



(<https://www.facebook.com/femlinkpacific>)



(<https://twitter.com/femlinkpacific>)



(<https://www.youtube.com/user/femlinkpac>)



(<https://soundcloud.com/femlinkpacific>)

The Fiji Women's Forum and Fiji Young Women's Forum National Convention & the 4th Fiji Young Women's Forum (</index.php/en/actions/archive/583-the-fiji-women-s-forum-and-fiji-young-women-s-forum-national-convention-the-4th-fiji-young-women-s-forum>)

Written by **Media Advocacy**

Published: **27 August 2017** Hits: 2516





press release – 25th August, 2017

Bringing together one hundred women, The Fiji Women’s Forum and Fiji Young Women’s Forum are set to hold their inaugural National Convention.

The three day event will be an intergenerational space to convene women from across all sectors of society including representatives from various groups such as young women, women living with disabilities, LGBTIQ and ageing women. “We as the women’s movement have very limited spaces to convene in such numbers,” outlined Nalini Singh, Executive Director of the Fiji Women’s Rights Movement. “This is a unique opportunity for all of us to get together and discuss common issues of interest as well as to strategise the ways forward given that this the pre-national elections period.”

“This is an opportunity to bring women’s leadership together to progress feminist values and principles,” said Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Executive Producer-Director of femLINKpacific. “We must ensure that when we talk about women, we are talking from a human rights and peacebuilding approach that is inclusive of women of all diversities including rural women, women with disabilities, LGBT, young and older women.”

“We think it’s important to be part of the National Convention because we get to engage with experienced women and we are also building networks,” added Chandra Fisi’iahi, representative of the Emerging Leaders Forum Alumni. “I think it’s really great. We get to witness the exchange of knowledge between the younger women and the aging, we are also in a way making a better and more empowered space for the younger generations of women to grow up in.”

“The other thing is the focus of the convention which is the constitution,” continued Adi Finau Tabakauoro, President of the Soqosoqo Vakamarama. “I’m looking forward to focused discussions on Fiji’s constitution and what it means to us especially as we are coming as indigenous women and there are certain parts of the constitution which will be of interest to us.”

The proceedings during the National Convention include plenaries on the role of women in relation to the 2013 Constitution, economic sustainability including women’s role in natural resource management and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

“It gives our affiliate organizations a space to highlight some of their local issues and it opens up other channels of communications and room for collaborations with other women and the organizations that they represent,” said Fay Volatabu, General Secretary of the National Council of Women Fiji.

Both the forums were conceptualized during Fiji’s democratization in 2012 and have since conducted its various national consultations with women from across Fiji from the issues of Constitution, Women in Politics and advocating for inclusiveness of marginalised women’s groups.

Coinciding with the National Convention, the Fiji Young Women’s Forum will convene a half day preparatory meeting as well as end the week with the 4th Fiji Young Women’s Forum.

“Young women need their own space so that they can also be part of decision making processes,” explained Audrey Seru, Management Collective member of Diverse Voices & Action for Equality. “Having this half day meeting is important as this will encourage our diverse young women to speak during the National Convention. It's not easy to speak up... (so) creating these spaces will strengthen and motivate our young women to speak in an intergenerational space's and disrupt the patriarchal spaces.”

Alongside constructive conversation, the two events will result in a collective statement from the National Convention and a Young Women's Manifesto from the 4th Fiji Young Women's Forum.

The Fiji Women's Forum and Fiji Young Women's Forum National Convention and the 4th Fiji Young Women's Forum is supported by the Australian Government through the We Rise Coalition, United Kingdom's Magna Carta Fund, Conciliation Resources and the European Union through the DUA Project.

<https://www.facebook.com/notes/femlinkpacific/cross-post-the-fwf-and-fywf-anticipate-inaugural-national-event/10155726132909295/> (<https://www.facebook.com/notes/femlinkpacific/cross-post-the-fwf-and-fywf-anticipate-inaugural-national-event/10155726132909295/>)

(Ends)

FemTALK: Younger Women's Political Security

by Sulueti Waqa with Sian Rolls

Ahead of the National Convention co-convened by The Fiji Women's Forum and Fiji Young Women's Forum, femLINKpacific's network of Rural Women Leaders have been discussing the barriers they have faced and which young women continue to face despite gender equality commitments and advances in information-communication technology.

