FIJI WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT
Balance
"HELPING TO BALANCE THE SCALES"
May 2015

Paris Principles & NHRIs: Safeguarding Human Rights in Fiji

By Monica Waqanisau

CIVIL society, particularly human rights based and feminist organisations, welcomed the recent announcement of the newly appointed Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Commissioners. For the Fiji Women's Rights Movement and other NGOs, it was a positive indication that efforts were finally being made to reinstate Fiji's National Human Rights Institution (NHRI).

For a NHRI to fully protect and promote Human Rights within a country, it must comply with the guiding principles set out during the first International Workshop on *National Institutions on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights* held in Paris from 7th to 9th October in 1991.

The workshop allowed the formulation of a set of principles and guidelines, which was simply referred to as the Paris Principles, and was then adopted by the Human Rights Commission the following year.[1]

The Paris Principles set a minimum criteria endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly, designed to ensure the independence, effectiveness and pluralistic basis for NHRIs. This is basically, the minimum standards required of a NHRI to be considered credible and able to operate effectively. They identified six criteria that NHRIs should meet in order to be effective, which include:

(1) A clearly defined and broad-based mandate, based on universal human rights standards
(2) Autonomy from government
(3) Independence guaranteed by legislation and or the constitution
(4) Pluralism, including membership that broadly reflects society
(5) Adequate resources and;
(6) Adequate powers of investigation.

Accreditation and full status as a NHRI occurs when the institution ensures full compliance with the Paris Principles.

Not only do the Paris Principles assist in legitimising a NHRI, but it also facilitates the NHRI to become member to regional and international NHRI-network bodies that will support in its establishment by ensuring their compliance to the Paris Principles. It also assists in capacity building to ensure they conduct their role in alignment with fully promoting and protecting a country's human rights.

The re-establishment of a dedicated human rights institution in Fiji will allow members of the NHRI a proper process to work closely with the State in implementing strategies to fully realise human rights. Using the Paris Principles will ensure a diverse representation of members that understand the socio-cultural context into which the semantic panoply of human rights must be translated.

Not only will this bring about a sense of ownership, but further indicate to the international community, Fiji's genuine willingness to completely transition to Democracy and uphold Human Rights in Fiji.

"We urge the Commissioners to study these Principles and ensure that the Commission's processes and procedures, its governing law and relevant Constitutional provisions fully implement the six core criteria of the Paris Principles. National human rights institutions are not only central elements of a strong national human rights system, they also "bridge" civil society and Governments; they link the responsibilities of the State to the rights of citizens and they connect national laws to regional and international human rights systems," said Daiana Buresova, Chair of FWRM's Governance Board.

Ms. Buresova further added that two legislative frameworks that govern the mandate of the Commission are the Fiji Human Rights Commission Decree 2009 and the 2013 Constitution Decree, which must be reviewed and reformed to ensure adherence to the Paris Principles. For example, Section 172 (5) of the Constitution Decree prevents the Commission from investigating any complaints for matters, events, or incidences that occurred prior to 21 August 2013.

FWRM reiterates that this governance institution plays a critical role in the promotion, protection, and fulfillment of human rights in Fiji, and welcomes the opportunity to assist the Commissioners in their new roles.

NGO Coalition on Human Rights
Towards a Fiji that respects and protects human rights

1 Principles relating to the status of National Institutions, UN Commission of Human Rights Resolution 1992/54 of 3 March 1992, annex (E/1992/22).

From the Director's desk

Greetings from FWRM!

Greetings from the Fiji Women's Rights Movement & welcome to our May issue of Balance! Despite it being only the first quarter of the year, so much has happened in the last few months for us.

People from all spheres of the community hailed our IWD Family Fun Day 2015 at Sukuna Park a resounding success. This event was the result of robust collaboration between FWRM and its partners International Women's Development Agency (IWDA), UN Women, UNFPA, EU Pacific and others, as well as the support of a few corporate and sporting organisations such as the Fiji Rugby Union (FRU) who decided to join us in recognising the achievements of women locally and throughout the region.

This of course, would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of the GIRL participants, their families and the FWRM staff. Thank you all, not just for your sterling support on the day, but also for your immense dedication to our GIRLS programme.

Whilst still on the topic of publicly hosted events, we were more than happy to kick-start discussions on the topic of women in mainstream society by inviting those from the private sector and the fashion industry to attend a screening of the movie 'Fabulous Fashionistas'. A 'spur of the moment' affair, this event proved popular with many in the audience, who related to the issues of self-identity, ageism and feminism.

Speaking of feminism, our Pacific CSO Delegation to the 59th Commission on the Status of Women, certainly ensured that their voices were heard loud and clear! Undoubtedly the largest delegation to have attended CSW, it was encouraging to see our Pacific young women take the lead in moderating and presenting on panel discussions, as well as play a key role in contributing to the global young women's statement.

You can read all about their exciting journey in the 'Big Apple' in this issue, along with the other stories mentioned. We hope to strengthen your awareness on the work that we do here at the Movement, in particular the 5th Fiji Women's Forum that was held recently at the Holiday Inn. The Forum, which we currently co-convene with FemlinkPACIFIC, National Council of Women and the Soqosoqo Vakamarama, provides women within our existing networks the chance to engage with politicians, candidates and young women leaders of all diversities, as part of a cohesive approach to increase women's (and young women's) political participation in local and national level decision-making.

Until the next issue, do visit us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter as we have many more exciting events and conversations set to take place in the next few months.

In solidarity,
Tara Chetty

Transitions

Monica joins the organisation as one of two Research Officers, having worked at FWRM's sister organisation, the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC) in the same capacity. She says that it was during her time at FWCC that she learnt to appreciate the enormity of the work carried out by Fiji's feminist NGOs, in terms of advancing Human Rights and demanding a full transition to Democracy and the Rule of Law.

