FIJI WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Balance

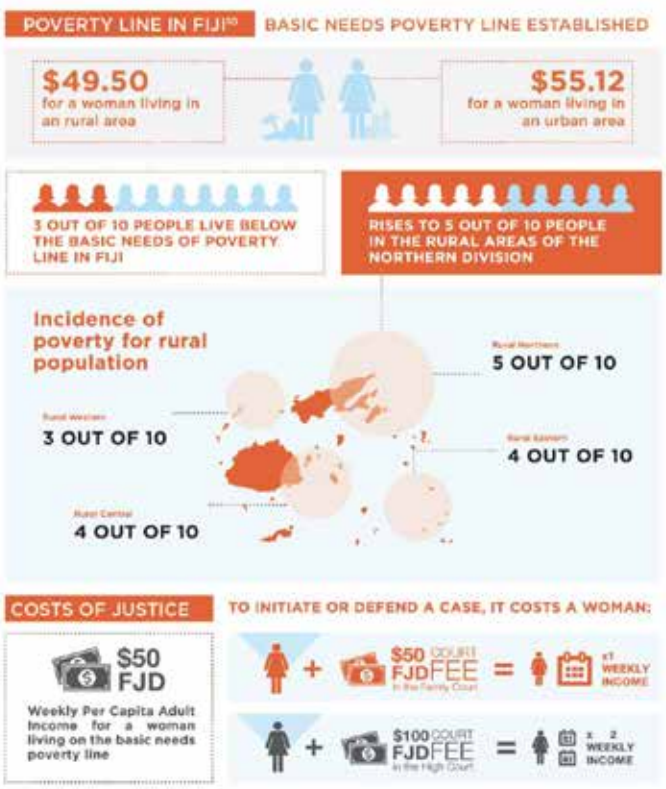
"HELPING TO BALANCE THE SCALES"

December 2017

Balancing the Scales

ON November 21st 2017, Fiji Women's Rights Movement launched its research report on 'Balancing the Scales: Improving Fijian Women's Access to Justice.' The research is part of a three-year project funded by the European Union. FemLink Pacific, Diverse Voices and Action for Equality and Haus of Khameleon are partners to this project. The research was commissioned by FWRM in January 2017 and was co-funded by the UN Women.

The aim of the report was to foster an enabling environment for improving women's access to the formal justice system with a focus on family law matters and violence against women and children.



The info graphic depicts some glaring findings of this report. The research report is available on FWRM's website on: www.fwrm.org.fj

A hard copy of the report can be made available via request sent to: info@fwrm.org.fj

FWRM is celebrating 31 Years of Balancing the Scales

The women surveyed **experienced violence for an average of 868 days** before they went to the police or courts to resolve these issues

From the Director's desk

Season's greetings from FWRM!

Welcome to the December Issue of Balance.

So much has happened since the last issue in March.

FWRM launched its groundbreaking Balancing the Scales: Improving Fijian Women's Access to Justice research, an important and timely milestone as we marked the 16 Days of Activism against Violence against Women. The research highlights barriers women face in accessing justice and provides recommendations on how to address this. It's a herstoric achievement for FWRM, continuing on decades of work in policy and legislative reform. We recognise the important role of legislative action in addressing violence against women and girls but it is another challenge to change mindsets and attitudes. We hope to achieve this through our awareness campaigns, advocacy and research.

That leads us to another success story from this year, our Not OK! Stop Sexual Harassment Campaign raising awareness on the prevalence of sexual harassment in the workplace. The Campaign was carried out using the findings from our Sexual Harassment in the Workplace Follow Up Study 2016. Over 1600 pamphlets and 598 posters were distributed to various offices, police stations and schools but more notably- an infographic video was shared online. This raised awareness on the types of sexual harassment; the 2016 follow up study findings and avenues to find help. The video garnered up to 12,000 views online.

This is a significant shift in our communications strategy with the objective of further utilising our digital profile and platform to amplify human rights advocacy. Sexual harassment and violence against women and girls can happen online or even exacerbated, as we've seen recently with local sex videos being leaked online and circulated. Recognising the internet's impact on advocacy, FWRM is committed to promoting a feminist Internet; not just as a visibility tool but for knowledge sharing and Pacific movement-building.

Through this research and our Access to Justice work, we've been able to strengthen our relationships with the formal justice sector institutions. The success of the sexual harassment campaign led to it being profiled regionally, in a joint campaign for 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence. There was an agreement at the Pacific Gender taskforce in October for a joint campaign between SPC, PIFS, UN Women, PIPSO, FWRM, and Haus of Khameleon to raise awareness on sexual harassment in the workplace. This also provided the opportunity to build on the outcomes of the 13th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women and 6th Meeting of Ministers on women's economic empowerment that took place in the first week of October.

As a representative of the PFF Secretariat, FWRM was a member of the Triennial event steering group. The Triennial represented a crucial opportunity for FWRM to contribute to Pacific women's movement building, carrying on from the successes of the Pacific Feminist Forum. We were able to achieve this with our partners from We Rise Coalition; femLINKpacific, International Women's Development Agency and Diverse Voices and Action for Equality. The Coalition with funding from UN Women was able to support the participation of over 30 Pacific women human rights defenders at the Triennial.

This is part of FWRM's work to enable women's participation at different spaces, in line with our objective to build and sustain a movement and give leadership opportunities to women, networking and sharing experiences with others in the Pacific and internationally.

FWRM also marked another milestone with the commencement of the inaugural Fiji Young Women's Forum and Fiji Women's Forum National Convention. This was one of the largest intergenerational spaces for women, to discuss common issues and pre-strategise for more women leaders, particularly as the elections would be happening next year.

Lastly, a popular highlight, our GIRLS (Grow Inspire Relate Lead Succeed) Theatre program successfully organised and performed a well-received production. The GIRLS wrote and created the play script themselves, with the theme focused on bullying. GIRLS has continued to be a pivotal feature of our Intergenerational Women in Leadership Program, empowering and fostering another generation of leaders and feminists.

There have also been sad moments this year and in commemorating Women's Human Rights Defender's Day, we'd like to pay tribute to two feminists and allies that we have lost this year. FWRM's former board member Dr. Mridula Prasad and Academic Dr Teresia Teiawa. Dr. Mridula was a strong advocate for women's health, particularly sexual and reproductive health and rights. Dr. Teiawa was a renowned Pacific poet, women's rights advocate and trailblazer in research. Their legacy and contributions to the Movement will always be remembered.

We're quite excited to release this Balance Issue highlighting our work around Access to Justice and paying tribute to our women's human rights defenders. The 16 Days culminated on December 10, Human Rights Day and FWRM, as the Secretariat of the NGO Coalition on Human Rights organised a march and rally for Saturday, December 9.

FWRM stands in solidarity with women human rights defenders and activists around the world on the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence. We wish our partners, networks, allies, members and staff, a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

In solidarity,
Nalini Singh

Transitions

THIS year was filled with many staff transitions and FWRM would like to acknowledge the contributions of those that have moved on to new challenges;

Monica Waqanisau

Monica Waqanisau joined FWRM in early 2015 as a Research Officer in the Gender and Transitional Justice Programme. She brought with her a flare for feminism, human rights and the rule of law which has inspired and informed her work during her tenure. Monica was also the Secretary for the NGO Coalition on Human Rights since late 2015 to her departure in October 2017. FWRM wishes Monica well for her future feminist endeavours!

Laurette Prasad

Laurette joined FWRM in 2015 as the Finance Officer, with over 16 years of experience in the Accounting and Finance sector. In 2016, she became the Finance and Admin Team Leader. During her time at FWRM, her vast experience and knowledge has helped shape and strengthen the organisation's financial and accountability processes. Laurette played a major role in helping develop FWRM's Finance Manual and has been a great asset to the organisation. FWRM wishes her well in her future endeavours and new opportunity.

