

PGWNet – Pacific Regional Meeting in Manchester, UK

There are seven regional groupings within IFUW and their membership is growing as new NFAs are formed. Representatives from all IFUW regions present at the 29th IFUW Conference in Manchester met over lunch to decide if informal networking between the regional groups would be of interest. There was clear approval for this idea but no particular structure is envisaged as each region operates differently, with its process and programme, or lack of, being whatever is most appropriate to the NFAs in that region.....

The Pacific region's Pacific Graduate Women's Network, aka PGWNet, is the youngest regional entity and, although it is comparatively small in numbers, it covers a vast territory most of which is ocean. PGWNet meets annually, at either an international or a member conference, eg Ottawa, Perth and Manchester and, in between, in Fiji, Australia, Samoa and New Zealand to date. Between PGWNet Council meetings there is a healthy flow of e-mail traffic.

Sadly, no current PGWNet Office-bearers/ Executive members from ATUW, Tonga who were elected at NZFGW Conference, Wellington, 2006, were able to travel to UK. However it was most important for members from Fiji, Samoa, Vanuatu (by proxy), Australia and New Zealand to take the opportunity to meet in person, reflect on where PGWNet is and to discuss its activities, past, present and future. Whilst the input of delegates from Tonga, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands or PNG would have enriched the IFUW Conference, their absence was understandable considering the high total cost of registration, travel, accommodation and leave for a full week or more of unpaid leave away from their countries. They were really missed...

Congratulations were given to all who will hold IFUW positions of responsibility for this triennium – especially to Akanisi Kedrayate, FAWG's dynamic and highly articulate, out-going President, who is now a member of IFUW Projects Committee. FAWG were also celebrating their transition to full membership of IFUW under the old rules (50 members) after many years as associate members. The membership rule change in 2007 accords full IFUW membership to associations of women graduates with 20 members, so SAWG will now be eligible. While it is exciting that there can be a real Pacific voting presence at IFUW in future, it is a matter of great concern that, with the phasing out of the Bina Roy Partners in Development programme, small fragile island states will struggle to fund their membership dues. On the positive side, the larger NFAs are keen to establish "sister-linkages" for support and mutual enrichment. Lily Vesikula, Fiji, raised this issue in a Conference plenary session. Consequently, a draft for PGWNetlinks has been circulated and all NFAs and their branches have been invited to comment.

As a Past-President of SAWG and their sole delegate, Emma Kruse Va'ai outlined the previous PGWNet Executive's achievements – in particular, the establishment of PGWNet's stand-alone website. There have been unexpected delays in the transition of all PGWNet Administration from Samoa to Tonga, but that is expected to be expedited forthwith.