FIJI WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT
Balance
"HELPING TO BALANCE THE SCALES"
September, 2022

Hundreds of Women Gather at 2022 *If Women Stop*, concert to call out gender injustice

The women danced. They protested. And they called out gender discrimination.

"If women stop, the world stops! If women stop, the world stops!" The words echoed loud, clear and bold through Suva's Fiji Museum verandah where more than 200 women and girls of all diversities attended the annual" If Women Stop, the World Stops" concert. Organised by FWRM, the concert marked this year's International Women's Day, a day dedicated to the recognition of women's contributions to our communities.

The concert was a show of solidarity among local women's organisations and partners amid music, dance and call for actions against gender discrimination and inequalities by women representatives from different organisations that FWRM works with.

Women demanded the recognition of unpaid care work undertaken in their households, addressing the lack of women in decision-making spaces, the high rates of violence against women and girls, and calling out patriarchal values that underlie all gender injustices.

The concert was held under beautiful weather in Suva and deemed a major success with a record number of participants attending. FWRM attributes this to the amazing partnership from sister organisations that have continuously supported the event since 2021.

Entertainment for the event was led by the Vude Queen Laisa Vulakoro and the Vude Vibes who were joined by the likes of Georgina Ledua, Etta Gonerogo, Talei Draunibaka, Harsha Hasmeetal, Paulini Bautani, Tom Mawi, the Band Boys, Sunia Soko Loga and Justin Hicks.

(Left to right) FWRM Board Chair, Makereta Waqavonovono, board member Imrana Jalal, Gina Houng-Lee, Priscilla Singh and FWRM Executive Director Nalini Singh at the Women's Global Strike concert. Photo: FWRM

By Serelisoni Moceica

FWRM acknowledges Laisa who has been instrumental in organising female artists to participate at the concert with support from their male counterparts.

While the event kicked off without hiccups, the organising in the lead-up to the programme was riddled with challenges.

Another challenge faced was the Suva City Council's refusal to allow the use of SCC properties as a concert venue. Thus the team was grateful to have been availed the Fiji Museum venue on short notice.

FWRM is grateful for the support and the solidarity displayed by our feminist partners whose representatives showed up on the day to join the event.

> "If women stop, the world stops!"

The theme of the concert "If Women Stop, the World Stops" calls on women in every corner of the world to stop or slow down their formal or care work and come together to demand women's human rights.

The concert was first held in 2020 at Suva's Sukuna Park as our solidarity strike action after FWRM and other organisations across the globe joined the If Women Stop, the World Stops - Women's Global Strike campaign in 2019 which was initiated by the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD).

The IWD 2022 If Women Stop, the World Stops concert was supported by the We Rise Coalition and UN Women's Pacific Partnership Programme.

From the Executive Director's desk

Greetings to our friends and avid followers of the work of FWRM!

A lot has happened this year and post lockdowns and travel restrictions after the COVID-19 pandemic, FWRM was ready to slowly transition back into normal hours, working from the office and travels for work.

We were grateful for so many things as we witnessed the impact of the pandemic on the thousands of jobless Fijians after the international and national lockdowns. We were grateful for our health despite having a few of the staff contract COVID during the lockdown. We were grateful for our families, the support systems that enabled us to undertake the enormous amount of work during the pandemic. We were grateful for our jobs, against the backdrop of thousands of Fijians having lost their source of livelihoods in the aftermath of COVID-19. Such was the notion the FWRM team had at the beginning of the year and as the work year progressed, we regained some sense of normalcy in the development of our work.

Thus, the progression of publishing this edition of Balance, put together with the over-arching theme of "I, Us, We: The Power of Coming Together', highlighting the strength and the power of solidarity of different networks of women and what we can achieve together. This Balance aims to promote and increase awareness around movement building, solidarity actions and overcoming the challenges faced by women and girls through feminist organizing.

For International Women's Day this year, two major events were organised – the first one by the FWRM GIRLS (Grow.Inspire.Relate.Lead.Succeed) Programme who led their own event at the Fiji Museum Verandah in Suva. More than 40 diverse girls between the ages of 10-17 including Deaf girls participated and led the day's programme with the theme 'Brown Girl Rocking Feminism'. Parents and guardians were also in the space and witnessed their girls taking centre stage with creative dance, art, spoken word and pop quizzes as the highlights of the occasion. The participants were able to debunk myths around gender stereotypes and gender roles while learning about gender equality and work feminists around this.

