FIJI WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT
Balance
"HELPING TO BALANCE THE SCALES"
APRIL 1/2011

100 Years, 100 Trees, 100 Women

By **Shazia Usman**

ON Tuesday March 8th this year, history was created as 100 women came together to plant 100 trees to commemorate the 100th year of International Women's Day (IWD)!

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM), with support from the British High Commission, decided to join the worldwide 'green initiative' and create awareness on the link between gender and climate justice. The event was a huge success and saw the gathering of close to a 150 volunteers comprising of both women and men.

The tree planting on IWD was in fact a culmination of a series of activities that FWRM had been organising with young girls' part of its Young Women in Leadership Programme.

In early February, FWRM had organised a two-day Gender and Climate Justice Workshop for 19 young girls (or the 'Green Girls' as they are now known) between the ages of 10 and 12. During the course of the workshop they discussed issues surrounding the **environment, climate change,** importance of **oxygen** and the **ozone layer,** the need to plant more **trees**, the **marine environment**, and negative effects of **pollution** and **littering**, and how all of this affects them as **young girls**.

Last year a similar workshop (also sponsored by the British High Commission) was organised to celebrate IWD, where a different group of young girls were taught screen printing. They printed their own 'slogan' t-shirts depicting the 2010 IWD theme. The t-shirts were then exhibited for three weeks at the Vodafone flag-ship shop in Suva and later returned to the participants.

This year, FWRM felt that it was important for the young girls to realize that they too had a stake and a say in what happens to their natural resources and that they were fully capable of taking care of their environment. In order to understand the theoretical aspect of climate change better, the facilitators (which included FWRM staff and environmental enthusiasts - former Miss South Pacific Mere Nailatikau and Econesian Society's Sainimere Veitata) used various interactive exercises. The most popular were the beading of commitment bracelets by means of which the girls pledged to complete their education and to take care of their environment.

Image courtesy of *The Fiji Times Limited*

Following the workshop, the Green Girls helped setup a nursery next to Muanikau Police Post compound (along the Queen Elizabeth Drive, Nasese, Suva). This particular site was chosen for the nursery because it was a safe and accessible place for the young girls to come and water the plants during the month. After a month of nurturing the trees were planted by the Green Girls and volunteers at the Umaria Park and along the Fiji Development Bank foreshore on IWD.

In her keynote address at the event, the Acting British High Commissioner Ms Jan Banks expressed the excitement of the Commission to be associated with this project.

"Although progress has been made across all continents, unequal pay and unequal access to health care, education, employment, inheritance and property continue to prevent many women from the full enjoyment of their human rights, and act as barriers to women's political and economic participation. Through ogranisations like FWRM, here in the Pacific we are addressing the issues that affect us. We have made progress but there is a lot that still needs to be done. To achieve more we have to act. Gender analysis is of crucial importance to better understanding the impacts of climate change on human communities. In developing countries, it is the women who fetch and carry water, sometimes over great distances, in order to meet the needs of their village communities. Women must be included in the planning and decision making process concerning climate change."

It was extremely heartening to see that amongst the volunteers, were also representatives of private, public, non-governmental organisations and interest groups, banding together for gender and environmental justice. These groups included the **British High Commission, Connect Interactive Fiji, Catholic Women's League, Fiji Elections Office, Fiji Environmental Law Association, Fiji School of Medicine, Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, Housing Authority, Live & Learn, Vodafone Fiji, Econesian Society, FWRM's Emerging Leaders Forum, Hibiscus Charity Champs, Ship of the World Youth and Women's Action for Change.**

Indigenous plants such as **Yaka, Tadalo, Laubu, Kuasi, Sacau, Dakua, Vesi Wai, Vesi, Yasiyasi, Kavika ni Viti, Velau and Cevuya** were planted on the day along with the following introduced plants - **Tavola, Kavika ni Vavalagi, Baumuri, Sekoula, Koka, Marasa and Lauci.**

Green Girl Lolene Tuiqali, 11, summed up the celebrations quite aptly by reminding everyone that *"today we are celebrating 100 years of International Women's Day and women's contribution all over the world. I wish for everyone here today to remember the reasons why we are observing this special day and the things that my fellow Green Girl friends and I can do to help the women of Fiji".*

WE TURN 25 THIS YEAR!

Turn to pages 7-10 for:
- an interview with one of FWRM's founding members Imrana Jalal;
- collection of vintage photographs; and
- messages from members

From the Director's desk

Greetings from FWRM!

WELCOME back to *Balance* after a year's hiatus! The reason for this break was due to enforcement of the Media Decree. We have applied for exemption and await word from the State. So while we wait – we might as well get *Balance* back!

FWRM staff after a successful IWD

This issue is special because this year FWRM is celebrating its 25th anniversary. In this issue and in the rest that you will be receiving this year, we will be showcasing a collection of vintage FWRM photographs. So do ensure that you receive a copy as you just might recognise someone or remember an event! This issue also has an interview with founding member Imrana Jalal. She takes through a journey of the Movement's challenges and triumphs.

Also in this issue, you will meet the new members of our Management Board (MB) who were elected last October. The new members are trade and gender specialist Roshni Sami; gender specialist and former member of parliament Sivia Qoro; environmentalist and academic Patrina Dumaru and lawyer Shoma Devan. Current sitting members are Gina Houng Lee (Chairperson), Priscilla Singh (Vice Chairperson), Judy Compain (Treasurer) and Avelina Rokoduru, Paulini Turagabeci, and Daiana Buresova. Founding member, Imrana Jalal continues to be a member.

Also joining the FWRM team are four new staff members. They are Filomena Tuivanualevu (Young Women's Officer), Kameli Tikoitoga (Administrative Assistant), Mereoni Tavakaturaga-Robinson (Research Officer) and Shazia Usman (Communications Officer). They have been a welcome addition to the FWRM family.

Be sure to check out FWRM's "100 Years, 100 Trees, 100 Women" event which was our contribution to the enviroment and the cenetennial celebrations of International Women's Day this year. Planted on March 8th, these trees can be seen at the Umaria Park along Queen Elizabeth drive and along the Fiji Development Bank foreshore. The event was a huge success for FWRM and for everyone who volunteered. Thank you very much for your commitment.

There is a lot more in this issue that I am sure you will enjoy so please read and if you have any feedback, send it to info@fwrm.org.fj.

Enjoy this issue!

In solidarity,
Virisila Buadromo

Welcome on board...

...new Board Members

FOUR new faces have been welcomed into the Fiji Women's Rights Movement Management Board. The four, whose area of expertise are in the legal, trade, environment and women in politics field, have come on board at a time when the organisation is undergoing some transition. One of the major changes deals with donor funding. After almost 17 years of partnership, Oxfam has decided that it will not be funding FWRM's programme work. This decision has been made in light of the priority change in NZAID's policy and the fact that FWRM's current programmes are unable to meet the new criteria.

Shoma Devan

Shoma Devan, a partner at local firm Neel Shivam Lawyers, joined the FWRM board because it is her "personal belief that every woman has a voice and needs to be heard on issues that affect them. My aim is to lend the organisation support in not only pushing for legal reforms but to lobby for reforms to be enforced to better the lives of women both in Fiji and regionally." Shoma is greatly inspired by art and when she is not in the court room, office or at FWRM, she enjoys travelling and poetry.

