



# Fiji Women's Crisis Centre

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NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2013

## Shining a light on violence



The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre leads the World Human Rights Day march which marked the end of the 16 Days campaign.

### Women lead march

FOR THE first time in three years, the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre on behalf of the NGO Coalition on Human Rights was able to secure a permit to march through Suva on World Human Rights Day on December 10, 2012.

The Fiji Police Force initially rejected the application for a permit, but after being pressed to cite reasons for declining the permit, they finally granted it.

One of the conditions was not more than 200 people were to join the march from the Flea Market to the Peace Garden at the Suva Civic Centre. In the event about 120 women, men and children turned out in support.

Other women's groups and members of the NGO Coalition on Human Rights took part.

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### *FWCC pulls out all stops in annual campaign*

**AT THE** end of each year, the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre joins millions of people across the world for 16 consecutive days of activism focussed on the persistent global problem of violence against women.

The 16 Days of Activism of Violence Against Women campaign began in 1991 and the FWCC has commemorated the event since then to put the spotlight firmly on the issue of violence against women. The campaign runs from November 25-December 10.

In 2012, the FWCC and its branches in Nadi, Ba, Rakiraki and Labasa experienced one of the most involved 16 Days campaigns with many individuals and groups inviting the Centre's staff to talk about the organisation's role and the dynamics involved in violence against

women. "This was one of the busiest periods for the FWCC's advocacy work. We had community programmes, sporting events, workshops, open days, invitations to school and village functions, marches and a social media campaign that were all happening over the course of just over two weeks," said Shamima Ali, Coordinator of the FWCC.

Ms Ali said while lobbying for structural and policy changes was vital, it was equally important to invest in the community because that is where real change begins to happen.

"It is only when people at the community level reject these entrenched notions about the causes of violence that we can start to have an impact on the daily lives of women and girls."

# Using sport to raise awareness

**THE FIJI WOMEN'S** Crisis Centre built on its successful experience of using sporting events to drive awareness aimed at preventing violence against women and girls during the 16 Days of Activism from November 25-December 10, 2012.

The FWCC joined with the Suva Volleyball Association to host a competition for women and conduct awareness-raising around the event. The FWCC was also involved in the 2nd Pacific Triathlon Championships. Both events were held on December 8 in Suva.

FWCC Coordinator Shamima Ali was keynotespeaker at the volleyball tournament opening, while Deputy Coordinator Edwina Kotoisua spoke at the opening of the triathlon championship.

“Through these efforts working with organisations like the Suva Volleyball Association and the USP Volleyball Association, the young people who have been involved in volleyball have gone out and spread the message in their different social and professional circles,” said Shamima Ali.

The triathlon championship hosted by the Fiji Triathlon Association brought together teams from Fiji, Tonga and Papua New Guinea. The association has worked in partnership with the FWCC for the past year and this link has been used to highlight various issues surrounding violence against women and girls to the many young people who participate in the sport.

The FWCC has begun taking its anti-violence message to where people are gathered – such as at sporting events – and this has proven effective in bringing awareness to newer audiences.



*Shamima Ali with participants at the Suva Volleyball Association tournament.*



*Edwina Kotoisua at the Pacific Triathlon Championship, left. Participants at the Suva volleyball tournament sponsored by FWCC.*



“People at these sporting events may not necessarily participate in our campaign activities so the opportunity to raise awareness with them is an important part of our mission of preventing violence against women,” said Ali.

The FWCC also believes encouraging women's and girls' participation in sport

helps empower them, especially in areas traditionally dominated by men.

“We know that sport helps women and girls by building up their self-esteem and enabling them to have confidence in themselves and their bodies, so this opportunity will also help the empowerment of women and girls.”

## Women lead Human Rights Day march



*Shamima Ali with the women of Naitasiri who came to support the World Human Rights Day march on December 10.*

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At the end of the march, FWCC Coordinator Shamima Ali spoke to the gathering reminding them that the right to raise their voices should be exercised despite the difficulties in the current political climate.

The event was significant in that calls for democratic government, freedom from torture and the right to equality were heard and seen through the streets of Suva for the first time in years.

Other events participated in included:

- A talk with the Catholic Women's League at the Lami parish;
- A talk with students of Saraswati College in Nausori
- Social media awareness campaign during the 16 Days of Activism.



*The women of Nalawa district in Rakiraki with Shamima Ali.*

# Rakiraki women take the lead

**THE WOMEN OF** Nalawa district in Rakiraki invited FWCC Coordinator Shamima Ali to the opening of a fundraising project they initiated in December.

The women felt that for their projects to progress they would need some empowerment about their rights and an understanding of the societal structures that held them back.

The event was held at Matawailevu Village on December 5, 2012 where people from Tikina Nalawa gathered.

It was the first time the women and men of district had heard directly from Ms Ali who spoke on the FWCC's role, how it operated and the purpose of 16 Days of Activism, and what women's human rights entailed.

The villagers sat attentive through Ms Ali's address and some explained later that they had found the talk interesting because they had never heard of such issues explained in such a way before.

Ms Ali stressed that women deserved the support of men in their fundraising efforts because it would ultimately benefit the community as a whole.

