



# FIJI WOMEN'S CRISIS CENTRE

## NEWSLETTER

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# Domestic violence - a rights issue

**D**OMESTIC violence is an international problem that is thriving locally, a menace that signifies the growing lack of fundamental respect for each other, among other things. That was the essence of the message delivered by Walter Rigamoto, Chair of Fiji's Human Rights Commission and Ombudsman, at the launch of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence on 25 November 2004.

Calling for solidarity in efforts to minimise, if not eliminate, gender violence, Mr. Rigamoto said "the realisation of women's rights is a global struggle based on universal human rights and the rule of law."

In this regard, he said the global trend is to involve men through such programmes as the FWCC-sponsored Male Advocacy Training workshop, which aims to educate men to be more aware of issues that affect women, be a positive influence on their peers when it comes to gender issues and to advocate for women's human rights.

"It has been shown through statistics that in almost all cases, women are the victims and men are the perpetrators, therefore men and boys from an early age need to know what domestic violence is about and most importantly, that it is wrong and unacceptable," said Mr. Rigamoto.

He stated the public have become increasingly aware of the problem of



**"We must work together to promote equal rights and human dignity for women...It requires all of us to unite in solidarity to end traditions, practices and laws that harm women" - Walter Rigamoto, Human Rights Commissioner and Ombudsman**

domestic violence and other gender-based violence and their social impact, due largely to the work of feminist organisations such as FWCC and through such programmes as the 16 Days of Activism.

"Violence against women here in Fiji and within the Pacific region is compounded by the traditional practices of Pacific island cultures, and is linked to the unequal relationship between men and women. It is

also a crime that unfortunately goes largely unreported," he said.

The 2003 national police crime report showed that gender-based crimes such as murder, attempted murder, manslaughter, common assault, assault occasioning actual bodily harm, acting with intent to cause grievous bodily harm exceeded the 900 mark in the year 2000.

"The 2003 figures indicate there is an average of more than 2 cases being reported daily. If one is to include the estimated unreported cases, the statistics would no doubt be alarming for a small country such as ours," said Mr. Rigamoto.

He said Fiji is taking the lead in the Pacific region by taking steps to comply with UN convention to combat gender violence. The Fiji Law Reform Commission (FLRC) is currently reviewing current laws and legislation that deal with gender related violence. The FLRC is also expected to come up with recommendations on how to proceed with this issue.

The Fiji Human Rights Commission is another independent body empowered under the country's constitution to protect and promote the rights of all men, women and children in Fiji and to investigate any allegations of unfair treatment, unfair discrimination and any other violations of human rights.

# FWCC contributes to reform of laws

**T**WO of FWCC's senior counsellors, Salote Malo and Yishu Lal, were invited by the Fiji Law Reform Commission (FLRC) to be part of a seven-member team that toured the country soliciting the public on their views on laws dealing with gender violence.

Due to their work experience in the area of domestic violence, they were asked to be interpreters during the two-week consultation trip in October 2004. The trip took them all over Fiji to areas such as Tailevu, Nadi, Lautoka, Ba, Rakiraki, Labasa, Savusavu, Taveuni, Levuka and Kadavu.

FWCC felt it was very important that its representatives should be proactive members of the FLRC team rather than just making submissions.

Ms. Malo noted the majority of the submissions



\* turn to page 3 Edwina, Salote and Yishu presenting FWCC submissions at a Domestic Violence Law Review hearing



# 16 Days of Activism

THE comprehensive 16 Days of Activism programme for Fiji got off to an early start on Monday 22 November with a briefing for members of the local media about activities planned for the 2004 campaign. It was also an occasion for FWCC staff members to sit down to an informal morning tea with local journalists.

Two days before the launch, FWCC Coordinator Shamima Ali, and Deputy Coordinator, Edwina Kotoisuva, conducted seminars with about 100 police recruits at the Fiji Police Academy in Nasese. Issues discussed with these trainee law enforcers included gender awareness. While the two half-day sessions were part of the overall 16 Day programme, they also contributed to the overall police recruitment course curriculum.

The 16 Day programme was officially launched on Thursday 25 November by Mr. Walter Rigamoto—Chair of the Fiji Human Rights Commission and Ombudsman, who addressed the issue of domestic violence from the human rights perspective.

Other speakers included Ms. Virisila Buadromo, Coordinator of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM), who discussed the issue of sexual assault and the current law reform process affecting this issue. A representative from the office of the Director of Public Prosecution (DPP) spoke at length on the recent decision by the Fiji Court of Appeal to remove the law of corroboration from regulations governing rape cases.

Ms. Vuki Qionibaravi from the Fiji Law Reform Commission gave an update on the review process of domestic violence laws. Speaking on behalf of FWCC, Ms. Edwina Kotoisuva gave an overview on the prevalence, cause and effect of domestic violence in Fiji. Each presentation was followed by discussions.

The 16 Day programme was disseminated throughout Fiji. Most workshops, focussing on domestic violence and women's legal rights were conducted in rural areas in Ba, Rewa, Tailevu, Tavua and around Vanua Levu.

A media campaign also ran parallel to activities undertaken during this time. These included paid advertisements on television for the duration of the campaign and later for another two weeks to the first weekend in January 2005. The advertisements were aired during peak viewing hours - early evening soap series, late night news segments and on Sunday afternoons. The Fiji Broadcasting Corporation Limited also ran advertisements in its vernacular stations (Fijian and Hindi).

# Calendar of Crimes

## November 2004

- 1 - A 32-year-old Rakiraki father jailed for nine years for incest with his 13-year-old daughter (*Daily Post*)

- 1 - Seaqaqa man in police custody charged with the murder of his wife (*Fiji Times*)

- 3 - Temo Vuli, 32, of Namuka-i-Lau sentenced to 18 months in prison for defiling a 15-year-old girl. (*Fiji Times*)

- 3 - Epeli Sadravata, 19, of Kese village, Yasawa jailed for 15 months for defiling a 12-year-old girl (*Fiji Sun*)

- 4 - A 34-year-old school teacher in police custody for assaulting wife. (*Fiji Times*)

- 5 - Man told by court not to re-offend within 12 months after being found guilty of assaulting his ex-wife (*Fiji Times*)

- 5 - A 64-year-old grandfather of Tavua held in police custody and investigated for the alleged rape of his 10-year-old granddaughter. He has been charged with four counts of rape of the minor (*Fiji Sun*)

- 15 - Lakeba-based police dispatched a team to Kabara, southern Lau group, to investigate the rape of a 14-year-old girl by a group of five men (*Fiji Sun*)

- 15 - A 24-year-old farm hand will appear in the Labasa Court for allegedly defiling his 14-year-old niece. (*Fiji Sun*)

- 16 - An 18-year-old man of Wainibuku, Nasinu appeared in court for indecently assaulting two women on separate occasions (*Fiji Sun*)

- 19 - Head teacher charged with two counts of indecent practices with two students. (*Fiji Times*)

- 20 - Man sentenced to 10 years in prison for raping his wife. (*Fiji Sun*)

- 24 - A 19-year-old man appeared in court for the alleged rape of a 5-year-old girl over the weekend (*Fiji Sun*)

- 26 - High school teacher charged with the defilement of three of his students (*Fiji Sun*)

- 28 - A Nadroga high school teacher refused bail by Lautoka Court and is in police custody for the alleged murder of his wife, also a school teacher (*Fiji Times*)

- 29 - Petero Korodua, 34 of Tokotoko in Navua fined \$70 for assaulting a woman (*Fiji Sun*)

- 29 - A man, recently released from prison for the 1970 murder of his daughter, re-appeared in court for the rape of his 15-year-old daughter (*Fiji Sun*)

- 29 - A 58-year-old man appeared in the Labasa Court faced with 10 counts of rape of his daughter (*Fiji Times*)

- 30 - Levuka Police hunting for a Phillip Thomas, alleged to have been making

pornographic movies involving school students on the island (*Daily Post*)

## December 2004

- 1 - Man handed a 12-month suspended sentence for assaulting his wife (*Daily Post*)

- 2 - Man placed on 2-year good behaviour bond for assaulting wife with hot rod (*Daily Post*)

- 4 - Harish Prasad of Namaka sentenced to 5 years behind bars for breaking into the house of a 51-year-old woman and attempting to rape her. (*Fiji Times*)

- 8 - Ilaitia Tamanikaivalagi, a villager in Taveuni jailed for three years for an attempted rape on a woman on her way to work (*Daily Post*)

- 9 - Parents of a 14-year-old girl questioned by police. Father is alleged to have raped the girl while the mother is questioned over the beating of the girl in an attempt to silence the teenager (*Fiji Sun*)

- 16 - Twenty year old Ba man charged over the alleged rape of a 12-year-old girl (*Daily Post*)
- 16 - 22-year-old investigated for allegedly sodomising a 9-year-old boy. (*Fiji Times*)

- 18 - Four men each sentenced to 100 hours of community work for assaulting their wives in separate incidents. Their individual 12-month prison sentence was suspended for 2 years (*Fiji Sun*)

- 18 - 28-year-old man handed a 12-month suspended sentence for assaulting his wife (*Daily Post*)

- 18 - Luke Molikeye, 55, sentenced to four years behind bars for the sexual assault of a 12-year-old girl (*Fiji Sun*)

- 19 - Police investigating a secondary school teacher for the sexual assault of a student (*Fiji Sun*)

- 21 - A 57-year-old man in police custody and charged with ten counts of rape of his 15-year-old daughter (*Daily Post*)

- 21 - A 44-year-old man questioned by police for an alleged incestuous relationship with his 15-year-old daughter (*Fiji Times*)

- 21 - Metuisela Rarawa, 19, handed a 24-month suspended sentence by the Suva Court for indecent attack on two female police officers. (*Daily Post*)

- 22 - Metuisela Ligaselei, 66, of Kinoya given a 12-month suspended sentence for indecently assaulting the modesty of a female by exposing his private parts to a seven-year-old girl (*Daily Post*)

- 24 - Sukhendra Prasad, 47, of Samabula with eight previous convictions denied bail by Justice Nazhat Shameem for the murder of his wife, Mohini Lata (*Daily Post*)

- 30 - Kiniviliame Apisalome Namomo, 34, sentenced by Lautoka Court to 6 months in prison for assaulting his wife (*Daily Post*)

Other abducts woman, heads for pine plantation

## Husband rapes wife

## Teacher in court for attempted rape

...HEAD teacher of a primary school in Lautoka charged with the defilement of three of his students (*Fiji Sun*)

...rape, indecent assault and indecently assaulting the modesty of a female. The accused pleaded not guilty to all the charges and the case has not yet been adjourned to be heard on November 29, 2004 for hearing.

...The court heard that the accused who has been separated from his wife for the past 10 years allegedly visited the offence inside his house at Natabua, Lautoka on March 16 this year. The court heard that the 29-year-old neighbour is married with children. She, upon Wava's request, had gone to his home to do some domestic work and this was when the alleged incident took place. Director of Public Prosecution...

...Navesha Nand reappeared in court with the case as he was ready with his five witnesses but defence counsel Iqbal Khan asked an adjournment. Mr. Khan said he needed more disbursements to do some domestic work and this was fair trial for his client. Magistrate Nakoro adjourned the case for the last time.



# Law Reform

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made by men were of the view that any attempt to provide more rights to women would directly result in an increase in domestic violence. Ironically, she also noted that men who have completed the FWCC-sponsored Male Advocacy Training programme thought otherwise. Three men from Savusavu and Taveuni took a gender sensitive view of domestic violence situations. In their submissions, they said domestic violence and gender crimes have their economic implications and should be considered from that perspective as well.

"They strongly believed that domestic violence is a hindrance to development within any community and that it is a human rights issue," said Ms. Malo.

Ms. Lal said while more women recognised the importance of reuniting families in times of family crisis, the majority were not even sure of the definition of domestic violence much less their legal rights under such circumstances.

She said among issues raised with the FLRC review team is the inadequate police responses to domestic violence complaints and that more female police officers should be assigned to handle these cases.

A representative of a women's group in Nadi requested for the Male Advocacy Training to be conducted in their area and also proposed the establishment of a safe house for victims of domestic violence.

# FWCC visits Rabi

In a first for Rabi, FWCC held a four-day workshop on the island in early December 2004 to discuss such issues as domestic violence, child sexual abuse and women's human rights.

And the lot for the women on the island of Rabi, off the coast of Buca Bay on the northeast of Vanua Levu, is no different from those of rural women in other parts of Fiji.

While Police statistics does not portray the reality for the Banaban women with only four reported cases of gender-based crimes from January to early December last year, participants at the workshop say women have their share of sexual, physical and emotional abuses.

As is the case with most women in other parts of rural Fiji, Rabi women also admit to lack of awareness of their human rights and services to aid them when faced with a crisis, such as government legal help, health and police services.

Through the workshop many women have been able to define sexual harassment, the criminal nature of domestic violence, as well as their responsibility under such circumstances.

In a separate session conducted with a group of 13 teenage Banaban girls, FWCC senior counsellor, Alumita Tuikenatabua informed the young women of their rights to say 'No' to unwelcome sexual advances.

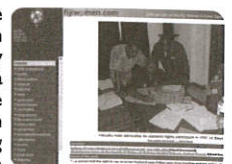


Saying 'No!' to sex is the right of every woman. FWCC Counsellor Alumita Tuikenatabua informed the Rabi girls of their human rights.

Speaking to the group at a recent sports camp in Tabwewa village, Ms. Tuikenatabua told the young women of recent increases in abuse cases of young girls around the country as reported in the media. A majority of these cases occurred in rural areas with close relatives, such as fathers, grandfathers and persons in authority such as school teachers being the main perpetrators.

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Get informed and get involved!

## RABI WOMEN SAY



Arariki Kaake

On the workshop:

"Every woman on the island should attend similar workshop because [most] of us would not know what to do [when faced with domestic violence or an incident of sexual assault]. I think those who are not in attendance have missed out on a lot of information."



Kataake Katauea

On gender awareness:

"I never realise we can change the roles we play at home - men can do women's job and vice versa because these roles are just defined by society and our culture. I hope we can have similar workshops in the future so we can change the way people view their gender role, so we can change [the way the] younger generations [view themselves] so that we can have less problems in societies and in families."



Teena Bureimoa

On whether women's rights is a threat to culture

"It will not change our culture but it will help our community and our families by promoting cooperation and peace. I think men and women should attend this kind of workshop because it will increase their knowledge of [issues such as] domestic violence, child sexual abuse and physical abuse, and how we can stop them."



# Tavua women want to know rights

**W**OMEN in rural western Fiji areas are determined to improve their future through education. Participants at recent gender awareness workshops held in four settlements around Tavua have appealed to the FWCC to hold regular seminars in their neighbourhood for the purpose of educating women and girls on their rights and allowing them access to timely information that would ensure their safety and wellbeing.

Women in the settlements of Bangladesh, Dramasi, Toko and Yasiyasi, outside the town of Tavua, said the visit by a team from the FWCC is the first by any organisation to address them on relevant social issues.

**“By educating women, we are also empowering them to know their rights, which would in turn give them the courage to seek outside help”.**

Yishu Lal, FWCC senior Counsellor, who was also one of the facilitators at the workshops, said it is imperative that issues affecting rural women are acknowledged and addressed. She stated this is vital because most rural women lack formal education and are generally unaware of their



Yishu Lal assists a member of the public at the Domestic Violence Law Review hearing in Labasa

rights, as well as the various resources available to them. She reasoned that rural women are usually the backbones of their families and communities, which serves to underscore the importance of increasing their knowledge through education.

“By educating them, we are also empowering them to know their rights, which would in turn give them the courage to seek outside help from police, Social Welfare Department, government health services and also legal aid from government,” said Ms. Lal.

“These women have the strength and will power but they do not have the

knowledge. However, through activities such as these workshops, we are providing them with added resources and support through education to the extent they are now asking us to visit them every six months or perhaps once a year,” she added.

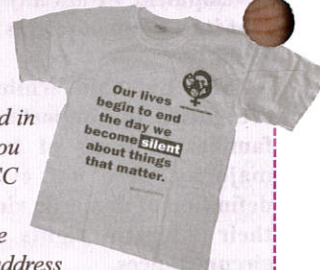
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FWCC t-shirts are available at our Suva office at \$10 each and come in S, M, L and XL sizes.

## COMMUNITY EDUCATION

**T**HE last quarter of 2004 was a busy period for the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC) staff engaging in community education programmes around the country. The outreach programme reached a diverse audience spanning the whole country - from legal workers in a private law firm in Suva, police recruits at the Police Academy to women's groups in rural areas and villages in Viti Levu, Yasawas and Vanua Levu. The table below presents the schedule of activities accomplished through this programme.

### AUGUST

14 - One day workshop on violence against women (VAW) with 12 women from the Deaf Women's Association

23 - Seminar on domestic violence & legal rights with 18 women of the Nari Sabha organisation in Kulukulu, Sigatoka

26, 27 - Two day seminar on gender awareness with employees of a Suva-based legal firm

30, 31 - Class session on gender issues with 20 male and 3 female police officers attending the Sergeant's Training course at the Police Academy

### SEPTEMBER

1-4 - Class session on domestic violence with 17 male and 5 female police recruits at the Nasese Police Academy

9 - Seminar on domestic violence and legal rights with 22 women at Raunitogo, Sigatoka Valley area

7-10 - Three day workshop on domestic

violence, rape, child abuse and the role of FWCC with residents of Kiobo, Nadivakarua and Navatu villages, Bua, Vanua Levu

27-29 - Seminars with residents of Yasawa, Nacula and Naviti islands in the Yasawa group - 105 men and 36 women in total attended the sessions

### OCTOBER

1 - Seminar on Waya, Yasawa: on role of FWCC

14 - Workshop with a women's group in Lami, discussed the role of FWCC, domestic violence, rape and child sexual abuse

15 - Seminar with a Suva youth group - discussed child sexual abuse and self protection

25-29 - Weeklong Male Advocacy Training workshop in Ba

26 - Participation/presentation at the Naitasiri Provincial Council Meeting - discuss the role of FWCC

27-28 - FWCC counsellors accompanied Fiji Law Reform Commission team on consultation tour around the country

27-29 - Seminars with women's groups on Taveuni - Qila Women's Club and Qarawalu Mother's Club - discussed domestic violence and women's legal rights

### NOVEMBER

3 - Conducted seminar with 21 prison officers - talked about role of FWCC and domestic violence

8-19 - Vanuatu Male Advocacy Training workshop: co-facilitated by FWCC and

Vanuatu Women's Centre. Twenty-two (22) officers of the Vanuatu para-military, mobile police, navy and prison officers attended the two-week seminar.

16-17 - Session on gender issues and domestic violence with 38 male and 4 female police officers attending the Corporal qualifying course

18 - Vunimono Vocational School, Nausori seminar - attended by 21 women and girls and 3 men; issues discussed include child abuse and domestic violence

19 - Conducted seminar with a group of Suva women (35) - discussed the issue of child sexual abuse

30 - Workshops at various Indian settlements and Fijian villages in the Ba and Tavua areas - discussed issues such as domestic violence, child sexual abuse and women's legal rights and aid

### DECEMBER

1-3 - Workshops at various Indian settlements around the Tavua area

6-9 - Weeklong workshop on Rabi Island

9 - One day workshop in Noco, Rewa; attended by 80 youths - discussed the role of FWCC, domestic violence and women's human rights

23-24 - Class lecture with 100 police recruits at the Nasese Police Academy - discussed gender issues and domestic violence

29 - Tavualevu Village: introductory session on the role of FWCC, domestic violence and child abuse