

fem'TALK June 2008

THE MONTHLY ENEWS BULLETIN OF femLINKPACIFIC: MEDIA INITIATIVES FOR WOMEN in collaboration with members of the Regional Women's Media Network on UN Security Council resolution 1325

Regional & International Spotlight on Women Peace and Security

by Sharon Bhagwan Rolls

While October 31st is the annual anniversary of unanimous adoption of UN Security Council resolution 1325 (UNSCR1325), June is the month, when in our region, Women, Peace and Security makes its way onto the agenda of the Forum Regional Security Committee (FRSC).

Since the 2006 Gender, Conflict, Peace and Security meeting convened by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, femLINKPACIFIC has worked to establish a regional women's media network to document and promote the work of Pacific Peacewomen to advance the implementation of UNSCR1325 at national, regional as well as international levels. This network, has grown from the pilot projects initially supported by the UNIFEM Pacific regional project on Women, Peace and Security, and opportunities to work with international partners such as the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security and its members including the International Women's Tribune Centre, the Peacewomen project of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and the Inclusive Security/Sustainable Peace: Women Waging Peace network. This year, the network is also focused on strengthening our policy advocacy at national level, through the initial implementation of our Peace Talks programme with our 3 partners. We have also commended development of our first policy document which will highlight critical women, peace and human security issues and recommendations.

The regional women's media network on UNSC resolution 1325 is coordinated by femLINKPACIFIC (based in Suva, Fiji) and includes the Legal Literacy Project of the CWL Tonga, Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency of Bougainville (PNG), Vois Blong Mere Solomon (Honiara).

And so, in late May, Pacific Peacewomen met again and this time with the assistance of facilitators Koila Costello Olsson and Felicity Hill, and together with our 3 regional correspondents (Kalolaine Fifita, Louise Anne Laris and Lisa Horiwapu) we worked through an intensive agenda that included: Preparation and participation in the second round of the Fiji Peace Talks Dialogue between NGO women and government officials; Preparation and participation in the Pacific Forum Regional Security Committee Track II process; Presentation at the FRSC retreat session on Women, Peace and Security and to also prepare for our next phase of work in the Regional Women's Media Network on 1325, in particular our policy and advocacy work and finalise national implementation plans for the Peace Talks programme.

Entering the world of peace and security policy can be daunting but not impossible to permeate, as we all discovered together during the two weeks together. It was another opportunity to strengthen our network as we learnt the difference between Track I and Track II – Asked why is traditional security considered “hard security” and human security “soft” security or why can't we also discuss issues of traditional security?

We learnt that preparation, whether it was for a Track II presentation or an informal retreat session needs just as much research and preparation as a formal speech or paper. We also learnt that negotiations are experienced at various levels. Within our regional network, we negotiate to identify common issues while we listen to the experiences of all our partners and make the relevant linkages. We also negotiate within our broader CSO or NGO network, and of course, we also need to negotiate when contributing to official papers and sessions. Understanding this process also helped us reaffirm our role as a media network, with the potential to provide vital anecdotal information, the stories of the women, in our countries.

And so on the basis of our work developed a collective position for Track II:

Why engage with civil society and peacewomen?

- **Civil society can bring independent and early warning information to the regional level**, deepening the understanding about the situations in our countries, for example, there is tension brewing in Bougainville and Tonga – why and what are the policy responses that civil society recommends?
- **Engagement with civil society is a conflict prevention mechanism in itself**; one of the costs of government not being open and accountable is conflict;
- **Sometimes we speak a different language**, so we need to learn each others language, which we can only do that by talking and engaging. Engagement can also break down assumptions and perceptions that non-governmental organisations are anti-governmental organisations – very often our criticism is an attempt to support and help government to work better, or with accurate information. When we explained, for example, the concepts of human rights in local terms, they were not seen as such a hostile imposition of a western concept;
- **We need regional approaches to many issues**, and Pacific Forum countries can support each other, for example to do some long-term capacity building, to increase the number of trained mediators, and the skills of envoys, eminent persons and restorative justice people who can be deployed.
- **Track II processes on the regional level pave the way for national level dialogue** to prepare, strengthening and regularizing the contact
 - a) among NGOs need to increase their preparation, participation and leadership
 - b) between NGOs and government - mechanisms for communication between NGOs and governments need to be strengthened or invented. Standing consultative committees with regular meetings, and opportunities to hold ad hoc dialogues on issues as they arise should be taken. This will increase the participation, engagement and support that civil society can offer towards security.

What are our civil society concepts of security issues?

- **Security concepts are thoughts, perceptions, interpretations, beliefs**, which shape how security is delivered.
- **Civil society has played a part in developing the Human Security model**, reframing and redefining security to include economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, political security. These are all parts of security that are ignored if only a military or state security concept prevails;
- **All the 7 aspects of human security are relevant**; unemployment is quite high, people have no money and have to walk miles because they can't afford the

bus. The rise in violence is directly related to the economic pressures. Poverty means women are sold, exchanged for money, bride price, so when women are abused and seek their family's support they are sent back to the abuser because he has "paid" for women, in the past the bride price was to bond families, but now it is about women as objects;

- **Civil society has a more localized perspective**, because we are close to the ground. We know because we are doing it – we know that security and insecurity are experienced differently by people from different levels in the community;
- **Civil society see a very important role for information** - security can be created and reduced depending on the kind of information that is communicated which can build knowledge and wisdom. Lack of information can build mistrust, fear and can breathe life into rumours;
- **Civil society knows that when guns are around it changes everything**. I am not free to claim my land rights, my personal security as a woman and as a land owner is reduced. In Bougainville there are guns and people do not access their freedom of expression; because guns are there, people are scared to speak their mind, make decisions, and go anywhere they want to go. Women are being raped at gunpoint, there is still fighting going on there, guns are still being used. Police are scared of guns, police cannot do their work, they cannot enforce the law because of the guns. Chiefs have very limited power now, the power is the hands of people who are known to have guns, the whole community is not secure, chief cannot make decisions because he is scared to;
- **As civil society people, our concepts of security are when we are free to make decisions and to have our rights**; when we are free to say things about our land; when we are free to access the things that we rightfully own, and when we are able to be in decision making, using the resources – then we have security.

What are our concepts of responses to security issues – CSO PERSPECTIVES?

- **CSOs feel that state responses to human security of women particularly slow**: How fast can police respond to our needs, who are they responding to? Too often our experience is that violations of women's security, such as domestic violence or rape cases, they don't come at all or they are very slow, there is no fuel etc. But when the government calls them to chase somebody or for security they respond quickly. Whose security is given priority, or is more important?
- **CSOs experience risk when they try to respond to security issues of women**: when, for example, we push for rapists to be prosecuted, we are targeted. When we step up to speak for peace and dialogue, we are targeted by people from both sides who see us as traitors;
- **CSOs feel the state response too often militarised**: Responses not just how fast we can deploy truck loads of men in green, we can utilise existing traditional forums, dialogue and mediation, as well as clearer information communication. Non-violent responses need to be invested in as much, if not more, than militarised security responses through increasing the number and capacities, mandate, role and formal standing of community peace builders;
- **CSOs experience that the international military or policing security response distorts our economies**: With the presence of RAMSI prices on goods are escalating, accommodation too, because of fat salaries the internationals are getting. Families are feeding their children with biscuits and noodles; there is an increase in prostitution, although the consultation between

civil society organisations in the training of RAMSI troops was quite good. 50 Kina (25 dollars) is what a 10 kilo packet of sugar costs in Bougainville. In Solomons, one mandarin is 2.50. 20 kilo bag of rice 170 Solomon dollars, that's in Honiara, in the rural areas 200. 88 dollars (20 Fiji dollars) for 10 kilos of rice. We are told to plant more vegetables, grow less flowers! But the internationals could stop importing water and bananas, which are plentiful. The internationals need to bring more women as part of their forces.

