ELF UPDATE

Emerging Leaders' Forum: 2007 and beyond

It has been a year of hard work, fun, laughter and celebration - which culminated in the graduation of 19 new ELFs, who join the expanding ELF graduate network. We look forward to seeing their vision of Pacific feminism take shape.

*On Friday, 2nd November 2007, 19 young women graduated from the Emerging Leaders' Forum 2007. **Sandy Fong**, a pioneering ELF graduate, spoke at the ceremony, which was attended by civil society representatives, FWRM staff, members and Board, and proud family and friends. This was the third ELF graduation, and the freshly trained participants joined the ranks of over 50 young women in the ELF graduate network.*

When I was asked by Anna to give the keynote address, I was petrified at the thought of standing in front of some of Fiji's strongest and most influential women – what could I possibly have to say?

But she said something that stayed in my mind the whole week, she said "step up!". And I realized that yes, it is time to step up. So many times as young women we complain about not being given any space, and then when given opportunities like this, we are quick to shy away and say we have little or nothing to say or we're too young or not experienced enough to contribute anything.

Three years ago a group of us stood in JJ's graduating as the pioneer ELFs. Tonight, there is representation of the pioneer elfs, the second lot of ELFs and now another graduating group of ELFs. Pretty soon, Fiji and the Pacific will be taken over by ELFs!

Graduating from the ELF program is only the beginning of the many things to come. ELF is the basis for the many things that you will experience in the future – the decisions you will make, the new interests you will take up....people will expect more from you as an ELF.

My time in ELF will always be cherished. Never before had I been part of a group of young women who were so opinionated, loud, enthusiastic to learn and passionate about advocating for the rights of women. In ELF we inspire each other, we challenge each other, we learn from each other.

There are many good memories as we journey together - learning from women before us whose hard work and struggles have helped improve the status of women today, so we could enjoy the opportunities we have.

We learnt to push boundaries together, to share the frustrations as we push for changes in our schools, workplaces, homes and churches; or revive groups such as the women students' association at the University of the South Pacific.

But ELF is not only about learning - it is also about building relationships; building life long friendships.

I never quite realized how much I had learnt from ELF until I started to apply some of the knowledge gained - in my work with the young women in my church in the past years, and even today as I work on governance issues in Fijian villages.

ELF exposes you to a lot of issues from media, to environment, culture, business, health and other social issues. Not many young women will be able to switch conversations from one topic to another because they have not been exposed to it.

That is why I say that ELF lays the foundation and it is up to you to build on that knowledge as you discover and choose your main area of interest.

The ELF pioneers chose a motto "setting the pace for young women" - and it is a fast pace that we have set. Sometimes we can get impatient with other young women who do not share the same passion for women's issues. It is easy to hang out with ELFs because you are with a group of young women who think on the same wavelength, but what is most important is what you do with what you have learnt.

If you just keep it within the group, then it is of no use. Share the knowledge, share the experiences with other young women to inspire them and challenge them to not always accept what is dictated to them but to stand up for things they believe in, to speak out against injustice, to ask questions.

In ELF we all have different backgrounds, beliefs, interests, but one thing that unites us is that we are all young women who are passionate about women's rights.

Women's rights are cross-cutting and it does not matter what field of work you are in. You do not need to work in FWRM to be an advocate for women's issues.

In whatever area of work you are in, you will be able to provide a gender perspective to issues - and I am sure raise hell if there is a violation of your rights as a woman or any other woman for that matter.

ELF may stand for emerging leaders forum but for me as an ELF graduate it also stands for emerging leading feminists!

As leaders you need to make informed decisions so never give up learning, never stop asking questions, and never stop challenging. ■

ELF 2007: *(clockwise from above)ELFs don't seem to mind getting soaked during the environment session at colo-i-suva; Anna leads the charge at early morning soccer during the final retreat at Pacific Harbour; Masha is symbolically silent on International Human Rights Day; ELFs get an insight into tourism on Denarau Island during the third retreat; Maraia looks serious during breaktime at the fourth retreat (below); Miri keeps us entertained on retreat (centre).*

Empty promises for Pacific

November proved to be a sad time for the negotiation of fair trade arrangements for Pacific Island countries. It was also a time to be angry.

