

Beneath Paradise

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THE MAGAZINE OF THE PACIFIC WOMEN'S NETWORK AGAINST VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



**Tonga shelves
CEDAW signing as
country debates
women's rights**

CEDAW SHELVED

The fight continues



Shamima Ali

Our fourth issue of Beneath Paradise is finally out. Our last edition was out on October 2014. Since then the Centre had shelved producing publications because we did not have a Communications Officer to work on it.

We sincerely apologise for the delay in our quarterly edition. After a lapse of two issues, the Centre now presents an issue which covers a wide range of stories impacting women in the Pacific.

In our cover story, we highlight the plight of women's rights defenders struggling for the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in Tonga.

This issue also discusses the struggle of women in Vanuatu following the aftermaths of Tropical Cyclone Pam and how they pick the pieces to rebuild their lives.

With a lot of policy changes taking place in the region in the past months, Vanuatu has finally launched its national gender policy following an agreement by the government's Council of Ministers in July. In the new policy, the Vanuatu government recognises that gender equality is part of the fundamental right and duty enshrined in their national Constitution.

Apart from our regular features, we also highlight the lack of scholarships for women sports and call on governments to allocate adequate resources in national budgets towards women in sports.

We also encourage corporate organisations to step up and support women sports.

Finally, we are almost approaching the end of yet another year.

In November, we will mark the 16 Days of Activism. We will need your continued support for this important event.

Before I end, please keep sending us your stories and pictures for publication. The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre have a very active Facebook and Twitter pages.

You can follow us on **Facebook: Fiji Women's Crisis Centre [FWCC]** or on **Twitter: Fiji Women - @CommsFwcc**.

From the FWCC and the Pacific Network Against VAW, we wish you a prosperous and violence free year end.

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88 Gordon St, PO Box 12882, Suva, Fiji ☎ (679) 3313 300
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International Events



Lili, middle, with civil society reps from Maldives and Cambodia. **Right:** a UNDP publication on Civil Society Spaces and the Human Rights System.

BANGKOK

Workshop on civic space

FWCC's legal officer Lili Vuyiasawa attended a UNDP roundtable discussion addressing civic space in South East Asia in August. The two-day event was held in Bangkok Thailand and included more than 70 invited UN and civil society experts, academics and government officials from countries across the South East Asian region such as Bangladesh, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, India, Indonesia, China, Maldives, Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Myanmar and Fiji.

"The event drew out the realities and challenges that civil society organisations have experienced in trying to address shrinking spaces of civic engagement in Asia," said Vuyiasawa.

"Issues highlighted during the event were quite similar all across the Asian region, and identified that essentially, the struggle between CSOs and governments existed at the national and sub-national level.

"This is as a result of growing legal restrictions, monitoring and regulations placed on civil society organisations; rise of militarisation; restrictions to freedom of expression and ongoing censorship or self-censorship of the media; old hierarchical and centralised culture of authority facing forces of democracy; countries under pressure for rapid economic growth, and supremacy of state sovereignty and control over private and public spheres, both physical and digital.

"It was good to see that Fiji is part of a wider community of civil society actors that are experiencing similar challenges, and the opportunity to share some key strategies and regional initiatives would help a great deal toward addressing the diminishing spaces for civil society engagement."

KIRIBATI

FWCC teams up with Kiribati ministries

The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre completed a successful collaboration with the Kiribati government to train its ministries and affiliates in June 2015.

The Kiribati Ministry of Women, Youth and Social Affairs invited the FWCC to train members of its SafeNet initiative. SafeNet is a group of organisations under the ministry's umbrella that advocate for women and the elimination of violence against women in Kiribati.

The group consists of the Health and Education ministries, faith-based organisations, police and NGOs working in the area of violence against women.

FWCC's regional administrator Wilma Eileen facilitated the training from 15-19 June, along with FWCC counsellor-advocate Shobna Devi. The training focused on how SafeNet members

could respond in an appropriate way to survivors of violence.

"In order for participants to understand the unequal power relations between a man and a woman, an introduction to gender relations was presented where participants did exercises on the expectations of a man and woman and gender division of labour and the difference between sex and gender," Ms Eileen said.

She said accepting societal gender roles was a learned behaviour, which could be unlearned so that there is equal distribution of work and participants understand and believe that both men and women can contribute equally in all areas of life.

"Participants then looked at the dynamics, and myths surrounding the issues of domestic violence, rape/sexual assault, sexual harassment, child abuse, and the impacts of these issues on women, their homes, communities and the nation as a whole.

"At the end of the training, participants had a sound understanding of gender equality, violence against women and human rights. Participants were able to identify with the issues discussed during the training and shared their own experiences."

"On the whole, the training was very rewarding as participants came up with their action plans that they will continue to create awareness in their own homes, villages and schools." Some of the participants at the training programme were graduates of the FWCC's flagship Regional Training Programme.



Kiribati...

The RTP graduates who continue to work in Kiribati say they found it useful and are using the knowledge and skills gained to create awareness on violence against women and counselling women who are survivors of domestic violence and rape on Tarawa and on the outer islands of Kiribati.

The RTP has also helped with an increase in community awareness with pastors, mayors, police and medical officers increasing their knowledge of how to respond to violence in the community.

RTP graduates say discussions on violence against women are being held more in churches and other community settings.



ON THE COVER

CEDAW coalition members with Prime Minister and Minister for Internal Affairs 'Akilisi Pohiva.

