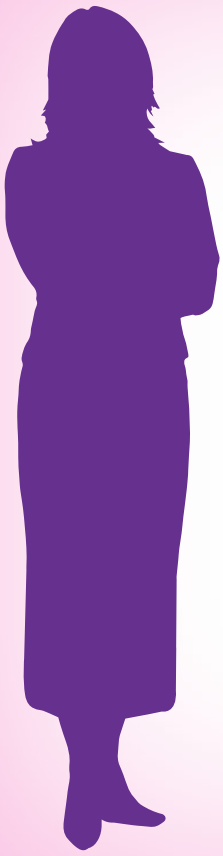
FIJI WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Balance

"HELPING TO BALANCE THE SCALES"

August 2018

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP



23.6%

of women in parliament worldwide

16%

of women in parliament in Fiji

(The World Bank, 2018)

14.5% of women in local government in Fiji as at 2008

(Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) Pacific)

Women hold under a quarter (24%) of senior roles across the world in 2018

(Grant Thornton, Women in business: Beyond policy to progress, 2018)

"Name a political leader whose leadership style you view positively"

79% of respondents named a man

6% named a woman

Public Perceptions of Women in Fiji 2014

From a total of 105 directors on the board of 19 listed companies on the South Pacific Stock Exchange (SPSE), only 13 are female directors

Gender Gap and Political Empowerment

Based on Fiji Women's Rights Movement Annual Analysis of the Global Gender Gap Reports.

By Menka Goundan

THE World Economic Forum (WEF) publishes an annual *Global Gender Gap Report (GGGR)* to track gender gaps and disparities around the world. The publication was initiated in 2006.

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

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

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

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

In this issue of Balance, we focus on the political empowerment sub-index of the GGGR. The sub index looks at three statistical indicators to produce a weighted ratio and rank for each country. These are:

1. Ratio: females with seats in Parliament over male value
2. Ratio: females at ministerial level over male value
3. Ratio: number of years with a female head of state (last 50 years) over male value

Fiji has managed to progress in the **Political**

Cont'd on page 12

Welcome to another issue of Balance!

BALANCE has chronicled our herstory for over 25 years and has evolved with the milestones achieved and the work we have done. At this juncture, we recognise the need to continue to highlight key issues and strengthen Balance as a channel for continuing our advocacy and feminist analysis. For this reason, we've changed the periodical to be published twice a year and have a thematic focus for each issue.

In anticipation for the upcoming national elections in Fiji, we have dedicated this issue of Balance to the theme of "Women in Leadership." Promoting women's participation in leadership is a key area of work for FWRM and in moving towards national elections, we hope to highlight key women's issues that need to be addressed. For those following our work closely, you may have noticed FWRM's ongoing Gender Equality Campaign, an initiative under our We Rise Coalition with support from the Australian Government. This Campaign raises awareness on the need to balance the scales of gender equality and has included a series of public issue-based adverts on women in leadership, women and unpaid household work and women in sports broadcasted on mainstream radio and free-to-air television channels. The campaign hopes to spark a wider conversation on women's issues in our homes, workplaces, churches, schools and communities. It's been an ongoing challenge to address negative attitudes and social norms towards women and girls, as well as, emphasising that gender equality is everyone's business. This is not work we do alone and we acknowledge the support and contribution from those in the women's movement, our partners and groups that have been on this journey with us. In particular, our work with The Fiji Women's Forum and Fiji Young Women's Forum has been essential to creating safe and empowering spaces for women towards our shared goal of having more women in leadership spaces. Some of this work will be highlighted through reflective pieces in this issue of Balance.

Our front-page story, the Global Gender Gap Report (GGGR) 2017 analysis for Fiji reveals an improvement in women's political empowerment. This is ascribed to the percentage of women in parliament and holding ministerial positions. While we acknowledge this improvement, it's important to recognise that the national, regional and global statistics of women's representation in leadership spaces across all sectors of society are still abysmal. There is more work to be done, in ensuring that women are able to speak and decide on key issues that affect them. Through our work, we strive to spark attitudinal change and continue to encourage affirmative action towards ensuring gender equality and the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

We also pay tribute to advocates that have passed in the last 6 months including LGBTQI activist Roger Stanley from Samoa and mental health champion Archana Mani from Fiji.

We hope you enjoy this issue of Balance and encourage readers to take time reflecting on the articles and share with your networks. As always, all feedback is welcomed and if you wish, you may email info@fwrm.org.fj

Thank you!

In solidarity,
Nalini Singh

Transitions

WITHIN the past six months, FWRM has welcomed new staff:

Our Gender and Transitional Justice team welcomed two new research officers:

Kunal Goundar

Kunal joined the team as a research officer in February, 2018. He has previously worked in private law firms and is a legal practitioner by profession. Kunal hopes to gain more insight as he relishes the challenges of his new role. Kunal graduated from the University of the South Pacific with a Bachelor of Laws and Professional Diploma in Legal Practice.

Laisa Bulatale

Laisa joined in February, 2018, as a research officer. She is passionate about raising awareness and legal advocacy about human rights issues, particularly in the areas of gender, disability and governance. Laisa graduated from the University of the South Pacific with a Bachelor of Laws and Professional Diploma of Legal Practice. She also holds a Diploma in Music from the Fiji National University and is a keen musician who has gained local popularity through her live performances.

The Intergenerational Women's Leadership team also recruited a relieving officer for current Fiji Women's Forum Programme Officer Losana Tuiraviravi who was on maternity leave.

Frances Tawake

Frances joined the FWRM team in March, 2018, as a relieving recruit for Losana Tuiraviravi who is on maternity leave. Frances is no stranger to women's rights issues and advocacy work as she has previous work experience as a network coordinator for femLINKPacific. Through her line of work, she has coordinated a regional network of community media correspondents, event planning and management, and community engagements as well as technical radio and video productions. In 2017, Frances worked with diverse women leaders in the Central Division through community media consultations. She currently pursues studies at the University of the South Pacific under the Leadership Good Governance and Human Rights programme.

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Photo: South Pacific Stock Exchange

Ringing the Bells for Gender Equality in Leadership

By Nalini Singh

& Krishika Narayan

REPRESENTATION of women in the Government and Parliament has been a fundamental issue despite years of determined advocacy to ensure women are on par in utilising their full leadership potential. It is commonly acknowledged that women are vastly underrepresented at the highest level of businesses, governance and parliaments.

Globally, of Fortune 500 companies, only 21 are led by women[1]. That's only 4 per cent representation!

