streets for women and children, given the fears that often surround them. *B*

Emerging Leaders attend Parliamentarians Seminar!



Above: The three Emerging Leaders who attended the Unifem Conference in Nadi.

At the in-house training reported on page 12, a programme was created called the Emerging Leaders. This programme was born to train and equip young females in leadership roles. They were able to attend a seminar for regional women parliamentarians and Fiji parliamentarians on "Governance, Globalisation and Budgets" held at the Mocambo Hotel in Nadi from the 22nd to 25th of March. The seminar was sponsored by UNIFEM and UNDP. The gathering brought together a great wealth of experts in the field who were able to enlighten the participants and observers on what seem to be the most pressing issues at this time. Attending from the Fiji Women's Rights Movement Emerging Leaders Programme were Ema Tavola, Siteri Kalouniviti and Reema Naresh. The Emerging Leaders were priveledged to share lunch with the first Pacifc Island Women Labour List Member of Parliament in New Zealand, the Honourable Winnie Laban, who shared with the girls her campaigning in the build up to the New Zealand election and what it is like to be a Pacific Islander and Women member of Parliament. They were also introduced to the Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry, Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Tupeni Baba and of course the remarkable women MPs from Fiji and around the Pacific region. The women Senators of the Labour Party were very empowering in their contribution. *B*

Commissioner launches *Herstory*

Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) launched the long awaited book *"HERSTORY: A profile of Fiji Women's Rights Movement"* at the Centra Suva. Launching the book was the International Women's Day activity for FWRM. The Australian High Commissioner to Fiji, Her Excellency Ms. Susan Boyd was Chief Guest at the Breakfast Book Launch.

At the launch, Ms. Boyd acknowledged the number of women in parliament and congratulated them. Speaking at the launch, Ms. Boyd said, that "The battle this century has not only centered on our parliaments, but also on women's right to equal participation in the workforce. Women have had to fight for employment, for security of employment, for safe workplaces, and for the removal of obstacles to moving up the ladder. The women's movement has played a vital role in ensuring that the correct legislative provisions and policies are in place for the benefit of the women of Fiji and for the whole of Fijian society. Its awareness building and training role has been important in letting people know of their rights and helping them to exercise them. And its role in forging regional and international links helps draw on the experience of others, and shares Fiji's experiences more widely."

***Above** (L-R): Zarina Begum the Legal Rights Training Officer, Sheetal Shah, treasurer for FWRM, Reema Naresh, volunteer worker for FWRM and Suman Chandra, FWRM Administration Officer.*

***Above:** HE Ms Susan Boyd launches HERSTORY on International Women's Day*

***Above:** Patrina Dumaru of Ecowomen garlands HE Ms. Susan Boyd, Chief Guest at the Breakfast Book Launch*

"The women's movement has played a vital role in ensuring the correct legislative provisions are in place for the benefit of the women of Fiji..."

Further, Ms. Boyd called for people to dedicate themselves to continue to work, individually and collectively, for the equal rights of women and all in our societies and for the conditions which will allow each in society to progress, without discrimination, to develop to their full potential. This will benefit not only their own individual countries, but also the good of the world. Ms Boyd also highlighted the fight to achieve the vote by women of years gone by and her own personal struggle in her career field as a diplomat, fighting discrimination as a women on the way. To date she is one of the most successful best in Australia's foreign service.

Sitting down to a full breakfast at Centra Suva, members mingled with supporters and invited guests of FWRM. Everyone displayed the stick on lables highlighting March 8 as International Women's Day. The activity started the celebrations for International Women's Day in Fiji. The breakfast was attended by the Minister for Women, Culture and Social Welfare, Members of Parliament and the Diplomatic Corps, members of the judiciary, NGOs and FWRM friends, collective and staff. The Breakfast began at 7am and by 8.30am people had dispersed to attend work or other International Women's Day Activities. *B*

Editorial

Welcome to the first issue of Balance in the Year 2000. There continues to be new challenges for civil society organisations and FWRM as we head into the 21st Century.

One critical issue is leadership and how do we develop our future leaders? The challenge of developing women to continue with the activism and to counter gender discrimination in our society? How do we share our institutional memory so that our history is not forgotten and women know of our beginnings and activities?

From our in-house retreat and collective meetings, we have been exploring this important issue and have come up with ideas and strategies. One approach is to document our history; FWRM recently launched Herstory, a profile of our Movement, which you can read about on page 3, with a review on page 14. Another approach is to develop a program of learning and exchange. FWRM has titled this project "Emerging Leaders" and intend to have this as part of our ongoing FWRM core work. The group has met twice and we intend to hold a workshop in July. The program is an extension of our in-house training in which we will educate women on key gender issues and explore feminist positions.

Apart from this project we have sent women to attend regional and international meetings to gain experiences in networking. You can read about their experiences in this issue.

Leadership is important for the on going sustainability of an organisation and FWRM will invest in this program. If you have any ideas on leadership building please let us know.

