FIJI WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Balance

"HELPING TO BALANCE THE SCALES"

March 2017

30 YEARS OF BALANCING THE SCALES

Penelope Moore (Coordinator) 1987-1993 | Vani Dulaki (Coordinator) 1994- 1995 | Praveen Sharma (Acting Coordinator) 1995-1997
Gaylene Osborne (Acting Coordinator) 1997 | Gina Houng Lee (Coordinator) 1997-2001 | Raijeli Nicole (Acting Coordinator) 2001
Virisila Buadromo (Executive Director) 2001- 2014 | Tara Chetty (Executive Director) 2014-2016
Michelle Reddy (Acting Executive Director) 2016 | Nalini Singh (Executive Director) 2017

30 YEARS OF BALANCING THE SCALES

Dear FWRM
You have been a shining beacon for many of us - actually in the revolutionary waves of feminism in Fiji & The Pacific!
*Solidarity *peace
Shalyn

WOW!! 30 YEARS OLD. WHAT A GREAT & BEAUTIFUL JOURNEY ITS BEEN... AND MORE TO COME.
CONGRATULATIONS TO THE PAST & PRESENT TEAM. BIG HUGS AND ONWARD!!
xx.

Best of wishes to FWRM. May all your goals be achieved. May the Good in you be a light and known around our region. May God be with you as you struggle for women's right.
Thank You for what you have done so far. I totally support your work.
I ♥ FWRM
Rm.20

Dear FWRM,
May you a Successful journey throughout the years to come
Blessed Year.

You are an inspiration in your tireless pursuit of equality, diversity & inclusion. The kindness & support you offer to your staff & allies is unparalleled
Here's to another 30 years
Tait Brimacombe.

Happy Birthday FWRM!
It's been a pleasure to be a volunteer, contractor & loyal friend of the movement.
Here's to the next 30 years!
Marlene Smith.

Here is to another 30 years and beyond!
Thank you!
♥ A.

With very best wishes in the work on gender equality in Fiji, regionally & globally.
Sky is the limit - so please keep the great & necessary

TO FWRM,
Thank you for the amazing work that you do for women across Fiji. FWRM is an amazing organisation and I am honoured to be a part of your growing network
with Love
Ranadi B.
YWCA.

TO FWRM,
HAPPY 30TH ANIVERSARY!!
MAY THE POWER OF FEMINIST BE THE STRONGT FOUNDATION IN REACHING ALL YOUR AIM AND OBJECTIVE AS HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER LEADING MOVEMENT IN FIJI AND
BEST WISHES!!
JOINT NGO/CSO/LA DISABILITY RIGHTS ADVOCATES
LABASA, FIJI

Keep doing what you do - the great work you do in advancing womens development & rights.
Happy Birthday!

FWRM,
BEST WISHES TO YOUR 30 YEARS ANNIVERSARY. THANK YOU FOR ALL YOU SUPPORTS. WISH YOU A SUCCESSFUL X-MAS AND SUCCESSFUL 2017
♥ LOVE VASITI

TO FWRM !!
Thank for the job well done. Keep Pushing lobbying and fighting for the rights of women and girls
♥
much love
House of Colours
Labasa.

A BIG CONGRATULATIONS TO FWRM FOR ALL YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS DURING YOUR 30YRS OF DEDICATION TO WOMENS ISSUES AND HR.
THANK YOU MICHELLE AND YOUR TEAM!!
FROM ALL OF US @ SEED.

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FWRM Celebrates 30th Anniversary

By Maryann Lockington

It could be imagined as the embers of a movement. Ignited in 1986, when 56 women took their passion and anger to Des Voex Rd in Suva and birthed a legacy. Three decades on, that legacy was celebrated by 200 Pacific Women Human Rights Defenders with raised sparklers that lit up the Oceania Centre at the University of the South Pacific.

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement celebrated 30 years of fearless activism and advocacy, defending human rights and gender equality as part of the closing event of the inaugural Pacific Feminist Forum (PFF).

Another herstoric milestone for FWRM, PFF was held from 28-30 November at the University of the South Pacific and brought together Pacific feminists and women's human rights defenders from 13 countries across the region.

The space was convened for re-energising, re-strengthening and re-affirming feminist solidarity and in many ways reflected FWRM's ideals, though it has come a very long way since the iconic meeting of those women in Suva years ago.

PFF was once only an abstract idea; the musings of two feminists who had just returned from the Asia Pacific Feminist Forum, Virisila Buadromo and Tavai Bale. Just as FWRM began, flowering from a concerned group determined to take on the patriarchy, PFF stemmed from the need to strengthen regional feminist solidarity.

After the first seeds of ideas were sown, it garnered interest from the Fiji Women's Rights Movement and after 2 years, a working group was formed to bring this vision to fruition. This included FWRM, Diverse Voices and Action (DIVA) for Equality, Pacific Young Women Leadership Alliance (PYWLA) and Haus of Khameleon (HOK).

In some ways, PFF was an ode to characters woven into the fabric of FWRM. The diversity, solidarity, connection and shared vision of justice and gender equality. PFF re-emphasised the power of a collective; that one whisper of defiance could be a loud roar for change.

Participants and Working Group Members on Day 2 of the Pacific Feminist Forum

At the end of the 3 days, The Pacific Feminists Charter for Change was drafted, finalised and endorsed echoing the voices, concerns, ideas and values of women's rights activists from across our region.

A feeling of accomplishment, relief and celebration permeated the space at USP, when the document was finalised and led by the working group, the participants chanted, danced and shouted.

"This is what a feminist looks like! This is what an activist looks like!" Chorusing voices, Pacific music and a renewed commitment to work with each other, across our diverse backgrounds, contexts, agendas and focus areas of work.

This sense of jubilation carried on to the closing event, FWRM's 30th Anniversary dinner.

The anniversary dinner included participants, the working group and invited guests, those that have been part of FWRM's herstory, as partners, friends and colleagues.

The event itself was hosted by FWRM staff and a GIRLS participant, highlighting the organisation's commitment to intergenerational engagement.

The night kicked off with incoming messages of solidarity from FWRM's Co-Founder Imrana Jalal in Manila and also, former Executive Director Virisila Buadromo who was in India at that time.

Jalal's message was read out by Board Member Makareta Waqavonovono.

"Being part of FWRM changes us forever. We leave knowing so much more, and even if we don't begin as feminists, we certainly leave as feminists," she said.

"Congratulations FWRM, on your 30th birthday," said Buadromo in her video message. "This is a huge achievement, particularly for an organisation where our world view and work is often viewed as unpopular," she said.

After the formalities were done, true to the roots of Pacific culture there was an explosion of music, dancing and socialising.

It was the end of PFF as an event, but also the beginning, as one of the first initiatives to bring together regional diverse feminist voices.

FWRM will continue to fan the fire of activism and foster the collective, creative diversity that brought about its beginnings and legacy.

Happy International Women's Day!

Welcome to the first issue of Balance for 2017, a special bumper edition celebrating FWRM's 30th Anniversary and the commencement of the inaugural Pacific Feminist Forum.

As the newly appointed Executive Director, I'd like to express my appreciation to the Governance Board and FWRM staff for their support and hearty feminist welcome.

It was an exciting start to 2017, transitioning into an organisation still reveling in the afterglow of a ground-breaking regional feminist forum. I was not able to be part of the celebrations in November physically but nevertheless, I proudly support and commit to promoting the Pacific Feminist Charter for Change.

A significant component of our work is fostered through FWRM's commitment to movement-building and partnerships. Pioneering an initiative like PFF, being part of the We Rise Coalition which is made up of FWRM, Diverse Voices and Action (DIVA) For Equality, femLINKPacific and the International Women's Development Agency (IWDA).

We've also just recently taken on the role of transitional secretariat for the Pacific CSO Organising Mechanism (PACCOM).

FWRM has embarked on the herstoric journey of Balancing the Scales: Improving Women's Access to Justice research on the effective implementation of Fiji's Family Law Act 2003, Domestic Violence Decree 2009 and the Crimes Decree 2010. Legislative reform has been a pivotal area of FWRM's core work.

This invigorating piece of work will inform FWRM's future legislative work and has renewed key relationships with the formal justice system.

Additionally, FWRM launched the second GIRLS program and also welcomed graduates of the previous cohort to the GIRLS Club.

I'm looking forward to the challenges that lie ahead, particularly with mapping our new 5- year Strategic Plan, the socio-political environment around Agenda 2030 and working in collaboration with our partners to ensure we reach our common goals.

In solidarity,

Nalini Singh

Staff Transitions

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement bid farewell to the following staff members in 2016. Thank you for your dedication and contribution towards building FWRM and the women's movement as a whole. (in order of departure)

Kameli Tikoitoga

Kameli has been a passionate feminist and a male advocate for women's rights for many years. He has contributed to the organisation through his different roles as Administrative Assistant, Finance Officer and later Finance Team Leader. We thank Kameli for his dedication and level of commitment to the organisation and wish him the best.

Tara Chetty

A committed feminist and women's rights advocate, Tara has had a long association with the Movement. She is a former FWRM Governance Board member, Young Women's Working group member and the former Communications Officer. Tara left the movement briefly for post-graduate study overseas before returning to FWRM as Programme Director. Finally, she became FWRM's Executive Director in February 2015. Tara is now currently employed at Pacific Women Shaping Development. We wish her the best.

Genevieve Sukhdeo

Genevieve has significantly contributed to FWRM's visibility and profile for 2 years as the Communications Officer. First engaging with FWRM as a participant of the Fiji Young Women's Forum, Genevieve's passion and zest for women's issues saw her moving from mainstream broadcasting to NGO work. Genevieve is currently travelling overseas and we wish her well.

Veena Singh

Veena has contributed to FWRM's work for years, collaboratively in her capacity as a femLinkPacific staff and a graduate of the Emerging Leaders Forum. Veena's wide knowledge and experience on women, peace & security has been a great asset to the organisation, when she joined as the Young Women's Officer before becoming the Gender & Transitional Justice Team Leader. Veena is now working at the Pacific Community and wish her the best.

Michelle Reddy

First joining FWRM 10 years ago, a former teacher and a graduate of the Emerging Leaders Forum, Michelle has played a significant role in contributing to the work of FWRM. She has been the Human Rights Training Officer, Young Women's Officer, , Gender & Transitional Justice Team Leader and the Programme Director. Michelle led FWRM through its transitional period in 2016 as Acting Executive Director for 5 months, seeing the organisation through the inaugural Pacific Feminist Forum and 30th Anniversary. We send Michelle our appreciation and wish her the best for the future.

Anniversary Message

By Imrana Jalal

Manila, Philippines, 30 November (The following was Imrana's solidarity message for the 30th Anniversary of FWRM which was read at the closing event of the Pacific Feminist Forum)

Imrana Jalal, FWRM Co-Founder and Management Board member

Another five years has passed by since we celebrated our 25th anniversary in 2011. Today we celebrate 30 years of Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) as an organisation. What an incredible three decades it has been! We have survived three military coups de'tat, several internal financial crises, the departures of several executive directors, including the longest serving Virisila Buadromo, the death of founding member Adi Kuini Bavadra, and the recent deaths of two key women who helped FWRM get established. These were Shireen Lateef who helped us get started, and Penelope Moore, who was our first paid staff member, and co-ordinator. I would like us to for one minute pause in silence and acknowledge Shireen and Peni. FWRM also especially thanks Shireen Lateef for the generous bequest left us in her will.

I will not repeat everything I said at our silver anniversary in 2011, but, again I have to pause here to acknowledge the co-founders of FWRM - Shamima Ali, 'Atu Emberson Bain, Alefina Vuki, Adi Kuini Bavadra and Helen Sutherland. Although Shireen Lateef was not a founding member, she provided great support to help us get started. She also strongly influenced the shaping of my feminism, which has in turn shaped some of FWRM's feminist ideology. She certainly strongly influenced my political ideology, as did Atu Emberson Bain.

I would also like to thank Penelope Moore, Vani Dulaki, Praveen Sharma, Gina Houng Lee, Raijeli Nicole, Virisila Buadromo, Tara Chetty and Michelle Reddy for their leadership as executive directors, over the last 30 years, as well as to the Board members, past and present. I am grateful to all of them for making the sacrifices they made to build and maintain FWRM as a strong women's and human rights organisation, and to take it from strength to strength.

FWRM is one of the things in my life that I am genuinely proud of.

So many amazing women have come through FWRM, walked its feminist corridors, and their subsequent employability at SPC, Pacific Women, regional organisations, the UN, international NGOs etc is living proof that we hire and train strong feminists and gender equality advocates. So FWRM is also a good training ground! Being part of FWRM changes us forever. We leave knowing so much more, and even if we don't begin as feminists, we certainly leave as feminists.

We can take great pride in the fact that although we are a small organisation by global standards, we are well known and respected in the international human rights community and law organisations abroad, and when we say things about Fiji we are taken seriously, We should not take this for granted. That reputation has been built by Founding and Board members, staff and active volunteers over 30 years. Our reputation is our most precious asset.

These are some of the important messages I have learnt as a feminist and human rights advocate that are both personal and political over 35 years, that I want to share with you young feminists at the Forum:

My message No. one: to you all here today, members and supporters of FWRM, & the Pacific Feminist Forum, is the same one as before - with the passing of time and lessening of resources, FWRM may soften its ideological stance; its feminist and human rights foundations may weaken due to pragmatism, a lack of time for scrutiny and rigour, given the difficult circumstances under which it survives; and it may take a practical direction, the easier road. Do not allow this to happen. Maintain the high ground always and although it may cause you grief in the short term, I promise that you will emerge from it stronger and better, in the long term.