The FWRM team also organised the 3rd If Women Stop, the World Stops concert at the Fiji Museum verandah. The concert, a major event for us held annually with the overall aim of honoring unpaid care work and allowing women the platform on the day to speak about the issues they face, was the largest gathering of women after the restrictions were lifted and also the largest recorded since the inception of the concert in 2020. Over 200 women registered their attendance of the event and showed up in support. The women danced and sang with entertainment led by veteran Laisa Vulakoro and the Vude Vibes, Georgina Ledua, Talei Draunibaka, Etta Gonerogo, Harsha Hasmeetal, Paulini Bautani, Tom Mawi, the Band Boys, Sunia Soko Loga, Justin Hicks and other popular local musicians. FWRM is grateful for Laisa who has been a constant since the concert began a few years ago. She has been an immense support to us during the organizing of entertainers for the concerts and goes out of her way to gather musicians who come to play for the women on IWD. The concert was a testament to the power and solidarity of women coming together to celebrate themselves and to call for action to address the challenges and barriers they faced in their communities.

Before IWD, members of the eighth cohort of the Emerging Leaders Forum graduated in the western division. It was the first time the programme was de-centralised and implemented outside of the central division and we are immensely proud of the fourteen young women who received their certificates towards the end of January. These young women now automatically join the hundreds of young women who are now part of the ELF Alumnae. The new graduates went on to lead a post -graduation activity sharing the lessons learnt and knowledge shared during the ELF 8 journey to the people of Koroipita. Self- care kits and diaries were also distributed during the activity. Members of the ELF Alumnae go on to become advocates of human and women's rights in the country and internationally as well.

The GIRLS Programme also successfully organised the 2nd GIRLS Forum this year in April where fifty diverse girls between the ages of 6 and 17 years old participated. The four-day forum was a space for girls to interact with speakers on topics such as leadership, girl-centered advocacy, self-sufficiency and young women in entrepreneurship. Members of the GIRLS Programme.

Solidarity in feminism is urgent and important in order to advance gender equality, especially in a country where patriarchal ideologies are the norm and women and girls' voices are not often heard and their issues not addressed. 'I, Us and We: The Power of Coming Together' highlights the power of collaboration to effect positive change.

On this note, FWRM acknowledges the Governance Board and our Trustees for the never ending support of our work. It is also my pleasure to announce that a new Trustee was appointed during our Annual General Meeting at the beginning of the year. Florence Fenton now joins Neelesh Gounder and Helen Tavola as our third Trustee.

We are also grateful to work with funding agencies and donors who enable the facilitation of activities, the organizing of events and the overall continuation of the work and the overall vision of the organisation in helping to eliminate discrimination and inequalities against all women and girls. There's more to come!

Happy Reading!

In solidarity,
Nalini Singh.

Plaintiffs with lawyer Jon Apted and supporters outside the courthouse. Photo: FWRM

Power of Movements: Constitutional challenge to electoral laws

By Bernice Lata and Shivana Singh

In the year 2021, Fiji saw its very first constitutional redress action filed by women as a special group claiming restricted political participation, rights to privacy and discrimination on the grounds of marital status, contrary to the Fijian constitution.

The case sought to challenge recent changes in electoral laws. The women plaintiffs, namely, Lavinia Ganilau, Shiromani Singh, Adi Toganivalu, Elizabeth Fong, Leba Nabou, Yasmin Khan and Salote Qalo are from diverse backgrounds, ranging from a former government minister to politicians, unionists, retired civil servants and a homemaker. This lawsuit showed solidarity in the feminist movement whereby this courageous act of taking the initiative to file legal action on behalf of hundreds of Fijian women impacted in their daily lived realities due to changes in law. The action was filed against the State.

FWRM together with the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre provided support to the litigation team by assisting with research and administrative support. From compiling affidavits to ensuring there was adequate space for the public to observe court proceedings, FWRM was at the forefront of ensuring all logistics were handled well. The case has garnered nationwide interest and debate over voter suppression and women's rights and laws which, although may seem non-discriminatory in its application, results in discrimination against married women. FWRM saw it necessary and highly critical to be part of such work especially since Fiji is a state party to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and therefore must be held accountable to upholding international commitments.

This was yet another example of how FWRM continues to advocate against discriminatory laws/policies which seek to undermine the full and equal participation of women in national processes such as elections. By utilising the formal justice system, FWRM hopes to ensure that access to justice by women from all walks of life is attainable. The law is used to create protections for women, and FWRM will continue to move the wheels of change to attain a better Fiji for all women and girls.