I hope you enjoy this issue.

Gina

In Brief

UNIFEM and UNDP held a seminar for Regional Women Parliamentarians and Fiji Parliamentarians from the 23 to 25 March 2000 at the Mocambo in Nadi. The theme of the seminar was "Governance, Globalisation and Budgets". The seminar was resourced by various prominent and professional people on the theme and was attended by sister parliamentarians from as far a Palau. FWRM was invited to be an observer at this programme and it was also a good opportunity for the visibility of the 'Emerging Leaders' programme.

* * * * * * *

Candace Hopkins a CUSO intern with WAINIMATE, held a workshop on 21 March here at the FWRM office on the Male Gaze. The workshop, titled "Escaping the Male Gaze; The Depiction of Women in Media and Art" was held to create a base for effective interpretation of visual images in relation to women in art and the media. The workshop was attended by FWRM members and interested members of the public.

* * * * * * *

The Family Law Bill has been passed by Cabinet. This news comes as music to our ears as FWRM was instrumental in submissions toward this family law reform. The bill will be tabled in the April-May Parliamentary sitting. FWRM will be lobbying during this period for the family law reform to be passed.

* * * * * * *

Upcoming Event: Regional Workshop on *"The role of national human rights institutions in advancing the international human rights of women"*, co-sponsored by the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions and the Fiji Human Rights Commission. The workshop will be held from May 5 - 7, in Suva. It will be held to discuss ways in which the international human rights of women in the Asia Pacific region can be improved. It seeks to develop the capacity of both national human rights institutions and non-government organisations and to promote the principles of good governance.

* * * * * * *

A regional meeting was held in New Delhi, India from the 30th March to 1st April, for the World March for Women 2000 campaign. The Meeting was held to discuss the launch of the World March for Women 2000 in the Asia Pacific Region and regional initiatives in the build up to the world rally to be held in New York on October 17. FWRM was represented the Oceania Region as Fiji is the only Pacific Nation with a coordinating body. FWRM member and FCC staff Shelley Rao sits on the International Liasion Committee for this worldwide campaign. More on the World March for Women 2000 on page 10.

* * * * * * *

Vinita D. Prasad is our latest volunteer worke. She came to us through the Ministry of Youth, Employment and Sports. She is currently helping out with administration duties. This includes organizing the movement's filing and the update of the resoruce centre. Vinita is looking for work at the same time. So if there are any openings, do let us know. By the way collective meetings are held every second Wednesday of every month from 1-2pm while issues collective meetings are held on the lastWednesday of every month from 5 - 6pm. Collective Members please attend.

* * * * * * *

Youth Forum at continued from page 6

frustrating process and it was obvious that issues such as sexual and reproductive health and rights are very sensitive subjects amongst many fundamentalist countries.

It was very disappointing at the end of the PrepCom to find that there would not be an outcome document. After having worked so hard alongside NGO's and GO's for two weeks, to arrive at the end and not have anything to show for it was very disheartening.

It made me question the effectiveness of the United Nations processes and how effective they were in addressing women's issues all over the world? It seemed in some cases as if the whole process was very tokenistic, as if some government delegations were taking part so they would appear to be addressing women's issues at the international level when in actual fact they were merely taking part in the process to stall negotiations or just to be there.

Many questions were raised during the negotiations as to how effective the Group of 77 was as a negotiating bloc during the PrepCom. A Group that was formed primarily for economic reasons was being made to come to a consensus on social and political issues. It was almost impossible at the time for the Group of 77 to come to a consensus on the issues raised in the working document due to its vast numbers and the diversity of political and social structures of the countries within the group.

The Network of Asia Pacific Youth (NAPY) is currently looking for funds to be able to attend the Special Session of the General Assembly for Women 2000/ Beijing+5 in June of this year. At the June Session there will be an opportunity for NGOs to suggest language to the various government delegations. As for my role as a collective member of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement, all I can do at this moment is to lobby the Fiji Government by proposing language that will address the issues facing Youth in Fiji primarily in the area of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Attending the Preparatory Committee Meeting on the Commission on the Status of women was an invaluable learning experience for me and as the former Chief Justice Supreme Court of Ghana, Annie Jiagge put it best when she said:

"What we have put in motion is a revolution from which there is no turning back. If we succeed, all humanity has a chance." *B*

Acknowledgements

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement are thankful to the various individuals, and businesses that often contribute to the well-being of the movement in some way or other. Since the last issue, there have been numerous donations that came through in the form of a computer or a chair or whatever. The Staff of FWRM would like to take this opportunity to thank all the organisations listed below for their kind and generous efforts:

Steelco Office Furniture - for donating two new office chairs in March 2000

Vodafone Fiji Ltd - for donating a mobile phone in February 2000 for the use of FWRM staff who are mobile.

Fastkil Pest Control Services - for a free commercial pest spray of FWRM office in February 2000.