- **CSOs find that during a security crisis, symbolic responses are very powerful**, civil society do symbolic vigils, standing, sitting, insisting to be heard through non-violent action;
- **CSOs find that too often the response of government to a security crisis is to close down information and communication**, when we feel the opposite impulse should prevail by opening up channels of communication and information. Linked to this, enabling legal frameworks for civil society participation is a good way to build mechanisms that can be utilised at times of crisis;
- **CSO often respond to security issues by doing research, generating petitions, and letters** that indicate a planned series of actions, and sometimes this informs the government or parliament of just how much opposition there is to an idea, such as casinos in Tonga;
- **CSOs work to go beyond our comfort zones, and reach across the divides**, civil society isn't immune or innocent in conflict dynamics but doesn't isolate as much, tends to create spaces of dialogue between people of different opinions. At the end of each conflict, the parties come together to talk – fast tracking that and creating opportunities to talk, even if its very uncomfortable and difficult needs to be done at the start;
- **Trauma and healing must be part of the security response.**

The network was extremely proud, that Helen Hakena was invited to provide a brief introduction to the Track II participants and while some of our network members were disappointed that members from their official delegations were not present at the Track II session, or that their ideas were cut-short in the group presentations, there was a mood of elation and accomplishment: *"The preparation was really useful, I felt confident to listen and participate; When one country representative said that he didn't understand security, then I asked him do you have domestic violence? do you have food on your table? are you preparing for climate change? Yes, we have plans, he said.....Gender issues were in the thinking from the outset because of Helen's speech and because Sharon gave the first report back..!!"*

And so it was on to the FRSC retreat session and an opportunity to speak to the official paper alongside the Permanent Secretary for Peace and Reconciliation of the Solomon Islands Government and seek the endorsement of officials of our "wish list".

Our network was hoping that officials would recognise the need to support the further operationalization of "1325". We hoped that they would...

Say "Yes" to ongoing collaboration and partnership with Pacific Peacewomen

Say "Yes" to an Annual Pacific Forum statement at the UN Security Council Open Debate

Say "Yes" to incorporate "1325" into the Biketawa Declaration

Say "Yes" to equitable representation of Pacific Peacewomen as advisers, envoys and eminent persons

Say "Yes" to implementation of recommendations from the 2006 Gender Conflict Peace and Security consultation and 2007 Women, Peace and Human Security Consultation

Say "Yes" to Women at the Peace and Security Table

While this was a closed session, our regional media network welcomed the opportunity to be able to speak directly with the officials present and provide linkages between their formal agenda, as well as incorporating a women's human rights framework into the human security agenda.

Upon further reflection, participating in Session 2 was a further step to advance women, peace and security issues into official spaces, especially one, up until 2006, had very limited engagement with Peacewomen. And so since that initial journey with the FRSC in 2006, we believe our small network has been adding to the contributions and the gains of Pacific Peacewomen who have paved the way for us, and we feel that these small steps are important milestones to be celebrated and as we saw the inclusion of those three words: Women, Peace and Security, in the outcomes statement of the FRSC, we felt that they were not little words, but a growing recognition that Pacific Peacewomen will continue to be part of the development of the region's peace and security framework.

Meanwhile upon conclusion of our regional meetings, our network's focus shifted to New York where members of Peace and Human Rights Networks, government missions and gender advisers were gearing up for June 19th when the United Nations Security Council was set to debate the relevance of sexual violence in conflict to its work. The Security Council is mandated by the UN Charter to address situations that threaten international peace and security, including violations of international law (such as rape) that rise to this level. The Council consists of 15 member states, all of whom would have to agree to the proposed resolution on sexual violence for it to pass. Presently the Council is composed of China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, United States--the five permanent members and Belgium, Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, Croatia, Indonesia, Italy, Libya, Panama, South Africa and Vietnam--the non-permanent members. The debate was to be chaired by the US Government.

For many Peacewomen and human rights activists the time was now to ensure member states of the UN pay greater attention to, as well as analyze and address the occurrence of sexual violence in all conflict-affected situations on its agenda. It was felt that to date the Council's record on raising concerns on this issue has been inconsistent, only recently issuing strong statements on the appalling levels of sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo—a conflict that has been marred by unconscionable violence for years—and hardly any mention of rape and other forms of sexual abuse in Cote d'Ivoire, where nongovernmental and humanitarian organizations systematically have documented continued use of such violence by all sides of the conflict.

However, in the lead up to the debate, UN member states are asked to tread with caution, so as not to dilute existing commitments to women, peace, security and human rights:

"A new resolution should take us forward boldly, with clear benchmarks, commitments, directives, programming and resources that build on progress that

has been made. In war zones, women and their dependents deserve nothing less," say Sanam Anderlini and Cora Weiss, who were both members of the NGO working group who enabled the drafting of the landmark Security Council resolution, 1325, on Women, Peace and Security.

According to them the new resolution, proposed by the outgoing Bush administration did not strengthen 1325 provisions but undermined the existing commitments. Anderlini and Weiss wrote:

"Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security that was adopted unanimously in 2000 and is a watershed moment in international affairs. SCR 1325 emerged out of a long standing consultative process with women in war zones. It covers the breadth of issues that affect their daily lives. It is grounded in 3 key pillars, of prevention of conflict and violence; protection of women and civilians during and after conflict; and most importantly participation of women and recognition of their contributions to peace making and peacebuilding. The agenda is broad, the vision is grand, not because women were idealistic, but because they experienced the reality and lived with the consequences of failed international peace and conflict prevention efforts. "

Anderlini is the former Director of the Policy Commission of Women Waging Peace where she developed and produced a series of field-based case studies on women's contributions to peace processes. Previously she was the Senior Policy Advisor at International Alert advocating for a UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security. She has written numerous pieces on the role of women in peace processes including Women at the Peace Table: Making a Difference for UNIFEM, the UN Development Fund for Women, and Women's Leadership, Gender, and Peace for the Ford Foundation. Prior to her work on women and peace building, she was the managing editor at the Forum on Early Warning and Early Response, a conflict early warning network. In 1996, she co-authored Civil Wars, Civil Peace: An Introduction to Conflict Resolution. Sanam Naraghi Anderlini holds an MPhil in Social Anthropology from Cambridge University.