In parliaments around the world, the number stands at 23.3 per cent.[2] In Fiji, the numbers are similarly dismal.

From a total of 105 directors on the board of 19 listed companies on the South Pacific Stock Exchange (SPSE), only 13 are female directors [3] while in Fiji's Parliament, 16 per cent are women representation.

Improving gender equality in the workplace is a goal for the government[4]. As women struggle to get a foot in the door, public opinion is changing. More Fijians believe women should be in leadership roles and in the same breath acknowledge the difficulties women face in getting there.

Breaking down barriers for political and leadership participation takes time, but it is heartening to see efforts being made locally.

Such an example can be found at SPSE where the company believes in the value and associated economic benefits derived from progressing gender diversity in the corporate arena.

The agenda has been the subject of ongoing discussions between enthusiasts since March 8, 2016 when the SPSE organised its inaugural 'Ring the Bell for Gender Equality' event to mark International Women's Day with counterparts from 35 other global stock exchange markets.

The event sparked fruitful discussions on what it would take to progress the agenda. Possible solutions discussed by participants included two main matters:

1. The Business Case for Gender Parity on listed company boards; and
2. Regulatory responses to the agenda of enhancing Gender Diversity on listed company boards.

Walking the talk, the SPSE in collaboration with Asian Development Bank's Pacific Private Sector Development Initiative conducted two-day workshops over three sessions last year through which a total of 25 women graduated with enhanced skills in topics such as governance, risk management and resilience, effective communication, constructing support systems, and managing the transition to leadership and directorship roles.

As a result of the training program, the SPSE received a formal submission from training participants, to either:

(i) make it mandatory for listed company boards to ensure at least 40 per cent of board members are women by the Year 2020 or,

(ii) ensure listed company boards have at least 20 per cent women representation as board members by the Year 2019, 40 per cent by the Year 2020 and 50 per cent by the Year 2022.

The 2018 International Women's Day SPSE debate centered discussions on this very issue – *should the SPSE mandate listed companies to have women representation on their respective boards through the SPSE Listing Rules?*

The results of the debate commiserated with what the SPSE embarked on and will continue to:

(i) support training of women to develop skills that will equip them to occupy board and senior positions in listed companies;

(ii) maintain the database on suitable women candidates for board positions; and,

(iii) connect women through ongoing training and development initiatives.

Fiji's private sector is increasingly recognising advancing gender equality throughout business operations. Value chains mean better talent, higher productivity, more customers, and a stronger bottom line.

More businesses are successfully changing their practices and investing resources to achieve gender equality.

A research report by International Monetary Fund on Gender Diversity in Senior Positions and Firm Performance[5]: Evidence from Europe shows that adding one more woman in senior management or on the corporate board, while keeping the size of the board unchanged, is associated with 8-13 basis points higher return on assets.

This should augur well for Fiji. More women in senior positions is good for the bottom line.

Slow as it may be, progress is being made. Women are making huge gains in the fields of entrepreneurship and leadership, which may help change the attitudes towards women in more traditional workspaces.

Gender equality is an advantage to the Fijian economy and life, and should continue to be a driving goal.

Ms Krishika Narayan is the Chief Executive Officer of the South Pacific Stock Exchange

[1] https://assets.rockefellerfoundation.org/app/uploads/20160512082818/Women-in-Leadership-Why-It-Matters.pdf
[2] http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2017/femmesenpolitique_2017_english_web.pdf?la=en&vs=1123
[3] Narayan, K. (2018). Welcome Address by CEO of SPSE on International Women's Day 2018.
[4] Fiji National Gender Policy: http://www.fiji.gov.fj/getattachment/db294b55-f2ca-4d44-bc81-f832e73cab6c/NATIONAL-GENDER-POLICY-AWARENESS.aspx
[5] https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/wp/2016/wp1650.pdf

Deconstructing Myths about Temporary Special Measures

By Kaushal Sharma

TEMPORARY Special Measures (TSMs) is a term used in Article 4 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

Article 4 endorses State parties' role in accelerating "de facto equality between men and women" until "the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved". The article also declares the adoption of such measures "shall not be considered discriminatory".[1]

In the concluding observations on the Fifth Periodic Report of Fiji, the CEDAW committee recommends the State Party "adopt and implement temporary special measures such as quotas, in all areas where women are underrepresented or disadvantaged, including the labour market and political life".

The committee further advises State parties to raise public awareness about the non-discriminatory nature and importance of temporary special measures for the achievement of substantive equality of women and men. [2]

At national level, the debate around TSMs is polarized.

On one hand, organisations such as femLINKpacific, National Council of Women, Soqosoqo Vakamarama and Fiji Women's Rights Movement are advocating for Temporary Special Measures. [3]

On the other hand, much of the opposition around TSMs is based on the argument that TSMs are discriminatory and stands in contradiction to a merit-based system of achieving equality. [4]

In order to comprehend the usefulness of TSMs and their limitations, it is essential to deconstruct both myths.

Myth 1: Temporary Special Measures such as quota systems are discriminatory

From a one-dimensional perspective, creating special measures such as a quota system that specifically reserves seats for women in Parliament is discriminatory because the underlying assumption is that a merit-based system founded upon electoral democracy is the most equitable way of justifying a seat in Parliament.

However, a merit-based system can only prove to be equitable if both male and female political candidates begin their electoral race from the same starting point.

It is true different candidates have different levels of access in terms of agency, resources, power and influence and autonomy. However, it is equally true that women have historically always been at a disadvantage when it came to resources, agency, power and influence.

To expect women, who are entrapped within an existing patriarchal system with less equitable access to the above tools, to perform on par with their male counterparts further perpetuates a deeper level of systematic discrimination.

Therefore, from a gender equity perspective, the different life experiences and needs of men and women need to be taken into consideration and, compensation ought to be made for women's historical and social disadvantages. [5] This can be done through positive discrimination [6] such as Temporary Special Measures, which not only take into consideration unbalanced gendered realities but also create, to some extent, the provision to reverse discrimination so that women are able to gain entry into decision-making positions on a leveled playing field.

Rather than being tokenistic, TSMs need to be embraced as an avenue for not just accomplishing gender balance but also a channel through which women's issues are effectively represented and advocated.

Myth 2: Gender equality can be achieved via Temporary Special Measures

Advocates of TSMs see them as a tool for achieving gender equality. Fiji Women's Forum Co-Conveners (2012) deconstructed several negative myths around TSMs. The forum views TSMs as the first crucial step to improving gender balance in legislatures. [7]

Short-term affirmative action such as TSMs can speed up the process of tackling discrimination and promote equality instead of waiting for the social, economic and political conditions to become conducive for women to politically participate on par with men. TSMs will be beneficial in incorporating a wider range of different voices within the processes of law and policy-making.

