FIJI WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT
Balance
"HELPING TO BALANCE THE SCALES"
December 4/2012

Women nominate CA members

By **Vosita Lenisaurua**

THE Fiji Women's Forum (FWF) held its third national meeting from December 3-4 to discuss concerns around women's participation in the democratisation process. The two-day forum saw the gathering of 49 women from diverse backgrounds from all the four divisions.

The objective for this FWF was for co-conveners, the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM), Soqosoqo Vakamarama iTaukei (SSVM), National Council of Women (NCW), femLINKPACIFIC and their affiliates, to report on activities carried out over the last few months as mandated by the last two national forums; identify other issues and concerns from those activities and see if this created any change to the FWF key priorities; and to create a strategic plan of activities that will further enhance women's participation in the democratisation processes.

Part of the two-day process was also for the FWF members to nominate members to be part of the Constituent Assembly (CA). After establishing selection criteria, the FWF endorsed the 13 women as their official nominees to the CA:

1. Adi Vasulevu Chute
2. Asela Naisara
3. Bulou Lavenia Cabebula Lacabuka Yavala
4. Fane Lomani
5. Frances Namoumou
6. Jasbant Kaur
7. Laisana Rakula
8. Noelene Nabulivou
9. Po Lin Fong
10. Priscilla Singh
11. Roshika Deo
12. Vani Dulaki
13. Virisila Buadromo

All the women endorsed were selected based on a criterion that representatives to the constituent Assembly should be:

- Committed to women's development and representative of women of all ethnicity, age group, youth, women with disability, secular, rural, urban, transgender.
- They are to be recognized by the FWF, understand FWF's objectives and be accountable to FWF on content and process.
- They have relevant skills including ability to network, debate, negotiate, lobby and build strategic partnership and have a good command of gender neutral and sensitive language and be able to critically engage on all issues particularly in women's participation in decision making processes.
- Ability to articulate issues well and mediate effectively.
- Have a proven record of public service (working with people, not necessary a civil servant).
- Transparent and accountable.
- Willing to make a voluntary commitment, approachable and have the ability to be good public speaker with diplomacy skills.
- Fluent in English and another vernacular language with good communication skills
- Demonstrated leadership skill in the community and understand issues of rural women and is able to understand the budget process.

It was a historic moment for the FWF as members shared their experiences of conducting civic education that assisted to make submissions to the Constitution Commission. Six hundred and fifty individual and group submissions were made by women around Fiji, as a direct result of this assistance. Over 125 rights-based civic education campaigns and programmes were conducted, advocating the inclusion of a Bill of Rights and ways to increase women's participation in decision-making through Temporary Special Measures (TSM). This included the publication of a position paper by the FWF entitled *Balancing the Power: Promoting Women's Political Participation in Fiji Through Temporary Special Measures* (read more about this publication and other related advocacy materials by FWRM on page 5).

It was heartening to see that women in rural communities eager, to not only learn the importance of participating in constitution submission processes, but actually participating. A number of men also benefited from the civic education training conducted in the rural communities by members of the FWF.

There were also a number of challenges that women shared during the civic education trainings. A large number of women in rural communities did not have access to resources and transportation to travel to submission centres, usually located in the town/city-centre. Some trainers assisted participants by providing funds so that they could travel to make their submissions. This is extremely concerning as women may face similar challenges during elections in 2014 and may not be able to exercise their voting rights as a result. Some women felt that the spaces were not safe for them to speak or discuss their issues confidently. There is also a need to identify creative ways to include everyone's concerns in the process.

Other issues discussed were the urgent need to increase women's participation at the national level, with political party participation, as well as ongoing civic education to assist women in building their confidence and support; the need to network, share and discuss possibilities with other non-governmental organisations and partners where gender issues and concerns are addressed.

The FWF co-conveners will meet to discuss further plans in early January 2013 to help confirm plans and activities. A one-day debrief will also be conducted for those involved in the civic education sessions in the Central/Eastern, Western and Northern Divisions.

From the Director's desk

Greetings from FWRM!

Image courtesy of CCF

In the last quarter of this year, the Fiji Women's Rights Movement, as part of the NGO Coalition on Human Rights, with other supporters, marched in the streets of Suva to commemorate International Human Rights Day. This was the first time since 2009 that a permit was granted for a march to mark this global event.

Along with the co-conveners, FWRM, held the third Fiji Women's Forum in early December. As you have read in our front page story, the Forum was pleased to put forward the names of 13 capable women as potential representatives of the Constituent Assembly.

In preparation to hold three information sessions on voting rights with high school students in 2013, FWRM undertook a pilot study with high school students in Lakeba. You can read more about the outcomes of this study on page 4.

Also during this quarter, FWRM produced a number of publications and other advocacy materials which are available on our website. We urge you to have a look and use these resources . Please send us your feedback.

Also take some time to read our Lookout! section (back page) where we give a detailed list of some important activities the Movement is undertaking in the first quarter of 2013, especially the launch of our Girls Theater Programme and our plans for International Women's Day.

