



FIJI WOMEN'S CRISIS CENTRE

NEWSLETTER

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COSTLY VIOLENCE

Fiji simply cannot afford these costs: Qetaki

The health cost of violence against women is too costly and Fiji "simply cannot afford it" said Chairman of the Fiji Law Reform Commission Alipate Qetaki during the launching of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence.

Chairing the panel discussion to mark the launch at the Holiday Inn, Mr Qetaki said even though the total cost is \$300 million, the hidden costs of violence against women cannot be measured.

Mr Qetaki said the Fiji Law Reform Commission is currently reviewing the domestic violence legislation, which is expected to be passed on to senate as soon as the amended clauses are in place.

Former medical superintendent at the Colonial War Memorial Hospital and a Fiji Media Council member, Dr Mary Schramm said the lack of interest in gender awareness by media bosses could be blamed for the increase in violence against women.

"Whenever we sit together at the media council and the gender topic comes up, they will all want the topic to be changed," she said. She said the media is an important forum for public awareness and therefore gender issues, like any other should be given priority.

President of the Soqosoqo Vakamarama in Fiji, Adi Mei Kainona, recommended that the family unit be looked at more carefully. She said government needs to thoroughly address the issue of domestic violence more often within the family.

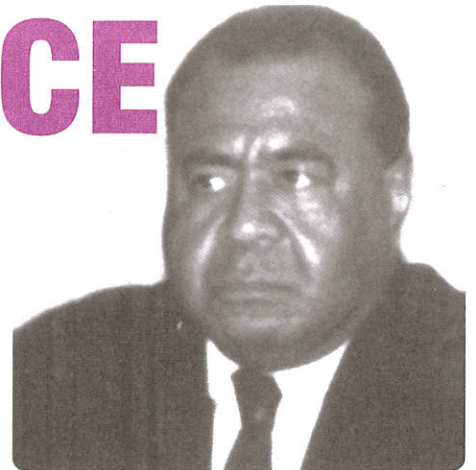
Fiji Women's Crisis Centre

NADI CENTRE

The Nadi Women's Crisis Centre (formerly Lautoka Women's Crisis Centre) is now located at 84 Sagayam Road, Nadi. Their new phone/fax number is: 6707 558. The operating hours are from Monday - Friday: 9am to 3pm. Office is closed on Saturdays.

Coordinator Shamima Ali said the root cause of the problem is the patriarchal culture that still exists within our society. "Men are always seen as being "macho" or as leaders and we really should rid ourselves of these kinds of attitudes now.

"If we learn to respect women and practice gender equality then we would be getting rid of the problem of violence against women," she said.



Qetaki... reviewing laws

Sex offences top police agenda

DOMESTIC violence and Sexual Offences will be two of the police forces four top priorities this year said Police Commissioner Andrew Hughes during his visit to the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre in November.

Reacting to comments made by FWCC counsellors regarding the mistreatment of clients as well as counsellors by some police officers, Mr. Hughes said the general insensitivity and delaying tactics is a cultural problem that exists within the police force.

"But we have a new generation of police officers who are educated that are coming up," he said.

He reiterated that the "No Drop Policy" has been clarified to all the stations Fiji wide but unfortunately some officers are still not aware of what needs to be done.

"We will just have to clarify it over and over again until it is very clear to all." Mr. Hughes said the problem within the force could be attributed to the lack of women in senior management positions.

"I am currently looking at ways of encouraging women to apply and try and get to this top level positions," he said. He said having women in top positions is a way of "fast tracking and breaking down the male dominated 'macho culture'".

Centre coordinator, Shamima Ali said she was happy to note that the two issues will be of top priority to police next year.

"We have been working together with the police on these issues for a while and such statements made by the commissioner himself is very reassuring," she said.

"Though things have improved vastly within the Police Force regarding crimes of violence against women and children, still a lot needs to be done," she said.

Ms. Ali commended the police commissioner for visiting the centre and said his presence was a sign that the police force is taking a serious stand on issues relating to women and children's human rights.



