FIJI WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT
Balance
"HELPING TO BALANCE THE SCALES"
July 2/2011

ELF 5 graduate

By **Shazia Usman**

LAST month was certainly a cause for celebration for the women's movement in Fiji as 15 young women graduated and joined the ever-growing Emerging Leaders' Forum Alumni (ELFA).

ELF is a year-long activity for young women between the ages of 18-25 and falls under the Fiji Women's Rights Movement's Young Women in Leadership Programme. The main objectives of ELF, which started in 2004, is to introduce emerging leaders to issues facing young women in Fiji and worldwide and to allow for in-depth discussion so that various important topics and current affairs may be better understood.

During the training, which began in November last year, participants were introduced to issues surrounding human rights, feminism, trade, sexual reproductive health rights, media, mental health, environment and violence against women – all from a women's human rights perspective.

This year marked the fifth successful year of the activity and a total of 79 young women have since graduated.

According to FWRM's Executive Director Virisila Buadromo, it is always heartening to see a "new lot of young women graduating and joining the ever-growing ELF Alumni".

All the graduates came from a diverse cultural and social-economic background and were very "excited" to graduate.

For Jasmine Kaur, "the whole programme has been very educational. I especially enjoyed the sessions on women and trade".

For Betty Bharka the happiness of graduating was mixed with the sadness of all the interesting "sessions coming to an end".

"I am excited and sad at the same time because I really bonded with my fellow ELFs' and I won't see them as often anymore. But I am really looking forward to joining the ELF Alumni and coming up with new activities to do," said Sarah Vamarasi, adding that the sessions on violence against women and the different gender roles were a really an eye-opener.

Aside from information sessions and training, the ELFs' also formulated and implemented advocacy plans on the theme Women and Sustainable Livelihoods. They also scripted and recorded a series of 1-2 minute films on Gender and Climate Justice. These films features the Green Girls - a group of young environment enthusiasts between the ages of 10-12 (also part of FWRM's YWLP) – and aims to inform, educate and communicate to audiences the importance of climate change and environment from a gender perspective. These videos were showcased at the graduation and can also be viewed on FWRM's newly revamped website.

In previous years, the ELF's have produced various Information, Education and Communication materials as part of the training. These include:

- Headstrong (2004) - a booklet featuring profiles of various women role models.
- Dauvosa (2005) a - journal for young women containing information on various topics covered during the ELF programme which included women and the law, the economy and globalisation, sexual violence and the environment.
- Be the Change (2006) - a documentary on young women leaders 'being the change' in their communities.
- Unveiled (2009) - a journal for young women featuring artwork by various Pacific female artists. The journal also included information related to women's health - sexually transmitted infections, myths about women's bodies and women's sexual and reproductive health.

Keynote speaker for the graduation was UN-WOMEN's Elizabeth Cox who congratulated the young women and wished them all the best in the any further leadership responsibilities they may undertake.

Graduates of the 2011 Emerging Leaders' Forum

WE TURN 25 THIS YEAR!

Turn to pages 5-8 for:
- an interview with one of FWRM's founding members Shamima Ali;
- collection of vintage photographs; and
- words from our well-wishers

From the Director's desk

Greetings from FWRM!

CONTINUING with the 25th anniversary celebrations, this quarter's publication profiles one of our founders, Shamima Ali, who is also the coordinator of our BIG sister organisation, the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC). Read about how herstory and the organisations' stories are intertwined and have formed such a solid foundation for the women's movement in Fiji. Shamima's recount is both inspirational and educational as it makes us remember the contributions that those before us have made.

Unfortunately, many of the achievements made a quarter of a century ago at the national level, are no longer available to us today. One of this happens to be our right to gather and reflect on our achievements and challenges as we try to develop strategies for the futue.

Virisila and FWRM Board Chair Gina Houng Lee celebrating with ELF Alumni

FWRM experienced this loss of "achievement" earlier this month when the police shut-down our planning retreat on July 1st, stating that we had breached the Public Emergency Regulations by not applying for a permit.

While the situation was quite traumatic for staff and partners present at the planning, the quick thinking and calm approach of the FWRM team managed to calm nerves and allay fears. Special mention goes to FWCC's Shamima Ali and Edwina Kotoisuva for getting in touch with the necessary people, as well as to Pacific Centre for Peacebuilding's Koila Costello Olsson for her support. On that note, I would also like to extend our sincere appreciation and gratitude for all the emails, phone calls, Facebook messages and Tweets of solidarity from all over the world!

On a happier note, we are pleased to bring to you in this issue, details on the graduation of 15 young women from FWRM's year-long Emerging Leaders Forum. Congratulations ELFs! We look forward to your continued engagement in our joined feminist journey!

As suggested by one of our founding members Shamima Ali on the need to continue with our legal literacy work, FWRM will soon working with communities in this area. Read our interview with Shamima for more details.

There is a lot more in this issue which you are sure to enjoy, so sit back and enjoy and do not hesitate to send us any feedback you may have, to info@fwrm.org.fj .

Enjoy this edition!