The Pacific Women's Network Against Violence Against Women members women's rights groups and agencies in **Bougainville; Cook Islands; Fiji; Federated States of Micronesia; Marshall Islands; Kanaky; Kiribati; Niue; Papua New Guinea; Solomon Islands; Vanuatu; Tonga; Samoa.** Send your Network News and photos to fwcc@connect.com.fj

Tonga's struggle for CEDAW



CEDAW Coalition members at work

By Tonga Women And Children Crisis Centre

You can bet your bottom dollar that everyone living in Tonga has heard of CEDAW. What is CEDAW? It is the acronym for the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. While it is not typical that ordinary citizens are aware of UN Conventions that their leaders have ratified and committed to, in the case of Tonga, CEDAW has been the talk of the town ever since the government announced in March 2015 at the Commission on the Status of Women, that it was prepared to take appropriate steps to ratify the UN Convention.

To give you a better picture, eight petitions were submitted to the King of Tonga and the Tongan Legislature with a combined number of

signatories of just over 13,000. However, these signatories were not in support of CEDAW but rather petitioning against the government's decision to ratify the UN Convention to eliminate discrimination against women in Tonga.

The backlash was mainly due to five key areas of concern predominantly raised by church leaders, religious fundamentalists and those in opposition to the current government and its leadership under Prime Minister 'Akilisi Pohiva.

The areas that concerned the Tongan public included:

- That CEDAW is a law and that it will be legalised once ratified;
- That references to the term 'family planning services' under articles 10(h), 12(1), 14(2b) are gateways to legalising abortion in Tonga;

FACT BOX:

The joint CSO statement to parliament highlighted the following reasons as to why they believe the government of Tonga should ratify CEDAW:

- We stand with other governments around the world to put an end to all forms of discrimination against women no matter what country you live in;
- We commit to upholding our promises to make Tonga a better country to live in for our women and girls to live in without fear of discrimination based on the fact that she is a girl or a woman - hence -
- We put in place mechanisms, policies and laws to END all forms of discrimination against women in Tonga just because she is a woman in the area of Education, Work, Sports, Business, Rural Women, Politics, International Representation, Health, Marriage Life, Culture and attitudes and beliefs that discriminate against women
- We face the REALITIES of all the social problems that women are most vulnerable to in Tonga and stop sweeping it under the carpet and getting our Government to be accountable towards its decisions and actions (Pornography, Prostitution, all forms of Violence against Women, Sexual Harassment in the workplace etc)
- We want to ensure our daughters, granddaughters, great granddaughters that they do not have to migrate from Tonga to find better opportunities elsewhere - they can access them all in Tonga

FACT BOX:

"On same-sex marriage however, there are only 15 countries in the world out of the 189 that have ratified CEDAW, that have legalized it. And the passing of such laws in those countries probably had less to do with CEDAW and more to do with the efforts of a powerful and resilient lobby for same-sex marriage."

- Publisher Kalafi Moala

- That references to 'the same right to enter marriage' and 'the same right to freely choose a spouse and enter marriage' are gateways to legalising same sex marriage in Tonga;
- That there is an alleged pot of funding amounting to more than 20 million dollars that the current government and non-government organisations backing CEDAW ratification will have access to if the ratification process is successful. This alleged pot of funding was claimed to be from CEDAW and the UN; and
- That the current government's process to announce Tonga's preparedness to ratify CEDAW at the 59th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in March was premature without holding proper and thorough consultations among community leaders, church leaders and the public at large.

These key areas of concern were addressed by various organisations and individuals who, despite the backlash, continued to raise awareness of CEDAW by providing key facts and information to the public.

► Continued on Page 4



Cultural dance display during CEDAW protest in Tonga

The Women and Children Crisis Centre (WCCC) in Tonga has been challenging these myths and misconceptions in the hope that a better understanding is created among the wider public.

“What we had to do was try and debunk the myths and misconceptions as soon as they arose,” said ‘Ofa Guttenbeil-Likiliki, Director of the WCCC.

“For example the two major concerns arising from the church leaders were in regards to same-sex marriage and abortion. As advocates of CEDAW ratification we had to provide information to the public that addressed these concerns. One of the first steps we took as an organisation was to develop a fact sheet that addressed six key myths, for example, in addressing the misconceptions around same-sex marriage we indicated on the fact sheet that CEDAW makes it clear that it is not aimed at all sex-based discrimination, but only at discrimination that is directed specifically against women.

“A same-sex marriage claim would include a charge that both men and women who want to marry individuals of their own sex are being discriminated against. There is no provision in the convention that would compel the Tongan government to pass same-sex marriage laws in order to comply,” said ‘Ofa Guttenbeil-Likiliki, Director of the WCCC.

The WCCC noted that they also had to address fundamentalist perspectives that discredited human rights conventions under the umbrella of the United Nations.

Guttenbeil-Likiliki stated that they also had to deal with accusations that the United Nations as the intergovernmental organisation responsible for CEDAW is a representative of the so-called anti-Christ and therefore, all agreements, treaties, declarations, conventions and covenants that derive from the UN are satanic in nature and support non-Christian values and beliefs.

“What is clear from this entire saga pertaining to CEDAW is that there needs to be a

FACT BOX:

The two-week CSW conference is held annually to promote women's rights and shape global standards on gender equality and women's empowerment. This year it celebrated the 20th anniversary of the historic Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. On March 9, representatives of UN member states, civil society organisations and UN entities came together to celebrate the progress that has been made towards achieving gender equality and what still needs to be done. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was adopted by 189 governments in Beijing in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women and it is still the most progressive blueprint for advancing women's rights. It imagines a world where each woman and girl can exercise her freedoms and choices, and realise her rights, including to live free from violence, to go to school, to participate in decisions and to earn equal pay for equal work.

nationwide re-education on CEDAW and its purpose. The current opinions against CEDAW is still very strong, and as an organisation we have had to re-prioritise some of our education programmes to assist in any way we can to undertake this re-education process in partnership with government and other non-governmental organisations,” says Guttenbeil-Likiliki.

