



Fiji Women's Crisis Centre

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NEWSLETTER MARCH 2011

We Remember...

WHILE MANY women celebrated International Women's Day by having parties, open days and meetings, two families this year lost their daughter/sister to extreme violence.

The first, 13yr old Atishma Lata, whose body was discovered floating in the Qawa River in early February.

On the evening before her body was found, Atishma had fed the chickens, then left home without informing anyone. After noticing her absence, family members informed police.

A search began half an hour later and her body was discovered the following morning. A juvenile has been charged with defilement and murder.

In the second incident, Karishma Nath, died after her husband allegedly poured kerosene on her and set her alight in late February.

The husband, Roneel Chand, has been charged with the murder. He has not taken a plea as yet.

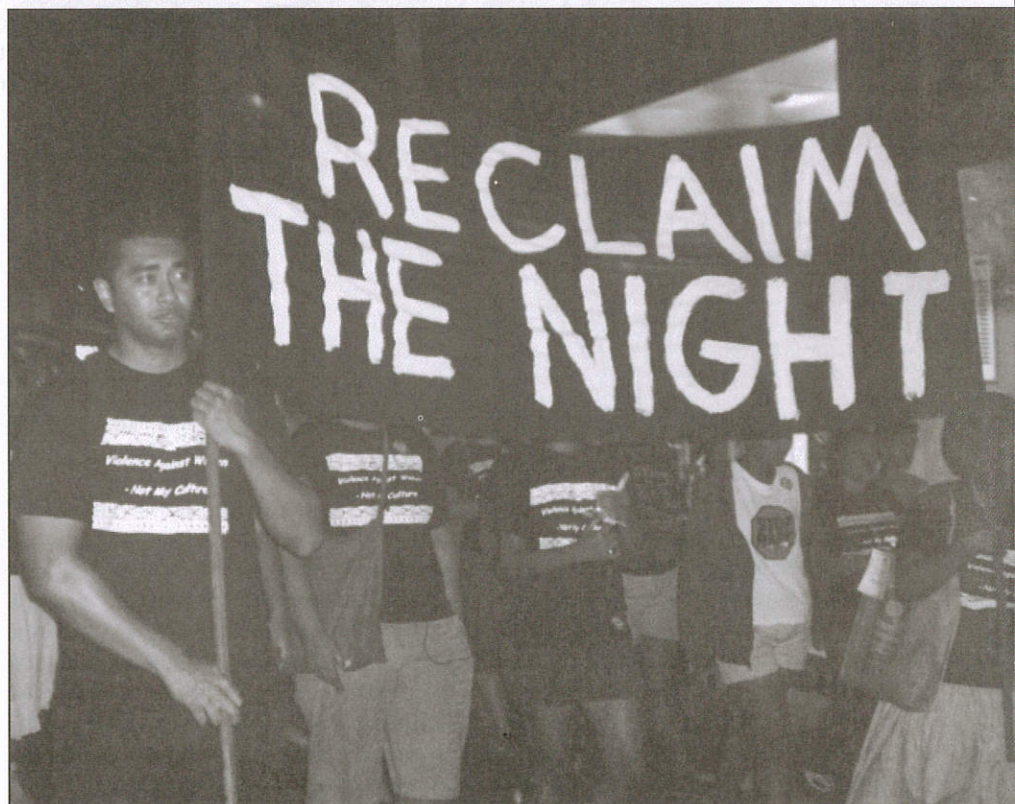
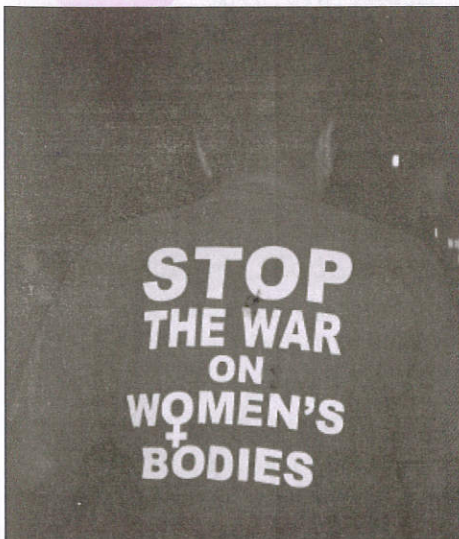
These are the women we remember on International Women's Day, women who did not have a chance at living their lives to the fullest because of violence.

