Violence against women and girls continues to be one of the most widespread and destructive human rights violations across the world today. Rates of violence against women in Fiji are among the highest in the world, with 64% of women who have ever been in an intimate relationship, having experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a husband or intimate partner in their lifetime. An alarming statistic underscoring the importance of the communal effort needed to address the issue of violence against women in our society.

In recognising and affirming a combined commitment to end gender-based violence in the workplace, on 27 November 2018, the Fund co-hosted a luncheon with ANZ Bank Fiji’s Banking on Women (BoW) to mark the annual 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence.

Fund Manager, Michelle Reddy, spoke to the 60 women and men in the room about how the Fund’s work with its partners and grantees to eliminate violence against women, aligns with ANZ’s BoW through targeted measures to ensure women are informed, and empowered to live a life free of violence.

“Like you, the Fund exists to serve the interests of women’s groups, networks and organisations by supporting them in advocating for women’s and girls’ rights. In marking 16 Days of Activism together, we are creating a new eco-system here today. It’s the beginning of a long-term partnership, and a united voice to demand a shift in both attitudes and behaviours so that women and girls are respected, and treated as equals.”

The luncheon was an inspiring sea of orange with guests adorned in the day’s theme colour, a personal acknowledgement that ending violence against women is everyone’s business.

ANZ Bank Fiji’s Chair of Banking on Women, Mareta Salacakau Fong, enlightened the audience on BoW’s activities around eliminating violence against women in the corporate workplace.

“ANZ’s Banking on Women’s focus is to encourage corporate women leadership and learning by addressing violence against women at the workplace so that together with the Fund and ANZ’s partners, we’re able to bring about transformative change for women, and the communities in Fiji,” Ms Fong stated.

The joint event held at the Australia Pacific Training Coalition’s Pacific Fusion also coincided with Giving Tuesday, a global day of giving towards causes of personal interest. Ms Reddy challenged all guests to initiate workplace giving to champion gender equality in their respective work spaces.

“A year from today, let’s pledge to raise funds for women’s groups, networks and organisations who continue to pave the way for women’s empowerment. You and I can be part of a meaningful Giving Circle in Fiji that directly supports women’s human rights defenders and women’s rights organisations who are the frontline defenders of gender equality.”
Kadavu remains one of the few undeveloped islands in Fiji today and its remote geographic location south of the main island of Viti Levu, means that the small population leading fairly subsistence lifestyles, faces challenges accessing critical social and health services.

In response to this, Medical Services Pacific (MSP), is making great strides in addressing the communities needs with a dedicated team making frequent visits to the island as part of its Maritime Outreach Program (MOP).

Into its second year, the MOP comprises the deployment of a clinical outreach team to provide general medical services. These services include family planning, awareness on Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR), reproductive tract cancer awareness and subsequent testing and treatment, mental and child health care, good nutritional care, counselling and social services.

With support from the Kadavu Provincial Council, and in partnership with the Ministry of Health and Medical Services, Education Ministry, Police, and local village leaders, the MSP team has been able to roll out its wholistic program to villages and schools across Kadavu’s Ravitaki District.

The Fund team accompanied the MSP crew on their recent outreach trip in March 2019 and report that the response has been overwhelming.

“The MSP program has been really effective especially around the health of our senior girls and welfare of the students in their homes. For example, the introduction of the menstruation kits for the girls means that they are more confident to reach out to us for help and not feel ashamed, especially when they get their first menses in school. We are thankful to the MSP team and it’s a worthy program all schools should go through so that students and parents are aware of the changes happening to them,” said Lepani Navucu, Head Teacher at Ratu Nacagilevu Memorial School.

According to MSP’s Taina Gucake, “despite the challenges, the program has empowered these young girls and women to be more aware of their own bodies undergoing puberty but...”
also educated the boys to be considerate of girls and their feelings as they go through this normal course of womanhood."

The program is also breaking new ground by changing mindsets for the better and reducing cultural barriers concerning attitudes and behaviours that discriminate women and children.

"MSP are doing very good work, especially with the grassroots people. Because most of the time they are not aware of the women and children protection. Most of the villages are still keeping their traditional ways with them and solving problems the traditional way. But since MPS's visits, now the villagers are aware of the importance of how to look after the women and children," said Assistant Roko Tui Kadavu, Laitia Raloa.

