MAINSTREAM MOVE OVER!

Human rights. Films. Free.
Who knew these three words would be uttered in the same sentence as Village Six Suva? But they were for a whole week as the NGO Coalition on Human Rights hosted the first ever human rights film festival in the country.
The festival featured local and international productions that documented struggles from Fiji to Pakistan to West Papua.
A press release from Alisi Tuqa from the NGO Coalition Secretariat said the festival aimed: at generating discussion and awareness about human rights issues, encouraging the use of locally produced films or documentaries on related issues (including the environment, gender, youth, poverty and race relations) and for the films to encourage and support local activists by exposing them to a common bond.
This was part of the 16 Days of Activism, which the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre hosts annually (see details on their campaign on page 3).
The festival ran for three days in Suva and at Lautoka's Village Four.
Productions included Feathers of Peace, In The Name of Growth, Compassionate Exile, Train to Pakistan and Papua Merdeka.

LOVE BITES

Mosmi Bhim

Trapping my heart
under a knife
He asks me
"What have I done wrong?"

Squeezing the blood
out of my heart
He asks
"Are you okay?"

Stepping on my
fallen body
He asks
"Do you need help?"

Crushing my heart
under his spiky boots
He says
"Don't worry, you'll be all right"

Kicking my hands
lying at his feet
He says
"The world is full of love"

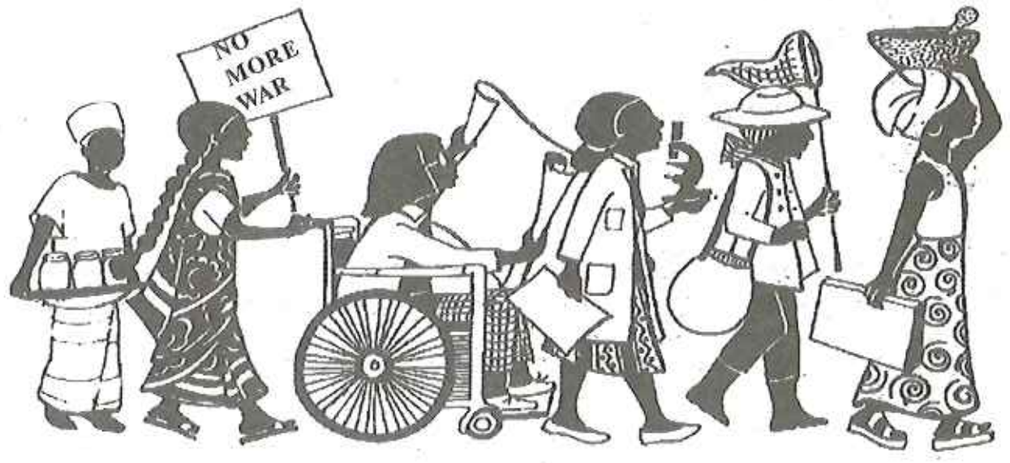
Squashing my face
in his hands
He asks
"Are you happy?"

No, this isn't love
it is pain
And I won't have any more of it
So f#%k off!

The Niu Waves Writers Collective launched its first collection titled *'Contemporary Writing From Oceania'* last month. The young writers group from all over Oceania was formed in 1995 to support and nurture young talents and provide a space for their combined creative energy to flourish. This piece by Mosmi Bhim is featured in a section titled *Feminist Waves*. The book is on sale at the USP BookCentre for a mere $20.

THE WAR AGAINST WOMEN

Most people when faced with the September 11th attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York were shocked at the sheer audacity of the act. Who thought that any terrorist would even conceive of such an act against an unsuspecting public? As the Americans started pointing fingers and then guns and bombs at a particular group of people the lines became confused between who was in the right and who in the perceived wrong. Hidden behind burkahs and a US-focussed media were millions of long suffering Afghani women fighting wars in their own homes. These are excerpts from a Time Special Report on the women of Afghanistan.



TO WESTERNERS, THE MOST VISIBLE SYMBOL of the Taliban's oppressive regime was the order that placed all women under the burka. Its long-standing place in Afghan culture is complicated. Many rural women, especially, claim to wear it willingly, at least when they speak in the presence of their husbands. There is even high fashion in burka wear. In Kabul, women allow a bit of lace trimming to show at the edge. The best burkas, from the Afghan city of Herat, have exquisite pleating that imparts a shimmering, watery feel but takes hours to iron.

FYI:

Under Taliban rule, women could not speak or laugh loudly, wear shoes that click or attend school.

But nearly any educated woman you speak to loathes the burka. So do many less educated ones-if you can question them where men cannot hear. The heavy cloth covering can induce panic, claustrophobia and headaches. It's a psychological hobbling of women of women that is akin to Chinese foot binding. It's also life threating.Try negotiating a busy Kabul street-around donkey carts,

Next page: Local peacebuilding intiatives
continued on page 14

Take the shackles off my feet so I can dance:
Peacebuilding in Fiji

If at first you don't succeed, reschedule: the permit saga continues

It was going to be the greatest party ever. There was going to be a Peace and Unity March through Nadi Town, followed by the Peace Rally at Prince Charles Park. That included the Peace Vigil initiative, school oratory presentations, entertainment and a Multicultural "Peace and Unity" Night.