I'm thankful for the tremendously empowering women that have shaped my feminist outlook. These strong, passionate, resilient and intelligent feminist activists such as Shamima Ali and Virisila Buadromo, have encouraged me in my feminist journey and provided much needed mentoring. I'm no stranger to FWRM and the vibrant team here. I've worked with the Movement in some capacity or another prior to my appointment as Research Officer. I' m thrilled to be part of the Gender and Transitional Justice team, lending my experience where I can to strengthen the team and using this opportunity to broaden my professional experience in research.

Imelda Joseph joins the Movement as a Training Officer within FWRM's Gender & Transitional Justice program and possesses extensive experience in both the private and public sectors. She was most recently a Project Manager for World of Difference Candidate ATH Foundation, where she implemented awareness programs on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) and Human Trafficking, working in collaboration with the Police Bureau of Juvenile Unit and Human Trafficking Unit Fiji. Imelda is no stranger to volunteering and has previously worked with sex workers and the LGBTQ community on social justice issues.She is also a motivational speaker, counsellor to the Patriots community sports club, and is a member of the Survival Advocacy network.

With more than 14 years of experience in the Accounting and Finance sector, Laurette is FWRM's new Finance Officer. Previously employed by JP Bayly Trust, she has a Degree from the Fiji National University majoring in Accounting and Finance and is just a couple of units shy from gaining provisional membership with the Fiji Institute of Accountants. Laurette enjoys being of service to the community and was a volunteer with the South Pacific Games 2003 Sub-Committee, the Rotaract Club of Suva and was even a member of Toastmasters!

Says Laurette, "I joined the Fiji Women's Rights Movement because I strongly support it's Mission, Purpose and Objectives. The desire to do good and make a genuine difference in the lives of all Fiji's women and girls is what truly motivated me to be part of FWRM."

After almost two years as Team Leader, Gender and Transitional Justice (GTJ), Michelle is now the organisation's newly appointed Programme Director. A member of the Emerging Leaders Forum Alumni (ELFA), Michelle has a strong affiliation with the Movement and at one time, served as FWRM's Young Women's Officer. She replaces Tara Chetty who took up the post of Executive Director early this year.

We farewelled Angelyn Singh earlier in the year, who left the Movement to take up a scholarship opportunity overseas. 'Angie' was an amazing young feminist and friend whose trademark sarcasm and wit is something we all miss dearly here in the office. Formerly a Research Officer with FWRM, she is now pursuing further studies at the Australian Catholic University. While undertaking a Bachelor of Arts programme at the University of the South Pacific, Angelyn undertook an elective course called Women in Society by Dr. Rae Nicholl, which made her question gender equality in everyday life.

"The vibrant personality and feminist energy of the movement just called out to me so strongly that I took a step towards seeing feminism evolve and I wanted to participate and contribute to it."

Well, you have certainly evolved in your feminist journey Angie and we wish you all the best!

IWD Family Fun Day 2015

By Maraia Tabunakawai

THIS year, FWRM celebrated International Women's Day (IWD) by partnering with Fiji Rugby Union's Telecom Fijiana team. This was a great opportunity to promote Women's visibilty in Sports, especially rugby, and the event also highlighted multi-generational interaction. With the theme "When I was a Girl", FWRM organised a Family Fun Day at Sukuna Park, involving families from diverse backgrounds.

Sixteen teams participated on the day, with several booths featuring GIRLS participants as lead facilitators. As part of FWRM's intergenerational focus, each team was required to have a child take part in the activities, and many grandparents were also present. There were eight booths in total orchestrating fun interactive games and creative knowledge-based sessions.

The young facilitators provided instructions to the registered teams on the various challenges, designed to educate and inform members of the public who may not be familiar or comfortable with the idea of feminism. Three booths were designated as exchange learning areas for either skill building or raising awareness on a particular issue concerning the girl child. One of the booths focused on IWD, what it stood for and our GIRLS motto, whilst the other booths dealt with positive messages on values and designing those messages on GIRLS rights.

The Fijiana team attended as guests, presenting prizes to the teams that took part, which proved to be the highlight of the day. A bouncy castle was organised for the very young while those who were interested in a more viogourous activity tried Hapkido, which teaches one moves in self-defence.

Members of the diplomatic corp and fellow civil society organisations attended the event, including UN Women, EU Pacific and the British High Commission. The #HeForShe Campaign, a global initiative that seeks to involve Men and Boys in the 'fight' against gender inequality, proved to be popular with local males who lined up to take photos with the #HeForShe sign.

Sukuna Park was filled with a 'colourful' range of people from all walks of life: Children, young women and the elderly who turned up for the Family Fun Day with an open mind and the intention to learn something new. It was also tremendously empowering to witness a group of young women representing the country in a male dominated sport, encouraging those females present to take full ownership of their bodily integrity within public spaces. This was demonstrated at the FRU booth when the Fijiana players talked to participating teams on the idea of GIRLS taking up rugby.

The IWD 2015 Family Fun Day not only smashed many people's notions of patriarchy, but also general negative connotations that the public may have about feminist NGOs. The overwhelmingly positive response at the Fun Day signified a change (however slight) in the mindsets of people, and allowed entire families to learn about feminist values, the GIRL Child, and FWRM's work.

The staff are already looking forward to many more exciting Fun Days ahead!

IWDA INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Fijiana rugby players hand out prizes to IWD participants, courtesy of EU Pacific

GIRL Leaders Graduate

By Maraia Tabunakawai

IT was an incredibly moving ceremony with which to end the Grow, Inspire, Relate, Lead and Succeed (GIRLS) Programme for 2015. The two and a half year journey culminated in 35 girls between the ages of 10 to 14, graduating in front of their families and friends at Suva's Holiday Inn.