Message No. two: If you are going to marry or choose a male partner, choose wisely! The strategic gender relations in the household, will, to a great extent, determine whether your partnership will be a happy one. You have to be happy at home if you want to change society. Men have to get "the equality thing" – not just intellectually, which is easy to say, but the practical realities of everyday living. Men have to be prepared to "live equality", not just mouth it! No point in us talking about equality, the equal burden of domestic labor, cooking, cleaning etc, the sharing of child and elder care. when at home it is still mainly us, shouldering the larger burden! Men have to be prepared to genuinely share the domestic and care responsibilities! So girls, when you are making your choices, don't confine your scan to the "hawt" ones only! Try to ascertain and visualise what they might be like in the kitchen, cooking and cleaning, in the bathroom scrubbing the toilet, changing pooey nappies, staying up with a sick child at night, looking after you with a serious illness, say for example, breast cancer….if you can visualise him doing all this, as if its part of "normality", grab him before someone else does! Why? Because they are rare! Unless of course you have the "balls" to teach them! I assume you must have some "balls" otherwise what are you doing at the Pacific Feminist Forum??! Having an understanding partner is so critical if you choose to be a feminist and gender advocate. Even if they don't share every element of your ideological views, they have to share enough to be able to support your cause, and to share in the home responsibilities. This is their "Last Frontier"! Will they triumph? Your gentle prodding is critical here.

Message No. three: Take time to rest and nurture your mind and soul. Don't allow yourself to "burn out". I have held at least 75% of former directors, and some staff, in my arms while they wept because they were so tired, exhausted and over worked, and had let themselves be too consumed by the "cause". Take time to smell the coffee! (Or the wine!) Fight the cause, but have fun too! Just don't dance on tables and the like, or get yourself into sticky situations because the whole movement will be judged, not just you. That's just the way things are.

There is not much that I regret about what FWRM did and the choices it has made as an organisation; nor the choices I have made in respect of FWRM. If I could live my life all over again I would make most of the same choices, despite the persecution and prosecutions of my family and I. FWRM has been one of the best parts of my life. We have remained true to our FWRM constitution and it has cost us plenty, but it's been worth it, I believe. Relationships are critical, not only for a strong organisation but for coalition building. Maintain them and keep the sisterhood intact through these relationships.

I am there in spirit and my heart is there with you all tonight, as we celebrate our 30th birthday. Happy Birthday FWRM!

Mapping Journeys and Building Movements

By Menka Goundan

The opening panel on Women's Human Rights Day, Day 2 of the Pacific Feminist Forum

From 28th November to 30th November, women human rights defenders, feminists and women from multifarious backgrounds across the South Pacific converged in Suva, for the inaugural Pacific Feminist Forum (PFF). The Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) along with its event partners and a Steering Group of Pacific Island representatives which includes: Diverse Voices and Action for Equality, Haus of Khameleon and Pacific Young Women's Leadership Alliance organised the PFF as a means of 'mapping journeys and building movements' amongst feminists across the region.

Feminism within the Pacific has grown from strength to strength, with various feminist organisations accumulating a wealth of experience and knowledge to advance gender equality and women's human rights across the Pacific region. Feminism is the advocacy of women's human rights on the grounds of political, social, and economic equality to men. It has evolved as an ideology, an analytical framework and a strategic framework. As an ideology, feminism today stands not only for gender equality, but for the transformation of all social relations of power that oppress, exploit or marginalize any set of people, on the basis of their gender, age, sexual orientation, ability, race, religion, nationality, location, class, caste or ethnicity. As an analytical framework, feminism has created a range of analytical tools and methods for unpacking the hidden and normalized power imbalances between men and women in various social institutions and structures. As a social change strategy, feminism prioritises the empowerment of women, the transformation of gender power relations and the advancement of gender equality within all change interventions.

Women of all diversities have embraced the fundamental idea of feminism and evolved over the years. The feminist movement has been pivotal in strategising, organizing and negotiating key spaces and policies that has not only benefitted women in all its diversities but men as well. Feminist movements are social movements that espouse feminist values and ideology. Gender equality, social and economic equality, the full body of human rights, tolerance, inclusion, peace, non-violence, respectful spaces and roles for all, even if they do not call themselves feminist or articulate these values in more culturally specific ways. Feminist movement building on the other hand, could be defined as the attempt to bring feminist analysis and gender equality perspectives into other movements.

Movements are often the most effective way for particularly stigmatised, marginalised and socially excluded constituencies of women to become visible and have their voices heard. Building their collective power through movements helps women convert their quest for their human rights, for equality and justice into a political force for change that cannot be ignored by their families, communities, governments or society at large.

It is possible to argue that women can be empowered without necessarily building movements, through grassroots work and policy advocacy. Some would assert that macro changes- such as Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women were achieved through research, documentation, activism and advocacy efforts of individuals and organisations- whilst this is true, it is also true that none of these could have been achieved without building some kind of collective power. Women not speaking as individuals or through particular organisations but with a powerful, collective voice.

Pacific Feminists have represented the region at various high-level meetings both regionally and internationally and successfully influenced those spaces in terms of networking and developing strong alliances with fellow activists worldwide. These spaces have often situated the Pacific as small contingents with very little space to voice a myriad of issues. The Pacific feminist movement therefore is one going against the current, as advocates and activists forge through the vast Pacific territory to consolidate works and push a Pacific development agenda to the forefront of global progress plans. In the past, feminists from the region have successfully participated in the Commission on the Status of Women, Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, Association for Women's Rights in Development Forum and the United Nation's People's General Assembly. These are just a few examples of international movement building.

Several factors have weakened and fragmented feminist movements, one of these factors is the co-option and distortion of feminist ideology- discourse and agendas by mainstream institutions and social forces. It is important that feminists from this region are provided with a collective space in order to strengthen and re-energise themselves for transformative change in their unique 'Pasifika' way. The Pacific Feminist Forum was one that was positioned to be an extremely important event for Pacific women being the first ever gathering of its kind in the region or in a small island state. Participants from 13 countries attended the forum. These countries include: Papua New Guinea, Autonomous region of Bougainville, Vanuatu, Fiji, Samoa, Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Australia, New Zealand, New Caledonia, Marshall Islands and Tuvalu.

This collective space with its robust sessions on a variety of topics not only limited to women's issues provided guidance and much needed 'fuel' to re-energise and perhaps initiate feminist movements in the region. The Pacific Feminist Charter which was launched on the last day of the forum is expected to maneuver key conversations and steer the regional feminist movement. It is one that weaves our Pacific issues and identities that influenced uncountable moments of tears, singing, dancing, laughter and chills during the three days. Whilst the forum may have been a time to pause and reflect on the journey of the movement- it also compelled young and future feminists to grow and envision the region and its feminist development paradigm. With much hope and energy for the future, feminists through the charter have committed to greater goals that will hopefully demystify the stereotypes of feminism in the region.

-The article also draws on concepts discussed by Sirlatha Batliwala in 'Changing the Worlds- Concepts and Practices of Women's Movements', AWID (2012).

We Rise at the Pacific Feminist Forum

By Meghan Cooper - IWDA and Maryann Lockington - FWRM

Over the 16 Days of Activism in 2016, Pacific Feminist Forum (PFF) was held in Suva, at the University of the South Pacific (USP), a regional convening for 'mapping journeys and building movements' in the Pacific, and coincided with the 30th birthday celebrations of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM).

The Forum was a success, for the diversity of women and their stories that the Forum connected, bringing 130 participants from across 13 countries. It is also notable for the partners who mobilised to make it happen.

Countless allies and partners were involved in the making of the PFF and its success cannot be attributed to one, or a few, but all who contributed.

PFF serves as an example of how four diverse organisations in the We Rise Coalition made up of Diverse Voices and Action (DIVA) for Equality, femLINKPACIFIC (femLINK), Fiji Women's Rights Movement and International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) are socially organising, and leveraging their networks and resources, to become, and create Coalitions for lasting change in women's human rights.

The PFF was also a key movement building activity supported through the We Rise 2 program, currently being implemented by the We Rise Coalition, with funding from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade through the Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development Program.

According to DIVA's Political Advisor Noelene Nabulivou:,

"(We) Need to acknowledge that each partner brings different forms of resources to the Coalition – need to name them, claim them and use them!"

At the centre of the We Rise Coalition's work is a commitment to building and sustaining women's collective power through movements. One way this commitment was realised was through the Pacific Feminist Forum. A commitment to movement building means recognising that we do not, and should not work in isolation. Rather, we must identify and work across the complex spaces, with diverse organisations, women and individuals in Fiji, the Pacific and around the world where we are each involved or seeking to influence.

"The legacy of the women's movement in Fiji is with networks and coalitions, and these are ongoing today," said former FWRM Acting Executive Director Michelle Reddy.

Partners in the We Rise Coalition after their workshop at the PFF. Photo credit: IWDA

"The We Rise Coalition is another way of coming together to transform political spaces – in Government and in the movement," said Sharon Bhagwan Rolls. But according to Donna McSkimming of IWDA, in order to transform these spaces we need to "continually negotiate our power differences, build consensus, and forge a collective identity as a Coalition – this takes time but is necessary in order to show that we are more than four organisations working on a program together."

For the We Rise Coalition, the case of the Pacific Feminist Forum, has served as an example of how this Coalition model and commitment has played out in a regional setting.

FWRM was the event host; DIVA was a member of the Forum steering committee who organised and participated in several parallel sessions and mobilised allies from across the region to participate. Increasing visibility of the Forum, in Fiji and across the region FemLINK was the official media partner for the Forum. FemLINK was instrumental to sharing the stories and special moments in the lead up to and during the Forum. IWDA worked hand in hand with the FWRM and FemLINK to capture the stories behind the Forum. This was a key part of IWDA's role as an equal partner in the Coalition, but also as an Australian based organisation working as an ally to the movement. IWDA also mobilised and sponsored five Pacific partners to attend from PNG and Solomon Islands.

The story of the Forum illustrates how the We Rise commitment to feminism and Coalition building was not about our collective self, but to testing and understanding our contribution to the women's movement in the Pacific.

The greatest achievement from this forum is how the Coalition mobilised our respective strengths, to help the Pacific Feminist Forum be a success. As expressed by Sharon Bhagwan Rolls during the Coalition workshop, the Forum was "a moment of demonstrating feminist solidarity in action", showing that "a Coalition is not a project activity", but another way of coming together to create, and transform political spaces.

Partners in the We Rise Coalition during a panel at the Pacific Feminist Forum

Reflections on the Pacific Feminist Forum

By Shazia Usman

Shazia and Sr Lorraine

I was privileged be part of the hundred resilient, brilliant and passionate feminists, women human rights defenders and gender equality advocates at the inaugural Pacific Feminist Forum last year. What a way to end 2016 - celebrating successes, acknowledging challenges and together, mapping the future for women's rights in the Pacific.

The Forum itself had around 20 sessions, including a combination of open plenary and multiple thematic sessions. Along with colleagues from the Developmental Leadership Program and the International Women's Development Agency, I had an opportunity to co-facilitate two sessions on building a feminist movement through communications. The exchange saw advocates sharing different strategies they use to share information, knowledge and lobby for support.

For me, there were many takeaways from this Forum. The first was the realisation that "wow…I'm really part of a bigger Pacific feminist movement!" I always knew I was, of course, but for the majority of us to be gathered in one space, to actually meet and spend time with each other, was surreal and a bit emotional. I met so many Pacific feminists whose work I had only heard of or read about. Many who live and work in areas where they risk their safety daily to support women and other marginalised groups to live freely with dignity and respect.

I had a complete fangirl moment at the Forum when I met Sr. Lorraine Garasu, who is one such women human rights defender. Sr. Lorraine is from the congregation of the Nazareth Sisters in Bougainville. "During the Bougainville crisis, a 10-year civil war (1989 – 1999), that forced the closure of one of the world's largest open cut copper mines and claimed thousands of lives, Sr. Lorraine led the women of Bougainville to demand for peace through continuous dialogue between the warring factions and peaceful protest. After the crisis, Sr. Lorraine built up the Nazareth Centre for Rehabilitation, a shelter built for women and children to seek refuge when in fear for their lives and a place where ex-combatants could go to receive trauma counselling and rebuild their lives again." I first saw her story as part of the Papua New Guinea-made Pawa Meri documentary (the bio text above is from their site). It was wonderful to hear her speak at the Forum and have her share her progressive thoughts on women's rights to our own bodies and have her endorse the first ever Pacific Feminists Charter for Change - her support was critical in getting some very strong and necessary language included on women's sexual and reproductive health and rights. What a shero!

Intersectionality is really important in the type of feminism I practice, and the type of feminism I would like to think we practice in the Pacific. Being an Indo-Fijian woman I sometimes feel the particular set of challenges we face as a community, sometimes gets lost in the mix if we don't have strong advocates highlighting them. During this Forum, there were a couple of us that did step up and speak on specific issues but we needed more of us to do this - there is much more to be done and if we don't do this work, then who will?

If there is anything this Forum reaffirmed for me and one that will keep me going, it's these words from the incomparable Audre Lorde: "I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own."

Shazia Usman credits her feminist awakening to the Fiji Women's Rights Movement, having joined the movement as an undergraduate research intern during the 2006 national election period. She later joined the organisation as its Communications Officer and is also an alumnus of its Emerging Leaders' Forum program. She's currently the Communications Coordinator for the Pacific Women Support Unit which provides technical support to the Australian Government's gender equality program, the Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development Program. Views expressed here are her own.

"This is what a feminist looks like!" Cheers at the Pacific Feminist Forum. (L-R Mamta Chand , Shazia Usman, Maryann Lockington)

GIRLS Matter Session at the Pacific Feminist Forum

Celebrating intergenerational leadership.

By Lillian Delana

GIRLS participant 15-year-old Akansha Kant was one of the panelists at the Pacific Feminist Forum Opening Plenary

The Pacific Feminist Forum brought together feminists and women from across diverse backgrounds including ethnicity, nationality, religion, sexual orientation and age. True to the spirit of diversity and inclusivity, the GIRLS (GROW INSPIRE RELATE LEAD SUCCEED) Club was also present at the PFF, as a participant, speaker and workshop facilitators.