According to Guttenbeil-Likiliki, the government's announcement that it was prepared to ratify CEDAW at the March CSW was an initiative of the previous government of Tonga to make a mark as the UN was getting ready to celebrate at the following year's CSW the 20th anniversary of the historical Beijing Platform for Action (BPA).

“Unfortunately we had a change of government and within that transition the new

government commencing this year just carried on from the previous government the initiative to make the announcement that it was ready to ratify after it had been endorsed by cabinet.

“So I can understand why so many people felt that the announcement that the government was ready to ratify came as a completely unexpected move by many, especially because it was made by the new government,” said Guttenbeil-Likiliki.

Up to 12 civil society organisations agreed to submit a joint submission and statement to parliament which was to be tabled for discussion in early September 2015.

WCCC's Director Guttenbeil-Likiliki submitted the petition and joint statement to the deputy clerk of the legislative assembly on behalf of the CSOs.

Meanwhile, the Privy Council had released a decision it had made upon advising the King in July that the decision of the cabinet to ratify CEDAW was not in accordance with the Constitution, in particular clause 39, where only the King has powers to make treaties, and as a result has directed the cabinet minister to annul Tonga's signature or ratification.

However that at the time the Privy Council's decision was made public, that the government of Tonga had not completed its instrument of ratification.

The Women and Children Crisis Centre in Tonga continues to raise awareness on CEDAW and works to debunk the myths and misconceptions that are still predominant among the wider public.

FACT BOX:

189 countries have ratified CEDAW. There are only seven countries left to ratify including two from the Pacific: Palau and Tonga. It contains 30 articles with the first 16 being the substantive articles covering the definition of discrimination, health, education, work life, economic opportunities, political representation, public life, marriage life, rural women, human rights, nationality, temporary special measures, laws and policies to end discrimination, trafficking and prostitution and social cultural attitudes and behaviours.



CEDAW protest march in Tonga

Photo: Matangi Tonga

▶ WHAT LEADERS SAY...

Regional shame

Fiji's Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama reaffirmed his government's commitment to addressing the pandemic of violence against women in Fiji during a high level meeting hosted by the country in April.

During his address at the Pacific Women's Parliamentary Partnership Forum at Lami's Novotel Hotel outside Suva, Mr Bainimarama said family violence in the Pacific was at crisis point and must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

"It is an issue of vital importance for every society, every government. And it is a fundamental test of our values as Pacific people which, I am sad to say, we are failing," he said.

Mr Bainimarama says tackling domestic violence is at the core of the Government's efforts to improve the position and status of Fijian women generally.

Mr Bainimarama said the current level of violence "woefully, unacceptably high."

"It is, in fact, cause for regional shame. And we must all do a lot more to stop it.

"The Government I lead takes this issue extremely seriously. Tackling domestic violence is at the core of our efforts to improve the position and status of Fijian women generally. To empower them. To give

them more of a stake in our economy. To enrich their lives and those of their families. To enable them to reach their full potential. And above all, to provide them with an environment free from intimidation and fear."

He said for too long, Fijian society - in common with other Pacific societies - has turned a blind eye to what goes on in the privacy of people's homes.

"Worse, we've tolerated, even encouraged, a culture in which spouses or partners are entitled to use violence to resolve disputes or bring supposedly errant family members into line.

"For too long, there was a saying in Fiji that so-and-so 'deserved a hiding'. But those days are over."

Mr Bainimarama said in Fiji, the issue was a burning one after a string of incidents in which women have been killed.

"In the latest, we lost one of Fiji's best and most respected journalists, Losana McGowan, in an alleged incident of domestic violence that shocked not only those who knew her but the entire nation.

"Yet these killings are merely the most obvious manifestations of a culture that we know extends across the Pacific of men resorting to violence against women in domestic confrontations."

Solomon Islands PM flags child abuse

Solomon Islands Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare says there is an urgent need to end child abuse and economic exploitation.

With the increase in domestic violence cases in the Solomons, Sogavare said the recent Family Protection Act 2014 had made major inroads to addressing the problem, but more legislation was needed.

The Prime Minister said his government intends to pass the Child and Family Welfare Bill this year, according to a Radio New Zealand International report.

Sogavare said it will pair policy commitments with increasing its work with families and communities to overcome the social acceptance of violence against children.

Meanwhile, during a recent United Nations conference in Fiji, representatives from 14 Pacific countries gathered to discuss solutions to the high levels of violence against children in the region.

The Special Representative to the United Nations Secretary-General on Violence against Children, Marta Santos Pais said the high levels of violence against children could be prevented.

Samoan women's plight highlighted in first human rights report

Samoa's government launched its first Ombudsman's report on the state of human rights in August 2015.

Prime Minister Tuilaepa Sa'ilele Malielegaoi highlighted the widespread physical and sexual abuse of women and children, saying this was unacceptable.

The report was prepared by the Office of the Ombudsman in its role as Samoa's National Human Rights Institution (NHRI).

"In a society which holds such strong community and family values, it is not acceptable that we continue to see women and children physically and sexually abused," Tuilaepa was quoted as saying in the Samoa Observer.

Women and children, the Prime Minister said, were often victims of violence at the hands of loved ones. He added this abuse includes children who labour on the streets.

"(The) children, Samoa's future and the guardians of family legacies, continue to labour in the streets; and that persons with disabilities are still denied equal participation in many areas of society," the Prime Minister said.

