

Fijian women oppose water privatisation

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The Fiji Women's Rights Movement is protesting the March 13 promulgation of the Water Authority of Fiji Bill, which according to public service and public sector interim minister Poseci Bune will provide more "effective management" of water, including "opportunities for competition in the provision of water" and facilitating the "corporatisation of the Water Authority of Fiji". Opposition to water privatisation sprang up last July when organisations including the Fiji Human Rights Commission protested the inclusion of five major private sector figures in a nine-person committee established to prepare a charter on water and sewerage. In a March 15 statement, FWRM executive director Virisila Buadromo said that "Water is a basic human right, and we are very worried about the commercialisation of this essential resource. We are appalled that water, as essential to life as air, will be treated like a business — especially in light of clear community concerns on the issue."

According to Buadromo, "Despite last year's assurances from the public enterprise ministry that this was a reorganisation and not privatisation, it is clear that this is to be a commercial, profit-driven venture. Globally, experience has shown that privatisation of water does not work ... even partial privatisation turns water from a public service into a commodity for profit. This has serious consequences for the entire population, but for women in particular because they face added burdens of work when they cannot access clean piped water." For more information visit "<http://www.fwrn.org.fj>".

P.S.

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