

# Community Radio Times

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## REAFFIRMING WOMEN AS FIRST-RESPONDERS ONE YEAR AFTER WINSTON

BY SHARON BHAGWAN ROLLS, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER-DIRECTOR OF FEMLINKPACIFIC

The successive natural disasters that impacted the Fiji Islands in the first months of 2017 are a clear signal of the future – greater climate unpredictability, persistent droughts and stronger cyclones, resulting in more complex and frequent humanitarian emergencies. Increasingly, complex and frequent disasters are confronting an existing humanitarian system of response that is not properly prepared to cope.

What is required is more transformative, gender-inclusive agenda for humanitarian response which will ensure the rights and specific needs of women and girls in all their diversities affected by natural disasters and humanitarian emergencies are addressed in national plans, strategies and responses - including disaster risk reduction policies.

Additionally, women should not only be portrayed as victims of natural disasters and climate change. Rather, they are equal partners in designing strategies and agreements on how to tackle related issues

As we reflect on the year since Sever Tropical Cyclone (TC) Winston, it is time for reaffirming women as first-responders. It is also a time for government to not just commit, but highlight how they will work with women's civil society to meet the representation targets in decision making processes.

Since TC Winston, femLINKpacific has and continues to undertake key community-led protection and humanitarian response activities. With the support of partners and allies including ActionAid Australia, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the International Women's Development Agency (IWDA), femLINKpacific scaled up its Women's Weather Watch (WWW) campaign - a gender inclusive innovative method to increase women's access to information through community radio and other media.

Activated immediately following TC Ula, femLINKpacific utilised its community media network to track approaching weather systems and disseminate information and early warning messages to 150 rural women leaders.

The key to the WWW success is the act of translating scientific weather jargon in local and accessible language and proved to be an effective local and women-led tool for disaster management.

The support also meant that femLINKpacific continued its humanitarian response and protection activities through disaster assessments conducted by rural women network leaders during monthly district meetings in 14 districts and three National Consultations on Women, Peace, and Security in humanitarian crises.

At the National Consultations, the women represented from across the Central, Western and Northern divisions of the Fiji Islands as well as from various stakeholder groups including from LGBTIQ, disability and young women's organisations. Across all consultations, including two rounds of divisional consultations in 2016, women identified food security, personal security and economic security as their most urgent protection issues. Specifically, a core group of women leaders from 71 communities were mobilised and supported to participate in 84 district consultations, 6 divisional consultations and 3 national consultations.

They shared and received information that is resulting in women-led preparedness and response in Fiji. This provided support to the women leaders to communicate how and why the day-to-day barriers and challenges to women's participation are heightened during natural disasters because, when women are not in the decision making processes, there is greater likelihood that their ideas as well as their priorities are not included.

A key message from the WWW strategy since 2016 has been to take a women's human security and protection approach. Layered on the concept of protection are the key ideas of safety, the condition of achieving security and dignity, the feeling of empowerment, self-worth, freedom and autonomy.

This means ensuring safety and security for women and girls of all diversities in their homes and evacuation centres as well as in the process of recovery when women are more vulnerable to exploitation because essential resources such as food and water are scarce.

"Psycho-social support and rehabilitation must support women to share their stories experiences, reflections and lessons learned,"

outlined Adi Vasulevu of Transcend Oceania and femLINKpacific's convenor in the Northern Division. "Their inclusion is key as they are still traumatized from the crisis!"

The disaster management system must also get better at collecting and communicating Gender Inclusive Data. That means ensuring that sex, age, disability and sexual orientation gender identity and expression disaggregated data is collected, reported and analysed at all times. It can also be a practical way forward to collaborate with women's human rights groups and networks who are already working to ensure the participation of women at all levels of decision-making including in emergency and recovery.

"Without (an) updated database from the communities, we would not be sure of what the humanitarian assistance (would be for specific populations)," explained Fane Boseiwaqa, femLINKpacific's rural convenor and correspondent in the Western Division.

"Information and collection of data is really important because we are able to identify why, how many people living with disabilities, the pregnant mothers, the children so in terms of having humanitarian assistance, their specific needs would be addressed through the collection of the database."

"For women with disability, access to information and communication is really needed especially during disasters," added Unaisi Bakewa Sadranu, Vice President of the Tavua Disabled People's Association, emphasising that it is vital to ensure that the specific needs of groups such as women with disabilities who too often face multiple discrimination are addressed. "From experience, communication was not accessible and it was not accurate during the last disaster (TC Winston)."

"Another thing is the awareness. Awareness has to be done not only to the people with disability but to the stakeholders too. The stakeholders too should know how to treat women with disability especially when disaster strikes. Women living with disabilities in rural areas have been left out and some of them have not been visited. (So), if women can be resourced and given the accessibility."