This feminist program for girls in Fiji, includes theatre based activities to help develop a feminist perspective from a very early age, instilling within these young minds the importance of being assertive and speaking out against all forms of discrimination and injustice. The GIRLS were encouraged to express their opinions right from the start, based on the theory that if they can express themselves in an articulate manner now, they will go on to be strong advocates for themselves and their communities when they are older.

In 2013, FWRM partnered with Informal Education Theatre Consultants (IeT) formerly known as Women Action for Change (WAC), to formulate and implement GIRLS, creating a healthy and safe avenue for the participants within the realm of theatre. The methodology included storytelling, craft work, rehearsing scripts, yoga and interesting theatre games.

This innovative teaching method personally impacted their self esteem, confidence, acting skills, ownership of the plays 'Time to Tell' and 'A Series of Unfortunate Events - Fiji Style' and increased their awareness on the rights of the girl child.

The Chief Guest Matelita Buadromo, an Olympic athlete, gave an inspiring speech, where she shared her experiences on playing soccer at a young age and facing discrimination from both her peers and society in general.

Three participants also shared their reflections on lessons learnt throughout the year, and their gratitude on being selected for the GIRLS programme. Having been awarded a Certificate of Completion and a gift pack at the ceremony, the GIRLS excitement was palpable. It was extremely encouraging to see loved ones turn out in numbers to support their sisters, daughters and grand-daughters in celebrating this milestone achievement.

'In the Program, we have learnt that we have rights, equal opportunity and equal participation. I'm vocal, I'm confident. We feel DIFFERENT, from shy to BOLD! Expressing is easy, it's just me. Thank you FWRM for changing ME, and changing US.'
Akansha Kant, 12 years

Reaching Out, Reaching Women

By Menka Goundan

On April 24th 2015, the Movement launched its report: "Reaching Out, Reaching Women: Assessing the impact and effectiveness of FWRM's citizenship rights awareness training." This report reflected FWRMs' work on the European Union funded project Enhancing the Political Participation of Marginalised Women Voters.

The two target groups identified for the purpose of this project were Indo-Fijian women and young diverse women. Indo-Fijian women, or Fijian women of Indian descent, are part of the Indo-Fijian ethnic minority that forms 37.48% of the total 837,271 of Fiji's population (Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics 2012). Indo-Fijians have faced long-term discrimination, particularly in the political arena. Since the last military coup d'état in 2006, FWRM, which is a multi-ethnic, multicultural human rights-based organisation, noticed a steady decline in the participation of Indo-Fijian women in its workshops/campaigns/initiatives, as well as at the national decision-making level.

Throughout Fiji's history, young women, which overlaps with Indo-Fijian women, have been similarly marginalised. They face multiple discrimination at the intersection of race, age, sexuality, place of origin and socio-economic status. However, with the growing importance of young voters and the national voting age at 18 years, the democratisation process was an opportunity for young women to become more politically engaged and influential citizens.

At the conclusion of the elections, FWRM developed monitoring and evaluation research that used a mixed method approach in collecting data, conducting face-to-face interviews with 348 women, seven focus group discussions involving 44 women, and nine key informant interviews. Respondents were chosen from three groups: Firstly, the direct recipients of FWRM's training; secondly, participants that attended further training organised by the direct recipients; and finally, non-recipient, randomly selected respondents.

This research found that most recipients of FWRM's training thought the training was useful or very useful, that is 81% of direct and indirect recipients. FWRM had produced two publications to accompany the two phases of training, and 69% of all training recipients also found these materials to be useful or very useful. However, the materials were particularly helpful for those receiving training indirectly, with close to 90% of those respondents finding the publications useful or very useful.

One of the objectives of the non-partisan FWRM media campaign and training was to empower women to attend campaign meetings as a means of making informed voting choices. The research showed FWRM made a significant impact here, as there was a higher percentage of women who received FWRM training directly that also reported attending campaign meetings, as compared to the indirect participants and those from the random selection. The survey showed 64% of direct participants attended campaign meetings, with only 42% attending such meetings from among indirect participants and down to 35% from the random selection. Thus FWRM's training programmes were useful as a mechanism to politically empower women.

Despite the training, however, the majority of respondents did not vote for women. Only 27% of training recipients (both direct and indirect) voted for women, while 32% of the random respondents gave women their vote. This goes against expectations, and indicates that there are many barriers remaining to the full recognition of women's leadership.

This research focused on the training and not the media component of the project, as the media campaign was monitored through different methodologies throughout the two years of the project. However, this research does confirm the findings of the initial FWRM scoping study from 2013: that radio remains a prime medium for reaching women. This finding had been incorporated into the design of the media campaign, that included multi-lingual radio advertisements and talk-back radio advocacy. Overall, FWRM's work with marginalised women voters had a strong positive impact on these women citizens, and also raised FWRM's profile in their communities around the country.

The research team made six recommendations following the analysis of all the data:

1. Training needs to be frequent to further enhance development of knowledge and empower women to actively engage in political processes.
2. The ad-hoc cascaded approach was effective and needs to be strengthened and institutionalized for future projects like this. This could be in the form of building a network of trained community facilitators, who undergo comprehensive training-of-trainers.
3. FWRM should intensify its media campaign. However, cost constraints and legislative barriers remain a challenge.
4. FWRM trainers continue to conduct evaluations of their training, including stronger follow-up. For example, interviews with the women, particularly indirect participants, on the quality of the training.
5. FWRM and other women's organizations, either independently or in collaboration, to intensify efforts to promote women candidates. This could include the distribution of women candidates' information to the wider public to ensure that female candidates' profile gets more attention during the campaigning. However, their ability to do this may be constrained by current legislation.
6. Further develop gender-sensitive voter and civic education messages that highlight the capacities of women as candidates and political leaders.

