

FIJI WOMEN'S CRISIS CENTRE

Newsletter



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AUGUST 1999

Debate on Domestic Violence Bill

A public forum was organized by the FWCC and was held on Thursday, 24th June 1999 at the Lali Room at the Centra Suva.

The chairperson for the evening was Ms Vandhna Narayan and there were five speakers. They included Mr Isikia Savua, Commissioner of Police, Ms Florence Fenton, Director, Fiji Law Reform Commission, Mr Narend Prasad, Deputy Director, Social Welfare Department, Mr Viren Kapadia, Fiji Law Society and Ms Anita Singh, Research Officer, Fiji Women's Crisis Centre.

At the cessation of the forum, all speakers above concluded that Fiji does in fact need a separate Domestic Violence Bill except Mr Narend Prasad. Commissioner Savua placed emphasis on the 'no drop policy' legislation which is currently in place. However, he admitted that it has proven effective only to a certain degree but, in the majority of cases the victims end up reconciling with the perpetrator of violence under Section 163 of the Criminal Procedure Code.

Anita Singh also placed emphasis on the 'no drop policy' and added that currently there are no penalties involved if someone does breach the policy. Also there is no effective way of ensuring that the policy is observed by investigating officers. She argued that the best way to ensure the above is to legislate the policy and introduce penalties for investigating officers who failed to observe it. Secondly, Anita spoke about the need for courts to impose stricter bail conditions. Bail conditions are one way of providing protection to victims especially if a domestic assault has occurred and if there is a risk of further violence towards the victim.

Florence Fenton argued for the need to change attitudes first before legislation can be effective. She stressed the need for an integrated approach rather than a linear one.



Narend Prasad, Viren Kapadia, Florence Fenton and Anita Singh

Viren Kapadia on the other hand argued that we should place legislation first. This will in turn help society change its attitudes towards domestic violence. Narend Prasad stated that more counselling and other support services should be made available rather than creating a separate legislation (which involves other areas such as the police, courts, prisons etc, which currently are being used to maximum capacity),

The discussion was then put to the floor, where questions were raised and discussed.

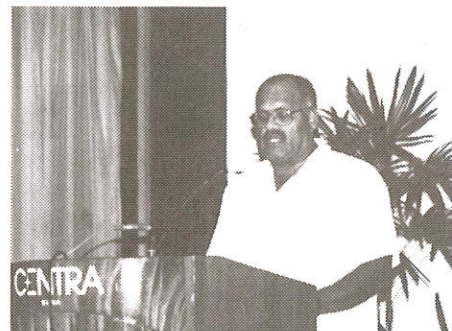
Some of the points raised were:

- What happens to the current legislation, once the new legislation is being introduced?
- Once the new legislation is in place, it may be difficult to prove that it is of a domestic

nature.

- With regards to Domestic Violence, it is automatically perceived as relating to women but indirectly it does also encompass children.

FWCC will be organising many more such discussions for public debate.



Commissioner of Police Isikia Savua

No charges yet in Meena Kumari case

In our April 1999 issue of the FWCC Newsletter, we ran a story about Meena Kumari, a 38 year old high school teacher, who died in hospital on 23 December 1998.

Meena had been allegedly beaten, starved and abused by her husband and was admitted to the CWM Hospital only after a neighbour reported the matter to police and the Department of Social Welfare. The Department then took Meena's children into custody. According to the doctors who

attended to Meena Kumari, she was diagnosed with tuberculosis and died from it as a result.

In the meantime her husband has not been charged for the abuse he is alleged to have inflicted on Meena Kumari and will not be.

Authorities have ruled that Meena Kumari died as a result of tuberculosis and not the abuse that she sustained. Her children are presently in state custody.

Meet the new FWCC staff

FWCC has recently recruited 5 new staff members and would like you to meet these women. Coming from diverse backgrounds, these women will add to the richness at FWCC.

Name: Lita Finau

Position: Receptionist

Previous Occupation:

Airline manageress.

Worked in the airline industry for 8 years.



Lita Finau



Sarah Pene

Name: Sarah Pene

Position: Information/ Research Officer

Background:

B.Sc Plant

Biology (Aust)

Previous Occupation:

Part time tutor for Aboriginal university students in Australia.

Name: Shobna Devi

Position: Part - time Counsellor

Shobna has been a volunteer at the FWCC for 6 months



Shobna Devi



Manor Piyare

Name: Manor Piyare

Position: Part - time Counsellor

Previous Occupation:

Secretary/ Supervisor

- Manor has also been a volunteer at the FWCC for 11 months.

Name: Swasti Chand

Position: Communications officer

Previous Occupation:

- Secondary school teacher

- Coordinator of the Citizens

Constitutional Forum



Swasti Chand



Presiding officers and Clerks from Paliament Houses listen to Shamima's presentation.

