



# FIJI WOMEN'S CRISIS CENTRE

## NEWSLETTER

Volume 4, Issue 3

February 2001



FWCC coordinator Shamima Ali meets North farmers' families

### C'wealth group appoints Ali

Fiji Women's Crisis Centre coordinator Shamima Ali has been appointed a member of the Commonwealth Foundation's Civil Society Advisory Committee.

Ali attended the committee's first annual meeting in London this month. Ms Ali is one of two appointees from the Pacific. The other one is from New Zealand.

The committee will assist the Foundation in developing strategic priorities and objectives for its civil society programme, leading up to the fourth Commonwealth NGO/Civil Society Forum in 2003.

The Commonwealth Foundation is an inter-governmental organisation of the Commonwealth.

The advisory committee will serve for three to four years. Committee members are active civil society leaders who are respected within their country, region or profession.

# North families hit hard

## Screen PSV drivers call

The FWCC wants public transport drivers screened.

This follows the rape of two female passengers by taxi drivers in less than a month.

"There is a lot that can be done," said FWCC Coordinator, Shamima Ali. "We can start by making sure drivers have a crime-free record. Police and the Land Transport Authority should have a system to screen drivers."

"There is a heavy reliance on public transport in Fiji," she said. "These attacks raise concern over the safety of passengers."

"Unless the safety standards are addressed, women are going to feel apprehensive about using public transport, and this is a severe restriction of their freedom of movement," said Ali.

Families in the farming communities around Labasa and Dreketi are finding it increasingly hard to make ends meet, says FWCC coordinator Shamima Ali.

This is because of job losses and price increases since the May 19 attempted coup, says Ali, who spent four days recently among these communities.

"Their situation is serious," said Ali.

Families are also finding it extremely difficult to get enough money to send children to school.

"Our children feel very ashamed because we can't pay the fees. Sometimes they say they will kill themselves because of the shame,"

said one woman.

Tragically, such threats are sometimes carried out. Only a week ago a boy killed himself by drinking paraquat because his family couldn't provide his school books.

"A child's schooling may be 'fee-free', but the real costs remain with book fees, building fees, bus fares and the

cost of uniforms, books and stationery. Parents are also expected to participate in fundraising activities for the school.

The financial pressure is made worse by some schools harsh and insensitive practice of sending

children home on the first day if they fail to bring the fees with them.

Meanwhile, women in the same communities are living in constant fear of sexual assault, says Ali.

People in these areas were terrorised following May 19. The physical and emotional scars are still

evident.

One young man's eyesight is failing due to a beat-

ing he received soon after the coup while the children are still traumatised by the terrorism.

"They are afraid to play outside. The little ones keep close to their mothers and they refuse to sleep alone," said Ali.

For the women in these areas, sexual assault is a constant fear. Some women were assaulted during the terrorism but have preferred to remain silent out of shame.

These communities are trying to overcome severe poverty, while at the same time cope with the emotional trauma of the past few months. Assistance and support services are desperately needed.

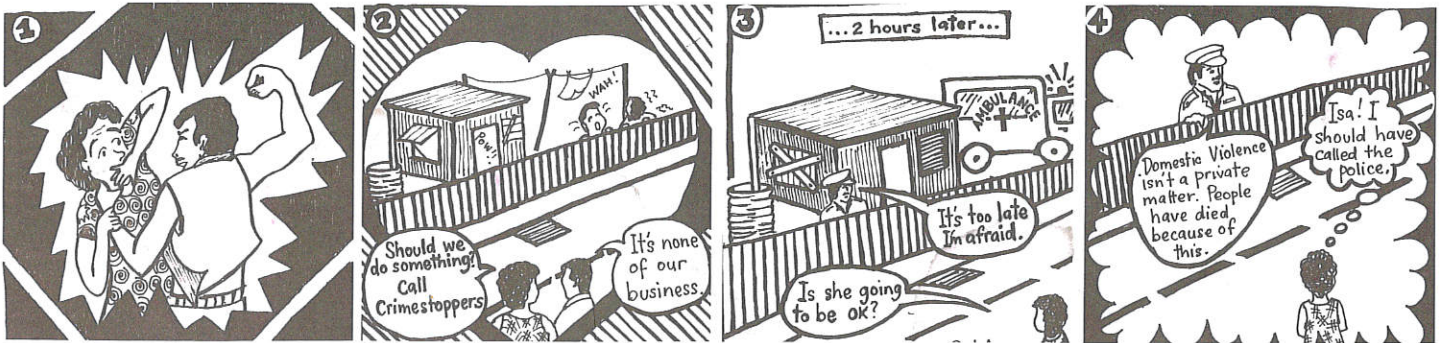
FWCC is assessing the situation in communities such as these so that it can redirect its activities to offer better support, and also to be able to provide development agencies with appropriate information and advice.