Furthermore, Pacific Island Forum Secretariat (2009, p.3), cites international treaties such as The UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, CEDAW, 1995 Beijing Platform for Action as well as the 2003 UN General Assembly resolution as affirmative measures to increase women's participation in national politics. [8] In addition, UN Women (2016) says "Quotas in leadership roles for women can help to ensure women's perspectives are sufficiently represented in society". [9]

Whilst TSMs provide a useful avenue for catalyzing women's political participation, there is an inherent danger in building a case for gender equality solely on the grounds of TSMs.

As mentioned earlier, TSMs offer the first initial steps in promoting gender balance in legislature. The pathway between having more women at decision-making levels and the impact it would

Photo: FWRM

have on gender equality within the society is not always straightforward.

In order to fully utilise TSMs to advance the goal of gender equality for all women, several existing conditions need to be met.

Rather than being tokenistic, TSMs need to be embraced as an avenue for not just accomplishing gender balance but also a channel through which women's issues are effectively represented and advocated. This can help the system evolve towards a transformative direction where empowering women politically at national and subnational levels transcends to empowerment in other areas such as the social, economical and cultural dimensions of women's lives.

Reconfiguring TSM: Building A Case for Special Measures

TSMs have limitations, particularly because of the temporary nature of special measures. To assume TSMs will either be able create stable conditions where the "objective of equality of opportunity has been achieved" or that the context itself will become conducive that TSMs are no longer needed, is far-fetched given the current global and local status of gender equality and women's rights.

The existing patriarchal systems of gender-based discrimination are not likely to go away any time soon. In some contexts, gender equality status of countries like Fiji has worsened rather than improved. Under current context, implementing TSMs and then removing them after a certain timeframe can possibly reverse the progress made during TSMs period. In other words, whilst TSMs can act as a catalyst, the temporariness of it has implications for sustainability of progress in the area of gender equality.

Given the limitations of the temporariness of TSMs and the deteriorating local and global status of gender equality and women's rights, there is a need to implement special measures which are much more substantive than Temporary Special Measures.

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8 https://www.pacwip.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/TSM-Book-Part-1.pdf
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Recognition of De-Facto Relationships in Fiji: A reflection on the Family Law Act

By Artika Singh

RECENTLY there has been a number of developments in terms of legal recognition of de-facto relationships. A de- facto relationship is one in which the parties live together like a married couple, without getting legally married.

In March 2018, the Parliament of Fiji passed the amendment to the Succession, Probate and Administration (Amendment) Act which now allows for the surviving de-facto partner to administer the estate of the deceased partner. The opposition parties in the legislature made comments during the debate regarding the change in the law including; that it could promote adultery and that this Bill ought to have been put before the standing committee. This is not the first time that law makers have attempted to prevent progressive equality laws being passed.

During the debate on the Family Law Act 2003, similar sentiments were expressed by various religious leaders in relation to de-facto relationships being recognized. One such incident was the now deceased Reverend Manasa Lasaro arguing that the proposed legislation would recognize gay relationships, promote same-sex marriage and herald the break-down of families.

An open challenge was made to Rev. Lasaro to point out the sections which recognized de-facto relationships and the legalization of same sex couples and the same would be taken out. Through this incident we get a clear depiction of the extent to which religious leaders were involved in the development of the Family Law Act, opposing the entire legislation solely because of a misconstrued belief that it would recognize de-facto relationships and allow same sex couples to be married. Religion was one of the tools used and still being used to ensure that women do not achieve basic equality.

During the consultation period, only one community in Ba had strongly argued for the legal recognition of de-facto relationships. However during other nation-wide consultations explicit statements were not made against the recognition of de-facto relationships. During the early discussion stages, recommendations were made by Commissioner Imrana Jalal of the Fiji Law Reform Commission for the recognition of the de-facto relationship. However this was not accepted by the Standing Committee and Commissioner Jalal was forced to compromise with the then Attorney General, Qoriniasi Bale, and to delete the proposed amendment. In any case the recognition of de facto couples was implicit in the Constitution and if challenged the courts would have had to treat de-facto couples equally to married couples. Due to the much needed change in family law, the recognition of de-facto relationships was removed in the final recommendation although the law did extend to include the children of such relationships.

The stance taken by the opposition is detrimental to society as a whole because it disregards the lived realities of people, especially the difficulties women face under the previous family law. The previous family law only recognized legally married relationships, and provided no recourse to the parties when the relationship ended. This affects women greatly as in most cases they are financially dependent on their partners, and may end up not being able to receive any financial benefit from joint assets due to archaic laws. These laws upheld patriarchal notions and had a detrimental effect on the women.

In 2012 the Fijian Government passed the Family Law (Amendment) Decree 2012 (as it was known then) to include de-facto couples. The government made a statement with respect to the inclusion of de-facto couples, that it was imperative that all Fijians are afforded the same rights. It was acknowledged that the original Law Reform Commission report had also considered the same stance.

Despite the enactment of the Family Law Act and the Family Law Amendment Act, religion is still being used to deter people, especially women, from achieving real and meaningful equality under the legal framework.

Fiji is a secular state, which means religion and the framework of the State are treated separately. Despite this, religion still makes its way into our law making process. It is not to say that one ought not to freely practice their religion, which is prescribed under the Constitution. However special care ought to be given to the lived realities of people, the current status of the people in terms of their relationships and the implications of ending such a relationship without legal recourse. After all, the Constitution does provide that one ought not to be discriminated against based on their marital status. At the end of the day if there are contradictions between conservative religious interpretations, and gender equality secured in the Constitution and international human rights law, equality must prevail.

Photo: FWRM

1 Lacanivalu, L (2018) De Facto Relationship Bill Passed By MPs available at http://fijisun.com.fj/2018/03/16/de-facto-relationship-bill-passed-by-mps/
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4 The Fijian Government (2012) Govt Advances Women's Legal and Social Rights available at http://www.fiji.gov.fj/Media-Center/Press-Releases/GOVT-ADVANCES-WOMEN'S-LEGAL-AND-SOCIAL-RIGHTS.aspx

Commission on the Status (CSW) of Women 62nd Session

Gains and Losses on the theme: 'Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment of rural women and girls'

By Nalini Singh

FOR CSW62 the theme: **'Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment of rural women and girls'** meant that policy makers, leaders and negotiators had to ensure that those farthest behind are reached first in the achievement of gender equality and empowerment for women and girls of all ages.