The GIRLS Club is representative of 20 graduates of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement's (FWRM) 3-year GIRLS Theatre Programme that took place from 2012 to 2015. The Pacific Feminist Forum kick-started their first activity, in participating within an intergenerational space as experts on their own issues and concerns.

At the forum's opening plenary, Akansha Kant, a 15-year-old GIRLS participant talked about the program, her journey and the challenges she faced with bullying. To hear sharing and reflections from the girl child's perspective was enlightening. Some of the discussions that came from both the panel, as well the audience, were centred around the importance (and lack) of self-care. Equally important was the need to address the multiple concerns of women's health, addressing perceived and hidden powers within intergenerational leadership, the gaps and the importance of documenting our own journeys.

On the first day of the forum, the GIRLS participants also facilitated a session titled, "GIRLS Matter." which included girls from the age of 12 to 16 years.

"The level of creativity that was created by the GIRLS at the session was so amazing especially how they facilitated the timeline with the different decades. I was so amazed at how the girls were very articulate and the way they were answering questions and responding to queries from the floor. I was amazed at their level of confidence especially at their age. For us back at home, young girls at this age don't speak up," said PFF Participant Yvonne Ono from the Young Women's Christian Association, Solomon Islands.

The girls shared on how songs, storytelling, yoga and interactive theatre games were safe means for them to talk about their issues. The intention was to encourage Pacific women human rights defenders to adopt similar strategies of working with girl children and their parents.

"Attending the GIRLS session, I was impressed at how confidently the girls facilitated the session and how they took lead in answering all the questions. From attending this session it has allowed me to understand issues of young girls and the importance of providing a space for them to be listened to," said Seremasi Latinara (Mother) from Nadi, Fiji.

Including the GIRLS in the Pacific Feminist Forum was herstorical, as this was the first ever gathering of its kind in the region and to include girl's voices in the panel and day-to-day events was a great achievement.

The Reflections of a GIRL at the Pacific Feminist Forum

By Abigail Aguilar

Being part of the Pacific Feminist Forum was a completely new experience for me. Especially since I hadn't understood feminism completely. However, overall it was such an interesting experience and I loved the active and lively vibes everyone at the forum had.

This forum actually made me well informed about the feminist work and of course the different organisations all around the Pacific that link to feminism, which I had no knowledge of before. Also being part of the GIRLS program has moulded me to become more mature in terms of activism and what to expect in reality and how to help others. It has inspired me to use this program to make a change in this world.

As a (PFF) participant, I could say that this forum has boosted my confidence even more. Especially, being a facilitator for one of the sessions at the forum. Not only has it boosted my confidence in terms of facilitating & public speaking, but also it has made me confident as a GIRLS and humanitarian activist. As for the Girls program, I've definitely learnt new information about things I hadn't known about, for example, I didn't actually think bullying was a serious issue until hearing personal experiences from the other members of the girls program themselves. My parents, especially my mom has been very supportive. She accompanies me to every occasion like the Human Rights day, and she has seen that I have become mature and confident especially in advocacy. My mother also attends the parent sessions and is keen to learning more information on the issues affecting young girls like us today, although she is quite informed, she too never thought bullying was a serious issue.

Abigail Aguilar, aged 15 years joined GIRLS in 2012 and is a member of the newly formed GIRLS Club. A migrant from the Phillipines, her family settled in Fiji in the last six years. As part of GIRLs, she has learned about different issues faced by her peers. Some of which, she has experienced, issues like bullying and being discriminated because of her race and gender. She is known to others as a quiet reserved young girl. Abigail was one of the youngest participants that attended the three-day forum from the Pacific. At the GIRLS Matter session Abigail was the lead facilitator who led in the discussion and was handling questions from the floor and provided advice to mothers who had had trouble handling teenage daughters. At the GIRLS Matter session Abigail managed to share her own struggles and challenges about herself and her body image and how she overcome this issue. For Abigail to share such a story in a public space was empowering and inspiring to others. Sharing this story definitely boosted her confidence and through this activity she nominated herself to be the Master of Ceremony (MC) for Human Rights Day.

Sexual harassment in the Workplace in Fiji - 2016 Follow up Study.

By Menka Goundan

In a study commissioned by the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) and conducted by Market Research Consultants, Tebbutt Research in August 2016; it was found that one in five women have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace. This means 20% of all women interviewed agreed to have experienced some form of sexual harassment in the workplace. The number has decreased from the 33% incidence recorded in a similar study conducted in 2002.

In 2002 FWRM commissioned Tebbutt Research to conduct a ground-breaking research on the incidence and nature of sexual harassment of women in the workplace. Results of that study were widely utilised, and assisted FWRM to lobby and advocate against sexual harassment in the workplace, and to provide input into a decision to adopt a broader definition of sexual harassment for legislation being developed at that time. In June 2016, FWRM commissioned Tebbutt Research to update the findings by conducting a follow up study. 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. A quantitative study with 1000 women currently in paid employment was conducted in Suva, Nadi, Lautoka and Labasa. The study asked the question, has the prevalence of sexual harassment in the workplace changed with the increasing number of women in the workforce and/or with the increasing number of women in decision-making roles?

Whilst the incidence of sexual harassment in the workplace in 2016 as compared to 2002 has decreased, the findings of the research point out interesting relations to Fiji's economic development in past decade. The Food, Beverage and Hospitality sector (35%) has the highest incidence of sexual harassment followed by Public Service (25%), Health (24%) and Retail (23%) with Education (8%) sector being the lowest. In the study, Nadi (35%) was identified as the 'hotspot' for incidences followed by Suva (19%), Labasa (18%) and Lautoka (11%). In 2002, Lautoka was reported to be the 'hotspot' for sexual harassment. Two hypotheses can be formed on the improvement in the situation on Lautoka; (1) being the tourism infrastructure restructure has contributed to this and (2) the expiry of the Multi Fibre Agreement in 2005 which saw the demise of many garment establishments in the city.

Younger women (25% of under 30 year olds) and those women from i-Taukei (29%) are most likely to be harassed, as are casual (43%) and part-time (30%) employees. Incidences are higher for women with these job requirements: serving members of the public; working on weekends; working at night; shift work; changing in and out of uniforms at the workplace; working on own in isolation; attending office parties. The most common types of sexual harassment that women face is Verbal (12%), Gestural (10%) and Physical (9%) harassment.

Most types of harassment are happening at the usual place of work and have occurred in the last 12 months. Most types have been experienced in the current organisation rather than previous organisation, indicating that majority women remain in workplaces where they experienced sexual harassment. The study confirms that majority of the offenders are males with a small proportion being females. Most of these offenders were between the ages 20-39 years. Therefore, young males are most likely to offend.

Of the 20% of women who have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace, half have experienced more than one type of harassment. Those working in the Food, Beverage and Hospitality sector are most likely to report multiplicity (10% 4+types) of offenses.

In the 2016 survey, the idea of sexual harassment instigated through communal or familial ties (tauvu, tavale, kinsmen) was explored. Almost one in eight women claimed to have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace or during the course of doing a job that was the result of traditional, cultural or kinship relationship.

Under Fiji's Employment Relations Promulgation (2007), 76 (2); an employer must develop and maintain a policy to prevent sexual harassment in his or her workplace. A total of 62% of all working women interviewed said their employer had a sexual harassment policy. This was much higher in the private sector (70%) than the public sector (57%). While 22% said their employer does not have a policy, a further 16% claimed they did not know if there was a policy or not in their workplace. Despite having proper legislation, majority of cases go unreported (82%). Reporting rates (18%) are down compared to 2002 when it was 23%. Of those that reported, 21% stated that nothing happened and that there was no consequences for the offender.

Most women in the study did not think that sexual harassment was a joke and there was strong support for speaking out and not staying quiet. The decrease in the incidence of sexual harassment in the workplace is encouraging, however, more work needs to be done for workplaces to adopt and implement sexual harassment policies that are consistent with the national standards as stated in the Employment Relations Promulgation (ERP). With strong patterns indicating high prevalence in the Food, Beverage and Hospitality sector, advocacy and knowledge base on sexual harassment needs to be strengthened across this industry. Most young people being victims and offenders of sexual harassment in the workplace indicates a long term issue since these people will remain in the work force for a long time. Strong implementation of the sexual harassment provisions in the ERP and effective workplace policies will help relinquish this issue.

Aaina Show on Radio Fiji 2 (L-R) Shammi (Presenter), Yishu (FWCC), Menka Goundan (FWRM)

"1 in 5 women have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace"

The Food, Beverage and Hospitality sector (35%) has the highest incidence of sexual harassment

Nadi (35%) was identified as the 'hotspot' for incidences

Almost 1 in 8 women claimed to have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace or during the course of doing a job that was the result of traditional, cultural or kinship relationship.

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A total of 62% of all working women interviewed said their employer had a sexual harassment policy."

Access to Justice Community Consultation: Improving Fijian Women's Access to Justice

By Alanieta Velulu

Over 10 years ago, the Fiji Women's Rights Movement realised a great milestone.

FWRM had been part of the long push to reform the family law as part of their work as a legaslitive lobbying organisation and finally in 2005, the Family Law Act was enacted.

Now, after a decade of it's implementation, FWRM wanted to see if this comprehensive piece of legislation is achieving its intended outcome which is to provide women fair and equal treatment before the law. Further to encourage and empower women to live abusive relationships and seek help from the Family Court and have greater access to justice.

This has been the purpose of the new project funded by the European Union titled, Balancing the Scales: Improving Fijian Women's Access to Justice Project. Under this project, FWRM works in partnership with femLINKacific, Diverse Voices and Action for Equality Fiji (DIVA) and Haus of Khamelon (HoK).

FWRM carried out Community Consultations from June 7 to October 28, 2016 in all four divisions (Eastern, Northern, Western and Central) with diverse women including; young women, older women, indo Fijian women and LBTQ. This was to gather information on women's issues, their understanding of the term justice, how justice looks like to them and what are the barriers stopping them from accessing the formal justice institutes.

A total of 17 communities, 11 villages and 483 people were consulted including young women, iTaukei women, Indo Fijian Women, sex workers, disabled women, the LGBTQI communities and few young men who were allies.

Women were asked to attend the consultation with an open mind and were not told what the consultation was about at the beginning. Majority of the women that were present mentioned that it was first time for them to be consulted. The consultation was conducted in iTaukei, Fiji Hindi and English, depending on the community FWRM was in and the participant's language preference.

The 4 reoccurring issues throughout the consultations included family, finance, education, alcohol abuse and education and school dropouts. Participants discussed that family challenges ranged from broken families, domestic violence, mothers expected to fulfill both parental roles because fathers were away from home for work purposes or attending village obligations and not spending enough quality family time together. Finance issues that were raised included the high cost of living and in-sufficient income to cater for family expenses. Some women shared that because the pressure to provide for family needs strained husband and wife relationships, it would lead to domestic violence or extra marital affairs.

Participants also shared alcohol abuse (including kava) as an issue, as it is abused by men, youth and some cases women. An interesting note that was raised at one of the consultations, the group that shared this also stated that when men abuse alcohol they expect not to do any work the following day unlike women who still expected to do their daily chores. In some cases family disputes arise out of this expectations and preferential treatment towards men. As for the youth, because of unemployment or lack of tertiary level education, they abuse alcohol to pass time which lead to other criminal activities.

Interesting that education was one of the reoccurring issues but participants raised this in relation to the high cost of sending their children to Secondary school in other villages in cases where there were no high schools in their area. This added to high cost of uniforms, stationaries and having no tertiary level institutes, having to send children to the mainland might be a contributing factor to the relative issue of high number of school dropouts. On school drop-outs, the two common reasons shared was the fact that parents cannot afford to send children to school and children had high expectations from parents with regards to school supplies such as uniforms, shoes, stationaries. If parents could not afford new supplies, children refused to attend school because they were embarrassed.

One thing that was evident from this consultation was that there was a general understanding of what justice was and how justice is achieved was different especially in the urban and rural communities. Majority chose to use the informal justice system because it is readily available to them, cheaper when compared to the formal justice system and because of family kinship. Using the formal justice system not only is expensive and time consuming, it is also a scary experience because it formalizes everything, which may cause disharmony in village settings or family but it is also not accessible to everyone. In cases where immediate assistance is needed there is financial constraints, police officers not available and if they were available they were not as helpful. From observations and reading all the information gathered from the consultations conducted it could be concluded from my opinion that the formal justice system, even with comprehensive and progressive legislation, everyday people fear it because they are not informed about it. This conclusion is drawn because during discussions, a reoccurring barrier is fear because of this preconceived idea that if you cannot speak or write proper English the formal justice system is not for them.

This is the first phase of this project followed by a research component, working with relevant stakeholders including judiciary, police, legal aid, police and the office of the director of public prosecution.

All information gathered from the consultations Information gathered from this Consultation will feed into FWRM Research and Information Kit.

> *"... the pressure to provide for family needs strained husband and wife relationships, it would lead to domestic violence or extra marital affairs."*

> *... when men abuse alcohol they expect not to do any work the following day unlike women who still expected to do their daily chores."*

> *Majority chose to use the informal justice system because it is readily available to them, cheaper when compared to the formal justice system and because of family kinship."*

Access to Justice Consultations in Kadavu

Perceptions surrounding Ageing Women

By **Monica Waqanisau**

The following remarks are extracted from the Scoping Study

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement took on a ground-breaking scoping study, the first ever in the Pacific, to explore the views about women and ageing.

Titled, Women & Ageing: Scoping Study on Perceptions of Ageing among Women in Fiji , it was commissioned under the We Rise II Coalition, an Australian Government three-year funding programme, administered to Fiji feminist CSOs including the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM), femLinkpacific, Diverse Voices and Action for Equality (DIVA) and Australian-based development feminist partner the International Women's Development Agency (IWDA).