2015 European Year for Development

our world
our dignity
our future

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Advancing and Sustaining Civic Engagement

By Kris Prasad

BETWEEN March and April this year, I took a whirlwind tour of the United States of America and visited half a dozen cities, met State officials, and members of different communities and organisations working for human rights and social justice.

This was made possible through my participation in the US State Department's International Visitor Leadership Program under the theme 'Advancing and Sustaining Civic Engagement', along with 18 other community leaders and activists from across the globe.

The three-week program explored the American experience in expanding equal opportunities and promoting enduring political and social change. Through our visits to Washington (District of Columbia), Columbus (South Carolina), Salt Lake City (Utah), Sacramento and San Francisco (California), we surveyed some key movements, such as the struggle for Women's Suffrage, the Civil Rights Era, the Immigrant Rights Movement, and the current LGBT Rights Movement.

Through our meetings and discussions with government officials, lobbyists, non-profit organisations and grassroots activists, we were exposed to various advocacy efforts used to influence policy decisions at the federal, state, and local levels.

We were also exposed to a wide range of public service and advocacy organizations and the methods used to develop and further their missions through public outreach and marketing, fundraising, social media and technology, as well as volunteer recruitment, training, and retention.

One of my biggest highlights was meeting US Congressman John Robert Lewis, politician and the only living "Big Six" leader of the American Civil Rights Movement. Congressman Lewis played a key role in the struggle to end legalised racial discrimination and segregation. He was also featured in the recent film, Selma and turned 75 recently. He is an inspiration and even at his age, still an activist at heart.

Freedom of speech and the right to peaceful protest are human rights that Americans hold dear and I had the exciting opportunity to attend a rally in Salt Lake City organised by a local LGBTIQ rights network to demand the release of a Guatemalan trans woman from an all-male immigration detention facility.

Less than 30% of Americans own a passport and an even smaller number travel overseas in their lifetime. So it wasn't a surprise that most Americans we met in our host cities were eager to meet us and find out more about our cultures, every day living and human rights situations in our home countries.

Through citizen diplomacy, mutual understanding and leadership exchange, we can work towards a more peaceful world.

PRESS RELEASE - 7th April, 2015

FWRM pays tribute to former journalist and women human rights defender

THE Fiji Women's Rights Movement is deeply saddened by the death of former colleague, close friend and long-time ally Losana McGowan.

Known for her exuberant personality and zest for life, Losana was loved by all that knew her, especially within the media and civil society circles. Closely associated with the Movement for many years, Losana volunteered in various capacities, and was involved with the organisation's Young Women's Working Group and volunteer communications team.

"Losana was vivacious, bright and full of energy, and you always knew she was in the office because of her contagious laugh! Her strong sense of ethics and experience in media and social justice work carried over into everything she did," said FWRM Executive Director, Tara Chetty.

"The outpouring of tributes to Losana is a testament to the kind of person that she was – well-loved, widely liked, a strong and true friend to many."

Losana's death, reportedly during an assault by her partner, also highlights the widespread issue of gender-based violence in Fiji. Losana was one of the 64% of women in Fiji who have experienced physical violence at the hands of their intimate partner – which is more than double the world average. Statistically, we know that on the day Losana died, 43 other women were injured; one was permanently disabled and 71 lost consciousness due to intimate partner violence. (All statistics from research published by the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, 2013, Somebody's Life. Everybody's Business!)

"Losana was a member of our close community and her death shows how intimate partner violence reaches everywhere, no matter where you come from or what field you work in," said Chetty.

"In remembering her bright spirit, we also recommit to fighting gender-based violence in all its forms."

Pacific not pacified at CSW59

By Genevieve Sukhdeo

IT was an incredibly strenuous, yet rewarding two weeks spent in the 'Big Apple', engaging in high-level discussions at CSW59 from 5th March – 19th March, 2015. As a young Pacific feminist activist representing the Fiji Women's Rights Movement and the Pacific Young Women's Leadership Alliance, this was a truly enriching experience! The Commission on the Status of Women or CSW is the main global intergovernmental body solely dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment.[1]

During the Commission's annual two-week session, ministerial delegations of UN Member States, civil society organizations and UN entities gather at UN headquarters in New York. They discuss the progress made and gaps remaining in implementing the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.[2]

For the first time at CSW, Pacific representation was substantial with several government and CSO delegations participating in the side-events and discussions. The CSO delegation included those well versed with CSW protocol, as well as other young women like myself who were quite new to the process.

The CSO team comprised of Shirley Tagi, Noelene Nabulivou and Viva Tatawaqa from DIVA for Equality Fiji, Sharon Bhagwan-Rolls and Frances Tawake from FemLINKPACIFIC, Miki Wali from Haus of Khameleon, Christina Ora from the Honiara Youth Council and Pacific Youth Council (PYC), Milikini Fallautusi from Tuvalu, PYC (also came under the Tuvalu Delegation), Sharon Yendevenge, Papua New Guinea, World Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), Tahere Siiasiialafia, Samoa, PYC, Director of the Tonga Women and Children's Crisis Center Ofa Guttenbeil-Likiliki and Naomi Navoce, Gender Officer for the Pacific Disability Forum.

Present from the Ministerial Delegation were:

- *Hon FalemoeLeiataua Tolofuaivalelei*, Minister Women, Community and Social Development, Samoa
- *Hon. Delilah Gore*, Minister for Religion, Youth and Community Development, Papua New Guinea
- *Hon Charmaine Scotty*, Minister for Home Affairs, Education, and Land Management, Nauru
- *Hon Louise Upston*, Minister for Women's Affairs, New Zealand (VAW, Human Security, National Progress)
- Australia's Ambassador for Women and Girls, *Natasha Stott Despoja*
- *Hon. Rosy Akbar*, Minister for Women, Children & Poverty Alleviation, Fiji
- Cherelle Fruean, Samoan Delegate & Pacific Young Woman Representative

A major highlight for me personally was to moderate the 'Pacific Women Rising' side-event organised by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC). The purpose of the side event was to showcase progress in the Pacific Island Countries and Territories towards achieving gender equality, empowerment, and women's human rights in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action's 12 Critical Areas of Concern.