But the powers that be said it was still too dangerous, that underground types might take offence to peace initiatives.

So the party isn't cancelled, merely postponed.

The organizing committee of the Women's Action for Democracy and Peace Initiative (Wad'aP) Blue Ribbon Peace and Unity Campaign have rescheduled to late January 2002. This is when authorities reckon "that the country (will have) reached a period of post-Election normalcy".

A multiethnic group of women's organizations including the Nadi Women's Collective, Nadi Women's Council, Rotuman Nadi Women's Council, Nakavu Women's Club, Soroptimist International Nadi, Saunaka Women's Club, in conjunction with the National Council of Women Fiji, had been working together since October 2000 to plan activities for what was to be a celebration of solidarity for peace in Nadi Town.

The "Blue Ribbon" event for Nadi would have not only coincided with the annual 16 Days of Action Against Violence campaign but it was also the Saturday to World Human Rights Day, December 10th. The event was an opportunity for women and their families to come together in Nadi to strengthen their unified call for a society that is free of violence and to further call for a strengthening of national efforts to work towards National Reconciliation to ensure long term Peace in our Multicultural Fiji.

Never mind. We can wait till next month.

The powers that be

A Police statement from ACP Operations Romanu Tikotikoca said the issuing authority for permits lies with the District Officer concerned. They cite Section 111 as the source of their powers to declare a security situation.

Section 111 (page 110)

This section describes the powers of the office of the Commissioner of Police. Subsection (5) says "The Minister may from time to time issue general policy directions with respect to the maintanence of public safety and public order and, if such direction has been issued, the Commissioner of Police must act in accordance with it.

source: 1997 Constitution

Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era*

What stands out in the Fiji Government's 2002 National Budget is the "missing women" - the absence of gender.

There are items showing particular amounts of money allocated especially for different ethnic groups to help close the gaps between them and other groups, but very few that are listed as specially for women that could help close the gpa between men and women.

It is as if by having a Ministry of Women, Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation, that the interests of the female half of the population are taken care of.

When Finance and National Planning Minister, Jone Kubuabola gave his Budget Speech November 9, there was only one mention of women in the whole 35 pages when he acknoweldged the significant role non-government organisations and "our women" play in poverty eradication and rural development:

"Governmentwould like to work more closely with women's groups and NGOs to help the poor and rural communities". There was no mention of what is to be allocated to women in the Budget or of efforts to address the imbalances between men and women.

*** This is an excerpt of a longer analysis. Space constraints mean we will feature more of it in future Balance issues.**

Say what?! How has the National Budget met your needs?

"I think the general things have increased like groceries and materialistic things like clothing...things you need in everyday life."

Christina Lovell, 17

"The basic needs aren't catered for. In terms of the individuals, women are hardly catered for."

Neetu Naikei, 20

"It helped my husband's wages to increase. There was more allocation toward domestic funds."

Losalini Senitautau, 42

stakeholders speak up

Paula Uluinaceva*

"I don't believe Govt. has a clear policy that makes it necessary to reflect gender considerations in budget preparation...there is a real dearth of statistical information for policymaking in Fiji...However, even without adequate information there is still a lot of room for improvement and we would surely be depending on the strength of representations from FWRM and Ministry of Women (on areas and information) that can surely help us highlight/ address the plight of women."

FWRM

Kudos to Government for increasing its allocation to the Education sector. Major money is going into infrastructure upgrades and teachers emoluments, but nothing is headed for a revamp of the school curriculum as recommended by the Education Commission.

Increased allocations to the Health sector are also aimed at the improvement of infrastructure and equipment. $1.8 million is set aside for essential drugs. The question is: what kind of drugs are aimed at women as more gender specific research is conducted.

Women's access to land and the financial resources needed to develop it is impeded by legal and cultural restrictions on women's land ownership and rights to conclude contracts. This leaves us far less able to benefit from any reform process and related expenditure. This is why it is important that any land reform programme initiated by the Government must integrate gender concerns into its monitoring and evaluation system and provide gender training for its staff.

Affirmative Action is a legitimate concept that attempts to address systematic and historic discrimination. The ethos behind it a positive one that the FWRM supports in principle. However, we urge the Government to put strict guidelines in place before is it implemented. These include:

- **applying rules of good governance whereby the State is required to consult all major stakeholders in over the Bill.**
- **having the authorisation of law. These laws must be specific. For example, too much power should not be given to civil servants without sufficient guidelines stating how and when they excise their powers because it could set a dangerous precedent.**
- **The Affirmative Action Programme has to be issue specific rather than having very broad general powers granted in enabling legislations. For example – there should separate acts for housing, scholarships; loans, etc. This would make certain that there is no room for abuse.**
- **There needs to be specific criteria on which the Affirmative Action programme is attempting to benefit and why? For example, should one qualify for the Programme simply because one is Indigenous Fijian or should one show that he or she is not only Indigenous Fijian but he or she is from a group of disadvantaged group of Indigenous Fijians.**