The findings provide a snapshot of attitudes and perspectives surrounding the feminisation of ageing, which is a phenomena that has shown that around the world older women out number older men, making ageing far more of a female experience. Like women of all ages, older women actively contribute to society and lead diverse vibrant lives. However, many continue to disproportionately face challenges ,particularly in terms of financial security and accessing healthcare.

The scoping study was comprised of 2 focus group discussions (with a total of 17 participants), 17 key informant interviews and an online survey that was completed by 35 people.

There was an overall consensus by the women that participated in the focus group discussions (FDGs) that the formal retirement age should revert to 60 years from the current 55 years. Participants that had retired at 55 years of age shared that they still had much to offer in terms of contribution to Fiji's labour force but that after retirement, finding work in their respected fields of experience was difficult. Poverty was also identified as directly linked to ageing, with older women not having an income base nor were many entrepreneurially inclined. Additionally, the concept of support did not have one single interpretation. Women in the FGDs saw it as meaning: physically, emotionally, psychologically as well as socio-economicly. That support, as reflected in the FGDs, declined for people as they aged, especially for women.

"There was an overall consensus by the women that participated in the focus group discussions (FGDs) that the formal retirement age should revert to 60 years from the current 55 years."

All three methods of data collection acknowledged that progression of age had a direct impact on health. Additionally, there was a huge gap in adequate and accessible healthcare literacy as well as healthcare for ageing women. Furthermore, it was strongly acknowledged that while women are already marginalised in society, this is further exasperated for openly lesbian women, women who live on the streets and or sex workers as they are often shunned in communities.

It was also noted that there is a lack of adequate homes for the elderly, i.e. there were not enough, and the ones in operation struggle with adequate resourcing.

Key challenges and barriers identified in both the key informant interviews and focus group discussions, which were amplified in the Online Survey were that: (1) women play a vital role in society but often side-lined during decision making; (2) stigma and discrimination by society was ongoing (including family members) due to their progression in age; and (3) continued responsibility to care and provide for their family whether financially or as 'carers' despite their advanced ageing.

A total of 35 respondents successfully completed the online survey, with a majority of them (Figure. 1-5) being: working ciswomen of iTaukei Fijian descent, between the ages of 34-41, with a tertiary level education. Of this total, 65% identified that growing old in Fiji was difficult.

Participants to the survey, were given a list of issues that were identified in both the key informant interviews and focus group discussions, and were asked to rank them by most important- 89% agreed that adequate healthcare to relieve health concerns that develop with ageing was a growing issue of concern, while only 18% agreed that sense of isolation was an issue for ageing women. They were also given a list of contributing factors (again identified from both the key informant interviews and focus group discussions), and were asked to tick the multiple factors they thought contributed to the issues they agreed with—29% agreed that no priority was given to resourcing of growing population. This was identified as the highest agreed contributing factor amongst participants.

"It was also noted that there is a lack of adequate homes for the elderly, i.e. there were not enough, and the ones in operation struggle with adequate resourcing."

Twenty one percent agreed that equal contributors to issues identified were: (1) women feel an obligation to continue care work as nurturers and supporters to the family unit; (2) that there were no adequate retirement homes, and (3) that women have no or little income opportunities. Only 6% identified other contributors which were not raised as priority concerns in the FDGs, these were: media; cost of providing for children and families through to tertiary education and futures is increasing; medical specialists not always available in Fiji; lack of information on menopause and growing older; and societal norms to look younger.

Moreover, 80% agreed that ageing women did not have the same opportunities as their male counterparts. Of the total number of participants that chose to answer this question— 67% agreed that YES women who have different sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression experienced ageing differently. While 88% admitted to no prior knowledge of a National Ageing Policy, 12% answered yes that they knew that Fiji had an Ageing Policy.

FWRM has worked for nearly 30 years to end all forms of discrimination against women (in all their diversities) in Fiji and the Pacific Region. Our work is founded on targeted research to better inform programming, policy and advocacy work on improving women's status in Fiji and the Region.

In terms of work, so much has been done and continues on, around empowering young women, FWRM acknowledges though that not much has been done in Fiji to address the lack of agency that women face as they age in today's society.

The aim of this study is to inform FWRM's future programmes in addressing some of the issues that Fiji's ageing women have identified. And recognised as systematic issues they face in Fiji's ever-growing ageing population. Additionally, to inform policy reform surrounding Fiji's National Ageing policy, in consideration with Fiji's National Gender policy. Fiji's National Ageing Policy was introduced and implemented in 2011 as part of a four-year programme, while the National Gender policy was more recently introduced and implemented in 2014.

Perceptions of Young Women in Fiji

Consultative study undertaken by Fiji Women's Rights Movement

By Mamta Chand

What is a young woman?

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement carried out consultations in the Central, Western and Northern division to help discern society's perception of what or who is a young woman.

FWRM engages with young women through it's core programmes and what began as an internal research to strengthen these models, turned into a more insightful outcome that transcended age definition of young women.

This is not the first time FWRM has carried out research of this nature, as in 2014, 60 young women were consulted on the age bracket that defined a young women. According to the report, "a young women is someone who identifies as a woman and is between the ages of 18-35." It also highlighted the participants concerns on the lack of attention towards advancing issues of girls and children between the ages of 13-17.

In July 2016, FWRM's Intergenerational Women's Leadership Team (formerly Young Women in Leadership Programme) reached out to 157 diverse participants through 16 focus groups across the 3 divisions. The space created in these consultations were inclusive and safe, so that the girls and young women were able to express themselves freely.

Majority of the participants identified 15 to 24 years as being young , with minimum age of 15 years and maximum age of 35 years.

Within the emotional conversations, it was clear that the definition of young women was not confined to the parameters of age but the varying cultures, social structures and contexts of how the women lived.

For example when a woman in her early twenties is married and has a child, she is no longer considered young. The restriction upon them further pushes them away from having a social life due to their responsibilities, hence they feel they are no longer young. Whilst a single 30 year old woman without a child may be considered young.

As part of the research, it was vital to document, not just the participants views on defining young women, but their experiences, lived realities and the challenges they face. Unpacking existing perceptions of young women and the challenges they faced would help further stregnthen the organisation's responses to address different human rights issues.

The Young Women Central Consultations

Some of the main concerns highlighted by participants during discussions included sexual harassment and discrimination at workplace, peer pressure, struggles to communicate with parents, lack of accessibility for women with disability, transphobia and rejection from society.

One of the most recurring themes among women under 25 years was the lack of trust and support from parents. There were suggestions made to have workshops dedicated to building trust between young women and their parents whereas other participants thought it should be a parents-only workshop. The sessions would be educational on how to provide a better trust and support system for their children.

Women also shared that they were not able to participate in personal and professional development workshops and trainings because parents or in-laws did not allow them. The older women present in the focal group discussions said they would allow their children to attend workshops, but the fathers "overrule us". This was common across all ethnicities.

Street harassment was highlighted by the participants, as young as 14 to 55 years of age. They shared their experiences on being harassed on the streets.

"In public the men, they look, poke, pass comments and touch you"- 14 year old participant.

Another prevalent issue that was being raised was gender discrimination at work places. This was raised by women with technical skills (salesperson, engineers, traffic control) who were assigned to administration or office work instead of the work they were hired to do while male colleagues with lesser experiences received promotions. Concerns were raised about men with lesser qualifications being hired over women who were much highly qualified, women being denied opportunities to gain work experience in the field, particularly construction, and the opportunity is instead awarded to men.

It was clear from the discussions that young women were still very much regarded within the patriarchal lens of "wives, mothers, sisters and daughters" instead of equal members of society. It's important to strengthen the confidence of young women and girls, to acknowledge their leadership skills and the positive contributions they make to society.

This emphasizes the importance of programmes like FWRM's GIRLS (Grow Inspire Relate Lead Succeed) which has effectively created a platform of inclusive and open dialogue between girls and their parents. This relationship-building was one of the major feedbacks from the research participants.

Additionally, there needs to be more commitment and attention to strengthen policies against sexual harassment and discrimination in the work office.

Feminist Sharing: DAWN Training Institute 2016

Feminist Sharing : DAWN Training Institute 2016

By Monica Waqanisau

In late 2016, I was fortunate to be selected from over hundreds of applications to be part of an intensive three-week training, the DAWN Training Institute. The training was organised by an organisation known as Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), which is a network of feminist researchers and activists from the global south. The training was framed to build the capacity of younger feminists to engage in analysis and advocacy on key global, regional and national issues.

The training was the fifth of its kind and was convened in Negambo, Sri Lanka. Previous trainings were held in other parts of the Global South with the inaugural DTI in Bagalore, India and following on with Monetvideo, Uruguay; Cape Town, South Africa and Siep Reap, Cambodia. There were a total of 27 participants from all over the Global South representing Latin America & the Caribbean, Africa, Aisia and the Pacific.

As one of the four Pacific representatives, I was interested in learning more about DAWN's key thematic areas on development, that is Political Economy of Globalization (PEG), Political Ecology and Sustainability (PEAS), Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), and Political Restructuring and Social Transformation (PRST) piqued my interest to pursue further learning

The first week, in my experience, was by far the most intense. Each day's session would begin at 8:45am (local time) and end at 5:30pm or 6pm some evenings. All 27 participants were placed into groups aside from our regional groupings to help us through the upcoming days which involved a lot of group analysis and presentation work.

One of the main takeaways from my DTI experience was the peer learning from fellow participants. It was both encouraging as well as insightful to hear that while country contexts were varied, we each had recurring issues that were triggered from larger global developments. For example the adverse effects of free markets on developing nations and their sustainable development.

Participants at the DAWN Training Institute

I was also fortunate to share the DTI experience with Viva Tatawaqa from FWRM's feminist sister organisation Diverse Voices and Action for Equality Fiji (DIVA). With Viva and the other Pacific participants, we were able to articulate our own Fiji and Pacific narrative and contextual struggles that we faced and had the opportunity to and learn from other participants on their responses to similar issues and the impacts of this context. We were able to delve further into the nuance of issues by inviting Resource persons outside of the DAWN Executive Committee who presented

They shared on their respective areas of work. Some of the noteable ones that not only provided nuanced insight but also left an impression were Mariama Williams from Jamaica who shared on Gender and Climate Finance, Ranja Sengupta of India, who talked on Free Trade Agreements and the consequences of Free Trade Markets, including fellow Fijian, Maureen Pejueli of Pacific Network on Globalisation (PANG) who came in during the second week and presented on the impacts of Free Market Trade on Climate Change and the Oceans, which came under her session on Extractivism.

The training was mostly work but we did manage to fit in some sightseeing when we could muster the energy on weekends. And while I came away a little shell-shocked after that three week intensive training I was still appreciative that such a training was available to young global south professional feminists intending to continue working on challenging patriarchal stereotypes within the development paradigm. In fact, in parting I would like to strongly encourage the need for more Pacific feminists to take up the challenge and give more representation to our Pacific context at the next DTI training. It will be a challenging space but an enriching one as well and I strongly recommend undergoing this training if you truly want to learn more about how your work around gender fits into development and globalistion.

Going to AWID

By Losana Tuiraviravi

A time to celebrate the gains, analyse the lessons, assess our realities, inspire and renew ourselves and strategise across movements to strengthen solidarity and leverage diverse collective powers.

This was the space provided by the 13th AWID International Forum that was held from the 8th-11th September, 2016 at Bahia, Brazil and I was fortunate to be part of the Pacific delegation in attendance.

It was my first time being part of the AWID forum and I was looking forward to the opportunity to meet other feminists from around the world. I wanted to find out more about feminism and human rights, the different existing mechanisms from around the globe and the different experiences related to this. I hoped to meet women's human rights defenders and share experiences, as well as, how their work was similar and different from our work at FWRM.

The biggesst highlight was being part of a session at AWID, Navigating diversity: The experience of the Fiji Women's Forum, as a panelist along with (former) FWRM Gender & Transitional Justice Team Leader Veena Singh. Also part of this panel was Adi Finau Tabukau coro from the Soqosoqo Vakamarama-iTaukei (SSVM) and Joanne Hayter from the International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) as moderator.

Noelene Nabulivou from DIVA for Equality (Fiji) was also part of the opening plenary on "Our Current Realities," an opportunity to share the realities of Pacific women's movement on issues around Climate Ecological Justice, Women's Human Rights and Pacific Activism.

At arrival, a pre-meeting of the Pacific delegation took place, allowing us to meet regional participants face-to-face, connect and strategise for the upcoming events. We talked about how we could support each other, by attending Pacific events and sharing on sessions we had attended.

The delegation was made up of 21 participants from Fiji, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and Samoa. Organisations present from the Pacific were, FWRM, FWF, RRRT- SPC, DIVA for Equality, Soqosoqo Vakamarama i-Taukei, Paci c Disability Forum, Haus of Khameleon, YWCA-PNG, PANG, and Women in Media Solomon Islands. This was the largest Paci c representation at AWID.

As it was, there were 5 different Pacific sessions including; 'Pacific Feminist: Moving from translucent movements to transgender justice', 'Pacific small island feminisms: Climate and ecological imperatives that change our organising', 'Trading away feminist futures - A critique of unfair, corporatized trade, Finance, Aid and Development practices,' 'Navigating Diversity - The experiences of the Fiji Women's Forum,' and 'Photo Exhibition - Realising Women's Human Rights in the Pacific.'

AWID International Forum

The 5 Pacific sessions were led by organisations that shared their experiences, challenges, successes of working together as women's organisation and movements in the Pacific. This also offered the opportunity for the Pacific women's organisations to mobilise between themselves and this was in the form of fundraising and sharing of resources. During the post meeting event of the Pacific delegation, we were able to reflect, strengthen the movement building within and strategies taken from the experience at the event towards the work implemented from local, national and international engagements of Pacific women's organisations.