We would also like to warmly welcome our new staff members

Programme Director: Kaushal Sharma

Kaushal joined FWRM in September 2017, after completing her MSc in Gender Development and Globalisation as a Commonwealth Scholar at London School of Economics and Political Science. She has 5 years of experience in Facilitating and Teaching Language, Literature and Geography courses whilst working at Fiji National University and the University of the South Pacific. After 5 years of work experience in Tertiary Teaching sector, she decided to navigate her career path towards Feminist Movement Building. Her major areas of interest and expertise include Feminist Research Methods, Feminist Theory, Gender Globalisation and Development issues, Feminist Economics and Gender and Human Rights.

Team Leader- Finance and Admin Management: Rakesh Prasad

Rakesh joined FWRM in September 2017 and comes with over 15 years of work experience in Finance and Administration and has held management positions in both private and public sectors. As an Associate member of CPA Australia, Rakesh also holds International Masters in Business Administration obtained from Taiwan.

Administrative Assistant: Priyasheel Prasad

Priya joined FWRM in April, 2017. She's a feminist with big dreams of making it big in the area of women's development. Upon completion of her Administrative studies at the Fiji National University, Priya plans to delve into gender studies where she feels she could make an impact in terms of the recognition of the contribution women make in all aspects of the Fijian society.

FWRM Launch New Research on Women's Access to Justice: A reflection

By Menka Goundan

It takes a woman an average of 28 months to report her case of violence to the police or courts; from the time she first experiences it.

This was revealed as part of the findings of FWRM's *"Balancing the Scales: Improving Fijian Women's Access to Justice" research*.

The research report was launched at the Tanoa Plaza in Suva on November 21 and I was given the honour of presenting the findings.

I stood at the podium facing a room filled with over a 100 people, clad in my black saree, revelling in being part of this herstoric milestone.

FWRM has been instrumental in policy and legislative reform in Fiji for the last 31 years. One of the organisation's milestones has been the advocacy and campaign around the Family Law Act 2003.

Over a decade later, here I was, realising another of FWRM's significant achievements. A research report that analysed how these progressive laws have been implemented and the barriers that continue to exist for women. This research was a product of a vision shared by the Movement and one that has taken years of advocacy, networking and campaigning to build.

This was reflected in the room, with guests from across the different justice sector agencies including Chief Justice Anthony Gates, the Director of Public Prosecutions Christopher Pryde, donors, the EU Ambassador to the Pacific Julian Wilson, allies, partners and present and former staff.

It was a moment of celebration, but as I read out the findings, an aura of mourning permeated the room. The raw reality of Fijian women's access to justice was glaring at the audience from the projector screen. There were few startled looks but also a quiet sense of acknowledgement, that on some level, we were not surprised.

Ninety-two percent of the women surveyed in the report said, they sought the formal justice system because they wanted the violence to stop.

I remembered this! My mind wandered back to the hot and humid afternoon in the mountain ranges of rural Ba, during one of the surveys with the women. One of the women had stated this in the simplest Fiji Hindi. There was a significant weight of responsibility for me, to share these women's experiences and their voices. While there were a number of us who worked extensively on compiling this research, I felt very close to this work. Every time I shared parts of the research, my mind would snap back to the moment I first heard/saw it.

Gender disaggregated data from the Fiji Police Force showed that 9 out of 10 victims in sexual offense cases were women or girls whilst 9 out of 10 perpetrators in sexual offense cases were men. The women's Movement has known this for years, through our programs that gender-based violence was real and women and girls were disproportionally more affected by violence. We finally had the data. Many times during the research, as we plowed through the cases, I'd stressed that it was important to collect gender-disaggregated data. This was why.

In the months of research, we collected and made trends of data from all four-justice sector agencies including; the Fiji Courts, Fiji Police Force, Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and Legal Aid Commission. There was a dedicated team of us, researchers, who worked from January to October 2017 and we used eight different methodologies to produce this report. We analysed five years worth (2012-2016) of statistics on cases filed at Family Court registries in Fiji. We found that women initiate 9 out of 10 maintenance cases and 7 out of 10 restraining order cases.

The research also highlighted the prevalence of sexual offences and it was disturbing to find that a significant portion of the victims/survivors were children. Sexual offenses account for rape, attempted rape, indecent assault, child sexual abuse, assault with the intent to rape, defilement, abduction with the intent to rape, sexual assault, incest and pornographic activity. According to the statistics shared by Office of the Director of Public Prosecution, rape accounted for 71 percent of sexual offense cases prosecuted in 2016. Further to this, two thirds of the victims of sexual offenses prosecuted (64 percent) by the Director of Public Prosecution are under the age of 18.

As part of the report, the research team also put together recommendations that had been drawn from the findings. The question was raised at the launch, where to from here?

In the report, FWRM committed to continuing with some of the research approaches for the next few years. This includes continuous analysis of relevant high court and magistrate court cases and collation of disaggregated data. FWRM plan to administer and update the women's survey during the community information sessions next year.

It was an incredible honour to be part of the research team and work behind the scenes to see this report to completion. The FWRM Research Team are grateful to all those who have contributed to this report. We hope that the recommendations highlighted in this report are taken forward by the relevant agencies and we will continue our efforts to lobby and ensure that they are.

Not OK! Stop Sexual Harassment

By Kris Prasad

SINCE the 1970s, large numbers of women have entered Fiji's formal workforce. While many women face intimate partner violence at home, the workplace has also become a dangerous place, as women face violence and discrimination through sexual harassment.

The 2002 findings showed that 1 in 3 women have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace The results at the time indicated that sexual harassment in the workplace was significant, widespread and varied in nature. The study helped FWRM lobby and advocate against sexual harassment in the workplace, through submissions on the Employment Relations Promulgation (ERP) and carrying out trainings on stopping sexual harassment. Since then, FWRM has continued to receive invitations to conduct trainings with several different organisations in the private sector.

Fiji's Employment Relations Promulgation (2007) now known as the Employment Relations Act, 76 (2); *states that an employer must develop and maintain a policy to prevent sexual harassment in his or her workplace*. FWRM assumes that the increase in the demand for such trainings is due to the amendments in the ERP stating mandatory Sexual Harassment Policy in the workplace. FWRM has also continued to receive clients seeking advice on sexual harassment incidents and assisted women in drafting letters of complaint or provided referrals to service providers.

In 2016, FWRM commissioned a follow up study to the 2002 research. The core research objective was to replicate and update the key elements of the 2002 study, while incorporating some changes to make the project relevant to the 2016 workplace.

The survey found that one in five women interviewed had experienced sexual harassment in the workplace with high incidences with young women in Nadi and the hospitality industry. The decrease in the prevalence of sexual harassment in the workplace could be due to the ERP's provision on having mandatory Sexual Harassment Policy in the workplace.

This year, the findings from the research was the rationale behind an awareness raising campaign titled *Not OK: Stop Sexual Harassment*. The campaign involved the production of an infographic video, posters and pamphlets to share findings from the research and also provide basic information on sexual harassment, how employers and employees can stop it and also resource information for survivors of sexual harassment.

The infographic video was shared across FWRM's social media platforms and received 12,338 views on Facebook with a reach of 36,318 and 113 shares. The video was also screened on Fiji Television during prime-time viewing periods.

Key stakeholders such as the Ministry for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations, Fiji Hotel and Tourism Association, Fiji Human Resources Institute, International Labour Organisation, Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, Fiji Commerce and Employers Federation and Fiji Trades Union Congress were also targeted with our campaign materials. A special trip was also made to the Western Division to disseminate campaign materials with hotels, tour operators, municipal councils and police stations.

An unexpected outcome on the campaign was the keen interest shown by the private sector. This was possibly the first time there was direct engagement between FWRM and private sector organizations and there was huge interest from organization to work with FWRM.

FWRM carried out a training of trainers in November, 2017 to upskill FWRM trainers and partner organisations to work in this area and it is intended that the trainers will conduct trainings as requested at a nominal cost.

Gender Training with Frontline Officers to Help Improve Women's Access to Justice

By Kris Prasad

WHAT is the difference between sex and gender? What is gender division of labour?