Even till today CSW remains as the main normative global space for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. The priority theme was an important one as when the theme came up for review in 2012, the member states could not come up with an agreement after the two weeks of negotiations. With this as the backdrop to the 2018 session, the African Group had proposed this theme for 2018. This theme was equally important given the global context of growing back lash and pushback on women's rights, shrinking civic space, dwindling resources for women's rights and declining political will on gender equality and women's empowerment commitments. And given that a significant proportion of our populations live in rural areas, it became apparent that an agreement would be most imperative.

What is to be celebrated

Having an outcome document at the end of 2 weeks of negotiations has to be celebrated. And some key details, which emerged as part of the negotiations, set up a higher benchmark in terms of member states consensually agreed upon language is to be noted as well.

- Recognition of contextual diversity- Women are often viewed as a homogenous group and their diversity, which is shaped by their realities and location, is ignored. This often leads to the failure of interventions directed at women who live in rural areas. But CSW62 recognised the diversity of women and girls living in rural areas and this was reflected in the provision of health without distinction of any kind. This is further reinforced with recognition of the need to address multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination across the document and operative language on addressing discrimination.
- Women human rights defenders (WHRDs)- were a hotly contested issue but in the end reference was made in both the preamble and operative paragraphs. When currently we see daily attacks on WHRDs, this became an important recognition.
- Stronger commitment and related language on violence against women and gender based violence, including sexual harassment and need to address harmful social norms and gender stereotypes.
- Agreement on universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights not only endorses the existing international commitments and which address reproductive health disparities, maternal mortality and investments in health workforce.
- CSW62 was one of the few times that member states acknowledged the changing needs and diverse forms of families and articulating the human rights of individuals in families as often conservative groups limit the recognition of various forms of the family. There was recognition of the role of men and boys in redistribution of unpaid care work in the family context.
- Recognition of the linkages between unpaid care work and barriers to education for girl's access to education. As such the agreement addressed violence and harassment in schools, enabling access to menstrual health hygiene products, access to comprehensive sexuality education and support for pregnant and parenting girls through re-entry policies.

What is the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)?

CSW is a global, intergovernmental body that meets annually at the United Nations Headquarters in New York for two weeks around International Women's Day (8th March). CSW evaluates the progress of UN member states in working toward achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, drawing on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA). The BPfA is a global policy document on gender equality, described as 'the most progressive blueprint ever for advancing women's rights' by the organisation UN Women. CSW is attended by representatives of states and hosted by the UN. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are invited to attend by Governments; as such this privilege is reliant upon a good working relationship between States and their NGOs. Each year new reports and recommendations papers are produced outlining actions that are aimed at accelerating and progressing women's rights across the globe in social, political, civil, economic and educational fields. Most years this takes the form of an 'Agreed Document' that is developed by States; which draws attention to obstacles and aspirations that have been highlighted by Government discussions over the course of CSW. However, occasionally a 'Chair's Statement' is released instead. Additionally, resolutions might result from the exploration of key themes. Each year at CSW three themes form the focus of discussions; these are drawn from the following categories: Priority, Review and Emerging issues.
(From: http://www.sisofrida.org/resources/guide-to-csw/)

What We Lost

With the gains above, there were some trade offs in the Agreement, which if these had been contested till the end then there might not have been an outcome document.

- Member states are still cautious when it comes to agreeing on the issue of migration and related texts were deleted as no consensus could be formed. The reality is that millions of women and girls migrate internally or cross-border and often are in precarious and vulnerable situations. A large number of these are rural women.
- Despite a strong emphasis and recognition of violence against women, the final Agreement did not include intimate partner violence.
- One of the biggest omissions was perhaps on the issue of young women and girls who had probably deserved a stand along paragraph outlying consensus commitments from member states.

Rekindling "Reaching Out Reaching Women"

This article is a reflection of a research report published in 2014 post elections and FWRM's work on voter education for women in the same year.

By **Menka Goundan**

IN 2012, Fiji Women's Rights Movement was awarded a grant by the European Union (European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights) for "Enhancing the Political Participation of Marginalized Women Voters". The overall objective of the project was *enhanced political participation of women, particularly women from minority and marginalised groups, in national democratic processes.*

The two target groups identified for this project were indo-Fijian women and young women. Indo-Fijian women, or Fijian women of Indian descent, are part of the Indo-Fijian ethnic minority that forms 37.48 per cent of the total 837,271 of Fiji's population (Fiji islands Bureau of Statistics 2012). Indo-Fijians have faced long-term discrimination, particularly in the political arena.

As a multi-ethnic, multicultural human rights-based organisation, FWRM noticed a steady decline in the participation of Indo-Fijian women in its workshops, campaigns and initiatives and at national decision-making level, particularly since 2006. The most probable inference of such a staggering reality was owed to community reactions to the pre-democratic political crisis, leading to disengagement from political activities. There was serious concern that the needs and concerns of indo-Fijian women were not taken into account during the constitution-making and electoral processes.

The 2014 election was fought on the basis of a new open list proportional representation (PR) system where voters were required to endorse only one candidate on the ballot paper. Party affiliations were not listed either on the ballot paper nor the national candidates list. Also, in accordance with the 2013 Constitution, the voting age was reduced from 21 to 18. Since there were no elections for eight years, close to 30 per cent of voters cast their first ever ballot in national elections, while 47 per cent of the voting population was below the age of 35.

The Electoral Act, released on March 27, 2014, stipulated rules and conduct of elections. Of particular concern to civil society organisations was Section 115 of the Act, which restricted CSOs from carrying out electoral education and outreach activities (Fiji government, 2014). CSO representatives met with the Minister responsible for Elections and the Electoral Commission to raise concerns over section 115 (Fiji Live, 2014) (Fiji One, 2014). Subsequently, CSOs were informed anyone wishing to carry out electoral education activities must have all materials examined by the Supervisor of Elections (Radio New Zealand international, 2014). . (needs Reference.

It followed that 11 CSOs applied for and received approval from the Electoral Commission to carry out electoral education and outreach including FWRM (Fijian Elections Office, 2014).

A total of 591,101 eligible voters registered for the elections, signalling the eagerness of Fijians to return to parliamentary rule. The polling scene was presented with seven political parties and 249 candidates, including two independent candidates. Just 44 out of the 249 were female candidates.