Participating in AWID helped me reflect on the work that I do and how I contribute to women's movement building in my region. It was a memorable experience and a great moment to rejuvinate my feminism as a Pacific Indeginous woman.

Movement Building Reflections from ILGA

By Kris Prasad

Over 700 LGBTQI activists from around the world attended the International Lesbian Gay Bisexual Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) World conference, which was held from November 28 to December 2, 2016 in Bangkok, Thailand.

I was fortunate to represent the Fiji Women's Rights Movement and Drodrolagi Movement as one of two Fiji representatives that was present at the event including Sulique Waqa from the Haus of Khameleon.

This was the third time I attended ILGA and I was keen on reconnecting with fellow queer activists, , especially from the Global South, as well as, use the space to reflect and re-energise my activism.

ILGA's organised space, including the sessions and workshops were of course a great opportunity to learn from other activists but the best networking times were during the informal gatherings. I was able to meet with a transman activist from Yogkaryta, Indonesia and we connected over our shared concern and passion for the freedom of West Papua. It was December 1, Global Flag Raising Day for West Papua and we quickly organised a Morning Star flag and approached other conference attendees to tell them about the West Papua issue. We took several #GlobalFlagRaising photos and posted on social media.

It's these spaces that allow us to build networks, partnerships and collaborate over the seas, to lobby for our issues. On my previous trip, I was able to meet and connect with Alok-Vaid Menon of Darkmatter. Eventually, we were able to organise for him to do a workshop in Fiji and performance in Suva- both events were successfully held in September last year.

We also had the opportunity to hear from Vitit Muntarbhorn, the first Independent Expert on Protection against Violence and Discrimination based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity where he highlighted five key goals , decriminalization, depathologisation, recognition of gender identity, cultural inclusion and empathisation. The Independent Experts' position has only been around for a few months and already there have been two attempts to undo the SOGI resolution passed in Geneva in June 2016.

The issue of LGBTIQ rights remains divisive and it is hoped that small island developing states such as Fiji can take the lead in affirming human rights at the UN. Hopefully, more activists and organisers from Fiji would be able to participant in the 2018 conference as it will be held in Wellington, New Zealand.

ILGA

Olympian Feminist

By Maryann Lockington

A feminist activist, racing across a grass-covered pitch to the roars of a crowd in Rio De Janeiro.

Timaima Tamoi is part of the Management Collective at Diverse Voices and Action (DIVA) for Equality Fiji and a national sevens rugby player who was selected to play in the Rio Summer Olympics 2016.

Tamoi shared her journey on breaking barriers and challenging stereotypes.

With paternal links to the village of Ketei on the island of Totoya in the Lau group and maternal links to Levuka, Tamoi grew up moving between the old capital and Viti Levu in her formative years.

"I was born in Suva and early on moved to Levuka, Ovalau where I attended kindergarten. From Levuka, we moved back to Viti Levu. We stayed in New Town where I attended Assemblies of God Primary School from Class 1 to Class 8," she wrote.

Tamoi began secondary school education at Assemblies of God High School before moving back to Ovalau to complete Form 5 and Form 6 at Levuka Public School.

"After that period, I returned to Suva and finished off Form 7 in Laucala Bay Secondary School. In 2009, I enrolled in the Fiji Institute of Technology."

Her first brush with feminism and activism was through an invite from a friend. Tamoi participated in workshops and sessions carried out by DIVA before being invited to become part of the Management Collective.

"I did not hesitate in accepting the offer as I really liked the work DIVA does, and I find that the work they do really accommodates marginalised women with diverse sexuality and they create spaces and an environment that make it okay for us to be who we are and not worrying about what society thinks about us," she wrote.

Tamoi wrote that she was extremely proud of being part of DIVA and valued the chance to learn from others and share critiques openly and constructively.

Now, Tamoi along with fellow MC Sereima Damuni, are working with a Steering Committee of five to pilot a DIVA activity 'The SRHR Women in Sports and Well- Being group.'

"I was called up to join the Fijiana Extended Squad sometime in 2014 and after much sweat and tears I finally made my debut in 2015"

Timaima Tamoi

A fitting endeavour, with Tamoi's passion for feminism and experience in sports.

"I got my start out in rugby through a good friend in 2012. A group of my friends were getting together to form their own women's rugby club and this good friend approached me at that time and asked if I wanted to play, just to make up the numbers," she wrote.

Deciding to try rugby without knowing where it would lead her, Tamoi began playing at club level before she realised that she "really enjoyed playing" and was quite skilled at the game.

"I was called up to join the Fijiana Extended Squad in 2014 and after much sweat and tears I finally made my debut in 2015," she wrote.

One year later, Tamoi was trekking across the rugby pitch in Brazil with the hopes of a nation behind her.

"Making the team to Rio was something special. I was so nervous when coach called me into the room. We sat down and he began telling me all these things, like my strengths and weaknesses and how he thought I was doing so far. I just sat there and couldn't do much beyond listen and wait. Finally after a couple of minutes or so he just looks over at me and says 'Congratulations, I'm taking you to Rio'. The smile that broke out on my face was the biggest one of my life. I was so happy and excited and relieved that all my hard work had paid off. This was and always will be my most significant moment in my rugby career, making the team to Rio. "

She has since continued her work with DIVA, and playing rugby, though she missed two rugby world series due to an ankle injury.

"Coming back home and resuming work with DIVA was hard due to the fact that I had to play catch-up most of the time. After making the team to Rio, I realized I had to make a choice and this year I have chosen to step down from the Fijiana team to focus on DIVA work."

Whether on the rugby pitch or working with DIVA, Tamoi continues as inspiration to girls and women on pursuing your dreams and facing challenges.

"Last but not least just wanna share that I don't take fear of failure to stop me doing what I really care about and it took me quite a long time to develop a voice, and now that I have it, I am not going to be silent."

"Making the team to Rio was something special. I was so nervous when coach called me into the room. We sat down and he began telling me all these things, like my strengths and weaknesses and how he thought I was doing so far. I just sat there and couldn't do much beyond listen and wait. Finally after a couple of minutes or so he just looks over at me and says 'Congratulations, I'm taking you to Rio."

A vagina is a vagina. Just say it.

By Maryann Lockington

I feel like this is a strange piece to be writing in 2017 and yet, the nervousness I'm feeling in trying to word this correctly, is essentially the whole problem.

Why are we censoring the word 'vagina'?

The conversation has been lurking in and out of the limelight recently, on both mainstream and social media. Vagina. This is more notably tied to the topic of sex education in schools and homes. The rhetoric remains the same, remove "graphic images and text" from school books.Vagina. Not a typo. I will randomly write, vagina and hopefully by the end of this read, you've seen it enough times to say it loud and proud. Vagina.

Getting prickly over correctly calling your body parts by their names, is an interesting stance to take in the face of numerous sexual offences being reported by the media. Child rape cases continue to make the headlines way too often. In January this year, the youngest sexual offence victim was five and in February, he was only six. (Director of Public Prosecutions, 2017) According to the Director of Public Prosecutions statistics, in February alone, there have been '24 victims of the 54 separate incidents (sexual offences) of which 14 victims were under the age of 18".

Teenage pregnancy is another topical issue that continues to make headlines. Just recently, it was reported that there were 109 teen births in February this year. (Danford, and Reece, 2017). For a small country, having a rate of 36 teen births per 1000 girls in the 15-19 age group, is alarming. (Simmons, 2014).

We cannot even begin to tackle these issues if we're not allowing ourselves, especially those with vaginas, to take ownership of our body.

Understanding your body and owning it, isn't only empowering but imperative. Not only in relation to safety but also, health, and it promotes body positive mindsets.

This reluctance to talk about the vagina is dangerous because while we are succumbing to the delicate sensitivities of society's entrenched patriarchy, we (those with vaginas) are missing out on full personhood.

How many of us are able to draw out a diagram of the vagina and correctly label our bits? How many of us have shied away from talking about normal biological processes like periods and vaginal discharge?

I can recall many stories from friends who have had children, sharing their shock horror at not being told about what happens to your vagina when giving birth.

Every one talks about the life-giving properties or the pleasure chest, that is, the vagina. It's the usual narrative of limiting women to their gendered roles of "child-bearing" and the mainstream sexual objectification of women.

The vagina's importance to a woman's health on the other hand, is too taboo to talk about. Society either tells you that it's special and too sacred to talk about or that it's dirty or shameful. However it's pitched, it's still problematic.

It's an important discussion. It's our vaginas that tell us if something is wrong with our reproductive systems, which when ignored, puts your life at risk. The vagina can show you symptoms and early signs for diseases like ovarian cancer, STIs, and endometriosis.

There is also menopause, which is an important stage in a woman's reproductive health. This conversation is rarely ever had because we're forced to talk about the vagina.

How many of us have blanched at the thought of visiting the doctors when we suspect there is something wrong "down there"? How would you explain to your doctor about your "vagina" while trying to pretend, that's not what it's called.

How many of us are wincing, at seeing so many "vaginas" on this page? Uncomfortable? That's the point and that's the problem.

It's time to normalise the word, "vagina" and deconstruct the myths around it. We can't afford to continue reacting when there's a sex-offence being reported, or abortion, or teen pregnancy, when we are the ones contributing to these issues.

We need to encourage bodily integrity and teach our children that they own their bodies and no one should ever be able to infringe on that ownership. Our bodies are not to be continually sexualised and our vagina is a vagina is a vagina is a vagina.

No one, not men nor society should ever stake claim on whether it be talked about or shunned. It is an essential part of us, women and we must acknowledge it and understand it.

Say it. Vagina.

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" The Clitoria by any other name, doesn't make sense."

NGOCHR: Human Rights Day 2016 -A Recap

By Menka Goundan

The NGO Coalition for Human Rights hosted the Annual Human Rights Day march on Saturday, December 2016. Hundreds gathered to march from Rodwell Road to Sukuna Park where a half-day activity took place. The city came to a stand still as Rodwell Rd and Stinson Parade filled with chants and solidarity calls from human rights activists, advocates and supporters.

The 2016 Human Rights Day drew much attention due to the largely publicized permit issue towards the lead up to the march. On 23rd November 2016, the permit to march on Saturday morning was declined by the Fiji Roads Authority citing major traffic disruptions as the reason. The outgoing NGOCHR interim chair said, "celebrating human rights was an essential part of building individual and community support to realizing and addressing human rights issues. Having a march on a Saturday morning for only one hour is surely not a big ask."

In the following days there was much uproar about the issue. On 30th November 2016 Fiji Roads Authority granted a permit to march after an application was made by NGOCHR on November 28th for the same march.

Despite these challenges and a gloomy Saturday morning overcast it was fulfilling to see the colorful turnout at the Suva Flea Market and later at the Sukuna Park. People of all diversities and a myriad of groups marched in solidarity to demand for our basic human rights and freely expressing our concerns and raising awareness on critical human rights issues. Marchers and supporters joined from as far as Kadavu, Nadroga and Naitasiri raised issues of concern around violence against women and children, mining and extraction and climate justice.

World Human Rights Day is celebrated worldwide on 10th December commemorating the day on which the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Locally, the NGO Coalition for Human Rights along with supporters of human rights march the streets of Fiji every World Human Rights Day. Fiji Women's Rights Movement is currently the chair and secretariat for the NGOCHR.

Members of the NGO Coalition on Human Rights, supporters, colleagues and friends at the Human Rights Day celebrations

FWRM's first year as Secretariat for the NGO Coalition for Human Rights

By Monica Waqanisau

Last year, 2016, was quite a year for the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) as Secretariat for the NGO Coalition for Human Rights (NGOCHR). It was FWRM's first year serving its three-year term as Secretariat for the Coalition. FWRM's Executive Director was voted in as incoming Chair and FWRM Secretariat in January 2016, and took over the role from sister organisation the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre.

The appointment of FWRM as Secretariat is a second of its kind and 2016 marked a first for the Secretariat as FWRM's internal leadership transition saw a change in Chair of the NGOCHR from Tara Chetty, who was elected in January, 2016 to Interim Chair Michelle Reddy. Fortunately, the internal transition of FWRM's leadership did not slow down the quick response to which NGOCHR responded to Human Rights concerns.

The coalition comprises of representatives of Civil Society Organisations who collectively under the NGOCHR banner amplify human rights concerns that occur within Fiji and the region. As the Secretariat FWRM took the lead in coordinating the Coalition in issuing Press Statements (11 in total), Media Alerts (1 in total) and engaged in issuing Parliament Submissions- specifically submissions for the Information Bill (August, 2016) and the Public Order Amendment Bill (October, 2016) in its first year. Our first term also allowed the NGOCHR opportunity to provide feedback for the Fiji Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Commission

With FWRM as Secretariat, the Coalition, in 2016, continued to amplify various human rights concerns through press statements and media alerts.

Even in the midst of challenges such as arbitrary arrests, allegations of torture and an initial permit rejection to host the annual Human Rights day event, the NGOCHR and FWRM Secretariat continued on with its resolve to advocate and lobby around the protection of Human Rights, particularly in Fiji. The Coalition utilised the State's international commitments such as country recommendations committed to under Fiji's Universal Periodic Review in 2013 and its ratification of the Convention Against Torture in 2016 to hold the State accountable for its commitments to safeguarding and improving Fiji's compliance to global human rights standards.

FWRM would like to take this opportunity to thank the respective coalition members its supporters and the ever-resilient network of Human Rights Defenders that has assisted in its first year as Secretariat and welcomes the new year of collaboration and solidarity to working towards a Fiji that respects and protects Human Rights.