"MSP is empowering women and children around the communities. I really support this program because they have really taken the services right to the communities and that's a good thing. Many of these communities were silent with their problems but after this outreach, they were able to gain that confidence to come out and seek assistance," stated Tevita Seru, Education Officer Kadavu.

The Fiji Women’s Fund is proud to support MSP’s Maritime Outreach Program and the incredible life-changing work their dedicated team provides to maritime communities like Kadavu, so that they are able to lead happy, safe and healthy lives.
Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation launches Fund’s 2018 Annual Progress Report

“The partnerships that we as women’s empowerment institutions have formed is the best way forward.”

A sage yet powerful statement by the Hon. Mereseini Vuniwaqa, Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, as she launched the Fiji Women’s Fund 2018 Annual Progress Report in Suva on the eve of International Women’s Day.

A signature event for the Fund, the launch coincided with the annual celebration of International Women’s Day and was an opportunity to introduce the 11 new women’s civil society organisations who were the successful recipients of the Fund’s 2018 grant funding round.

Speaking at the launch, Minister Vuniwaqa said: “We may have taken great strides as a region and as a nation in the area of women’s empowerment and gender equality, but our women are still faced with discrimination, still limited in decision making and still second recipients of opportunities in many instances. Therefore, we as responsible implementing and funding agencies must continue our accounted for, well monitored and continually evolving programs till gender parity is a reality. The Fiji Women’s Fund provides for that opportunity to Fijian Women.”

The Fund’s second annual progress report provides information about program achievements, challenges and learnings in reaching remote, rural and marginalised women to improve their lives, including those of their communities.

The Fund, a first of its kind in Fiji and the Pacific region, and according to Member of Parliament, Hon. Ro Teimumu Kepa who also attended the launch, “It’s a great initiative of which the grantees and eventually the community, particularly the women, will benefit from.”

Since its inception in 2017, the Fund, has provided funding to 29 grantees who implemented activities in each of Fiji’s four divisions. Through these activities in 2018, the Fund reached 7,869 people including 5,321 women, 2,481 men, and 67 representatives of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, and intersex (LGBTQI) community. Noteworthy in this demographic were 25 women and 14 men living with disabilities.

Australia’s Deputy High Commissioner, Anna Dorney, commended the Fund’s work: “Today’s launch marks another milestone for the Fiji Women’s Fund. Australia is proud to support the Fund and the important work you do to assist women and communities in Fiji. Collective action is essential to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women. Australia remains steadfast in supporting the Fiji Government, women’s civil society, private sector and key stakeholders, in their efforts to progress gender equality and the empowerment of women.”

Fund Manager, Michelle Reddy, emphasised that “By working alongside our grantees, we are informed by their field practises and insights especially on what they think works for them and not what we think works for them in advocating for women’s rights. Together, we are stronger in making this world a better place for women and girls.”
Women in Fisheries Network—Fiji launches National Stocktake of the Institutional and Enabling Mechanisms that Support Gender in Fisheries in Fiji report

Women in Fisheries Network—Fiji’s (WiFN- Fiji) four years of hard work and stakeholder collaboration to support gender mainstreaming in fisheries paid off with the launch of their National Stocktake of the Institutional and Enabling Mechanisms that Support Gender in Fisheries in Fiji report, an institutional mapping of Fiji’s fisheries sector on 4th December, 2018.

Launched by the Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, Honourable Mereseini Vuniwaqa, at the second Women in Fisheries Forum in Suva, the report findings underscore the importance of stakeholder collaboration in supporting gender mainstreaming in the fisheries sector to advance women’s participation and economic empowerment.

“It is important to understand the gender dimensions of fisheries as women make enormous contributions to fisheries and aquaculture supply chains that are almost unrecognized, and for anyone that is invisible, their interests, their needs, their opportunities are not addressed,” said Minister Vuniwaqa.

Minister Vuniwaqa added, “We can no longer afford to let our women fishers remain invisible and I am extremely happy that organisations like the Women in Fisheries Network—Fiji are taking great strides in making the women fishers visible in our nation and it is with keenness, that I render the support of my Ministry to further develop this area of work.”