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

The research found that most recipients of FWRM training regarded the training as useful or very useful - that is, 81 per cent of direct and indirect recipients.

FWRM produced two publications to accompany the two phases of training and learnt that 69 per cent of all training recipients found the material useful or very useful. The materials were particularly helpful for those who received training indirectly, with close to 90 per cent of respondents finding the publications useful or very useful.

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

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

The 2014 elections resulted in 16 per cent women members of Parliament, which was the highest proportion of women ever in Fiji's Parliament. Whilst this is viewed by some as an achievement, it is far from the proportion of the total women population of Fiji which is 49 per cent of the total population.

The Fiji Women's Forum commissioned a study on *"Public Perceptions of Women in Leadership"* in 2014. The research report explains reasons for a continued disproportion of women representation in leadership positions.

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The Reaching Out, Reaching Women research report was published by Fiji Women's Rights Movement and funded by the European Union and the International Women's Development Agency. The research team include research consultant Romitesh Kant, research officer Menka Goundan, field assistants Jalesi Korotini, Tupou Kata and Rachna Kumari and, data entry intern Anushka Maharaj.

Revisiting Public Perceptions of Women in Leadership

The following article draws on excerpts from the "Public Perception of Women in Leadership" published in 2014 by the Fiji Women's Forum in partnership with International Women's Development Agency.

By **Menka Goundan**

THE research on perceptions of leadership and women in leadership roles provides important information about current and varying attitudes across Fiji's population, and where change is happening.

The information is valuable in that it suggests future action to support increased representation of women in politics and provide a baseline against which the success of such efforts can be assessed.

It is valuable to revisit significant research reports published in 2014 following extensive work on voter education in preparation for national elections. As we stand ready for another election year, it is imperative to note perceptions and findings from our most recent past.

As the first study of its kind in Fiji, the conclusions explore community views about women in politics and leadership. The inferences provide a snapshot of attitudes and perspectives prior to the September 2014 election. The study entailed a questionnaire to 1211 men and women in rural and urban areas in Viti Levu and Vanua Levu, 25 focus group discussions (with a total of 187 participants) and, eight key informant interviews.

Some significant findings of the study include:

- 81 per cent of respondents agree women are under-represented in Fiji, and 72 per cent think it would be better for the country if there were more women in national government.
- Being hardworking, honest and intelligent were the three traits most frequently assessed as being absolutely essentially in a political leader. Over two thirds of respondents stated these traits were equally true of men and women.
- The vast majority of respondents considered fluency in English (96 per cent) and a university education (89 per cent) important or absolutely essential in a political leader.
- The majority of respondents identified cultural barriers (60 per cent), discrimination (59 per cent) and a lack of support at community level (53 per cent) as major reasons fewer women than men contested elections, rather than a lack of education (15 per cent) or experience (19 per cent).
- 77 per cent of respondents would not be influenced by a candidate's sex when casting their vote. 17 per cent of women would prefer to vote for a woman.
- 67 per cent of respondents believe it likely or extremely likely that Fiji will have a female Prime Minister within the next 10 years, and 65 per cent said they would like to see that happen.

The results of the study can be encapsulated in three key statements:

1. The majority of people in Fiji feel women are under-represented in government and that change would be beneficial to the nation as a whole.
2. People recognise that the qualifications and attributes of leadership are not unique to men, but are common to both men and women.
3. Conservative viewpoints that favour male leadership are a small but significant minority in certain demographics; the strongest support for female leadership is to be found amongst women and young people.

The study draws attention to gender bias that lie at the heart of why women are under-represented in government and the need for definitive action to support women's political participation in order to better reflect the public's desire for more gender balanced political representation.

The Fiji Women's Forum was convened in 2012 by the Fiji Women's Rights Movement, femLINKpacific, the National Council of Women and the Soqosoqo Vakamarama iTaukei. The objective of the Fiji Women's Forum is to give women's organizations space to collectively develop strategies to increase the number of women elected to Parliament upon return to democratic rule.

Photo: FWRM

Empowering women to lead #VotewomenFiji2018

By Frances Tawake & Losana Tuiraviravi

WOMEN make up over 49 percent of the global population but only account for 23.6 percent of seats in national parliaments world-wide. (World Bank, 2017)

In Fiji, women's under-representation in leadership is much more pronounced. With women being half the population of the country, they make up only 16 percent of parliament. The lack of women meaningfully participating in decisions on healthcare, education and other essential services excercabate the discrimination, inequality and violence women and girls continue to face.

In 2012, four diverse women's groups in Fiji came together in solidarity with the common goal of promoting women in leadership. In the build up to Fiji's 2014 elections, the first since the 2006 take-over, femLINKPacific, the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM), National Council of Women Fiji (NCWF) and the Soqosoqo Vakamarama i-Taukei (SSVM) formed the Fiji Women's Forum. FWF believe strongly that the full representation of women in leadership at all levels is essential to ensure good governance and a vibrant and sustainable democracy. This movement was built upon the need to provide spaces for women in order to address the many challenges including the struggles with conflict and democratisation. Since 2012, FWF has organised over 5 national forums bringing together women from rich and diverse backgrounds – representations from women with disabilities and living with HIV, as well as different faiths, cultures, sexualities, gender identities, ages, demographics and opinions.

With the National General Elections around the corner, FWF is reiterating the importance of improving women in leadership to address other interlinked social issues and gender inequality. On International Women's Day 2018, FWF launched the hashtag #votewomenfiji2018 as a rallying call for voters in Fiji. The co-conveners are utilising the hashtag on social media to highlight stories of women's leadership, challenges and reflections of Fiji's women in politics herstory.

A 2014 study commissioned by FWF in partnership with the International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) titled *"Public Perceptions of Women in Leadership"* revealed that women leaders, their capacity and representation in leadership spaces were not remembered or as celebrated as male leadership. Even though Fiji has had its first deputy woman Prime Minister in 1997- Mereia Taufa Vakatale who served under the Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa Taukei (SVT) party.

While #votewomenFiji2018 seeks to empower women's political participation, it is a stark reminder of the grim reality of women's representation at national decision-making levels.

In 2006, 32 women contested out of 336 candidates. Three of whom went on to be independent candidates in the 2006 General Elections.[1] In the 2014 elections, there were 44 female candidates (17.7%) out of the total number of 248 candidates, 1 of whom stood as an independent candidate.