In solidarity,
Virisila Buadromo
PS – You can now follow us on Facebook and Twitter!

Birthday shutdown!

THE Fiji's Women's Rights Movement's (FWRM) birthday retreat and planning at the Pearl Resort in Pacific Harbor was shut down by police on July 1st

FWRM Executive Director Virisila Buadromo was taken in for questioning by the police over alleged breach of the Public Emergency Regulations (PER). She was accompanied by fellow staff member and lawyer Roshika Deo. It was noted that another NGO was holding their strategic planning event at the same venue and were not interrupted by the police.

At around 9.30 in the morning, a police officer from the Central Investigation Department enquired with the hotel event coordinator whether FWRM had a permit for the retreat. After being relayed the query, Virisila informed the officer that the event was an internal FWRM planning and that 25 representatives of FWRM staff, management board and partners were spending three days reflecting on their achievements over the 25 years.

Despite assurances from Virisila that the gathering was part of FWRM's annual internal planning for which a permit was not required, the police insisted that she be taken in for questioning to the Pacific Harbor station. The officer reiterated that FWRM had contravened provisions PER. When Buadromo agreed to accompany him with a lawyer, he insisted that a lawyer's presence would not be needed.

Virisila however, insisted that it was within her rights.

At the police station Virisila and Roshika were told to wait while the officer *"consulted his superiors."* During that time, Virisila called several women human rights defenders as well as a human rights lawyer to inform them of the situation. She was advised by the lawyer to request that her statement be given in Suva, in his presence. This request was denied by the police (however, later in the afternoon she was requested to come to the police station in Suva the next morning).

After half an hour of phone calls between the police officer and someone at the Suva CID headquarters, Virisila and Roshika, were informed that charges would not be pressed but the meeting had to be dispersed and that this should be viewed as a *"warning."* Whilst waiting at the station, a police officer told Roshika *"it's because you are an activist that is why they have brought you in …..to check!"*

Both women returned to the Pearl Resort with the police officer to confirm that the planning was shut down.

No charges were pressed against FWRM.

Strategic Conversations

ON June 9-11, 2011, thirty feminist activists, academics, and experts from around the world met at Rutgers University to participate in a "Strategic Conversation on the Intersections of Militarism and Violence Against Women" organized by the Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL).

The importance of this conversation was reinforced by a number of events that were happening around the world simultaneously:

7 June 2011 in Medellin, Colombia: Ana Fabricia Codoba, a committed women human rights defender and peace advocate, was assassinated while traveling on a bus because of her outspoken advocacy for the rights of displaced persons and victims of violence.

10 June 2011 in Baghdad's Tahrir Square, Iraq: Demonstrators were brutally targeted with sexual assaults and beatings by men who were reportedly bussed in by the thousands to disrupt the weekly protest. The activists, who work with the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq, report that their attackers were organized and paid by government security forces, which used the un-uniformed men to avoid accountability for the violence.

10-12 June in the Nyakiele area, South Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo: Reports of rape of more than 100 women as part of the ongoing conflict in the region.

Each of these attacks provides a snap shot of different aspects of militarism and violence against women and can be tied to the prevalence of militaristic mindsets, the availability, threat and use of weapons, and gendered power relations.

These cases also capture how militarism as an ideology creates a culture of fear and supports the use of violence, aggression, or military interventions for settling disputes and enforcing economic and political interests. It becomes clear that militarism is an ideology that often has grave consequences for the safety and security of women, girls, and society as a whole. Participants in the strategic conversation discussed how these issues arise and set out to investigate what the feminist response to this ideology is and should be.

FWRM's Virisila Buadromo with fellow participants

Participants at the Strategic Conversation spent three days in small group sessions and report-back plenaries, brainstorming about the conceptual framing of these topics and strategies for moving feminist analysis and advocacy forward. Some of the key discussions centered on: the importance of redefining security in terms of human rights and non-military solutions, the manner in which patriarchy, militarism, and big business interests intersect, and the normalization of violence and the socialization of people to militaristic ideologies from a young age.

Participants also debated about working with police and military vs. challenging current structures, possible strategies for supporting women human rights defenders and women political actors and peace-builders as they are involved in peaceful protests and social/political change efforts, and the importance of compiling both quantitative data and personal stories that help illustrate the global interconnections of militarism and violence against women.

A number of strategies emerged from the meeting, and CWGL will be working to incorporate these suggestions into its activist toolkit for this year's 16 Days Campaign. For example, CWGL plans to launch a participatory project that asks people to share, "What does security mean to you?" through short video and written entries. During the campaign, activists will also be asked to do an analysis of their country's national budget, detailing the percentages spent on military vs. spending on achieving economic and social rights. The final step will be to compare whether people's priorities regarding security match up to their government's spending.

Bringing gender to the clubs

RESPECT was a main point of discussion at a recent training facilitated by the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM). FWRM was extremely pleased to be approached by Matrix Holdings to train its security and service staff – from O'Reillys, Shenanigan's and Bad Dog Café - on gender and human rights.