The launch of the report follows months of

work by the Ombudsman, Maiava Iulai Toma and his team at NHRI. The report explores the Fa'asamoa (Samoan Way) principles of equality, respect and protection, which complement basic human rights in international law, and the relationship between these principles and the bigger issues which form the basis of the report, namely, the equality, respect and protection of vulnerable populations; all aspects of health; environmental health; and religious and economic freedoms.

The main focus of the report is the need for better safeguards for equality and respect for women, children, people with disabilities and prisoners. The research and outreach conducted by NHRI show these groups were the most vulnerable in Samoan society and the most in need of stronger human rights protections.

The report concludes with a discussion of the emerging issues of mental health and freedom of speech.

Also contained within the report are a



Samoan Ombudsman Maiava Iulai Toma

number of recommendations made to relevant government ministries and agencies in order to better strengthen human rights protections for the people of Samoa. "As Samoa continues to develop and prosper, more needs to be done to ensure quality health care is available and accessible for all Samoans," Tuilaepa said.

"This includes taking action to address the more sensitive and taboo topics of preventing STIs (sexually transmitted infections) and family health and planning.

"Improving health outcomes must also be addressed through improved water and sanitation for both urban and rural areas. And to ensure continued development and prosperity, Samoa must be protected from the impacts of climate change as a fundamental human rights issue. In these ways the Samoan community can be strengthened, the rights of all protected, and sustainable livelihoods ensured."

SOURCE: Samoa Observer

Vanuatu launches gender policy

Vanuatu has launched a new National Gender Equality Policy following an agreement by the government's Council of Ministers in July 2015.

A Vanuatu government report says the Ministry of Justice and Community Services through the Department of Women's Affairs will coordinate the implementation of the policy.

In the new policy, the Vanuatu government recognises that gender equality is part of the fundamental right and duty enshrined in the National Constitution of Vanuatu.

"Chapter 2, Part 1 of the Constitution recognises the rights and freedoms of all individuals without discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, place of origin, religious or traditional beliefs, political opinions or language," the report stated.

“ The policy statement for the National Gender Policy of the Government of Vanuatu will exercise leadership to achieve gender equality and take proactive steps to embed gender equality into its legislation, policies, programs, organisational structures and operational procedures. ”

"Gender equality and women's empowerment are also critical to the achievement of national development vision: a just, educated, healthy and wealthy Vanuatu."

The first national policy affirms the Vanuatu government's commitment towards gender equality across all sectors and at all levels of society and the elimination of discrimination and violence against women and girls.

"The policy builds on previous national policy initiatives and is informed by extensive background research and consultation," the government statement said.

"The journey to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment will not be easy – a major shift is needed in societal attitudes and behaviour towards women."

Counting the cost of Cyclone Pam

Women and children are usually disproportionately affected during and after natural disasters. When Cyclone Pam hit Vanuatu in March 2015, an estimated 100,000 people were left without homes or belongings.

JUDITH'S STORY...

The following is the story of a woman we'll call Judith and her experience of surviving Cyclone Pam along with her two daughters.

It was a Monday, two days after Cyclone Pam had hit Vanuatu. Judith walked to the Magistrates Court where she reported her husband for not helping her during the cyclone.

With two daughters and a child maintenance case against her partner, Judith was afraid for her children and knew that her house would not withstand the destructive winds that were approaching.

She called her husband many times to ask for his help in securing their house, but her calls were never answered.

Judith worked and with what she earned she bought plywood for the windows and threw bags of sand on her roof to hold it down. But when the cyclone came, her fragile house was blown away in the powerful winds.

Judith and her two daughters ran to her neighbour's house but their corrugated iron roofing was also peeled away by the wind.

They held roofing iron and plywood over themselves as they huddled together waiting for the wind to pass.

In the morning, Judith's clothes and belongings were wet and blown everywhere. She gathered what she could find and made a small shelter with her neighbour's help.

Judith tried to call her partner over the weekend to tell him of their situation and that they needed his help but he could not be reached.

When she was told that the Magistrate Court was closed that week for repair and would open the following week, she felt depressed although Judith was working she could not afford to pay for new iron roofing and clothes for her daughters. She was worried about food and how her daughters would go to school.

Her partner had not been paying for child maintenance for many months

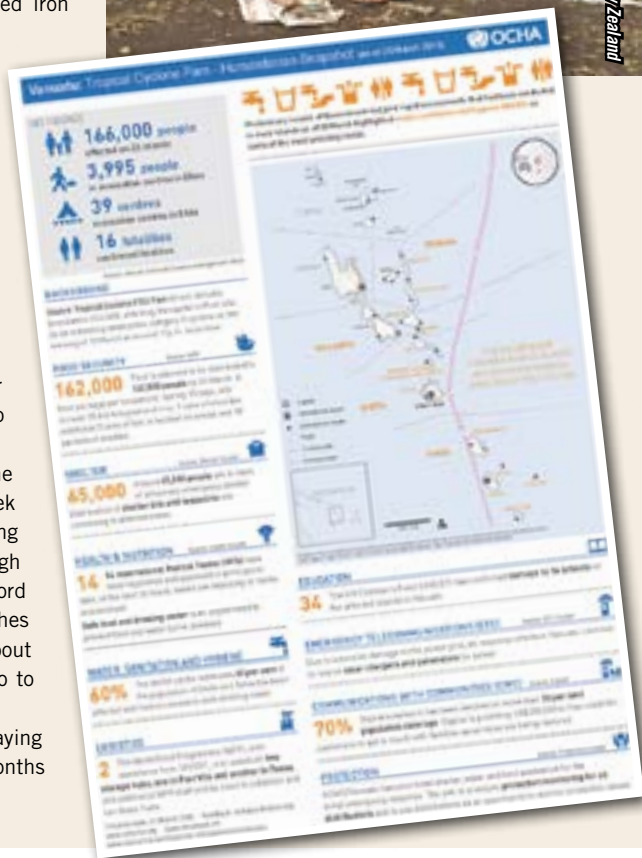
and now that the cyclone has caused more destruction, she felt more stressed.