The #votewomenFiji2018 tag is also a conversation on the perception of women's roles in society. In FWRM's 'Women & Ageing' Scoping Study 2017, a key challenge that was identified in the key informant interviews and focus group discussions, was that women played a vital role in society but were continously side-lined during decision-making. In FWRM's Perceptions of Young Women in Fiji study 2017, it was clear from the findings that women were still very much regarded within the partriarchal lens of "wives, mothers, sisters and daughters" instead of equal members of society.

It is continously highlighted that women play key roles in society and are often the first responders in conflict prevention and post disaster events and now it's time women's voices are heard, from the local, to the national level. This year, #votewomenFiji2018 breaks down regressive stereotypes on women and gender roles by clearly showing that women are taking ownership of empowering others and working towards improving the lives of women and girls in getting access to better health care, equal access to education, decent work and better equal representation in key positions. Empowering and educating women is effective and enables women to understand the importance of their presence in decision-making. #VotewomenFiji is a timely rallying cry from FWF to recognise women as leaders and address the gap in leadership representation.

#VotewomenFiji2018

It is continously highlighted that women play key roles in society and are often the first responders in conflict prevention and post disaster events and now it's time women's voices are heard, from the local, to the national level.

[1] https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/j.ctt24hbbn.40.pdf

Fiji Young Women's Forum – Progressive Reflection

By **Mamta Chand**

THE Fiji Young Women's Forum (FYWF) has transformed into a collective space of reaffirmation for diverse young women of Fiji.

In a bid to address political participation and leadership, FYWF has organised five forums with an estimated 133 young women leaders since 2013.

The journey stemmed from the need for young women to be effectively active in the 2014 national elections and to be politically aware to make informed decisions about voting.

The exercise entailed young women leaders putting together the FYWF Outcomes Document(s) and/or Declaration(s) while lobbying at various platforms - nationally, regionally and globally.

Fiji is committed to national polices and legislation linked to global conventions to progress women's human rights. Young women of Fiji are continuously striving for effective implementation through recommendations contained in FYWF lobbying documents.

The documents reflect critical issues such as psychosocial disability, sexual and reproductive health and rights, climate justice, good governance and democracy, economic security, violence against women and girls, political participation and equal representation, and peace and security.

Young women experience discrimination when it comes to accessing platforms such as higher education, employment opportunities and, representation in leadership positions at institutional and political spaces.

Systematic barriers such as patriarchal structures, gender identity, sexual orientation and psychosocial disability discrimination increase young women's susceptibility to oppression. Culture and tradition are also major obstacles depriving young women's autonomy as they are unable to make their own decisions, particularly when the decisions are made about their lives.

From education to employment and marriage, young women continue to struggle for the freedom to explore life against orthodox expectations.

It is crucial for young women to interlink self-autonomy, primarily to recognise and strengthen self-determination of women's human rights in relation to leadership. For young women to be able to identify and acknowledge their prejudices and privileges, it is important to understand social issues with a feminist and gender analysis to effectively influence transformative change.

Leadership reflects in numerous actions and is not necessarily limited to parliamentary leadership roles. To become an effective and influential leader, a young woman needs to be provided with opportunities, encouragement and empowerment as a girl child. Employing such measures, builds confidence in girls at very early ages to raise concerns, embrace self-autonomy, challenge gender roles and determine her own leadership journey. Empowerment leads to a self-assured girl child who becomes a self-assured young woman.

Photo: FWRM

Leadership empowerment for young women

By Vika Kalokalo

YOUNG women from diverse backgrounds are under-represented at all levels of decision-making and leadership roles in Fiji outside the political arena. This is the reality at home, village and community levels.

Young women often lack the initiative, courage and confidence to take up leadership roles or to have a say at any level of decision-making.

For young women without a voice, the Fiji Women's Rights Movement(FWRM) through the Fiji Young Women's Forum (FYWF) program, generates awareness of human rights. The forum targets young women between the ages of 18 and 35 years.

Fiji Young Women's Forum has successfully co-convened national forums which allow young women of diverse backgrounds a safe space and refuge to share their personal experiences.

The forum serves as a place where their voices are heard regardless of their sexuality, ethnicity, faith, abilities and other limitations they encounter in their struggle to move forward.

We raised some of the barriers to exercising our rights in urban, rural and maritime areas. It would mostly be older women and men engage in family meetings, community and public discussions.

Stepping out of our comfort zone is not easy because we have to overcome social and cultural barriers that limit our rights.

Knowing very little about leadership roles, politics, access to services and rights at decision-making levels, makes young women vulnerable and left out.

Fiji Young Women's Forum is convened by young women for young women to empower each other.

Young women use the Fiji Young Women's Forum for capacity-building, political leadership training, gender violence and leadership roles. The forum's outreach program uses the media to target grassroots communities by documenting stories of young women free from all forms of discrimination and stereotypes.

With the support of co-conveners, allies and support networks, such efforts have strengthened young women's participation in the Fiji Young Women's Forum. It has also groomed diverse young women of grassroots communities to be great leaders of today.

Gender Gap and Political Empowerment

from page 1

Empowerment sub index, which is reflected in the ranking, moving up 31 spots from 136 in 2014, to 105 in 2017. The narrowed gap in 2017 is a reflection of the 16 per cent women in parliament with four women holding ministerial positions. However, it is still a challenging journey for women to achieve political success - whether this translates into real change for Fiji's women remains to be seen. Fiji still scored 0.104 in comparison to the global average of 0.230. An undermining factor in women's political empowerment is the absence of provisions for temporary special measures or reserved seats for women's political participation. As stated in the GGGR, "progress in the economic and political worlds has been proven to be self-reinforcing, so interventions such as quotas – which have been demonstrated to have wider positive effects – offer insight into how the gap could be closed further in future".

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

The increase of women in national decision-making augurs well for women's influence, voice and agency, if female legislators perform well and shape laws and policies that actually improve women's lives. They have not been tested yet, and we await the outcome of the impact of a greater number of women in the national legislature to see whether it makes a difference for gender equality in Fiji.

Notwithstanding the relative improvements, the gender gap is in decision-making and is still considerable at 16 per cent, and women should aspire to the suggested global quota of 30 per cent of the legislature in the next election. Temporary special measures in the form of electoral quotas for women should be seriously considered as a means of narrowing the gender gap in national decision-making.

*Note that Fiji did not participate in the 2016 Global Gender Gap Report.

Photo: FWRM

Girls' lead- a rallying cry

By Maryann Lockington

EMPOWERING girls to lead can spark greater progress towards positive social change.