Visitors to FWCC

Visitors to the Centre over the last three months included Wendy Cook the Programme Director from Oxfam New Zealand, Madam Liu Hairong - The President, All Women's Federation of China, Cilla Ballard - AusAID Progamme Officer, Canberra and Dr Jimmie Rogers, Deputy Director of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Nabua, Suva.

We also had a visit from Presiding Officers, Clerks, Speakers and members Parliament from abroad. They were in Fiji for a meeting of Speakers, Parliamentarians and Staff of Parliament. Amongst the visitors were 2 members of the Fiji Parliament namely Assistant Minister for Health, Doctor Gunasegran Gounder and Ms Ofa Duncan, an Opposition MP.

Community Education Continues

The FWCC has seen community education as one of its most important roles. Thus, FWCC staff members spend a great deal of time and effort going out on community education programs. Below is an account of the talks and workshops that they have done in the past three months. Salote, Shamima, Fiu, Yishu, and Edwina conducted the following community education activities. They held talks and discussions on the following issues: violence against women, rape, child sex abuse, basic counselling skills, reproductive health, gender accountability, domestic violence and the role of the FWCC.

The groups to whom they spoke included: Catholic women at the World Union of Catholic Churches Day in Lami and Sigatoka, Government Managers in Labasa and Lautoka, secondary school students, rural health nurses at the Fiji School of Nursing, police officers from the sergeants course in Suva, Labasa and Lautoka, 70 second year medical students, Assemblies of God women (Western

division) and community members from Nadroga province.

The FWCC conducts commissioity education talks and workshops upon request and looks forward to receiving invitations from schools, clubs organisations and community groups.

We welcome the opportunity to share our knowledge and experience on gender issues, particularly on the issue of violence against women and children.



FWCC HOLDS FIRST AGM

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre was held for the first time on June 26 at the Bedara House in Korotogo, Sigatoka. The meeting was attended by the four trustees of the FWCC namely: Cema Bolabola, Miles Young, Ruth Lechte and Bernadette Rounds - Ganilau. Others who attended include the staff of the FWCC from Suva, Labasa, Ba and Lautoka.

Top on the agenda for the meeting included the FWCC proposed management structure which has been confirmed and for the FWCC Constitution and the Policy Manual to be amended accordingly. Other items that were discussed included the end of the year Financial Report for the FWCC, the achievements and major lessons learnt over the past four years and future plans.



Salote clarifies an issue at the AGM

MAKING THE MEDIA GENDER SENSITIVE

There was a discussion held with the Media on Monday the 21st of June at the FWCC office at 88 Gordon Street. The media representatives present were Luisa Tora and Virisila Buadromo from FM96 and Christine Khan and Arthur McCutchan from the Fiji Times. Other media organizations were invited as well but failed to attend. Prior to the discussion Shamima Ali the Co-ordinator of the FWCC read a paper titled "How can the Media be more Gender Sensitive". The discussion's prime objective was to highlight the current lack of gender sensitivity by the media and the need for them to adopt it immediately. This included things like the type of language used, the photographs that are published

with the stories and so on. Another thing that was up for discussion was the importance awarded to a story. For example if a woman got beaten up by her husband it would not make front page in the dailies but if a man gets bashed by his wife it does.

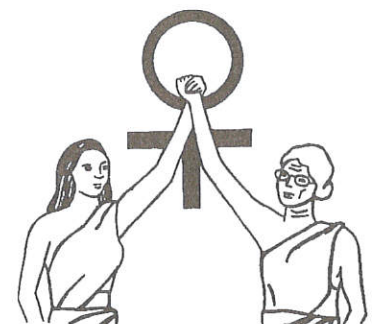
The response that the media representatives present at the discussion gave in relation to the above is what makes front page depends on what is newsworthy at the time and also what the public wants to read. The outcome of the presentation was a positive and encouraging one. However, there is still a dire need to continue lobbying for media to adopt a policy of gender sensitivity.



Media representatives at the discussion

SHAMIMA GIVES A TALK TO THE "BRIDGEBUILDERS"

On the 23rd of July, the Centre Co-ordinator Shamima Ali was invited to address the "BridgeBuilders", a network of Women from the Presbyterian Churches around the Pacific Rim who share faith while seeking peace and justice for all people. In her address Shamima spoke on Violence Against Women in Fiji and the Pacific Region, a history of the FWCC, the role that Churches could take up on difficult issues facing women and children and also the role of the media in our day to day programmes. A group of 50 women were involved in discussions after the talk and all agreed that they now had a much wider perspective of issues raised in Shamimas' talk. The consultation was held at the St Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Suva.