A week and a half after the cyclone, Judith returned to work, she still lives in the small shelter she had built and is slowly managing with the help of her family in providing food given by the National Disaster Management Office.

Source: Vanuatu Women's Centre documentation



Picture source: Oxfam New Zealand



the Pam on women's livelihoods



Picture source: UNDP



Picture source: UNDP

BETTY'S STORY...

Betty arrived at Saint Joseph evacuation centre at Second Lagoon, in the early hours of Saturday 14 March after Cyclone Pam had passed Efate.

She and her husband prepared their home to shelter her community as their village was the last in the Teouma Bush area, much further from the road and other villages. They divided their corrugated iron house into six rooms and moved in families before the arrival of the cyclone.

During the cyclone, Betty prayed in her heart that angels would keep their roof from being blown away so the families could be safe from the cyclone. But as hard as she prayed, the strength of the cyclone increased.

One by one the cyclone blew away the roof over each room and Betty had to move the women and children until they were in the last room.

She hid them under tables and her husband, with the help of the other men, gathered corrugated iron and plywood to cover the women and children.

At around 3am when the cyclone had passed, Betty and her husband gathered up

their village and had them walk in the rain to Saint Joseph.

The children were wet and shivering but their parents pushed them on. Young children were carried on their parents' back. They came to the Teouma River which had widened and flowed faster than usual.

The men had to carry the children across and then help women walk across the river. When everyone had crossed safely, they continued walking until they came to the main road where some families who had a little money got on a service bus and went to Vila North School for shelter.

Betty and her family continued to walk with many others until they arrived at Saint Joseph. Betty said she felt sorry for the children who were exhausted and cold. Men and women were too tired that they fell asleep in whatever space they could find, too tired to care about the wet clothes they wore.

On Sunday morning, Betty and her husband walked home. She gathered some wet clothes that were lying on the ground and washed them at the shelter with soap provided by Save the Children.

At the shelter, Betty had to share pots, plates, spoons and cups with other families. The toilets did not work properly and sleeping

in a crowded room was not easy as children cried around her and people walked in and out of the room at night.

Cooking was hard because they sat in the open air outside the classroom and the wind kept blowing out the fire so the food took longer to cook.

Betty worries about returning to her village, her husband is slowly putting up corrugated iron and plywood to make a house but she is afraid it won't be the same.

Betty worries about the food her children eat and misses her garden. Her garden has always provided healthy island food and had been her source of income.

She worries that her children will not be able to return to school, that there will be no water to drink, and damp leaves will make the place stink.

She also worries that she will not have her kitchen utensils and will have to build a new toilet and shower room.

Betty is grateful for the food and tarpaulin provided by Save the Children and grateful to the school for sheltering them but is worried that on returning home, she and her family will start again from nothing.

Source: Vanuatu Women's Centre documentation



Picture source: Tom Perry/CARE



Picture source: UNICEF East Asia Pacific

FSM, Marshall Islands develop policies on gender equality

The Federated States of Micronesia and Marshall Islands have embarked into the process of developing an overarching national policy to move gender equality forward.

Efforts have been made in the past few years to ensure equal access to education and health care services and to improve public infrastructure and services, with significant impact on the quality of life of women and men in all states.

However, challenges remain to ensure women and girls are safe from violence, can play leadership roles and fully access economic opportunities. Progress is being made with the support of vibrant women's organisations across all States.

Consultations facilitated by the Ministry of

Health and Social Affairs with the support of SPC have taken place in early July 2015 with a range of stakeholders from government and civil society of the four states of FSM to discuss some of the main issues negatively affecting the status of women in the archipelago.

The workshop also offered an opportunity to introduce participants to gender statistics, gender analysis and gender mainstreaming approach.

"We need to work together to make sure that our daughters and sons, and grand children can fulfil their aspirations, be protected from all forms of violence and discrimination, can actively take part in decisions that shape the society they live in, can work and generate incomes to fulfil their family's needs, and be happy to live on their island as Micronesian,"

said the Acting Secretary of the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs.

"Adopting a dynamic policy specifically focusing on reducing inequalities between men and women will help mobilise and coordinate efforts from different actors at various levels and ultimately lead individual men and women to living healthier and more fulfilling lives," explained Eleanor Mori, Gender Development and Human Rights Officer.

Similar efforts are seen in Majuro, Republic of Marshall Islands, where following the endorsement of the National Gender Policy in February 2015, consultations took place in June to develop the policy's implementation plan.

The Micronesian senator advocating for women's participation in public life

A Micronesian senator says women belong in all spheres of life from the home to parliament.

Senator Magdalena Walter was one of the speakers during a Women's Conference in Pohnpei.

Speaking to more than 250 women from four different states of Micronesia, Senator Walter said it was time for change and women must understand their right to do whatever they wanted without feeling restricted by their past traditions and culture.

"You have to start now. The theme for this conference is 'maintaining our culture to inspire change'. If we don't move to inspire that change, nothing will happen," Walter told the conference.

"Despite your beliefs and what you think, I want to tell you today that women can make a difference and we need to be there for our economy and the prosperity of our country," she said.

"Research has found that a majority of high school dropouts in Pohnpei are young girls. Parents, we must change this trend. Mothers you need to stand up to your husbands and tell them how important it is for your daughters to get an education.