Weiss the President of the Hague Appeal for Peace, has been well known as a peace activist since the early '60's, when she was a co-founder of Women Strike for Peace which played a major role in bringing about the end of nuclear testing in the atmosphere. She was a leader in the anti-Vietnam war movement, organized demonstrations, including the largest one on November 15, 1969 in Washington, DC. As Co-Chair and Director of the Committee of Liaison with Families of Prisoners Detained in Vietnam, she organized the exchange of mail between families and POW's in Vietnam which revealed and names of those alive and arranged for and accompanied some returning POW pilots. For ten years Ms Weiss was a volunteer teacher in the NY City public school system. As a Trustee of Hampshire College, she started the campus campaign to divest stocks in companies doing business in South Africa. She has a long record of support for the United Nations, starting in the 1950's when she hosted colonized Africans who were petitioning for the independence of their countries. She has devoted most of her life to the peace movement, the movement for the advancement of women, and the civil rights movement. As President of the Hague Appeal for Peace, she is leading a campaign dedicated to the abolition of war. It seeks to re-focus our minds on the vision of a world in which violent conflict is publicly acknowledged as illegitimate, illegal, and fundamentally

unjust. To implement that vision, the Hague Appeal for Peace has launched a Global Peace Education Campaign.

As we worked through the resolution across time zones, from the northern to the southern hemisphere and back, in the lead up to June 19th, I recalled that this was not the first time that the US Government would have attempted to re-open negotiated and adopted language. Women's human rights advocates will recall efforts to re-open negotiations on language addressing Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights in the lead up to Beijing Plus 10.

No wonder, Weiss and Anderlini were concerned that political posturing and talk about bringing depth to SCR 1325, would actually serve to enable more equivocation and foot dragging or re-open negotiations on a resolution that has already been negotiated by member states including some who sit on the Council today: "1325 did not come easily, there was and still is much resistance to it. But it exists. It is international law, and those who claim to support it, should focus on implementation, not on new words and more rhetoric," they said.

What was urgently needed, they said, was a global gathering of actors - state, UN, NGOs - to share information about what is being done on 1325: "We are in danger of being led by people who don't know the full scale of work going on; who see things from the New York world view only - but who have a platform and keep saying 'that 1325 is too general, can't be done' - and thus diminishing and making invisible the breadth and diversity of work in a whole range of countries."

This would also ensure that further and strengthened implementation of UNSCR1325 would actually be done in consultation with women around the world, just as the existing security council resolution was developed: "We as advocates, as the UN system, as people privileged to live in rich peaceful countries have no right to determine for women in conflict areas - what issues are priorities and what is not. This resolution prioritises one issue over a host of the world (contrary to 1325) - thus it is a world power picking up an agenda and framing it as it wishes - not as women in the world want.

While our network welcomed the announcement the upcoming debate at the UN Security Council which will address sexual violence in conflict, we also supported Anderlini and Weiss's call for implementation, rather than re-negotiation! Members of our network, after all, are well aware that for too long the reality of sexual based violence during times of conflict has not been addressed substantively even though UN SC resolution 1325, adopted on October 31, 2000, has a clear commitment to ensuring the protection of women during times of conflict.

We also believed that this was a timely debate for the Pacific region's members at the UN to contribute too, as there is genuine concern for the need to also ensure upholding of human rights standards by all peace support operations and peacekeeping troops, including those from this region.

It was a further opportunity to highlight the commitments made to women, peace and security the preceding week's Forum Regional Security Committee meeting. It was an opportunity for Pacific Forum Leaders to also assert a Pacific commitment to addressing gender based violence as a peace and security issue.

Our network noted, that like many of the Peacewomen discussing the draft resolution that for too long the reality of sexual based violence during times of conflict has not been addressed substantively even though UN SC resolution 1325, adopted on October 31, 2000, has a clear commitment to ensuring the protection of women during times of conflict:

"Furthermore, when the Security Council adopted this watershed political framework, it made a legal and binding commitment which makes women and a gender perspective relevant to negotiating peace agreements, planning refugee camps and peacekeeping operations, and reconstructing war-torn societies. It makes the pursuit of gender equality relevant to every single Council action, ranging from mine clearance to elections to security sector reform. The Security Council recognized that international peace and security are advanced when women are included in decision-making and when they contribute to peace-building. This debate should further strengthen efforts to ensure protection of women and communities who bear the brunt of the worst type of violence. We stand in solidarity with other peacewomen and activists who have been working to end the impunity on such crimes. The debate should also help guide and assist Pacific women's human rights defenders and other agencies, ensure the protection of women at times conflict, and also pave the way to address the reports of sexual based violence during our recent conflicts, as well as the ongoing threat of armed violence in our region."

We also reiterated that the UN system must stand by its commitment within UNSCr1325 (protection) and therefore ensure that any UN peacekeeper involved in sexual abuse/exploitation **MUST BE PROSECUTED** by international tribunal; additionally civilian international staff involved in sexual abuse/exploitation must also be prosecuted.

Victims must be given care and reparations (whatever is needed) to enable them to live their lives with dignity; at the moment it is of critical concern that they get nothing and are further ostracised in their communities

Humanitarian operations must be designed with the prevention of sexual and gender based violence integrated from the outset, this includes the provision of firewood, blankets that are being enough, shelters, lighting etc

In the words of one of our sister-organisations from Uganda: "We pray that this thinking will yield positive results for all women in conflicts situations. This is what we at Isis - WICCE have been calling for a decade now. Working and documenting the voices of women in situations of conflict has for years questioned what is meant by building peace in conflict situations when the discussion does not focus on the violation of sexuality of women, when we all know it is the core reason for the continuous violation and marginalisation of the road to equality! We have just finalised documenting Liberia!, a county that all of us have now forgotten! And the situation is pathetic. sexual violence is the norm! Women were and continue to be sexually abused to an extent that some think is the norm for them to survive! it a commercial product for their survival! This inhuman action must stop!

Post Script: UNSCr 1820 to End Sexual Violence in Conflict was adopted on June 19th. While we welcome the Pacific contribution to the open debate and the linkage with human security, Pacific peacewomen also recognise the need to also consider the impact and realities of armed violence, political crises and the continuing presence of arms and guns in Pacific societies. The outcomes of the recent debate

must also give closer consideration to investing in actual implementation of existing women's human right commitments such as UN SC resolution 1325 and ensuring women are able to participate in the process of rebuilding and transforming societies from conflict to sustainable peace - the transitional stage from conflict and peace is also when women and girls remain vulnerable to all forms of violence and exploitation

(The Pacific Statement of June 19, the FRSC Outcomes statement and UNSC statement on resolution 1820 are featured from Pages 14 - 19 of this bulletin)

From the Regional Women's Media Network on UN Security Council resolution 1325

Helen Hakena speaks at FRSC Track II Dialogue:

This discussion today is about civil society and governments working together for peace and security. Thank you for inviting me to share with you my experience. I am here with colleagues from the FemLINK Regional Media Network. We are from that part of civil society which is working for women's rights through peace and non-violence.

Civil society in the Pacific region has paved the way for dialogue and consultation between rebels and governments, such as in the Solomon Islands and in my island home Bougainville. During the conflict in Bougainville, women went into the jungle to urge negotiation; they took messages to and from the conflict actors.

The first cease fire agreement in 1992 was enabled by women. We provided clothing to the rebels. This was more important than it sounds; if they couldn't sit at the table with dignity, they couldn't negotiate. I personally was dropped from a helicopter into the No Go Zone to deliver this clothing.