Roshni Sami

The second new board member, Roshni Sami, brings with her a wealth of knowledge in the area of trade and gender. The former coordinator of the Pacific Network on Globalisation joined the Management Board because she supports and is inspired by FWRM's work. As a board member she also hopes to better engage with the women's movement in relation to trade and economic issues as in recent years she has done work in the area of trade and macro-economic policy. "I see an important role for gender awareness and mainstreaming in this area for FWRM. This would complement its existing work on law reform and human rights, as equality economics and material life are fundamental to equality in gender power relations". Roshni is also an avid yoga enthiusiat.

Patrina Dumaru

Bringing her love for community-based resource management and climate change adaptation is Patrina Dumaru. Patrina, who is currently completing her postdoctoral studies in this area at an Australian based university, sees "the potential of incorporating this perspective into the current and future work of FWRM". Patrina has been affiliated with the Movement for a while now and was one of the orginal young women leaders identified, nurtured and trained by FWRM – a programme now known as Emerging Leaders Forum. When she can spare the time, Patrina likes "good food, good wine and good company".

FWRM's fourth new board member is former parliamentarian Sivia Qoro. She brings to the Movement years of valuable experience as the head of the former Women's Bureau at the South Pacific Community. She currently works as a consultant in the region.

According to her "as everyone lives life once, it's important to engage in issues, organisations and goals where you can make the maximum (positive) impact in the lives of people. To leave a legacy of excellence, of encouragement and of purpose is something that we need to continuously strive for, no matter what our circumstances may be. FWRM's overall goal is to make a difference in the lives of women and girls, society and the nation as a whole. That is why I chose to be involved with the Movement. It is one of the avenues that provides me with the opportunity to make that impact and contribute positively to society".

These four members, elected for a term of three years last October, join the ranks of current sitting members - Gina Houng Lee, Priscilla Singh, Avelina Rokoduru, Judy Compain, Imrana Jalal and Paulini Turagabeci.

...new Staff Members

Filomena Tuivanualevu, Kameli Tikoitoga, Mereoni Tavakaturaga-Robinson and Shazia Usman are the newest additions to FWRM.

Filomena, Mereoni, Shazia and Kameli

Temporary Special Measures:

A Priority for Increasing the Number of Women in Pacific Parliaments

On International Women's Day's this year, the University of the South Pacific and the United Nations Development Programme officially announced a newly established partnership between the two institutions. To celebrate the launch of this partnership, a panel discussion on the topic *Temporary Special Measures: A Priority for Increasing the Number of Women in Pacific Parliaments* was organised.

FWRM Board member and Women and Local Government Coordinator, **Priscilla Naidu Singh**, was part of the panel discussion and spoke for the motion. Below is an excerpt from her opening address:

SOME people have said that the issue of quotas to promote women in the Pacific is not up for debate. Let me say, I agree with them. I think Temporary Special Measures (TSM) is the right way to go at this point in our democratic development.

I have been a casualty of the patriarchal political structures that currently exist in our country. Each time an election is announced, some women gather the courage to contest the elections. But do they win? Some do, but most do not. Not because they are not capable but because there are far too many barriers to their participation, thus the need for a quota system.

The core idea behind quota systems is to recruit women into political positions and to ensure that women are not only a few token in political life. Women in the Pacific are the most poorly represented in their legislatures. The latest data shows that Pacific Islands Forum countries' legislatures have only 5.3% women in parliaments. Four of our Pacific countries have no women parliamentarians at all at the national level.

Half of our countries population constitutes of women and feature prominently during election as voters. However, when it comes to running for elections, we do not have many women actually coming forward. We all know that there are many capable women in our communities that can make a valuable contribution to policy making at the national level. Traditionally, women and men in the Pacific have a long history of shared decision-making and in fact, some of our countries are matrilineal. But somewhere along the way, as we moved from our traditional societies to modern politics, women's voices dropped out of our highest decision-making forums.

Women in the Pacific, like elsewhere, realise that their voices need to be heard, and are now calling for more efficient methods to increase their representation. Some question the need for quotas. Others say that if women want to be part of decision making then they must be educated and selected on "merit". Who decides whether someone has the merit to be in parliament? How many times have we seen male parliamentarians, chosen supposedly on "merit", actually living up to their promises and being exemplary leaders? Are we saying that there are NO women with merit? I find this very insulting. We know we have many highly educated Pacific women – many are academics, public servants, and many work in our communities.

It certainly is not about merit. I can tell you from experience that it is social, economic and cultural pressures. I want to recount some of my experiences to demonstrate that in reality. I worked tirelessly on elections, since way back in 1994. I have also been a member of the National Federation Party for more than 20 years. As a member of the party, I helped to organise people and articulate issues of concern through the women's wing of my party. Despite my hard work, I noticed that some of the older men in the party acted as "gatekeepers". They would only allow women to support the party in what they deemed to be "appropriate cultural roles". I would be asked to organise the women to make tea and lunch, rather than being brought into higher level policy discussions. I, of course, refused to make the tea!

I first ran for the Suva City Council in 1996. After many years of consistent hard work and contesting and winning three council elections, I felt I had proved myself capable enough to contest the national elections. But when it was my turn to get elected, societal barriers came into play. It was difficult to organise campaign meetings. Women often do not have as many or as extensive networks as men because we have been brought up to take care of the private sphere while men look after the affairs of the public. When not enough people attended my meetings, I had to make house calls to try to get my message through. This was not only time consuming but it had serious economic implications. As a woman, there were also security issues that needed to be accounted for when campaigning door-to-door and into the night.

In addition to all of these very practical barriers was also the overwhelming task of raising a family. Even though I got a lot of help from my husband, it was a challenge as he too contested elections. I remember many occasions when I had to pack nappies, bottles and take the children and their babysitter with me because while I was running a serious campaign, I also wanted to spend quality time with my children.

The end result of my story is that I was not successful in getting elected in the 2006 national elections. Through personal experience I can share with you that when women run for elections, they often face very real barriers to getting elected. While it is true that there are no formal barriers to women's political participation, there are many societal, economic and cultural ones that women face on the ground and if statistics are anything to go by, it seems to be the same for many women across the Pacific.

The question then arises: can something more proactive be done so that the voices of this silent half of our population can be heard thus making our Pacific parliaments truly democratic?

The introduction of a minimum quota for women means a critical mass of voices can be achieved. International good practice suggests that 30-40% of seats will constitute that "critical mass". Quotas can kick start the process of women's participation. By getting more women into parliament, quotas can also operate as a channel for raising awareness on issues of concern to women. Quotas are a mechanism for ensuring that women must make up a certain number or a certain percentage of the members of parliament. In our region, the most common form

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Image: *CEDAW Restoring Rights to Women* p. 35

Affirmative Action: Leveling the Playing Field for All

LEADING 50

By **Shazia Usman**

ON International Women's Day (IWD) this year, two of Fiji's very own were among the 50 women recognised and honoured as current and emerging female leaders of the Asia Pacific at the Women's Leadership Summit organised by Advance - Global Australians Global Networks.

Nehal Kapadia and Patrina Dumaru were selected following calls for nominations by Advance from various Australian institutes and organisations around the Asia Pacific to nominate women who are connected to Australia by birth, education or occupation. Both women were nominated by AusAID as they are Australian alumni and potential contributors to Australia's future.