According to WiFN-Fiji Executive Board member, Cherie Morris, they intend to work with government on collecting baseline data on women and men involved in fisheries “and determine what gaps are there are so that WiFN Fiji can address these in terms of provision of assets and services especially for women.

“The Women in Fisheries Network—Fiji is delighted to have the opportunity to work together with our key development partners including the Ministry of Women to strengthen awareness on gender mainstreaming issues along the value chain particularly with providing support to women’s organizations and groups in the fisheries sector,” said Ms Morris.

With the theme Rethinking Women in Fisheries Network—Fiji, the forum was attended by representatives from government, non-government organisations, civil society agencies, academic institutions and community women and men fishers.

The Fiji Women’s Fund is proud to support WiFN-Fiji with their project to create awareness and build knowledge about the situation of women in fisheries in the Rewa and Tailevu provinces.

WiFN-Fiji facilitates networks and partnerships to enable opportunities for women to be informed about all aspects of sustainable fisheries in Fiji, and increase the meaningful participation of fisher-women in decision-making and management at all levels of the fisheries industry.
The Fiji Women’s Fund second call for funding in 2018 resulted in 11 women’s groups, organisations and networks receiving grants for their respective projects working across women’s economic empowerment, eliminating violence against women, improving women’s participation in leadership and decision making, and strengthening women’s groups and coalitions for change.

The new grant recipients were hosted to an orientation session at the Novotel Suva on 1st March, where the Fund team presented information on the elements of their grant agreement, progress and completion of narrative reports, financial management, grant financial reporting, and communications and visibility guidelines.

The Fund’s 11 new grantees are:

- Fiji Disabled People’s Federation
- Ra Naari Parishad
- Naitasiri Women in Dairy
- Women in Fisheries Network-Fiji
- Graduate Women Fiji
- Laje Rotuma Initiative
- Striders Rugby Women’s Club
- Women Entrepreneurs and Business Council
- Fiji Women’s Rights Movement
- Fiji Women’s Rights Movement and Edge Effect
- 2nd Pacific Feminist Forum Working Group

Complementing the orientation, the Fund’s range of capacity development providers will work with these grantees to provide strategic direction in the following areas over the course of their respective grant:

- Organisational governance and leadership
- Strategic business planning
- Business advisory services
- Organisational policy development
- Resource mobilisation
- Project management
- Women’s legal rights and legal literacy
- Communications
- Financial management
Twenty participants from the Fund’s first call for funding grant recipients walked away with a better appreciation and understanding of communications after attending the inaugural Communications Capacity Development Training held in Suva from 10-12 April 2019.

According to training facilitator, Maria Ronna Luna Pastorizo-Sekiguchi, the support came at a good time for grantees as they re-evaluate their respective strategic plans for the next twelve months.

“It is absolutely critical for the grantees to understand the importance of communications and marketing with their target audiences in mind. Everyone in the training learned how to create a simple marketing plan that is aligned to support their organisation’s goals and overarching strategy,” said Mrs Pastorizo-Sekiguchi.

She added, “It was a wonderful experience to be a training facilitator for this program as the participants came from a diverse set of backgrounds and they were so passionate to share with each other about why their organisations exist, and what makes their organisation uniquely different from others.”

From the importance of branding, to the necessity for a communications plan, the training covered a wide range of essential components of communications that businesses and civil society groups utilise to position their respective organisations in the public domain.

The training has empowered the grantees with new skills and confidence to drive communications in their respective organisations.

“My key takeaway for this whole training was that there’s a lot to be learned. We learned about the power of hashtags including how to use it and also the power of videos and other means of communications that we could use in order to help the organisation get the word out to people that need it. For example, for us it would be our members and our donors,” said Naifitalai Uluinikorotabu, Fiji Disabled People’s Federation.

“I learned to brand our organisation. When I go back, I will be setting up a Facebook page for Naitasiri Women in Dairy, and I’ll try and get a website done too,” said Susan Pocock, President of the Naitasiri Women in Dairy Group.

“This training reminded me about the power of utilising social media – and using digital media as a platform in which we can create, and mass amplify the messages that we advocate upon, for us particularly on LGBTIQ rights, on social injustice and climate justice,” said Tamani Rarama, Rainbow Pride Foundation.