While we await the outcome of the case - a first for Fiji - the determination and perseverance of FWRM will be remembered for decades to come as this is also a milestone achievement in our herstory.

Court hears challenge to voter name change requirements

Submissions are underway in the Suva High Court for a constitutional redress filed by seven women challenging amendments to the Registration of Voters Act and the Interpretation Act.

The applicants are Lavinia Ganilau, Shiromani Singh, Meade Fong, Semi Nabou, Yasmin Nisha Khan, Adi Davila Toganivalu and Salote Waikole Qalo.

They told the court that their right to vote, and those of other women have been restricted until and unless they make the choice on what name they want to use.

NOTE

On September 22, 2021 Parliament passed the Electoral Registration of Voters Amendment Bill that requires Fijians to use the names stated in their birth certificate and no other aliases. The Bill became an Act of Parliament and was fast-tracked under Standing Order 51. Under the new laws, Fijians who wish to use their married or adopted names for these purposes must formally change their names on their birth certificates in order to do so. The women believe that the new laws have a disproportionate, adverse impact upon married women compared to other groups.

GIRLS lead 2nd GIRLS Forum

Members of the Grow.Inspire.Relate.Lead.Suceed (GIRLS) Programme led and organised the 2nd GIRLS Forum that was held in April. Photo: FWRM

By Emeli Anise

In light of movement building, 50 diverse hearing and Deaf girls convened the 2nd GIRLS Forum with the theme "Girls Lead" from the 5th – 8th of April, 2022. The forum was hosted by the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) Grow. Inspire. Relate. Lead. Succeed - GIRLS Programme led by girls for girls. Building from the virtual Inaugural Girls Forum held a year ago, this year's Girls Forum was the first time for like- minded adolescent girls to physically convene and deliberate their priority issues over four-days.

While opening the forum, FWRM's Executive Director Nalini Singh highlighted the importance of girls' voices in the ongoing policy advocacy work the organisation is heavily involved in.

"The work you do here goes beyond these walls and with persistent advocacy by the FWRM team and you all, we can influence laws or policies that government make," said Ms Singh.

More specifically, the 2nd Girls Forum was the first time, Deaf girls were present in the space where not only were they participants but part of the Girls Forum working group who designed and co-facilitated the space.

"We are happy to be part of an inclusive setting like this. zWe don't have this opportunity often and we're just happy to be part of the space where we can build on our confidence, allowing for us to be bold and speak up on issues we want highlighted." – Mariana and Lusi, Deaf Girl participants of the forum said.

Integrally, the space allowed for girls form diverse socio-economic backgrounds to listen, express themselves and stand in solidarity of Fijian girls' human rights. Participants interacted with speakers on topics such as leadership, girl-centered advocacy, self-sufficiency and young women in entrepreneurship.

Moreover, feedback from participants included the need to have such spaces.

"I am happy I came here to speak about the issues I have been struggling with. I was able to share these in the space (GIRLS Forum). I know this is the right space to bring it up as I know the forum declaration will highlight this and hopefully a positive change comes out of it," said Emily, another forum participant.

While there have been strides to strengthen national feminist networks of young women and older women, there is a need to begin this work with girls. Taking on this lifecycle approach have proven to shed light on existing challenges that lie in women and girls' intersectional realities. There is a need to transform both formal and informal structures with gender responsive approaches. This forum is a means of this collective voice that is aimed at influencing these structures.

A 2nd GIRLS Forum Declaration has been drafted focussing on ending violence against girls, access to education and the importance of girls' issues around sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

Encouraging Young Women's participation in leadership spaces through the Fiji Young Women's Forum

By Mamta Chand and Timaima Qereqeretabua

Fijian young women, due to their intersectionalties, face multiple forms of discrimination within the existing patriarchal systems.

The gender roles and stereotype continue to be an interference in accessing and exercising their women's human rights, creating additional barriers to young women's participation in leadership in their homes, communities and at the national level. The lack of opportunities links directly with young women not being aware of their women human rights and other issues such as gender equality, feminism, leadership etc.

As the secretariat, FWRM manages the Fiji Young Women's Forum (FYWF) programme to strengthen and increase diverse young women's political participation at all levels, targeting young women between the ages of 18-35. In 2014, the My Guide to Voting booklet was conceptualised as a direct response to addressing the lack of voter and electoral information accessed by FYWF and their networks.