Nehal holds a Bachelor's (Hons.) degree in Mechanical Engineering (Biomedical) and is currently working as a Biomedical Technical Officer at the Biomedical Engineering Department at Colonial War Memorial Hospital in Suva. The Department services, repairs and maintains equipment in hospitals and health centres. Patrina Dumaru is one of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement's newest Board members and works at the University of the South Pacific. Her area of expertise is in community-based resource management and climate change adaptation and she is currently completing her postdoctoral studies.

Two days prior to the summit, the Leading 50 women were hosted to afternoon tea by the Australian Governor General, Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce, at her residence in Sydney.

The summit coincided with the 100th anniversary of IWD and explored how women contribute to the development of business, social innovation, commercialisation and culture in the Asia Pacific. According to Nehal, it also provided an opportunity for her to "meet successful women who are leaders in their own fields and exchange ideas and knowledge".

"The Leading 50 women were from various countries in the Asia Pacific, with a few from the USA, each connected to Australia through either birth or education, majority of whom were either CEOs, directors, founders of their businesses. They were joined by other inspiring Australian male and female leaders who also participated in the plenary and round table discussions."

Discussions during the opening plenary sessions focused on economic growth and development through innovation and ways to make green economy the solution for businesses and the planet, each focusing on system change and regulating measures for a better and "healthy" business.

The concurrent roundtable discussions were based on building green economies, innovation network, leadership and philanthropy, board directorship for women, and creative futures for businesses.

"The closing plenary session focused on the next generation of leadership - a sustainable approach based on various approaches taken by leaders today in their businesses and what other approaches may be taken in future."

A White Paper with all outcomes from the discussions is to be presented to the Government of Australia.

Nehal Kapadia (right) with Fiona Hoggart of the Department of Foreign Affairs (Australia).

Image courtesy of Advance - *Global Australians Global Networks*

Temporary Special Measures: A Priority for Increasing the Number of Women in Pacific Parliaments (cont'd)

From page3

of quotas is the reservation of a number of seats for women and/or making it a requirement for all political parties to endorse women candidates. The quota system places the burden of nomination not on the individual woman, but on those who control the recruitment process for candidates. The core idea behind this system is for political parties to actively recruit women into political positions and ensure that women are not isolated in political life.

A point that needs to be noted and will help allay fears of domination is that quotas are supposed to be applied as a TEMPORARY measure – that is to say that quotas should only be in place until the barriers for women's entry into politics are removed. Of course, in reality, in many of our countries it will probably take a generation to remove those barriers.

In Fiji, we can think of a range of approaches. At the simplest level, we could reserve a certain number of seats for women. We used to have 71 seats in our House of Representatives – perhaps 30% of these could be reserved for women. Noting that we have a long history of strong political parties though, we could alternatively consider some type of political party quota.

If Fiji decided to have a proportional representation system, where parties had to nominate lists of candidates, then we could also consider a quota which required the lists to go in order of "man, woman, man, woman" – normally known as a "zipper system". This is what they do in New Caledonia and Tahiti and they both have around 40% women in their national parliaments. These are some ideas for Fiji to consider.

In the last 12 months there have been five elections in our region – in Solomon Islands, Cook Islands, Tuvalu, Tonga and Samoa. In three of these elections, not a single woman was elected. In the other two, fewer women got back into parliament than before. We seem to be going backwards. We need to do something about this and we need to do something quickly.

The true debate hereafter should be what type of quotas or temporary special measures are appropriate within our different Pacific contexts and not whether we need them.

Empowering Women in Local Government

By **Neomai Maravuakula**

Participants at the CLGF Training in Lautoka

TO empower women working in local government, the Fiji Women's Rights Movement, in collaboration with the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) recently facilitated two trainings in the Central and Western divisions. The trainings provided awareness on topics such as *Gender, Human Rights, Employment Rights, Sexual Harassment,* and *Leadership* and also provided them with public speaking skills. All participants of the training work within the local government.

The need to train its members in these areas was identified by the Women in Local Government (WiLG) Network following a consultation in December 2010. The objectives of the two-day training held in February and March (and the last due to be held in April) included the:

1. Examination of the advantages of women's participation in public life;
2. Exploration of the different forms of leadership and the importance of women in leadership;
3. Exploration of human rights and women's rights from a gender equality perspective; and
4. Equipping participants with basic information and skills to boost confidence for greater engagement in their communities.

The first two trainings were held in Suva and Lautoka, benefitting a total of 40 women from Suva, Nasinu, Nausori, Lami, Sigatoka, Nadi, Tavua, Ba and Rakiraki town councils.

During the training participants highlighted various issues that women working in local government face. For many women culture and religion played a huge part in determining their role in the home, within their community and place of employment. Some participants lamented that despite occupying a decision-making post in the council, their role in meetings were only seen as "note takers and tea makers". Majority of the participants also shared that because they are women they are expected to "clean and serve coffee/tea" in their office despite it not being in their job description.

At the end of the training participants also came up with practical action plans that that they intend to implement after the training in their respective councils. Additionally, the training also gave the women an opportunity to form networks amongst each other which will certainly enhance their level of communication.

GO - NGO collaboration important to CEDAW

By **Neomai Maravuakula**

IN December last year, Pacific regional Government (GO) and Non Governmental Organisations (NGO) representatives met in Nadi, Fiji for a three-day dialogue to enable the sharing of experiences on the ratification and implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, including the existing challenges to its reporting and implementation.

The dialogue was a collaborative effort of the International Women Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific (IWRAW), UNIFEM Pacific, the Pacific Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT), a programme of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM).

In attendance were 29 participants from 13 countries including Fiji, the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Cook Islands, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

The objectives of the dialogue included:

- Build on existing understanding of the importance of CEDAW and international human rights standards and obligations of states towards the promotion and protection of women's rights to substantive equality and non-discrimination;
- Assess the status of CEDAW implementation in the Pacific, through sharing of experiences on ratification, reporting process and implementation of CEDAW Committee's Concluding Observations;
- Identify strategies to take advantage of opportunities and address challenges and constraints in the Pacific Region to CEDAW ratification, reporting and implementation;
- Formulate strategies to strengthen GO-NGO collaboration for CEDAW implementation in the Pacific;
- Identify next steps to carry forward national action plans for CEDAW implementation and progress review; and
- Utilise regional assistance and resources to strengthen capacity to implement national action plans

In her address to the participants' former member of CEDAW Committee, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Colombo (Sri Lanka) and IWRAW Advisory Committee Member, Professor Savitri Goonesekere called on Pacific Island states "not to be afraid of ratification". According to her, some countries do not ratify the Convention because they assume that when they report, the Committee will "name and shame" them for not implementing.

"Ratification is a solemn commitment that countries must domesticate the convention into their local laws. The CEDAW Committee encourages constructive dialogue and ratifying countries must not think that the Committee is asking hard questions for no reasons," she said.

With the exception of Nauru, Palau and Tonga, all countries of the Pacific have ratified CEDAW. The American Territories of Guam, Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas (CNMI) and the American Samoa have not ratified by virtue of USA's failure to ratify. Niue is a signatory to CEDAW through New Zealand.

One of the key recommendations that came out of the dialogue was the need to improve coordination and collaboration between the GO and NGO if the realisation of women's human rights was to be achieved at the national level. Participants stated that proper budgetary allocation from within the government's national budgets was a priority that would be better achieved if the GO and NGOs collaborated on an effective lobbying strategy. The government representatives also identified that having a lack of financial and intellectual resources meant that the women's machineries were also under-resourced. This has contributed to the limited progress on implementation of CEDAW by states who have ratified CEDAW.