Under intense and grossly unfair pressure, Papua New Guinea and Fiji split from other nations in the Pacific and initialed an interim agreement on trade-in-goods with the European Union. This development may have grave implications for Pacific economics.

The EU had threatened Pacific livelihoods by refusing to rule out raising tariffs in 2008 on key exports of tuna and sugar. These kinds of bullying tactics by the EU made a mockery of their own rhetoric that a new Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) would be a 'tool for development' in the Pacific. If it's so useful for Pacific development, why have only bullied nations signed onto an interim deal? The EU has also explicitly ignored its obligations under the Cotonou Agreement (2000) that no Pacific nation would be worse off, whether they signed a deal or not.

Virtually none of the Pacific's development priorities have been served by the initialing of the interim deal. Pacific negotiators had developed key priorities in areas like improved labour mobility access to the EU, improved rules for tuna exports and increased aid to cover the adjustment costs that arise from meeting new obligations under the deal[1]. All of these were presented to the EU in negotiations for a new EPA. The EU rejected virtually all of them.

The only glimmer of hope in the deal appears to be partial concessions from the EU on access for tuna exports[2]. But this tiny gain can hardly be in the spirit of economic 'partnership'. In return for opening Pacific markets to competition from the EU, an advanced region more than 1400 times the economic size of the Pacific, and selling away the ability to set trade policies in key areas, the EU has offered the Pacific virtually nothing in return.

One Pacific official in Brussels during the negotiations said the EU had insulted the Pacific officials and ambassadors. "In effect we have abandoned almost all forms of traditional trade policy. In return, we got nothing. They did not get any commitment on aid-for-trade and Mandelson [EU Commissioner for Trade] said he would expand the Rules of Origin [affecting tuna exports] to chilled fish only at the end of negotiations.

"I had never seen Ministers looking so dejected as they left. They knew what they had done."

The impact of tariff losses and liberalised investments are already familiar in Fiji, where health, education and infrastructure are severely underfunded. It is widely acknowledged that women bear a disproportionate brunt of the negative effects of trade liberalisation.

cartoon: www.erodoc.be

Pacific women need to be especially wary of two likely scenarios in Pacific trade negotiations.

Firstly, as part of the continuing Economic Partnership Agreement negotiations, the EU is likely to push for the inclusion of new trade rules in 2008 - on services, investment and competition, and trade-related intellectual property rights. It is vital Pacific negotiators understand that no new agreement is required (by the World Trade Organisation) in any of these areas. Negotiators should not feel pressured this time around to sign an agreement that fails to meet Pacific development priorities.

Secondly, Australia and NZ are going to try to bully the Pacific to offer any concessions granted to the EU to them as well. As Pacific countries have much larger trade with their big brother neighbours, the implications of free competition with Australia and NZ could be devastating. The Pacific could see drastic losses in government revenue, business closures (especially in manufacturing), and job losses. Pacific civil society and governments should not enter any free trade arrangements with Australia and/or NZ without seriously analysing potential consequences and instigating wide public debate[3].

In the face of one-size-fits-all impositions from rich nations, it can be difficult to think about reclaiming our own trade and development agenda in the Pacific. But if we are to avoid embarking on an irreversible experiment with Pacific economics, which could have devastating consequences, that is exactly what we need to do.

■ *continued on page 9*

Young feminists advocate for women with disabilities

The graduates of the DAWN/FWRM Young Feminist Advocacy Training continue to make waves around the region. At the training, held in Papua New Guinea in July this year, the participants committed themselves to sharing the information and skills they had learnt.

They developed personal and group plans to use their newly-developed feminist analysis. Fiji-based Sainimili Tawake and Ruby Awa chose to work together on the issue of women with disabilities – who face intersectional discrimination and, as a result, rarely seek redress for the violations against them.