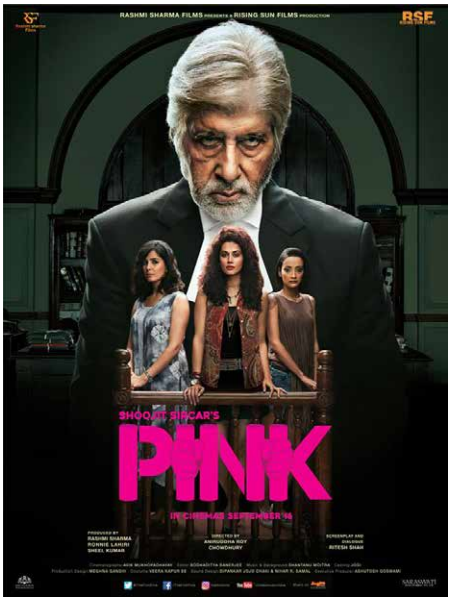
Marchers at the annual Human Rights Day March.

When No means No!

Review of the movie PINK

By Menka Goundan

"This is a movie with a simple message that our society has made complicated. It conveys that NO means En- O, NO! There is nothing as a middle ground or invoking responses to sexual signals."



On 16th September 2016, the Indian social genre movie PINK starring the icon Amitabh Bachchan, Taapsee Pannu, Kirti Kulhari, Andrea Tariang released worldwide with a clear message that NO means NO. Despite much rally for the movie to be screened in local cinemas, it was disappointing to see yet another bold movie being shunned by cinemas like past social successes: 'Bol' and 'Angry Indian Goddesses.'

The movie based on the social trajectory of consent, explores the topic in a real and definitely non-Bollywood fashion. Based on the realties of three young Delhi women, the plot and the characters are easily identifiable with any young woman living in this day and age. The questions, the arguments and the "accusations" made during the powerful court scenes are those any woman must have encountered in their lives. The "are you a virgin?" question- I am sure every woman must have encountered at the very least!

Whilst Indian press sold PINK as an attempt at shining the light on the way women are perceived in India and as a closer look at the sexism that women in India face on a daily basis. I think the movie captured the everyday plight of women living beyond India. There were multiple scenes where the issue was real for me and other women around me. The unfavorable structural impediments illustrated by a female police inspector, outlined the grave reality of entrenched patriarchy and often times unjustified enforcement of even the most progressive laws.

Shoojit Sircar (director) deconstructs the notion of consent and leaves the audience questioning their sexual modesty or perhaps even morality on what might or might not have been consent. The saga of male entitlement and the urgency of patriarchy to portray the righteousness of male's sexual decisions based on circumstances like location (resort?), atmosphere (party?) and state of the woman (drunk?) raise pertinent insights on how we have continually justified and given in to patriarchy. But beyond all this was a woman's outward presentation that was examined extensively, her dress, her language, her social interactions and her sexual appetite. "An exchange of a vulgar joke or a short dress meant that she was ready and available," were just a few notable dialogues from the movie.

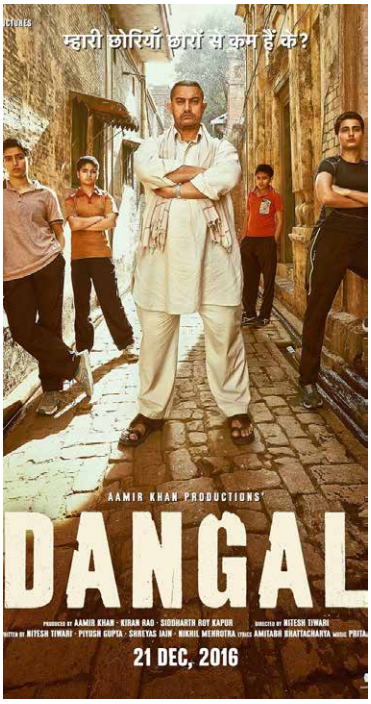
Creative reference to the 'Rulebook of the Girl's Safety Manual' drives the idea of regressive social norms that women and girls are expected to follow. The surreal demands of society for women and girls that exist in an undocumented format but one is expected to follow if you are of the female species. The set back to this movie is Amitabh Bachchan's larger than life persona which depicts him championing this idea. The use of a male icon to explain the concept of consent overshadows the powerful characters that the three female protagonists play to an extent but nonetheless the movie manages to raise critical discussion on consent.

This is a movie with a simple message that our society has made complicated. It conveys that NO means En- O, NO! There is nothing as a middle ground or invoking responses to sexual signals. Engaging with a person in willing and mutually consented sex means there was a level of satisfaction and undoubted agreement from all parties engaged in it. Whilst PINK will spike frustration and anger unraveling the goddesses within us; I definitely recommend the movie alongside the Indian Express' 4.5 star rating.

"The use of a male icon to explain the concept of consent overshadows the powerful characters that the three female protagonists play to an extent but nonetheless the movie manages to raise critical discussion on consent"

Dangal Review

By Mamta Chand



I am an Aamir Khan fan (if you not, well I have issues with you) tagged by fans the Bollywood Perfectionist. AK is a powerful advocate through the Indian television talk show Satyamev Jayate (Truth Alone Triumphs) on women's human rights and social justice. Encouraging you to watch it if you have not!

When the biopic of Dangal (wrestling) was announced I was looking forward to seeing him take on the role of a wrestler. Once the first preview was out, I got hooked (so did my friends). The preview of 3mins 26secs gave me goose bumps and had me in sniffles. I am the queen of sniffles. Dangal is a must watch.

Warning; Spoilers.

Dangal is based on Mahavir Singh Phogat (I really like his name) former Indian national champion wrestler whose dream was to win Gold at the Commonwealth Games (every athletes dream, I reckon. I would love to win Gold for Fiji alas I love extra fries and not exercise) but was unable to afford the international platform. As most father's he made up his mind to live his dream through his chora (boy) yet to be born. On this chora note, he is from Haryana and I love their dialect. I wonder if my ancestors were from there. Hmmmm.

Boom! He has four amazing daughters with his wife Daya Shobha Kaur despite, ahem, trying various methods of having a son from doing it on a Sunday to feeding cows by the direction of the elders in the village (Go ahead, try some methods if you planning for a boy, tell me how it was, I mean if a cute little boy comes along).

Barge in patriarchy (eye roll). Mahavir and Daya were no exception in being conditioned. With daughters put on planet earth to be married to men (cough cough) and have babies (I love babies) he locks away his dreams in a tin box. Mahavir loves his daughters. He takes parenting seriously helping the girls with school work.

Geeta and Babita, Sheroes of the movie (I love them to bits, I wana be them but well, fries) the elder Phogat chori's (girls) have a tussle with the village chora's for name calling. It is delightful to watch Mahavir's nazaria (viewpoint) towards his daughters change seeing them scruffy and triumphant. Chori's thrashing up chora's in Haryana village, that's radical. The hard core training for the two girls begins for Gold!

Reviews for Dangal has ranged from feminism to nationalism. The father hell bent on driving his dream on his daughters with winning Gold for the country. Distortion of Phogat's life and cinematic dramatization has been argued. There were moments in the movie that was discomforting making me silently scream No!

However, I firmly believe it is an extraordinary story defying gender taboos particularly from Haryana the extremely conservative state of north India depicted hell for girls who are seen as burdens, notorious for child marriage, female foeticide, honour killings and low female literacy rate.

A chori to step into the akhara? (Wrestling ring or pit). And to top it off through the male-only sports. Not male-dominated because there were never any women.The conformist Haryanvi's would have never considered this. The Phogat girls would have never dreamed about this. Both Daya and Mahavir battled the status quo to train the Phogat girls. Senior Phogat would have given the same gruelling exercises and tough coaching to the boys. He was determined to mould Geeta and Babita into the best of the best Dangal's. The girls hated it. Who wants to wake up at 4.00-5.00 in the morning to go for a long hard run and other hard-crore exercise? (Ok maybe you, but duh). And forbidden to eat the yummy pani puri's (spicy tangy snack – water bread). This is unforgivable by my standards.

A disconcerting scene was the crossroads for the Phogat chori's. It took a child bride, a friend of the girls, to make them realize that papa (father) was fighting the appalling masculine system for them. Fighting for their transformative future.

"I wish my father was like yours. "I'm going to cook and clean for a man I've never met. At least yours is preparing you for your future." The sheer power of the child bride's soft utterance leaves you angry and anguished.

The Phogat girls were smashing gender stereotypes getting hostility from the traditionalist community from getting their long tresses chopped (well it was forced chop chop to avoid lice as per Senior Phogat), training in tee's and in their cousins long pants made into shorts (poor bugger didn't know what would be done to his pants) and ready to Dangal chora's when they made ridiculous comments.

Despite getting criticism from the community Senior Phogat did not budge. A lovable father but a stern coach managing to separate his emotions. He affectionately called Geeta, pehlwan (wrestler/champ). I wouldn't mind being called pehlwan.

The movie beautifully and emotionally captures countless moments. The interactions between the girls with their parents are enjoyable to watch and is impeccably placed. AK captivates you with his act. He is flawless with one glance capturing you with his emotions. Larger than life, Mr Perfectionist did not overshadow any of the characters. He was Perfect. I would have liked to see stronger character portrayal for Daya though Sakshi Tanwar carried out her role effortlessly.

Both the younger and the older version of Geeta and Babita are brilliantly played by Zaira Wasim/Fatima Sana and Suhani Bhatnagar/ Sanya Malhotra respectively. I absolutely idolised the do-not-mess-with-me-look of young Geeta winning her first Dangal. The ferocious battle between father and daughter is exceptional in the akhara with older Geeta determined to prove to her father the new wrestling techniques are more effective than his older ones. The iconic nail biting Clash of the Dangal's leaves you in waterworks and breathless seeing Mahavir struggle against his daughter. And the unwavering daughter wanting him to lose. Of course I cheered when he lost. But then I felt bad. But then was grinning for Geeta.

I was seriously bawling when Geeta sobs on the phone to her papa after losing several games. The papa's gripping expression leaves you stricken knowing his daughter needs him. And he was there for her. Watching Geeta battle in the final scene at the Commonwealth Games makes you feel you are watching the actual game. Girl, you could learn some fast-witted cool techniques to bring down your opponent!

Check out the funky sound track Dhaakad (someone who is powerful and strong, someone people are afraid of) sung by non-other than Aamir Khan dedicated to Geeta and Babita. And all the girls in the world!

3 movies old, Nitesh Tiwari has done an incredible direction going on to win the 62nd Filmfare (one of the oldest film events) Best Director Award. Dangal saw AK winning Best Actor along with Best Film and Best Action also.

Mahavir Singh Phogat and Daya Shobha Kaur set ablaze the pioneering female wrestles in Haryana with Geeta and Babita. Geeta does not only win Gold for India but for every girl child sparking courage and revolution.

I hope Bollywood works harder on the significant representation of women in the cinema moving away from the male gaze. With movies like Dangal amongst others fans can be optimistic.

Remembering Peni Moore

By Seona Smiles

Toiling up a flight of elderly stairs to a set of poster-papered offices opening onto a wooden veranda above a busy road in the heart of Suva, anxious, earnest, busy, sometimes exhausted women found a fount of kindness, understanding, empathy and energy in FWRM's first coordinator, Peni Moore. Long since then the Fiji Women's Rights Movement has moved on to new premises and new projects. Peni also moved on, but both retained their central concern for women's human rights, justice and peace. Peni passed away just over a year ago but she left us a legacy that continues in the many lives and places she touched.

To sketch her life in terms of a curriculum vitae doesn't reveal what she was really about: trained in veterinary nursing and worked at the Fiji SPCA for four years before becoming the FWRM Coordinator from 1987 to 1993. She then established Women's Action for Change, leading a miscellaneous group powered mostly by good intentions to support her work to with marginalised communities throughout Fiji, including women but also at-risk youth and ex-prisoners. A significant feature of WAC was the establishment of Fiji's first professional theatre that travelled remote and isolated areas as well as in troubled urban communities, prisons and schools to take messages of hope, conciliation, restoration, equality and justice. Peni was also a commissioner in the Fiji Legal Aid Commission and a member of the ill-fated Constitutional Commission.

The first meetings of WAC were held in the basement room of St Andrew's Church hall, where the 'management collective' planned great things while Peni's youngest, baby Eli and infant Zoe, played amongst us on the mat. Their elder sister Jade was in school. Later Peni gave WAC a base in her own home, which she never saw as too small for the clutter of actors, collective members, and those who came seeking help. When she moved she took all with her, including to a house next door to Virisila Buadromo, former FWRM Director.

Virisila described her as a peace-builder, an animal lover; a hippie, a social justice activist and a strong ally to at risk communities. She had a strong sense of community and had no qualms in voicing a dissenting view if she felt that people were being wronged. She was brave, feisty, fierce and always looking for ways to make this world a better place for everyone.

"Peni's cutting edge work in restorative justice, activist and playback theatre created inclusive and safe spaces for many people who were marginalised by the mainstream, particularly after the 2000 crisis in Fiji. When her work was connected to the policy work carried out by organisations like FWRM, our analysis and advocacy was strengthened for the lived experiences of the most marginalised within our communities. This often meant that FWRM's work was better targeted and had a bigger impact to create meaningful and sustained change."

Both Peni and Viri were animal lovers and the WAC collective had to brave a barrage of barking to get to the big sitting room where meetings were held, new theatre moves demonstrated, and actions for change generated while workshops and rehearsals ran downstairs. Peni and her actors were often a few pay days behind when funds ran short and collective members would bring cream bun and cracker rations with them if they expected any afternoon tea. Peni's courage shone through not only in speaking out against perceived injustice, but in the small things like balancing a virtually non-existent budget to make sure people had busfares and children were fed while she found the wherewithal to keep the show on the road and venture where angels fear to tread.