**This column represents the personal views of Mr Paula Uluinaceva. In no way does it represent the views of the Ministry of Finance and National Planning.*

The anti-war movement speaks

Many people in Fiji still do not understand why we have an anti-war movement, which is, in particular, calling for a halt to the US-led bombing in Afghanistan. After all, they say, the US are our allies and helped save the Pacific from the invading Japanese, and World War 2 was fought by our forefathers to defend our freedom. Our response as a Movement is to say that while we respect those that fought for our freedoms in the world wars, we cannot allow ourselves to continue to accept war as the best way to defend our freedoms. We have also stressed that the anti-war movement is not anti-american. Nor is it in support of Bin Laden and the Taliban. We strongly oppose such bigots, oppressors and terrorists. The movement is against the effects of war, the costs of war, the military spending that could be used for poverty, the environment and education.

Stanley Simpson, Fiji Anti-war Movement

Meanwhile in another part of the forest...

Speculation that the US will go ahead with plans to hold suspected terrorists and prisoners of war on remote Pacific islands intensified yesterday when US forces began delivering heavy equipment to the Northern Marianas.

Naval officers on nearby Guam said the delivery to the island of Tinian would last 10 days.

"That's very unusual," Mark Pangelinan of the Northern Marianas' emergency management office, told the Saipan Tribune. "We need to inform the public what's going on."

A US military spokeswoman on Guam said that the C-130 aircraft spotted unloading equipment on Tinian was practising for the air force's "annual Christmas drop" of gifts to islands in the region.

But the local press reported that officials had said earlier that they did not need to unload heavy equipment in preparation for the goodwill exercise.

Moreover, the US army has asked for additional security measures at Tinian's international airport.

Senior officials on the Northern Marianas, a commonwealth of 14 islands administered by the US and dependent on aid from Washington, believe the US forces may hold suspected terrorists and former Taliban fighters on land they lease there.

There has been widespread unease in the Pacific since the US authorities confirmed that its territories in the region would be considered as sites for holding prisoners of war and conducting military trials.

Several politicians on the Northern Marianas and Guam oppose the use of their islands as military prisons because they believe it will damage the economy and the predominantly Japanese tourist trade.

Hotels on the Northern Marianas islands were at their emptiest after the September 11 terrorist attacks.

But Mr Pangelinan said he would support a US plan to use Tinian to hold or try captured al-Qaida members.

"Our country is in need of our assistance and we all should cooperate and put in our share as a United States commonwealth," he said.

Senators on Guam have introduced a resolution asking George Bush and Donald Rumsfield, the US defence secretary, to remove Guam from their list of potential sites for war tribunals.

President Bush's press secretary, Ari Fleischer, told a White House briefing last week that no preparations ere being made on Guam to hold military trials there.

US forces have conducted several big exercises on the Northern Marianas in recent years, and plan to send 5,000 marines to Tinian next March.

Northern Mariana port officials said the US had always informed them of the nature of its military activities on the islands.

source: http://www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,3604,615362,00.htm

Local legal eagles

Democracy and human rights are relatively new concepts to many people in Fiji.

This has become apparent from the Legal Literacy workshops conducted by the FWRM and RRRT (Regional Rights Resouce Team) according to facilitator, Asenaca Colawai.

"Most people are not aware of how law is made", Asenaca said. "They're always questioning why it's vastly different from how the politicians conduct themselves, the so-called pro-indigenous."

Asenaca says the satisfaction as a trainer/ facilitator comes from empowering people to develop themselves for their betterment "for their family, their districts, their province, their nation."

She does this by training people in the basics of law. This includes telling them how laws are made.

All workshops, so far held in Tavua, Ba, Ra, Lautoka, have a rights-based approach to poverty alleviation. They are resourced and facilitated by RRRT.

Legal think tank: *Participants at the Legal Literacy workshop in Tavua in November thrash out ideas on paper.*

"If need be, RRRT will source outside resources depending on the topics that we cover, for instance, the Department of Social Welfare, Fiji Human Rights Commission or the Fiji Law Reform Commission."

Classes are based on the existing family laws but Asenaca says she also highlights the recommendations in the upcoming Family Law Bill facilitated by FWRM "so they are aware of changes".

The workshops have a dual purpose. Some participants are identified to attend **National Community Paralegal Training** workshops. Unlike the Legal Literacy work, this is a national workshop. Participants with an interest in advocating human rights and democracy come from community organisations and NGOs from around the country.

FWRM hopes to build the capacity of organisations, particularly in relation to human rights and democracy. Participants also recieve a RRRT Certificate of Participation. The Movement also keeps track of participants in the hope that they run their own basic community workshops.

NO REST FOR THE WICKED!

FWRM has its schedule for the next couple of months pretty much sorted out. The staff will be busy writing a Shadow Report on the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. The Government has filed its report with the United Nations in New York and now it's the NGOs' turn. Due to time constraints the FWRM will contract out particular articles.