One of the opportunities that the GO representatives identified was the lead role that women machineries could undertake in advocating for an integrated multisectoral approach in achieving substantial equality for Pacific women.

At the end of the three-day dialogue, GO and NGO representatives for each country drew-up action plans that set out specific measures to be undertaken within a time-frame of five years, as well as identifying the actions that will be taken within the first four months to help in the implementation of CEDAW (or towards the ratification of CEDAW for non-ratified countries). FWRM remains the secretariat of the dialogue and will continue to liaise with these countries to monitor their progress.

Participants at the GO-NGO dialogue on the ratification and implementation of CEDAW

FWRM

FIJI WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Celebrating 25 years of balancing the scales

June 30th 1986 - June 30th 2011

25 years of balancing the scales

It has certainly been an enlightening 25 years for the Fiji Women's Rights Movement – a quarter century of challenges and of triumphs. As the Movement gets ready to celebrate this milestone in June, Shazia Usman talks to one of the most important women in the organisation's herstory, founding member **Imrana Jalal**, of how it all came about.

How many women were part of the setup process of FWRM?

Apart from me, Shamima Ali, Dr. 'Atu Emberson Bain, Alefina Vuki, Kuini Bavadra (now deceased), Helen Sutherland and others were part of the initial setup. Penelope Moore was our first paid Coordinator, followed by Vani Dulaki, Praveen Sharma, Gina Houng Lee and now Virisila Buadromo. After Penelope, we realized that, as good as she was it would be more strategic for FWRM if we had someone born and bred in Fiji, as such a person would have a better understanding of the nuances and contexts of the culture, obsessions with dress, form, and protocols to be the head and face of the organisation. The messenger is as important as the message when you are attempting to disseminate an unpopular idea seen at variance with the local culture. Why give someone the chance to shoot the messenger and ignore the message? I recall at the time of being accused of racism, at wanting a truly "local" face at the head of FWRM. At that time our membership did not fully understand the importance of a movement, a struggle, being perceived as truly home-grown. Now, we have a very clear understanding of these intersectionalities and the importance of the political paradigm. I owe my own feminist and political maturation to women like Shireen Lateef and Dr. Atu Emberson Bain, and men like Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi, from whom I have learnt so much. For me, mentoring the younger women at FWRM, has been "paying it forward", to the next generation. Why? Because our message is right and inherently about justice, not because we are arrogant.

How did the need for an organisation such as FWRM come about?

In 1984, the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC) was founded to challenge crimes against women, specifically rape and domestic abuse. Around that time I was a lawyer at the Crown Law Office (now known as the Attorney General's Office) and did a stint at the Legal Aid office. I represented many of FWCC's clients. I was so angered by the treatment of women in the courts and by the legal system as a whole. Their subordinate status allowed those with power to take advantage of them. FWCC Coordinator Shamima Ali and Shireen Lateef (who was at that time doing her PhD research in Fiji) suggested the idea of creating an organisation that looked at the equal rights of women in Fiji but at the policy level. And so the Fiji Women's Rights Movement was founded. We decided that the organisation would campaign and lobby on a number of fronts including changing the thinking and attitudes of citizens and politicians towards the social, economic and political status of women in Fiji. We called a mass meeting and about 100 women came. The women told us their stories. It was a "speak-out"' meeting about discrimination. Our first campaign was on rape laws and changing citizenship laws to give women equal rights.

What sort of challenges did the organisation face over the years?

The intersections of race, democracy and women's rights have been a continuing ideological challenge. Many of our members did not want to deal with race or democracy issues – but how can you deal with women's issues out of context? For example, if there is no

freedom of speech (as is the case now) or freedom to mobilize or we are polarized because of race, how much can we achieve for women as a group? It is virtually impossible. FWRM had grown from being a feminist 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. It has a global profile despite the smallness of Fiji. This is something that we should take great pride in. FWRM was the first women's NGO in Fiji to come out as openly feminist. Thus, ensuring that feminist issues are firmly at the forefront for FWRM has always been important. However, despite the maturation of the women's movement as a whole between 1987 and now, FWRM has been constantly thrown into the deep end during various political upheavals.

FWRM has worked hard on returning Fiji to constitutional democracy and the rule of law, while at the same time trying to hold its membership, staff and organisation together despite racial divisions. During these times the majority of FWRM's work on straight feminist issues has come to a halt to allow it to focus its intellectual and other resources on the restoration of democracy and constitutional rule. This has been a constant problem for us. But it has been necessary because women's rights are part of human rights. We do not have the luxury of engaging in one struggle and not the other. However, by far, the biggest obstacle has been the challenges to democracy and the rule of law by successive illegal regimes. How does one continue to work for gender equality and human rights against this backdrop? The advancement of women is determined by a functioning democracy and the rule of law. Advancement in one, promotes advancement in another. Without one, the other is fleeting and illusory.

What have been FWRM's greatest achievements to date?

Input into the formulation of the 1997 Constitution: The 1997 Constitution was a remarkable and forward looking document giving women unprecedented equal rights. FWRM fought a long and bitter campaign with others to put in Article 38 of the Constitution, which gave us protection against discrimination on the grounds of sex, gender, marital status and sexual orientation, as well as advocating for a Human Rights Commission. Winning equal citizenship rights for women, with a coalition of women's NGOs was another achievement, which FWRM spearheaded as part of the Women's Coalition for Citizenship Rights).

Emerging Leaders Forum (ELF): The Movement had been working closely with young women in secondary schools and in the workforce under its Women's Employment & Economic Rights project. In 1998, it launched a campaign around two themes: Girls Can Do Anything and Jobs Have No Gender. The response and interest of the young women in these campaigns was overwhelming. It resulted in the Emerging Leaders Forum (ELF) programme such as you see it today. ELF began in 2004 and is a year-long leadership programme developed and run by FWRM. It is designed for young women who come from diverse socio-economic, ethic, religious and educational backgrounds. It is now a global best practice project, adopted by many NGOs.

Imrana Jalal making a point at a 2006 Family Law Act consultation

"Being a co-founder of FWRM, means that FWRM is part of my psyche, part of who I am. It is like something I have partly given birth to, my baby. I am one of that baby's parents".

What were some of the challenges faced during lobbying for the enactment of the Family Law Act?

The legislation, common law and legal practices were discriminatory against women. For these reasons we had reform of the family law high on our agenda. I was named Family Law Reform Commissioner and with FWRM and the Fiji Law Reform Commission (and later the Pacific Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT) where I worked), set out on the long and arduous task of consultation, gathering support for a new law, and drafting the legislation to take into account gender equality. The proposed law had many ups and downs and was defeated many times by military interruptions to the rule of law, or ideological opposition. It finally became law in October 2003 and was activated in late 2005. The Act is not the product of one person's vision, but the product of many forces operating in concert, converging together at one fortunate time. As the then Attorney General said in his introduction speech, "all people's legislation should follow this process, this is law making at its best".

Is there anything special you would like to impart to FWRM on its 25th anniversary?