While it seemed, especially to those involved in seeking funding, that WAC often lurched from crisis to crisis, Peni's work and her approach to what she was able to achieve won international respect. The International Women's Development Agency described her as a formidable individual and visionary leader for change. IWDA partnered with WAC from 2000-2013 and was inspired by her creativity, courage and determination to make change happen. They spoke of her great faith in humanity and the power of personal transformation. Her work provided opportunities for so many people to be heard, to explore and reflect on inequalities, process grief, trauma and joy, learn new skills, gain confidence, advocate for themselves and forge new pathways both at a personal and community level.

If Peni were to read these words she wouldn't recognise them as describing herself – she was self-effacing about her achievements and more remarkable than she knew. Not so long before she died, Peni moved herself, her family and her animals to her own house, which she could finally afford to build at Wainadoi. It was a home like her heart – big, open, generous living spaces and verandas where people sat on mats and continued the conversations she had started. They still reverberate through the women's movement and many of the communities who miss the sight of the purple and white WAC van lurching through the potholes to bring messages of conciliation, justice and equality and to help them find the courage to make changes.

Shireen Lateef the Innovator and Legacy Maker

Eulogy By Imrana Jalal 13 February 2016.

Shireen was not a religious person, in fact she was an agnostic, but because I do not like to think that this is the end for Shireen and I, for us, it gives me comfort to say – "Inna Lillahi Wa inna Ilayhi Raji-un (Surely we belong to Allah and to him we shall return)"

Shireen had a famous plaque in her office at ADB which said "A woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle". To many at ADB that was their first introduction to her.

Shireen Rexina Lateef was my mentor and friend and she drove me crazy. We fought and argued all the time. We also made up pretty quickly, and this was a strength of our friendship, and part of the reason for its durability, since it has lasted over 33 years. She would push me and prod me about writing something that she considered mediocre at 9am, remind me that at ADB she was my boss and not her friend at 10am, and then would call me before 12 and sheepishly say "how about lunch"?

Bossy, tenacious, opinionated, impatient for results, always wanting to be right and have the last word, no matter how unimportant the issue, but she was also truly brilliant and strategic.

Her PhD dissertation was on Indo-Women in Fiji: Purdah in the Pacific Islands – focusing on gender equality and on the "rule of the danda" (or stick). Shireen had left Fiji (been extradited out by family as it were!) when she was 15 years old. She came back to Fiji in 1984 for her PhD field work, and then came in and out of Fiji until she joined ADB in 1992. This is when Sufi Dean, Atu Emberson-Bain and I met her. Caeser (Shahzran), her brother and one of my closest friends, had told Sufi and I, "hey girls, my sister is coming to do research on "feminism and that type of shit" - could you meet her and talk to her?" We groaned but did his bidding. As he would say "you know the rules, girls!" Needless to say we all ended up as subjects in her thesis.

She was relentless when she wanted something and she hounded people until it was done. Countless women in Asia and the Pacific have probably suffered as a result of Shireen's theories based on a handful of Indian Fijian women's minority opinions! But seriously, we were blown away by Shireen and her ideas. She pushed us to think beyond the narrow confines of local small town gossip in Fiji, the latest parties, how we looked, fashion, and, the men in our lives on whom she had long, loud, and strong opinions. Particularly those she disapproved of as husbands! Thankfully she adored my second husband, Sakiusa Tuisolia, and when she broke her hip he carried her out of hospital and up and down the stairs at her home a number of times. I was grateful for my big, muscular indigenous Fijian husband on those days!

And in the later part of our lives Shireen also spouted unsolicited advice, based on absolutely no experience at all, on how to raise our children. She continued to challenge us during her yearly visits to Fiji and arguments would be picked up where it let off the year before like no time had gone by.

She has had a profound influence on many of us, with her feminism and political views. Many of my own ideas about women and gender equality were vastly influenced by her. Three things stand out - her pushing me to enroll for a Masters in Gender Studies in Australia, writing my book on Law for Pacific Women, and most importantly, pushing me to establish with Shamima Ali, Atu, Helen Sutherland, Kuini Bavadra and others, the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM). It was a journey, that as it turns out, was one without a return. FWRM has become a respected feminist and human rights organisation globally. I put many of her theories into practice at FWRM even though she was not directly involved.

It was this "focused energy," to quote my friend Annette Sachs Robertson describing Shireen, and being "unemcumbered" by a husband, children or other dependants to distract her, which allowed her to change a huge powerful institution, profoundly and hopefully forever– with a gender policy in 1998, and to create a unique gender mainstreaming architecture in 2010, to persuade ADB to adopt it and through that, to inspire many women and men at ADB to do better for women in Asia and the Pacific. This ADB system of gender mainstreaming (GM) system is now widely considered a good practice system amongst international financial institutions.

Some 20 yrs ago every development agency was requiring gender mainstreaming in projects, but very few people knew what it actually meant in practical terms, and what to do about it. Innovator Shireen Lateef developed a 4-tier category system with matching criteria in which every ADB project was categorized for GM. This measures the extent to which gender designs are integrated into the project designs. If there were substantive gender designs directly benefiting women the project was counted towards the top 2 categories, and considered GM. Because of this, we know now what GM is, and what it is not at ADB! This 20 year odyssey, changing minds and mind sets, not to mention hearts, finally resulted in the 2010 GM Guidelines, and in 2012, the first target of 40% GM in projects, was introduced in the ADB corporate Results Framework – the first Multilateral Development Bank (MDBs) to do so. To translate this in non-development speak, this means that roughly 45% of our projects to over 30 countries in the Asia Pacific region has explicit gender designs providing direct gender benefits to women. They thus bear the hallmark of Shireen's legacy, as gender architect of ADB.

Shireen's biggest challenge in her 25 year career at ADB in Manila was changing the mind sets of ADB staff to accept mainstreaming in their projects and to implement quotas for women and gender designs to benefit women within the financing investments, and she did that with passion and drive. These ADB projects designs have benefitted millions and millions of women in education, water & sanitation, agriculture, skills, infrastructure saving women's time poverty and empowering them socially and economically. She told me time and time again not to assume that the battle was won. And she is right, we really can't let down our guard, EVER. ADB is a global industry leader in the MDBs in gender mainstreaming in projects, something little known outside international gender circles. Other Banks look to our system as one to emulate. We, (and countless Asian and Pacific women) owe a debt of gratitude to the incomparable innovator and gender architect¸ Shireen Lateef, for having the vision, tenacity, fortitude and courage to see the vision through to its practical realization, and to ADB for having the grit to embrace it.

Not bad for a girl born in little Fiji!

Shireen Lateef started her career at ADB some 24 years ago, after leaving academia in Melbourne, as a very junior gender specialist, at a time when "gender equality" was a word and concept barely known at ADB, in fact for many ADB engineers and economists at the time, it was a dirty word and although they accepted it intellectually they did not want it to have anything to do with their financing projects. That all changed when the GM category system was developed and ADB put a target of 40% in the corporate results framework. Shireen retired from the Asian Development Bank in June 2015 as Senior Advisor (Gender), and a respected senior staff member.

She cut a very wide swathe at ADB and in the MDB gender circle.

Such is the influence of Shireen – she left such a mark …. I have never been able to pay Shireen back for what she has done for me over the 33 years I have known her, all I can hope is to keep her legacy alive and to it "Pay it Forward" to other young women. Farewell Shireen, you will live in our hearts forever

"Shireen Rexina Lateef was my mentor and friend and she drove me crazy. We fought and argued all the time. We also made up pretty quickly, and this was a strength of our friendship, and part of the reason for its durability, since it has lasted over 33 years"

Remembering Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi

By Imrana Jalal
October 2016.

One of the greatest privileges of my life was being close friends with Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi. He had so many, and his heart accommodated us all. He was a man of many parts, Roko Tui Bau, a descendant of the royal line of Fiji, Lord of the Privy Council of Tonga, Chief Justice of Nauru, former Fiji Vice-President, and former Judge of the High Court of Fiji, and friend to all races, a rare Fijian chief indeed. He ought to have been our Chief Justice or President in the last decade of his life. He had the requisite intellectual brilliance, stature, integrity and a genuinely multiracial heart and perspective, a rare combination in any man, in any person. He had no peer. And those who denied us the opportunity to benefit from his formal leadership will be judged by history.

It is hard for me to imagine a Fiji without him. I thought we would grow old together. Long solid friendships that have stood the tests of time and vicissitudes of life are rare. I would look forward to his handwritten letters from Fiji, from Nauru and elsewhere. He was the only person left who wrote them. He and Princess Diana we would joke. His letters would make me laugh out loud, would make me nostalgic and yearn to be back home with him in Fiji surrounded by our mutual friends. These have always been the very best times in my life. I loved his witty, intelligent insights into people in his letters, with his typical gentle humour, and never with any malice. He had that incredible tolerance for human frailty which is one of the reasons we all loved him so much, albeit it made us frustrated at times. He would often chide me and say, "please be more charitable and forgiving Imrana Bhainee (or IB)!" His magnanimity was boundless. He forgave all those who wronged him, some of them deeply, even though he kept them at distance.

I wrote him 2 days before he died that his friendship was a privilege that I never take for granted. In the last 6 years since I left Fiji I saw him twice, once in Melbourne in 2013, with the Fiji Women's Rights Movement gang, whom he had a special place in his heart for, and then recently again in Fiji, in September 2016. We had a whole day together at Sufi and William's and then a small dinner the following weekend. So many of us spent the Sunday with him laughing, eating, and drinking wine. I told him that there is absolutely nothing to match being with an old tried and tested friend, who knows you inside out, warts and all and who loves you anyway. There is no awkwardness, just peacefulness about being together. The following Saturday night with he, Jon Apted, Gwen Philipps and Avendra Singh was equally precious and it's always funny to me how we just quickly fall into our natural roles with each other. I had watched him walk up the stairs, slowly and painfully, with my heart in my mouth, wondering how many more times I would get to see him again. We laughed so much that night. He had such a great sense of humour and because of the length and breadth of his knowledge, together with his droll, wry sense of humour, he could pithily comment on any leader in the world with great insights. I remember Georg Fritz my Austrian friend visiting Fiji, shaking his head in wonder at Ratu Joni's insights on a former Austrian leader of the Opposition.

In my letter I reminded Ratu Joni (RJ as my father affectionately dubbed him years ago) that we had had some wonderful hilarious times together and I treasured then all. I told him that I really looked forward to growing old together with him, and that he couldn't let me down. I asked him to fight, to call on any reserves he had left. We needed him, his leadership and his friendship. In my heart, I knew the time could be short. But I hoped for 65, maybe 60. When I got the messages from Virisila Buadromo, Shamima Ali and Martha Fatiaki at 3am in the early hours of the morning in Manila, that he had gone, I fell to my knees and wept and thanked God that I had seen him only weeks before. Clearly, I was meant to go home, if for no other reason, than to say goodbye. Andrew Mcintyre, thank you for including me in your ADB team, unknowingly enabling me to say goodbye.

We all have great stories about him, little anecdotes that explain the man. I want to share a few little ones, which say more about him than all the formal things he said or did. During Diwali and Eid every year he would be invited by wealthy Hindus and Muslims to celebrate with them. He might visit for a few minutes, but he chose to go to the homes of his other friends for the longer part of the day and evening to dine – with the Indian Fijian taxi driver who regularly picked him up from Nadi, his former secretary Chand, other mainstream Indian-Fijians with limited connections and power. Such was the measure of the man.

When I married my husband, Ratu Sakiusa Tuisolia, he gave me a lesson in Fijian protocol about how to behave in Saki's village. He suggested that I should behave out of character and go against my natural tendencies. I followed his every advice, knowing that acceptance of an Indian Fijian daughter-in-law would have its own challenges. He said that unlike many others who suspected me of making a politically expedient marriage, he knew I spoke the truth when I said that I had married Saki, first for his body and second for his mind! He knew me well. He delighted in Roma's birth, saying that children like Roma were hope for a future Fiji.

One small but important lesson he taught me well - when angry, write the email. Sleep on it, and then if you still feel angry the next day, send it. At least 90% of the time you don't send it or at least not in that form. He taught me to be more measured, more thoughtful and more considered. He has left his indelible mark on me, on us all.

He said recently that to leave bitterness behind was critical in moving forward and he was right. He said he loved the fact that I harboured no bitterness about the past. I told him I was too superficial to remain bitter, and that to sustain bitterness required a depth of personality that I lacked. He laughed long and hard.

To be in his presence was to stand in the presence of greatness, everyone who met him or knew him felt it. In that, in this era, he remains matchless.

"He had the requisite intellectual brilliance, stature, integrity and a genuinely multiracial heart and perspective, a rare combination in any man, in any person"

Meet our Staff

Executive Director Nalini Singh

Nalini Singh joined FWRM in January this year, after 15 years of regional work in the field of women's rights, human rights and gender. Nalini is a graduate of the University of the South Pacific, with combined arts and science degrees. Over the course of her career, she has developed a wide range of experience having worked with the Pacific Regional Human Rights Education Resource Team (RRRT) before joining the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) in Thailand and the Asian Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW) in Malaysia. She returns to Fiji after 12 years, hoping to use her experience and knowledge to contribute to the women and human rights movement at home.

Finance Team Leader Laurette Prasad

With over 16 years of experience in the Accounting and Finanace sector, with a degree from Fiji National University majoring in Accounting and Finanace. Laurette began at FWRM as the Finance Officer before being appointed as the Finance Team Leader in 2016. In the same year, she gained provisional membership with the Fiji Institute of Accountants. She is currently pursuing her Post Graduate Diploma in Forensic Accounting & Fraud Investigation at the University of the South Pacific.

Gender & Transitional Justice Team Leader Menka Goundan

Menka joined FWRM in August 2014 as a Research Officer and more recently transited to Team Leader Gender and Transitional Justice. She has 5 years work experience in the CSO sector. Menka is an alma mater of the Eastern Mennonite University and the University of the South Pacific. Her passion to work with diverse women, motivates Menka as a feminist. Her keen interest lies in analysis and gender inclusive data in policy formulation.