These acts of senseless violence are the main reasons behind calls during the FWCC's Reclaim the Night March for SAFER HOMES, SAFER STREETS and SAFER NIGHTCLUBS and safer spaces for women and children.

FWCC Annual March given last minute go-ahead

"OUR NUMBERS for tonight's march may not be high, but one thing that is high is our spirit, our spirit in calling for safer streets, safer homes and safer nightclubs, and however small, this is our contribution to the movement that started International Women's Day all those years ago, calling for equal and human rights for all women".

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Friends and FWCC Staff at the "Reclaim the Night March" 2011



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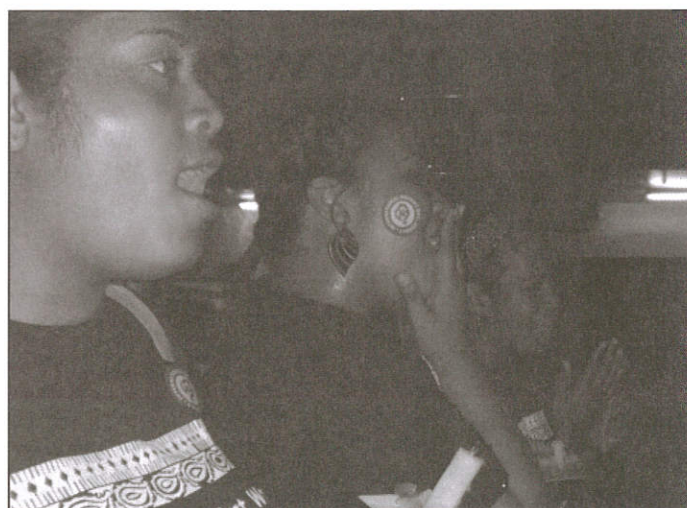
FWCC Annual March given last minute go-ahead

These are the words of Deputy Coordinator FWCC Edwina Kotoisuva at the Government Buildings when addressing around 50-60 women, men and children that were part of the 'Reclaim the Night' march on 8 March, International Women's Day.

She added, "whatever comes our way we will try as much as possible to continue to not be moved, to continue to fight for freedom, to continue to fight for human rights and to continue to fight for the lives of many women and children who live in violence, who live with the fear of violence but also who live in a system that at times does not protect them, does not offer them justice".

The modest numbers present this year, according to Kotoisuva, was in part due to the fact that the FWCC had not received a march approval for the Reclaim the Night march from the DO Suva, the National Command Centre and the PM's Office until the last minute (so to speak) and so the FWCC was not able to advertise the march beforehand in the media and call for support.

At around 2.30pm on 8 March, International Women's Day (exactly a month after the permit application was lodged), FWCC Deputy Coordinator Edwina Kotoisuva received a call from the Prime Minister's Office giving the FWCC clearance to hold its annual march calling for safer streets, homes and nightclubs and safer spaces for



women and children.

In past years, by March 8, placards and banners would have been made, t-shirts made and printed, advertisements on air and in the papers for closure of the march route and ads calling for more support for the 'Reclaim the Night' march from members of the public, with a permit given on the first week of March and around 300 supporters attending the FWCC annual event.

FWCC on International Women's Day

EVEN THOUGH the Police said that there is a decrease in domestic violence cases for the months of January to February this year in comparison to last year, the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre has recorded a slight increase in their numbers.

Deputy Coordinator Edwina Kotoisuva said, "For the period of January to February 2010, our offices around the country recorded a total of 154 new domestic violence cases and this year we recorded an 8% increase as we have attended to 167 cases in the same period".

The Police on the other-hand had recorded 15 cases in January and February last year and this had decreased this year (Fiji Times, March 4 p.16).

For the FWCC, marking 100 years of International Women's Day is about remembering the hundreds of women who continue to live with violence in their lives.