The training request was a part of a series of trainings that the management of Matrix Holdings had organised for its staff to equip them with different skills that they may be able to use at work and at home. One woman and 15 men participated in the training.

Participants at the training.

Image courtesy of *Matrix Holding*

By **Neomai Maravuakula**

The topics of the training included **breaking down the roles of men and women and the different factors that determined these roles.** Participants discussed this in relation to their work and assessed whether they sometimes let their own perceptions of these gender roles affect how they treat their customers. The training also discussed the rights that people are entitled to. The aim of this session was to emphasize that people, regardless of their sex, gender, race, religion or economic status, must not be discriminated against. This was an important session as their work requires them to serve and interact with a lot of different people from different backgrounds.

Cont'd on page 10

How are women surviving the economic struggle in Fiji

"I don't think our pay is fair. The prices of things are increasing and at the moment our pay is on a fixed line."

"We really don't get enough from the sugar cane farming. Everything is really expensive. I have thought of maybe selling vegetables if sugar cane farming is not good."

"I have never worked before and never thought of it. But now when I think of the household expenses, I think I have to work outside."

"I have to adjust [to my weekly earnings of] $40. I take out $7 for the rent. Then one week, I will buy big bag of flour. Next week it will be rice or oil. I spend $20 on that and take out $10 for my bus fare. It is $1.40 return."

These may be the comments of four women but it summarizes the daily hardships of many women in Fiji, according to a research undertaken by the Fiji Women's Rights Movement this year.

The research looks at how women in Fiji have been affected by the economic downturn that Fiji has been experiencing for over a decade now. This study has looked at women all over Fiji with specific focus on women in tourism, civil service, teachers, and nurses, women in sugar cane farming, market vendors, domestic workers and sex workers. Often, we hear about economic struggles through numbers, not through faces and stories. This study presents both.

Women from all works of life in the country have shared similar experiences of rise in food prices and low wages. The severe hardships faced by women in Fiji have not only caused a dent in their savings and incomes, but also in their family life, their health and emotional well-being.

By **Shabina Khan**

Since 1990's women are doing their best to move up the ladder in all avenues for national building and stability. However, after the political instability of 2000 and 2006, these very women who moved up ladder, suffered a downfall.

The impact of the instability on the women, who are the very backbone of the country and who play a huge part in nation building is beyond imagination. Women are now made to work more for the same price or even less. There is no "decree" protecting their interests.

For some women who are involved in the cane farming industry, the cry to fix a broken bridge, which may not end all their woes, but surely make their life easier by lowering transportation costs, is seen as insignificant.

For some women who are in the civil service, the many years of savings are being secretly withdrawn to continue providing the usual meals at home without creating a fight with the husbands.

Similarly, women in the garment sector experience the difficulties of low wages against the harsh choices they have to make. For them the "easy option" is to overlook their own health and do more work. Many opt to work overtime, seek supplementary employment, and spend the little time they have for rest, on subsistence gardening for food.

The well-being of women is a basic but important indicator for the fulfillment of women's rights. These struggles clearly show how far behind Fiji is in achieving this.

The findings of this research will be publicized by the end of this year.

Poor Relief Society Food Ration Distribution 2008

The right to a safe working environment

WHILE relaying to a friend that International Whores Day was being commemorated in Fiji, the look of surprise and shock (and the questions that followed) reinforced the stigma and pejorative of the word whore.

Every year on June 2, the world marks International Whores Day to commemorate the 1975 direct action taken by around 150 street based sex workers in Lyon, France to highlight the police harassment and violence perpetrated against them including the refusal of government to engage in dialogue.

They occupied Lyon's historic St Nizer Church for one week until they were violently evicted by the police. This action by the sex workers in Lyon inspired sex workers in other provinces to take similar actions of protest around France.

In Fiji, the Survivors Advocacy Network (SAN) commemorated the day by inviting the public to attend a discussion forum on the theme ***"All workers have the right to a safe working environment"*** which is in line with International Labour Organisation standards that includes sex workers as workers.

By **Roshika Deo**

Panelists discussed the impact of the Crimes Decree, provisions of legal aid services, sex workers right while been detained, and police policy in regards to sex workers.

The event was attended by numerous sex workers, civil society organisations, activists and state.

Panelist and sex worker rights advocate Rani Ravudi said:

"*Stigma and discrimination is common by the state and non state actors. Influential people in local communities and the larger society such as religious leaders, media, teachers, law enforcement officers and parliamentarians play an important role in setting local norms regarding the ways in which prostitution should be viewed and how sex workers are treated. Sex workers face many forms of abuse by police officers and sometimes their own communities and families as a result of lack of access to the justice system. This lack of legal protection makes them vulnerable to violence, extortion and other forms of abuse.*"

She also reminded the audience *"that sex work is the oldest profession in the world and it is not going to stop or disappear regardless of whether laws make it illegal. Therefore it is a waste of police and court time and money making it a crime. Instead by making sex work illegal the state is creating an environment where sex workers are beaten, verbally abused, and sexually abused with no support or help. Women who are forced into prostitution, children or young people who are forced into prostitution by family or friends have no way to seek help because of the law. So the best thing a country can do is to assist sex workers to take control of their lives, work in a safe environment, prevent underage sex workers and the spread of HIV by decriminalizing sex work or at least stop police and community abuse of sex workers now."*

Events such as this allows us all to unite in creating awareness and demanding an end to discrimination, harassment and violence that sex workers are subjected at various levels.