"You need to invest in your children. Inform your daughters of what they can achieve. The time for women to be slaving in the kitchen is over. I'm not saying you have to totally ignore your families. On the contrary, you need to build your families and your husbands need to pitch in," she added.

Senator Walter went on to outline some of the reasons why women are a critical part of society and would make great leaders.

"I've always said, we need more women to run in the upcoming elections. Some of us are very quick in judging ourselves, saying we're not good enough and senate or parliament is just good enough for the men because they are used to making the decisions.

"That's not true. Let me tell you something: it has been proven that women have a far more success rate in business than men do. That's a fact. And it's not hard to believe because women have been doing this all their lives. Women manage homes. They manage the welfare of the family. They manage their children, the groceries, their husbands," she said.

She also challenged women to step up and show what they're made of, encouraging them with research statistics and past findings.

"Another fact is that corruption has been found to be more where there are no women involved. This is not because we're better than men, it's just because for us women, it's in our nature to talk things out.

"Another fact is that while men tend to look out to other countries for resources and other things, women tend to look closer to home. So I encourage all of you to stand up and together we can make the change. Reach out to other women who want to make a change, we're all in this together and when our time to rest comes, don't take your knowledge with you, pass it on to the next generation.

"We are the ones that fight for true democracy, for good governance and for gender equality. There are some men out there, very few



Senator Magdalena Walter

I must say who have come forward to join this fight but for generations, it has been us women who have been braving this fight which is why I say, it's time to take it to the next level. We need to be at the top level, making decisions for our people."

Senator Walter paid tribute to her family and especially her husband for supporting her when she said she wanted to become a politician. She said the culture in FSM and around the Pacific has always seen women as housewives who are meant to look after the family and in some places, women aren't allowed to speak at village meetings.

"I was fortunate to have a very supportive husband. To all the men out there, I urge you to support your wives. Let them go if they want to attend meetings or if they want to pursue a dream.

"And to all the women out there who are thinking of running in the next elections, I congratulate you and I leave you with this message. In order to succeed and become a good politician, you need five values and they are, fairness, respect, honesty, trust and accountability. With these, you can never go wrong."



FWCC sponsored schools representing Tonga (St Vincent College) and Samoa (Jasper Williams High School)

FWCC supports school girls' rugby

The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre partnered with the Fiji Rugby Union in August to sponsor a secondary schools rugby tournament for girls.

FWCC Coordinator Shamima Ali said the Centre encourages women and girls' participation in sports so they become leaders in the sporting arena.

"Sponsorships like this promote an enabling environment for women to participate in sports. Women are often marginalised and neglected when it comes to sports, particularly male-dominated ones," Ali said.

She said more positive representations of women in sports will encourage more young women and girls to not only stay active, but to obtain leadership positions in the future.

"Sports teach young girls the value of perseverance, how to set and reach short- and

long-term goals, work together as a team, and how to overcome failure."

The Centre sponsored Jasper Williams High School representing Samoa and St Vincent College representing Tonga.

"We chose to sponsor Samoa and Tonga to signify our role in the Pacific," she said.

Ali also highlighted the lack of sponsorship for women's sport was an issue.

"We encourage corporate organisations to

step up and support women's sport.

"We also urge governments to allocate adequate resources in national budgets towards women in sports."

Ms Ali said the event also provided a platform for the Centre to raise awareness on violence against women and girls and an opportunity to develop young advocates for the elimination of violence against women and girls.



Team Tonga

Training for SPC staff after death of colleague

With the horrific death of Fijian communications officer and former journalist Losana McGowan allegedly in the hands of her partner in April, staff members from her workplace believe signs of domestic violence need to be recognised.

More than 30 staff members from the Secretariat of the Pacific Community's Geoscience Division took part in a workshop on domestic violence awareness and gender relations facilitated by the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre in Suva.

FWCC Coordinator Shamima Ali said the training followed a request from SPC and is part of the Centre's ongoing awareness with other agencies and stakeholders.

"It is to increase and develop a better understanding of domestic violence and issues relating to it, examine gender power relations and its link to domestic violence and to develop skills for appropriate responses to domestic violence," Ms Ali said.

SPCs Adviser Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management Policy at the Geoscience Division, Cristina Casella said

staff members at the division were affected following Losana's death.

"We were really affected and staff members recognised that certain issues relating to domestic violence need to be discussed," Casella said.

She said it is important for managers in workplaces to be able to recognise the signs of domestic violence.

"Managers/heads need to know how to approach issues of domestic violence and deal with it. So these kind of trainings are important."

Casella said such workshops help educate staff members and empower them to know what to do when a colleague is in a domestic violence situation.

She said SPC is currently in the process of revising its domestic violence policy to make it more visible and usable by staff.

Casella said SPC was looking in to organising a series of similar training workshops. McGowan was a former staff of the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre and the Fiji Women's Rights Movement.



'Long-term aid needed' for violence survivors in Fiji

Fiji Women's Crisis Centre Coordinator Shamima Ali says while government has a children's helpline managed by a children's NGO, the concern is who is at the end of the line.

Ms Ali said Fiji needs improvement in its long-term services for survivors of child sexual abuse and violence.

She said it was important that those at the end of the helpline know what to do when they receive a call from a child and act immediately.

"The government has got a children's helpline which is managed by an NGO, and they are getting a lot of calls. But our concern is who is at the end of the line," Ali told Pacific Scoop.

"When a child says, 'I have been sexually abused', you can't just talk to the child for two minutes, it is an ongoing thing. So although it is good to see how many calls one is getting you have to have people of expertise on the line," Ali said.