Women should be treated with respect... explains FWCC counsellor Yishu Lal to Police Commissioner Andrew Hughes. Also listening is counsellor Salote Malo

Extreme violence

Emotional and sexual abuse, and marital rape cases up at FWCC in December

The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre has seen an increase in extreme cases of domestic violence in December. Coordinator Shamima Ali said clients coming to the Centre have complained of severe emotional and sexual abuse and marital rape and some have come to seek legal advice from the Centre.

"From the beginning of December, from 1 to 19 the Centre has had 43 new cases of domestic violence and 46 cases where women sought counselling for "other" issues such as divorce, maintenance, custody, husband/partners committing adultery and needing shelter. Of these 46 cases 54 percent



Violence is not the solution explains FWCC coordinator Shamima Ali during the Ba Men's Advocacy Training

have had a history of abuse," Ms Ali said. "Counsellors are seeing more clients who are coming to the Centre because they are being emotionally and sexually abused by their husband/partners," she said.

Ms Ali said this is a normal trend around the festive season, but this year the number has slightly increased. The Nadi, Ba and Labasa Centres also received similar complaints from their clients.

Ba Women's Crisis Centres Project Officer, Farida Khan said most clients complained about men not contributing money towards the family unit.

"Most of the clients are not working and in December they know for sure that their husbands were getting back pay but they never saw contributed to the family needs and the women and children suffer a lot because of this," she said.

FWCC advises anyone needing help either victim or perpetrator to please call our 24-hour line 3313 300.

What we need to address violence

Health Minister Solomoni Naivalu said to ensure that violence against women is addressed at all levels in the health sector, Fiji needs to:

- Recognise and address the various forms of violence against women and the hidden consequences and costs.
- Appropriate policies are in place within the health system to ensure that victims of gender violence are dealt with effectively and appropriately.
- Medical personnel to be trained to deal with symptoms and to recognise the phenomenon of VAW and its effects on women's reproductive health.
- Data collection systems within the Ministry of Health to ensure that the levels of violence being reported around the country at every hospital and health centre is documented.
- Reproductive health programs throughout the country, in particular in rural areas and smaller communities need to ensure confidentiality (in particular where STI's and HIV/AIDS are concerned) and have elements of empowering women, to encourage their participation.
- Reproductive health programs for women need to address the status accorded to women in our society, in particular where gender violence is concerned.
- Programs such as the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre mobile counselling which is conducted in partnership with the Ministry of Health need to be encouraged.
- Reproductive health programs for men need to have a gender dimension to encourage a change in behavior.
- Education and awareness at all levels of society - community-based and at institutional level.

Violence affects economy

Violence against women decreases the contribution of women who are already in the workforce to the economy said Fiji's Health Minister, Solomoni Naivalu while launching the 16 Days of Activism Campaign.

"Furthermore, violence and the threat of violence discourage women from even entering the workforce and becoming economically active," Mr Naivalu said.

He grouped the types of costs of violence against women into three categories which are:

- 1) Direct costs - This cost linked to sick days, lower productivity, medical treatment, cost of police work and welfare.
- 2) Indirect costs - This cost is related to the family, community and society.
- 3) Opportunity cost - The cost is for money spent on violence against women that could be better spent on other



worthwhile development projects. The minister added that men's violence against women is deeply rooted in our society and as a nation it must be addressed. "It is a health concern more so now than ever before given the risk to women of possible contracting STI's and HIV/AIDS."

He said it was time to collectively address violence against women as a development issue, for it keeps women, who make up fifty percent of Fiji's population, "discriminated against and not enjoying their God-given divine rights".

Media dismisses gender topic

Gender issues are often dismissed and the media needs to focus more on the issue if the community at large is to fully understand the issue said former Medical Superintendent Dr Mary Schramm.

Speaking at the panel discussion during the launch of the 16 Days Campaign Dr Schramm said the basic understanding of gender issues can help eliminate violence against women.