These were some of the issues discussed at a 2-day Gender Sensitisation training conducted from 5-6 June 2017, at Suva's Tanoa Plaza.

Twenty-six frontline officials from the Fiji Police, Legal Aid Commission and Family Law Courts took part in this training.

FWRM's current project -Balancing the Scales: *Improving Women's Access to Justice* has already established strong relationships with formal justice sector institutions thus this training complemented the 3-year project, specifically the research component, where participants were able to share insights from their work as frontline officers.

Through interactive sessions and open discussions, participants were able to differentiate between sex and gender, unpack gender stereotypes and uncover women's unpaid work.

The challenges of diverse women (LGBTIQ, defacto, disabled, rural and poor) accessing formal justice institutions were also highlighted during the programme as participants explored the data from a scoping study carried out by FWRM in 2015.

The study documented women's experiences in utilizing the Family Court services and their experiences of the Family Law Act, Domestic Violence & Crimes Decree.

Women, despite progressive laws and in particular, marginalised women were found to continue to face barriers to access institutions and services related to security, protection and justice.

Previously statistics shared with FWRM by the Chief Registrar in 2014 showed a threefold increase in the number of applications to the Family Court between 2009 and 2014, from 5,506 to 14,578 which also meant a great deal of pressure on the court's ability to cater for the needs of its clients.

A key lesson learnt from the workshop is the demand for gender sensitive training/ modality from FWRM as service to organizations that request for such training and this could be an area of future consultancy service for FWRM.

Five Years of the Fiji Women's Forum

IN April 2012, four diverse women's organisations came together in a herstoric move to promote women in leadership and mobilise women in various sectors of society to meaningfully engage in the democratisation process. This was the formation of the Fiji Women's Forum, co-convened by the National Council of Women Fiji, Soqosoqo Vakamarama i Taukei, Fiji Women's Rights Movement and femLINKpacific. That year, only 19.7 percent of national parliaments worldwide were women and 12.4 percent in the Pacific.[1]

Women's representation at the national level was a major concern for women's groups around the country as Fiji prepared to return to democracy, with its first national election in 2014 since the 2006 coup. Recognising an opportunity to mobilise and promote women's participation in leadership, the Fiji Women's Forum came into existence and marked an incredible milestone for women's movement-building.

"Coming together in a coalition with FWRM, SSVM and NCW made good sense. It was important at that time when particularly we were in a very critical transition to our democratisation process to amplify the collective call of women of the kinds of values that we have," said femLINKpacific Executive Producer Director Sharon Bhagwan Rolls in a 2014 video interview by the International Women's Development Agency (IWDA).[2]

By Maryann Lockington

In April 2017, exactly five years after the FWF was formed, the Co-Conveners signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) committing themselves to the forum for the next two years.

"We are still fighting for more women in leadership positions. We are still fighting for human rights and more (women's) participation in all spaces so the significance of this is that we haven't faltered, we haven't wavered from our initial commitment. We are just renewing it," said NCWF General Secretary Faye Volatabu in the FWF press statement.

Initially formed to increase women's participation in leadership focusing on the 2014 elections, the Forum has established a reputation in mobilising and empowering women leaders. FWF has organised 5 national forums, bringing together diverse women from across Fiji, as well as, making efforts to collaborate with the Fiji Young Women's Forum to ensure an intergenerational space.

"The Fiji Women's Forum was revolutionary in that it brought together four (4) women's groups with different agendas and mandates for one common goal, to promote women in leadership. It's a testimony of our commitment to movement building and recognising the power of a collective voice in bringing about positive change, Nalini Singh, Executive Director of FWRM said in the FWF press statement.

The forum also marked its half a decade of existence and re-affirmed its commitment by launching a new logo. The new logo represents the interweaving of ideas, beliefs and the common goals of women's movements in Fiji. The logo also represents the true meaning of collaboration and gives an authenticity of our rich tradition and culture.

"It's an affirmation of our unity and solidarity," said Adi Finau Tabakaucoro, Soqosoqo Vakamarama i Taukei General Secretary in the FWF press statement.

The event was also an opportunity for FWF to discuss their focus for the next 2 years and strategise for the upcoming elections.

1 Archive.ipu.org. (2017). Women in Parliaments: World and Regional Averages. [online] Available at: http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/arc/world310112.htm [Accessed 13 Dec. 2017].
2 Young, K. (2014). Fiji Womens forum. [online] YouTube. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=123&v=5yncXBOTRsc [Accessed 13 Dec. 2017].

FYWF and FWF Hosts Inaugural Fiji Women's National Convention

By Maryann Lockington

It's important that women are represented at all levels of leadership and decision-making.

The Fiji Young Women's Forum and Fiji Women's Forum marked a herstoric milestone for women's movement-building as they hosted the inaugural National Women's Convention that was held from August 28- 30th, 2017.

The Fiji Young Women's Forum is co-convened by femLINKPacific, Diverse Voices and Action (DIVA) for Equality Fiji and the Emerging Leaders Forum Alumni (ELFA). The Fiji Women's Forum is co-convened by the Fiji Women's Rights Movement, National Council of Women Fiji, Soqosoqo Vakamarama iTaukei and femLINKpacific

Recognising the need for an intergenerational space and dialogue, to strengthen Fijian women's collective voices, the Forums brought together over 100 women from across Viti Levu, Vanua Levu and the Maritime Islands. Within that week, the FYWF held a pre-strategising meeting on August 27 before the Convention and went on to host the fourth Fiji Young Women's Forum from August 31-1 September.

The FYWF pre-stategising meeting was a chance for the young women to talk about issues important to them and the barriers they faced in voicing their concerns. One of the challenges highlighted were the cultural and societal norms that discriminate young women based on their age and gender. The young women were able to identify their challenges and map out ways in which to amplify this at the larger National Convention.

The National Convention was focused on promoting women's participation in the national processes, particularly in reference to their understanding of the Fiji Constitution 2013 and with a focus on the Sustainable Development Goals (especially, SDG 5- Gender Equality for Women & Girls). The Convention enabled a capacity-building space for women to unpack the Bill of Rights and identifying how the Fiji Constitution directly relates to and affects them.

There were vibrant conversations on the influence of the community, society, culture and faith/religion on women's participation but also, the need to empower each other in order to move forward. The discussions spanned beyond the Convention, as Fiji MP Salote Radrodro, who had been one of the plenary speakers, went on to mention the Forums during the September Parliamentary sitting.

"Madam Speaker, women in Fiji compose more than 50 percent of Fiji's population and yet their issues, interests, what is to protect them, empowerment and development is not reflected in the Constitution. Madam Speaker, last month the Fiji Women's Forum and Fiji Young Women's Forum held the National Convention in Nadi and which I had attended with the objective of scrutinising the 2013 Constitution and its limitation in advancing the development and empowerment of women particularly in the political spaces…"

The Convention was a vital step in fostering the intergenerational movement and forming strategies for women across generations to support each other towards claiming more leadership roles.

This was reflected in the National Convention's Outcome Statement, in which the Forum participants committed to promote women in leadership. The participants recognised that there were structural limitations to women's political participation but despite this, will continue to hold to account the inclusivity of national governance processes and supporting women in the bid for national and government leadership positions. The Outcomes Statement was endorsed by 109 Fijian women.

GIRLS Voices: A Herstory

"When in a country daughters are disrespected and demeaned tell me truly, can that country be called free?" A GIRL CHILD (1993)[1]

By **Maryann Lockington and Lillian Delana**

FWRM's 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.