Ms Ali then spent time answering questions from the villagers and was able to correct some of the misconceptions of women's human rights.

The FWCC contributed \$500 to the Nalawa women's fundraising effort and the centre was invited to carry out workshops with several groups in the area.

## Ba centre reaches out to children

**AMONG THE** events attended by staff of the Ba Women's Crisis Centre during 16 Days were invitations to school prize-giving ceremonies where they used the opportunity to raise awareness among children about the issue of child sexual abuse.

Ba Women's Crisis Centre project officer Wilma Eileen was chief guest at Tavua Kindergarten where around 60 children graduated on November 26, 2012.

Ms Eileen explained to the children and their parents about child sexual abuse and the difference between "good touches" and "bad touches". The negative effects of child sexual abuse on children were also highlighted to parents.

On November 27, the Ba Special School invited the Centre to their concert and prize-giving ceremony. About 71 students and their parents were present to hear about how to combat child sexual abuse by not tolerating "bad touches" or keeping "bad secrets" but reporting them to somebody in authority who will take their complaints seriously.

On November 29, the Ba Housing



*Wilma Eileen presents a certificate to Tavua Kindergarten pupil.*

Assistance Relief Trust (HART) Homes invited the Centre to speak on rape and child sexual abuse to about 24 women who live in the Catholic-run community.

The next day the Centre spoke to the Clopcot Women's Club on the purpose of 16 Days and the dynamics of rape.

# Religious leaders attend Nadi workshop

**IN THE LEAD** up to the 16 Days campaign, FWCC Coordinator Shamima Ali facilitated a workshop with 21 leaders of religious groups, including police officers from the Namaka Police Station.

This was a follow on from a discussion a few weeks before between Ms Ali and some of Nadi's religious leaders about using their important positions in their communities to help eliminate violence against women and girls.

During the 16 Days of Activism, Nadi Women's Crisis Centre held 10 workshops interacting with 120 participants, including about 36 men and boys.

The workshops focused on the purpose of 16 Days as well as topics such as the role of the FWCC, gender, domestic violence, rape, child sexual abuse and sexual harassment.



*Some of the participants of a Nadi workshop.*

A workshop was also held with the men of the Koroipita settled where some of the misconceptions behind sexual violence and gender equality were addressed.

One of the main myths surrounding rape that was tackled included that women and girls are raped because of "the way they

dress".

Feedback from the men participants was positive with many committing to spreading the message within their families and communities, as well as reporting incidents of violence against women and girls to the police, the FWCC, the social welfare department and the courts.

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# Why women should hold the purse strings



The Nadi Women's Crisis Centre organised a march on November 24 to mark the start of the 16 Days of Activism Against Violence.

**NADI WOMEN'S CRISIS** Centre organised a march through the town on November 24 to mark the start of the 16 Days of Activism Against Violence Against Women.

About 80 people joined the march at which Nadi's special administrator Aisea Tuidraki was chief guest.

In his speech, Mr Tuidraki said he spoke at the event not only in his role as the town's administrator but as a father who believed that "violence against women and girls has no place in our society."

Mr Tuidraki highlighted the fact that women are the "driving force behind the economic survival of families in rural communities and villages", playing an important role in reducing poverty.

"I know that some men may not agree with this statement due to gender competitiveness, but it is difficult to dispute facts and statistics," Mr Tuidraki said.

"A host of studies suggest that putting earnings in women's hands is the intelligent thing to do because women have been proven to be good

financial managers.

"When they control income, more is devoted to education, health and nutrition-related expenditures, and less is spent on alcohol, cigarettes and gambling.

"Women usually reinvest a much higher portion of their income on their families and communities than men, spreading wealth beyond them. This could be one of the reasons why countries with greater gender equality tend to have lower poverty rates."

## Gender training for Labasa inmates



Sera Bogitini talks with inmates in Labasa.

**THE LABASA WOMEN'S** Crisis Centre conducted a four-day workshop with 15 inmates of the Labasa Corrections Centre from November 20-23, 2012.

Labasa project officer Sera Bogitini facilitated the programme assisted by Rinieta Ratawa.

Topics covered included gender, division of labour, male privileges, domestic violence and sexual assault.

Although challenging, the Ms Bogitini and Ms Ratawa felt the participants responded well

through their discussions and the questions they posed.

One of the prisoners asked if the Centre could step up its awareness efforts in villagers and many people like him did not realise the factors at play in issues of violence against women.

Ms Bogitini said it was vital for participants to hear of the impacts of abuse on survivors, to hear of women's experiences of violence as well as the need to change their attitudes to women.



Villagers at Nawailevu, Bua after FWCC workshop.

Other events organised by the Labasa Women's Crisis Centre included:

- A talk on child abuse during the Wailevu Methodist Sunday School camp on December 4 where 90 children were present;

- Facilitating a two-day workshop at Nawailevu in Bua organised by the Ministry of Women. 40 people attended the workshop which focussed on gender, domestic violence,

child abuse and rape;

- Presenting on domestic violence at a workshop with about 50 members of Moraia Methodist Church in Labasa organised by Reproductive Health on December 5;

- An awareness raising talk to 17 community members of Tandavula area in Vunucuivui on November 30;

- Community education at the Revival Church Children's Camp on December 8.