This process was a direct result of the responses and feedback from the diverse young women representatives who came together at FYWF's two consecutive meetings in 2013-2014 to discuss strategic lobbying mechanisms for advancing young women's participation in the democratisation process. The first step towards achieving this was to empower young women to engage in their civic right to active citizenship.

The Fiji Young Women's Forum is led by young women for young women and according to our internal reports compiled over the years, has brought together approximately 28 young women in 2013 from 8th-10th November, 24 young women from 14th-16th March 2014, 50 young women from 27th-29th November 2014, 50 diverse young w xomen from 27-31 August – 01 September 2017 and 20 young women from February 23 – February 25, 2018. Around 120 young women leaders and activists aged 18 – 35 years from Fiji discussed barriers and strategies to young women's meaningful participation and representation in Fiji's democratization process in 2014 and 2018 national elections and beyond in the 5 forums.

The FYWF is co-convened by the House of Colours, Emerging Leaders Forum Alumni (ELFA), and femLINKpacific. The co-conveners recognised the need to maintain the FYWF as a unique 'young women-

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Members of the Fiji Young Women's Forum with representatives from the Fijian Elections Office at the central divisional dialogue that took place on May 6th and 7th early this year. Photo: FWRM

The central divisional dialogue was organised by the Fiji Young Women's Forum in May this year. Photo: FWRM

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led space' that fosters strength through leadership, sisterhood and solidarity. The FYWF is a safe, inclusive and collective space for all young women and participants including transwomen, young women with disabilities, young women of both religious and non-religious beliefs, young lesbian, bisexual, transgender (LBT) and intersex women, aspiring young women politicians, young women sex workers, rural young women, young women mental health consumers and other young women in all their diversities. Participants represent their young women networks and are actively engaged in the democratisation process and various advocacy efforts that serve to highlight young women's concerns.

Furthermore, the FYWF strengthened intergenerational leadership by co-convening the National Convention with FWF in 2017. This provided an exceptional opportunity for young women to participate directly with government ministries but also continue the exchange learnings with women who have contributed outstandingly to political platforms in Fiji. The FYWF has hosted five national forums with approximately 194 young women with the fifth forum being decentralised to the Northern Division in Labasa. This was extremely significant for the young women leaders in the North because of the lack of opportunities for such forums.

Young women leaders remain strongly committed to respecting autonomy and dignity of all the co-conveners and their core values, collaboration and recognise the need to collectively amplify the call for compliance with human rights treaties and conventions, fostering unity and solidarity to advance the resolutions of the FYWF in the various spaces and meetings. Through good governance with transparency and accountability of internal processes, the young women leaders are ensuring the sustainability of the FYWF. And to further strengthen and build on to the feminist movement, FYWF is fostering a deeper understanding and use of intergeneration dialogue and collaboration. FYWF firmly believes in diverse representation of young women in all their intersectionalties between the ages of 18-35 to strengthen Fijian young women leader's voices for an effective, powerful and meaningful visibility at all levels in the socio-economic process.

FYWF represents young women with disabilities, young women who are single mothers, mothers, women from different ethnic backgrounds, young women in de-facto relationships, young women living with and affected by HIV, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and Intersex (LGBTQI), young women of both religious and non-religious beliefs, aspiring young women politicians/leaders in their communities (provincial/youth groups), young women sex workers, rural young women, young women mental health consumers and young women in all their other diversities.

Programme Officer Mamta Chand at the central divisional dialogue with the Fiji Young Women's Forum. Photo: FWRM

1 http://www.fwrm.org.fj/programmes/young-women-in-leadership

2 http://www.fwrm.org.fj/programmes/intergenerational-womens-leadership/fiji-young-women-s-forum

Diversity, Inclusion, engagement, and movement (DIEM) strategy brings a new perspective to the Pacific Feminist Forum (PFF) approach

By **Shayal Nand**

At the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) we work towards capturing as many women's and girls' voices as possible. Many of us identify as Feminists and the word Feminist continues to be highlighted and voiced - Working closely with feminist organizations around Fiji and regionally building partnerships and relationships to support and fight for women and girl's rights.

FWRM is part of the We Rise Coalition which consists of seven feminist organisations from around the region that implement We Rise 3, the overall goal of the coalition is to develop, demonstrate and strengthen feminist coalitions and partnerships in order to grow and uphold inclusive governance, equality, diversity, justice and women's human rights. We rise has also adopted the DIEM strategy and is working towards a more diverse, inclusive, and empowered approach with the work that is being done.