The Beginnings

In line with this, a core part of FWRM's work is promoting women's participation and leadership in different spaces and levels of decision-making. This includes young women and girls and recognising that their experiences could draw meaningful and significant contributions to dealing with existing social issues. Hence, the ground-breaking and pioneering work with empowering girls has been a popular, high-profile feature of FWRM's Intergenerational Women in Leadership Program (formerly Young Women in Leadership Program). In 2006, FWRM began working with girls, in response to a research, "Violence against the Girl Child in the Pacific Islands Region" by the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre. The research highlighted the different forms of violence and discrimination girls faced because of their perceived inferior status in Pacific Island society (due to patriarchal cultural norms). Girls were vulnerable to physical emotional and sexual abuse and exploitation. There would be no better voice to share these experiences than the girls themselves but this would mean challenging what society dictates, 'girls are seen not heard.' The women's movement and feminism has always been about challenging the norms and inspiring transformative change. Recognising the leadership and capacities of women across all diversities, including age groups, FWRM moved to create a platform that empowered girls to speak. The idea was to use more innovative approaches, like arts and sports, to encourage girls' creative expression.

GIRLS

One of the first activities was 'Picture This,' which involved the girls in FWRM's International Women's Day celebrations. This became a staple for IWD and to this day, girls have always been part of the March 8 celebrations. The concept evolved until in 2013, when the GROW, INSPIRE, RELATE, LEAD, SUCCEED (GIRLS) Theatre program was launched. The program involved girls in theatre arts and rugby, encouraging them to share their stories in a positive space and challenge gender stereotypes. The GIRLS graduated in 2015 and became part of a Digital Storytelling project in 2016. Through this project, the GIRLS shared their own experiences of gender stereotypes, sexism and bullying by writing and creating short story digital productions. All thirty-five films were previewed at Damodar Cinemas in Suva and featured at different activism events including Human Rights Day 2016. The GIRLS successes led to the launch of another new cohort in 2017. Eleven years after FWRM's first activity to engage with girls, sees a thriving GIRLS program with its second Theatre group. In November this year, the GIRLS performed their play, "Angel's Gift" at the Japan ICT Building at USP in Suva. "Angel's Gift" was conceptualised and developed by the girls themselves, with support from the consultants Moana Loa Performing Arts Centre. Through the play, the GIRLS shared their stories of bullying, abuse and discrimination faced at home and in schools.

"Throughout the play, you could see there was abuse happening but at the end of it, we could understand what the message was. Gender equality was an important message, men can't do everything, we need women to move forward" (Teen male audience member).

"It was nice to see these little girls, being confident. There were a lot of messages in that play, talking about abuse at home or bullying at school. There was so many things going on. I really liked how the girls came together and you

1 A Girl Child. (1993). Balance, [online] (November), p.10. Available at: http://www.fwrm.org.fj/images/fwrm/publications/balance/pdf/1993_BalanceNovember.pdf [Accessed 13 Dec. 2017].

can see they have a voice of their own." (Young man audience member)

GIRLS CLUB

GIRLS became a phenomenon, creating wonderful vibrant young leaders and inspiring the formation of the GIRLS Club. GIRLS sparked a love for activism and advocacy among the participants and created an impression with parents. For this reason, the GIRLS Club was created as another avenue for the GIRLS graduates to continue learning about advocacy, engage with the Movement and help mentor the next cohort of GIRLS. One of the first highlights of the GIRLS Club was their participation in the Pacific Feminist Forum, as featured in the Balance March 2017 Issue. For the first time in the Pacific and Fiji, there was a GIRLS-led workshop at the forum, as well as, a GIRLS representative at the official opening plenary. GIRLS were visible and heard. Early this year, the GIRLS Club travelled to Namosi Eco Resort under the activity theme, "Women and Food Security." The GIRLS and their parents were taught by the village women about subsistence living and were given the responsibility to harvest their food and gather firewood. They also learnt how to light fire and prepare their meal without the modern conveniences, they would otherwise have at home in the city. Each group was given one hour to prepare their meals. Each group was tested on their teamwork, cleanliness and time management. This activity allowed the girls club to learn about the local crops and traditional ways of farming. During that weekend, the GIRLS also created their own songs and mini-dramas, to portray what they had learned about "Navunikabi Women & Food Security" to present to everyone. The reflections proved insightful and interesting, as the girls acknowledged how privileged they were compared to those in rural areas. Three of the girls shared how that weekend had allowed them to get away from technology and bond more with their parents.

"Last week, my teacher asked me to write my goal on my book I wrote "I want to be the Prime Minister." But after reading this again, I thought to myself, oh this is impossible. How can I achieve this? Now, looking at the Namosi women today, it's taught me to work hard and that nothing is impossible." (GIRLS Club participant)

It was evident from the two days, that the girls together with their parents enjoyed the adventure trip. It also created a good bond within the GIRLS Club participants as they unplugged from the world of technology and focussed on spending time together by either playing cards, playing the ukulele, singing and sharing stories.

"The team building exercise truly is a memorable one in which all the girls took part and were responsible for their respective tasks, even if it was their own lunch. The girls seemed to have a good time too and one could also sense the satisfaction of a completed task from the team at Namosi Eco Resort. In addition, the capabilities of women in Namosi to perform a man's task is really a classic lesson that girls/women can do anything: Grow Inspire Relate Lead Succeed," (GIRLS Club parent).

Parents

The GIRLS program encouraged the participants to express their ideas, share and create but the parents/guardians were also continuously involved and exposed to the realities of their daughters/wards experiences. FWRM recognised the pivotal role parents had in the GIRLS lives and carried out separate sessions, to ensure they understood and were aware of some of the challenges GIRLS faced and they solutions they recommended.

"Some of the major changes that i have noticed which I believe has been the impact of joining the group: she has gained more confidence. She's more vocal now and able to speak her mind, anytime. She has built a very strong confidence in her, which I am grateful for. Thank you once again for accepting her into the group and we continue to support all your activities." (GIRLS Club Mother)

A GIRLS mother on the parents' info-session, "Definitely an enlightening session on human rights, especially on the history on establishment of the universal declaration of human rights. I'm more aware of the gaps I human rights that exist in our society."

Changing the Narrative

GIRLS continue to change the narrative, being part of the various feminist spaces to share on their realities. They are able to recognise the challenges they face, know their own experiences and, their voices vital, to finding ways to address the issues that affect them. During the GIRLS Theatre Performance in November, FWRM Executive Director Nalini Singh said, "GIRLS face further discrimination because of their gender, in addition to their age and abilities. In fact, our recent study, Balancing the Scales: Improving Fijian Women's Access to Justice Research shows that children are the victims and survivors in 64 percent of sexual offence cases prosecuted by the Office of Director of Public Prosecutions in 2016. These are sobering statistics but more importantly, it's a sad depiction of the amount of violence being perpetrated against children."

FWRM is committed to the GIRLS program and proud to observe their achievements. The GIRLS continue to build the Movement, contribute to its sustainability, holds us accountable and provides a voice for intergenerational leadership.

References:

A Girl Child. (1993). Balance, [online] (November), p.10. Available at: http://www.fwrm.org.fj/images/fwrm/publications/balance/pdf/1993_BalanceNovember.pdf [Accessed 13 Dec. 2017].

We Rise at the Triennial

"We commit to escalate and support innovative feminist social organising efforts by all Pacific women, inclusive of marginalised rural, remote and urban communities,"
- Pacific Feminist Charter for Change 2016

By Maryann Lockington & Kaushal Sharma

The first week of October 2017 saw a large gathering of regional CSOs and government representatives from across 22 Pacific countries and territories for the 13th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women and Sixth Meeting of Pacific Ministers for Women at Novotel in Lami. The theme of the Conference was, "Economic Empowerment of Pacific Women,". This Conference represented a crucial moment for feminists and women advocates across the region to join forces and collectively advocate for the changes they want to see for women's human rights including economic empowerment in the Pacific. It presented an opportunity for feminists, women advocates and Civil Society Representatives to connect and share joint strategies from their respective work at home, and across the region.

Participation in the Triennial Conference was helmed as a major regional event under We Rise year 2 program. The overall goal of the We Rise Coalition for the Triennial Conference was to support movement building of feminists and women's human rights defenders following on from the success of the Pacific Feminist Forum. Out of the 208 applicants, the Coalition sponsored the designated 31 participants from 9 Pacific Island Countries including urban, rural and remote Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Cook Islands, Tonga, Samoa, Republic of Marshall Islands, Vanuatu and Tuvalu. The participants attended the Triennial Conference thorough the We Rise Coalition with the funding support of UN Women and Australian Aid.