Intergenerational Women's Leadership Team Leader Maraia Tabunakawai

Maraia has had more than 7 years work experience in the development sector working specifically in the area of gender equality, young women's empowerment and child protection. Maraia is a young feminist that advocates and supports the rights of diverse women and girls, in relation to social and development justice. Maraia is a member of the Emerging Leaders Forum Alumni, Fiji Young Women's Forum, Pacific Young Women Leadership Alliance , the Pacific Feminist Coalition on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and a member of the UNWOMEN Pacific Civil Society Advisory Group (CSAG).

Fiji Women's Forum Coordinator Losana Tuiraviravi

In her role as coordinator, Losana liases with the four co-conveners of the Fiji Women's Forum-FWRM, Soqosoqo Vakamrama I-Taukei, National Council of Women and femLINKPACIFIC. Losana is a member of the Emerging Leaders Forum Alumni. She's passionate towards women's empowerment stemmed from her being part of the FWRM ELF 4th cohort in 2009.

Young Women's Officer Mamta Chand

Mamta Chand has been part of the feminist movement for the past 14 years and is a graduate of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement's (FWRM) Emerging Leader's Forum (ELF) program. She has been working with FWRM for the last decade as a volunteer, intern, research assistant and currently a full time staff member under the Young Women in Leadership Programme. Mamta is passionate and committed to empowering and promoting diverse young women of all intersectionalities in leadership spaces. She love's being a fun free fierce feminist.

GIRLS Officer Lillian Delana

Lillian Delana has been part of the FWRM team for 5 years since joining in 2012 as the Administrative Assistant. Since then, she has grown within the movement and now coordinates the GIRLs program and the newly formed GIRLS club. Lillian studied business management at the University of the South Pacific (USP), and also has experience in finance management. She is passionate about empowering girls.

GIRLS Support Officer Daiana Taoba

Daiana first joined the movement as a relieving coordinator for the Fiji Women's Forum before becoming a full staff member in her role as the Administrative Assistant. Daiana is passionate about working with young women and girls in promoting and empowering young leaders. In 2016, she was appointed as the GIRLS Support Officer.

Research Officer Monica Waqanisau

Monica Waqanisau is a Research Officer under FWRM's Gender Transitional Justice (GTJ) Program. She graduated from the University of the South Pacific in 2011 with an undergraduate degree in Law and ever since, has worked extensively in women-led NGO's for the past six years with extensive experience in policy and legislative reform through research, gender legal analysis and targeted advocacy. She is a passionate human rights and rule of law advocate and fiercely self identifies as a global south Pacific feminist.

Research Officer Artika Singh

A new addition to the team, Artika joined FWRM in March this year. Artika is a lawyer by profession and a women's rights and gender equality activist. Not new the movement, Artika is a graduate of FWRM's Emerging Leaders Forum program and has been part of the Fiji Young Women's Forum. She is passionate and determined to furthering social justice. She is committed to democracy and upholding the rule of law.

Human Rights Training Officer Kris Prasad

Kris Prasad is the Human Rights Training Officer. He is a queer activist and also a student of politics and Sociology

Human Rights Training Officer Alanieta Velulu

Alanieta graduated from USP with a Law Degree in 2011 and was previously employed as a Legal Officer with the Fiji Commerce Commission. She joined FWRM as a Human rights trainer and after 3 years with organisation, she can proudly say that she is a Feminist and human rights defender with a keen interest in women and children's rights.

Communications Officer Maryann Lockington

Maryann Lockington is a journalist, blogger, social media consultant, creative writer, poet and advocate with over 4 years experience working in the fields of communications and journalism. She was a graduate of FWRM's 6th Emerging Leaders Forum program and now currently serves as the Deputy Coordinator for the Emerging Leaders Forum Alumni and currently a co-convener of the Fiji Young Women's Forum. She is also completing her studies in Journalism and Law at the University of the South Pacific.

Communications Support Officer Serelisoni Moceica

Serelisoni Moceica is a journalist and writer, beginning her career in the media industry as a reporter for Fiji Times in 2011. She studied Sociology at the University of the South Pacific but developed an interest in journalism and writing. Serelisoni attended Assemblies of God Primary School and Ratu Sukuna Memorial School where she developed her love for English writing. She also worked for Newswire and was involved in other public relations work for local organisations.She is the only sister to four brothers and understands about the constant struggle of being a woman living in a patriarchal society. Serelisoni is a new addition to the team and joined FWRM in March this year.

Finance Officer Poonam Prasad

Poonam Prasad graduated from Fiji National University in 2012 with a Bachelors of Accounting. Currently she is pursuing Post graduate Forensic Accounting and Fraud investigation at the University of the South Pacific. She joined FWRM in October, 2016 and has an interest in learning from and working with team members.

Program Support Officer Shyana Ali

Shyana Ali is a feminist and no stranger to the movement as a graduate of the Emerging Leaders Forum. An artist and young women's advocate, Shyana first joined FWRM in 2014 as Administrative Assistant and is now the Program Support Officer under the Finance Team.

*The positions of Programme Director and Administrative Assistant are still vacant.

About Us

the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM), a multiethnic and multicultural non-governmental organisation committed to removing discrimination against women through institutional reforms and attitudinal changes, by means of core programmes as well as innovative approaches.

By means of core programmes and innovative approached, 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, indeginous 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
Mail: GPO Box 14194, Suva, Fiji Islands
@FWRM1
@fwrm1

FWRM Welcomes New Board Members

FWRM's AGM 2016

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement Annual General Meeting was held on Thursday 17 November 2016 at the Fiji Club in Suva.

Over 20 people were in attendance including, staff, members, the management board, partners, friends and networks. The event was officiated by Board Chair Daiana Burseova and outgoing Acting Executive Director Michelle Reddy.

The main outcomes of the AGM was the election of two new board members, feminist activist and former FWRM Executive Director Virisila Buadromo and Emerging Leaders Forum Alumni member and a masters student at the University of the South Pacific Ashlyn Lal. They officially assumed their roles in 2017, as Daiana Buresova and board member Tamara Balenaveikau 's term came to an end.

FWRM also named a new trustee, Fijian Academic and University of the South Pacific lecturer Dr. Neelesh Gounder succeeding Professor Wadan Narsey.

FWRM's Annual Report for July 2015 to June 2016 was presented with additional presentations from Price Waterhouse Cooper auditors on the organisation's financial performance. Also, as part of the agenda, the minutes of the last AGM in 2015 were approved and adopted. In 2017, FWRM's management board now includes interim Board Chair Makareta Waqavonovono, Treasurer Shradha Sharma, Imrana Jalal, Sharyne Fong, Eseta Nadakuitavuki, Virisila Buadromo and Ashlyn Lal, Anna Cowley and Neomai Maravuakula. FWRM's Trustees include Lisa Apted, Helen Tavola and Dr.Neelesh Gounder.

New PACCOM Mechanism Formed

By Maryann Lockington

Key civil society representatives from the region convened the Pacific CSO Organisaing Mechanism dialogue at Studio 6 , Suva from 6 to 8 February.

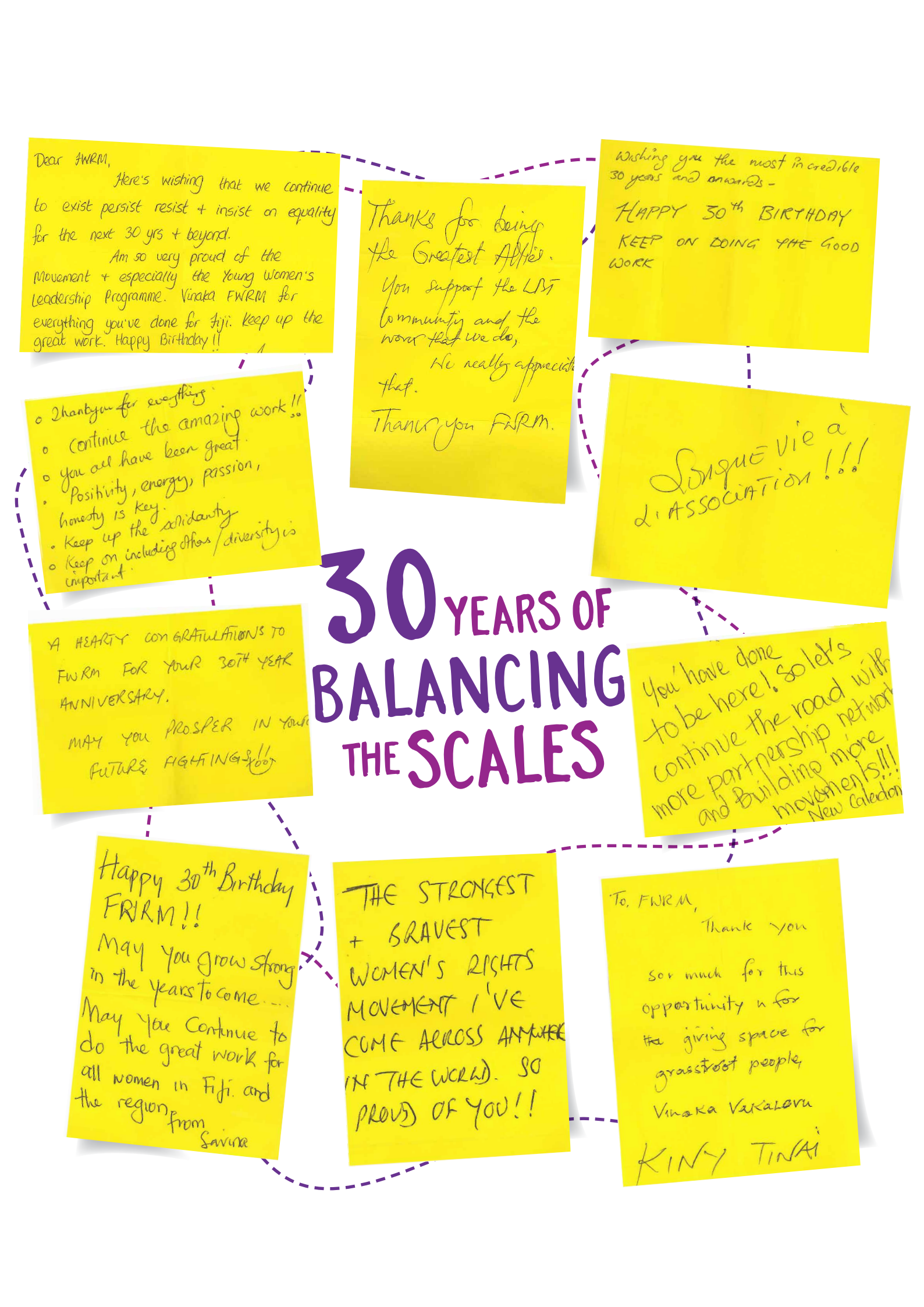
It was organised by a regional working group including Fiji Women's Rights Movement, DIVA for Equality, Pacific Youth Council, Women United Together Marshall Islands (WUTMI) and Tongan Leiti Association who were chosen by over 30 civil society groups from the region to take this work forward to an initial meeting.

Some of the important highlights of the forum include; the endorsement of the PACCOM Declaration and the establishment of the new secretariat and working group. The Mechanism's 6-month transitional Secretariat will be hosted by the Fiji Women's Rights Movement, with a working group including Diverse Voices and Action (DIVA) for Equality, Samoa National Youth Council, Pacific Youth Council Samoa, Women United Together Marshall Islands (WUTMI) and Tongan Leiti Association. A new list-serve was also created to help diseminate and communicate PACCOM related work to partners and interested parties.

Working Group member and Diverse Voices and Action (DIVA) for Equality Fiji Political Adviser Ms Noelene Nabulivou said, "Civil society in Pacific small island countries and territories are as diverse as our region. When we look at the many challenges facing Pacific people and the world, we need to be ever stronger in our collective analysis, advocacy, communication and social organising. PACCOM will assist many Pacific Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) community led, national and regional civil society groups to work better with communities, each other, governments and CROP agencies. We will certainly try!"

The three-day Pacific CSO Organising Mechanism (PACCOM) dialogue was supported by European Union funded Non-State Actors Programme implemented by Pacific Islands Forum Secretaria (PIFS).

For the next 5 months, FWRM supported by the working group will further improve PACCOM's structure and set-up before officially handing the secretariat over.


30 YEARS OF BALANCING THE SCALES
Dear FWRM,
Here's wishing that we continue to exist persist resist + insist on equality for the next 30 yrs + beyond.
Am so very proud of the Movement + especially the Young Women's Leadership Programme. Vinaka FWRM for everything you've done for Fiji. Keep up the great work. Happy Birthday!!
Thanks for being the Greatest Allies. You support the LBT community and the work that we do, We really appreciate that.
Thank you FWRM.
Wishing you the most incredible 30 years and onwards -
HAPPY 30th BIRTHDAY
KEEP ON DOING THE GOOD WORK
Longue Vie à l'ASSOCIATION !!!
Thankyou for everything
Continue the amazing work!!
You all have been great.
Positivity, energy, passion, honesty is key.
Keep up the solidarity
Keep on including others / diversity is important.
A HEARTY CONGRATULATIONS TO FWRM FOR YOUR 30TH YEAR ANNIVERSARY.
MAY YOU PROSPER IN YOUR FUTURE FIGHTINGS!!
You have done to be here! So let's continue the road with more partnership network and building more movements!!!
New Caledon
Happy 30th Birthday FWRM!!
May you grow strong in the years to come....
May You Continue to do the great work for all women in Fiji and the region from
Savina
THE STRONGEST + BRAVEST WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT I'VE COME ACROSS ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD. SO PROUD OF YOU!!
To. FWRM,
Thank you
sor much for this opportunity n for the giving space for grassroot people
Vinaka Vakaloru
KINY TINAI

30 YEARS

FWRM

FIJI WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT