

FNU Gender and Leadership workshop highlights key issues



FNU Gender and Leadership Workshop participants with FNU Pro Vice Chancellor Research Prof Mohini Singh (sitting, fourth from left), Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation Senior Women's Interest Officer Reijieli Mawa and FNU Vice Chancellor Professor Nigel Healey.

Fiji National University (FNU) female academics, lecturers and middle-managers were challenged to be active participants in decision making at all levels to ensure gender equity and equality.

Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation Senior Women's Interest Officer, Reijieli Mawa highlighted this during her key address whilst opening the FNU Gender and Leadership Workshop at De Vos on the Park in Suva today.

"In 2014, 16 percent of women made it to Parliament and in 2018, it increased by 4 percent to 20 percent," Mawa said.

"We would like to see this happening at community level and at all levels of decision-making. Not just because we want women to be there, but because we need women to be present and participate in matters that affect everyone."

"We are also looking at implementing a 30 percent participation of women at all levels of decision making."

Mawa highlighted the importance of Fiji's National Gender Policy and said it was a significant step showing the progress of substantive gender equality in the country.

"We hope that this policy assures that one day the men, women, boys and girls of Fiji are equal in rights and in dignity and in opportunities."

"The most important thing about the policy is that it declares the commitment of the Fijian Government to gender equality and to the policy itself."

She said that in order for the national document to be effective, it should be implemented at all levels and used in policy consultations and formulations.

"It would be good to see it used in FNU planning and policies," Mawa said. FNU Vice Chancellor Professor Nigel Healey said such workshops provided women an opportunity to discuss challenges such as career progression in the higher education sector and how this could be addressed.

"In this workshop, we will listen to women and their experiences and what is

holding them back in their career. There are some obvious ones which we are directly trying to address," Professor Healey said.

"One of the reasons women's careers, particular in education, tend to not advance in the same way men's do is because women take career breaks to have children and to raise children at the most productive times of their academic career."

"One of the ways in which we plan to help is having child care facilities for young children on campus."

"It is something that we are currently working on and this would make a significant impact because it would mean that women would come back to work much sooner and they could work confident that their child is just across the campus."

"Another is the promotions criteria and making sure that the promotions system is sensitive to the fact that women have career breaks."

FNU Pro Vice Chancellor Professor Mohini Singh further emphasised that in order to help achieve a gender balanced environment, women needed to support each other, celebrate achievements and raise awareness against bias.

The workshop ends tomorrow with a seminar at Nasinu Campus to commemorate International Women's Day.



Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation Senior Officer Reijieli Mawa and FNU Vice Chancellor Professor Nigel Healey.