One of the landmarks within the Triennial Conference was the Pacific Feminist Hub that was set up by the We Rise Coalition. The We Rise Coalition created this dynamic movement-building hub as a meeting point for feminists and civil society partners from across the Pacific. The hub provided a CSO-only, safe, informal and friendly space for We Rise coalition participants to build relationships, reflect on their experiences, share updates, as well as strategize for effective networking, urgent action, text work, advocacy and lobbying during the negotiations on the outcomes document and in preparation for civil society panel interventions. The informal and friendly ambience of the hub helped create a nurturing atmosphere for many of the participants who were attending the regional conference for the first time.

The participants brought with them a wealth of experience and knowledge about gender issues affecting grassroots communities within their national context. They served as a channel through which Pacific women's voices and issues were represented within the main negotiation, parallel events and informal meetings and gathering. One of the major highlights for the We Rise Coalition was its contribution towards the successful negotiation of the Outcomes document. The We rise CSO Caucus was able to negotiate for the inclusion of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, Women with Disabilities, Information Communication Technologies, Faith Based Institutions as well as added language on Gender Responsive Budgeting, Technical and Vocational Education and Training.

> *"One of the hardest things I've done today was walk through the doors to the CSO Preparatory/ strategy meeting facilitated by WE RISE COALITION. It was the fear of the unknown that made me pause. I feared that they wouldn't understand me and my cause, that my path was different from theirs, that there was no space available for a girl from Ba who has been advocating for gender equality and the empowerment of women by the only means available to her ~ social media & community work. Well, I couldn't be more wrong…. As the meeting drew to a close, one thing was certain, a lot can be achieved if women come together in solidarity and are not intimidated by the constant nagging voices that try to drown our cause."*
>
> – Participant from Ba.

The We Rise Triennial experience highlights the leveraging of social movement power that takes place when feminist and WHRD networks

WE RISE COALITION

A Feminist Coalition in the Pacific

femLINKpacific MEDIA INITIATIVES FOR WOMEN · FWRM · IWDA INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Rationale

The words We Rise is a powerful phrase and indicates a myriad of thoughts and feelings at first glance.

We, as in the people; We, as in women; We, as a region; We, as a movement.

To emphasise the importance of the name of the coalition, the font was proposed for its high legibility and its roots in environmental signage which is significant to the coalition's work in the Pacific on ecological sustainability. This type of font signifies strength, stability, decisiveness and justice.

The triangle motif surrounding the coalition's name is a homage to the Pacific and also emphasises that the coalition's work is guided by the principles of equality, human rights and feminism. This design also reaffirms the importance of equal partnerships in that independent feminist organisations have come

collaborate for collective action and political voice within intergovernmental spaces. This leveraging of collective voice and strategy further strengthens the call for accountability and creates spaces that makes it possible for diverse Pacific women activists' and advocate's voices to be heard both by their own government representatives as well as by each other, and within difficult, often hierarchical regional intergovernmental spaces and processes.

together to work in solidarity to ensure women are able to fully realise and enjoy their human rights.

The raised fist or clenched fist is a popular global symbol of solidarity, support and active resistance. To capitalise on its universality, this symbol has been used to indicate that while the coalition is Pacific, it's also part of the global movement to dismantle patriarchy. In addition to this and to clearly establish the coalition as a feminist one representing Pacific women and ensuring that their interest is central to the coalition's work, the symbol for women is incorporated into the raised fist.

The colours were chosen to give the coalition its own independent visual identity.

Many of the We Rise sponsored participants concluded by expressing their gratitude for having the opportunity to raise issues that affect women in their own countries as well as hear from their Pacific sisters. Majority of the participants reaffirmed their commitment to working further in the area of women's rights and utilize the lessons and experiences learned from the Triennial conference within their own work.

"What I came for was first for women with disabilities to be heard and I wanted to ensure that they include us in polices... Just the first part on the meeting, my minster agreed on that [and] I am happy about it… I had the opportunity to raise issue I came to cover esp. in the caucus meeting. I liked the space as we were able to speak our minds freely and also meet with the delegates…we were able to tell them what we want and what we came here for. [This Triennial experience] has empowered me greatly in terms of strategising …and also working together with other people working for common goals like women with other diversities. Coming here I learned we all are working for a common goal. When I go back I will be able to follow up with my friends so we can achieve what we want by empowering women despite whatever diversities and abilities we have."

– Participant

What do Shrinking Spaces for CSOs mean for the Pacific?

By Losana Tuiraviravi and Maryann Lockington

CIVIL society plays an essential role in the democratisation process; promoting good governance, transparency, supporting accountability mechanisms, disemination of information, public debate and advocacy. CSOs and NGOs work across diverse and specific human rights and social justice causes, and, are experts on these issues, monitoring and evaluating the reality on the ground. Their work is vital in informing the public and those in governance levels about issues that are prevalent in society, as well as, providing information, appropriate language and recommendations to create strategies/policies that can address these.

Yet the participation of CSOs and NGOs within decision-making spaces continue to be limited and/or excluded. This was evident during the CSW (Commission on the Status of Women) 61 in New York when NGOs were escorted out of negotiations on Wednesday 22 March, 2017. Among those present, were our partners in the We Rise Coalition; femLINKPacific, Diverse Voices and Action(DIVA) for Equality and International Women's Development Agency (IWDA). The Coalition is just an example of Pacific women's organisations at the global stage amplifying our issues, in the context of our small island states.

This was also a topic of conversation at the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) in March this year and the pre-strategising meetings at the CSO Forum on Sustaintable Development attended by Fiji Women's Forum Coordinator Losana Tuiraviravi. The meeting opened a dialogue between CSOs and stakeholders that contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals Agenda 2030. Diverse issues were discussed from different contexts within the Asia Pacific Region, including trade, land grabbing and corporate capture. A particular point that was raised during the CSO Forum by a Samoan participant, was the plight of Pacific Island voices not being equally represented in these spaces and drowned out, in favour of the larger Asia Pacific nations.

Hence, while shrinking CSOs spaces is a concern for everyone, it is more so for small Pacific Island nations who have struggled to utilise their limited resources to be present in these spaces and heard. It becomes a great achievement for Pacific Island representation to be visible and especially, to influence the overall meeting outcome. An important moment for the Fiji Women's Rights Movement and our Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism (APRCEM) and Pacific CSO Organising Mechanism (PACCOM), was the combined Statement delivered on behalf of the Women's Major Group, by FWRM's Executive Director Nalini Singh at the High Level Political Forum in July on SDG 5, "Gender Equality." Nalini highlighted issues within the Pacific context of systematic and structural barriers including patriarchy, corporate capture and militarism. She also highlighted the work of the women's organisations, the vibrancy of the Movement and the significance of its presence in the Pacific to dismantle patriarchy and push for positive social and political change.

FWRM recognises this strength and the importance of movement-building to amplify the voices of women and the marginalised in the society. However, mobilising and building movements in the Pacific are not without its challenges.

The Pacific Islands face unique challenges, in terms of being developing nations with limited resources and geographically isolated from each other across the largest ocean in the world. Considering this and the context of entrenched patriarchal cultural and societal norms, existing race and religious tensions and political upheavels, the women's Movement and human rights groups have looked at more innovative ways towards

creating regional solidarity and strengthening our voices at regional and global platforms.

CSOs ensure Pacific Island issues are meaningfully captured. It would be an accountability measure that could influence governments and policy makers nationally and regionally. The recurring discussions centered around a need for small Pacific Islands to mobilise and pre-strategise prior to regional and global dialogues.