Being a co-founder of FWRM, means that FWRM is part of my psyche, part of who I am. It is like something I have partly given birth to, my baby. I am one of that baby's parents. But like a baby, it grows and becomes an adult; it finds its own feet. It carries something of the dreams of its parents, but it has its own dreams too. It therefore defines its own future. The future of FWRM lies in the hands of the Board and its young, dedicated staff. Every movement has its theorists, its philosophers, its thinkers and its activists, the doers who take the ideologies and turn them into action– all are critical. But every action ought to be examined. Does it meet the goals of the ideology? If the ideology is lost the dream is also lost. The gains are fleeting. My only concern, and this is my message to those who may or may not wish to carry on the dream of FWRM's founders - is that, with the passing of time and lessening of resources, FWRM may soften its ideological stance; its feminist and human rights foundations may weaken due to pragmatism, a lack of time for intellectual scrutiny and rigour (for this it needs to bring in a more diverse membership e.g. from the academe), given the difficult circumstances under which it survives; and it may take a practical direction, the easier road, the one more travelled. Then we will become part of the mainstream. If that is the case, we will lose not only our cutting edge, but the very reason why we came into existence. However, having said all of that, I trust and hope that this will not happen. I have faith in the current leadership of FWRM, and will stand by it and them, regardless. They are my "sisthas", and they also have their own dreams for FWRM. As I said they shape the future, not only for FWRM, but also for Fiji. It is a huge burden.

Imrana recently left Fiji to join the Asian Development Bank as a Senior Social Development Specialist (Gender and Development). She remains a member of the FWRM Management Board.

What does FWRM mean to you?

Messages from members

To me FWRM is all about women's empowerment – a place where I learnt about my rights and responsibilities.

Maretina Vataniyaragi
ELF 5

FWRM has been a parent to my twins during my struggles as a single mum of Indian ethnicity. It has empowered me for 5 years and continues to do so every day. FWRM reminds me every single day that women are strong and they can "be the change you want to see in the world" as Gandhiji once said.

Seema Naidu
Former Legal Rights Training Officer 2002-2006

FWRM helps in solving some of the issues that women face.

Gloria Naduva
ELF 5

FWRM to me means women human rights defenders, innovation, analysis, debate, courage, global advocacy, local activism, leadership, community and resilience. The Fiji Women's Rights Movement, which continues to be so important to me, has had a very challenging 25 years. But it has also been a quarter century of inspiring feminist activism, with many successes that we can all draw on as we face the difficult times ahead. Happy birthday FWRM and congratulations FWRMers!

Tara Chetty
Former Communications Officer and Board Member

FWRM is a safe space for me, a sanctuary for all women alike and a beacon of hope and encouragement in times of oppression and the likes, and general ill treatment. To the staff, past & present, congratulations for making a quarter century!

Tavai Bale
ELF Alumni

Over the past 4 years, FWRM has become my family. I owe many of my life's experiences as a young woman to FWRM. Because of FWRM and its networks, I've come to find friends, colleagues, fellow advocates, mentors, and sisters.

Paulini Turagabeci
Board Member and ELF Alumni

FWRM is the voice of women (young and old) in Fiji.
FWRM is the change women in Fiji need.
FWRM is the platform that brings the best out of young women (through the ELF programme and research work they do).
FWRM is turning a quarter century old! I wish them all the best and support them in the great work they have been doing!

Elisha Bano
ELF 5

FWRM will always have a special place in my heart as it's the first place I ever worked/interned in. It's a place which helped bring out the feminist in me by encouraging critical thinking. It's a place where I found some good colleagues and made great friends. Happy 25th FWRM and keep on rocking!

Shazia Usman
FWRM Communication Officer and ELF Alumni

FWRM to me means solidarity, fairness, hope and inclusiveness. FWRM to me means a voice for me and others.

Roshika Deo
FWRM Research Officer and ELF Alumni

FWRM is a source of pride and inspiration for me. FWRM is the platform that enables me to promote and advocate for human rights.

Priscilla Singh
Board member

I came to be affiliated with FWRM through other feminists and growing up in Fiji. Now I am a new member of the Management Board. To me FWRM has meant the representation of a radical feminist voice in Fiji and the Pacific region. When other groups would not speak out, FWRM would. At 25 years I want to say THANK YOU! - To the generation that has gone before me and created and sustained this organisation and this feminist conviction within Fiji. You have inspired me! Now I reflect back on myself and my generation; we must pick up on the work done and challenge ourselves to continue transforming and shifting our society for the young women that follow us.

Roshni Sami
Board Member

FWRM is kind of where I grew up, as a young woman learning about different issues through ELF, and then as a member of ELFA learning how I could give back to the organisation as well to my community. Now as a trainer continuing to learn as well as share with others what I have learnt in the past few years and what I continue to learn.

Neomai Maravuakula
FWRM Human Rights Training Officer and ELF Alumni

FWRM is a group of committed women working towards a better place for women and girls in Fiji and the Pacific. FWRM has been a meeting place of women who have together advanced structural changes for women in Fiji. It has nurtured friendships, built alliances in the region and worked in solidarity for women's human rights. Happy 25th Birthday – may you continue to be strong and steadfast.

Gina Houng Lee
FWRM Board Chair and former Coordinator (1998 to 2001)

It means a lifeline, a bridge, an extended hand of welcome; to the women and young women of our nation. To dismissing the stigma and injustices committed against our women through time! It means 'HOPE'…keep up the great work!

Kele Gavidi
ELF 5

FWRM means empowerment – being informed and aware, regardless of any issues that affect us as individual women in our society.

Losana Tuiraviravi
ELF Alumni

FWRM has been a mentor to me. We had excellent facilitators during the ELF sessions and I learnt heaps from them. My experience as an ELF has made me very outspoken as I can now speak without being scared of what others might think of me.

Angelina Singh
ELF Alumni

I became involved with FWRM through the Girls Retreat as a university student. FWRM to me is like a feminist incubator (as described by someone I know) - a place where you can work as a feminist, practice your feminist values and challenge them too.

Naeemah Khan
FMRM Programme Manager

FWRM gave me a whole new opportunity to empower and be empowered as a young woman in the Pacific society. It is an organisation that promotes empowerment and value for human rights.

Betty Barkha
ELF 5

FWRM is a champion for young women.

Filomena Tuivanualevu
FWRM Young Women's Officer and ELF Alumni

ELF 5

Testing their video shooting skills

ELF Kele interviewing Green Girl Tema

Presenting their ideas

Role-playing

ELF visiting a hotel as part of their Gender and Trade training

ELF 5

By **Alisha Bano**
(on behalf of ELF 5)

THE Emerging Leaders Forum has been an excellent way of getting young women together and educating them on feminism, eco-feminism, environment, globalisation, livelihoods, the media, fundamentalisms and sexual rights to become informed members of society.

Our journey began in October last year when the sixteen of us met for the first time during ELF orientation. By the time rolled around, we had exchanged phone contacts and added each other on the most popular social network - Facebook.

We had our first weekend retreat at the Raintree Lodge in Colo-iSuva where the Jwahir Tribe gave the programme's first book review. Altogether there are four groups or tribes and members of each tribe do book reviews and advocacy together. This was a great opportunity to get us all to read (and stay in the habit of reading and educating ourselves). The last time many of us had read a story book was back in high school. Thanks to ELF, after doing the initial book review, I have read three other story books and have noticed how much how much my vocabulary has improved since. It also been quite inspiring to read books about strong female characters and those written by women with strong feminist themes. During this retreat we learnt about the different kinds of feminism, eco-feminism, activism and human rights. Knowing the fundamentals of these concepts has definitely enhanced our analytical skills.

For our second weekend retreat we went to the beautiful Coral Coast and learnt about gender and trade. This was quite an intense topic as we learnt about how so many industries around the world exploit their workers, especially the women, who struggle to provide for their families with just one meal a day.