It is often a case of double discrimination – age and gender coupled with persistent economic barriers.

Or, simply put, the lack of jobs:

“I know young women (who) have very supportive ideas that can help us to make our way up and also to make way for young women to take up leadership roles in their community,” said Eta Tuvuki, a member of the Nalawa tikina Soqosoqo Vakamarama in Ra. “Older women (are also) sharing their knowledge and experience to younger women to learn and have better understanding and perspective of the whole context within the community.”

Without a voice, nothing can change.

“For younger woman, some extent of challenges we still have is the cultural barrier at the community level,” said Ayesha Nisha, Secretary of the Ra Naari Prasad in Rakiraki.

“Most of the time, issues arise within our family,” added Adi Ana Ramatai, President of Soqosoqo Vakamarama Bua. “When our children raised issues...we do not listen.”

“They are young, they can't say anything in the family or in the community,” continued Camari Dauna, a representative of the Vuya Women's Club. “They can't trust anyone even their family or parents (so) their voices are not heard - in the community or even in their own family.”

There is also the impact of Fiji's political crises - the disruptions caused to education and their political participation:

“Another barrier to political security is with the coup culture and the fear with in the younger generation,” shared Ramatai. “Maybe they didn't come across the first coup and maybe they heard of what happened and that has brought fear in them.”

That is one of the reasons why The Fiji Women's Forum and Fiji Young Women's Forum are convening a National Convention to discuss inter-generational approaches to support women's political participation, from local to national governance.

"I think it's really great," said Chandra Fisi'iahi, representative of the Emerging Leaders Forum Alumni. "We get to witness the exchange of knowledge between the younger women and the aging, we are also in a way making a better and more empowered space for the younger generations of women to grow up in."

"We as the women's movement have very limited spaces to convene in such numbers," outlined Nalini Singh, Executive Director of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement. "This is a unique opportunity for all of us to get together and discuss common issues of interest as well as to strategise the ways forward given that this the pre-national elections period."

"This is an opportunity to bring women's leadership together to progress feminist values and principles," added Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Executive Producer-Director of femLINKpacific. "We must ensure that when we talk about women, we are talking from a human rights and peacebuilding approach that is inclusive of women of all diversities including rural women, women with disabilities, LGBT, young and older women."

For femLINKpacific, the Rural Women Leaders network and the use of community media, in particular community radio, has been a powerful tool of bringing women of all diversities together.

It has continued an intergenerational dialogue where younger women and older women envision the best way forward:

"(It) is about involving younger women in decision making," explained Kiran Chandra, representing the Ra Naari Parishad. "We have to involve older ladies to share their experience, information and pass them to the younger ones. This is for sharing of information and experience."

"We invite young women to participate more (to) increase their participation so that they can be empowered," added Tuvuki. "Since the voting age has gone down from 21 to 18, I think the Education Ministry has to set up a curriculum in schools to cater for these 18 years who are eligible to this voting system in Fiji."

And where young women have opportunities, they need to capitalise on them:

"Nowadays, the young women are allowed to voice out their opinions and there are a lot of pocket meetings which they are allowed to attend," stressed Nila Rao, an advisory councillor for Caulasi in Rakiraki. "They have got a lot of freedom and equal rights. They know their rights now so they can access to these information. There are a lot of political parties which they can support and vote for nowadays."

Therefore, sharing knowledge and experience is vital to enhance the participation of young women. Giving them space to raise their concern and also access to information would further empower them to participate.

"Young women need their own space so that they can also be part of decision making processes," explained Audrey Seru, Management Collective member of Diverse Voices & Action for Equality. "It's not easy to speak up... (so) creating these spaces will strengthen and motivate our young women to speak in an intergenerational space and disrupt the patriarchal spaces."