Women and girls face many difficulties when trying to voice themselves, it becomes extremely difficult to tag one's self a "feminist" if negative ideas are focused on the term. The DIEM strategy maps out how through We Rise 3 we can strengthen a movement of fearless oceanic pacific feminists and feminist organisations woven together with strategic resistance, and acting together on a common agenda of change under We Rise. The strategy revealed that 7 out of 10 self-indicated feminists from the Oceanic Pacific indicated that the feminist movement is concentrated in Fiji only and 15 out of 20 women's organisations refrain from identifying as a feminist organisation or from using the word feminist in their own countries.

"Pacific women's representation and voice has always been key to our work and it's been incredible to see the We Rise Coalition grow to seven diverse NGOs from across the region. We're honoured to be part of such a ground-breaking collective, where we are bringing together our strengths and resources and building a collective voice to effectively advocate and address women's human rights issues in the Pacific,"

- FWRM Executive Director Nalini Singh.

An interesting way the strategy has been approached is through the Pacific Feminist Forum (PFF). The forum is organized through the 3rd PFF Working Group with the Secretariat hosted at Fiji Women's Rights Movement and is set to happen this year. Convenings take place every two to three years with the last convening taking place in 2019 . The Pacific Feminist Forum is a regional gathering for the feminist movement in the area to unite and promote the development of regional movement strategy. The Forum brings together a varied group of women to exchange ideas, recognize successes, and plan joint initiatives to advance women's human rights. The Strategy highlights the issue of feminists around the blue pacific and how they are unable to relate. The forum has had several meetings to address the issue, shifting from the perspective of only bringing the members to the forum for discussions to moving forward to a different outlook and having discussions, building relationships within their own communities, and looking at issues they face as a feminist organisation before they attend the forum. This executes a form of groundwork in their respective countries and helps them develop an outcome statement for the forum dialogues.

The We rise Coalition in 2021 welcomed new partners Brown Girl Woke from Samoa, Talitha Project from Tonga, Sista from Vanuatu, and Voice for Change from Papua New Guinea join femLINK Pacific, the Fiji's Women's Rights Movement in the Coalition, and the International Women's Development Agency (IWDA).

New partners - Voice for Change (PNG), Brown Girl Woke (Samoa) Talitha Projects (Tonga) and Sista (Vanuatu) were welcomed by the We Rise Coalition last year. Photo: FWRM

Women Belong in all Spaces: The Fiji Womens Forum (FWF) on strengthening existing relationships

By Shayal Nand

"Women belong in all places where decisions are being made....it shouldn't be that women are the exception" – Ruth Bader Ginsburg

Fijian women's representation is lacking in all spheres of leadership spaces. The under-representation is directly linked to many of the challenges that women face, including the struggles with conflict and democratization. The Fiji Women's Forum believes that the full representation of women at all levels is a fundamental ingredient in the prevention of the resurgence of violence and the long-term sustainability of peace and democracy. Women's participation is key from the local to the national level and must be supported with an inclusive and creative information and communication system. By amplifying women's knowledge and voices, a shift from reaction to prevention is possible.

The Forum's co-conveners had its 8th Annual strengthening retreat in February this year. The FWF is co-convened by Soqosoqo VakaMarama lTaukei (SSV), Fiji Womens Rights Movement (FWRM) and femLINK Pacific with FWRM serving as the facilitator and secretariat. FWRM as the secretariat takes the lead role in organizing all activities and events for the Forum and also produces the various reports for the co-conveners for distribution to their membership, affiliates, and network.

The first day of the retreat saw the signing of a renewed terms of reference by the three organizations, pledging a new commitment for the next two years. The second day's discussion focused on organizing activities related to the upcoming general election. The discussions and group work by the nine participants on both the days was a successful one as the objectives of signing the new TOR and plotting the elections activities for the forum was achieved by the end of the retreat.

Ensuring women's active engagement is paramount! Women are not a homogeneous group. Depending on whether women are young or older, educated or uneducated, live in rural or urban areas, they have very different life experiences that lead to different priorities and needs. Hence, the Fiji Women's Forum aspires to support women's civil society organizations to work collectively for sustainable and participatory democracy and development in Fiji, in line with commitments under regional and international sustainable development and human rights instruments . They continue to recognise and reaffirm women's diverse perspectives, and experiences.