The training is the first segment of communications capacity development support scheduled for the Fund’s grantees, and will be followed by one to one mentoring support over the next few months.
In recent years across the globe, case studies have shown that modest progress has been made in integrating the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transsexual Questioning and Intersex (LGBTQI) communities into development programming. However, these small-scale success stories have only warranted a prompt reminder for donors and development agencies that LGBTQI communities’ inclusion in traditional gender programming as both partners and beneficiaries, is not only best practice, but fundamental to social and economic progress.

In the lead up to International Women’s Day 2019, the Fiji Women’s Fund was proud to support, Edge Effect (EE) and Fiji Women’s Rights Movement (FWRM) to host a two-day workshop and public forum exploring intersectional feminist approaches to the inclusion of people of diverse gender and sexualities in traditional gender programming.

The Fund’s Program Officers, Devina Devi and Kuini Rabo, joined 20 humanitarian and development Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) practitioners attending the workshop to discuss and explore opportunities to include and develop new programs that firmly integrate LGBTQI people into the development landscape.

Co-funded by the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)
Pacific Philanthropy Study explores opportunities for funding women’s human rights and gender equality in the region

In an effort to gain deeper insights into the current philanthropic efforts that support women’s human rights and gender equality in the Pacific, the Fiji Women’s Fund (the Fund) has partnered with sister fund, Urgent Action Fund - Asia and the Pacific (UAF-A&P), to undertake a Pacific Philanthropy Scoping Study with a specific focus on Fiji and Papua New Guinea.

Modelling a partnership approach to mobilising resources and contributing towards the changing culture of giving in the Pacific and Asia, the Fund and UAF-A&P are collaborating on the development, implementation and resourcing of the scoping study, scheduled to be completed by June 2019.

It is envisaged that study findings will identify potential gaps in available financial and non-financial resources for gender equality and women’s rights, including strategic entry points for mobilising resources for women’s rights organisations and women human rights defenders in the Pacific.

The study will also explore the current donor landscape including bilateral funding, corporate social responsibility and local philanthropy, in an effort to outline the types of monetary and non-monetary support and capture the challenges and opportunities for funding women’s human rights and gender equality.

According to the Fund and UAF-A&P, “through this study we hope to demonstrate that funding cannot just be transactional, but instead should support women movements’ abilities to reflect and strategise at a collective level.”
Many entrepreneurs and leaders agree that encouraging cross-learning and collaboration benefits everyone because it promotes a culture of diversity, explores new possibilities and helps people gain a better understanding of where they fit into the big picture, and leads to greater engagement and productivity.

With the theme Women Economic Empowerment: Good Practices, the Fund team employed this approach as part of its capacity development support and set out on a three-day cross-learning trip around Viti Levu, from 27th - 29th March, with six grantees to learn and engage with established women entrepreneurs and business ventures to facilitate networking and learning opportunities.

The trip left a positive impact on the lives of the grantees, and inspired them to think outside the box, and recalibrate their mindset with an “I can and I will” attitude to their respective projects.

“I’ve learnt so much during this trip but most of all the importance of time and money, commitment and good planning. Our visit to the Bulaccino Café and Farm in Nadi with owner, Eileen Rosenburg-Chute, really inspired me because we have the resources and the land to do dairy and also something diverse like Eileen has done,” said Susan Pocock, President of the Naitasiri Women in Dairy Group.

According to Helynah Netani of Survival Advocacy Network, “The most important thing I’ve learnt is using the resources around me and turn things into opportunities for income generation. For example, items like plastic bottles and trash, I can turn them into jewellery so we can have income generated. Knowing your product and how to market it to your customers is very important too. I was really inspired by Vitila Vuniwaqa of Vee’s Organic Farm. Because as a stroke survivor, even though she has a disability, she is not hindered by her disability.”

The grantees were motivated...
as the women entrepreneurs shared their anecdotes on how their success did not come about overnight and was laden with many setbacks and challenges. But through perseverance and good business acumen, they were able to overcome these hurdles and turn these obstacles into opportunities.

“This trip was a real eye opener for our women. The things that stood out for them from the places that we visited was the practice of proper planning and that they are not alone in the challenges they face in trying to make their projects successful,” said Maraia Likuvono of the Delailasakau Women’s Group.