Paperchase - free loan of overhead projector for our WEER workshop in Labasa in February 2000

Bank of Hawaii - for donating two used computers in January 2000

NCR - for upgrading and installing programmes on the above computers in January 2000

Office Works - for donating three rims of special paper for the Human Rights Awards in December 1999

Suva Bookshop - for donating Christmas Decorations for the FWRM office in December 1999

Mags Printing Press - for printing the Human Rights Awards Ticket in November 1999

Victoria Wines and Spirits - for donating wine towards our fundrasing movie night.

Rewa Dairy - for donating cheese towards the fundraising movie night

Pacific Printery - for printing the tickets for the fundraising movie nights tickets

Above: Suman Chandra our new Assistant Adminstration Officer and the new chair and computer that were donated to the FWRM office.

Staff Movements

- Raijeli Nicole attended an Asia Pacific lobbying workshop in Kathmandu, Nepal from the 29–30 January for lobbying techniques for PrepComII meeting.
- Staff and FWRM members attended an In-house training from 29 to 31 of January 2000 at the Raintree Lodge in Colo-I-Suva.
- Gina Houng Lee attended an Asia Monitor Resource Centre regional council meeting from the 15 – 16 February 2000 and an OXFAM meeting in Auckland, New Zealand on her way back.
- Zarina Begum held two workshops on Family Law Legal Literacy in Labasa from 14 - 17 February with the Labasa Women's Club and 21 – 25 February 2000 with the Labasa Soroptomists.
- Raijeli Nicole held a WEER workshop with the Labasa Women from 14 – 17 February 2000.
- The PrepComII meeting was attended by Raijeli Nicole from 3 – 17 March 2000 in New York, USA.
- A Family Law Bill discussion was held by Ministry of Women and attended by Zarina Begum on Tuesday 14th March 2000.
- Katalaini Duaibe, Reema Naresh, Ema Tavola, Siteri Kalouniviti attended a Regional Conference on Women Parliamentarians and Fiji Parliamentarians at the Mocambo, Nadi from 22 – 25 March 2000.
- Raijeli further worked for a week on the FWRM funding proposal at the OXFAM office in Auckland, New Zealand from 20-24 March 2000.
- Katalaini Duaibe attended a Regional Meeting on World March for Women 2000 in Delhi, India from 30 March – 1 April 2000.

Visitors to the Office

- Alan Atwell from Australia
- Kathryn Hufton of Australia
- Natalie Batey of Australia
- Esiteri Nawadra – Rewa Street
- Vinay Chand – Samabula
- Fiji Women's Crisis Centre Participants of a Regional Training
- Pete Hilton – Taveuni, Fiji.

If you have any comments or suggestions on this publication, please let us know. If you have articles which you feel may be worth including in *Balance*, send them to us addressed to:

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Balance

Newsletter of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement

"Balancing the Scales" January - March 2000

What's in this issue...

In Brief 2
Editorial 2
The launch of 'Herstory' 3
Preparations for UN CSW meeting 4
Interview with Raijeli Nicole 5
PrepComII and the Youth Forum 6
International Women's Day globaly and around the region 7
World March for Women 8
Tuvalu School Girls tragedy 8
Legal Literacy Outreach 9
FWRM In-house training 10
More on the IR Bill 11
Click on to fijiwomen.com 12
A Review of Herstory 13
Acknowledgements 14
Staff Movements 16
Visitors to the Officer 16

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IWD 2000 begins in Fiji.

FWRM launched "HERSTORY" at an International Women's Day Breakfast.

In celebrating International Women's Day, a series of activities took place in Fiji. Suva in particular was a hive of activities from Friday 3 March 2000 through to Wednesday March 8 2000. This year was significant in that it was the first International Women's Day for the new millennium.

To begin with, celebrations started off with the World Day of Prayer for Women on March 3. Another activity that eventuated on the same day was the Development Alternatives with Women in a New Era (DAWN) "Gender and Trade" seminar with Jamaican Economist "Mariama Williams". She is an international expert in gender and trade issues. The seminar is part of the debate on multilateral trade systems and advocacy for fair and just global economic relations, responsible governance, poverty eradication, gender justice and sustainable and equitable development.

On Monday 6th March, the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre launched their website www.fijiwomen.com. The website was launched by Dr. Vijay Naidu of the Development Studies Centre of the University of the South Pacific. The website hosts the "most current, comprehensive information on the activities, issues and topical discussions of the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre and the members of the Pacific Regional Network Against Violence Against Women. Also available on this site are their TV Advertisements, online library catalogue, their archived newsletters and an online shop.

Wednesday 8th March was the busiest with activities beginning from as early as 7am. FWRM hosted a breakfast at which we launched our publication *"HERSTORY: A Profile of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement"*. The publication has been in production for more than two years, and seeing it to print and to finally being launched was awesome. Present at the breakfast was the Australian High Commissioner Her Excellency Ms. Susan Boyd, who was chief guest. Also present was the Minister for Women, Culture and

(Continued on page 14)