The Co-conveners signed the TOR at the annual strengthening retreat in Suva (21 & 22 February 2022). Source: femLink

The Fiji Women's Forum believes in active participation of women in leadership spaces and regularly holds workshops for Women in Politics for knowledge and information sharing. Photo: FWRM

The Fiji Women's Forum was formed in 2012 and brought together diverse women's groups with the shared aim of increasing women's participation in leadership. Women's groups put aside their differences to work towards increasing women's participation in the political sphere, specifically targeting the then Fiji national elections held in September 2014.

Personal is Political

The writer believes that despite the right to gender identity and expression in the Bill of Rights, there is blatant disregard to the broader spectrum of gender identity and expression, denying us our existence particularly as transwomen. Photo: FWRM

By Shivana Singh

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In this reflective piece, I would like to share my account of transphobic discrimination through misgendering by an insurance provider, how that impacted my sense of self, the measures taken by the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) to ensure that my concerns are taken seriously and the action that was taken by the provider to ensure my rights and dignity were respected.

In the past decade, I have been known for pushing gender boundaries in terms of my advocacy and representation work to improve the lives of trans and gay people in the face of discrimination in Fiji and internationally. Having facilitated community input into the submissions to the Attorney General's Office for the 2013 Constitution of the Republic of Fiji to include Gender Identity and Expression in the Bill of Rights with specific focus on Legal Recognition of persons of transgender experience , it has been a constant battle feeling like a lone activist challenging the existing systems. The fact remains that despite the right to gender identity and expression being implemented within the Bill of Rights, our system continues to pay blatant disregard to the broader spectrum of gender identity and expression, denying us our existence particularly as transwomen, and denying our right to self-identity, expression and equal citizenry.

For definitions sake, misgendering a person is regarded the highest form of discrimination and equates to emotional violence. It is as simple as referring to a transwoman as "he", calling her a "guy" or using "Mr" for her honorific. In a nutshell misgendering is referring to transgender, non-binary, or gender non-conforming persons using pronouns or terms that does not align with their affirmed gender and can be done intentionally

For definitions sake, misgendering a person is regarded the highest form of discrimination and equates to emotional violence.

1 Details of the conference presentation can be found in "Advancing the Human Rights and Inclusion of LGBTI People: A Handbook for Parliamentarians" (Page 35).

2 The Republic of Fiji Islands Constitution 1997: Bill of Rights Section 26 - Right to equality and freedom (Page 24).

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or unintentionally. It is considered emotional violence as it could be hurtful and demeaning for such individuals who face multiple layers of discrimination and stigma. This even means that service providers such as hospitals, government offices, and corporate organisations have forms that do not offer broader honorifics to allow for diversity and inclusion based on respective identities.

To provide context, here's an example. After gaining employment with FWRM, I was eligible for medical cover under the staff insurance scheme. Every time, I received communication from the provider, for example a remittance advice, they would refer to me as "Mr ". I found this not only disrespectful but embarrassing and I became distraught. As a result, I raised my concerns directly with the provider but was informed that they could not change the title as they processed according to the birth certificate which according to them stated that my "gender" (not biological sex) was male and that their system required them to enter a "Title" to every name they entered and in my case, that is exactly what they did. I went on further to request if "Mx" (a gender-neutral title) could be used instead.

Having brought this to the attention of our Executive Director, the Management Team intervened immediately and came to my rescue. Through ongoing communication, FWRM was able to convince the provider that they could accommodate my request in ensuring that they didn't discriminate against anyone and expressed its disappointment that a large insurance company in the Pacific was engaging indiscriminatory practices, demanding the issue be immediately addressed so that the right of their staff is respected. The provider did come back stating in their communication that they had made adjustments to their systems and sent their apologies for the inconveniences they had caused.

Being part of the consultative process in ensuring the inclusion of freedom from discrimination based on gender identity in our Constitution, this was the first time I was able to rely on section 26 to demand equitable treatment, free from discrimination, which is guaranteed under the Constitution for my protection. The success of this case is truly attributed to FWRM and this has yet again proved that transfeminism does have a very important place in the traditional feminist movement who view their liberation to be intrinsically linked to the liberation of all women and beyond.

FWRM, by significantly advocating for this change on my behalf by convincing the insurance provider has strongly paved the way for many others like me to live a life free from discrimination and intimidation by the system.