As such, I facilitated a panel discussion involving Pacific Island Ministers, as well as Australia's Ambassador for Women and Girls Natasha Stott-Despoja, Director of the Tonga Women and Children's Crisis Center Ofa Guttenbeil-Likiliki and Naomi Navoce, Pacific Disability Forum's Gender Officer. The side-event was held on Wednesday, 11th March at UN Headquarters.

Besides the Pacific Women Rising side-event, I was extremely fortunate to have attended several other activities and events including: the World Women and Girls Forum organised by Young Women's Christian Association (March 6th), the International Women's Day March which ended at Times Square (March 8th), the Pacific Climate Change side-event (March 13th), a side-event organised by the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) High level task force, as well as side events focused on celebrating the Lesbian Bisexual & Transgender (LBT) global movement and discussions centered on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. The Fiji CSO contingent was also invited to a special dinner hosted by the Fiji Mission.

Haus of Khameleon's Miki Wali featured as a panellist for the CSW Intergenerational Dialogue, becoming the first 'transfeminist' from the region to do so. Several interventions were instituted by the other Pacific young women representatives, whilst our Pacific young women statement fed into the global Young Feminists Statement.[3]

Having enjoyed being part of the CSW process and the Beijing+20 negotiations in Bangkok, it is my view that young women feminists and activists need to continue playing a pivotal role in discussions surrounding women's rights and gender equality. Not only would this form an intrinsic part of Intergenerational Leadership but also enable 'new generation' feminists to build on the legacy of the feminists and human rights activists that have gone before us.

1 http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/57sess.htm
2 http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/
3 http://iwhc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/young-feminists-statement-csw59.pdf

"The good, the bad and the ugly" – Fiji and the Global Gender Gap Report

"Fiji has dropped a staggering 19 places in 5 years in the Global Gender Gap Index. This is a sobering and critical concern for all Fiji women. Gender equality should be improving not worsening."

By the Fiji Women's Rights Movement: An Analysis of Fiji in the Global Gender Gap Report and What it means for Fiji's women

EVER since 2006, the World Economic Forum (WEF) has been issuing an annual Global Gender Gap Report (GGGR) to track gender gaps and disparities around the world. The numbers of countries have increased from a total of 111 in 2006, to 142 in 2014.

The Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) measures and ranks gender equality, not women's empowerment, in its annual GGGR. It is a quantitative, not qualitative index. It looks at outcomes not inputs, and gender gaps (between men and women as a group), not levels. It cannot therefore assess the improvements in the quality of women's lives.

Overall, the WEF suggests that Fiji is not doing too well in advancing gender equality.

It is important to remember that one cannot point to individual successful women to rationalize the advancement of gender equality in Fiji, as is commonly done in the Pacific Islands. The GGGI measures women's advancement as a group. The success of individual women is laudable, but an anomaly, an exception to the mainstream. They succeed in spite of the system, not because of it. It is important and appropriate to celebrate them, for many reasons, including their importance as role models to girls and young women. But this cannot, and should not, be an overall indicator of gender equality, and what is happening with the vast majority of women in Fiji.

Fiji's overall ranking has been steadily slipping since 2009, when it was first ranked. In 2009 Fiji was ranked 103 (out of 134 countries), in 2010 it was 108, in 2011 it was 109, in 2012, 113, in 2013, 117 and in 2014 it was ranked 122 out of 142 countries.

It has therefore dropped a staggering 19 places in the space of 5 short years, from 2009 to 2014. Even accounting for the small increase in the total number of countries by 8, this is a phenomenal drop and requires explanation.

What the GGGR measures.

The GGGR measures 4 key indicators - economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival and political empowerment.

Fiji is currently the only Pacific Island country to be ranked. In this regard Fiji is to be commended for collecting and sharing sex-disaggregated data.

The GGGR does not measure every gender indicator, since the vast majority of developing countries do not have statistics, most don't collect sex-disaggregated data, and some have the data, but do not want to release it for political and other reasons. Notwithstanding, it does provide some measure of where we stand in relation to others globally and regionally, and it is a relative index comparing countries from year to year, in four (4) key areas, because it compares "some apples with other apples" and not "apples with bananas".

What the GGGI does not measure

The GGGI does not measure gender- based violence, equality under the law, land ownership or access to land, property ownership, women's time poverty, access to basic infrastructure (which would reduce women's time poverty), and the share of domestic and household work relative to men. Nor does it measure the overwhelming burden of the care economy (unpaid work caring for children and the elderly) on women.

Information and sex-disaggregated data on these aspects would provide a much more comprehensive picture of gender equality in Fiji, and a more nuanced and qualitative one. We suspect however, that data on what is not available would likely worsen Fiji's ranking, not improve it.

Conclusion– Show Women the Money

From a gender perspective it seems that Fiji is doing well in 2 of 4 categories, but not so well in the most fundamental of areas – economic empowerment. Gender equality must be vigorously pursued in this critical area. Fiji can start off by designing macro-economic policies that are gender sensitive and that target industrial subsectors which have a potential for expanding women's job opportunities – investing in areas in which women might be attracted to the job market. Jobless growth is meaningless. It mainly makes the rich richer. Second, national employment strategies must be gender sensitive, and have specific numerical and percentage targets to increase women's participation in the labour market, in various sectors, for which the state should be accountable. Third, young women and high school girls must be given opportunities in the technical and vocational sectors, in traditional "men's jobs", so that they have the option to pursue jobs in areas that generally pay better. Finally, and fundamentally, men must take on a greater share of the burden of household and care work (caring for children and the elderly), to narrow the gender gap in vulnerable work, so that women in Fiji get a "fair go".