If you're visiting our office anytime soon, you will be pleasantly surprised to see that we have expanded – both in staff numbers and office space. We thank AusAID, who have offered us core support for the next three years thus making this expansion possible.

These are just some of the stories captured in this edition, as well as, highlights of activities planned in the next couple of weeks. As always, if you have any feedback, send it to info@fwrm.org.fj.

Enjoy this edition!

In solidarity,

Virisila Buadromo

FWRM grows

In the last quarter of the year, the Fiji Women's Rights Movement welcomed two new staff members on board to assist in the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

Lillian Delana joins the Movement as its new Administrative Assistant. This position was previously occupied by Kris Prasad, who is now FWRM's new Project Support Officer.

Lillian studied business management at the University of the South Pacific (USP), and also has experience in finance management. She was previously employed for a year by *The Fiji Times* as their subscription coordinator and the Fiji Hotel & Tourism Association as a finance officer for three and a half years.

According to Lillian she has "always wanted to work in an NGO" and "believes in FWRM's values in promoting good governance and promoting equal opportunity for women".

"I want to be more involved in a team that addresses issues affecting women in our society and make a difference in my own life, my community and the world at large."

FWRM also welcomes Vosita Lenisaurua as the new Women's Forum Coordinator. In her role as Coordinator, Vosita will be liaising with the four co-conveners of the Fiji Women's Forum, which aside from

Vosita and Lillian

FWRM, include Soqosoqo Vakamarama ITaukei, National Council of Women and femLINKPACIFIC.

She has a degree in sociology and psychology from USP and has experience in counselling and family therapy. Prior to joining FWRM, Vosita used to work at the Pacific Centre for Peacebuilding where she designed and conducted trainings, and also facilitated processes in the area of peace-building intervention; conflict analysis and transformation.

She also undertook several short courses at the Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg Virginia in the area of restorative justice and monitoring & evaluation. This experience led her to become the Coordinator of the Restorative Justice Programme, which worked in partnership with the Fiji Corrections Services Rehabilitation Programmes.

Both Lillian and Vosita can be contacted via email: lillian@fwrm.org.fj and vosita@fwrm.org.fj

A special Human Rights Day

While FWRM joined the NGO Coalition on Human Rights (of which it's a member) and the many others on December 10 to acknowledge Human Rights Day by taking part in a solidarity march in the streets of Suva, it had an extra special reason to celebrate life on the day.

After nine months of eagerly awaiting for our Programme Manager Tara Chetty to give birth, little Naya Sohana Chetty Taylor was born on the culminating day of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence Campaign.

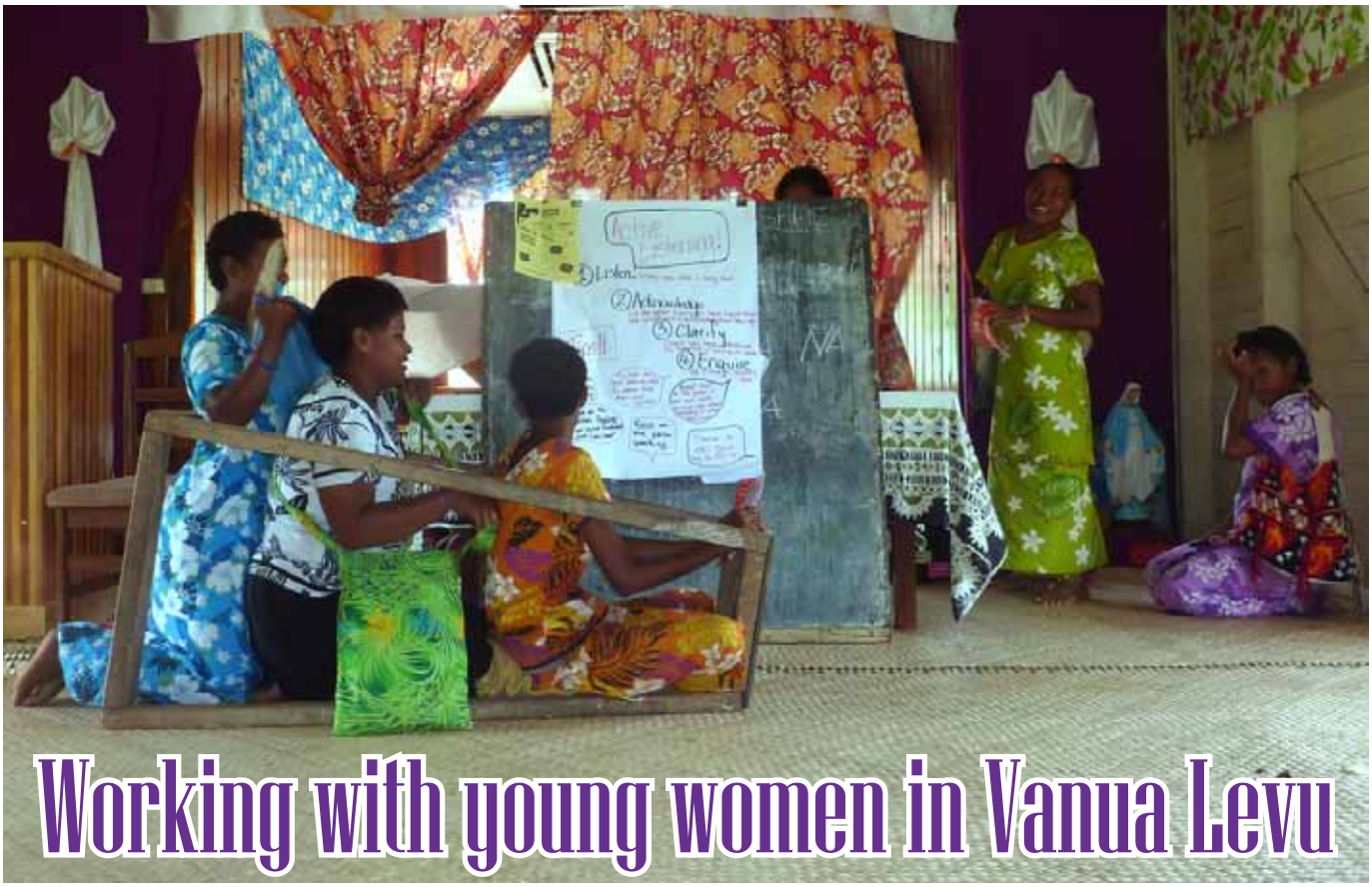
We asked the new mum what pregnancy was like for her; how motherhood is treating her so far and what are her some of her hopes and dreams for Naya:

*"It [*pregnancy*] was a great experience! Okay, maybe having "morning" or pregnancy sickness on a long distance flight to Istanbul wasn't so fun but apart from that I had a very happy healthy pregnancy. All the advice about staying active and keeping healthy and hydrated served me well. As for the travel, Naya can lay claim to having visited Istanbul, London, Malaysia and Australia, all before she was born!*

*It's [*motherhood*] been amazing, despite the usual sleep deprivation; we're just so enjoying our time with Naya. Motherhood has also reinforced my pro-choice beliefs, because having a child is such an interesting and happy experience - when you are ready and have the opportunity to choose to have a baby.*

I hope Naya is happy and healthy throughout a long life. I hope she has many opportunities - for education, leadership, a fulfilling career, love, friendships, family and fun. I hope she gets to enjoy our beautiful island environment - including the Pacific Ocean, and the forests, beaches and reefs of my own childhood. We need to protect our forests and coastlines, including the mangroves, so Naya and her friends will have the chance to enjoy them as well."

We wish the same for Naya and look forward to seeing her visit FWRM often after Tara resumes work in March.



Working with young women in Vanua Levu

By **Bronwyn Tilbury**

IN mid-November, the Fiji Women's Rights Movement's Young Women in Leadership team travelled to Vanua Levu to conduct training with young women between 18-25yrs old. The purpose of the trip was to test a basic self-esteem and respectful relationships training in a number of different contexts in order to determine which context, which group of women and what content would work best for an on-going Young Women's Leadership Programme outside of Suva.

FWRM chose to test the programme in Vanua Levu in rural and semi-urban contexts including Nawaido Village, Vunivau Settlement and Labasa Town. The content of the trainings covered topics around self awareness, leadership qualities, gender roles, respect, communication skills and problem solving. The content was basic for this testing phase due to the limited time available for each workshop, and the consequent lack of time to develop trust and a safe space to talk about issues like safe sex, domestic violence and Sexually Transmitted Infections. The facilitators were flexible and let the participants' reaction to the content guide their facilitation and the activities that were implemented in each context.

In each testing location there were over 20 young women participants including young mothers, students and young women with careers. FWRM was consistently impressed with the enthusiasm, intelligence and insightfulness of the young women. For example, when the young women were asked to make 'problem trees' detailing the causes and effects of issues in their community, their analysis of problems such as 'school drop outs', 'teen pregnancy', and 'domestic violence' was inspiring.

In Vunivau's Indo-Fijian settlement, the young women were very shy and did not want to speak up on the first day. However, by the end of the second day they were presenting dramas to the group and voicing their opinions freely. FWRM was especially happy at the end of the Vunivau training that the young women expressed a desire to start up a 'Vunivau Young Women's Club' to facilitate young women to get together more regularly outside of the home. FWRM has since funded a grassroots women's rights activist from Labasa, Mrs Nirmala Sharma, to visit the Vunivau group and inspire them with her story of success in Labasa.

When asked what their favorite things about the training was, these were some of the responses:

"Meeting new people"
"Getting to know myself"
"Games and Drama!"
"Learning about Respectful/Loving Relationships"
"To know about FWRM and be part of it."

By **Neomai Maravuakula**

...participants were reminded that despite the geographical distance from main centres, their voices counted and were important in national processes.

THE Fiji Women's Rights Movement began its awareness raising campaign with young people on Fiji's democratisation process by conducting a pilot programme at the annual Methodist youth rally in Tubou Village, Lakeba.

The programme tested some of the topics that FWRM will be incorporating into civic education training for high school students, organized for early 2013. This training continued the work that FWRM had begun on lobbying young people's participation in the constitution submission-making process.