Shivana Singh is a Human Rights Training Officer at FWRM. She is an activist and educator who has been involved with the LGBTQI+ movement for over a decade. Photo: FWRM

Women's Global Strike

If WOMEN
stop,
the WORLD
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Agar AURAT
log ruki,

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jaai.

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tab DUNIYA ruk
jaai.

Thank you!

FWRM takes this time to acknowledge sister organisations and partners for the show of solidarity and support after joining us on International Women's Day If Women Stop, the World Stops concert. We also thank members of the public who attended the programme and enjoyed the entertainment and listened to the voices of women and girls who used the platform to voice out demands on issues faced. FWRM thanks all those that took the stand to share with us their experiences on the day and demand urgency on actions to take.

We are also grateful to those who could not be there on the day but sent in their messages of solidarity.

Hundreds showed up for the concert signifying the power of feminist solidarity and collaboration.

''I, Us, We: The Power of Coming Together', the overall theme of this newsletter was witnessed during the event which would not have been successful without our sister organisations, partners, friends and followers of FWRM.

Our Acknowledgement to the following:

Fiji Women's Crisis Centre
femLINKpacific
Soqosoqo Vaka Marama I Taukei – Viti
Fiji Disabled People's Federation
Rainbow Pride Foundation
Fiji Deaf Association
Fiji Museum
Ginger Cafe
House of Colours
Solo Moms Project
Naitasiri Women in Dairy
Shifting the Power Coalition
Emerging Leaders Forum Association
Pacific Sexual and Gender Diversity Network
Women in Maritime Association
Citizens Constitutional Forum
National Union of Factory and Commercial Workers

Last but not least we also acknowledge Laisa Vulakoro and the Vude Vibes, Georgina Ledua, Etta Gonerogo, Talei Draunibaka, Harsha Hasmeetal, Paulini Bautani, Tom Mawi, the Band Boys, Sunia Soko Loga, Justin Hicks and all the other musicians who provided music and entertainment for the day.

STAFF TRANSITIONS & APPOINTMENTS

Laisa Bulatale

LAISA BULATALE: TEAM LEADER - GENDER AND TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE PROGRAMME

Laisa takes up her new role as the Team Leader for the Gender and Transitional Justice (GTJ) Programme. Prior to this, she held the position of Research Officer. Laisa holds a Professional Diploma in Legal Practice (PDLP) 2017, Bachelor of Laws (LLB) 2017 - University of the South Pacific and Diploma in Music - Fiji National University.

Shayal Nand

SHAYAL NAND: RESEARCH OFFICER

Shayal has taken up a new role as Research Officer. She had been working with FWRM as a legal intern for the Gender and Transitional Justice team (GTJ). She has also taken up the role of relieving Legal Rights Officer. She is a graduate of the University of the South Pacific where she completed her Bachelor of Laws and Professional Diploma in Legal Practice (PDLP) in 2019.

Timaima Qeretabua

TIMAIMA QEREQERETABUA: WOMEN'S FORUM COORDINATOR

Tima has worked in various sectors and most recently at the Fiji Bureau of Statistics. She now looks after the Fiji Young Women's Forum and the Fiji Women's Forum.

Lillian Delana

LILLIAN DELANA: 3RD PACIFIC FEMINIST FORUM- PROGRAMME OFFICER

Lillian Delana is no stranger to FWRM. She is a Pacific feminist and previously worked with Fiji Women's Rights Movement representing FWRM at various spaces from national, regional and international spaces. After leaving FWRM she worked as an independent consultant in gender and development. Additionally, Lillian is a certified yoga instructor.

Lusiana Cauca

LUSIANA CAUCAU: 3RD PACIFIC FEMINIST FORUM - PROGRAMME SUPPORT OFFICER

Lusi is a graduate of the Emerging Leaders Forum Programme 2007. She graduated from the University of the South Pacific in 2016 with a Bachelor of Laws (LLB) and later graduated with a Professional Diploma in Legal Practice (PDLP) in 2017. She looks forward to working with regional feminist organisations in her new role.

TRIBUTES

Asela Naio Naisara (Mama Ashy)

The passing of founder and co-ordinator of the Mama Ashy Projects Asela Naio Naisara (Mama Ashy) last year was a sad loss to the FWRM family.

She was a strong advocate for women's rights and gender equality. Mama Ashy, as she was fondly known, was greatly admired for her leadership and community work especially in assisting families during difficult times. FWRM is privileged to have worked with her on many occasions.