You may find a more comprehensive analysis on the four subindexes on the FWRM website: http://fwrm.org.fj/index.php/publication/fiji-gender-equality-the-good-bad-and-ugly

Diversity Represented at 5TH FWF

By Maryann Lockington & Rosie Catherine

FOR the first time at the 5th Fiji Women's Forum, an intergenerational consultation was carried out, to promote and improve women's representation in Local Governance structures.

Ten representatives from the Fiji Young Women's Forum (FYWF) were part of the discussions from the 8th to the 10th of April at Holiday Inn, Suva. With 60 participants in attendance, the Forum brought together different women's NGOs, CSOs, traditional and religious bodies.

FYWF engaged with the Fiji Women's Forum to bring their different issues and perspectives to light.

"Ageism is no longer a barrier to standing with other women networks in solidarity after getting to understand and view things more openly through discussions," said FYWF participant Luisa Miracle.

FYWF participant Sulique Waqa said compared to past forums, the 5th FWF allowed her the opportunity to bring visibility to transgendered women.

"Other women participants needed to realize that gender is fluid and that the only way to move forward as a women's movement is to recognize and acknowledge this fluidity," she said.

It was important for FYWF to emphasize inclusivity of women in decision-making through all their diversities including LGBTQI and women living with disabilities.

"Before the Forum, FYWF participants came together to strategize how best to address our priorities and increase our visibility among long-time women activists and leaders," said FYWF co-convener and DIVA representative Viva Tatawaqa.

She said the Forum was an opportunity to learn and also recognize the need for more inclusion of young women in decision-making instead of reinforcing the "young women need mentoring" mindset. FYWF felt the Forum was an opportunity to identify entry points for young women to engage in local government.

"Always start at the community level. Be involved and contribute to the community and stay relevant," said Adi Finau Tabukaucoro, President of the Soqosoqo Vakamarama (SSV), who outlined the various structures of local government.

Regional Program Coordinator, Commonwealth Local Government Forum Pacific, Megan Praeger said local governance could also open doors to national levels of governance.

"It's important to explore new roles and take on leadership positions, such as at local governance levels where there is space for women leaders," she said.

In addition to this, FYWF said the Forum was important to create partnerships and support networks with other women organisations. Priscilla Singh, National Federation Party (NFP) candidate for the September 2014 elections, reiterated this during the panel discussions.

"Forming partnerships is important to get women into local government positions but we must continuously support them in order to strengthen our efforts to push for our priorities," she said.

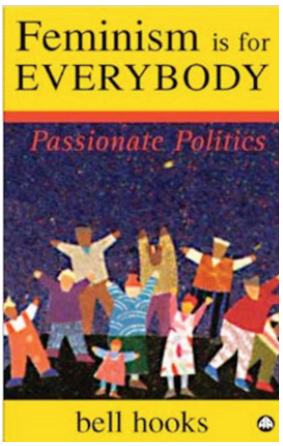
Luisa Miracle adds that the Forum has given her hope that despite the challenges persons with disabilities encounter, they are still recognized as part of society.

"Together we can make changes to enhance the lives of persons with disabilities and to be actively involved in the principles and values that accommodate our needs."

FYWF felt that though they appreciated the space given to them at the Forum, there was still a need to encourage inclusive processes and dialogue.

"There is still a feeling of being defined by other participants because of our diverse backgrounds but we should emphasize this and speak up about it," said FYWF participant Jasmine Kaur.

Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics



by Bell Hooks
Review by: David Alan Snap

"Everything we do in life is rooted in theory".