HOUSEKEEPING

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Just the facts, please

Education

$217 million will be spent on this sector in 2002. This is an increase of $39 million. The major components include:

- $1.4 million for compulsory education for forms 3 and 4.
- $1 million for upgrading and maintenance of schools and institutional quarters.
- $2 million for upgrading facilities for primary and secondary rural boarding schools
- $300,000 for primary school library scheme
- $550,000 for construction of classrooms and quarters for major Fijian boarding schools
- $200,000 for upgrading of Navuso Agricultural School
- $1 million for the establishment of a Centre of Excellence
- $13 million to subsidise Grant-in-aid teachers and emoluments
- $607,000 for payment of leases for Government schools on native lands that will be expiring next year

$1.2 million in rural allowances and incentives for teachers posted to rural areas.

Health

A total of $106.6 million has been allocated for health- an increase of $15 million. The main provisions are as follows:

- $1.5 million for the construction of a new wing in Labasa hospital with the completion of the Vunisea, Levuka and Nadi hospitals this year.
- $500,000 towards the the Taveuni Health Project
- $1 million for the upgrading of urban hospitals and institutional quarters.
- $1 million for the maintenance of the health centres and nursing stations in all divisions
- $1.8 million for the upgrading of health facilities in sub-divisional hospitals and health centres
- $ 1 million for equipment in sub-divisional health centres and nursing stations
- $8 million for the purchases of essential drugs
- Day charges at hospital general wards will now be borne by government.

The Blue Print

The economic support to indigenous Fijians and Rotumans is part of the government's aim to promote a more equitable development. Funding will be directed towards a programme of carefully targeted affirmative actions to assist indigenous Fijians and Rotumans in business, education and in general economic activity.

$28 million has been allocated for Affirmative Action Programmes, including the following:

·$200,000 - Review of the Fijian Affairs Act and Implementation of the Review Report
·$200,000 - Review of NLTB and Native Land Fisheries Commission
·$1.5 million - Development Assistance Scheme for Fijians and Rotumans
·$5.5 million - Fijian Education Fund Scholarships
·$10 million - Establishment of the Fijian Trust Fund
·$145,000 - Transfer of State land and Schedules A & B to NLTB
·$500,000 - To assist Fijians in buying back ancestral land through interest free loans
·$100,000 - Establishment of the Land Claims Tribunal
·$5 million - Continuation of the Fiji Development Bank Interest Subsidy Scheme for indigenous Fijians and Rotumans

Sugar

The Government has estimated that production for the 2001 season is expected to be 318,000, with a forecast decline to 301, 464 tonnes in 2002, a decline of 5.2%.

The nagging land issue that is a national problem underpins this. However Government stresses that it is commited to an early resolution to this problem and is mindful that the successful resolution of this issue depends on cooperation between all stakeholders.

The Government has also allocated $10 million in 2002 to provide land, infrastructure development and farming assistance to farmers and existing tenants.

Our main feature this issue looks at four sections of the National Budget 2002 - education, health, sugar and the Blueprint - from a feminist perspective. It is now recognised in many countries that a gender balanced Budget is necessary for the citizens of a country to live a full and equitable life. We asked seven stakeholders what they thought of this Budget and how we can move towards a more balanced document.

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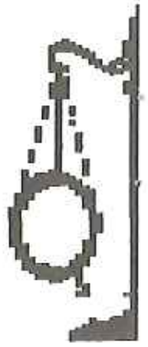

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The Budget is a policy statement. It reflects the social and economic priorities of a government. Literally this shows how a government puts it money where its mouth is in relation to specific policies and programmes.

Gender responsive budget analysis is a way to hold governments accountable for its commitment to gender equality and women's rights. It links these commitments to distribution, use and generation of public resources.

The theme of the Kubuabola Budget for 2002 is " Building Confidence for Sustained Growth". The Government acknowledges that to build confidence, consistent and credible policies must be implemented.

The Government has adopted a three-pronged approach in this budget. This includes taking a more "active and interventionist role"; adopting a re-distributive spending policy of infrastructure development; increasing poverty alleviation and rural development expenditure; and recognizing that a more efficient and competitive environment must be developed.

Who are the stakeholders in a Budget?

Civil society

Women's organisations, trade unions organisations, independent researchers and economists, men's organisations, media, social justice groups, women's studies organisations and representatives of political parties.

Government

Ministers and civil servants at Ministries of Finance, Women's Affairs, other planning and spending ministries, the Reserve Bank and central statistics offices.

Lawmakers

Parliamentarians and elected officials at national, regional and local levels.

International

Donors, international finance institutions, bilateral and multilateral development agencies.

Budget Initiatives overseas

The Philippines

In 1994, the Philippines Government adopted a policy that requires every government agency to allocate at least 5 percent of its budget for development and gender. In 1999, they introduced a performance based budgeting policy that reduced agencies allocations if they weren't compliant.