Our workshop on sexual reproductive health rights was also an eye-opener. We were learnt about our reproductive health rights, the different forms of gender-based violence, the high rate of teenage pregnancies as well as breast and cervical cancer in Fiji.

We also interacted and interviewed FWRM's Green Girls (a group of nineteen 10-12 year old environmental enthusiasts who helped take care of and plant 100 trees for International Women's Day this year). Before we interviewed them, we were given a one-day training on how to script and video shoot 1-2 minute video documentaries on the environment and climate change. These videos will be showcased during our graduation ceremony and also uploaded on FWRM's website soon.

Our final weekend retreat focused on the environment and my fellow ELF's and I saw some very interesting video's on how much damage is being to our planet by so many developed and industrialised countries and how it is all contributing to climate change.

In the next two months there will be three more workshops focusing on the media, mental health issues and leadership, all with a gender perspective and we are very much looking forward to it.

All the tribes are currently working on their advocacy plans and you can read more about them in FWRM's next issue of Balance.

ELF 5 TRIBES

UMON'HON TRIBE

Origin: Native American
Meaning: Against the Current

Members:
1. Sarah Vamarasi
2. Dipika Deo
3. Mereani Duituturaga
4. Jope Gavidi
5. Gloria Naduva

JWAHIR TRIBE

Origin: Somali
Meaning: Golden Woman

Members:
1. Elisha Bano
2. Maretina Vataniyaragi
3. Kelerayani Gavidi

UILA TRIBE

Origin: Pacific
Meaning: Lightening Bolt

Members:
1. Betty Bharka
2. Talei Matakibau
3. Jasmine kaur

YASU TRIBE

Origin: Japanese
Meaning: Assertive and confident

Members:
1. Agnes Lord
2. Akshay Kumar
3. Monisha Rao
4. Tamara Balenaveikau
5. Miriama Turagabeci

ELF receives human rights award

By **Shazia Usman**

THREE Pacific Islanders and three organisations were honoured on 10thDecember last year with the SPC / RRRT Pacific Human Rights Award. Organised in collaboration with the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, the 2010 awards focused on recognising extraordinary efforts in advancing gender equality in the region. Amongst the three women presented with the individual category award for their outstanding work in advancing women's equality and women's human rights was FWRM's very own ELF Alumni Jacque Koroi for her efforts in advancing the rights of young women!

Following the award ceremony on International Human Rights Day, FWRM spoke with Jacque on her achievement.

How did you feel when you first heard that you had been nominated for this award?

I was excited but very shy. I actually did not know that I would be receiving the award till the morning of the ceremony.

How did you feel when you eventually won it?

It was a very humbling moment – both as a recipient and the fact that I was receiving it in the presence of individuals and organisations who have been tirelessly promoting human rights in Fiji and who have played an influential role in my life.

I was also moved to hear that it was Mereia Carling and her UNICEF team who saw it fit to nominate me.

How did your friends and family react to the win?

My friends and family marked the occasion with lunch and well wishes. I also wrote an email to a select group of people, dedicating the award to them and thanking them for their influence in my life.

What are some of the things that you are currently involved in?

I have just graduated with a BA in Law and Social and have a deep desire to pursue my Masters in Gender, Peace and Public Administration this year. I also have plans in the pipeline to experience working in other developing countries with a long term goal to work in Fiji and the Pacific region. I continue to engage in voluntary and short term work related to Youth Development. Aside from being an ELF Alumni, I am also a member of the Pacific Youth Council, Youth Coalition Fiji, YWCA, and Lami Gospel Youth amongst others.

Would you like to share some of your experiences as a women human rights defender in Fiji?

I consider myself a human rights defender in the context of "promoting the positive roles young men and young women play in community and national development". I continue to be involved in the designing, implementation and promotion of activities that challenge the mindsets and attitudes of my peers to adopt lifestyles and values for our overall positive development. At a recent youth gathering, we discussed the roles young men and young women can undertake in ending violence against women and girls and I was so excited to hear the young men identify ways to deal with their anger that does not include violence.

Jacque Koroi receiving her award

At Kaleidoscope

By **Filomena Tuivanualevu**

The Oxfam International Youth Partnership (OIYP) programme is a global network of young people who share a vision of a just world and are committed to working for peaceful, equitable and sustainable social change within their communities. Every three years, the programme introduces a group of 300 young men and women (aged 18 to 25) from around the world to the OIYP network.

Since the program began in 2000, OIYP has worked with over 1150 young people, known as action partners, from 98 countries. Throughout the three year cycle, the OIYP program focus' on building skills and knowledge, supporting action and facilitating networking. In addition to networks amongst Action Partners, members of OIYP are given opportunities to network and form partnerships with many other organisations and communities around the world to support them in their work.

Members of the Emerging Leaders Forum Alumni (ELFA) - Jacque Koroi (ELF 1), Mamta Chand (ELF 3), and Losana Tuiraviravi (ELF 4) - who have been part of previous conferences or Kaleidoscopes as they are more commonly known, still play vital roles in the OIYP family. Last year Mamta was a part of the international selection panel while Losana was a part of the Mentor and Motivator group made up of previous action partners who go on to mentor and assist current action partners' in their three year cycle.

For the fourth cycle of Kaleidoscope, held in New Delhi India from the 19th to the 29th of November last year, four ELFA members were part of the ten member Fiji delegation. Along with me (graduate of ELF 3 and FWRM's current Young Women's Officer managing the ELF programme) my fellow alumni Gopika Dasi (ELF 4), Mei Milly (ELF 4) and Yashna Narayan (ELF 4) attended. The sessions ranged from gender, sexual diversity, indigenous rights, climate change, and education to poverty.

The objective of the women's session which we had organised was to create a space for women to come together to share their stories and form a network that would act as a working group for the three year cycle. The response to the session was quite overwhelming as participants consisted of females and males alike as well as facilitators and action partners. There were stories shared from members who work for the underground LGBT movement in the Philippines, a male champion for Safe Motherhood in Zimbabwe, a young woman from Bangladesh just beginning her feminist journey as well as stories from Sierra Leone, Nepal and Australia.

Plans and proposals are currently being developed for the training to be conducted in April this year in the Pacific or the Middle East. We are currently advocating for a Pacific based training.

Throughout Kaleidoscope, action partners' from Oceania met to discuss ways in which to work together as a region and discuss which issues to collectively focus on. The importance of gender equality was highlighted as a priority issue as well climate change, sexual reproductive health rights and mental health.

This year we will advocate identified issues through sports after taking into consideration the scheduled South Pacific Games in New Caledonia. In 2012, the Oceania action partners will use arts as a medium of advocacy and utilize the Melanesian Arts festival as a means to get our message across. In 2013 the action partners plan to use education as a means of advocacy.

Kaleidoscope was an amazing event to be a part of and we will be forever grateful to Oxfam who made it possible for the ELF Alumni to be a part of it.

Action Partners in front of the Teen Murti Bhavan Delhi, India

Women protesting in the Middle East [Image courtesy of the *Huffington Post*]

Women fuel Arab revolts

Representing all age groups and various backgrounds, they have proved to be the catalysts for change.

By **Jumana Al Tamimi**

THE pouring of Tunisian people onto the streets in what many Tunisians described as a "people's revolution to regain their dignity", starting from mid-December 2010, led to the ousting of long-time president Zine Al Abidine Bin Ali nearly a month later.