It enables us to challenge society perceptions and stereotypes based on whore-phobic attitude.

SILVER JUBILEE

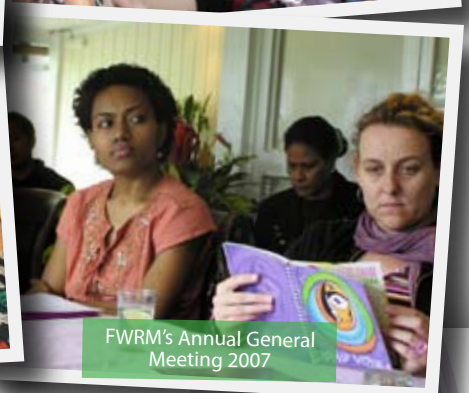
10th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women 2007 in Noumea

Activism!

DAWN training in Port Moresby, PNG

ELF Alumni Maraia, Jacque and Rosie

FWCC's Edwina Kotoisuva at the 20th anniversary of Asia Pacific Forum on Women & Development (2006)


FWRM's Annual General Meeting 2007

FWRM
FIJI WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Celebrating 25 years of balancing the scales

June 30th 1986 - June 30th 2011

Gina Houng Lee at a Conference of Pacific Women 1999

Girls Can Do Anything Retreat

Girls Can Do Anything

Legal Litracy Training in Savusavu 2005

Participants at the DAWN Training 2007

Regional Feminist Legal Training 2007

A quarter century of collaboration

SILVER JUBILEE

For any movement to grow and sustain itself, it needs the helping hand of its members. This year, as the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) celebrates its 25 years of existence, it also pays homage to one of its important allies in this feminist journey – the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre. FWRM's Shazia Usman talks to one of the most instrumental women in the Movement's herstory - Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC) Coordinator **Shamima Ali**, who continues to mentor and champion women's human rights in Fiji.

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

It all started when FWCC opened its doors to the women of Fiji in 1984. Our core area of work was supposed to be offering counselling services to survivors (women and children) of all forms of violence. However, around 18 months (April 1985) into attending to women (and this included accompanying them to court and medical clinics), we realised that things were not right for women at the policy and legislative level. With this disparity in mind, we decided that there was an immediate need for another group, a more academically inclined group, to draft policies and advocate for legislative reform. The initial meeting was called by FWCC and come members of the YWCA Public Affairs Committee (aside from me, this included Tupou Vere, Tess Marie Fulham, Helen Sutherland, and Salote Malo etc.) During that meeting it was agreed by all present that there was a need to work at the policy level and that we needed to invite other interested people who had the relevant expertise to carry this forward. At that time there were no women's organisation that had a rights based approach. FWCC and FWRM were the only ones doing work in this area overtly. We approached Nazhat Shameem to join us as she came from a law background but she was unable to assist us as she was leaving to pursue studies overseas; she suggested we approach Imrana Jalal. Imrana agreed to come on board and was quite instrumental. There were also women such as Kuini Bavadra who also became involved in the cause. We would get together and have meetings at our homes. We then decided to hold a public meeting and were quite pleased when around 80 women turned up! Imrana, Kuini, Helen, Suliana Siwatibau and I each gave a presentation on the various aspects of women's rights that we believed at that time was not being addressed and were problematic. All women present at the meeting, decided that we needed another organisation to deal with these disparities and that is how FWRM was born.

Then came the part where we needed funding. So we all helped in the fundraising by having lunches and potluck dinners. More women joined the movement, such as 'Atu Emberson Bain and Peni Moore. From the 80 women, 20 remained an integral part of the Movement's set-up. Women such as Shireen Lateef also assisted later on. As we received more funding we decided to employ people to do the work and Peni became the first Coordinator. FWRM adopted a collective management model of operating.

I believe that this was a very effective way of building up a movement – a more active, analytical and academic level. Even though we were all working at different levels (some at the community level and some at the policy), we ensured that everyone fit in. Both these levels are complementary to each other and both need the other to function.

How have FWCC and FWRM collaborated over the years?

Since its set-up, both FWCC and FWRM collaborated with each on issues and we have both been each other's strongest allies. This, I believe, is because both are women's rights based organisations that have a feminist outlook. Over the years we have also shared resources to get the work done. When FWRM was having difficulties in securing funding, we shared resources to conduct activities.

Sharing a light moment, Shamima with FWRM Board Chair Gina Houng Lee

As we have been collaborating for so long, the management teams of both organisations have an immediate understanding and consensus on important issues. Like any movement, we have also had our moments and we experienced a bit of rift some years back but circumstances always pull us back together. We have needed each other in times of difficulty, especially during coups. It is these things that make us realise that we are working on the same issues, within a similar framework, and stand up for democracy, rule of law, human rights. These are the things that bind the two organisations together.