Two weeks later, women leaders were seen as neutral actors. We were flown into the jungles to reach out to other women, asking them to also come out of the jungle and to stop the fighting. Women from all areas – in the government controlled areas and the No Go Zone – could easily agree that we could not lose any more children to malaria and hunger, that the killing had to stop and negotiations had to begin.

In 1995 there was no formal government in Bougainville, there was also no freedom of speech or movement. Women in civil society again broke through these barriers by organising a silent peace march, dressed in black, holding banners they had sown. Our symbolic action was about women weaving Bougainville back together. Our peace march was a dangerous act at that tense time. But because it was documented, it meant we could get our demand for peace out to the world, and also to those in the No Go Zone.

When the Pacific Forum Peace Monitors arrived in Bougainville, they didn't know who to trust and turned to the women for advice and information about how to nurture and build peace. They provided an enabling environment for us to work, helping the women of Buka to meet with the women from other districts. They set up open spaces to discuss – bringing civil society together with the BRA and the resistance fighters. This regular, reliable meeting point broke down the barriers; it meant we could address issues and human rights violations as they occurred. Alongside these

meetings we had women's meetings too, space for women to speak with the peace monitors; I believe we helped their work very much.

Sometimes our peace work is very risky. It is not easy to do peace work during conflict because of the presence of guns, hostility and mistrust. Women have called for the destruction of the containers of weapons that were gathered by the UN in Bougainville. Two containers have been broken into, and the weapons have caused deaths. It is fair to say that the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration programme in Bougainville was a disaster, badly designed and badly managed, and a good example of exactly what not repeat. The UN has recently developed guidelines for DDR, and includes a gender Standard Operating Procedure which must be used in the future.

Bougainville is full of guns, which strongly impacts on our freedom of expression. People are scared to speak their minds, make decisions, and move freely. Women are being raped at gunpoint. Police are afraid and cannot do their work; they cannot enforce the law because of the guns. Chiefs have very limited power now; their cultural position has been removed because power is in the hands of people who have guns. Women have consistently alerted to the need for disarmament but because we don't have guns, we are not included in the decision-making. However, we are very affected by this situation.

Civil society is brave, but our work costs lives. Women have been raped, tortured and humiliated. I have received threatening letters and death threats. I have been told to stop organising women's meetings at the point of a gun. I have received threats to my children, so much that I had to send my daughter to a boarding school in Port Moresby. But it didn't stop me working for peace.

And still today it is necessary to continue to take risks for peace. This week in my country, my organisation spoke out against a decision taken by our President to reopen the Panguna mine, the mine at the centre of the conflict in Bougainville. Without consulting the landowners, without even consulting the parliament, the President has signed a contract with a Canadian company which will reopen the mine and take 70 per cent of the profits from our rich land.

Land is owned by women in Bougainville. And we have learned lessons from the war experience. We have learned that the government must consult in an open and transparent way, especially about something as sensitive as the Panguna Mine. The Women's Minister was the only person who opposed this deal, and for standing up and representing people, and for trying to prevent conflict, she was sacked. As a conflict prevention measure, bringing early warning information from civil society, I ask you all to pay close attention to what is happening in Bougainville, and also to urge the President to reinstate the Women's Minister and reverse the illegal decision about the Panguna Mine.

Civil society can support governments by demanding and working for peace and dialogue. Governments should more routinely and regularly consult with civil society because we can provide early warning to prevent tensions from brewing. When Sergio de Milo was the UN head in East Timor, he set up a monthly civil society meeting. It was a clearing house, a place where ideas and complaints could be heard, and where information could be shared and built upon. It worked there, to build familiarity, and to increase understanding; a similar regular interaction can work on the national and regional level.

Peacekeeping forces should consult civil society also. The RAMSI mission has benefited from listening to women, and from including civil society input to the training of police and military going to the Solomons. You should understand however, that there is a strong impact when internationals come to our countries with their large salaries and needs for housing. Food prices and accommodation in the Solomons severely impact the human security of women, men and children. If you come to protect and provide security, but leave us hungry, our security is not complete; in fact, hunger is the basis for increased tension and fighting.

Civil society can be a resource and a support to government. Sometimes we are seen as anti-government in our work. Yes, we are **non**-governmental, that doesn't mean we are **anti**-governmental. Our criticisms and reports are designed to alert government to needs they are neglecting, and to help governments work better. Because we are close to the people, close to the grassroots, we can feel the fear and divisions when tension arises, and that information is actually a resource for governments.

Thank you for listening to my experiences from Bougainville. I look forward to a rich discussion about our concepts of security and the best security responses that can be made to address the many challenges to human security.

Correspondents Perspectives ...from Community to Policy Advocacy

Louise Ann Laris works for the Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency in Bougainville, PNG, serving as the regional media correspondent, reflects on her growth in the network, since the regional partners consultation in September last year:

"During the last consultation I was not too sure of my role and my job was new to me. It was also my first time as a young woman to join an NGO and to do or document women's stories. I didn't know how I would link my stories.

Since our latest consultation in Suva, I have discovered more deeply and learnt more about the linkages with UNSCR1325 and CEDAW and our work in Bougainville. This is what we should be using to advocate for women's inclusion and participation at all levels. Therefore, I was fortunate to learn how women have struggled to be heard by their governments and the United Nations. It was a long struggle which I as a young woman appreciate. Many young women in the Pacific are not as fortunate as us in the media initiative. With this I am so thankful and full of praise to those who went before us."

"On Thursday 29th May 2008, was my first time to sit in and experience first hand how NGOs can dialogue with officials as the Fiji women at our meeting staged their Peace Talks dialogue. I appreciated being part of this process. Everyone at the official table had an opportunity to ask questions. For me, having a dialogue is better than face to face confrontation. There is better understanding of both parties' issues. The facilitators also prepared the participants well to meet with the officials. Unfortunately only one official from the Women's Department turned up and we found out that a lot of the government officials were busy overseas, or they commit to an appointment and something else comes up and so they don't attend the NGO programme. Anyway, this process also helped us as the regional network partners from Tonga, Bougainville and the Solomons to see first hand what we will do in our countries later this year, when we host the Peace Talks programme."

"During the programme, I noticed how the organisers and facilitators were also mindful that each country had different issues of concerns and provided a space for country discussions to allow participants to priorities issues."

"And then it came to FRSC. At first I didn't understand what FRSC is, what was its role was until the facilitators explained thoroughly what it is. Now I am able to refer to this committee with confidence. Again I know the young women attending this consultation are most fortunate to be able to come close to the table at the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. Even Track II Dialogue was just too much for me at the beginning, just looking at the program mad me scared. I thought I would not understand or follow the experience women in the room. But they too were new to Track II Dialogue so we were lucky to have counterparts from the UNDP Pacific Centre and the Forum Secretariat come and share their knowledge with us., explaining what it is and who attends."

"My work continues to be a privilege and a great opportunity for me to gain confidence and fully understand women's issues. I am pleased to be a member of this network."