The women's movement took a significant step forward last year by organising the inaugural Pacific Feminist Forum that took place from November 27 to 29, 2016. The Forum was organised by a working group led by FWRM and included DIVA for Equality, Haus of Khameleon, Pacific Young Women's Leadership Alliance (PYWLA) and Bold Alliance. Over 100 women human rights defenders from 13 Pacific Island countries were in attendance, whose cause ranged from children's rights, women's rights, LGBTQI rights, Climate Justice and young women's political participation. An important outcome of the forum, was the Pacifc Feminist Charter for Change 2016; a living document enshrining the values of Pacific Feminists to guide our future work. The Charter was endorsed by 143 women human rights defenders and organisations. The Working Group members continue to disemminate the Charter in various regional and global spaces. It was used by the We Rise Coalition at the 13th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women in Lami, September 2017, to inform the Outcomes Document language.

Language is key. Visibility in spaces is strengthened through visibility in text. Ensuring inclusive language to recognise the diverse range of issues, intersectionalities and the marginalised, promotes a collective approach to solutions and limits areas of discrimination.

Having the language and collective was important but mobilising and coordination was also key. To strengthen regional CSO coordinating, the Pacific CSO Organising Mechanism was formed at a dialogue held in Suva, February 2017. A key outcome of the Dialogue was the PACCOM Statement that highlighted key issues for Pacific Island CSOs and human rights groups. The Mechanism was formed to ensure a strengthened Pacific Island voice at regional and global platforms, with particular emphasis on marginalised groups. This relates to the CSO Forum and APFSD discussions on Pacific representation and the Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism (APRCEM). There were over 50 Asia Pacific CSOs from APRCEM present in that space, with only a handful from the small Pacific Islands. PACCOM would be the avenue to mobilise, share information and pre-strategise for regional events.

There is still work to be done to improve CSO mobilisation and movement-building within the Pacific but this is actively happening against a continously shrinking space. However, the continued efforts, by CSOs and the Women's Movement has been the catalyst for positive social change. For FWRM, it has been effective and succesfull legislative lobbying and movement building for the past 31 years. As Nalini put it in her HLPF address, "A comprehensive global research spanning over 40 years found that the single most important factor in influencing positive policy change relating to violence against women was the existence of autonomous feminist movements. Their existence was more significant than the number of women in parliaments, the wealth of a country, the status of treaty ratification or other conditions tested. The presence of autonomous movements with support from progressive social movements advanced women's economic and labour rights."

Lastly, femLINKPacific Executive Producer and Director, Sharon Bhagwan Rolls in her CSW address said, "Finally, from my own Pacific Island region, I amplify the call of feminist sisters in particular the We Rise Coalition that progressing the gender equality and women's human rights agenda requires building and sustaining women's collective power through movements because it has been and will continue to be women's movements that turn individual efforts into a political force for change that cannot be ignored."

Amplifying the Women's Voice:

FWRM reads the Global Statement of the Women's Constituency at the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Bright in my Pacific Island prints I stood in front of state officials, United Nations representatives, CSO champions, private sector and inter governmental agencies representing the women of the world. As I brushed aside my curls, I knew inclusion of women in disaster risk reduction policies around the world is vital for not only women but also the well being of global society as a whole.

FWRM was part of the women's constituency, which was largely made of organisations part of the women's major group. The women's constituency delivered an official statement that was read out by a FWRM representative at the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Approximately 3000 delegates from around the world attended the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction held in Cancun, Mexico from 22nd-26th May 2017. The Pacific Delegation had 62 delegates that included; Civil Society, Government and Private sector representatives. The Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction is a biennial forum for information exchange, discussion of latest developments, knowledge and partnership-building across sectors, with the goal of improving implementation of disaster risk reduction through better communication and coordination amongst stakeholders. Its core function is to enable governments, NGOs, scientists, practitioners, and UN organisations to share experience and formulate strategic guidance for the implementation of global disaster risk reduction agreements: the 2005 Hyogo Framework for Action and its post-2015 successor the Sendai Framework.

Whilst it was certainly a new experience since FWRM's vision to strategically take up Disaster Risk Reduction with its new Strategic Plan 2017-2022. The groundwork into Disaster Risk Reduction begun in 2016 after FWRM's involvement in the area of gender based analysis in the area of safety and protection, post-Severe Tropical Cyclone Winston. This experience and FWRM's extensive community consultation activity in 2016 through the European Union funded, "Balancing the Scales: Improving Fijian Women's Access to Justice" project helped in the framing and valuable input Fiji Women's Rights Movement was able to provide in the women's constituency statement;

Official Statement to the Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction (GPDRR) 2017

By Menka Goundan

The Women and Gender Constituency (WGC) for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) views successful operationalisation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction as implementation that recognizes the rights of all people, in all their diversity -- including gender, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, race, ethnicity, geography, income, migrant or refugee status and disability. It should contribute to achieving sustainable development, gender equity and equality, as well as address underlying risk factors and overcome structural inequalities through a human rights-based approach.

It is critical to recognize that women and girls are disproportionately affected by disasters, conflict and poverty. Regressive gender norms and roles limit women and girls' access to resources, finance, decision- making, time, formal and informal education and power structures. However, cultural gender roles may contribute to their specialized knowledge of natural resources, community vulnerabilities, response capacity, warning signals, water and food safety and security, as well as indicators of risk.

Women and girls are not inherently vulnerable, passive recipients of aid after a disaster. Women are crucial leaders, innovators and change makers with important diverse knowledge and perspectives critical to DRR.

The WGC key messages include recommendations and demands in seven focus areas, all of which support a gender-responsive approach across all phases of DRR, including planning, financing, budgeting, implementation and monitoring. Several are highlighted here.

At the outset, it is inherently necessary to recognize that women and girls do not constitute a monolithic group – there is great diversity and multiple intersecting identities, some of which may exacerbate the impacts of disasters. Achieving gender equality and DRR requires gender-responsive approaches to engage men and boys but also to go beyond the binary to include sexual orientation and gender identity, and sexual and gender minorities.

Additionally, the prevailing enabling environment, including social, cultural, economic and political systems, often facilitate and institutionalize root causes of inequality, especially gender inequality, challenging inclusivity. The result is that systemic barriers – due to both conscious and unconscious biases - lead to exclusion of women from participation and decision-making in DRR. One particularly entrenched barrier is the unpaid domestic and care work generally done by women, which is exacerbated by negative attitudes and social norms that maintain its gendered characteristics.

Overcoming these barriers of institutionalized discrimination in order to achieve inclusive, gender- responsive DRR requires the following, most notably from States and local governments:

First, protect, promote and fulfill women's human rights - including rights to land and other assets, mobility, education and information, as well as sexual and reproductive health and rights. Women are often responsible for farming land and caretaking property, yet, because of gender norms, often do not hold legal and financial rights to access or utilize these assets. Even where legal rights exist in principle,

customary laws may prevent women from actualizing property claims in practice while customary indigenous laws often provide women with remedies that are not recognized by the State. Therefore, when disasters occur, women not only lose safe homes and places of work, and the livelihoods from work, but face more challenges reclaiming economic status without documents

recognized by the State, legal titles to land or financial resources. Ensuring women's rights and access to ecosystem resources, freedom from violence, education, literacy and numeracy, and access to formal and informal information promote empowerment of women and girls in DRR.

Second, identify national platforms for ensuring coherence among SDGs, Paris Agreement, New Urban Agenda, and DRR policies, and ensure inclusive engagement of civil society, including women's and feminist organizations and representatives, within these national platforms, to exchange ideas, knowledge and learning that would contribute to meeting targets and indicators of the different agreements by contributing to planning and projects that will have multiple benefits across platforms, sectors and groups in society (e.g. for redistributing informal and unpaid care work while diminishing erosion and promoting communication infrastructure).

Third, focus on women's participation, leadership and decision-making, within local, Regional and Global Platforms for DRR and beyond, by committing to addressing gender parity at all levels; by providing capacity-building for women; and by establishing mechanisms for providing safety, training, financial support and public services that ensure women are actively engaged in DRR processes, including expedited urgent special procedures for human rights violations..