Children are afraid to play outside since May 19

# Somebody's Life . . .

You can save a life, call for help immediately  
Don't wait till it's too late

# . . . Everybody's Business



## Find out the Facts about Violence in The Home

**Myth:** Women provoke domestic violence by nagging or other annoying behaviour

**Fact:** There is no excuse for violence and no one deserves to be bashed. We do not blame the victim in other crimes. For example, we do not blame the murder victim for being murdered. And in any case, many women are woken from sleep by being beaten, or are hit from behind with no warning.

**Vakasama lasu:** Era dau laumoku na yalewa baleta na ukecike kei na vorivoti ni nodra i tovo.

**Ka dina:** E sega ni dodonu me yaco na veivakamavoataki. E da sega ni dau beitaki ira ka vakayacori vei ira na cala ena kisi tale eso. Ena kisi ni laba eda sega ni beitaki koya ka labati. E so mada ne yalewa era moku ni ra moce, se ra moku ni ra tu wele tu.

### गलत धारणा

महिलाएं ही घरेलू हिंसा को बढ़ावा देती हैं क्योंकि पति को ताने देती हैं तथा उसके साथ गुस्से से पेश आती हैं।

### वास्तविकता

घरेलू हिंसा के लिए कोई बहाना नहीं है क्योंकि कोई भी पिटने का शौक नहीं रखता है। हम अन्य किसी भी अपराध में अपराध का शिकार हुए व्यक्ति को दोष नहीं देते हैं। मिसाल के तौर पर अगर किसी का कल्ल हो जाए तो हम यह नहीं कहते कि इसके लिए वही जिम्मेदार है जिसका कल्ल हुआ है। कभी कभी पति अपनी पत्नी को पीछे से पीटना शुरू कर देता है या फिर जब वह सो रही हो तब वह उसे मारता है। यह व्यवहार पशुओं से कुछ कम नहीं है।

## Another Month of Violence

Crimes of violence against women and children in January:

### RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

Jan 1 - A taxi driver raped his teenage passenger. Police are still searching for him.

Jan 3 - A 76-year-old man was charged with attempted rape of a 9-year-old-girl. He was released on a \$300 bail.

Jan 6 - A 60-year-old man was given a 2-year suspended sentence for sexually assaulting a 6-year-old-girl.

Jan 12 - A 43-year-old man was sentenced to 15 months in jail for sexually assaulting his 13-year-old niece.

Jan 14 - A man was jailed for 3 years for attempting to rape his 13-year-old niece.

Jan 17 - A bench warrant was issued for a man charged with raping a woman in August 1999.

Jan 23 - 4 masked and armed men broke into a house and raped a woman. Police are still searching for them.

Jan 26 - A 17-year-old girl was raped by taxidriver travelling to Delainavesi. Police have not yet caught him.

Jan 27 - A man tried to rape a girl, but released her when she screamed.

### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Jan 5 - A man pleaded not guilty to beating and sexually assaulting his

## Fiji's most common form of assault

DOMESTIC violence happens all over the world and is the most common form of assault in Fiji. What constitutes domestic violence? We all know that domestic violence is physical, but it happens in the one place where a

wife. The case was adjourned to February 14. His wife is recovering in hospital.

Jan 10 - A 21-year-old woman tried to kill herself and her child, to escape from a 3-year abusive marriage.