Developments in Tunisia sparked protests and demonstrations in other Arab countries as well. Twenty days of protests in Egypt led to the overthrow of the regime of Hosni Mubarak, and the eruption of fierce fighting in Libya between the ordinary people opposing Colonel Muammar Gaddafi and his supporters in the security apparatus. Other protests also swept some other countries, including Algeria and Yemen.

Apart from calls to introduce political and economic reforms, many Arab women are concerned about their own rights in the future and protecting their achievements. Tunisian women have participated in every protest that took place before and after the overthrow of the Bin Ali regime seeking a bigger role in the future and attempted to let their voices be heard. They represent different age groups and come from various backgrounds, including those who wear hijab and those who wear miniskirts, women activists said.

"There is awareness among women that we should do something so we won't be excluded or marginalised during political developments. Women participation in protests was intense but their presence in the first and second cabinets formed in the aftermath of the ousting of the Bin Ali regime has not reflected that participation," said activist Hedia Belhaj Al Sebai.

Only a few women were included in the previous two Tunisian governments in the past month that included scores of men. Some explained the limited participation of women as a preference for staying away from "adventures" while many things are still unclear. Therefore, many women prefer to stay in the shadows, throughout the present stage, just watching. However, the other side believes there were not enough calls for women to join in deciding the future of their country.

Women in almost every Arab country, however, are involved in making history at the moment, including in Egypt. Nearly half of the protesters in Tahrir Square in Cairo in January were women, noted Egyptian women activist Amal Sharaf, an English teacher. "There is a general impression in the country all people are participating in politics, so women should be also part of it," said Amal. Amal is also a member of the April 6 youth movement that has been active in the recent revolution that ousted Mubarak's regime. The movement was launched in 2008 to support the workers amid a price rise at that time. Its members were harassed and some were detained, including Amal herself. Amal's mother used to advise her to stay away from politics, telling her she would not gain anything but headache from such activities. But throughout the recent revolution, her mother's perception has changed. "Her heart is with us now," Amal said.

While Egypt comes in the list of Arab countries with relatively good achievements of women in the political process, generally Arab women don't participate in the decision-making process as much as men do, though female participation varies from one country to another. In some countries, women have occupied senior posts in the diplomatic corps, judiciary as well as parliaments and governments. In some other countries, illiteracy stands in the way of women's advancement. Both Bahrain and Yemen provide a contrasting image that has become clearer under the current circumstances. There are female judges, ambassadors and ministers. Women constitute nearly 15 per cent of the upper house of parliament in Bahrain.

The Bahraini "woman was given what she needs to mature politically", commented Jehan Mahmoud, a Bahraini writer. However, in a country that has witnessed a sectarian split, women took part in the anti-government protests that took place in Bahrain to demand more rights to introduce more reforms, and women also participate in pro-government rallies to express their loyalty to the regime and its policies.

But in Yemen, women participation differs from one city to another. For example, only a few women were seen in the protests in Sana'a. Their percentage was "less than one per cent" said Samia Al Agbhry, a Yemeni journalist and woman activist with Al Thawri newspaper of the Yemeni Socialist party. "But in other [southern] cities, such as Ta'z and Aden, the percentage reaches 20 per cent," she said. According to Samia, various percentages reflect variations in the status of women.

In the southern cities, women are more educated and advanced, while in Sana'a, a high percentage of illiteracy coupled with strong norms and traditions in almost all aspects of life and fatwas [a legal opinion or ruling issued by an Islamic scholar]prohibiting women and men from mingling are behind the low female participation. Yet, Samia expects women's voices in politics to become louder with an increasing number taking part in rallies and demonstrations.

Regardless of the outcome of the current developments in many Arab countries, the size of women's participation and the impact on the status of women, real indicator according to Hedia, would be whether women's current participation in making history will be reflected in the decision-making process in the future.

"What is much more important is what is coming and not what exists now."

Excerpted from www.gulfnews.com (published March 8, 2010) where the writer, Jumana Al Tamimi, is an Associate Editor.

Team Katniss!

By **Lani Smith Phillips**

Book Review : Hunger Games Trilogy (The Hunger Games, Catching Fire and Mockingjay)
Author : Suzanne Collins

WITH the advent (and subsequent global takeover) of the Twilight Saga and Team Edward/Jacob, I feel like we were left longing for a time when Team Bella might have meant something. Or, maybe we were longing for a Bella that merited having a team to begin with. But, the extreme popularity of Bella and every terrible stereotype she represents have made my desire to find a worthy role model for teenage girls and young women that much stronger. So, when I heard about The Hunger Games Trilogy and its heroine, Katniss Everdeen, I was excited. In Katniss, Suzanne Collins created a young heroine who truly deserves the respect and adoration that – up 'til now – has been given to the likes of Twilight's Bella.

Katniss, a 17-year-old girl living in a place called District 12, a division of Panem, the remnants of the United States post global warming and civil war and about a hundred years after the latter. The Capitol has created The Hunger Games to keep the Districts in check after an uprising 74 years earlier. For the Hunger Games, The Capitol chooses two "tributes", who are children between the ages of 12 and 18, from each one of the Districts; they lock them in an arena, and have them fight to the death. The one left alive is the victor. Obviously, you can assume Katniss becomes one of the tributes from District 12.

Collins' portrayal of Katniss is that of a strong, capable young woman-hunter who is left to provide for her mother and little sister after her father passes away. Collins allows her this strength and will without the cliché of her also being emotionally distant. Katniss is simultaneously humble and amazingly confidant. She is quite capable of making her own decisions, but also faces doubt and is sometimes haunted by the consequences of her decisions.

Collins consistently presented genuinely diverse representations of gender. Aside from Katniss herself, Peeta Mellark, Katniss' fellow tribute and potential love interest, does not fall inside of normative gender stereotypes. He is a baker's son who enjoys frosting cakes, making cookies and painting. He is portrayed as often in need of Katniss' protection and does not bear her ability to hunt and shoot. Collins is careful to present diversity without just reversing the expected male/female gender roles. Collins also openly questions the value of social beauty norms and plastic surgery throughout all three books (the first two especially). Taking Katniss from District 12 in preparation for the Games she is tweezed, waxed, plucked, tanned, tarred and feathered all the while wondering why the people of The Capitol take such foreign and painful measures to ensure the look of youth when youthful is the farthest thing from what they actually look.

Like the Twilight Saga – there is a love triangle. Unlike Twilight, that love story is not the heartbeat of the story.

Collins builds her story on the often slow realization that our own personal history is entwined with political decisions and individuals in positions of power. Katniss' decisions promote the struggle for ideal democracy and we see the transformative force that one, simple act of rebellion can be on society as a whole.

With the Twilight Saga coming to a close, Hollywood is hungry (no pun intended) for the next teen, moneymaking machine phenomenon. The Hunger Games is presently in the process of being cast to be made into a series of movies. Let's hope that they are able to leave the integrity of Collins' story intact and that Katniss is not just turned into another Bella-for-the-Masses.

Excerpted from www.feministfatale.com (published February 16, 2011).

Made in Dagenham (2010)

Film Review by **Alexandra Tweten**

IT'S not often that a blatantly feminist film is released to a wide audience. There are many films with characters who posses feminist qualities, but only a handful about the feminist movement itself in recent years. Actually, Iron Jawed Angels and North Country are the only ones that come to mind.