She told Pacific Scoop the concern was what could be done to help and keep the person safe after the abuse was reported.

Lacking resources

"Implementation, resources and training people, that's where we seem to be failing," said Ali.

"We also do not have child psychologists. For some people the abuse has been going on for a long time so they need psychological care. That again is something that is lacking."

"One of the reasons we have very damaged adults is because they have suffered child abuse at a very young age and there haven't been reflective services that could have enabled them to move on in life as a wholesome individual."

Statistics of violence

Statistics from the FWCC's major report 'Somebody's Life Everybody's Business', shows Fiji's level of violence against women and girls rates among some of the highest in the world.

The report was based on a survey exploring the prevalence, incidence, and attitudes to intimate partner violence in Fiji from 2010 to 2011.

It showed 64 percent of women in Fiji who had been in an intimate relationship had experienced physical or sexual abuse by their partner or husband.

FWCC also found 31 percent of women and girls had experienced physical or sexual assault since they were 15 years old, by someone other than their husbands or partners.

The most prevalent form of sexual violence is child sexual abuse, with 16 per cent of women in Fiji having been sexually abused while they were under 15 years of age.

In early 2015, FWCC also supplied statistics to the media showing one in four women in Fiji had been raped.

Future plans

But Ali said the centre was planning to organise workshops with service providers and invite expertise from overseas to help improve these services.

The centre is also in the process of purchasing property for the establishment of three shelters for those who have suffered from sexual abuse and violence.

Ali said one of the shelters would be specifically concentrated on providing an exit strategy for young girls who had been sexually abused.

"Why are they put back in their homes if that's where the abuse is happening?" she asked.

"There are instances where once a child is known to be sexually abused, particularly a female, she is not welcomed back into the home because there is a stigma.

"Sometimes these girls are then put into government-funded homes but they are often run by religious organisations, which I believe is not the most appropriate protocol for many reasons." Ali said the shelters would provide appropriate counselling as well as supporting continued education for young girls.

'Continued education'

"We are trying to raise funds for continued education.

"At 17 years old, when they come of age, we want them to continue [education] so they don't end up on the streets, or are then open to all other kinds of exploitation, or sent back to abusive homes.

"We've had suicides of girls that are sent back to abusive homes where the abuser still remains. So this exit strategy will help them provide for themselves," said Ali.

Source: TJ Aumua/Pacific Scoop

Tonga's crisis centre sees hundreds of cases

The Tonga Women and Children Crisis Centre has assisted more than 1800 women and children since it was set up in 2009.

The Nuku'alofa-based centre has recorded some dramatic cases of domestic violence, including incidents of child abuse during that time.

The Centre's Director, 'Ofa Guttenbeil-Likiliki, told the Matangi Tonga news website the country was not an exception to the global problems of family violence.

"Reports of violence against women and children in Tonga are increasing. Between 2000 and 2013, the Tongan Police have received more than 5000 reported cases of domestic violence with the majority of victims being women and children," Guttenbeil-Likiliki said.

She said between 2009 and 2014, the Centre had assisted more than 1800 women and children through its counselling advocacy and support services and temporary safe housing.

"The WCCC was pioneered by a group of women and some male advocate supporters who were determined to develop an NGO that is efficient and professional in its deliverance of quality support services to women and children survivors of violence throughout Tonga."

The Mo'ui Ke Fiefia Safe House provides a 24-hour temporary safe house accommodation to women and children who are victims of violence.

She said the Centre's work was informed by the experiences of their clients.

Guttenbeil-Likiliki said the most dramatic cases were incidents of child abuse and incidents where women were kept in severe isolation by their partners.

"Male family members over a long period of time rape young girls as young as five years of age right up to 17 years of age. The ones (aged) five to 13 are the hardest to deal with."

She explained that other cases involved isolation "where women are living in harsh coercive control situations, where she is isolated from her family and not allowed to go anywhere or talk to anyone without the consent of her husband or partner, and nobody has any idea because it's not physical violence, which is more obvious."

Some clients at the centre had revealed their personal accounts of domestic violence and mistreatment.

"One woman at the centre described how she suffered beatings from her former husband. The woman said that her ex-husband attacked her even after they had already divorced and separated."

Training on women's human rights for chiefs

Vanuatu Women's Centre organised a training workshop for chiefs from north Tanna living in Vila in March 2015.

This followed a request from the chiefs to learn about the issues of violence against women, domestic violence and the Family Protection Act.

With chiefs held in high regard on Tanna, many women still choose to go to their chiefs with their issues because the chiefs are

accessible and live in the community.

The chiefs often deal with domestic violence cases in their communities and wanted to learn how they could deal with them more appropriately and how they could link up with the WVC and the police.

The training was arranged with WVC male advocate for women's human rights, Iaken Ampen, who works at the Police College in Port Vila.



PNG prosecutors get survivors training

FWCC's Farzana Gulista and Vanuatu Women's Centre's Marilyn Tahī facilitated an eight-day workshop for victim liaison officers (VLOs) in Papua New Guinea's Office of Public Prosecutions in June 2015.

It was funded by the PNG-Australia Law and Justice Partnership Transition Programme for the Office of Public Prosecutions.

VLOs are critical people in the protection of survivors of violence as they attempt to access justice. Apart from VLOs, participants included those from the Royal Police Constabulary of PNG, from the Family and Sexual Offences Unit, members from Gender Equity and Social

Inclusion Programme, a Seventh-Day Adventist pastor and participants from Oro Province who work in a women's refuge.

The training was aimed at supporting efforts to strengthen services addressing family and sexual violence within the Law and Justice sector and to support the Office of Public Prosecutors, VLOs and to provide better support to survivors.