A Pacific Regional Rights Resource Teams (RRRT) and Pacific Disability Forum (PDF) training for advocates with disabilities was held in Fiji from November 12th to 23rd, 2007. Sainimili and Ruby successfully lobbied to include a session on gender and sexual and reproductive health and rights, which they conducted at the training.

The training was aimed at developing disability rights advocates. Sessions included an introduction to human rights and human rights systems, which focused on international and regional treaties and policy documents that provided for the rights of people with disabilities. The training also covered skills needed to advocate for disability rights, which are human rights. The participants were disability advocates from the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

"We used interactive methods to explain gender and the unequal access to opportunities, wealth, property and decision-making that exist for men and women. Although worldwide statistics were used, it would have been great to use statistics from women in the Pacific," said Ruby.

By the end of the training, participants had developed action plans that involved training and other activities for working towards the realisation of rights for people with disabilities.

A follow on from the RRRT/PDF training was a roundtable meeting to discuss a draft report on the *Review of Challenges, Policies and Programmes on Women and Girls with Disabilities in the Pacific*. The Roundtable, organized by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Pacific Centre in partnership with the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) was attended by 30 participants from around the region.

The meeting was held in Nadi from the 26th to 27th November 2007, and included six participants from the RRRT/PDF training who contributed in critiquing the report. There were also three graduates of the DAWN/FWRM feminist training who took part: Sai, as a consultant; Ruby; and Shoma Prasad, who was a meeting organiser.

The report commissioned by the UNDP Pacific Centre examines the challenges faced by girls and women with disabilities in 22 Pacific Island Countries and Territories; the social and economic factors leading to these challenges; and the existing laws, policies and programmes to address these challenges.

"Once the final report is launched, it will be used as a working document by Pacific governments, Pacific civil society organizations and development agencies in tackling issues facing women with disabilities," Sainimili said.

■ *Ruby Awa/Sainimili Tawake*

Sainimili Tawake (front, far right) *and Ruby Awa* (back, second from right) *with Shoma Prasad* (back, far right) *and fellow participants and facilitators at the DAWN/FWRM Young Feminist Advocacy Training, held on Loloata Island, PNG, in July 2007.*

CEDAW spots discrimination

Cherelle Jackson (L) and Linda Kenni at the CEDAW implementation workshop last month.

"We have the same issues – we only experience them differently!"

This was the sound of young women, speaking to their country representatives at a recent workshop in Vanuatu, on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

The workshop, held in Port Vila from the 19th to 21st November, focused on the implementation of concluding observations delivered by the UNCEDAW Committee to Pacific states.

Presenting on behalf of the young women's caucus, Fiji Women's Rights Movement Research Officer, Susan Naidu, stressed the importance of recognising that young women are doubly discriminated – for being both young and female. And young women living with disabilities face three-fold discrimination.

"This discrimination is not always obvious. For us, CEDAW provides a framework for identifying discrimination. It is a living document which needs new interpretations inclusive of young women's realities," said Naidu.

The presentation highlighted experiences of young women from Samoa, Fiji, the Cook Islands and Vanuatu based on the thematic areas of *Violence Against Women, Sexual Reproductive Rights and Health, Women in the Workforce* and *Women's Participation in Politics.*

While the four thematic areas were part of a larger discussion, the presentation drew close attention to crucial issues such as the increasing rate of sexual abuse and commercial sexual exploitation of girls and women in Pacific Island countries, equality in political participation and decision making, and the importance of maternity protection provisions.

Naidu said the provision of maternity protection to all women workers will ensure compliance with CEDAW.

"However, women may be discriminated against as maternity protection provisions are misunderstood by some – such as the tourism and garment industry leaders, which employ a largely female workforce - as a hindrance to economic growth," Naidu said.

Another issue the caucus addressed was challenges around teenage pregnancies. As young women from around the Pacific shared their experiences, it became clear that not only do young women face discrimination from men, but they are also shunned by many of the older women in their communities.