Jan 14 - A woman is found murdered in a Suva hotel. Police are still searching for her boyfriend.

Jan 18 - A soldier is let off without conviction for beating his wife. He was ordered to pay \$50 court costs.

Jan 19 - A man was sentenced for beating his wife. She was beaten with a wooden stick in front of their children.

Jan 20 - A 40-year old man received a 1 year suspended sentence for assaulting his wife.

Jan 22 - A man was jailed for life for the murder of his defacto wife last May.

Jan 22 - A man was jailed for 2 years for punching his mother.

Jan 23 - A 7-year old girl was found murdered in Rakiraki. Her mother is charged with the killing.

Jan 26 - A 23-year-old man is jailed for 6 months for beating up his wife with a wooden rod.

Jan 29 - A man receives a 1 year jail sentence for beating up his wife.

Jan 30 - A man appears in court for assaulting his wife, whilst already serving a suspended sentence for similar offence. The magistrate gives him another suspended sentence.

## Search on for alleged rapist

SANJAY GOLINDAR  
has not approached  
of Fiji has not  
about the incident.

# The police solution to rape

Police are trying to keep women and girls off the streets at night to curb the increasing number of rapes, they say.

The FWCC feels that the police are attacking the problem from totally the wrong angle.

"Why should women be the ones who are kept from walking around freely when it's the men who are the perpetrators of these rapes?" questions FWCC Coordinator, Shamima Ali.

"The police should be working to make the streets safer so that women can move around at night, not telling them they shouldn't," says Ali.

"This can be done by improving street lighting, making sure that streets are constantly being patrolled, and monitoring any men who are loitering or acting suspiciously," says Ali. "What the police are suggesting instead is violation of women's privacy and freedom of movement."

Reactions to FWCC's comments have highlighted the still prevalent attitude that women should restrict their lifestyles, rather than create an environment where rape is not a constant threat.

"It confuses me why Shamima wants women to have all the freedom of walking alone at night," former advisory councillor, Ram Krishna, told the Daily Post.

FWCC has described this comment as "a typically outdated view of women's rights."

"The bottom line is - who would we rather have moving around freely at night - women or rapists?" said Shamima Ali.

## How To Avoid Rape

**Don't go out without clothes** - that encourages some men

**Don't go out with clothes** - any clothes encourage some men

**Don't go out alone at night** - that encourages men

**Don't go out alone at any time** - any situation encourages some men

**Don't go out with a female friend** - some men are encouraged by numbers

**Don't go out with a male friend** - some male friends are capable of rape

**Don't stay at home** - intruders and relatives are also capable of rape

**Avoid childhood** - some rapists are 'turned on' by little girls

**Avoid old age** - some rapists 'prefer' aged women

**Don't have a father, grandfather, uncle or brother** - these are the relatives that most often rape young women.

**Don't have neighbours** - these often rape women

**Don't marry** - rape is legal within marriage

**To be quite sure** - don't exist.



Participants at the SDA childabuse workshop

## If a child is being abused . . .

"If I suspect that a child is being abused, do I have the right to report it?"

This question was raised at a workshop on child abuse, attended by over 100 SDA pre-school teachers.

"Everyone has the responsibility to protect children by reporting any suspicions of child abuse," FWCC counsellor, Salote Malo told the workshop. However, she warned against jumping to conclusions as to whether a child was being abused.

As part of the workshop, the group discussed what indicators of child abuse there were



- in both the child's physical appearance and in their behaviour.

Participants also raised the issue of how and when to talk to children about abuse and what to do to protect themselves.

"It's very important that children know about abuse and how to protect themselves," said Malo.

"A useful tool is our 8 Rules for Safety. By discussing these rules with your children, you make them aware of the problem and help them to understand that there are things they can do to keep themselves safe."

## Visit the new [fijiwomen.com](http://www.fijiwomen.com)

Our website, [www.fijiwomen.com](http://www.fijiwomen.com) now has some new features. There is a daily news update featuring the main news story involving women. News from around the region will also be available.

We will be running a weekly opinion poll. You can cast your vote on a variety of issues concerning women's rights. All poll results will be archived - see for yourself what people think about these issues!