The Movement is doing good work for the women of Fiji. I feel however, that FWRM should restart its legal literacy trainings and campaign. They used to undertake this work and it also complemented FWCC's work. People are not aware of all the decrees that are coming out and that makes a difference. So we are hoping to collaborate with FWRM in this area.

As you know, its FWRM's 25th anniversary, is there anything you would like to say to the Movement?

FWCC congratulates FWRM on the work that the Movement has done over the years, particularly in the area of Family Law Act, the Employment Relations Bill and the fact that the Movement is fighting all odds to survive. FWRM also has a very youthful image and has managed to bring in a lot of young women. With their Emerging Leaders' Forum (ELF), I believe the younger women have found a niche for themselves. That is a unique programme for Fiji and the Pacific. And the Movement has to be congratulated on that.

Compared to the last 25 years, do you think young women today still have the passion for women's rights work?

You need people of all ages in the Movement and when you bring in young women you have to constantly mentor them. There is a place for everyone in the family – whether you are a 100 or 10 years old. And for those of us who have gone before, it's our duty to create those spaces. When people come in with the josh, the enthusiasm, you need to encourage that and you need to have space for that to flourish. People need to understand that having a degree does not make a worker automatically gender-sensitised. You need to train people. While ELF is a great programme, I believe there is always room for improvement. It can be a lot more rounded and in depth in terms of consciousness. But yes, we do welcome young women into the movement and we hope this trend continues.

Messages from members

FWCC congratulates FWRM on the work that the Movement has done over the years, particularly in the area of Family Law Act, the Employment Relations Bill and the fact that the Movement is fighting all odds to survive. FWRM also has a very youthful image and has managed to bring in a lot of young women. With their Emerging Leaders' Forum (ELF), I believe the younger women have found a niche for themselves. That is a unique programme for Fiji and the Pacific. And the Movement has to be congratulated on that.

Shamima Ali
Fiji Women's Crisis Centre
Coordinator

I was a volunteer at FWRM in 2001 and in 2003, and supporter and friend ever since. FWRM can take credit for creating my addiction to libraries, a passion that has served me well ever since. Happy birthday FWRM!

Eleanor Kleiber

From all the women at International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) in Australia we send huge congratulations to FWRM for your 25th year celebrations. We have travelled together through partnership since 1987. For all that you have achieved through networks, projects, resource centres, campaigns, training, advocacy, research or media and for all the change that is yet to come.....FWRM's vision and courage shines on. We share your journey with love and respect.

Jo Hayter
Executive Director
IWDA

I have seen FWRM on the ground while I was working in Fiji and have also been watching since being back in Australia.
FWRM is the bravest group that there is in Fiji. They are principled and do fantastic work. In spite of a less that welcoming environment they get down and work in exciting ways with groups of women to open up horizons and minds.

Kathryn Choules

I am proud to be a trustee of FWRM, an organisation that has been a staunch defender of human rights since its inception. This is a particularly significant achievement as FWRM operates in a difficult environment that is currently openly hostile to many fundamental human rights.

Helen Tavola

Since I joined FWRM in September of last year, I've found the experience of working among women who are passionate at what they do to be empowering, liberating and very rewarding in the sense that a lot of issues pertaining to gender/women that is often disregarded is brought into perspective and addressed within the Movement. It's amazing to note that 25 years on is continuing the AWESOME work of empowering women in recognising their individuality and in promoting human rights.

Mereoni Tavakaturaga

As CSO partner and friend of FWRM, I see FWRM as this:

F / Fiji
W / Women
R / Respects
M / Men as their Equals.

Joseph Camillo
Ecumenical Centre for Research, Education and Advocacy

Congratulations on your 25th birthday, in this very important and critical period in the history of FWRM.

As we remember you, I am reminded of the role you have played throughout this period in the democratic and feminist movement - not just in Fiji , but in the region. I remember as a young activist, over 20 years ago, when mapping the leadership of the people's movement in Asia and the Pacific, invariably, there would be two at the very top of the list, GABRIELA in the Philippines , and FWRM in Fiji . At a time when most of us were struggling to establish not only the women's movement and the people's democratic movement, FWRM was already evolved and mature, and the early leaders of your organisation inspired all of us to aspire higher, with their in-depth analysis, and thorough understanding of the ways in which the various pillars of democracy - the media, judiciary and civil society - contributed to sustainable and people-centred development.

We continue to look to you in this era of regressive politics in the country, where your struggles continue to inspire us, not only because of your forbearance in the face of illegal and unacceptable provocation, but also the resilience, fortitude and undying spirit of solidarity that you continue to hold towards the people, and especially the women in Fiji .