The caucus made specific recommendations to the delegates, which were included as general recommendations. These included:

- Recognising the double discrimination faced by young women because they are both young and female. States need the active participation of young women in the implementation of CEDAW.
- Noting the importance of nurturing young people to become future leaders.
- Urging states parties to support innovative leadership programmes and existing efforts for the advancement of young women.

The Young Women's presentation was prepared by Cherelle Jackson (Samoa), Grayleen Lapi, Josephine Kalsuk (Vanuatu), Tevita Serulumi and Susan Naidu (Fiji).

■ *Susan Naidu*

(L-R) *Grayleen Lapi, Jessica Evans and Shoma Prasad*

Women at work

Economist Dr Wadan Narsey launched a study on Fiji women at work this month, which shows just how overburdened local women are.

The publication, titled *Gender issues in employment and underemployment and incomes in Fiji*, was published by Vanuavou Publications in conjunction with the Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics and AusAID.

"The women's movement has been advocating for the recognition of women's unpaid work for years. We've also highlighted how women are grossly overburdened by work in the home – and how this puts women and girls at a disadvantage in the public sphere," said Fiji Women's Rights Movement Research Officer, Susan Naidu, who attended the launch on 11th December, 2007.

"Dr. Narsey's book supports what we have been saying, with hard facts and figures, and concrete recommendations for government and civil society. He shows how women earn less but work more. Fiji must address this huge imbalance, as Government agreed to do by signing onto the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)."

In his study, Dr Narsey noted a sizeable gender gap of 19 per cent between average incomes earned by men and women. However, when he looked at actual time worked, it showed that women worked longer.

"Despite doing 52 per cent of all time work done in the economy, females received only 27 per cent of all income earned," Dr Narsey said in his study.

This backs up feminist theory used by Pacific women's rights activists, which looks at how economics are built on the backs of women's undervalued work.

"FWRM has been lobbying for the enactment of the Employment Relations Bill, which took on board many of our recommendations for women workers. These include maternity protection and ensuring equal pay for work of equal value," said FWRM Executive Director, Virisila Buadromo.

"Dr Narsey's study shows that women are disadvantaged because of the burden of work in the home, particularly childcare - FWRM believes that progressive employment legislation can go some way in addressing this inequity."

■ *For more information, contact Dr Narsey on* wlnarsey@connect.com.fj *or the Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics* www.statsfiji.gov.fj

Did you know?

- *A conservative estimate puts total value of household work in Fiji at FJ$478 million annually - which is almost the same as the Sugar Industry.*
- *Of this, women and girls contribute 76%, which is FJ$363 million worth of work.*
- *If we include household work, women work 26% to 31% more than males - but most of that isn't counted as "economically active".*
- *Working women on average do an extra 26 hours of housework per week, compared to only nine hours for men.*

■ *from previous page*

Notes

[1] OECD countries like the EU nations, Australia and NZ have all made international commitments to an aid contribution of 0.7 per cent of GDP. They have consistently failed to live up to their own promises. Aid is a right in its own. Developing country negotiators needn't be apologetic or defensive about needing aid to benefit from trade. Pacific nations should not sell away their policy space (in binding agreements) in return for vague promises of aid. The consistent linking of aid with a free-trade agenda is a form of neo-colonialism that ignores developing nations' right to set *their own* trade agenda.

[2] Tuna caught in the Pacific countries' Exclusive Economic Zones is worth more than $1.3 billion each year, yet only a tenth of that value stays in the Pacific. Pacific leaders are struggling to find ways to benefit more from their own resource, in part by developing Pacific fleets and processing plants, and by improving market access to the EU and other rich nations. The EU is the world's largest tuna market.

[3] Article 6(3) of the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations specifies that if Forum Island Countries that have ratified PACER enter a free trade agreement with the EU, then Islands who have signed PACER will be obliged to '*offer to undertake consultations as soon as practicable with Australia and New Zealand, individually or jointly, with a view to the commencement of negotiation of free trade arrangements*'. Note that there is no specified time frame to start or complete those negotiations – nor that an agreement should be completed. As Pacific Trade Ministers have previously recognised, no deal is better than a bad deal.