Sweden

Every ministry, including the Finance Ministry, is expected to set gender objectives and targets within their programmes. They add an annex to the Budget on the distribution of income, which includes differences between women and men.

HOUSEKEEPING

"I've got grey hair now"

Said FWRM volunteer, Sandra Fong, about the **FWRM Strategic Planning week-end** at the Shangri-La Fijian Resort from 15-16 December - and this is before they'd left Suva. Countless hours, energy and strands of black hair, went into organising this red-letter weekend. This is the third strategising event held since 1998. The last one in 2000 involved structural changes in administration and programmes.

Since then a new Constitution with a concrete vision of FWRM's mission, purpose and objectives was drafted and passed. The Strategic Plan that resulted clearly outlines FWRM's mandate of lobbying for changes to discriminatory laws to women and our legal literacy programme. This focusses on human rights and democracy, family law and economic empowerment.

An exciting project to arise out of this Strategic Plan exercise is the Young Women's Leadership programme. An extension of the Girls Can Do Anything project, the FWRM envisions this project developing and educating activists to become active members of the NGO community. We hope to fully develop this as a part of the Movement.

Collective member & organisational development consultant, Emele Duiduituraga, consultants Sue Elliott and Diane Goodwillie facilitated the strategising exercise.

Volunteers make the world go round

Like any other NGO, FWRM relies heavily on volunteers, especially in the last couple of post-coup months when our Management Board - Laisa Bale, Frazine Dutt (Treasurer), Diane Goodwillie, Gina Houng Lee, Imrana Jalal (Chair), Patricia Sachs-Cornish, Shelly Emalin Rao and Shayne Sorby - directed the Movement.

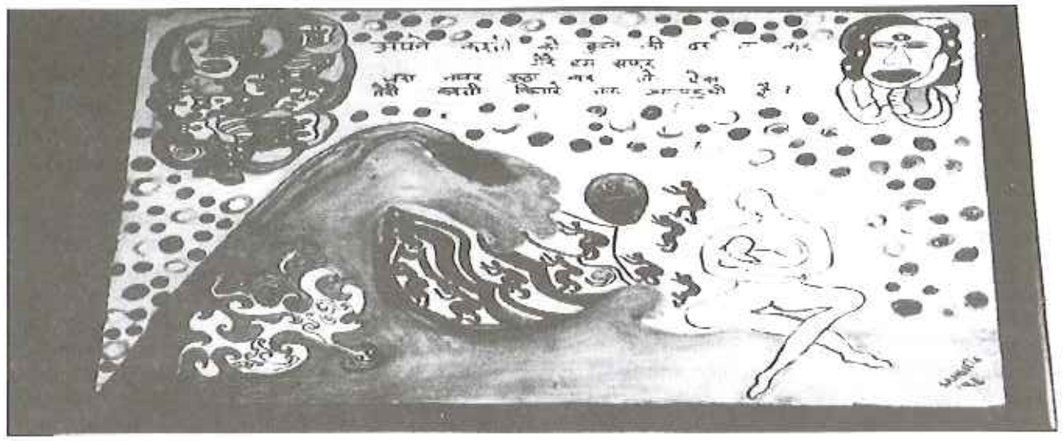
In July FWRM ran a Women Ask project as part of our Election Watch campaign focussing on asking political parties about their commitments to improving the status of women. This was solely run by volunteers, Jane Fisher, Felicity Szenant, Sandy Fong and Elenoar Kleiber. The results were circulated to the media and we will continue to use it as a monitoring tool.

With school holidays upon us, we have two secondary school students, Lawedua Mara and Olivia Pene assisting us with updating our Resource Centre and helping with the production of *Balance*.

Pictured above: FWRM volunteers, Meme Tikoduadua (left) and Glynis Yaranamua (right) on a field trip with New Zealand journalists from a New Zealand Family Planning Association awareness visit in February this year.

con't from pg 9

carcening buses and the Taliban roaring by in Datsun pickups-when your hearing is muffled and your vision is reduced to a narrow mesh grid.



UNTITLED: ***A painting by local artist Sangeeta Singh. Her painting Carve A Virgin is part of a Women of the World exhibition currently touring internationally. FWRM received the invitation and passed it into the appropriate hands. The rest is herstory.***