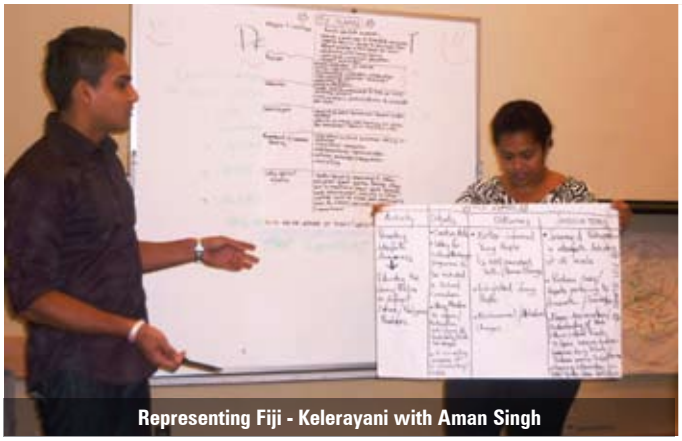
We only wish we could do more, to return greater democracy to this exquisitely beautiful island of yours, and the peace and generosity that infused the peoples of your land before.

With best wishes,

Sham and the team at ARROW

Wansolwara Youth Peace-building Conference

One of the Movement's newest Emerging Leaders Forum alumni, Kelerayani Gavidi recently attended a youth peace-building conference in Auckland, New Zealand last month. Kelerayani was one of the two participants representing Fiji at the conference and shared her experience with Balance:



Representing Fiji - Kelerayani with Aman Singh

Kelerayani with a fellow participant at the conference

By **Kelerayani Gavidi**

The first *Wansolwara** Youth Peace-building Conference (WYPC) was held in Auckland from 20 to 23 in June. Eighteen young people between the ages of 18-25 years representing fourteen Pacific Island Forum countries met at the Conference to discuss ways of developing their capacities to promote undertake and support peace-building activities within the Pacific region.

Peace-building involves many approaches and processes aimed at strengthening relations and engagement between individuals and various stakeholders. Peace-building included fostering unity, reconciling differences, relationship-building and establishing greater social cohesion amongst people, young and old, and involved engagement and dialogue with all social institutions and different cultures. By engaging young people as agents of peace-building, we will be able to contribute constructively to and assist our respective governments, regional and civil society organisations, and other stakeholders in developing and supporting best practices, policy processes and mechanisms for peace-building within our local communities and the wider Pacific region.

The conference brought together a unique group of youth from across 14 different countries that speak 16 different languages and have 23 very different pasts.

The 4-day conference utilised interactive question and answer sessions on how to identify, evaluate and respond to conflict within different Pacific nations.

This opportunity was something that I will never forget and I feel has given me additional leverage on the platform of youth leadership and advocacy. I choose to see it as a way of gaining knowledge and greater networks across the region, therefore encompassing the issues of young people as a whole and not only from one nations' perspective.

We looked at issues that affected our young people in the Pacific including gender equality, gendered perceptions, culture and tradition, social policies, international funding and proposal writing, crime and rehabilitation, youth leadership, good governance, human rights and youth advocacy.

It was amazing to be able to discuss and share with youths from all over the Pacific about the work that they do back at home and how youths in their home countries are dealing with both similar and different issues. As young people I feel that we should allow for spaces to share and to learn, and this was what I found in Auckland! I always maintain that young people have the uncanny ability to create, innovate and design new avenues. Therefore we should share our ideas with each other whenever we can.

Creating new networks as well is vital for any young person but it should also encompass not only other youths but organisations, both regional and international. This allows for more information sharing and resource planning. Young people have the creativity and innovation to make that change, to push for something better. We have the energy and the passion to make a difference! I find that as young people, we are able to bridge the gap that has existed. With the advanced education and technological advantages of today, we as young people can be trained to marry this to our traditional and cultural values and use it to help our people move forward. I believe that appreciating our cultural and traditional knowledge is important because that is part of our identity; it is the essence of who we are.

As an outcome of the conference, there was a collective youth statement that was created and I was happy to have been part of the team that coordinated it. It serves to remind our elders and decision makers of the important role that we, as young people, as young men and young women, play in our society today. It literally is our cry to them to not only read and hear but to LISTEN. We also have a vision of tomorrow, of how we would like to be utilised in the decision making and coordination of our respective governments.

I hope to disseminate and reflect all that I have learnt to my fellow youths. I am no more superior for having attended the conference but am rather an equal and I wish my brothers and sisters to know that. You inform a young person and the ripple effect begins! So it's essential that the knowledge gained is shared and fine-tuned to the context of that situation.

I acknowledge with appreciation the kind support and assistance of the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP), the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as well as the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), in facilitating arrangements for this Conference.

**Wansolwara is pidgin for One Ocean One People*

Insist, Persist, Resist, Exist!

By **Mereoni Tavakaturaga-Robinson** and **Ekta Singh**

ON May 12 this year, staff of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) set out on an ambitious task of implementing a NO JUNK FOOD POLICY (NJFP) within the office.

Any food classified as junk food by the staff and interns could not be brought into or consumed within the office premises. To document the experience, the staff were encouraged to record their daily experiences and views during the month long initiative.

The NJFP was harder then what most of us had anticipated since it began. The first time the staff were hit by the gravity of what they were committing to, was when our staff member Kameli was treated to a sugarless birthday treat of fruit, nuts, muesli bars and honey as a substitute for sugar - with no cake in sight!