MOBILE COUNSELLING GOES TO RURAL AREAS

The FWCC has taken on a new counselling approach to reach rural areas and outlying islands. This move by the FWCC has been welcomed by the Ministry of Health and the counsellors are working closely with the District Medical Officers. The mobile counselling clinics will be stationed at local health centres and hospitals. These clinics are held to provide counselling, support and information to women in these remote areas who find it difficult to go to centres when they require the relevant support services. The clinics will be visiting various areas for a day or sometimes up to a week. Should the need arise there will be counsellors available to conduct counselling in either Fijian or Hindi.

The clinic will be in the following areas:

Venue	Date	
Nadi Health Centre	August	11-12
Sigatoka Health Centre	August	18-19
Rakiraki Health Centre	September	7-9
Levuka Health Centre	September	20-24
Vunisea Hospital	October	4-8
Taveuni Hospital	October	18-22
Savusavu Health Centre	November	1-5
Korovou Health Centre	December	1
Navua Health Centre	December	7
Nausori Health Centre	December	9



सलाह प्रदान करनेवाली सेवा अब देहाती इलाकों में

फीजी विमन्स काइसिस सेन्टर देहाती इलाकों तथा दूरवर्ती द्वीपों तक पहुंचने के लिए अपनी सलाहकारणी सेवाओं को नया रूप दे रहा है।

सेन्टर के इस कदम का स्वागत स्वास्थ्य मंत्रालय ने किया है और सलाहकार जिला के स्वास्थ्य अफसरों के साथ निकटतम रूप से काम कर रहे हैं।

चलती-फिरती सलाहकारणी सेवा यानी मोबायल क्लीनिक, हेल्थ सेन्टर और अस्पतालों में प्रदान की जाएगी।

क्लीनिक का उद्देश्य है इन दूरवर्ती इलाकों की महिलाओं को सलाह, समर्थन और जानकारी प्रदान करना, जो उपरोक्त सेवाओं के लिए केन्द्रों तक जा नहीं सकती हैं।

क्लीनिक विभिन्न इलाकों में एक दिन या कभी कभी एक हफ्ते तक भी रहेगा।

अगर आवश्यकता पड़ी तब सलाहकार फीजियन या अंग्रेजी भाषा में भी सलाह प्रदान करने के लिए उपलब्ध रहेंगे।

क्लीनिक निम्न इलाकों में होगा:

स्थान	तारीख
नांदी हेल्थ सेन्टर	11-12 अगस्त
सिंगातोका हेल्थ सेन्टर	18-19 अगस्त
राकीराकी हेल्थ सेन्टर	7-9 सितम्बर
लेवुका हेल्थ सेन्टर	20-24 सितम्बर
वुनिसिया अस्पताल	4-8 अक्टूबर
तव्युनी अस्पताल	18-22 अक्टूबर
सावुसावु हेल्थ सेन्टर	1-5 नवम्बर
कोरोवु हेल्थ सेन्टर	1 दिसम्बर
नावुआ हेल्थ सेन्टर	7 दिसम्बर
नौसोरी हेल्थ सेन्टर	9 दिसम्बर

NA VEIQARAVI ENA SO NA TAUDAKU NI KORO VAKAVAVALAGI

Oqo na: • veitalanoaveiwasei ena leqa ni veimaliwai ni bula vakavuvale
• veitokoni ena veivuke tale eso
• veitukutuku eso me kilai taumada ena veileqa e tara na bula ni tamata yadua

Eratou sa mai dolova e dua tale na sala vou ni veiqaravi na Fiji Womens' Crisis Centre ka veitokoni kina na tabacakacaka ni bula.

Ena vakayagataki eso na vei vale ni wai kei na vale ni bula mera na qaravi kina ko ira na marama kei ira na gone ka dredre na nodu gole mai, mera mai qaravi e vale ni volavola ka tiko e tauni.

Erau na veiqaravi tiko na i vakalesilesi ni soqosoqo na Fiji Womens' Crisis Centre ena vosa vakaidia kei na vakaviti ena veivanua oqo:

Nadi Health Centre
Okosita 11 & 12
Sigatoka Health Centre
Okosita 18 & 19
Rakiraki Health Centre
Sepiteba 7 - 9
Levuka Health Centre
Sepiteba 20 - 24 (1 na macawa)
Vunisea Hospital
Okotova 4 - 8 (1 na macawa)
Taveuni Hospital
Okotova 18 - 22 (1 na macawa)
Savusavu Health Centre
Noveba 1 - 5 (1 na macawa)
Korovou Health Centre
Tiseba 1
Navua Health Centre
Tiseba 7
Nausori Health Centre
Tiseba 9