In reality, girls' are not encouraged to express themselves. Instead, the perception of girls' is tied to gender-roles and they are often expected to sit quietly and speak only when spoken to. This leaves them more vulnerable in society and exacerbates the different forms of discrimination and violence they face.

Sexual violence against girls is prevalent in Fiji. In a recent research, it was revealed that 59 percent of victims/survivors of rape in 2016 were children. (Balancing the Scales: Improving Fijian Women's Access to Justice, 2017) It's also troubling that a significant number of the perpetrators were known to the victim, as a partner, parent, member of the family or relative. Over half of the sexual offence cases referred by the Fiji Police Force to the Medical Services Pacific in 2015 and 2016, found that the perpetrator was known to the victim/survivor before the incident as a friend, boyfriend or acquaintance. (Balancing the Scales: Improving Fijian Women's Access to Justice, 2017)

There is still a lack of awareness on girls' issues and continued stigma when talking about girls' rights. According to Save the Children Fiji's 2016 Child Rights Situational Analysis Report, children between the ages of 12 to 17 felt keenly that they lacked parental support and were inhibited from voicing their issues or asserting their rights. The report highlighted that attitudinal change was a factor and a disproportionately heavy emphasis was placed on cultural and socially constructed norms relating to sexual and reproductive health, responsible parenting, corporal punishment (including sexual and physical abuse) and the value of education.

It's important to recognize the role of women and girls in tackling violence and the discrimination they face. This has been an essential part of the work of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) to promote intergenerational women's leadership. Girls know and understand the issues they face. This came out clearly in FWRM's Grow Inspire Relate Lead Succeed (GIRLS), a 3-year program targeting girls between the ages of 10 to 17. The program promotes girls leadership through innovative methods including sports, theatre and arts. Drawing from their own experiences, the GIRLS have continued to challenge the 'culture of silence' by raising awareness on the types of discriminations they face. The GIRLS reiterate that in working towards solutions that are in the best interests of the child, the child must be heard.

In November 2018, the GIRLS put together a theatre performance titled "Angel's Gift." The talented cast of GIRLS between the ages of 10 to 11 shattered expectations and stereotypes by weaving together a story that was embedded with heavy themes of domestic violence, bullying and racism. They provided a snapshot of GIRLS lives, how they perceive these issues and the way it affects them. For many in the audience, it was an alarming realization of GIRLS reality and the issues they were exposed to.

On International Women's Day, the GIRLS hosted a poetry night in partnership with the young women's network, Emerging Leaders Forum Alumni (ELFA). The event celebrated an intergenerational theme and included girls, young women and ageing women. Again, standing before an audience of over 200 people, the GIRLS used the spotlight to address issues of bullying, gender stereotypes and fat shaming. Whether it was through poetry, theatre arts or sports, the GIRLS utilized every platform and space to share their views. The GIRLS expressions and re-telling of their experiences demonstrated a meaningful understanding of the issues they face, unique from how adults or older people would perceive it.

There have been several documented stories from the GIRLS programmes on the participants continuing their advocacy in other spaces. Three of the GIRLS aged 10, who were victims of bullying in school reached out to the programmes counselor to report their matters. This was taken up with their respective school management and the bullying was addressed. A wider awareness campaign was carried out within the school communities. Three GIRLS graduates (aged 17) encouraged their peers to share personal fat shaming experiences and co-led their school film production as part of a nation wide film competition. The school film showcased the need for teenage girls to have a sense of bodily integrity and agency and that fat shaming is harmful to girls. A 14-year-old GIRLS graduate went against gender stereotypes and norms to pursue a subject she was passionate about. She is the only girl in the entire school to enroll in Technical Drawing, an otherwise male-dominated subject. Some GIRLS have joined other child-led initiatives and clubs, to promote children's rights and as peer educators on issues of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

When GIRLS are aware of their capacity to inform and affect change, they are able to contribute towards building a better environment at home, school and church. They're also aware of their rights and are able to speak up and act when they are being threatened or abused. The GIRLS were empowered to speak truth and were able to take the lead in tackling issues that were important for them. For GIRLS, GIRLS Lead is not just a slogan, it's a rallying cry to support and respect their rights.

Photo: FWRM

To'oto'oali'I Roger Stanley

A TRIBUTE

THE passing of beloved LBTIQ activist Sooalo To'oto'oali'i Roshni Roger Stanley was a reminder of the relationships fostered through the passion for advocacy in human rights.

A fervent and tireless advocate for human rights, Roger's death met with an influx of condolence messages from the world over for someone who, as a fa'afafine, had touched the hearts of more people than he ever knew.

Mama Roger, as she was fondly known, was president of the Samoa Fa'afafine Association Incorporated since its launch in 2006.

Under Roger's leadership, the SFA pushed for the recognition of the validity and rights of the fa'afafine community. She also strongly advocated for the recognition of a third gender in the island country.

In an interview with Outright Active International, Roger identified with the struggles of the Association as he outlined his experiences as a fa'afafine growing up in an island community.

"Being a fa'afafine is at times both a blessing and a challenge. A blessing in the sense that fa'afafine play fundamental roles of service within the family, church, [and] village unit. Fa'afafine play a significant role in the rearing and raising of children, caretaking responsibilities for the elderly and disabled. Many of our fa'afafine do well in education and employment and thus provide financial sustenance to families and the many obligations attributed to being a Samoan."

"However, these are the same relationships which prove challenging at times. Although we lead the choirs, organise the decorations for the church and so on, it is the same church that tells us that the way we live our lives is wrong. This then gives way to those who may look at us with contempt and suspicion, justification for the maltreatment fa'afafine."

Anna Chernyshova, program manager for the Multi-Country Western Pacific Programme acknowledged Roger's contributions in the fight against discrimination and the stigmatisation of fa'afafine in Samoa. Ms Chernyshova credited Mama Roger for the advocacy and networking on issues the fa'afafine community faced not only in Samoa, but with the LGBTIQ community in the Pacific and, on a global context.

"Roger was a nationally and regionally recognised champion for human rights and fa'afafine and fa'atamaloa empowerment. She was a pioneer in articulating the links between human rights, exploitation of fa'afafines in Samoa and the Pacific, and the health, wellbeing and security of the LGBTIQ community. A fearless queen who never gave up on making a mark for SFA in national development, and who managed to engage the Honourable Prime Minister of Samoa as the Patron for their community organisation."

FWRM had opportunities to work with Roger as he (the gender is still confusing as some places it is written she while some places it is written he. If that can be corrected I believe it should be she). was a part of recent programs such as the Pacific CSO Organising Mechanism held in early 2017 and the 13th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women and Ministers in October of the same year.