♀

Kalolaine Latu Allison Tangimeimuli Fifita is 21 years old and recently joined the Legal Literacy Programme of the Catholic Women's League in Tonga, where she serves as the organisation's regional correspondent. This is her story:

"I am 21st years old and I am residing at Ma'ufanga, Nuku'alofa, Tonga. I come from a family of seven. I have 5 sisters and 1 brother, and I am the second to the youngest. My father is an accountant, my mother is a housewife and I come from a big extended family. I am currently a student at the University of the South Pacific (USP) Tonga Campus, studying for my degree majoring in Financial Accounting and Pacific English Literature. This is my third year in the University and already I have completed half of the course, planning to finish by the end of next year."

"I started working at the Legal Literacy Project-which is a human right project promoting women and children's rights, on the 12th of May, 2008 as the regional media correspondent for femLINKPACIFIC. I am proud to be in this 1325 network in helping women and young women of Tonga, by reaching out to them and documenting their stories on issues they face. During this few weeks as a regional correspondence I have learnt a lot by reading and listening to women's stories about violence's they face in their community homes."

"Recently I travelled to Suva to also attend our network meeting and this was also my first trip away from home!"

"The 2 weeks of consultations and planning has been a very big learning experience for me. Firstly I got to meet our regional network partners from Fiji, Solomon Islands and from Papua New Guinea; sharing their stories on the reality that they are facing in their respective countries. Adding on to that is that the training was very informative. I received a lot of information that really exposed my mind to what is happening in our communities and the importance of peace and security to our countries. I was also excited to hear how much work this regional network done together and it really inspires me as a young woman to feel responsible for making

of women's issues visible. Not only that but I have also learnt from our rich full discussions sharing with each other issues and experiences that we personally faced or is experienced by the community as a whole, that has reflect a need for peace and security."

"Another learning experience for me was my first time to go on radio with femLINKPACIFIC's community radio station – femTALK 89.2FM. I felt very excited to share with the people what we do in our organization and how important it is for women's issues to be heard."

"Overall, these few weeks in Suva has been a special way to start my work as a regional correspondent, and the training has been valuable and exciting too and I am looking forward to work together with all our regional network partners in telling women's stories, making their issues visible, be heard and to make known their role as peace educators recognized."

Translation Initiatives

femLINKPACIFIC is please to announce the availability of UN Security Council resolution text in Tongan, PNG Pidgin and Solomon Islands Pidgin. The translations will soon be available on our website, and will be featured in our Peace Talks project publication. Hindustani and Fijian language translations are also in progress.

More femTALK 1325

Source: IWTC Women's Global Net

ARRIA FORMULA MEETING ON SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT-AFFECTED COUNTRIES

In the lead-up to the Security Council discussion on the resolution on sexual violence, the United Kingdom Mission to the UN hosted an Arria Formula meeting to bring to the Council's attention the outcomes of the recent Wilton Park conference (May 27 - 29, 2008) on the role of military peacekeepers alongside other actors including NGOs, UN and government agencies, in addressing the sexual violence in conflict-affected countries. An Arria Formula meeting is an informal event that allows for more interaction between the Security Council members, civil society, UN agencies and other sectors on international peace and security issues.

While panellists speaking at the June 11 Arria came from a cross-section of the peace and security community, they all emphasized the need for more coherent, coordinated and robust approach to ending sexual violence in conflict situations. They said that while peacekeepers already address the threat and effects of sexual violence, the response is often ad hoc. The NGOs at the meeting underscored the need for more systematic quality and comprehensive data collection on sexual violence, the need to ensure accountability, and the need to ensure women's participation in discussions on sexual violence as well as in designing and implementing actions to end it.

Official Statements:

Statement *by*
Mr. Mahe Tupouniua
Deputy Permanent Representative
Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Tonga to the United Nations
On behalf of the Pacific Small Island Developing States

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Pacific Small Islands Developing States (PSIDS) comprising Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and my own country, the Kingdom of Tonga.

I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate you for your strong leadership in convening this Open debate on the theme: "Women, Peace and Security: Sexual Violence in Situations of Armed Conflict." We share the concerns raised in the Presidential Statement of October 2007 (PRST/2007/40); wherein the Security Council condemned all acts of gender-based violence in situations of armed conflicts committed against women and girls, including killing, maiming, sexual violence and abuse. We commend the work that Security Council has done in addressing gender-based violence with the adoption of resolution 1325, and the recent adoption of resolutions 1468; 1493 and 1590.

Gender-based violence in situations of armed conflict is a violation of women's basic human rights. It is also a concern raised by the Secretary-General report of an In-depth study on all forms of violence against women published in 2006. The report recognized that there are many forms and manifestations of violence against women in a wide range of settings, including the family, the community, State custody and institutions, armed conflict and refugee and internally displaced persons situations. The Secretary-General emphasized that "violence constitutes a continuum across the lifespan of women, it cuts across both the public and the private sphere and one form of violence often reinforces another."

We must recognize that violence experienced by women does not exist in isolation; violence tends to breed more violence. What we are seeing in some parts of the world is the use of rape and sexual assault as systematic war tactics in destroying the cohesion of communities. In some cases, women who were raped or sexually assaulted during situations of armed conflict face the rejection of their families and communities. They are often ostracized and left to fend for themselves. These women face debilitating poverty, discrimination and many subsequently fall into the vicious cycle of further exploitation and abuse by working in the sex trade, and many are exposed to the danger of human trafficking.

In light of women caught in situations of armed conflict, we urge the Security Council to recognize gender-based violence as a threat to the maintenance of international peace and security. We recommend that, where appropriate, the Security Council systematically monitors incidents of gender-based violence in situations of armed conflict. And where appropriate, for the Secretary-General to systematically include comprehensive information on gender-based violence in his reports on conflict-affected situations and to prepare a special report with timely information on sexual and gender-based violence to the Security Council to initiate the process of follow-up for the Security Council and the UN agencies in their efforts to prevent further atrocities. We congratulate the sponsoring countries for taking the initiative to put

forth this resolution that reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and peace-building, and in highlighting the fact that violence, intimidation and discrimination may erode women's capacity and legitimacy to participate in post-conflict public life, reconciliation, and post-conflict peace building process.

In our efforts to support the victims of sexual and gender-based violence, we must provide women with psychological care to help them to achieve long-term stability.
Mr. President,

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the importance of taking a preventative attitude towards sexual and gender-based violence and other factors that may endanger the security of women. Sexual and gender-based violence does not occur in a vacuum. Unfavourable political, social, cultural, economical and environmental factors exert pressure and therefore reinforces existing vulnerabilities and gender inequalities. It is important for the Security Council to address cross cutting issues such as climate change in relation to women's security.

Climate change is an emerging cross-cutting issue with serious security implications. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), in its Fourth Assessment Report highlights the vulnerabilities of developing countries and stated that "poor communities are especially vulnerable... [due to] limited adaptive capacities, and are more dependent on climate-sensitive resources..."

Women and children account for an estimated 70% of the world's poorest population. Women in the developing countries are responsible for an estimated 45%-80% of household food production. Women are arguably much more dependent upon agriculture for their livelihood and survival, and thus far, the effects of climate change are mostly likely to erode women's capacity to be able to provide for themselves and their families due to the loss of their livelihood.

It is important to recognize gender differences not just in terms of differential vulnerability, but also as differential capacity to adapt and to mitigate the effects of climate change. Climate change is not gender neutral; gender is an important determinant in climate change mitigation and adaptation. The lack of provisions in integrating a gender perspective into adaptation and mitigation strategies will seriously threaten the security of women. Women need to be empowered economically and receive training and capacity building to better adapt to the effects of climate change. It is also imperative to increase grassroots assistance to women in their efforts to preserve their livelihood.