■ *Roshni Sami, PANG Coordinator. The Pacific Network on Globalisation (PANG) is a Pacific Islands regional fair trade organisation based in Suva, Fiji.*

PANG Coordinator Roshni Sami speaking at a Civil Society Forum in Tonga earlier this year.

Picture: PANG

Virisila Buadromo takes part in a panel at the APWLD 20th anniversary, held in Bangkok, Thailand. The banners in the background celebrate women human rights defenders from the network, including Virisila and fellow Fiji Islander, Shamima Ali.

APWLD celebrates 20 years

The Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development looks back at two decades of advocating for women's human rights and asks, does law matter?

Feminist lawyers, academics, and activists – both young and old – gathered over two days to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the women, law and development networks of the economic South. They met from 28th to 30th November 2007 in Bangkok, Thailand to discuss and debate *"Does Law Matter? 20 Years of Accessing Justice for Women"*.

It was the first time that representatives from the Fiji Women's Rights Movement , the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre and the Pacific Regional Rights Resource Team gathered with their partners from the Asia Pacific forum on Women Law and Development (APWLD) as well as our sister networks in Africa (WILDAF) and in Latin America (CLADEM).

Celebrations included a public event commemorating the International Day for Women Human Rights Defenders, which is marked around the world on November 29th every year. FWRM Executive Director, Virisila Buadromo, sat on the panel and highlighted some of the issues facing women human rights defenders in Fiji and the Pacific. Among the issues she raised was the challenge of working in a context where population size is both a protection as well as a challenge.

To illustrate her point, Virisila talked about how easy it is to bump into the Prime Minister walking along the seawall in the morning in Suva – which makes it great for advocating your women's agenda, but makes it very difficult to keep a low profile or protect yourself in times of crisis. The same could not be said by Asian, African and Latin American WHRDs.

Another issue raised was that because of Fiji's small and limited economy, sometimes the effect of the coup in Fiji on WHRDs and the violation of their human rights would not necessarily make the headlines – unlike the coup in Pakistan . This is disheartening and discouraging for Pacific Island WHRDs. However Virisila and FWRM thanked the APWLD network for the support and solidarity during the difficult times in Fiji over the past year.

As part of the WHRDs Day celebration, the work of Virisila and FWCC coordinator and Fiji Human Rights Commissioner, Shamima Ali, was recognised by APWLD – alongside WHRDs from around the region, such as Hina Jilani and Azra Sayeed from Pakistan, and Burmese women's rights activists.

A significant discussion from the two-day event was an intergenerational dialogue between young and experienced feminists, and was facilitated by Malaysian women's rights activist, Ivy Josiah **(pictured, bottom right)**. Panellists and audience both discussed feminist leadership, and how to encourage, empower and motivate younger and older feminists to work together for the advancement of women's rights in the developing South. While parts of the discussion got a bit tense, participants recognised that this was one of the first dialogues between the generations in the network, and that this conversation will continue.

■ *Virisila Buadromo*

Thank you!

From Queensland to Suva, friends and members of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement continue to show their generosity and support for the work that we do.

Diane Goodwillie, a longtime friend of the Movement, facilitated the donation of a dozen pink chairs, flown in from Australia - which were given to us by a group of dragon-boating survivors of breast cancer. The pink reminds us of the advocates, carers and survivors of this disease, and helps raise awareness for the early detection of breast cancer.

A big thank you also to Suva Rotaract for the donation of a computer, which has already been put to good use by our new Research Officer. The group of volunteers, which includes young women from FWRM's Emerging Leaders' Forum, are also giving us a printer. ■

Susan shuts down her new computer donated by Rotaract (left).

Filo relaxes in one of the dozen pink chairs (right) *which were donated by breast cancer survivors in Australia.*

Fiji begins prep for UNCEDAW

Fiji will submit a progressive report on the status of women to the United Nations Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in June next year.

This was revealed by the Director for Women, Kiti Makasiale, at the *CEDAW Implementation of Concluding Observations Workshop* held in Port Vila, Vanuatu from the 19th to 21st November this year.