Although it proved to be the first of its kind, the staff of FWRM continued to "INSIST, PERSIT, RESIST and EXIST with the NJFP. Once the one month had passed the staff had actually contemplated extending the term as everyone had felt that it was more of a benefit than torture, but we were also reminded of withdrawal like symptoms that were evident in the behaviour of certain staff members from the lack of sugar. All in all, the NJFP taught us the value of our health and how important it is to live life in a positive way.

The NJFP also laid the foundation for other activities that the staff undertook to live up to the commitment they made towards living a healthier and active life.

Two of the major events staff participated in were the annual Olympic Fun Run in Suva and team building exercises at the Kila Eco Adventure Park in Namosi.

In June FWRM's Programme Manager Naeemah Khan encouraged staff members to be part of an Olympic Fun Run during teams would run, jog, or walk the designated distance. Certain staff members attended together with their partners and friends. The FWRM representatives that attended together with the support of their family members were FWRM's Board Chair Gina Houng with Virisila, Naeemah, Filomena, and Shazia. The FWRM "crew" were divided into two teams for the activity. Both teams completed the 10 km distance race - Team 1 finished the race in less than an hour while Team 2 completed the race in just over an hour.

This month, FWRM staff spent a day undertaking team building exercises at the renowned heart stopping adventure park, which certainly lived up to its name. The day begun with a 440m long zip line across trees from a height that would make an acrophobia's knee tremble. A self-confessed acrophobic and staff member Ekta said "as soon as I had reached the top and looked down, I felt a sudden ticklish feeling in my knees." However challenging and scary it was for Ekta and other staff members (whose names will not be mentioned), all members braved the heart racing activity.

The rest of the activities after this, were all low level ones consisting of the spider web, the tension traverse, a short rope "Tarzan" like swinging activity and the trust fall. All four activities proved to be physically challenging for the two teams which staff members were divided into. Both teams saw their fair share of falls, momentary episodes of leadership based on which member was contributing to how a task could be solved at any given time, blisters, skin grazes, mud splatted clothes and most of all, learning to trust each other as a team and ourselves.

Team trust became more crucial during the Trust Fall task whereby each staff member would fall from a platform into the arms of the rest of the staff who were standing in a straight line, facing each other with outstretched hands ready to catch the falling staff member. We came away from Kila world with a renewed sense of trust for each other, self confidence, and drive to be more vigilant with gym attendance as a means of improving physical fitness and maintaining our strive for a healthier way of living.

Bringing gender to the clubs (cont'd)

From page3

The training generated a lot of discussions as the participants shared their experiences on what was expected of them. In their different capacities, they have to ensure the safety of their customers, while also guaranteeing that the business makes money and that the property is protected at the same time.

The participants also shared accounts of their interactions with customers. One of the biggest challenges they face is ensuring customers enjoy themselves in a safe environment, and at the same time handling situations professionally when customers become rowdy and create a scene.

The two and a half day session culminated in group discussions where the facilitators shared five scenarios that different staff members at FWRM had experienced with the security staff at the different establishments. The different scenarios illustrated how customers may be discriminated against by the security staff. This was an interesting exercise as the participants had to discuss how they could apply what they had learnt during the training. The participants highlighted "what the discrimination" in each scenario was and how this may be addressed differently. This gave the participants a better understanding of the sessions that the facilitators had taken them through.

With this training FWRM hopes that the security staff will incorporate what they have learnt into their every day work.

The Uglies

Excerpted from www.disabledfeminists.com (published March 20, 2010)

Book Review : www.disabledfeminists.com
Author : Scott Westerfeld

I RECENTLY finished Uglies, which is not about disability, but does have some themes which I think are disability related. It is a really interesting book and it touches upon some intriguing themes and material. It is actually the first in a series of books (The Uglies/Pretties/Specials/Extra).

The world of Uglies is one in which everyone is surgically altered at 16 to look more or less the same. To look, in fact, "pretty." This homogenised society is supposed to be less filled with strife and argument because everyone is beautiful and has also had the experience of being "ugly," and the logic of the modifications is very much based in evolutionary psychology - people are modified to be highly symmetrical and to appear "vulnerable" and so forth.

When the story opens, we are introduced to the lead character, Tally, while she is still an "Ugly" and eagerly looking forward to the surgery. But she meets another character who introduces her to an alternative: running away to join a community of people who do not undergo modification. This character, Shay, is very opposed to the very idea of modification, even repulsed by it. Our heroine just wants to be pretty and go to all the pretty parties and is very resistant to the whole idea.

As a reader, I immediately felt a parallel here with cure evangelism. In the society we live in, it is assumed that everyone wants to be cured and in fact cures are forced upon us, just like the surgery in Uglies. "It's for your own good," the argument goes, and ample arguments are mustered to show you how terrible things will be if you are not cured.