Taking a decidedly radical feminist position, Bell Hooks, the writing voice of Gloria Watkins, promotes the learning of feminist theory and history as essential parts of the process of self-actualization and the practice of freedom. In "Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics", Hooks provides an overview targeted to readers, new to interdisciplinary feminism. Importantly, Hooks argues in strong opposition to the anti-feminist public voice in contemporary culture. In particular, she speaks to young female readers who know little about feminism, many of whom falsely assume that sexism is no longer a problem or is "no longer relevant since women now have equality". Hooks also speaks to male readers, assuring them that we too can play a positive role in the feminist movement. The bottom line is that "feminism is a movement to end sexist oppression". Hooks argues that if people adopt her definition, and know more about feminism and feminist history, then they would no longer fear it. Feminism is for Everybody provides an introduction to the work of Bell Hooks, a prolific writer about popular feminist theory and cultural criticism. Hooks considers herself a social activist and a revolutionary feminist, though her work has had a significant impact in the academic world. This book's initial interest stems from Hooks' argument that sexism, racism, classism, capitalism, and colonialism in America promote oppression by idealizing oppressive values and characteristics. In order to liberate, Hooks interrogates cultural assumptions supported by oppression. She prompts readers to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of women, to raise awareness about the world in which they live; she respects and encourages readers to find their own voices, and helps them critically reflect on and analyze their place in society. The historical background included in this book provides useful information about earlier days of the feminist movement, especially to readers new to feminism. While, at times, Hooks' tone may seem confrontational to some readers -- for example, when she demands alternatives to patriarchal, racist, and homophobic aspects of popular culture -- Hooks asks readers to participate in what she calls true liberation. Some readers may feel shocked when she critiques the increased entry of bourgeois women into the workforce; she points out that this is not, in fact, a sign that women as a group are gaining economic power. Rather, this phenomenon is related to a process whereby women's interests are divided along class and racial lines, and feminism itself -- when measured by corporate accomplishment -- is co-opted by capitalism. In this regard, one particularly strong chapter is on feminist class struggle (chapter 7). This chapter links class and behavior -- how women are taught expectations about behavior, and how women understand and resolve problems. Drawing from work by Rita Mae Brown, Betty Friedan, Mary Barfoot, Charlotte Bunch, and Nancy Myron, as well as her own previously-published work (e.g., Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center), Hooks critiques the notion that economic gains of affluent females is a positive sign for all women. Instead, Hooks argues, "that freedom of privileged-class women of all races has required the sustained subordination of working-class and poor women". She asks readers to consider how "feminist liberation is linked to a vision of social change which challenges class elitism". In this sense, she suggests that we rethink the meaning of work. "When women work to make money to consume more rather than to enhance the quality of our lives on all levels, work does not lead to economic self-sufficiency. More money does not mean more freedom if our finances are not used to facilitate well-being". Hooks connects theory with practice and sees commitment to feminism as connected to political action. For example, she argues "one cannot be anti-choice and be feminist". She believes that when women do not have the right to choose what happens to their bodies, they risk relinquishing rights in other areas. Missing the organized, radical feminist, mass-based political movement, she calls for a renewed commitment to political solidarity. Although Hooks clearly argues for the notion of inclusion in feminism, what makes this book indeed valuable to readers more advanced in feminist thinking is her critique of power struggles within the women's movement, struggles among highly literate, well-educated, and materially privileged white women and materially disadvantaged women who do not have access to class power. Hooks does not shy away from pointing out that females can be sexist. She illustrates this point with a critique of "lifestyle feminism" and "power feminism," two contemporary co-optations of feminist thinking that, according to hooks, shape the feminist movement toward competitiveness and away from a clearly defined goal of ending sexist oppression. Hooks argues that the current feminist movement lacks a strong sense of sisterhood due to this focus on competition (sexually, economically, physically) concurrent with a lack of participation in consciousness raising groups. In making this argument, she discusses some of the differences between "reform" and "revolutionary" feminism, and explains why knowing about this distinction is so important for women today. Hooks realizes that learning about feminism takes place both inside and outside academic settings. She passionately argues for taking feminist theory from the academy and giving it back to the communities from which it sprang. She calls for feminism without divisive barriers but with rigorous, yet non-hierarchal, discussion and debate. She also argues that feminism cannot succeed without men's participation in the movement, that men can exist as "worthy comrade[s] in struggle" because feminism is anti-sexism, not anti-male. The enemy, then, is sexist thought and behavior by men or women. She concludes that "enlightened" feminists see that men are not the problem, that the problems are patriarchy, sexism, and male domination. Some critics contend that Hooks' work offers no practical suggestions regarding the feminist struggle. However, Hooks does apply her philosophies and suggests specific solutions. For example, she argues for the creation of housing co-ops with feminist principles. She also suggests programs of job sharing, and an increase in pay for teachers and service workers. She argues for equal access to welfare for men, so that it would no longer carry the stigma of gender. In doing so, Hooks asserts that we all live in chaos, because capitalism defines the ways in which we can care and love. But feminism can help society and individuals by creating rhetoric of belief, to help us learn about and participate in the struggle of the marginalized. Only by doing this can humans celebrate life and love, working against dehumanization and domination. Hooks espouses the belief that true revolutionaries must anchor their efforts in an act of love of people and of life. Hooks' writing often includes personal stories, and her use of emotion and confessional tones often draws criticism from scholars for being nonacademic. In "Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics", Bell Hooks uses a mere 123 pages to present some of her concepts and philosophies in a simple, readable way. Its language and tone are accessible and clear. The book consists of concise chapters (about 7 pages), each covering a specific topic such as consciousness-raising, education, neocolonialism, spirituality, anti-violence movements, male feminism, and marriage & child rearing. Readers familiar with feminist theory, and especially Hooks' other work, may find this book to be a simplified, and perhaps even recycled, version of her other texts. Nevertheless, at a cost of just over $10, this book serves as an excellent introduction to feminism. I also find it to be an excellent gift to male friends who are just learning about feminisms or for "power feminists" to help them reflect on their "feminism" in relation to others. Hooks has served as a professor at Yale University and Oberlin College, and currently is the Distinguished Professor of English at City College, CU-New York.

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What Is A 'Feminist' Movie Anyway?

by H.Shaw-Williams
Directed By: George Miller

http://screenrant.com/mad-max-fury-road-feminist-movie/

Mad Max: Fury Road is an insane, face-melting, two-hour vehicular chase through Hell filled with every ridiculous and awesome idea that director George Miller has managed to dream up over the course of three decades. It is also, depending on who you listen to, either a fun feminist action film or insidious feminist propaganda designed to lure men in with the promise of fire tornadoes before brainwashing them into submitting to female oppression.

The former claim comes from playwright and feminist Eve Ensler, who worked on the film as a consultant. The latter claim comes from "a blog for heterosexual, masculine men," in a post that warns moviegoers about the dangers of being seduced by Mad Max: Fury Road's glorious, glorious trailers. It's worth noting that the author of that blog post admits to not having seen Mad Max: Fury Road, and also doesn't appear to have seen any of the other films in the series. This isn't stated outright, but he refers to the franchise as "a piece of American culture" (it's very much Australian), insists that "Nobody barks orders to Mad Max" (actually quite a lot of people do), and seems to believe that the Mad Max films have always been a bastion of heteronormativity (two words: assless chaps).

That particular editorial has already been very thoroughly derided by other outlets, but the description of Mad Max: Fury Road as a feminist movie – whether used as praise or insult – does raise the interesting question of what exactly constitutes a 'feminist' movie? Is there a checklist? Is there an algorithm? Is there a governing body that decides these things?

One of the issues with describing any creative work as 'feminist' or 'not feminist' is the inherent assumption that every film should be given a definitive thumbs-up or thumbs-down. Not only is the thumbs-up-or-thumbs-down approach incredibly difficult to settle, given how inclined feminists are to disagree with one another, it's also incredibly boring.