The annual Methodist youth rally saw a total of 121 participants from Kabara, Moce, Lakeba, Nayau and Oneata converging for a week of spiritual dialogue and to discuss pertinent issues affecting young people. Despite the delay in the arrival of participants to Tubou, the spirits of the young people were not dampened, as they prepared for the arrival of their friends from the rest of the Lau group for their annual meeting.

FWRM was allocated a day to raise awareness with the young people and to also hear their concerns and respond to any queries. The participants were eager to learn how they could engage in national processes and how they could address some of the issues they were facing.

It was a challenging and an interesting exercise for the FWRM team that undertook this training. Beginning to explain "*What is a Constitution?*" and why there is a need for young people to have a say in their country's constitution, generated a lot of discussions and questions. The notion that democratic processes were for those in the urban centers, was dispelled during the day. Through this pilot programme participants shared the difficulties that young people in the Lau group face every day and how difficult it was for young people to participate in different national processes.

The participants expressed their disappointment in not being able to fully participate in the constitution-making process as it was difficult for them to travel to the only two venues that were allocated for Lau.

This week-long meeting coincided with a second visit to Lakeba by the Elections Office. Participants were encouraged not to miss this opportunity and to register as voters, if they had missed out earlier. Discussions during this session also focused on the power that young people have in Fiji in choosing their government, as the majority of voters in the 2014 elections will be young people.

As the FWRM team prepared to leave Lakeba, participants were asked to reflect on how they, as a group could mobilise young people from the rest of their villages to vote for the leaders they want in the next elections. As many of them prepared to take part in their first elections, participants were reminded that despite the geographical distance from main centres, their voices counted and were important in national processes.

Following the success of the pilot programme, FWRM will be hold information sessions for young people between the ages of 16-18, who will be voting for the first time in 2014. The three sessions will target high school students from the Central/ Eastern, Northern and Western Division. Funded by the British High Commission these three information sessions will be held in late January and early February in 2013.

Together we can change the world

By **Fredrica Nagan**

Bula FWRM & friends,

I was blessed to be chosen to be part of the 20 member Fiji Girl Guides contingent to the Australian Girl Guides International Jamboree which was held in Quercus Park, Tasmania from the January 6-12, 2013. This was also my first time to travel overseas and without my parents. There were 1800 participants from countries like New Zealand, Japan, Singapore, Hungary, Canada, USA, UK, Ghana, China and of course Fiji.

Fiji was the 2nd largest group from an International country. As I experienced this International Jamboree with a theme Ensuring Environmental Sustainability – MDG7, it provided me with an opportunity to learn, explore, challenge myself, make friends and have fun.

We were divided into groups and then sub camps which were named after animals and given colours to make identification easier. I was in group Purple Swift Parrots, sub-camp Blue Pin cushion!

These are some of my experiences in the different activities from the Jamboree:

Bivouac:

Bivouac was a good experience of an outdoor camp, and for most of us who went for Bivouac. It was the first time for me to camp outside in the forest and I found it fun and exciting to use a tarpaulin as shelter and to sleep out in the natural environment.

Challenges:

- Most of us found it hard to cope with the weather because it was freezing.
- I slept uncomfortably due to broken branches, twigs, and leaves that were on the ground.

Pamper Haven:

Most of the girls thought it was too girlish... hellooo!! I liked it because I got my nails painted. Some of the girls sat around looking at the stylish nail polish and finally got around to getting their nails painted.

Challenges:

- Being a princess for a day
- Having to put up with the smell of nail polish

Bling, Bling and more Bling

We had to make earrings, bracelets and necklaces out of beads and resources around us. It was fun because at the end of the activity we had to keep what we made… nice!

Challenges

- Most of us found it hard making it because of limited time.

An A-mazing Experience

It was fun for girls who loved playing maze games and puzzles. They took it pretty well because working as a team made it even easier to reach the centre of the maze to win a prize. Most girls enjoyed it.

Challenges

- Girls were confused with all the directions that they came across.
- Most of them were upset when they were lost.

Apart from the activities, I met so many girls from different countries and made a lot of new friends. We were able to tour the city of Melbourne and experience a much bigger city, sites and a lot of people. I had fun but at some point some of us were finding it difficult to cope with the weather and being separated from our families. But apart from that it was the a great opportunity given to us young girls of Fiji to represent our country at the International Jamboree in Tasmania, Australia. It was an indeed a fantastic journey for me!

I am very, very grateful to FWRM & friends for the support and I believe that FWRM has been a part of building my self esteem, confidence and character.

Thank you and a big vinaka vakalevu!

Images courtesy of Kaajal Kumar

Young women's journey of discovery a

By **Roshika Deo**

THE lead up to the Emerging Leaders Forum Alumni's (ELFA) 16 days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence Campaign was a hive of activity and rippling anticipation among the members.

Following various discourse, ELFA decided to do their campaign in Labasa in recognition of the fact that the highest number of women with disabilities is in the Northern Division and that there is an acute lack of resources and advocacy/activism-related activities taking place in Labasa.

Seventeen young women in ELFA worked with women in the Northern area to network, share learning, create awareness and empower each other.