Without a doubt, the myriad benefits of cross-learning are well worth the effort and the Fund’s capacity development support using this approach has certainly left a positive footprint in the hearts and minds of the grantees during this trip.

The grantees on the cross-learning event comprised of the Delailasakau Women’s Group, Naitasiri Women in Dairy Group, Aging Empowerment with Dignity, Survival Advocacy Network, Ra Naari Parishad and Rise Beyond the Reef. They visited the following business ventures: Nasautoka Women’s Group, Ra Naari Parishad, Rise Beyond the Reef, Vee’s Organic Farm and Tailevu Fiji Cacao.

· from page 11

Vitila Vuniwaqa, the proud owner of Vee’s Organic Farm in Nadi. © Fiji Women’s Fund

Tailevu Fiji Cacao staff explains the chocolate production process at their Nadi factory. © Fiji Women’s Fund
Funding networks and programs in the Pacific run by women for women, continue to make a significant impact in influencing change to the discriminatory cultural and social norms that hinder gender equality and women’s economic empowerment.

In recognition of the important role that women-led funding mechanisms have in progressing transformative change, three diverse women’s rights funders were invited as panelists to the 2019 Australasian Aid Conference in Canberra, Australia.

With the theme, Catalysing change through women’s movements: evidence from the Pacific, Fund Manager, Michelle Reddy of the Fiji Women’s Fund (The Fund), Co-Lead, Virisila Buadromo of Urgent Action Fund for Women’s Human Rights Asia and Pacific (UAF-A&P) and Senior Program Manager, Bronwyn Tilbury of the International Women’s Development Agency (IWDA), addressed a packed room on how their respective

Members of the Women’s Fund Asia, FRIDA The Young Feminist Fund, Fiji Women’s Fund and Urgent Action Fund Asia and the Pacific at the Australasian Aid Conference. © Fiji Women’s Fund

Fund Manager, Michelle Reddy, Virisila Buadromo of Urgent Action Fund for Women’s Human Rights Asia and Pacific and Bronwyn Tilbury of the International Women’s Development Agency (IWDA), address the panel audience at the conference in Canberra. © Fiji Women’s Fund

Women’s rights funders panellists at Australasian Aid Conference
organisations are supporting vibrant and dynamic women’s movements in the Pacific to bring about transformative change for gender equality.

The panel discussion was chaired by Women Fund Asia’s, Tulika Srivastava, and over the course of the session, the three panellists and renowned feminists spoke to the audience on how their funding mediums are breaking barriers by working together with their grantees and stakeholders to bridge the gender parity gap.

Speaking from a Fiji perspective, Ms Reddy shared the Fund’s experience of locally-owned transformative change with the grantees that the Fund supports. She emphasised that the road to progressing any change is always accompanied by a myriad of challenges which only open communication, understanding and stakeholder collaboration can address to make a positive impact.

With a global lens, Ms Tilbury shared IWDA’s experiences of the most effective ways to support, connect, accompany and enable vibrant and dynamic women’s movements to drive systemic change towards gender equality.

From a regional standpoint, Ms Buadromo shared how UAF-A&P builds the resilience of women’s rights and rights of non-binary human rights defenders and their movements through rapid response grant making and advocacy and alliance building.

The Australasian Aid Conference, held in February of each year in partnership with The Asia Foundation, has become an integral part of the Australian and regional aid calendar. The aim of the conference is to bring together researchers from across Australia, the Pacific, Asia, and beyond who are working on aid and international development policy to share insights, promote collaboration, and help develop the research community.
Like many corners of the world, faith is an integral part of
community life in Fiji, mobilising
members to champion causes of
shared interest, and help people
most in need.

One such religious body that
embodies this approach is the
Anglican Diocese of Polynesia's
House of Sarah, which, since its
establishment in 2009, continues
to provide a listening ear, a warm
heart and a welcoming hand to
women who are facing violence.

Building on a decade’s experience
in assisting women and girls
facing violence, House of Sarah
proudly launched the Preventing
Violence Against Women in
Fiji’s Faith Settings (PVAWFFS)
initiative targeting three Anglican
communities in the greater Suva
region on 23 January 2019.