Fiji civil servants shared how in the last six months they have been going around the country collecting information for their third and fourth report. It is now in the process of being synthesised and compiled. Fiji was one of the four countries that had representatives from Government and NGOs attending. The others were the Cook Islands, Samoa and Vanuatu.

Chair of the UNCEDAW Committee, Dubravka Simonovic, facilitated a number of sessions. She told Pacific delegates about how important it is to ensure a multi-sectoral approach in the implementation of CEDAW concluding comments.

She also advised Fiji to use the concluding observations handed to the Vanuatu and Cook Islands Governments as a template of what to expect from the UNCEDAW committee when they make their submission. Simonovic told state representatives that with the backlog of hearings, Fiji would probably appear before the UNCEDAW committee in 18 months to two years time.

The workshop was organised by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) , UNDP Pacific centre, UNIFEM and UNICEF.

■ *see more on CEDAW, page 4*

From the Director's Desk

Greetings from Knollys Street!

Welcome to the last Balance for 2007. It's been a long and eventful year for FWRM and Fiji. Sadly, it's also been a year since the December 5th 2006 coup de'Etat. We continue to have limited to no engagement with the interim administration. This is our way of letting those who are in power know that we do not support them nor do we want to legitimize their cause.

The support of our friends, staff and family during this difficult time has been much appreciated and we look forward to continuing work for democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

This last quarter has also been a sad one for FWRM because we lost our young women's officer, Anna Padarath, to love. Anna, thank you for being a role model and we wish you well. We expect to have a new YWO by early next year, so watch this space!

And we welcome our new researcher, Susan Naidu. Susan is expected to be a regular contributor to Balance - filling us in on who's doing what about implementing CEDAW.

Other good news is the graduation of 19 young women from this year's Emerging Leaders Forum. They join the cadre of young women leaders making changes in the community.

On behalf of the team at FWRM, Merry Christmas and continued solidarity for 2008!

Virisila Buadromo

Goodbye Anna, welcome Susan

Anna Padarath, inaugural Young Women's Officer at the Fiji Women's Rights Movement, has left us for the Land of the Long White Cloud.

Anna P, who joined FWRM in 2003 to start off our young women in leadership programme, has moved to New Zealand to be with her partner and to seek new challenges in human rights and development work. Part of Anna's legacy at FWRM is our flagship project, the Emerging Leaders' Forum (*see page 6*).

"It's been hard but also very rewarding & I leave with much hope for the future of the women's movement in Fiji," Anna said, as she left Fiji in November.

Speaking to the ELF graduate network, she added, "I hope that you will tend your feminist flames and keep them burning always. I hope that you will stay LOUD, not settle for second best, work through fear to keep experiencing new things and learning, learning, learning."

We'll miss you Anna, but wish you all the best in your new endeavours.

Research Officer, Susan Naidu

Former Young Women's Officer, Anna P

On a happier note, FWRM is pleased to welcome Susan Naidu as our new Research Officer. Susan is a graduate of the FWRM/DAWN Young Feminist Advocacy Training, held in PNG earlier this year.

She holds a sociology/industrial relations degree and has research experience with various local NGOs, including femLINKPACIFIC. Susan has a deep commitment to women's rights issues and a particular interest in intergenerational dialogue within the Pacific women's movement.

She hit the ground running in November by representing FWRM at a regional workshop on CEDAW implementation. This is going to be crucial for Susan as one of her main tasks as a researcher is coordinating and compiling the Fiji CEDAW shadow report.

"I'm honoured to be given the opportunity to be part of the movement. As a committed young feminist it is now my mission to contribute towards the advancement of women through relevant and credible research," she said. ■

One coup per dictator

One of Pakistan's most senior judges has criticised the international response to the state of emergency.

Rana Bagwan Das was among Supreme Court members sacked when President Musharraf suspended the constitution last month. The international community was not doing enough to restore democracy in Pakistan, Mr Bagwan Das told the BBC. He said January general elections could not be free and fair unless he and his colleagues were re-instated and the rule of law restored. President Musharraf says he will end emergency rule on 15 December. He stood down as army chief and was sworn in for a new term as civilian president at the end of November.