"The public believe what they read and



hear from the media so it is an excellent forum to create awareness in terms of gender equality," she said.

Dr. Schramm believes that it was up to every media boss to take the first step.

"When we have meetings there will be about two of us willing to expand more on the issue but we will be quickly ignored which shows that they are not interested in pursuing the topic any further," she said.

Calendar of Crimes

NOVEMBER 2003

• 5 - A man who allegedly hacked his wife with a cane-knife was discharged by the Suva Magistrates Court after the couple stated they had reconciled.

• 6 - The Suva Magistrates Court yesterday sentenced a 29-year old man of Nasinu man for indecently annoying and threatening to rape a 21 year old woman and throwing stones at her mother.

• 9 - A 46-year-old woman is in hospital

with severe injuries after she was knifed by her jilted lover at the Labasa Market.

• 12 - An unemployed man of Jittu Estate pleaded guilty before Magistrate Aminiasi Katonivualiku for assaulting his wife for the second time.

• 15 - A 15-year-old girl is one month pregnant after being repeatedly defiled on separate occasions by seven men on Nairai Island.

• 15 - Suresh Jeet, a taxi driver was thrown

Spousal murder cases on the rise

THERE have been six murder cases involving spouses with their partners over alleged love affairs in Lautoka over the past two months. And the most recent case of this nature occurred on Thursday in Simla, where a husband used shoelace and a shoelace cord to strangle his wife until she died. The man had accused his wife of having extra-marital affairs. Earlier in June, there were two cases of death which were undertaken by a jealous husband.

Life for wife murderer

SHANKARAN GOPAL was jailed for life yesterday after he admitted murdering his wife about four weeks ago. Shankaran, 46, was found guilty of murdering his wife, Mrs. Devi, in the Lautoka High Court. The judge, Justice John Byrnes, said that Shankaran had a history of violence against his wife. He also admitted to having an affair with another woman. Shankaran was sentenced to life in prison after pleading guilty to the murder of his wife. The judge said that Shankaran's actions were premeditated and that he was a danger to his wife and the community. Shankaran was also sentenced to pay costs of \$10,000. He was released on bail by the High Court to await trial. Shankaran was in custody after killing his wife but later released on bail by the High Court to await trial. He pleaded guilty yesterday. Suresh Jeet from the Lautoka High Court reviewed the case. Justice Byrnes imposed a mandatory sentence of imprisonment.

back in prison for life after a failed second attempt to clear himself of a charge of the murder of Roshni Lata in 1998. The facts of the case state that the 27-year-old taxi driver of Samabula murdered Lata by strangling her to death on June 2 five years ago in Suva.

DECEMBER

• 2 - A man appeared in the Suva Magistrates Court for allegedly stabbing a woman in a night club.

Freedom of expression

To build a better nation
Children's voices to be heard
Their ideas and information be respected
With proper monitoring by the state and parents

Freedom of expression is a constitutional right of every human being
Regardless of race, religion, color or creed
We should love, respect and listen to our kids
So the future leadership and wealth of Fiji is guaranteed.

- Manju Lata
- Sofia Begum
- Ilisapeki Maria
- Reshmi Singh
- Teresia Raqitawa
- Sera Bogitini
- Losana McGowan



(Fiji Women's Crisis Centre)

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I am very excited to know that issues such as rape and domestic violence have been addressed in our homeland.

For many of our generation, this was a silent abuse that was not to be spoken about let alone be punished.

If we do not address these issues as women, then our daughters and granddaughters for generations to come will not be able to live, as they should.

Keep up the good work!

Seini Otu Gucake Donald
Australia

Training opens eyes

Members of the community must work together to eliminate all forms of violence against women were the words of the nine men that attended the Regional Training Program in October.

The training also proved to be an eye opener for those that attended. Not only was the group one of the biggest the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre ever hosted but

also the region was well represented with seven participants from different sectors of Papua New Guinea, a Police woman from the Solomon Islands and four women from Vanuatu.

