

THE IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

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To encourage women's participation *in all areas of spiritual, social, traditional and cultural, economic and political development including decision-making process and leadership roles of the church and the community*" these are the words of the Womens Department led by Deaconess Salanieta Naucabalavu.



Established in 1978 the Department of Women's Fellowship is situated at Lot 1 Edenville, Toorak here in Suva with the secretariat living upstairs as the house is provided by the Methodist Church in Fiji. Deaconess Sala has been the secretary since 2010 and this is her sixth year as secretary and pledges to accept the call to Christian womanhood and promise by God's help to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. To make my home, a place where He is loved; my Church, a place where He is worshipped and my Country, a realm

where He is honored.

Looking forward to commencing workshop this year that will focus on awareness towards the Men in the coming months of March and November in the western side of Viti levu and up in the North. She believes and emphasizes the importance of prayer, "if we pray alone and hard enough, we can overcome the problems" She says. Problems such as domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape, sexual violence during conflict and harmful customary or traditional practices such as female genital mutilation, forced marriages and honor crimes. All of these come under Gender Based Violence.





One of the many root causes that the Women's Fellowship came across is divorce in youngercouples within the Church this is due to Kava drinkingwhich has been an on-going issue for the churchmembers. Also the miss-interpretation of scripture,the word of God needs to be preached and taughtcorrectly. Gender Equality reflects in the bible in thebook Paul to the Galatians 3:28 "There is neither Jewnor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there isneither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. Also poverty and unemployment, lack of trainingof Family Life for husband and wife, pre-maritalcounseling

and issues of being side-lined(understanding of parents must always be the case). "Awareness should begin at Sunday school then toMYF level and so forth within our own churches" says the secretary of the Women's Department. It **should not** be a **TABOO** conversation becausechildren as young as **7months old are beingraped** by the very people who should be protectingthem.

Last year three departments of the church- the Men's and Women's Fellowship Departments and theDepartment of Christian Citizenship and Social Servicescombined and held the first of three workshops thatcreated awareness on issues related to gender basedviolence and child protection and care specially forMen's Fellowship Leaders and young men who comefrom Methodist Youth Fellowship. The aim of the seriesof workshops is to ensure that ministers, MethodistMen's Fellowship presidents and young men from theMethodist Youth Fellowship are equipped biblically tospeak out about the issue of Gender-based Violence andViolence against Children and to learn what they can do to reduce and prevent violence against our vulnerablemembers of the community.

Love and support womenand children in the church. Together we can make difference.