Her passion and dedication to her work is an inspiration to us all and she will surely be missed.

Rest in power and with all our love Mama Ashy.

Matelita Seva Cadravula

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement was saddened by the news of the passing of Reproductive & Family Health Association of Fiji - RFHAF Executive Director Matelita Seva Cadravula last year. A strong ally, admired for her advocacy and work around women and girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights, Matelita's passion for her work was an inspiration to us and the programmes that she was often a part of where she shared her knowledge and experience in SRHR.

She was one of the speakers during the 8th cohort of the Emerging Leaders Forum Programme Module 8 Training on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights last year. She was also spoke during the 7th cohort of the previous ELF programme in 2020.

Matelita brought with her a wealth of knowledge with her sessions being very interactive and informative.

Rest in power and with all our love Matelita.

Susana Evening:

The passing of Susana Evening in April brought great sadness. She was a strong and admired leader, and a mentor known for her extensive advocacy work on gender equality and women's empowerment.

Rest in power and with all our love Susana.

Rest in power

About us

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement is a multi'ethnic and multi-cultural non-governmental organisation committed to removing discrimination against women through institutional reforms and attitudinal changes. By means of core programmes and innovative approaches, FWRM practices and promotes feminism, democracy, good governance, and human rights. We strive to empower, unite and provide leadership opportunities for women in Fiji, especially for emerging young leaders in Fiji, indigenous and locally-born women. The FWRM vision is for the women of Fiji to be free from all forms of discrimination, have equal access to opportunities and to live in a healthy environment where the principles of feminism, democracy, good governance, multiculturalism and human rights prevail.

Join us

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

ANNUAL FEE:

Waged - $10 Organisation - $30

Non-waged/Student - $5

Name: _____

Address: _____

Ph: _____

Email: _____

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This publication is supported by the Australian Government through the We Rise Coalition.

From the Editor's Desk

Cola vina everyone!

Thank you very much for talking your time to read this issue of the Balance!

On behalf of the Balance Committee, I take this time to acknowledge followers and avid readers of the newsletter and those who follow our work.

Also a big thank you to everyone who contributed towards the publication and helped us produce the August issue.

The newsletter is now produced after every six months and each publication aligns to a common theme for content. This issue's theme is I, Us, We – The Power of Coming Together and reflects the power of solidarity in movement building amongst advocates of women's human rights. The newsletter contains articles of FWRM work, tributes and even personal reflections. The articles are chosen related to the theme and authors

The publication and distribution of the Balance newsletters featuring well researched human rights and feminist articles increase awareness around issues that directly affect basic gender and human rights.

I also would like to thank the Balance Committee for the teamwork and working around their own schedules to have this issue published. Your contribution to the process is much appreciated and I look forward to working with the next Committee for the production of the next issue.

The Committee welcomes any feedback from the FWRM networks especially our membership, towards the improvement of the publication or even for upcoming themes.

Until the next issue and in solidarity,

Serelisoni Moceica
Communications Officer

BALANCE TEAM

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Serelisoni Moceica

Communications Support Officer:
Mere Satakala

Executive Director:
Nalini Singh

Balance Committee
Kalisito Biaukula
Timaima Qereqeretabua
Shayal Nand

Feminfocus

- The 3rd Pacific Feminist Forum is happening this year in hybrid modality.

As a build up to the PFF, 16 countries will organise their own national forums before coming together for the regional event later this year.

The forum is being organised by the Working Group which includes femLINKpacific Sista Pacific Disability Forum Talitha Project, Tonga Brown Girl Woke VoiceforChange, Kiribati Association of Non-Governmental Organisation - KANGO, We Rise Coalition and the Fiji Women's Rights Movement.

- Catch the gender equality advertisements produced by FWRM currently running on our national television and radio channels. The advertisements focus on three thematic areas of Women in Leadership, Women in Sports and Women and Unpaid Care Work.

We hope to create conversations on issues faced by women and the importance of the inclusion of more women in various spaces in the lead up to the national elections.

- The ''Prevalence and Impact of Sexual Harassment on Female Journalists: A Fiji Case Study'' research was launched earlier this year in partnership with the University of the South Pacific Journalism Programme.

This research is a follow-up to two groundbreaking FWRM studies in 2002 and 2016 into the incidences and nature of sexual harassment of women in the workplace in Fiji's four major economic hubs in the country — Suva, Nadi, Lautoka and Labasa. ze research is available on the FWRM website.