Four of the 'ELFAs' arrived a day earlier in Labasa to confirm all the arrangements and to start promoting the creative activism open forum that was held in Labasa Civic Centre. ELFAs hard at work on that day were "butterflies"[1]

On December 8, the rest of the ELFA team left early morning to arrive in Labasa just in time for the first event – the workshop.

ELFA Mei Milly, who lives in Lautoka, also came to join us for this campaign. ELFA Monisha Rao who resides in Labasa and is a young woman with disabilities, was an inspiration to a lot of us. She mobilised a group of around 18 women, majority of whom were women with disabilities.

During the campaign, specifically the themes of International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women; the Montreal Massacre and Human Rights Day, was combined and applied at a local level.

The theme for the Montreal Massacre was localised by drawing attention to the risks that women human rights defenders and feminists face in Fiji.

The theme of human rights especially women's human rights was incorporated in the campaign through a topical subject – women's political and civil rights. A workshop was conducted with women with disabilities and other women

1 Name given to the Mirabal sisters who opposed the Dominican dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo - November 25 the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, is dedicated to the Mirabal sisters.

nd learning during 16 days of Activism

on the constitution-making process, including the importance of participation by women. The correlation of violence against women to women's political and public participation was also discussed. During the workshop different ELFAs performed multi-roles in providing translations and support.

A concerted effort was put in to present the sessions in simple and relevant language.

Women at the workshop shared their experiences. One woman said that every time her son used to play with dolls, she used to get angry at him, and take it from him. She used to tell him that it is only for girls. She said she will not be doing it anymore. A woman with disability shared that "I learned today how the constitution affects me as a woman and what I can do about it and how".

At the creative activism open forum, the global campaign *One Billion Rising Labasa* was launched. The group at the workshop joined the other people that turned up at the Labasa Civic Centre to 'rise'!

Around 80 people showed up at the open forum. Thank you butterflies!

ELFA also created awareness on gender based violence through expressive dancing, and the performance of selected monologues from Eve Ensler's *Vagina Monologue*. Women, who attended the open forum event, shared poetry, writings and messages.

Through all this themes and activities ELFA mobilised women, including women living with disabilities and promoted active citizenship among rural and vulnerable women.

The workshop was a learning experience for a lot of us too. We tend to take for granted or fail to understand the challenges that women with disabilities, including women living with mental health illness experience.

There is always the rhetoric of including women with various forms of disabilities but we rarely make the effort to substantively include them because at times, unintentionally, our own intolerance and patience, and failure to make structural changes override the genuine inclusion of all women.

This campaign forced us to look deep within; at our own behaviour and attitudes. At what we take for granted and what we need to change within and outside, to be able to substantially include women with all forms of disabilities.

ELFA would like to thank International Women's Development Agency and Fiji Women's Rights Movement for their financial support.

Postcards from the Pacific

By **Kris Prasad**

LAST month I had the honour of attending the world's largest gathering of LGBTIQ activists in Stockholm, Sweden. Over 450 activists from almost 100 countries descended in cold and snowy Stockholm for the week-long event with yours truly making the 40-hour journey across the globe.

The conference was organised by ILGA, the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Association together with the host, RSFL (Riksförbundet för homosexuellas, bisexuellas och transpersoners rättigheter (the Swedish federation for LGBTIQ rights).

Every two years ILGA holds the World Conference to provide an opportunity where members and allies of ILGA are able to meet to share their experience and best practices, strategize, build alliances and partnerships and elect their representatives.

The Conferences are also a good occasion for activists who campaign in their respective countries to meet and share their experiences. Activists learn more about campaigning; develop new skills during workshops and seminars and to coordinate local and international actions.

Several pre-conference events were held before the Conference with forums focusing on trans, women, youth, faith and intersex and sex worker issues.

The 2012 Conference had the theme of "Global Rights Global Respect" with many sessions facilitated by activists from the Global South especially from Latin America and Africa.

I facilitated a session with Rani Ravudi of Survival Advocacy Network (Fiji) along with Joey Mataele of the Tongan Leitis Association and Ken Moala of the Pacific Sexual Diversity Network.

Our session titled "Postcards from the Pacific" was a chance for us to provide the LGBTIQ situation from our tiny homelands - a region almost always overlooked in the international movement.

Panellists shared their activism experiences in their home countries, the lack of Pacific presence in the international movement, lack of resources and capacity building for activists and the cultural acceptance of indigenous queer identities in countries such as Tonga and Samoa and the difficulties in organising on LGBTIQ rights in militarised States such as Fiji.

ILGA also encourages regions to have their own conferences and there are talks of having the first ever ILGA Oceania Conference in Fiji in 2014. Stay tuned for that!

Kris (left) with Bemz Benedito of Ladlad- a LGBTIQ political party in the Philippines.

More than the sessions, panels and workshops, the most inspiring part of the conference for me was meeting and networking with grassroots activists from around the world trying to create social change in their communities, many working under more oppressive climates.

The Conference strengthened my passion for activism and left me with renewed energy for working on human rights and social justice for LGBTIQ people.