<https://www.facebook.com/notes/femlinkpacific/femtalk-younger-womens-political-security/10155732129754295/>
(<https://www.facebook.com/notes/femlinkpacific/femtalk-younger-womens-political-security/10155732129754295/>)

(Ends)



The Fiji Women's Forum and
Fiji Young Women's Forum
National Convention
28th to 30th August, 2017

FemTALK: Women - Stand Up and Take Ownership of Leadership Spaces

by Sian Rolls

“What we (want) as young women (is) an approach that works for us – a consultative dialogue approach,” said Bonita Qio of the Pacific Rainbows Advocacy Network. “We can come to dialogue.”

Qio was one of four panellists during the opening of The Fiji Women's Forum and Fiji Young Women's Forum National Convention in Nadi, Fiji Islands.

The three day event is an intergenerational space to bringing close to 100 women from across all sectors of society including representatives from various groups such as young women, women living with disabilities, LGBTIQ and ageing women addressing the priority themes of the 2013 Fijian Constitution and women's political participation:

“No political involvement is easy,” shared Priscilla Singh, a former local government official. “During my term, I had huge difficulty. I was the only woman in a 20 member council when I was first elected. I went in as an idealist, thinking I was going to change the world. It doesn't happen that way when 19 men around you don't get the female perspective.”

“There is still a lot of barriers we face as women... structural barriers and cultural barriers,” said Hon. Salote Radrodro, an opposition member of parliament. “It is important for women to be in parliament. We women see things differently. In terms of governance, we women – as caretakers, nurturers and bankers in our families – have (an) appreciation of good governance. If there are more of us in parliament, we will have a louder voice.”

“I have kept chipping away, I did not budge when they said that women's place are in the kitchen,” continued Singh. “There is an old guard (but) perseverance is key and you have to be resilient. There will never be quick results.”

The participants, while being well aware of the daunting task to bring about reforms of the 2013 Constitution, were reminded that they should not lose sight of the aim to increase the representation of women in parliament, as well as local government

“We need to recognise our constitution rights, our political rights... whatever rights are covered in the bill of rights (are for) a democratic approach,” emphasised Qio.

“A democratic approach is a consultative approach.”

“Many times we hear women saying politics is very dirty... we don’t want to go there,” continued Singh. “What’s dirty about wanting your rights? I think we would bring better decorum to the august house of parliament. If we want to really achieve our objectives, and by being dignified about it, we can still do it. It is not about yelling and screaming. Politics is about our everyday experiences and so we must participate.”

<https://www.facebook.com/notes/femlinkpacific/femtalk-women-stand-up-and-take-ownership-of-leadership-spaces/10155733939029295/> (<https://www.facebook.com/notes/femlinkpacific/femtalk-women-stand-up-and-take-ownership-of-leadership-spaces/10155733939029295/>)

(Ends)

The FWF and FYWF: Commit to Creating a Better Future

press release – 1st September, 2017

“As diverse women leaders, we commit to bring the voice, agency and actions grounded in collaboration and solidarity from community to national level to create a better future.”

This is a commitment expressed by 109 diverse women leaders who from the 28th to the 30th of August marked another historic moment in Fiji’s history and the her’story of the women’s movement with the inaugural National Women’s Convention. The convention closed with the adoption on an outcome statement

(<http://www.femlinkpacific.org.fj/index.php/en/actions/policy-documents/584-creating-a-better-future-inaugural-national-women-s-convention-outcomes-statement> (https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.femlinkpacific.org.fj%2Findex.php%2Fen%2Factions%2Fpolicy-documents%2F584-creating-a-better-future-inaugural-national-women-s-convention-outcomes-statement&h=ATNmvnO-eD6mBRiuM01iYvFgSSI2WF-Rd91OzvWF4vVmQ3xgfauGni1WaRDoMRg0dqdb678VZkep4GbAPn4MZOp9tVZChCd58ZVt_Y9douBHwIV5V9u-XswSrKHPpZIBRUDgfeco_Q)) expressing a political vision.