Tributes that have been made for Roger is testament of her influence, charisma and passion for the cause she believed in.

Members of the Asia Pacific Transgender Network also posted a message on the SFA Facebook page sympathising with the passing of a great leader in the Pacific transgender movement.

She was an inspiration and such a powerful member of our communities. Roger was a visionary and her dedication to the pursuit of rights of her community is admirable and will long be remembered. Our thoughts are with you and the Samoa fa'afafine and fa'afatama communities during this difficult time.

As befitting for a queen and for her advocacy, her funeral was also an "inclusive space" and witnessed government ministers, including the Samoan Prime Minister, friends, family and LGBTIQ advocates from around the region line up to pay their respects to a life well lived and much loved.

REMEMBERING *Archana Mani*

ARCHANA Mani was synonymous with the work of Lifeline Fiji. Her life revolved around her work, right up to the time of her death.

Under her leadership as executive director for Lifeline Fiji, the organisation has become a go-to support system for an average of about 7000 callers each year.

Ms Mani's death, on March 4 this year, dealt a big blow to staff members who worked for her and looked up to her leadership.

"This (Lifeline Fiji) was her vision – to have the crisis line, the centre where people can anonymously call in to be stabilised and move forward," said Timaima Rokotagane, officer in charge at Lifeline Fiji.

Ms Rokotagane worked directly with Ms Mani from 2014, after Lifeline Ba was forced to shut down operations.

She recalls the late Ms Mani's determination for the cause.

"The strength she had to try to fulfil the dream motivated us. She would use all mediums at her disposal to champion the cause and move it forward," Ms Rokotagane said.

Ms Mani was popular and respected amongst her peers. She had a firm-handed way of pushing her workers into taking responsibilities above their own individual workloads.

"'I walk on eggshells every day', as Archana would just call and say, 'You're needed at a talkback show in 30 minutes', and I would be terrified not knowing what to say. And all she would say was for me to just talk. She was that kind of woman. She saw the potential in her staff and just threw us into the deep end knowing we'd be able to handle it," Ms Rokotagane said.

Crisis support officer Akisi Adilawasa said Ms Mani encouraged the staff to be courageous as she threw them work she believed they could do.

"She was very proud of her staff and protected us. We were like one big happy family here," Ms Adilawasa said.

She said Ms Mani was strong-willed, loud, protective and scolded them like it was nobody's business.

The colleagues reminisced about their much-loved "biscuit and tea days" in the kitchen with Ms Mani.

"We'd laugh at the top of our voices as if we had thousands (of dollars) in the bank. She'd invite everyone to tea. She knew how to bond with us and how to get us moving," Ms Rokotagane recalls.

She said the close relationships between Ms Mani and the staff enabled each of them to be forthright with each other.

"It got to the stage where I felt I could ask her for anything," Ms Rokotagane said.

Archana's passing was a wake-up call for the staff who felt her death was another one of her trademark moves to throw them out to the wolves.

While her passing is met with grief and loss, the staff of Lifeline Fiji are determined to continue her legacy of hard work with enthusiasm and dedication, said Ms Rokotagane.

"After her death, we regrouped and realised that she had left us with what we needed to carry on. It was a sense of grief, of loss, but at the same time it rejuvenated our determination and confidence. It was always there in us, what she saw was always there," Ms Rokotagane said.

"I remember she would always tell me,'"Timaima, do not come to me with just your problems. Bring your solutions as well'. The way she ran Lifeline, she always encouraged us to step out of our comfort zones, and I guess she's saying the same thing this time, and again giving us the chance to be the best we can be."

Ms Mani was an inspiration to women leaders in the country and impacted countless people through her work. She will not be forgotten. May she rest in love.

The tributes are by the Fiji Women's Rights Movement

About us

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural non-governmental organisation committed to removing discrimination against women through institutional reforms and attitudinal changes.

By means of core programmes and innovative approaches, FWRM practices and promotes feminism, democracy, good governance and human rights. We strive to empower, unite and provide leadership opportunities for women in Fiji, especially for emerging young leaders in Fiji, indigenous and locally-born women. The FWRM vision is for the women of Fiji to be free from all forms of discrimination, have equal access to opportunities and to live in a healthy environment where the principles of feminism, democracy, good governance, multiculturalism and human rights prevail.

Join us

YES! I want to support the Fiji Women's Rights Movement

ANNUAL FEE:

Waged - $10 • Organisation - $30

Non-waged/Student - $5

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From the Editor's desk

Hi everyone,

Thank you for taking time out to read this issue of Balance! We'd like to acknowledge all our readers, new and old, as well as all those that have contributed to making this issue possible.

As mentioned in the Director's Desk segment, Balance is now a bi-annual publication, focused on highlighting different thematic women's issues. Our next issue will be released in November and will fall under the theme of, "Women's Economic Empowerment." This corresponds well with our ongoing Gender Equality Campaign. As part of the campaign, we produced television and radio adverts that are being broadcast nation-wide, highlighting key areas such as women in leadership; women in unpaid household care work and women in sports. For more information on this campaign, please visit our website events page. (http://www.fwrm.org.fj/news/events/gender-equality-campaign).

Balance has been an essential mouthpiece for FWRM to highlight important issues and we welcome guest contributors to share their perspectives and analysis.

As we continue to find ways to strengthen Balance, we always look forward to feedback from our readers to gather some thoughts. Please send us your queries or feedback at info@fwrm.org.fj

Please look forward to our next issue.

In solidarity,
Maryann Lockington
Communications Officer

Feminfocus

Check it out!

Gender Equality Advertisement Campaign

To raise awareness on issues of continued prevalence of violence and discrimination women face today, FWRM is carrying out a Gender Equality Campaign focusing on four key areas including; women in leadership, women and unpaid household work, women in sports and women in employment. A series of #GenderEquality advertisements on these issues have and will be broadcasted on national television and radio. We hope that this campaign can help engage a wider range of discussions on the everyday inequalities women face in today's society particularly in reference to key gender issues.

Women and leadership

Women and unpaid work

Women and sports

The gender equality television spots are available on FWRM's Facebook page and Youtube Channel (https://www.youtube.com/FijiWomensRightsMovement1986) To send us feedback on the gender equality campaign, please email maryann@fwrm.org.fj

Coming Up!

Access to Justice Campaign…..

By the Fiji Womens Rights Movement through the Balancing the Scales: Improving Fijian Women's Access to Justice project funded by the European Union