[fijiwomen.com](http://fijiwomen.com) is also offering you the opportunity to win a free FWCC T-shirt - all you have to do is to visit the site and



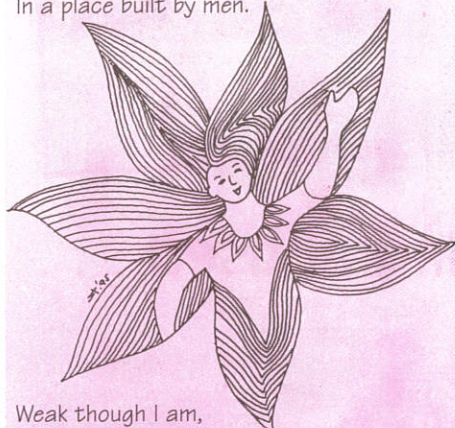
email us your ideas, comments and opinions on issues concerning women in your community.

So click on [www.fijiwomen.com](http://www.fijiwomen.com). Get informed and get involved!

# I am a Woman

They say I am not worthy,  
Compared to a man,  
They don't help me,  
Pass comments instead.  
When my husband beats me,  
They laugh 'cos its fun to them,  
Pain inside me,  
No one understands.

Fragile and weak-looking I am,  
A victim of violence,  
In a place built by men.



Weak though I am,  
Yet strength inside me I find,  
I am a woman!  
And I need to stand for my rights,  
Pain inside me  
No one will understand,  
Till the very day,  
I stand upright.  
Come, let's join hands, all alike  
All women, all victims,  
All races, either black or white,  
Cos race, religion, colour doesn't matter,  
The pain we feel is just the same.  
So be proud,  
Stand up and say,  
I am a woman,  
Not a weakling,  
Not to be victimised  
Not someone overpowering men.

I am a woman,  
Kind, gentle, loving,  
I need respect, dignity and love,  
I am a woman,  
Just like Eve,  
Created from the rib of Adam,  
Not to be above or below him,  
But to stand beside him,  
And that's where I want to be.

Written by,  
Neelam Singh, Lautoka

# Meet our counsellors

## MANOR PIYARE

Manor has been a counsellor at FWCC since July 1999. Before that she worked as a volunteer for nearly 2 years. She feels that the Centre provides a much-needed service for women in Fiji.



"Here at FWCC women can come to share their feelings and their problems with someone who is prepared to listen and help them. Women often need help learning how to cope with their problems. Others come for moral support when they need to make difficult decisions about their lives."

## MERE VUNIBAKA

Mere has worked with FWCC as a counsellor since 1996. She finds her work interesting and at times extremely challenging.



"Sometimes a woman may be back for counselling for new problems. This is a challenge for me because I then feel that I have been ineffective in empowering this woman to be able to cope with her own problems. Each time I am faced with such a client I am determined to help her grow and deal with her own problems effectively."

## Counselling is back on the road

### February

21 Lodoni Health Centre  
22 Korovou Health Centre

### March

12 - 16 Nabouwalu Hospital  
26 - 30 Wainikoro Health Centre

### April

2 - 6 Taveuni Hospital  
23 - 27 Levuka Health Centre

Free and confidential counselling and support provided by Hindi, Fijian and English-speaking counsellors.

## Listen to us on radio every week

You can listen to FWCC staff on the radio talking about the work of the Crisis Centre and the issues that we deal with. These radio programs are available in English, Fijian and Hindi on the Bula Network.

**Fijian:** 3.15 pm on Bula 102 FM  
Every second Sunday, starting 28th January

**English:** 9.30am on Bula 100.4 FM  
Every Tuesday, starting 30th January

**Hindi:** 10.00am on Radio Fiji 2  
Every Thursday starting 1st February

## We'd love to hear from you

*We want to hear from you! If you have any comments regarding current cases of violence against women or wish to air your views on women's rights or on the work of the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre - write to us via fax, email or post.*

*Please include your name and contact details. We will select the best comments for publication in the newsletter and you could win an FWCC T-shirt.*