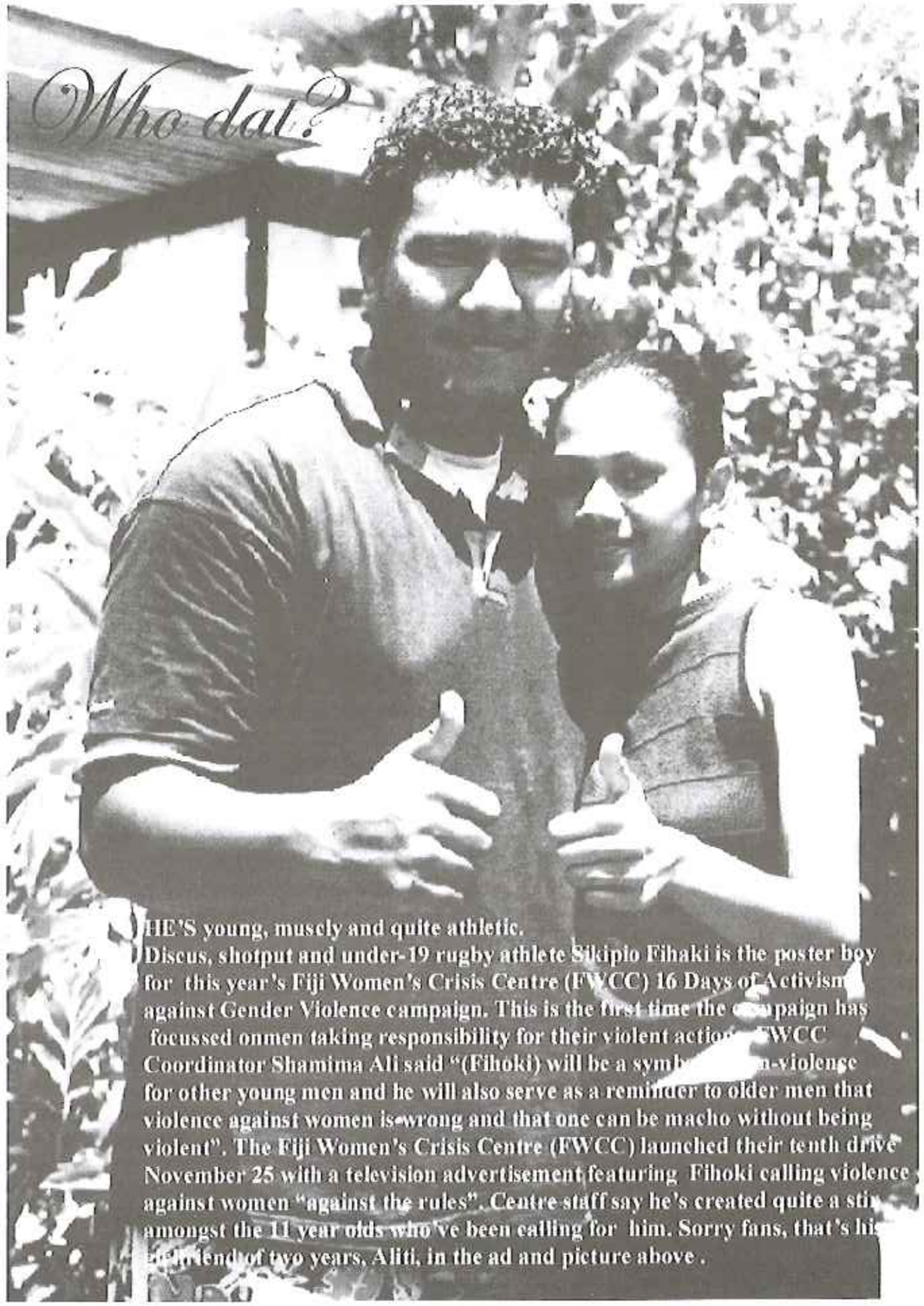
On March 8, International Women's Day, six awardees received the first ever **Millennium Peace Prize for Women** from the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the London-based activist group International Alert.

"Why is it that we bring warlords to the negotiating table and not women," asks *Noeleen Heyzer,* UNIFEM executive director. "Our job is to identify the unsung heroines who have wrestled their way to the front of the line, where they now stand a better chance of sharing equally in economic and political power."

Veneranda Nzambazamariya, who died of cancer last year, was recognized for the reconciliation she bought about as president of Pro-femmes Twese Hamwe, a collective of 32 women's organisations in Rwanda. The group was assembled shortly after the April 1994 massacre of Tutsis and sympathetic Hutus that resulted in one million deaths and the creation of more than two million refugees. ***Flora Brovina***, president of the league of the Albanian Women in Kosovo (see Ms. February/March 2000), was honored for establishing a center that cared for women and children fleeing Kosovo during the Serbian occupation. In April 1999 she was arrested by the Serbian military for gathering food, clothes, and medical supplies for Kosovo Liberation Army. (She was released in November 2000) Pakistani human rights activists ***Asma Jahangir*** and ***Hina Jilani*** (see Ms. February/March 2000) were honored for helping to bring a feminist solution to the bitter conflict between India and Pakistan over Kashmir.