Promoting women's visibility in the media

By **Shazia Usman**

IT WAS fantastic to be selected by the Journalism Educators Association of Australia (JEAA) to attend, participate and learn from its annual conference in Melbourne in December, 2012. My selection, including a grant of AUD$3000.00, provided me with the opportunity to share and discuss with other, more learned members, of the JEAA, the findings of my Master's thesis, which is based on female political candidates representation in Fiji's print media during elections.

During the conference I received an amazing insight into the current journalism debate in Australia, especially with the move to online news delivery and the introduction of the paywall systems for many of the country's print news media. While Fiji has only one online news media[1] which has a paywall system in place if you want to read the story in depth, you can access the other online news sites without any cost.

The main objective of my presentation was to share with JEAA the level and kind of visibility female election candidates and females in general received in *The Fiji Times* and *Fiji Sun* during the 1999 and 2006 elections.

After analysing the data collected quantitatively and qualitatively the research concluded that female election candidates and females in general were virtually invisible in both newspapers and in both time periods.

The few articles there were on women or quoted women were mostly clichéd, lacked critical analysis and stereotyped women. The research concluded that by covering male and female candidates differently, Fiji's two most prominent and widely read newspapers may have influenced the success or failure of female candidates in their bid to hold public office.

An unexpected but equally important finding of the research shed some light on why there may be a lack of visibility of female election candidate (as well as other development related issues) in the dailies during election times.

The data showed the extensive prominence Fiji's print media gives to race and coup-related issues as elections drew near, crowding out reportage of other major issues. For instance, the lack of women at the highest-level of decision-making is rarely ever covered in any in-depth and informed manner.

The media have been so preoccupied with the supposed tension between the two major ethnicities (the indigenous Fijians, now known officially as i-Taukei, and the Indo-Fijians - Fijians of Indian origin) that they have overlooked the fact that in all elections since independence, women have only managed to secure less than 12 percent of the 71 seats in Parliament - yet women make-up nearly half of the total population of the country.

The literature review undertaken showed that when racial and ethnic tensions and national security issues are at the forefront of discussions during election times, it is men who tend to dominate the news. Subsequently, studies have concluded that voters may vote a male into power (over a female) because they feel that a male might be able to handle a race-related issue or a national security issue better than a woman.

1 http://www.fijivillage.com/

Movement launches advocacy materials

By **Shazia Usman**

It's was an Information, Education and Communication (IEC) blitz at the Fiji Women's Rights Movement in the last quarter of 2012, as the Movement launched some critical IEC materials it had been working on in the lead-up to Fiji's democratisation process.

Below is a summary:

1. **TVC: "Support TSM's. It's about time we balanced the scales"!**

(Supported by AusAID)

In effort to 'balance the power' in Fiji, the FWRM is promoting women's political participation through Temporary Special Measures (TSMs).

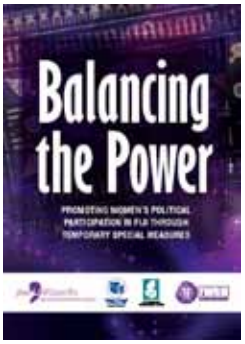
This Public Service Announcement (PSA) explains what TSMs actually are and the why they are urgently needed to fast-track gender equality in Fiji, where women are still lagging behind in political life due to institutionalized patriarchal structures.

This PSA officially hit the airways on Monday December 17, 2012 and ran for around two months.

The video can be viewed on FWRM's YouTube page.

2. **Publication: Balancing the Power: Promoting Women's Political Participation in Fiji Through TSM's**

The Fiji Women's Forum (FWF) in its inaugural meeting in April 2012 identified four key priority areas that are of concern for women. One of these key priority areas was the promotion of women's participation in decision making and democratisation processes. The FWF agreed that the current democratisation process needed to integrate the need for representation of women at all levels. In addition, any new or reformed Constitution must integrate temporary special measures to promote 50% women's political participation at national and local government levels. Further the FWF also recognized the need to include women in decision-making roles within the communities as well.

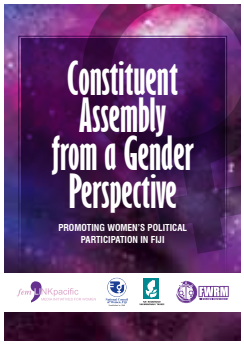


This paper examines temporary special measures and the different options that can be used to ensure women's political participation. In addition it will also highlight best practices in countries that have successfully adopted these different options.

The full policy paper by the Fiji Women's Forum can be viewed on FWRM's website, under *Publications*.

3. **Publication: Gender and the Constituent Assembly - Promoting Women's Political Participation in Fiji**

In the current constitution making context, the Constituent Assembly is an entity being formed with the purpose and intent of adopting and legitimising the constitution. The experiences of other countries have shown that constituent assembly membership, functioning, procedures, and decision-making often lack a gender perspective. Some countries have used quota arrangements to ensure the representation of women, but in general gender perspectives are not adequately taken into consideration resulting in procedures and decision-making that marginalise women's participation and contribution.