No, really. Of all the fascinating ways in which feminist analysis can be applied to film, bickering over whether or not it passes an arbitrary 'Feminist or Not?' test is mind-numbingly dull and pointless by comparison. It's almost as dull and pointless as the debates over whether Marvel is better than DC, or whether PlayStation is better than Xbox. Unfortunately, much like those debates, some people never seem to get bored of obsessing over it.

Mad Max: Fury Road's youngest female actor is Coco Jack Gillies, who was around 8 years old at the time of filming, and its oldest female star is 78-year-old Melissa Jaffer. Around half of the female cast is over the age of 50. It's the kind of diversity that's rarely seen within the action genre, and it's just one of the things that makes Mad Max: Fury Road's approach to gender so rare and groundbreaking.

What's noteworthy about Mad Max: Fury Road isn't that it features strong female characters. Plenty of action movies have done that, whether in iconic roles like Ellen Ripley and Sarah Connor, or in token attempts at gender parity by giving the leggy love interest (and only prominent female character) a scene in which she kicks ass and the male protagonist stares at her, temporarily dumbstruck by her grrrl power.

In short, most action movies empower their female characters by gifting them with a few traditionally masculine traits, offering a surface level dose of apparent equality while also not upsetting the bedrock notion that traditionally masculine traits are good and traditionally feminine traits are bad. As an example, think of Hit Girl sneering "take your tampon out, Dave" in Kick-Ass 2, or any movie in which a female character mocks a male character by calling him a "bitch" or a "pussy." It's an odd kind of empowerment that relies on using femininity as an insult.

By contrast, Mad Max: Fury Road empowers its many female characters through a positive framing of traditionally feminine traits. The entire reason for the movie's lengthy desert chase is Immortan Joe's determination to retrieve his "property": women who are enslaved but also revered for their ability to create healthy new life.

Of course, Joe doesn't care about his wives as people. He values their breeding function only and considers them little more than objects (this attitude is not uniquely applied to female characters; Max himself spends the first act of the movie as a "blood bag"), but the wives take control of their bodies and end up weaponizing their wombs. They are protected by the knowledge that the Immortan's fighters daren't harm them, because they are

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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

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Fabulous Fashionistas

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement, the Emerging Leaders' Forum Alumni (ELFA), the University of the South Pacific, and YWCA Fiji collaborated to host Fiji's first-ever public screening of the groundbreaking documentary '*Fabulous Fashionistas*'! The screening was held at 7pm on Wednesday, 18th March at the USP Japan ICT Centre. Entry was FREE and there was also refreshments provided after the movie, with guests encouraged to come dressed in their most FABULOUS FASHIONISTA outfits!

The documentary follows the stories of six resilient and stylish older women in the UK, using a discussion about fashion to blow the lid off our assumptions and prejudices against older women. The film features Fiji's own Brigitte Sojourner, who was present at the screening to introduce the movie and engage in an intergenerational feminist discussion afterwards.

Reviewed here: http://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2013/sep/18/fabulous-fashionistas-tv-review

Save the Date!

Pacific Feminist Forum 2016

More details coming soon!

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precious cargo. At one point, the wily Angharad actually uses her heavily pregnant belly as a shield to protect Furiosa.

Even traditionally feminine traits that the Immortan has little regard for are shown to have crucial value. The wives' capacity for mercy and compassion leads them to spare the life of the sickly, stray War Boy Nux, who in turn becomes instrumental in their escape. Themes of reproduction come into play once again when the wives meet the Vuvalini tribe and the Keeper of the Seeds, a woman who has been doggedly attempting to get plants to grow in the sour, poisoned earth of the post-apocalyptic future.

Moreover, even as Mad Max: Fury Road seemingly celebrates traditionally masculine traits like violence and aggression, it also condemns them in none-too-subtle ways. One of the wives' mantras is "Who killed the world?" – a reference to the fact that the war and greed which destroyed their homeland was spearheaded by men – and when the Keeper of the Seeds proudly tells The Dag that she has killed every person she ever met with a headshot, The Dag isn't impressed. "I thought somehow you girls were above all that," she says wryly.

It's an achievement in its own right that all of this unique, thought-provoking and nuanced commentary on femininity and masculinity is conveyed within a movie that has more explosions than dialogue. A thoughtful vision of gender roles in a post-civilization society sits comfortably alongside a mobile rock band and a scene in which desert-dwellers on motorcycles perform stunt jumps in order to drop grenades onto the hood of Furiosa's War Rig.

While the initial response from feminist writers has been largely positive, it probably won't be long before counter-opinions begin to crop up. Gender abolitionists might bristle at the way Mad Max: Fury Road flirts with gender essentialist ideals. Intersectional feminists may lament the limited amount of racial diversity in its cast. Still others might object to the wives' partial reliance on male characters to help achieve their goal of liberation. All of these discussion points are perfectly valid and worth talking about.

It could be argued that some of the most interesting conversations about feminism and gender in cinema have blossomed from the fundamental question of 'Feminist or Not?' Yet it's important to remember that the question itself doesn't actually need to be answered; it's merely one of many critical scalpels that can be used to dissect a text. Getting too bogged down in quarreling over a 'thumbs-up' or 'thumbs-down' score just leads to discussions that ultimately go nowhere.

Take, for example, the woeful misapplication of the Bechdel Test – an otherwise useful tool for measuring overall trends of gender representation in the film industry – as a means by which to measure whether or not individual movies qualify as feminist or not. Even the Mako Mori Test, an alternative proposed after the release of Pacific Rim to try and make up for the shortcomings of the Bechdel Test, treats feminism in film as though it were quantifiable rather than subjective. There is no shortcut for this discussion, nor should there be.

Mad Max: Fury Road might be considered this year's Gone Girl: a movie that isn't afraid to play with notions of gender and to progress the ongoing dialogue about portrayals of both men and women in Hollywood. This is what action filmmaking looks like when characters aren't written as male by default.