At the end of the training the VLOs reported they could better manage survivors and make better and effective impact statement without being judgmental or undermining the survivor's experience.

Forum leaders urged to prioritise West Papua

Groups around the Pacific and the world lobbying for freedom of West Papua from Indonesian control, have focussed attention on the human rights atrocities being carried out in the Melanesian country.

An important step for West Papua was the historic decision in July by the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) to grant observer status to the United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP). The ULMWP is umbrella body representing the majority of the groups struggling for West Papuan freedom.

However, while the ULMWP was granted observer status, Indonesia was granted associate membership, with Papua New Guinea support, much to the dismay of West Papuan and human rights activists.

Following the actions of the MSG to legitimise Indonesian claims over West Papua, the Auckland-based West Papua Action has written to the Pacific Islands Forum to prioritise human rights issues at its 46th meeting to be held in Papua New Guinea in September 2015.

The group in its letter has urged the

Forum to advance the gains made at the recent Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Leaders' Summit in Honiara in July, where the historic decision was made to grant the United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP) Observer status in the MSG.

In its letter, the group stated that international and Indonesian human rights groups have regularly documented violence in West Papua, including the extensive use of intimidation, torture, sexual violence, beatings and killings by the security forces.

The United States State Department 2014 Human Rights report on Indonesia exposes and condemns gross and persistent human rights violations by the Indonesian authorities in West Papua.

"Throughout last year, there were harsh crackdowns on numerous peaceful rallies. All sectors of society in West Papua including lawyers, human rights defenders, activists, clergy and journalists faced regular intimidation or the threat of arrest," the letter stated.

Aussie politicians visit Vanuatu Women's Centre

AUSTRALIAN Members of Parliament Laurie Ferguson, Jane Prentice and Senator Janet Rice visited the Vanuatu and Fiji Women's Crisis Centre in March and July respectively.

The delegation visited Vanuatu to see the impacts of Tropical Cyclone Pam, which hit the country on 13 March 2015.

Tanna was one of the worst-affected islands in the archipelago. The delegation visited the VWC branch briefly and also met with VWC Coordinator Marilyn Tahī.

Tahī briefed the visitors on the work being done by VWC on Tanna and in the southern province of Tafea.

The delegation expressed their appreciation for the work being done on Tanna and said they were happy that Australia supported such work in Vanuatu.

The delegation visited the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre on 29 July to learn more about the Centre's work and programs on eliminating violence against women in Fiji and the Pacific.

The delegates, who were taken through a brief background of FWCC's programs, research, partnerships with FBOs (House of Serah) and sports (Redrock Rugby Club), were on an exchange program with the Fiji Parliament.

Speaking to them, FWCC Coordinator Shamima Ali highlighted appreciation for the continued support given by Australia in eliminating violence against women and girls.

The Senators acknowledged the Centre's work and assured their full support.



Australian Members of Parliament at the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre

Members of the Pacific Women's Network Against Violence Women facilitated a male advocacy workshop on women's human rights in PNG in July.

The workshop was co-facilitated by Isi Oru of Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee (FSVAC) and male advocate for women's human rights, Melkie Anton.

Women leaders who also attended included Ume Wainetti, national coordinator of Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee, Mary Kaman, president of the Madang Council of Women, Sophie Mangai, coordinator of East

PNG male advocates trained

Sepik FSVAC and Safe Haus, and Wallis Yakam, executive director of Consultative Implementation Monitoring Council who officiated at the closing of the workshop.

The weeklong male advocacy workshop had two specific objectives: to develop a community male advocacy guideline and to identify and develop the training contents for the male advocacy material. To achieve these objectives, participants from the Momase and

Highlands region were invited from Chimbu, Western Highlands, Enga, Eastern Highlands, Morobe, East Sepik and Madang province. This workshop particularly focused on developing the appropriate guideline and training content that is useful and relevant to the Papua New Guinea context.

The workshop was attended by the FSVAC provincial network partners from the Momase region.

Women on the move



Newly-appointed Samoa Supreme Court judge Mata Tuatagaloa. *Photo: Government of Samoa*

Name: Mata Tuatagaloa

Position: Samoa's first female judge of the Supreme Court

Work history: Ms Tuatagaloa was appointed as permanent judge of the District court four years ago after serving as a prominent lawyer for many years. She was sworn in before the head of state last month.



Maryann Lameko- Vaai *Photo: Samoan Observer*

Name: Maryann Lameko- Vaai

Position: Newly appointed General Manager for Bank South Pacific Samoa

Work history: Ms Lameko-Vaai is a chartered accountant and auditor by profession. Her interest has always been in accounting, finance and investment. She was hired by Westpac in 2012 and worked for three years before its takeover by BSP.

Prior to moving to the bank, Ms Lameko-Vaai spent 12 years with a Samoan computer company called Computer Services Limited.

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FIJI WOMEN'S CRISIS CENTRE

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POSTAL ADDRESS:

EMAIL:

SKYPE:

TYPE OF TRAINING DESIRED:

TRAINING BY ATTACHMENT (4 weeks): **SHORT COURSE (3 weeks):**

SENDING ORGANISATION :

POSTAL ADDRESS:

PHONE: FAX:

APPLICANT'S POSITION IN ORGANISATION:

ENDORSED BY:

1. Name:

2. Position:

1. Name:

2. Position:

SPONSORING ORGANISATION:

CONTACT PERSON:

ADDRESS:

PHONE: FAX:

* List any requirements of trainee regarding health, diet, language, etc in an attachment to this application. Also attach a one-page summary with more details of the applicant's work and interest in working on violence against women, and include a brief statement of your position on women's rights.

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