“The community-led project
encourages residents to reject
violence and stop it from being
accepted as a normal part of
life, by committing themselves
to changing their attitudes,
behaviours and knowledge in
order to build communities based
on justice, peace and dignity,” said
Reverend Sereima Lomaloma,
Chairperson and Trustee of the
House of Sarah.

The PVAWFFS project is
adapting the internationally
recognised SASA! Faith model
that was originally developed out
of Uganda. The project will be
implemented over four years, with
technical funding support from
UN Women’s Fiji Multi-Country
Office. The SASA! Faith model
has proven to reduce levels of
violence against women, and uses
a faith-based approach to prevent
violence against women, engaging
the whole community to address
the issue.

Pilot testing is underway in the
Anglican communities at St Mark’s
in Newtown, St Michael and All
Angels in Matata, and St Johns
in Wailoku. To date, 22 women
and men have been trained as the
Community Activists, who act as
violence prevention advocates in
their respective parishes.

Speaking at the launch, Fund
Manager, Michelle Reddy, said:
“The Fiji Women’s Fund is proud
to support the House of Sarah
and are committed to being
a dependable, supportive and
empathetic partner in their journey
of adapting and implementing the
SASA! Faith model.”

“The Australian Government
is proud to be supporting this
community-led project in Fiji, via
our funding support under the
Fiji Women’s Fund, and also the
new regional Pacific Partnership
Program. We commend this
project and its ability to work
directly with individuals and
communities to consider the
influence of social norms, attitudes
and behaviours in preventing
violence against women and girls,”
said John Feakes, Australia’s High
Commissioner to Fiji.

Fiji is one of many countries
around the world adapting the
SASA! or SASA! Faith approach,
and is also a focus country for
the Pacific Partnership that brings
together governments, civil society
organisations, communities
and other partners to promote
gender equality, prevent violence
against women and girls (VAWG),
and increase access to quality
response services for survivors.

The PVAWFFS project is co-
funded by the Fiji Women’s Fund
and the new Pacific Partnership
to End Violence Against Women
and Girls programme. The Pacific
Partnership is funded by the
European Union, with targeted
support from the Australian
Government and UN Women for
service delivery and community-
based approaches.
Someone once said, “if your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more and do more, and become more, you are a true leader.”

A sentiment embodied in two outstanding women leaders and members of the Fund’s Steering Committee, Christina Munzer and Leaine Robinson, who we bid adieu this month.

Amidst a packed room of grantees, friends and colleagues from the women’s movement, government and development agencies, Fund Manager, Michelle Reddy, paid tribute to Christina and Leaine for being part of the Fund’s journey.

“Thank you for trusting us and for being our feminist ally in shaping the way that we work. The Fund team is forever grateful for your stewardship which has inspired us to be better development partners to the women and communities that we serve,” said Ms Reddy.

Ms Munzer was instrumental in her capacity as Chair of the Fund’s Steering Committee during its inception phase in 2017. After three years as Counsellor, Development Cooperation Fiji and Tuvalu, at the Australian High Commission in Suva, Ms Munzer moves on to her next posting at the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Canberra.

“It has been an honour to serve on the Fund’s Steering Committee. The Fund has achieved such extraordinary results because of the strong leadership in Michelle, as Fund Manager, and her dynamic team. In my time here, it is clear to me that working with the women’s movement is the most effective way to advance gender equality,” said Ms Munzer.

Ms Robinson has been a visionary leader in her work on Australia’s bilateral and regional gender equality and inclusive growth programs. The Fund is deeply grateful for her guidance, advice, diplomacy and patience since its inception in 2017.

"Managing the Fiji Women’s Fund has been my pride and joy, I have much respect for the women’s movement in Fiji, and the work you do. The Fund has established such strong foundations since its inception in 2017, and is ready to take off in many positive ways. I look forward to following the Fund’s journey," said Ms Robinson.

After seven years as Senior Program Manager, Gender Equality & Inclusive Growth at the Australian High Commission in Suva, Ms Robinson is chartering a new course to pursue further studies, and continuing to contribute to advancing gender and social inclusion in Fiji, and the Pacific.

We wish Christina and Leaine all the best in their new adventures!