“Forums like this don’t come around every day,” said Adi Finau Tabakaucoro, President of the Soqosoqo Vakamarama, during the closing of the 3-day convention. “I am glad I have had opportunities through this forum to interact with our diversity and our differences and the thread of women, knowledge, qualities and strengths that we all represent here.”

“The 3 days have been a demonstration of what a powerful group of women leaders from Fiji can discuss and decide as actions for themselves and for all those they represent,” added Nalini Singh, Executive Director of the Fiji Women’s Rights Movement. “The inaugural Fiji Women’s National Convention is not be a one off either. The Convention has galvanised both the Forums and the women leaders that together we can create the change we see for ourselves and Fiji.”

Co-convened by The Fiji Women’s Forum and the Fiji Young Women’s Forum, the National Convention was an opportunity to discuss effective implementation of Fiji’s 2013 Constitution in relation to diverse needs of women and develop key strategies and recommendations to government and all other stakeholders to address limitations faced by women, in advancement of gender equality and universal human rights.

“The convention demonstrates the commitment and ability of the co-convenors to bring women and young women of all diversities of Fiji society to come together to discuss, deliberate and adopt an outcomes statement that reflects how to bring gender equality and women’s human rights into Fiji’s political processes,” said Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Executive Producer-Director of femLINKpacific.

"The fact that women leaders demand accountability of the Constitution and related governance systems sends a clear message including to us as the Fiji Women's Forum co-convenors to ensure women across Fiji have access to information in order to confidently engage in political processes," continued Singh.

The National Convention brought together representatives of diverse constituencies from across Fiji and upholding the qualities of women's leadership building on the rich tradition of activism of Fijian women throughout our national history.

This includes a commitment to collaborative leadership with young women throughout the country, which can build on the her'story of women's participation in political spaces including social movements.

The Fiji Women's Forum is co convened by Soqosoqo Vakamarama Taukei, National Council of Women, femLINKpacific & Fiji Women's Rights Movement. The Fiji Young Women's Forum is co-convened by young women for young women with Diverse Voices and Action for Equality Fiji (DIVA), Emerging Leaders Forum Alumni (ELFA), and femLINKpacific's Programme Associates.

(Ends)

Young Women Envision the Future

press release – 4th September, 2017

44 young women leaders of all diversities on Friday adopted a vision document outlining the future they want to see realised in Fiji, available online: <https://www.facebook.com/notes/fiji-young-womens-forum/a-vision-of-the-future-fywf4/503414633329065/> (<https://www.facebook.com/notes/fiji-young-womens-forum/a-vision-of-the-future-fywf4/503414633329065/>)

"The 4th Forum was a space where young women from diverse backgrounds could address the gaps that exist with relation to young women's political participation, agency, advocacy and awareness," said Kele Gavidu, a participant from the Emerging Leaders Forum Alumni (ELFA). "It was a key opportunity for young women to bridge the divide and pull resources and networks into collaborative work. It's crucial that young women's representation at multi-level forums is encouraged."

"The 4th Forum was a great space for young women to extend their knowledge on how we should see each other as women with diverse issues regardless of our SOGIESC (sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, sexual characteristics)," added Audrey Seru of Diverse Voices and Action (DIVA) for Equality. "Having the 4th Forum after the first ever National Convention was one way of addressing and discussing more on gaps and challenges, especially from a young women's perspective."

"We look forward to progressing the outcomes of the National Convention and the vision put forward at the 4th Forum especially through our community media network," continued Alisia Evans, a Programme Associate at femLINKpacific. "If we want women of all diversities to participate, including young women, as well as engage and influence the development cycle, they must be supported to meet as leaders and provided information, communication and resources."

The document has been developed in light of the recently adopted outcome statement from the first National Convention, available

online: http://www.femlinkpacific.org.fj/images/PDF/Policy/TheFWFFYWF_NationalConvention_OutcomeStatement.pdf (/images/PDF/Policy/TheFWFFYWF_NationalConvention_OutcomeStatement.pdf)

Co-convened by The Fiji Women's Forum and the Fiji Young Women's Forum, the National Convention was an opportunity to discuss effective implementation of Fiji's 2013 Constitution in relation to diverse needs of women and develop key strategies and recommendations to government and all other stakeholders to address limitations faced by women, in advancement of gender equality and universal human rights.