Ultimately, we know that we will continue to face extreme weather events and natural disasters which have an excessive negative impact on women and girls and that their peace and security will be at risk without a human security and protection approach.

"While there are disaster preparedness committees, they also have a vital role in response and recovery, and should not just be limited to committees in settlements," said Mereani Nawadra, a community radio broadcaster and staff member of the Methodist Church in Fiji.

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She suggested that disaster risk reduction (DRR) must be incorporated into wherever communities gather. From women's clubs to faith groups. What is vital is inclusive representation. "The DRR committee must include a youth member, a person with disability (and) a representative of the LGBT community," Nawadra added.

"We must have more women's participation in all diversities of life," continued Vani Tuvuki, of the Koronubu Women's Fellowship in Ba "That is pre, during and after any disaster."

Inclusive preparedness, response and recovery requires the representation of women.

The leadership, experiences and challenges of women in all their diversities can ensure a smooth transition from relief to development as well as address sexual and gender-based violence as an integral and prioritised part of every humanitarian response. Strategies to build resilient and self-reliant communities must also ensure that the traditional, cultural and societal barriers – as well as safety, economic and political barriers – to women's participation are addressed.

Evidence from the WWW campaign 2016 has highlighted the reality that despite leading in their communities before and after the events

of 20th February, 2016, women continue to be invisible – they are still under-represented in decision making despite a pre-existing commitment of 30%.

The impact of this was evident in the Post Disaster Needs Assessment which was gender neutral in its perspective. It is disappointing that the status quo remains even though there has been opportunity to address the under-representation of women especially in local governance structures and there has been greater visibility of rural women speaking about the impact and recovery strategies, as well as communicating key lessons and preparedness recommendations which are missing from the formal spaces despite commitments at the World Humanitarian Summit (2016), the National Gender Policy (2014) and ratification of The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (1995).

Ultimately, while natural disasters do not discriminate, nothing is gender neutral because of the inequalities in our society. Now, more than ever, there is a need for the state to ensure that women are empowered to equitably and meaningfully participate with men, their needs and interests are prioritised in strategies and responses and the human rights of women and girls are promoted and protected in

all development efforts.

*Background:*  
 Activated on 1st January, 2016, following Tropical Cyclone Ula, femLINKpacific's Women's Weather Watch model has since reached more than 440 rural women leaders across Viti and Vanua Levu, who represent more than 11,700 women from over 120 clubs and a further 15, 428 household members. Our rural women leaders network extends across Fiji's 14 districts including Macuata, Bua and Cakaudrove as well as Rabi Island in Vanua Levu; Navua and Rakiraki in the Central Division; and Ba, Nadi, Tavua and Rakiraki in the Western Division of Viti Levu. In the period July – October, our community radio stations in Suva and Labasa have together dedicated over 3,300 hours to promoting women's voice on local weather and environmental issues. During this time, femLINKpacific also organised and convened 56 monthly meetings at district level; conducted three quarterly divisional level consultations including three focus group discussions in the western division, and held our third national consultation in Suva.

# THREAT TO HUMAN SECURITY FOR RURAL WOMEN LEADERS

BY SIAN ROLLS

"The consultation in Lagi yesterday created an empowering space bringing together women of all age groups (including) young women and mothers," shared Adi Vasulevu, femLINKpacific's convenor for the North on the 21st of March, 2017.

Vasulevu's sentiments were echoed by femLINK's convenors across the country as femLINK convened consultations in the Central Division, Nadi, Lautoka, Ba, Tavua, Rakiraki, Labasa Town and Lagi earlier in the month, with more than 125 women leaders representing more than 10,000 other women through their community groups, organisations and networks.

Women across the country discussed and defined the development they want to see as they identified the human insecurities faced by themselves as women leaders, their families, their communities and districts. Such insecurities included environment, food, economic, health and political insecurity alongside concerns about poor infrastructure.

Even Vasulevu, in her report following the Lagi convening, shared the challenges of travelling the more than 140 kilometre journey to the village.

"Our vehicle was so bogged down through the potholes on our return," she said, adding the rain at the time made the trip more perilous.

For the women leaders, such challenges present dilemmas including when it comes to asserting their own health needs – they opt not to take expensive trips or walk for long distances from their communities. "Not having access to proper health services is a challenge to us women," shared Manjula Reddy from Korociriciri Mothers Club from Nausori. "The facilities that are available does not cater for the patients and especially women's needs."

"Most of the time we are send back to buy our own medicine and in this way we have to draw from our food budget but most of the time we will go without it because we don't have the money to buy."