Made in Dagenham, which came out in November last year, is the latest retelling of feminist herstory. The film, directed by Nigel Cole (*Calendar Girls)*, focuses on the little-known story of the 1968 strike for equal pay at the Ford Motor factory in Dagenham, England. Sally Hawkins stars as Rita O'Grady, leader of the 187 women who sewed vehicle interiors but were branded "unskilled" and thus paid less than men. Shot in bright, uplifting colors and lighting, the film conveys the women's optimistic view as they fought for equal pay while also taking care of their families. The film still shows the grim working conditions and obstacles the women had to overcome, but is filled with optimism and humor.

While Rita starts out as a reserved and ordinary working mom, with the encouragement of union representative Albert (played by Bob Hoskins) she soon surprises everyone by speaking her mind to the Ford and union bigwigs, organises the women and speaks out to the press as their spokeswoman. She demands that Ford brand the machinists skilled workers and give them equal pay. When the union wavers in its backing of the women, she delivers a heartfelt speech to regain its support. Norma Rae, anyone?

Efforts of the strike, which caused the entire 55,000-employee plant to cease production, caught the attention of Secretary of State for Employment and Productivity Barbara Castle (Miranda Richardson) and led to the U.K. Equal Pay Act of 1970 that made it illegal to pay employees differently because of gender. While the U.S. had already passed its Equal Pay Act in 1963, the Ford strike was followed by equal pay laws in France and Ireland.

In an interview, Hawkins emphasized the importance of what the women in Dagenham fought for:

"Sadly, equality is very much still a fight we're fighting. In the film industry–again–it's men calling the shots and it always has been. It frustrates me enormously. The message of the film is to keep pushing yourself, and keep challenging yourself…as the women of Dagenham showed us, it's so important to fight for what you believe is right, even when it's scary."

The film has already met with controversy over its "R" rating for "language and brief sexuality." Yes, the F-bomb is thrown around more than once and there is a brief car scene that is sexual in nature, but no nudity. Hawkins' character even apologizes later for using the F word. It's a shame that the film didn't earn a PG-13, because this is a movie that families should see, especially those with daughters. It's important that the story of how we've gotten as far as we've gotten be told, and Made in Dagenham is one of the few films telling it.

Excerpted from Ms. Magazine blog (published November 15, 2011).

Drodrolagi Movement

Kris Prasad marching with the Survival Advocacy Network

Image courtesy of Kris Prasad

By **Kris Prasad**

"YOU can't be anyone but yourself." Those were the words shared to me by my dear friend Rani Ravudi as she was crowned the winner of *Adi Senikau 2010*, Fiji's premier pageant for the transgender community. Rani has been a strong advocate for gay rights for many years and her words inspired me and made me think of ways to make a difference for the gay community.

Being a student at the University of the South Pacific's (USP) Laucala Campus and noting the lack of safe and supportive spaces for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) students, I decided to start a group on my own. An earlier LGBT student group called the *Drodrolagi* Association existed between 1997-2001 with Luisa Tora (former FWRM board member) and others but the group ceased to exist as its active members graduated.

I set out to revive the group and we had our first meeting on September 27th last year and renamed ourselves the *Drodrolagi* Movement (also known as *droMo*). *Drodrolagi* is Fijian word for rainbow, which is the international symbol for gay pride. We are a social, educational and support network for LGBT, transsexual, intersex, gender-variant, closeted, questioning, *akava'ine, laelae, vakasalewalewa, pinapinaaine, fa'afafine, fakaleiti, tongzhi, re fak hen* and other identified students, and their allies and friends on Laucala Campus. We even have members from outside USP who are keen to be part of the movement!

LGBT students at the USP bring unique characteristics and concerns that may affect their academic experience and overall access to human rights and social justice. Our concerns are diverse. While many are parallel to those of heterosexual students, LGBT students require additional support in light of considerable societal violence, discrimination and marginalisation experienced due to our sexual orientation and gender identity. These concerns may include but are not limited to:

- The coming out process,
- Development of an identity in a heterosexually biased and gender-stereotyped environment,
- Development of an identity without appropriate role models,
- Impact of oppression through religious dogma,
- Social isolation and alienation,
- High rates of depression, substance abuse, suicide,
- Negotiating living space as a member of the non-dominant culture,
- Potential isolation (or fear of isolation) from family and friends,
- Fears of being discovered and ostracized by peers and mentors,
- Intellectual alienation,
- Fear of under/un-employment upon graduation due to societal homophobia,
- Societal, family and intimate partner violence including sexual, physical, emotional, economic and structural violence and hate crimes, and
- Overall lack of social services designed for people with diverse gender identity and sexual orientation

droMo is a student based group and as our members pay compulsory students' association fees every semester, we decided to apply for affiliation to the USP Students Association Laucala Campus (USPLSA).

Getting affiliated would mean we have access to the same resources available to other affiliated groups- including the right to request financial assistance from USPLSA and be recognised as part of the larger student body at USP.

The USPLSA Council is made up of young student leaders from the 12 Pacific countries which make up USP and some of these leaders refused to endorse *droMo* due to reasons ranging from "religious beliefs", and "cultural and moral values". I have even been at the receiving end of hate mail from one of the Council members who warned me to "stop the propaganda." Others have chosen to ignore us and have not acknowledged any emails or phone calls.

There was active resistance to *droMo's* efforts to affiliate with the USPLSA from current Officeholders. Since October last year, *droMo* has been using all official channels to affiliate but our proposal had been slowed, openly obstructed and was postponed until the first meeting of the USPLSA Council in March this year. Following the meeting, *droMO* was informed that its bid for affiliation had been unsuccessful. **However, a week later the USPSA Federal Council (comprising of executives from the 14 campuses around the region) overturned that decision and accepted *droMO's* application.**

Despite the overt discrimination and setbacks, *droMo* was determined to get official recognition. We pride ourselves for being the only group on campus that is inclusive of everyone, gay or straight and we do not restrict our membership based on ethnicity, religion or discipline of study. We hope to provide more equality, recognition, respect and acceptance of LGBT students because we are proud of who we are. Most importantly, we will not change or blend in because "you can't be anyone but yourself"!

About us

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

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 in Fiji, 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: _____

_____

Ph: _____

Email: _____

Fiji Women's Rights Movement
Ph: (679) 3313156 Fax: 331 3466
website: www.fwrm.org.fj
Email: info@fwrm.org.fj
Mail: GPO Box 14194, Suva, Fiji Is

LOOKOUT!

ELF Graduation

Close to 16 young women will graduate from the Emerging Leaders' Forum (ELF) In May this year. This is the fifth round of ELF facilitated by the Fiji Women's Rights Movement. By graduation, the young women would have completed an intensive training programme over several months, covering topics such as feminism, globalisation, livelihoods, environment, the media, fundamentalisms and sexual rights. For more information contact the Young Women's Officer by email filomena@fwrm.org.fj

FWRM Website Revamp

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement's website is being revamped. Once up and running (in a month's time), it will feature up-to-date information on all our programmes as well as an interactive discussion forum. Users will also get an opportunity to subscribe to our e-newsletter Balance as well as view short documentaries on the environment produced by members of ELF 5. For more information contact our Communications Officer by email shazia@fwrm.org.fj

25th Anniversary Celebrations

In June this year the Fiji Women's Rights Movement turns 25! We are currently planning a gala night (for the later part of this year) to celebrate this herstoric occasion. If you would like to get involved or would like to know more about it, email info@fwrm.org.fj