Two groups also won awards. Ruta Pacifica de las Mujeres, from Colombia, was acknowledged for teaching coexistence strategies to rural and professional women. The group also organizes women's marches, calling for peaceful resolutions for ongoing conflicts. And ***Leitana Nehan*** Women's Development Agency won an award for providing humanitarian relief to women and children victimized by the nine-year war between Bougainville rebels and the Papua New Guinea military. ***Leitana Nehan*** also provides training in conflict resolution, promotes AIDS?HIV awareness, and teaches tactics to end violence against women. "We must send a powerful message that women need peace," says ***Anwarul Karim Chowdhury***, UN permanent representative of Bangladesh. "But more important, peace needs the involvement of women."

source: Ms magazine



HE'S young, musely and quite athletic. Discus, shotput and under-19 rugby athlete Sikipio Fihaki is the poster boy for this year's Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC) 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence campaign. This is the first time the campaign has focussed onmen taking responsibility for their violent actions. FWCC Coordinator Shamima Ali said "(Fihoki) will be a symbol against violence for other young men and he will also serve as a reminder to older men that violence against women is wrong and that one can be macho without being violent". The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC) launched their tenth drive November 25 with a television advertisement featuring Fihoki calling violence against women "against the rules". Centre staff say he's created quite a stir amongst the 11 year olds who've been calling for him. Sorry fans, that's his girlfriend of two years, Aliti, in the ad and picture above .

Jumping in at the deep end: budgets, restructuring and Shadow Reports.

New Coordinator, Virisila Buadromo

Welcome to the final issue of Balance for 2001. The past six months has been a period of transition, consolidation and restructuring for the Fiji Women's Rights Movement.

The most noticeable transition has been the change of leadership. Gina Houng Lee resigned in August and I joined the Movement in November. As our Management Board Chairperson, Imrana Jalal, eloquently points out in her tribute (front page), Gina's leadership was crucial at a time when the country, our society and FWRM was under enormous pressure. For this we are extremely grateful. Gina continues to play an active role on our Management Board.

On behalf of the Movement, I would also like to thank four of our staff members who have left us. They are the Gender Economic Employment Opportunity Rights Off icer (GEER) Alisi Tuqa; Senior Finance and Administration Officer, Priscilla Singh; Communication Officer, Christine Gounder and Communication Advisor, Gladys Terichow. Their contribution is much appreciated by the Movement.

A BIG VINAKA VAKALEVU also goes to our Capacity Building Project Advisor, Raijeli Drodrolagi Nicole. Raijeli worked at the WEER (now GEER) desk for three and half years before Alisi came on board. She held the fort at 88 MacGregor Road before I joined and she continues to prepare me to fill the large shoes left behind by Gina.

In this issue we look at the National Budget 2001 through women's eyes. We hope that the opinions will create discourse on strategies we can use to lobby Governments to adopt our vision of a Gender Responsive Budget.

We also discuss the impact of war on our Afghani sisters. Read about their lives under Taliban rule and the changes, if any, brought about by the North Alliance uprising. It's a bittersweet story that I am still trying to come to grips with.

We feature the work of the Movement over the last six months and preview other work we will be involved in, including writing the CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women) Shadow Report.

I hope you enjoy the spread we have laid out for you. On that note - Happy Holidays and an enlightened 2002!

Virisila Buadromo, Coordinator

Capacity Building with Oxfam New Zealand

Transparency, accountability and efficiency -that's what the Fiji Women's Rights Movement wants to achieve so we can better serve our members. That is also the best way to describe Oxfam New Zealand's Capacity Building Project.

Coordinator, Virisila Buadromo says the three-year undertaking is a move toward fulfilling the Organisation's vision of being a sustainable, dynamic and effective member of civil society. The project is the brainchild of long-time donor and friend of the movement, Oxfam New Zealand and visionary members of the Movement, who believed that the Organisation needed to have systems in place to ensure that our goals were being met.

Oxfam New Zealand Programme Director, Rebecca Wrigley visited the Movement in November and reviewed the Capacity Building Project and conducted a one day training session on monitoring and evaluation. She also helped us strengthen our strategic plan.

As part of this process, FWRM has taken on a more corporate management structure that includes a Management Board and Collective Working Groups that follow practices of transparency and good governance. This obligated FWRM to make Constitutional changes. 40 members, including staff and Board members passed these amendments and Board members at a Special General Meeting held at the University of the South Pacific's Marine Studies Common Room on September 29th.

The restructuring process includes a staff reshuffle. The positions affected are the Gender Economic Employment Rights (GEER) Officer, Senior Financial and Administration Officer, the Communication Officer and the Communication Advisor. Alisi Tuqa, Priscilla Singh, Christine Gounder and Gladys Terichow have all moved to other organisations and the Movement wishes them all the best. The Collective is confident that this new direction will ensure that the Organisation continues to effectively carry out its role in advocacy, lobbying for policy and legislative changes in the areas of discrimination faced by women.

Highlights:

You, FWRM, DAWN and the Ministry of Finance deconstruct the Budget 2002. Pg 4-7

War against Women: + local peacebuilding initiatives Pg 9

Housekeeping Pg 12-13

cont'd from pg 1

There is little doubt that FWRM is a force to be reckoned with and the State can no longer afford to ignore us, or if it does, it does so at its peril. Although the organisation as a whole have together made this significant rise in our profile and our ability to shape and influence Fiji's destiny possible, Gina must be given credit for steering its course.