At the end of training, all men vowed to go back and help other men understand issues relating to women's human rights. Below are a few responses from the Fiji participants.

WHY DO YOU THINK GENDER EQUALITY IS IMPORTANT FOR FIJI?

Dipeeka Devi Ministry for Women

Gender equality will lead to non-discrimination and development. Women are as important as men towards the development of any nation. Gender equality will lead to peace in the homes, in the communities and most of all in our nation as a whole. Women's roles will be more recognized rather than being kept hidden and unaccounted for. It's about time our societies recognize the importance of gender equality.



Jone Rauvi Fiji Military Forces

Each person is supposed to be entitled to his or her own right and not to be deprived of it. If everybody in Fiji is gender sensitive we would be able to live together in a spirit of harmony without any trouble at all. Fiji definitely needs to be gender sensitive if we are to move forward in terms of development. We are all living in a modern world and are governed by all kinds of laws which most do not follow.



WPC Laniana Mudunavosa Fiji Police Force

In the police force where I work, I think we should be treated equally because we have the same level of training and academic qualifications as men. Even some women have higher qualification than men and go through the same training but

when we are sent back to our various stations, it seems that women are given office works than dealing with the real thing. If Fiji is to develop in every sense all stakeholders need to recognize the importance of gender equality.

Preeti Singh Ministry for Women

If everybody practices gender equality all people in every community will benefit. We will move away from the cycle of poverty that is engulfing our country. Women should not only be doing the same work as many men but they should be paid equal amount of money. When women are being treated unfairly in the workplace they leave their jobs and stay home. In this case not only is she losing out but also the company and the productivity as a whole.



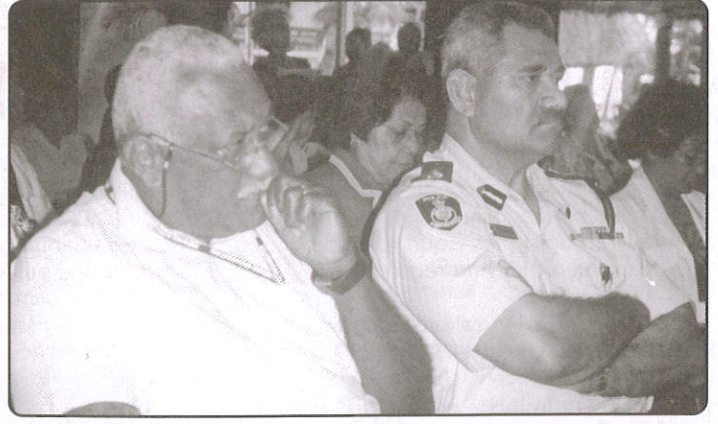
Cprl Soroepeli Soqe Fiji Police Force

If we want a good nation than the government of the day has to realize the importance of gender equality. Men cannot do things alone for e.g you cannot light a fire without a piece of wood. But to have a good fire you need more pieces of wood. So to have a good family men have to treat and respect their partners like the way they want to be treated. Likewise it applies to the work place. If bosses do not discriminate women, the workplace will be a healthy and very productive one.





Kindergarten students of Vunimono Islamia school during their annual prize giving ceremony where FWCC coordinator Shamima Ali was invited as chief guest to speak on "Parenting Roles" and "Child Abuse"



Colonel Ratu George Kadavulevu of the Fiji Military Forces and Assistant Commissioner of Police Operations Kevueli Bulamainivalu at the "Women in Armed Conflict" Public Forum that was organised by FWCC



Boitaci villagers during Vanua Balavu community outreach



Nadelei Women's Group discuss Domestic Violence



Rinieta Ratawa of Labasa Women's Crisis Centre discussing a 'myth' of DV with participants during the workshop in Kovosi, Navatu Cakaudrove



Turaga ni koro in Waitabu (Lakeba) village during a workshop



Participants at a discussion in Kasavu village, Cakaudrove



Sera Bogitini observing some of the participants during group discussion at the Police Training Centre - Namara, Labasa