Her Excellency Melanie Hopkins, British High Commissioner, said the UK is pleased to support the fourth Fiji Young Women's Forum as a platform to develop and strengthen young women's political leadership roles. She hoped the participants were able to engage in meaningful discussions on the participation of women in political processes, an area which the UK remains committed to supporting.

The Fiji Young Women's Forum is co-convened by young women for young women with Diverse Voices and Action for Equality Fiji (DIVA), Emerging Leaders Forum Alumni (ELFA), and femLINKpacific's Programme Associates.

(Ends)

Podcast: Hosted by Audrey Seru of Diverse Voices and Action for Equality, representatives of the co-convenors of The Fiji Women's Forum:

1. Nalini Singh of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement
2. Fay Volatabu of the National Council of Women Fiji
3. Sharon Bhagwan Rolls of femLINKpacific

Held during the preparatory meeting ahead of The Fiji Women's Forum and the Fiji Young Women's Forum National Convention.

Listen here: <https://soundcloud.com/femlinkpacific/femtalk89fm-aug17-fywf4-intergenerational-dialogue-with-the-fwf>
(<https://soundcloud.com/femlinkpacific/femtalk89fm-aug17-fywf4-intergenerational-dialogue-with-the-fwf>)

About The Fiji Women's Forum

The Fiji Women's Forum's first national consultation on women's participation in national democratic processes 12th April 2012 was a historical moment in Fiji bringing together women from rich and diverse backgrounds – women living with disabilities and living with HIV, as well as different faiths, cultures, sexualities, gender identities, ages, demographics and opinions.

While The Fiji Women's Forum was initially formed to bring together diverse women's groups towards the shared aim of increasing women's participation in leadership - in particular focusing on women's participation in Fiji's national elections - which was held in September 2014, the co-convenors have since convened four more forums with the purpose of:

- Securing and supporting the full participation of women in all levels of decision-making*
- Engaging more women in the development and political processes of Fiji*
- Bringing attention to the diverse needs and concerns of women by facilitating appropriate responses and communicating this to a wider audience.*

The four national forums enabled a diversity of women to mobilize in large numbers and implement civic education in collaboration with other women. Women participated in the constitution making process at different levels and degrees allowing for their voices and experiences to be included in the democratization process and the 5th Women's Forum 5 held in April 2015 specifically focused on women in local governance.

About the Fiji Young Women's Forum (FYWF)

FYWF builds on the intergenerational The Fiji Women's Forum, which was first convened in 2012, as well as the rich tradition of activism and feminism by Fijian women throughout our national herstory. The mission of FYWF is to increase

and progress young women's political leadership in an effective, meaningful and inclusive participation in Fiji's communities, legislative bodies and national process. FYWF is built on the guiding principles of mutual respect, active participation, transparency and good governance, accountability, gender sensitivity, respect and appreciation for human rights and diversity.

FYWF has successfully convened three national forums with a combined total of over 100 young diverse women. These young women actively participated in the lead up to Fiji's 2014 national elections in their local communities. These included nationwide distribution and awareness of the My Guide to Voting (young women's voter guide) and the forum declaration to political parties and other stakeholders. Following the first national forum (November 2013), FYWF noted the importance of State obligation and accountability to translate gender equality, transparency and human rights into legislation, policy and budget allocations. This process is critical for young women to be able to not only understand their needs reflected in the policies but at the same time the State is fulfilling its responsibilities.

Home (<http://www.femlinkpacific.org.fj/>) | About Us (</index.php/en/about-us/mission-vision>) | Privacy Policy (</index.php/en/about-us/contact-us>) | Contact Us (</index.php/en/about-us/contact-us>)

Copyright © 2015 femLinkpacific. All rights reserved.