Mr Bagwan Das made his remarks in a rare interview from his home in Islamabad.

"The international community seems oblivious to the ground realities and the fundamental human rights of the citizens of Pakistan. Whatever has been said and done is quite insufficient and inadequate," he told the BBC by mobile phone. Mr Bagwan Das said he and his colleagues were living under virtual house arrest, with police preventing them from leaving their housing complex. They were not allowed to receive visitors and their main phone lines had been disconnected, he said.

There was no legal basis for their detention, Mr Bagwan Das said, because no warrant of arrest or detention order had been issued against them.

The BBC's Jill McGivering in Islamabad, who conducted the interview, says the plight of the former chief justice and these senior judges lies at the heart of the current political crisis. Their growing opposition was cited by President Musharraf as a main reason for imposing the state of emergency. The other was rising militancy in the country. Opposition figures Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto are both calling for the sacked judges to be re-instated. But both now also say their parties will contest the elections anyway, under protest.

Western diplomats, too, seem resigned to the judges' dismissal. They want stability in Pakistan and more progress in the battle against militants. Pushing ahead with elections may seem more important than fighting for the return of the judges, our correspondent says.

■ *news.bbc.co.uk*

Women activists protest against Pakistan's military dictatorship
Pictures: Azra Sayeed

Code pink kicked out of Pakistan

Two visiting peace activists were detained by Pakistani police on the evening of Tuesday December 4, and deported to Washington the following day.

Medea Benjamin and Tighe Barry of the Code Pink peace and social justice movement came to Pakistan on a fact-finding and peace activism mission when they were detained at the Race Course police station.

Advocate Khurram Latif Khosa, who drove them to the airport, told local newspaper *Dawn*, "The order of deportation has been executed and they would like to make it clear that they left under protest. They are under immense shock and cutting their trip short. This has also caused them great financial loss."

At the airport, they were met by a group of children who cheered them and shouted "Pakistan Zindabad, American people Zindabad". [*i.e., long live Pakistan, long live the American people*']

Medea Benjamin said, "We will be going to attend the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations on 'US foreign assistance to Pakistan' to meet with Senators and call for funding to Pakistan to be cut."

Earlier at the Lahore Press Club, they addressed a press conference and narrated in detail the events of the previous evening.

Ms Benjamin said, "We are absolutely appalled. We condemn the government for the way they treated us and for the way they are treating lawyers, judges, students, the press – we say there can be no free and fair elections in Pakistan without restoring the judiciary."

"We are going home very angry at the government. We see this as not a democracy, but a dictatorship. Musharraf is a dictator. If he can do this to us – we are privileged because we have US passports – what can they do to their own citizens?"

■ *Dawn newspaper/Code Pink/ www.wluml.org*

About us

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural non-governmental organization committed to removing discrimination against women through institutional reform and attitudinal change.

By means of core programmes and innovative approaches, FWRM practices and promotes feminism, democracy, good governance and human rights.

We strive to empower, unite and provide leadership opportunities for women in Fiji, especially for emerging young leaders, indigenous and locally-born women.

The FWRM vision is for the women of Fiji to be free from all forms of discrimination, have equal access to opportunities and to live in a healthy environment where the principles of feminism, democracy, good governance, multiculturalism and human rights prevail.

Join us

YES! I want to support the Fiji Women's Rights Movement

ANNUAL FEE:

Waged - $10 ■ Organisation - $30

Non-waged/Student - $5

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

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Email: _____

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Look out !

Family Law ads

FWRM is currently working on television ads, which address some frequently asked questions about the Family Law Court. The ads, which focus on Court procedures and child maintenance, will be on TV in January 2008

Panty power!

Post your panties for peace and freedom in Burma. The Burmese regime is not only brutal but very superstitious. The generals believe that if a man has contact with a woman's panties or sarong they are robbed of their power or 'hpon'. Here's your chance to help end military rule in Burma. You can pick up sheets of stickers of the Burmese generals from FWRM – then just stick one on your pants and mail it to the Myanmar (Burmese) Embassy in Australia. Or you can deliver your activist panties to us, in an envelope, and we'll mail them for you.