"International Women's Day came out of the women's movement and their struggles for equality so while we celebrate the many gains that we have made over the years, we should never lose sight of the fact that there are still many obstacles women face on a daily basis and violence is just one of them."

The FWCC says that the severity of the violence is something that should not be taken lightly and the community as a whole needs to get involved.

"Just last week a woman lost her life as a result of the violence she was experiencing in her life and this is not just a one-off incident – for many women it is a daily occurrence and the sad fact is people around her may know it is happening but they are not prepared to support her."

The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre urges all those concerned about the issue of rape and sexual assault



and especially those in positions of authority - to learn about the dynamics of sexual attacks and how they can help survivors of rape and help in prevention work against violence against women.

For information contact the FWCC on 3313 300.

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SPEAK OUT AGAINST VIOLENCE

"...THERE ARE many more women in our areas who are suffering at the hands of their husbands, partners and male relatives and who are probably at this moment wondering whether there would be a day when they would not cry...."

This is part of the speech by Labasa Women's Crisis Centre (LWCC) Project Officer Sera Bogitini while addressing hundreds of women at the Labasa Civic Centre on International Women's Day this year.

After observing a moment of silence for women who lost their lives to gender based violence, Bogitini continued, "some probably cannot remember the last time she laughed, had a cent in her hand, new clothes or a decent meal.

"Some women are kept in isolation and in captivity by the men in their lives and are further traumatised or are sexually abused. For some, their children are also abused".

Bogitini then challenged those present and asked what we as a people could do about these situations and added that we could do a lot if we put our minds to it.

She added we must not just speak out against these injustices women face in the home, in the streets and in the workplace

but we must, "report all domestic violence, rape, sexual harassment, child abuse to police and keep following it up to ensure that the offenders are taken to task!"

Bogitini also reminded everyone about the purpose of International Women's Day and how this was about the world wide women's movement and how they fought for political, economic and social rights 154 years ago in 1857 in New York.

Bogitini said, "countless numbers of women are struggling to gain their human rights in their communities, in their workplaces and in their homes and they need our support NOW".

Bogitini ended, "we need to declare our support by calling out to would be offenders:

GHARELU HINSA ROKIYE, (STOP DOMESTIC VIOLENCE), **BALAAKAR ROKIYE**, (STOP RAPE), **ASHLIL BEWHAR ROKIYE**, (STOP CHILD ABUSE), **ASHLIL HARKAT ROKIYE** (STOP SEXUAL HARASSMENT)



LWCC Project Officer Sera Bogitini addressing hundreds of women in Labasa for IWD
(Photo: Fiji Times)

Villages use IWD NWCC open day to learn more

INTERESTED VILLAGERS from Votualevu, Dratabu, Malolo, Meiguniyah, Navakai, Navoci and staff from AFL and Red Cross Nadi, visited the Nadi Women's Crisis Centre (NWCC) for their Open Day on International Women's Day (IWD) March 8.

Project Officer Torika Tabua said having an Open Day was their way of contributing to IWD and creating awareness that the NWCC does exist and is there to help women who experience violence/sexual abuse in their homes or at work.

Tabua said NWCC staff planned the day well, with viewing of Violence Against Women Documentaries, selling "Violence Against Women - Not My Culture" T-shirts, and handing out posters, brochures, pamphlets, newsletters and stickers.

She added, "it was really great to see that people are genuinely interested in the work that the NWCC does".



Women who attended IWD celebrations at the Labasa Civic Centre (Photo: Fiji Times)

Tabua said, "this awareness simply means that all the crisis centres around the country are being visible and are getting their messages across, people are becoming more aware and as this happens, the reporting of these crimes increase, as some women may have been frightened to come forward before but are doing so now because they know that there is support out there".

She said the NWCC staff not only waited for people to come to the centre

but distributed IWD stickers to market vendors, people walking in the streets and stakeholders.

Tabua added all of their Open Day visitors agreed with the international theme for this year's IWD was Equal Access to Education, Training, Science & Technology:- Pathway to Decent Work for Women and added that women need to be recognised for their contribution to different spheres of society.