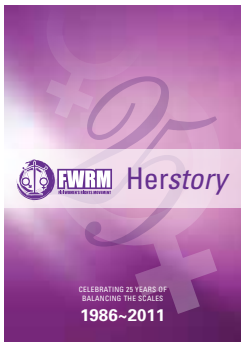


It is not only important that the membership of the constituent assembly is gender balanced but that the procedures and processes adopted are responsive to the realities of women and men.

The full policy paper by the Fiji Women's Rights Movement can be viewed on FWRM's website, under *Publications*.

4. **Publication: Herstory (Supported by AusAID)**

Herstory – celebrating 25 years of balancing the scales...



... is a chronicle of the Fiji Women's Right's Movement's quarter century history. The publication funded thanks to AusAid began a year ago with the assistance of Ricardo Morris compiling and documenting the stories that made us cry, laugh, celebrate and reflect as a feminist movement.

While it was impossible to capture everything the Movement has undertaken in the last 25 years, the publication captures all the significant moments, which include our humble beginnings in 1986 after a need was identified by our sister organisation, the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre and some members of the Young Women's Christian Association to establish a lobbying group reforming laws that discriminated against women and girls.

Another significant moment captured is how FWRM has and continues to maintain a strong stance on human rights, the rule of law and democracy during all the coups despite being persecuted by the military.

FWRM Herstory was officially launched on Women Human Rights Defenders' Day on November 29th, 2012 by FWRM Vice-Board Chair Priscilla Singh.

A copy of the publication can be accessed on FWRM's website, under the *About Us* tab.

For more information on any of these IEC materials, contact FWRM's Communication Officer Shazia Usman on 3312711 or email shazia@fwrm.org.fj

Each Balance issue this year will feature a traditional fairytale re-written with a feminist twist by eight budding authors. These stories were re-written by 10-12 year-old girls, part of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement's Young Women in Leadership Programme.

Snow White and the Seven Fairies

By **Lolene Tuiqali** and **Amelia Wojcik**

Once upon a time in a faraway land a Queen and King wished for a daughter who was independent, smart, loving and kind. When Snow White was born, sadly the Queen died upon the birth of her little girl.

After two long years, the King married a woman whose beauty was very, very precious to her. The woman could not stand anyone being more beautiful than her. Everyday the evil queen would stand by her magic mirror and ask: "mirror on the wall, who is the fairest of all"?

The mirror would reply: "oh you my Queen, are the fairest of them all".

One day when the Queen asked the mirror, the mirror replied: "You are fair but Snow White is fairer than you are".

When the Queen heard this, she was so angry that she planned a plot to kill Snow White by calling the huntsman to kill her.

Here Snow White ran far away into the deep forest. The huntsman followed her but could not see where she was going and so he killed a pig and took the heart to the Queen as proof of Snow White's death.

When the Queen saw this she was very, very happy and awarded the huntsman with silver and gold.

Meanwhile, Snow White was still looking for a place to live in. It was getting dark so Snow White made a fire and found food and made a place for her to sleep in.

The next day when Snow White was roaming around to find a place to live, she found a magical castle within the deep and dark forest in which seven fairies lived.

Snow White walked into the castle and she saw that the castle was filled with books, potions and spells written on scrolls.

When Snow White walked up the staircase she found seven fairies.

After a while Snow White and the fairies got to know each other better and helped each other in making spells and potions.

In the end the fairies awarded with her own wand.

Snow White uses her wand to help people in need.

- THE END-

About the authors

Lolene Tuiqali turns twelve-years- old this year and attends Dilkusha Girls School.

She wants to be a lawyer when she grows up.

Amelia Wojcik is eleven-years-old and attends Saint Anne Primary School.

She wants to be an artist when she grows up.

A Mighty Girl

Review by **Shazia Usman**

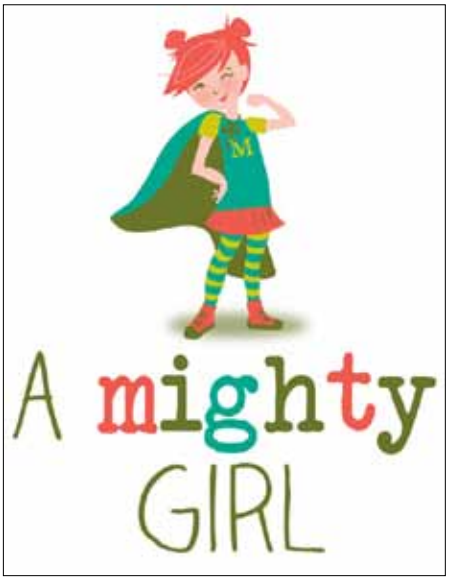


Image courtesy of: www.amightygirl.com

EACH issue of *Balance* has a review of a book that, in our opinion, promotes feminism. We, at Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM), love to read. We love reading so much that we are quite disappointed last year when we discovered that there were hardly any contemporary children's books available in Fiji, which had empowering female characters. We did notice however, that Fiji has ALOT of books on princesses, which are not all bad, but let's face it, how many of these princesses are empowered and independent?