Fourth, ensure that DRR monitoring and evaluation strategies are gender responsive. States should quantify the changes in access to, distribution of benefits from, and decision-making regarding resources following disaster. Sex, age and disability-disaggregated (SADD) data and gender analysis are fundamental planning tools to strengthen participation, leadership and advocacy of women-led and feminist organisations. Qualitative and quantitative data should be designed, collected, analysed and shared meaningfully, including by women's organizations at all levels (e.g. in the Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction (GAR), which currently lacks such a gender focus).

Fifth, while we are starting to see international policy language and national commitments on gender in DRR, in order to put these strategies into practice, government policies must prioritise gender funding, gender budgeting and gender mainstreaming. Women's organisations must have direct access to funding on DRR.

The Women & Gender Constituency is committed to working closely with all of you for inclusive and gender-responsive DRR. And, moving forward, the Women & Gender Constituency, in coordination with our local, regional and national networks and other allies, will monitor, evaluate and make technical recommendations for national and local governments to transparently and comprehensively address the aforementioned gender responsive measures in DRR policy and program implementation.

Fijian Women Echo *Me Too*

By **Maryann Lockington**

Me Too was not a victim's phrase but one that was full of power, courage and bravery. Whether said out loud or whispered within, Me Too was a force for peace, justice and truth.

This has been a year for women's resistance! The Me Too Campaign made the Time Magazine's Person of the Year, with the front page donning some of the brave women that came forward and Merriam-Webster's 2017 Words of the Year included, '*Feminism*.'

Globally, women insisted, persisted, resisted and existed against the rising tide of extreme conservative and alt-right ideologies. Two years ago, the leader of the world's second largest country, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau received international attention and praise after his retort, "It's 2015!" This was in response to a question on why women made up 50 percent of his cabinet.

How ironic, that fast-forward to 2017, their neighbours to the south seemed to have missed the memo. Several protests, marches and hundreds of petitions later, women are owning their collective power and bringing with it, an eruption of change and a ball of fire during these dark times.

The *'Me Too'* Campaign was a movement sparked by advocate Tarana Burke over 10 years ago to empower young women, particularly from marginalised and low wealth communities that have been victims/survivors of sexual violence. The Movement caught media attention in 2017, when numerous women came out with sexual assault allegations against powerful men in the movie industry. This gave other women strength to speak up and before long, the Movement had snowballed into digital media with the tag #MeToo. American Actress Alyssa Milano was one of the first few to share the hashtag, and from a tidal wave, there was a tsunami. Waves of stories from thousands of women around the world echo-ing #MeToo was shared online.

Fiji was not left unaffected. In fact, it was fertile ground for the #MeToo Campaign, during a time when sexual offence cases dominated mainstream news. FWRM was carrying out awareness on the prevalence of sexual harassment in the workplace. FWRM's *Sexual Harassment of*

Women in the Workplace Scoping Study 2016 states that 1 in 5 women have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace. FWRM's *Balancing the Scales: Improving Fijian Women's Access to Justice* research report was launched, with findings pertaining to the prevalence of sexual violence in the country. The 2016 Office of Director of Public Prosecution's (ODPP) statistics show that rape accounts for 71 percent of sexual assault cases prosecuted. Fifty-nine percent of the victim/survivors are children. Yet, at the time of the explosion of #MeToo solidarity posts and stories, there was also a young girl's sex video being circulated online.

The irony and hypocrisy that followed caused a whiplash. The same people that were quick to sympathise and send messages of solidarity to women sharing #MeToo, turned around and condemned that girl in the sex video. There seems to be some moral-based criteria to determine who the real victim is and if one did not meet those criteria, you become fodder for victim blaming and bullying.

Take a second to look around you. Whether you are at the office, church, school or sitting with your family. Look to your left. To your right.

Notice the women and girls. At least one of them have been or will be a victim/survivor of sexual harassment and abuse sometime in their life. That's a dark thought to have but the reality of our society right now. There's always going to be a woman or girl in the room, who has been catcalled, beeped at by a passing vehicle, had lewd comments thrown at them, leered at or touched inappropriately. Unfortunately, it could be more extreme forms of violence like abuse and rape. Almost every woman has heard of or knows another woman who has been physically or sexually abused.

One of the most common arguments against the #MeToo Campaign and fuel for victim blaming, is the risk of the accuser lying and destroying the reputation of the accused. The prevalence of false allegations has been debunked many times over the years through different researches. A particular research, Joanne Belknap's "Rape: Too Hard to Report and Too Easy to Discredit Victims" found that five percent of rapes reported to police were false accusations however at least 90 percent of rape cases go unreported. This would suggest that false allegations made up 0.005 percent of all rape cases, considering the cases that go unreported.

Also, let's be real about people's reputations being ruined. A lot of celebrities have been accused of and even charged with sexual offences but continue to be successful and celebrated. Sean Penn, Casey Affleck, Nelly, R. Kelly and Woody Allen. America elected a man, who not only has accusations against him but also was caught on tape, bragging about it.

Now, with the #MeToo Campaign, the ivory towers are crumbling.

On the other hand, we'll definitely remember every woman whose sex tapes have gone viral. Sex tapes shared without their consent. Never mind that it was made with their consent. The public judgment would usually go along the lines of, "she had sex and filmed it!?! Disgusting!" Back to moral policing of someone's personal life, instead of focusing on the crime; that she has been exploited and her privacy breached. Most won't remember the men in the videos. If they were remembered, they'd probably suffer a small dent to their reputation but life will go on. Maybe even a high five on how well they performed in the video. Kudos. Yet, the savagery women would be faced with is nowhere close. It's traumatic.

Whether said out loud or whispered within, Me Too was a force for peace, justice and truth.

Particularly, in Fiji's context where women's sexuality is so severely restricted.

In the conversations, I've witnessed online and in person, the attribution of power in the situation was missing. A woman forced to exchange sexual favours with her employer, can be seen as a coward for not reporting it immediately. A slut for using her sexuality to climb the corporate ladder. The context of her power in the situation and the fact, her livelihood and future career is on the line is ignored. Yet, if she were to come forward, she'd be faced with the backlash of rampant victim blaming and scrutiny over her private life and ideals. Most reactions are related to the character analysis of the victim. The MORAL, character analysis of the victim.

The statistics alone are horrifying but #MeToo reminds us, that these are people. People we know and love.

It's time for a change of mindset.

Believe her/him.

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Fijian Young Woman at the Obama Summit

By Emerging Leaders Forum

Human rights activist and graduate of FWRM's Emerging Leaders Forum Roshika Deo was one of the civic leaders from around the world invited to be part of the Obama Summit that took place from October 31 and November 1 in Chicago, USA.

The two-day event was organised as a space "to exchange ideas, explore creative solutions to common problems, and experience civic art, technology, and music from around the world." Ms. Deo was invited due to her activism and as the recipient of the International Women of Courage Award in 2014, which was presented by Michelle Obama.

"I was very surprised that after over 3 years I was still on their radar so to speak, that I was still remembered. When I got the award in 2014 I thought this was it. It was a humbling realisation that I was still remembered."

"It was also meeting Barack Obama and hearing him in the small breakout sessions – some of the things he shared in the smaller spaces were interesting and useful to hear, plus he has a great sense of humor."

Ms. Deo was particularly interested in learning about online advocacy strategies and sharing ideas on increasing girls/women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

Ms. Deo said, she was proud of the achievement and the recognition of younger Pacific Islanders in a world civic leaders forum.

"A lot of the time, as pacific islanders from SIDS, we get dismissed and trivialised on the global civic

activism stage – comments such as "but you are what? A 100 people?" So being included in this space was an affirmation that we had experiences and knowledge that others could learn from. We were equally important and relevant on the global sphere."

REMEMBERING
Dr. Teresia Teaiwa

Some feminists make it happen
Some feminists let it happen
Some feminists make other feminists

- Excerpt from *'How does change happen?'*
(For Jully Makini)* By TERESIA TEAIWA

A feminist, poet, academic, scholar and activist, Dr. Teresia Teaiwa leaves her legacy lodged firmly within the women's movement, arts and research in the Pacific.