Calendar of crimes

JANUARY

- Father-of-three found guilty in sexual assault case
- Youth jailed for five years for rape
- Man who hit ex-lover with a pinch bar sentenced to three years in jail
- 51yr old jailed for annoying and abusing a woman in his village

Jail for rapist uncle

FEBRUARY

- Man in court charged with wife's death
- Wife killer jailed for five years
- 37yr old labourer pleads guilty to indecent assault
- 64yr old sentenced to three years after pleading guilty to sexual assault of a 12yr old girl
- Teen faces sex, murder charge of 13yr old girl in Labasa
- 56yr old charged with multiple offences of indecent assault
- Man sentenced to 15 years in prison after he was found guilty of raping three year old girl

MARCH

- Three men charged with sexual assault, aggravated burglary and theft
- 50yr old to spend next six years in prison after hacking his wife with a cane knife
- Man charged with two counts of murder of woman and man, whose bodies were found in a cassava patch in Kasavu
- Accounts Clerk charged with wife's murder

Amputee spends time in jail for sex assault

SHALVEEN CHAND

A 61-year-old diabetic amputee was sentenced to 10 years in jail by the court in Labasa after pleading guilty to a sexual assault charge on a 12-year-old girl.

The court heard that after the attack, the perpetrator had the victim taken to the hospital for medical treatment.

because she was like your granddaughter. "Instead, you exploited her by giving small amount of money to stop her from reporting your crime," he said.

"I treat your early guilty plea, co-operation with the police, expression of remorse, previous good character, old age, illness and disability as mitigating factors," said Justice Gounder.

disability, these factors counterbalance the serious nature of offending by you. "You committed the offence in your old age and tarnished your previous good character. "The principle of general deterrence applies in your case. Your illness and disability is not such as to expose you to undue hardship in prison. "The prison will have a visitor you can see

Ba stakeholders meet on IWD

WOMEN IN Ba representing Social Welfare, Life Line Ba, Senior Citizens and Legal Aid Commission came together for an inter-agency meeting to commemorate International Women's Day (IWD) March 8.

The meeting was facilitated by the Ba Women's Crisis Centre as part of the IWD celebrations.

Topics discussed included the work of the BWCC and its goal to eliminate all violence against women, the counselling offered and community education.

Project Officer Wilma Eileen said there was a lot of discussion on Child Sexual Abuse counselling, the Domestic Violence restraining order and whether or not police officers know their duties when women report domestic violence cases to them.

Eileen said a lot of the reps had relayed to her that the meeting was very beneficial as they got a chance to meet other service providers, to network



Some of the Interagency Meeting participants taking time out from discussions

and to improve referral systems.

She added it was also a good opportunity to meet with the new service providers and Heads of Departments.

FWCC on International Women's Day

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Also, the FWCC says that it is important that when women do want to access justice, they are able to do so through a system that is supportive and sensitive.

"A High Court Judge said last week that he noted the lack of commitment on the part of the Police to enforce the Domestic Violence Decree and this matches the experience of many women so before we can talk about the empowerment of women, we need to ensure that the systems are in place and working for them", said

Kotoisuva.

In addition, Coordinator Shamima Ali says this year the FWCC will be focusing more on the prevention of sexual violence (rape, sexual harassment and abuse) against women adding that this will be done through the continuous awareness programs that the Centre undertakes in schools, in rural areas, workshops and trainings.

The FWCC is marking International Women's Day with the sharing of information and dissemination of materials to raise awareness about the issue of violence against women.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION

FEBRUARY

- Talks to 42 men of the Delainavesi Motusa Men's Church Group on Gender, Violence Against Women (VAW), Domestic Violence (DV), Sexual Assault (SA), Child Sexual Abuse (CSA)
- Talks to 40 women of the Delainavesi Motusa Men's Church Group on Gender, VAW, DV, SA, CSA
- Talks to 28 men of the Delainavesi Motusa Men's

Church Group on Gender and VAW

MARCH

- Radio Talkback on Fiji Broadcasting Corporation Limited's (FBCL) Radio Fiji Two and Radio Fiji One on International Women's Day (IWD)
- Radio Talkback on FBCL's 2Day FM on IWD
- Radio Talkback on Communication Fiji Limited's Radio Sargam on IWD