If you have been an avid reader of *Balance* (as we hope you are!) you would have noticed that every issue in 2012 has had one feminist fairytale written by a group of young girls that FWRM worked with last year, after discovering the princess book phenomenon in Fiji.

As we end this amazing journey of promoting these particular stories (which can we found on our website), we would like to leave you with this wonderful resource we found, while working on the Feminist Fairytales Project, which we encourage you to explore.

A Mighty Girl – "is the world's largest collection of books, toys, movies, and music for parents, teachers, and others dedicated to raising smart, confident, and courageous girls and, of course, for girls themselves!"

According to the founders:

After years of seeking out empowering and inspirational books for our four young nieces, we decided to create A Mighty Girl as a resource site to help others equally interested in supporting and celebrating girls. The site was founded on the belief that all children should have the opportunity to read books, play with toys, listen to music, and watch movies that offer positive messages about girls and honor their diverse capabilities.

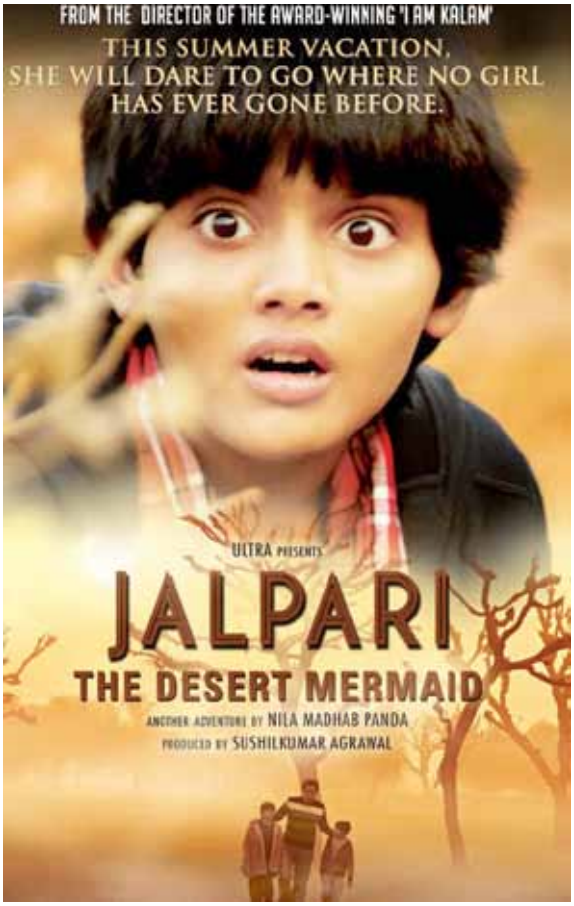
Girls do not have to be relegated to the role of sidekick or damsel in distress; they can be the leaders, the heroes, the champions that save the day, find the cure, and go on the adventure. It is our hope that these high-quality children's products will help a new generation of girls to grow and pursue whatever dreams they choose -- to truly be Mighty Girls!

A Mighty Girl is a work in progress and we are continually adding new empowering books, toys, movies, music, and other resources for girls to the site. To learn more about you can help support the mission of A Mighty Girl, please visit our website http://www.amightygirl.com/

Such is the awesomness of A Mighty Girl that I have bought four books already...for myself. I mean, why should they be just enjoyed by children, right?

Jalpari: The Desert Mermaid

Review by **AyushPrasad**



CRITICALLY appreciated at Festival de Cannes 2012 and nominated at the prestigious Asia Pacific Screen Awards 2012, Nila Madhab Panda's *Jalpari: the Desert Mermaid*, is a film with a difference.

It talks about the issues of superstition, gender inequality, male bias in favour of the male child and female foeticide that foundationally constitute much of contemporary rural northern India's sexual and gender realities.

Jalpari traces these insidious realities through the personal journeys of two children, Shreya and Sam, and their city-educated doctor father.

The film provides a chilling encounter with the bane of misogyny that makes up much of native and provincial Indian masculinity. The child actors in *Jalpari* evoke confidence and shine in their naturalised styles of acting. Pravin Dabas also cuts a solid figure in his role as the enlightened doctor trying to bring sense to the uneducated and misled.

Overall, the film seems to be an emphatic feminist take on some of the most primordial gruesome realities that structure gender bias in the workings of the Indian society and consequently pave the way for maltreatment of girls and women in such a partisan society.

In fact, it lays bare the traditional roots of such biases and calls for the boycott of these customs and traditions through some attentive, evocative and vociferous drama that intelligently brings the children's film genre and the adult film genre together.

And that undoubtedly is a cinematic feat to acknowledge and salute. We indeed hope to be bewitched.

Excerpted from: http://pandolin.com/jalpari-the-desert-mermaid-trailer/ on January 29, 2013

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: _____

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Facebook - www.facebook.com/FWRM1
Twitter - #fwrm1

LOOKOUT!

International Women's Day (IWD)

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement has several activities planned in the lead-up to and on International Women's Day 2013:

1.

2. *On IWD*, a soccer match will be held for young girls between the ages of 10-12. Match details are still being finalised, so keep checking our Facebook page and/or our website for updates.

For more information contact us via telephone 3312711 and/or email info@fwrm.org.fj