On another note the crisis of May 2000 has given me an opportunity to observe Gina's political maturation. FWRM was thrown in at the deep end for the second time in our history when the crisis happened. FWRM worked with the NGO Coalition on Human Rights and Democracy and with the Fiji Blue Democracy Campaign to return Fiji to Constitutional Democracy while at the same time trying to hold our membership, staff and organisation together. The majority of our work on gender stopped (for want of a better word) to allow us to focus our intellectual and other resources on the broader democracy issue. Some members and staff couldn'[t understand that democracy is a pre-condition for the attainment of women's rights and we had little choice but to engage in the political arena to aggressively push for the return to Constitutional rule. Partly because of this lack of understanding of the inextricable links between gender and democracy we lost one staff person.

The way we have weathered this crisis stands in stark contrast to the crisis of 1987. In 1987, the organisation polarised along racial lines. Many of our indigenous Fijian women members left. They were made to feel by political extremists that by working with an organisation committed to democracy they were betraying their indigenous brothers and sisters. This polarisation has not really happened this time. It is partly because of Gina's leadership and partly because we have all matured politically that the organisation has managed to hold its membership together as a united body.

At this juncture may I digress and urge us all to focus on our common goals for women so that our political differences do not split us apart. This does not mean that we have not had our trials and tribulation or will not continue to have them. At various times we have had members and staff questioning our commitment to democracy and some being made to feel that if they were pro-democracy they were therefore anti-indigenous Fijian or pro-Indian Fijian or the myriad of boxes that we slot people into. We must all learn to celebrate our diversity and to rejoice that we have more goals in common that unite us than that which divides us. At FWRM we have the freedom granted by our own Constitution and by the national 1997 Constitution to have a variety of different political leanings as long as they do not hinder our progress towards the common goals of democracy, equality and human rights.

As an organisation we have suffered internally as a result of these external pressures and there is much work to be done to make us function more efficiently internally.

We must give a large amount of credit to Gina for holding the organisation together despite all these enormous pressures, and for providing us with leadership during a time when leadership was crucial.

None of this has been easy. It has come at great personal and other costs to Gina, the Staff and FWRM. The membership must fully acknowledge that. On this note I would like to thank Steven Pickering, Gina's partner, for supporting her during those long dark months and by extension supporting FWRM in its journey. I know that Gina suffered enormous pangs of guilt over the last 2 years or so, feeling always that she was not giving her family the best of herself. In that regard I will have this to say to Gina's children, Scott and Jessica, when they are old enough to understand - "Your mother did not abandon you when you were little children. She was, with others at FWRM and civil society, making this country a better place so that you would be free from fear and prejudice and so that one day you could walk this land as a free and equal citizen of Fiji. That is her legacy to you". And I know I am right and I say this also to you, intrepid members and Staff of FWRM. Know that what you are doing is to make this land a better place for our children.

Thank you Gina. We have had the best of you for over 4 years, for this we are grateful. We wish you all the best in any future employment and are glad that you are not abandoning our beloved Fiji Islands. We also are very grateful that you will continue to serve FWRM and the women of Fiji through your membership on FWRM's Management Board.

Production: Luisa K Tora
Editorial Comment: Virisila TC
Buadromo
Contributors: Virisila TC Buadromo,
Luisa K Tora

Fiji Women's Rights Movement
GPO 14194, Suva
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Vinaka Gina!

The end of an era at FWRM

P. Imrana Jalal, Board Chair, FWRM

I first met Gina Houng Lee in 1993 when she joined the Fiji Women's Rights Movement, (FWRM), as a member of the Collective as it then was. She joined the staff as Coordinator when Praveen Sharma left in 1997.

I have watched Gina grow from a young woman armed with a university degree and an attitude (the right one of course!) to a sharp and savvy, politically astute, analyst and lobbyist. As Board Chair I have thoroughly enjoyed my mentoring relationship with Gina and we have shared much laughter and some tears over the years. She told me many years after I met her that she was part of a class at St Joseph's Secondary School that I had spoken to in third form and that she had resolved that day to one day have something to do with improving the rights of women. It has been a privilege for me to be part of Gina's feminist and political maturation and I take some pride in knowing that I have in some small way contributed to the amazing woman that Gina has become.

When Gina joined FWRM as its Co-ordinator, she brought to the organisation a youthful energy and a zest for improving the way FWRM functioned internally and externally.

One of the gifts that Gina has given the organisation is a realisation and recognition, which has now grown into an FWRM policy that our future lies in our ability o draw in young women as members. This is very important in any organisation that is trying to be sustainable. We ought not to always rely only on our founding members and members who have been in the organisation a long time. That is not to say that the original vision is not relevant but that young women are needed to sustain that vision. Gina has recruited a lot of young women to FWRM as members and workers. That is a significant gift to FWRM.

Gina has been the Chief Executive Officer of FWRM at a time of transition when we have gone from being a small but feisty player in the gender scene and women's rights arena in Fiji into a significant NGO in the broader spectrum of human rights issues. We have grown from being an NGO dedicated mainly to women's issues to an organisation which is regarded as a legitimate social and political commentator and actor on a variety of legal, political, social, cultural and economic issues.

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