The link between climate change, the security of women and gender-based violence in situations of armed conflict is more closely related than one would expect. The developing world is facing many exogenous threats and risk factors than ever before. During the Food Security Forum in April this year, the FAO warned the long-term food insecurity would lead to the "chronic under-nourishment" of the world's poor. An estimated 850 million people worldwide suffer from hunger, and the number is likely to increase by 4 million each year. The experts at the forum cautioned that without proper mitigation and adaptation strategies and resources to implement such strategies, many developing countries will see their coping capacity diminish over time. The loss of arable land, the increased frequency of natural disasters, weakened infrastructure, increase in epidemic diseases, population displacements, the increase in poverty and the competition for natural resources are drivers of conflict.

Since nearly one-third of the world's poorest population live in countries that are fragile or conflict-affected, they will also be the ones most likely to be affected by or to engage in "resource wars," – armed conflicts over the use of natural resources, including oil, water and arable land. In a recent interview, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Antonio Guterres reinforced the likelihood of the situation as he explained that climate change could also uproot people by provoking armed conflicts over increasingly scarce resources.

Such conflicts will have a devastating impact on developing countries and it is very likely that women will be exposed to physical and psychological harm of sexual and gender-based violence. We therefore urge the Security Council to take a preventative approach in dealing with sexual and gender-based violence by considering climate change as a threat to women's security and also to the maintenance of international security and peace.

Outcomes Statement of the Pacific Forum Regional Security Committee:

"The Pacific Islands Forum Regional Security Committee has concluded its two-day meeting at the Forum Secretariat in Suva, Fiji today with a retreat session to consider broader security issues in the region. The retreat session chaired by New Zealand focused on the development of a human security framework for conflict prevention; the linkages between women, peace and human security; Land Management and Conflict Minimisation, an assessment of potential security challenges to the region; progress in the implementation of the broader security and governance priorities of the Pacific Plan and the Secretariat's activities under the Biketawa Declaration.

The meeting welcomed the initiative by the Forum Secretariat to develop a three year Human Security Framework for Conflict Prevention for consideration at next year's FRSC meeting. The Human Security Framework for Conflict Prevention will provide insight into how broader security issues can be causes of conflict and crisis, and provide a set of tools for preventing and addressing these at the national and regional level.

The Committee reaffirmed the importance of the linkages between women and conflict when furthering work on conflict prevention and responses. The Committee endorsed the Land Management and Conflict Minimisation Guiding Principles and the Implementation Framework for Customary Land Management and Conflict Minimisation and recommended that these be adopted by the Forum Leaders.

The retreat session also discussed the implementation of the Biketawa Declaration with reports on the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands and the implementation of the Leaders' decision at the 2007 Forum and the 2008 Foreign Affairs Ministers meeting on the situation in Fiji. The meeting welcomed the progress made in implementing the Leaders decisions at the 2007 Forum regarding the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands.

It also noted the Forum's ongoing work to encourage and support Fiji's return to parliamentary democracy. The next Forum Regional Security Committee meeting will be held in June 2009"

UN Security Council Adopts Resolution 1820 to End Sexual Violence in Conflict 19
June 2008: *SECURITY COUNCIL DEMANDS IMMEDIATE & COMPLETE HALT TO ACTS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CIVILIANS IN CONFLICT ZONES, UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTING RESOLUTION 1820 (2008)*

The Security Council today demanded the “immediate and complete cessation by all parties to armed conflict of all acts of sexual violence against civilians,” expressing its deep concern that, despite repeated condemnation, violence and sexual abuse of women and children trapped in war zones was not only continuing, but, in some cases, had become so widespread and systematic as to “reach appalling levels of brutality”.

Capping a day-long ministerial-level meeting on “women, peace and security”, the 15-member Council unanimously adopted resolution 1820 (2008), which noted that “rape and other forms of sexual violence can constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity or a constitutive act with respect to genocide”. It also affirmed the Council’s intention, when establishing and renewing State-specific sanction regimes, to consider imposing “targeted and graduated” measures against warring factions who committed rape and other forms of violence against women and girls.

The resolution also noted that women and girls are particularly targeted by the use of sexual violence, including in some cases as “a tactic of war to humiliate, dominate, instil fear in, disperse and/or forcibly relocate civilian members of a community or ethnic group”. Stressing that such violence could significantly exacerbate conflicts and impede peace processes, the text affirmed the Council’s readiness to, where necessary, adopt steps to address systematic sexual violence deliberately targeting civilians, or as a part of a widespread campaign against civilian populations.

Further to the text, the Council demanded that all parties to armed conflict take immediate and appropriate measures to protect civilians, including by, among others, enforcing appropriate military disciplinary measures and upholding the principle of command responsibility; training troops on the categorical prohibition of all forms of sexual violence against civilians; debunking myths that fuel sexual violence; and vetting armed and security forces to take into account past sexual violence.

The text made several key requests of the Secretary-General, including that he submit by 30 June 2009 a report on implementation of the resolution that would include, among other things, information on conflict situations in which sexual violence was widely or systematically employed against civilians; and proposals aimed at minimizing the susceptibility of women and girls to such violence. It also requested him to develop effective guidelines and strategies to enhance the ability of relevant United Nations peacekeeping operations to protect civilians, including women and girls, from all forms of sexual violence.

Chairing the debate on behalf of the United States, which holds the Security Council presidency for the month, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice noted that there had long been dispute about whether sexual violence against women in conflict was an issue the Council was authorized to address. “I am proud that, today, we respond to that lingering question with a resounding ‘yes!’,” she said, adding that the world body was acknowledging that such violence was indeed a security concern. “We affirm that

sexual violence profoundly affects not only the health and safety of women, but the economic and social stability of their nations," she said.

In his opening remarks to the meeting, which came eight years after the Council had adopted its landmark resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said that an increasing and alarming number of women and girls were falling victim to sexual violence in conflict and that the problem had reached unspeakable and pandemic proportions in some societies attempting to recover from it. "But we can and must push back." He announced plans to shortly appoint a Messenger of Peace tasked entirely with advocacy for ending violence against women. He also urged the Council to adopt resolutions with strong language on sexual and gender-based violence, so that "the UN can respond more forcefully".

"We must do far more to involve women in conflict prevention, peace negotiations and recovery after the guns fall silent," he said, stressing that he needed Member States to come forward with more women candidates. Referring to the all-female Indian civil police unit in the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) as a possible model, he said that, when Member States send qualified personnel, the United Nations could demonstrate the central role of women in restoring stability to war-ravaged countries.

On the issue of United Nations operations, the Secretary-General said: "Let me be clear; the United Nations and I personally are profoundly committed to a zero-tolerance policy against sexual exploitation or abuse by our own personnel." By creating a culture that punished violence and elevated women to their rightful role, "we can lay the foundation for lasting stability, where women are not victims of violence, but agents of peace", he added.

Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro also addressed the meeting, which featured the participation of nearly 60 speakers, saying that sexual violence had not only grave physical and psychological health consequences for its victims, but also direct social consequences for communities and entire societies. "Impunity for sexual violence committed during conflict perpetuates a tolerance of abuse against women and girls and leaves a damaging legacy by hindering national reconciliation," she said.

Ms. Migiro added that tackling this complex problem on all fronts would require the combined effort of all, including Governments, the United Nations system, as well as civil society and non-governmental organizations. She called women "one of our greatest assets" in the fight against such horrific crimes. "If we promote the full and equal participation of women in the security sector, we can ensure that security services effectively identify and respond to their needs," she added

Echoing that sentiment, General Assembly President Srgjan Kerim said that women must be assured equal and full participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes, and represented in the structures and institutions realized from any peace dividend to ensure that it lasted. He also noted that, while both the Assembly and the Council had adopted groundbreaking resolutions on the issue, stronger and more coordinated efforts were needed to address sexual violence against women. "Clearly, we all have to do more to prevent human rights violations against women and girls in situations of armed conflict, do more to punish the perpetrators and end the impunity of war crimes violators," he said.

Among the other high-level speakers today, Olubanke King-Akerele, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Liberia, said the issue before the Council was of the utmost seriousness, and the powerful 15-member body and the wider international community must step up efforts to address that grave abuse of dignity and human rights.

Much remained to be done to ensure broad implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), which needed accountability, measurement and benchmarks. And, it needed focal points within the United Nations system to follow-up on its implementation at national levels. To address those shortcomings, she suggested mechanisms similar to those included in Security Council resolutions on "children and armed conflict".

Retired Major General Patrick Cammart, Former Division Commander of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), said that the current climate of impunity in most post-conflict contexts allowed the many forms of violence, including sexual violence, to flourish. Further, the political will to end the vicious cycle of impunity did not exist. That being the case, impunity remained a serious impediment for the prevention of sexual violence. "It has probably become more dangerous to be a woman than a soldier in an armed conflict," he said. "You are the UN, you play an important role to ensure that the UN and the international community continue to intensify actions to end violence against women and girls," he said, adding that everyone understood how many important issues were before the Council at any given moment, each needing great care and attention. But, women and girls were suffering. "You have the responsibility to protect them and to take real and effective measures to put an end to this," he said.

Also participating in the debate were the Vice-Prime Minister of Croatia, and the Foreign Ministers of South Africa and Burkina Faso. They were joined by senior ministers and Government officials from the United Kingdom, Belgium, France, Italy, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Also speaking were the representatives of China, Libya, Viet Nam, Costa Rica, Indonesia, Panama, Russian Federation, Japan (in his capacity and as Chairperson of the Peacebuilding Commission), Liechtenstein, Ghana, Slovenia (on behalf of the European Union), Australia, Spain, New Zealand, Bangladesh, Netherlands, Israel, Iceland (also on behalf of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden), Nigeria, Brazil, Switzerland, Ireland, Canada, Ecuador, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Austria, Argentina, Colombia, United Republic of Tanzania, Germany, Kazakhstan, Iraq, Rwanda, Philippines, Afghanistan, El Salvador, Tonga (on behalf of the Pacific Small Island Developing States), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Myanmar, Tunisia, Benin, Mauritania and San Marino. The Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union also addressed the debate.



Tok Peace: Siwai, Bougainville, 2004

What Are You Doing For the International Day of Peace?

We are once again counting down to the 2008 observance of the INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE which will be commemorated globally on Sunday September 21 2008.

Earlier this month, the United Nations Secretary-General released a personal message asking "...governments, communities and individuals to start preparing concrete activities for the International Day of Peace and beyond." The Secretary-General noted the millions of people, mostly women and children, suffer from displacement and violence and urged that this day of ceasefire and non-violence be taken very seriously.

In the past few years, many Pacific Peacebuilders have staged events and activities, including peace vigils, peace walks, oratory competitions, and dialogue sessions. Last year, in Fiji, PPSEAWA launched its Peace Garden in the heart of Suva's capital, while in Tonga, the Legal Literacy Project of the Catholic Women's League staged the first peace vigil as part of the annual IDP Vigil campaign.

Once again, this year, as a member of the Pacific People Building Peace network femLINKPACIFIC is serving as the regional media coordinator for the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict and we would like to hear about your individual and community plans to observe IDP 2008 - so please send us your news!



Interfaith Vigil for International Day of Peace
Holy Trinity Anglican Cathedral, Suva, 2006 in Suva

News from the Community Media Centre

By Peter Sipeli (CMC Manager)

We have been a bustling, anxious and rather overtly busy bunch here at the office. We have recently completed another regional network consultation, this time in the lead up to the FRSC.

Aside from the preparation for FRSC, we have several other programme commitments that are managing together with the final stage of our organisational review and institutional strengthening, which has involved the entire team.

I have to admit, I have found it a challenge to move between the financial administration and my preferred programme area as my brain goes numb and I turn into an idiot when it comes to anything that faintly resembles numbers or smells a little of finance. So, yes, I have been rather overwhelmed with it all, and it is not a time to move slowly yet systematically. Sometimes this is not easy with our work, as things are evolving all the time, including in one's personal life (yes!!) and there have been times when I wish I had a magic wand to make it all happen...However, we continue, we work on as best we can, and while I seriously miss the field work, I am humbled by listening to the stories of women that come in from the field that informs that my issues are minute compared to their reality, the stories the women share from Bougainville and Honiara of violence and the impact of conflict make me feel like little Paris Hilton fretting about a pair of shoes.

Recently, I had the opportunity to speak to a diverse group of participants attending the annual 4 week training programme organised by the Pacific Violence against Women's Network. My topic was "Advocating for Gay Rights" and so in front of 42 people I spoke about the challenges of growing up gay in Fiji and the work done so far by the Sexual Minorities Project, now called Equal Ground Pacific. I took a long 3 young gay men to also share experiences, as in my experience I feel that people need to hear the horror stories of growing up gay here to understand the need equal rights for gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans-gendered people. As expected, there were mixed responses to our presentations. I realised we still have a long way to go in assisting even those who work in the human rights community, to separate the personal from the professional. The personal too often includes biblical references which sound like rhetorical excuses for prejudice. And so we take strength from those that give us encouragement and support.

femLINKPACIFIC currently has a growing network of correspondents and focal points. Aside from our regional network members, as part of our Community Empowerment Programme we have a team of women equipped with tape recorders (yes and tapes and batteries) and our Community Media Manual working through their local networks. Now, in addition to Adi Vasu based in Labasa, there is also Ana Rakacikaci based in Suva working in the Central Division, Gavidu Turuva and Juleka Mastapha based at the Nadi Guidance and Counselling Centre managed by the Saunaka Women's Club, while the Poor Relief Society members based in Suva and Rabia and Dorothy at the Ba Senior Citizens Centre work every month to provide us with 3 rural stories from women in their communities.

Currently my challenge is assisting these teams of correspondents (who you have to realise are not trained journalists but women who recognise and value community media) keep to their production and administration deadlines and providing them with all the support they need. So with that we keep the sun on our smile even when it's raining outside and we keep on

Women's Civil Society News

Fiji's Biggest Morning Tea (FBMT)

Yes it's on again. The Fiji Cancer Society recently launched its annual Biggest Morning Tea campaign with the support of the Motibhai Group of Companies, the supplier of Bushells Tea. Over the last two years, this campaign has raised close to \$70,000 and funds are once again earmarked for the Fiji Cancer Society Hospice.