The breadth of Dr. Teaiwa's work spanned across the region as she became renowned for her informed voice on different political issues, militarism, culture and art.

"This is a huge loss for Fiji and the Pacific as Dr. Teaiwa inspired many as an educator, researcher, friend and a colleague. She was widely known and respected within the women's movement as a fearless advocate who used her research to address issues of gender and feminism within the Pacific. Even those that may not have met her, would know of her work," said FWRM Executive Director Nalini Singh.

Former FWRM staff and allies to the Movement shared a few words of tribute,

"She was a strong activist and was very engaging. She was a people's person and could see the brightness and strength in every one. She has such a wide circle of friends and influenced many with her warm connections and her way of being. She was a strong feminist and committed to social justice," said former FWRM Coordinator and Board member Gina Houng Lee.

Ms. Lee met Dr. Teaiwa at Yat Sen School and went on to attend the same high school, St. Joseph's Secondary School.

"I then got to know her better as she was a good friend with Raijeli Nicole (former FWRM Coordinator). Raijeli and I worked at FWRM around 1997 to 2001. As this was during the 2000 coup, Terry helped us in her insight and analysis of the military coup as she studied militarism and indigenous rights."

"She was creative and challenged me. To be creative in activism and feminism. She was just an awesome person to be around. Strong and committed to the Pacific – to Oceania and to its people. She was also someone who knew her roots, her culture and this helped shape and drive her. She was a strong feminist and loved life."

Also sharing her tribute message reflecting on Dr. Teaiwa as a teacher and friend was Human Rights Activist Luisa Tora. Ms. Tora's video message was played at Dr. Teaiwa's memorial at USP's Oceania Centre, which was organised by Robert Nicole.

"I don't think there was one (clear example of Dr. Teaiwa's influence on my life), it was an ongoing lesson because we were constantly learning from her in different ways. One of the lessons I learnt was to read widely, which I was already doing in my academic life and have now kept that in my creative practice. But reading outside your canon, it was such a revelation for me as I thought if you studied English, that you should only read what's relevant on your reading list. She changed this and said no, read the writers that resonate with you.

"Another lesson she'd shared was about building our own archives. She lea rned this while studying and researching Fijian women in the British army and her colleagues having archives and resources to draw from and she not having the same. And she would say to build your own archives and share it with people. That is another thing I've drawn from and I've been very grateful for that."

"I'll miss that (Dr. Teaiwa's reminders to be humble), that grounding. She had so much knowledge and so grounded. Humility was another ongoing lesson."

Ms. Tora spoke about the different lessons Dr. Teaiwa taught about, through the books she'd recommend.

"I'll miss her terribly. Rest in peace, Teresia. I love you."

As a women's rights activist, Dr. Teaiwa was involved with the Women's Action for Change (Fiji), the Fiji Young Women's Christian Association, the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Movement and the Citizens' Constitutional Forum (Fiji).

"She was a distinguished pioneer for women in research and for Pacific research as a whole. She has left a rich legacy in her published academic and literary works and a vacuum in the social justice movement in the Pacific and will always be remembered," said FWRM Governance Board interim-Chair Makereta Waqavonovono.

"FWRM expresses our heartfelt condolences to Dr. Teaiwa's family. Just as she wrote in her poem, 'some feminists make other feminists,' Dr. Teaiwa was that very model who inspired and influenced others through her work and creativity."

REMEMBER HER NAME,
REMEMBER HER CONTRIBUTION:

Dr Mridula Prasad

REST IN POWER AND LOVE

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) sends its sincere and warm condolences to the family and friends of the late Dr Mridula Prasad. Originally from Lautoka, Dr. Mridula was a general practitioner, dermatologist, mental health and gender advocate who served on the FWRM management board for more than five years.

Dr Mridula was a strong advocate for the advancement of women's health, in particular women's sexual and reproductive rights at a time when these issues were considered private and often only discussed in the context of sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDs. Some of the early work that FWRM initiated on sexual and reproductive rights was under the guidance of Dr Mridula. The United National Population Fund in September 1999 recognised her strong advocacy for women's sexual and reproductive rights and awarded her with a regional award for Reproductive Health and Rights.

FWRM members have many anecdotes about Dr Mridula.

Raijeli Drodrolagi shared, "a vivid memory that I have of Dr Mridula as a strong advocate for women's health and rights, is when she convinced some of the FWRM staff and management committee members to trial the female condom. She made it necessary that if we were to speak about contraceptives then we needed to come from a place of knowledge and experience. This was Dr Mridula – very matter of fact."

Praveen Sharma noted that "Dr Mridula was the other side of the coin for FWRM – one side was focused on legal and economic rights and she was focused on healing and empowering from within, protecting women against sexual violence, empowering women to take control of their sexuality, making informed decisions. She made us complete."

Dr Mridula was a member of the FWRM management board up until the 1999 national elections, the first polls under the progressive 1997 Fiji Constitution. Dr Mridula resigned from the civil service and FWRM's governance body to stand in the elections. Dr Mridula was one of the few Fijian women at the time that stepped up as a candidate for Fiji's legislature. After the elections, she went into private practice and continued to contribute her knowledge on women's health to a wide variety of community groups such as the Fiji AIDS Task Force and FRIENDS.

Dr Mridula was passionate in her beliefs and stood up for vulnerable women and men. She is remembered as a strong, dedicated and tireless campaigner for women's health and empowerment. She will be missed by FWRM, the women's and feminist movement of Fiji and we thank Dr Mridula for being part of our journey.

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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

ANNUAL FEE:

Waged - $10 • Organisation - $30

Non-waged/Student - $5

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

Ph: _____

Email: _____

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

- www.facebook.com/FWRM1
- @fwrm1

Human Rights Day

By Serelisoni Moceica

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

World Human Rights Day was commemorated on the streets of Suva on the 9th of December, 2017 as activists, feminists, human rights advocates, civil society representatives and followers marched and rallied on the day.

Clear blue skies provided the perfect backdrop for the procession led by the NGO Coalition on Human Rights, who broke out into chants and cheers, raising their colourful messages on their banners on their way to Sukuna Park.

"Dignity. Equality. Justice!; Women's Rights Are Human Rights; All Humans Have Rights; Free West Papua; Free Merdeka; Defend Our Commons" banners shared the struggles and opinions faced by the common people.

It was a celebration of the work of activists around the country who called for greater responsibility and accountability from the state and Fiji citizens in addressing systematic injustices and violation of fundamental human rights.

"This is a time to raise awareness and develop a culture of active citizenship participation. How can I as an individual claim my right If I don't know my rights in the first place? The provision in the Constitution and the declaration can only do so much and it up to us, as individuals, groups and civil society organizations to know our rights, to claim our rights and to fight for it when the need arises." Kaushal Sharma of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement said.

As Secretariat to the NGOCHR, FWRM organized logistics for the HRD as T-shirts were printed, banners were drawn, posters painted and chants rehearsed in a frantic build-up to the event.

The march was also a culmination of the 16 days of activism that began on November 25 and representatives of the NGOCHR stood up to speak on issues they advocated on.

10th December is a day of empowerment for all humans as the principles enshrined in the Declaration are as relevant these days as they were 70 years ago in 1948, when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights after two years of drafting, meetings, debates and voting on the document.

49 years later in 1997, the first World Human Rights Day march and rally was held in Fiji and the NGOCHR launched a year after in 1998.

"Human rights are values that keep our society just and fair. It protects the children, the elderly, the people in care, victims of domestic violence, people with mental health problems, religious groups, teachers, soldiers, and prisoners. Human rights protects all of us." Miss Sharma said during the recent rally.

Speakers praised the work of human rights defenders who fought and struggled for the recognition of human rights in Fiji, the Pacific and also around the world including those who were still part of the struggle.

With the accompanying music from the hired deejay, participants danced and celebrated the success of the march as the event drew to a close.