

# Speaking Out Against Violence



(From left) Sophia Jahon, Shamima Ali, Edesina Kotoisuva and Koila Costello of the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre.

**S**hamima Ali has played a major role in putting violence against women on the Pacific agenda in the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China. She is a leader in the worldwide movement against gender violence and is a founding member of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement. Today, Shamima is at the center of things at the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre.

Established in 1984, the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre is now the hub of Pacific action on violence against women. It works to highlight gender violence as a key development issue. Shamima and her co-workers come from various ethnic backgrounds and religions. Their collective offers training and resources to community groups, the police, judiciary and health workers throughout the Pacific region. The Centre also provides a 24-hour emergency service that includes medical aid and refuge where possible, professional counselling for victims of all kinds of violence, marriage counselling and legal assistance.

With its sister organization, the Fiji Women's Rights Movement, the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre runs mass media campaigns that help both Fijian and Indo-Fijian communities to bring their problems out into the open. Since the Centre opened, more women have reported incidences of violence. This indicates the Centre's success in drawing out women and children from the culture of silence that allows violence to continue.

Shamima and the Centre has produced two regional training manuals, one on crisis counselling and the other on community education on violence. Through the Centre, Shamima has also helped Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea set up crisis counselling services.

Over the past eight years, Shamima has traveled throughout Fiji and the Pacific to train and lecture on women and violence. Using her background in media and education, Shamima has done and continues to do no less than a good job. ☺