According to the FBMT Coordinator, Sangeeta Maharaj, she is keen to hear from women and men who can volunteer their time to help in the lead up to and the actual day of the annual morning tea – July 21st.

Contact details are: **FBMT Office Phone: 3363633 / 9990 246** or **Fiji Cancer Office Phone: 3324960 / 3324348**
Email fbmt@connect.com.fj

FIJI PPSEAWA Chapter

The Fiji Chapter of the Pan Pacific South East Asian Women's Association (PPSEAWA Fiji) will be holding a members meeting and white elephant sale at the Playhouse in Suva from 10am to 1pm on June 28th. New members are invited and members are reminded to renew their annual subscription of \$10.00. For more information contact PPSEAWA Fiji President Mavis Toganivalu. Email dove@unwired.com.fj

Good News for Vanuatu with the adoption of the Family Protection Bill:

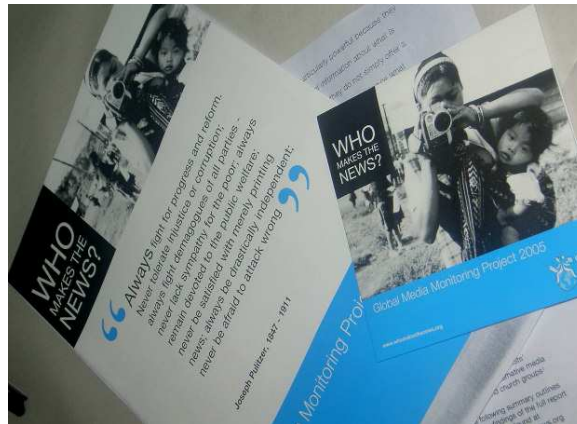
In welcoming the passing of this milestone legislation, The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre and the Pacific Women's Network against Violence congratulated the Vanuatu Women's Centre and the Vanuatu National Council of Women:

"This is a momentous occasion for the women of Vanuatu and a testament of the hard work done by the women's movement in Vanuatu over the past 10 years. Kudos also to the Vanuatu government for recognising violence against women as a violation of women's human rights. We join you in celebrating this historic occasion."

According to a UNIFEM Pacific Statement, this historical event is a reflection of years of advocacy and lobbying work behind the scenes from organizations like the Vanuatu Women's Centre and the Vanuatu National Council of Women and that this milestone achievement is also a very important example to the leaders and legislators across the rest of the region. We look forward to seeing the government of Vanuatu continue to lead by example by passing other pieces of protective legislation that will ensure the full protection of the law for of all women and children and the recognition of their right to lives that are free from oppression, violence and discrimination:

"The passing of the FPO Bill is an excellent example of a government following through on its commitments. Vanuatu's new Law must now be implemented. This priority task is the responsibility of the Vanuatu government. UNIFEM offers its support and assistance to government and NGOs

who will be involved in that task. All the support systems that women survivors of violence need must be put in place, which is the collective responsibility, of NGO's and of a government that recognizes the human rights of all. Indicators of successful implementation of the new legislation would include increased reporting, increased systems of support for women who report, increased training of women human rights defenders/para-legals who can assist women to successfully navigate both the informal and formal justice systems," said Regional Programme Manager Elizabeth Cox.



WACC has been the global coordinator for the Global Media Monitoring Project

Your Section J Spot: WACC Congress 2008

If you are involved in community based media you should be planning to join communicators and peace advocates from around the world in **Cape Town, South Africa this October for Congress 2008**, the fourth global conference sponsored by the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC). Join faith-based and secular communicators from around the world to explore the conference theme *Communication is peace: Building viable communities*. The congress focuses on the role of communicators in conflict situations and offers participants the opportunity to learn more about how they can contribute to creating conditions which lead to sustainable peace in their communities.

According to the WACC President, Dr Musimbi Kanyoro, who until recently was the World YWCA General Secretary, "Africa is a vibrant, modern continent that needs to communicate faith in itself. It needs those working in the mass and community media to project positive images and stories, to play an affirmative role in promoting peace and reconciliation. This is why WACC's Congress on the theme '*Communication is peace: Building viable communities*' is so significant." Africa, the 'cradle of civilization', has a higher proportion of people living on less than \$1 a day than anywhere in the world. Wars and other conflicts, drought, and economic stagnation have caused millions of people to become poorer than just a decade ago. Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest prevalence of HIV & AIDS and deaths from malaria. Children under the age of five die of treatable diseases, often due to malnutrition and lack of basic healthcare."

"Thousands of children are recruited to serve as regular soldiers, guerrilla fighters, porters, spies, sexual slaves, and even suicide commandos in conflicts in the Congo, Ethiopia, Uganda and Sudan. Almost one third are girls. Environmental degradation, water pollution, and food shortages add to the list of woes. And the latest Millennium Development Goals Report (2007) states that while only one region in the world is 'on track' to achieve all the MDGs, 'the projected shortfalls are most severe in sub-Saharan Africa'. What has gone wrong? Why are global resources insufficient to tackle these fundamental abuses of human rights? How can communication play a role in contributing to change? First, if people can communicate their needs and concerns, they stand a better chance of mobilizing support. Genuine communication begins with dialogue. Second, if people have access to information and can exchange knowledge, they can work in solidarity and share scarce resources. Third, if people are empowered by communication that is participatory, builds community, and strengthens mutual understanding, they are more capable and more willing to work to bring about the drastic changes needed to transform Africa."

"Africa is a vibrant, modern continent that needs to communicate faith in itself. It needs those working in the mass and community media to project positive images and stories, to play an affirmative role in promoting peace and reconciliation. This is why WACC's Congress on the theme 'Communication is peace: Building viable communities' is so significant. South Africa's great president, Nelson Mandela, recalled in his Nobel Prize Speech, that we need 'to demonstrate, in practice, that the normal condition for human existence is democracy, justice, peace, non-racism, non-sexism, prosperity for everybody, a healthy environment, and equality and solidarity among the peoples.' "These values lie at the heart of WACC's mission and will be highlighted by Congress 2008's theme of 'Communication is peace'.

The WACC Congress will include keynote presentations by leading figures in the world of communication rights and peace advocacy including Ruth Ojiambo Ochieng Executive Director (Isis-WICCE)

The programme will include the address by Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu at the opening ceremony; a series of workshops on 'Peace Arts in Parishes' led by theologian and artist, Rev. Bob Haverluck; daily prayers sessions guided by Phumzile Zondi-Mabizela, a prominent HIV and AIDS rights activist; and a professional development course on 'Writing for Peace' for correspondents who report from conflict zones for all news media. If you are a communicator committed to peace advocacy and human rights, this event is for you!

Registration deadline: 30 June 2008.
To find out more visit www.waccglobal.info

fem'LINKPACIFIC would like to acknowledge the AUSAID Civil Society Support Programme, AUSAID Canberra, European Centre for Conflict Prevention International Women's Development Agency, NZAID, UNESCO who currently support our programmes and projects.

To find out more about femLINKPACIFIC visit: www.femlinkpacific.org.fj