The "Uglies" give each other nicknames based on supposedly ugly aspects of their bodies. They bodyshame themselves and each other and eagerly look forward to the time when they will be "Pretties." Once Prettified, people are modified later into Middle Pretties, once they reach adulthood and start working, and then again as they transition into old age, but naturally aged people do not exist. A society of perfection is hardly a new thing in science fiction, but it's still interesting to see how different authors play with the concept.

Uglies unfortunately does not touch upon racial issues very much. I'm hoping that this changes with the series because it seems like an obvious thing to explore in a book series about a society which is homogenised to an extreme degree.

No One Killed Jessica

Film Review by **Roshika Deo**

NO One Killed Jessica is a Bollywood movie that was released worldwide in early January this year. Although the movie preview was played in the Fiji cinemas, the movie itself was not released in the local cinema. I was disappointed to say the least. Upon query, I was told that the movie was censored because of its "indecent language".

Bollywood cinema makes me experience a myriad of emotions and No One Killed Jessica is one such movie where I was inspired, angry, disgusted and disappointed.

No One Killed Jessica is based on the true story of Delhi model Jessica Lall who was shot dead in 1999 by Manish Bhardwaj, alias Manu, an influential politician's son in full view of the guests at the party. Lall was working at the bar in a Delhi restaurant and was shot for refusing to serve alcohol after the bar was closed. In 2006 the court had acquitted Manu and his friends due to lack of sufficient evidence. Following this, there was a public outcry in India where thousands of people through petitions by media channels and newspapers expressed their outrage. There were candle light vigils in New Delhi to show their protest against the court verdict. A t-shirt campaign in the politician's hometown (Chandigarh, Punjab) was also held for a week. Subsequently the case/investigation was reopened. A sting operation was also conducted by a media organization exposing the corruption. In December 2006 Manu was found guilty and imprisoned for life.

The movie No One Killed Jessica is a mix of fiction and nonfiction. The movie has focused considerably on the role of the media, and also brought up issues like corruption, intimidation, power abuse, nepotism, and independence of the judiciary, power of solidarity, activism and portrayal of women, among others.

Unlike mainstream Bollywood movies where women are portrayed mostly in submissive, stereotyped, sexualized and sacrificial roles within patriarchal settings, this movie showed women as protagonists and in non-conforming social roles, fighting for justice (and this is the reason I believe that this movie was not considered cinema/commercial/family/social worthy by local censors).

One of my favourite scenes is when there is a flashback of Jessica with her sister Sabrina (played by Vidya Balan) walking along the road and Sabrina gets sexually harassed by a man on the streets. Jessica reacts to the harassment by confronting the man and telling her sister that you have to "fight" for justice. In India the everyday sexual harassment of girls and women are a harsh reality and sadly so it is also a very harsh reality of our own society too. Violence against girls and women exist in our society in many forms either by the pull of a trigger or a lewd touch on the buttocks.

Another thing that resounded for me was the powerful role that the media can play in bringing about social changes and justice. Especially within strong patriarchal settings such as the Indian one (and the Pacific context) where women can use the media as a powerful advocacy tool to highlight issues, influence change and use it as an avenue to have a voice and seek liberty and empowerment.

I enjoyed watching the result of solidarity and how one person's leadership and activism can trigger others to fight for justice and equality.

I enjoyed TV journalist Meera Gaity (played by Rani Mukherjee) character. She was shown as a career oriented woman who was not afraid to speak her mind, frank in her approach, unapologetic in her ways, expressing frustration/surprise through cursing – a very real human portrayal. A refreshing change from the typical Bollywood where women are shown to be apologetic if she steps outside the expected gender role, where women prioritize getting married and having a family rather than following their careers and individual ambition – basically where women's role should be within the confines of patriarchy.

However there was one or two aspect of the movie that was disappointing for me. I seem to notice more and more that when Bollywood cinema attempts to portray women in strong characters they still fall short and end up doing injustice to women by sexually stereotyping independent career oriented women. The independent, modern attired and career oriented Meera is shown to be bad by being a bully to her workmates, having sexual desires and sex, and loves cursing whereas on the other hand the conservatively attired, not so independent, Sabrina is perceived as good because she is quiet, plain, apparently has no sex or sexual desires and does not curse. This is unfortunately a reflection of how society perceives independent career oriented women generally.

There are very few Bollywood movies that empower women and portray them in a positive and progressive light. So as long as you can discern the subtle or not so subtle stereotypes that are present, No One Killed Jessica is still a recommended watch for its other aspects which are inspiring.

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: _____

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_____

Ph: _____

Email: _____

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LOOKOUT!

FWRM will be attending **Secure Online Communications Workshop for Women Human Rights Defenders-Asia** from 25 July to 29 July 2011 in Manila, Philippines. This training is organised by Isis International, Global Campaign to Stop Violence Against Women in the name of "culture" (VNC Campaign). For more information contact the Communications Officer by email info@fwrm.org.fj

FWRM Website Revamp

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement's website is being revamped. Once up and running, 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 info@fwrm.org.fj

25th Anniversary Celebrations

We are currently planning a fun-day for November this year to celebrate our 25th anniversary. If you would like to get involved or would like to know more about it, email info@fwrm.org.fj