Bon voyage Sandy

Sandy Fong, a graduate of FWRM's Emerging Leaders' Forum, is off to Geneva this month to take up an internship with the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. It's a great opportunity to learn more about advocacy at the international level with one of the oldest women's peace organisations in the world.
This means that Sandy won't be able to take on the role of FWRM Young Women's Officer, as originally planned. But we're sure that she'll be back in the Pacific soon - with a wealth of new experiences to share.

New brochures

Keep an eye out for new Family Law brochures, which will now be launched in early 2008. The Fiji Women's Rights Movement has been working closely with the Family Law Court to produce the eight brochures, which will also be translated into Fijian and Fiji-Hindi. The easy-to-read, colour-coded pamphlets will detail basic procedures and essential information on areas like divorce, property settlement, maintenance, child protection, violence in the home and parenting arrangements.

Congratulations!

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement congratulates Kup Women for Peace on their RRRT Pacific Human Rights Award, which is in recognition of their years of outstanding work in peace-building.
FWRM has been collaborating with KWP on building a young women's programme in Kup, which began with Virisila and Anna visiting the Highlands in 2006.Agnes Sil, Mary Kini and their colleagues are amazing women who work in very difficult circumstances.We have learnt a lot from them, and we look forward to continuing our work with them in the future.

Help wanted

FWRM is in desperate need of help - at least our resource centre is. We're looking for volunteers with librarianship skills who would be willing to help us out. If you know of such an angel, please email info@fwrm.org.fj.

Balance is the quarterly newsletter of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement. Contributors: Civil society colleagues, FWRM Board, staff, members and friends. Production: Communications Officer, Tara Chetty. Comments: tara@fwrm.org.fj

FIJI WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT

FWRM

Balance

"HELPING TO BALANCE THE SCALES"

DECEMBER 2007

All human rights, for all

This year, the Fiji Women's Rights Movement commemorated International Human Rights Day – which is held annually on December 10th – with an emphasis on the indivisibility of rights. This means that no one right is more important than another.

"Civil and political rights, which include the right to vote and participate in political life, are indivisible from social and economic rights, like the right to a decent standard of living and safe working conditions. This means you cannot promise some economic rights, while taking away other rights, like the rights of arrested and detained persons and the right to be free from torture and degradation," said FWRM Executive Director, Virisila Buadromo.

Fiji's women in particular face great difficulty in realising their human rights. They are subject to brutal violence in the home, and increasingly by the state, which only gets worse in times of crisis and economic downturn.

Women are also among the poorest and most burdened of Fiji's citizens, according to a recent study (*see page 9*).

All these violations of civil, political and economic human rights are interlinked - which is why FWRM pushes for a return to democracy and the upholding of the rule of law, as well as women's economic and employment rights.

"This International Human Rights Day we remember the human rights violations we've experienced over the past year, and we pay tribute to the work of human rights defenders, especially women human rights defenders," Buadromo said.

Fiji has been in limbo since a military coup on December 5th 2006, with reports of human rights violations by the military and police over the year since – including the illegal detention and torture of FWRM's own Executive Director and other pro-democracy activists last Christmas.

However, human rights defenders have been encouraged by the interim administration's stated commitment to hold democratic elections by March 2009.

"With democracy comes the opportunity for all of us, including women, to have a say in the decisions that affect our lives. It is only with democracy and the rule of law that we can hold our leaders accountable for their actions, and for the upholding of our human rights," Buadromo said.

The Movement joined other civil society groups in Suva for a celebration of Human Rights Day with a march through the city, organised by the Citizen's Constitutional Forum. The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre held a similar event in Ba.

FWRM's Emerging Leaders' Forum graduates also made a stand for human rights – creatively – with the launch of their *Rights tiko vei iko* t-shirts. ■

Civil society stands together for human rights at Sukuna Park (left).

FWRM marches through Suva for women's human rights (below).