Such realities then create another dilemma – with women having to weigh the costs of healthcare with the costs of good food and other regular expenses in the context of more frequent and more severe natural disasters including droughts and floods.

"Our crops and vegetables are destroyed when the Nadi river floods, we have no choice but to buy expensive vegetables from the market," explained Aseri Natoma from Nadi.

"The standard of living in Fiji is getting too expensive especially to our basic food items like floor, rice, milk and we don't earn much," Leena Reddy of the Korociriciri Women's Group from Nausori – a district also hard-hit following last December's floods. "For me, I have two children only (but) sometimes it's quite hard to support their needs."

Sometimes, there is the problem of too much water and, other times, too little. The women leaders of Ba highlighted that the weather seems to switch frequently between dry and hot and heavy downpours. Without piped water supply, ensuring their health and keeping food on the table is a constant challenge. "In Koronubu settlement, it's been 45 years they have (been) facing issues of access to clean drinking water, this also affects their food security when they want to do farming," said. Sainiana Tinai from Ba. Sharing a regular space for the women leaders through the femLINK network also presents an opportunity for solidarity building, capacity sharing and network strengthening.

The women leaders of Ba reflected on this as they marked the passing of Kasanita Buloulutu, also the mother of Vani Tuvuki, Koronubu Women's Fellowship Leader.

"The soft spoken network leader who never missed attending our monthly meeting in Ba (who) was very passionate about the issues," reflected Fane Boseiwaqa, femLINK's convenor for Ba, Tavua and Rakiraki. "Especially when she saw the young women coming to the consultations, she always encouraged them to join the women's clubs and groups."

"She will be sadly missed."

The issues of the network of rural women leaders shared at district consultations held during March, including issues discussed at recent Divisional and National consultations, will be the priorities for national budget submissions to be published in femLINK's first Women's Human Security First report for 2017.



# WOMEN LEADERS OF THE NORTH DEFINE THE DEVELOPMENT THEY WANT

FEMLINKPACIFIC STATEMENT – 21ST FEBRUARY (6/2017)

“Women are seen as victims but they are the first responders to everything,” stated Mareta Tagivakatini of the Labasa Market Vendors Association. “They have to have a better understanding of where to take (the issues).”

She was speaking during femLINKpacific’s Northern Division Consultation that started on the 21st of February in Labasa. Tagivakatini is one of the 18 women leaders, collectively representing more than 563 other women through their community groups, women’s groups, faith communities and other networks. The consultation is the second divisional consultation held ahead of a national convening with the focus, ‘Celebrating Resilience and Defining Economic Security’.

“This is an opportunity to meet as women leaders who participate in our monthly district level convenings, or belong to ally and partner organisations, to not just discuss development priorities but consider the priorities in the context of human security as well as

disaster preparedness and response,” explained Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Executive Producer-Director of femLINKpacific.

The women leaders defined their district and divisional priorities including infrastructure, environment security, access to services – including health services – economic security, food security, personal security and access to information.

“Due to the weather change, the food gardens are flooded and there are landslides,” outlined Tabatau Rewi of the Buakonikai Women’s Group on Rabi Island. “The goods from the shops also aren’t enough.”

“We need someone to come to give awareness on planting vegetables that can (survive).”

“Most of the people are relying on the backyard gardening (but there is) no proper drainage,” added Nirmala Sharma of the Vunucuicui Multiracial Women’s Forum and Vanua Levu Arya Mahila Mandal. “The water (goes into) the backyard gardening and it affects the growing and at the moment the price of vegetables is really high and people can’t buy it from the market.”

“When it’s bad road, we can’t get our groceries because of the rainy season,” continued Disavu Daugunu, Secretary of the Tawake Women’s Club. “We can only hire maybe a carrier for \$100 plus – sometimes \$160 - and linked to that is our health.”

“If it’s bad road, it’s hard for our ambulance to reach Tawake. All those from Yasawas, Udu Point come to deliver the sick person in Wainigadaru. I’ve been raising up for 20 years but nothing.”

The poor infrastructure, the most common and pressing development priority, also has implications for access to education. “(We need) a preschool for the little ones because us as young

mothers we don’t have much income,” explained Jojiana Waqanitoga of the Lagi Women’s Club. “We have to struggle to bring our children down to town and we have to leave them with our relatives and go back up the coast so we can provide for them.” “Since TC Tomas, (which) damaged the preschool, nothing has been changed.”

Also raised was the need to recognise women’s leadership as well as building the capacity of women leaders to better interact with governance systems.

“We are (raising the issues) but we haven’t got any results,” said Rev. Suruj, representing the Association of Anglican Women (AAW) Labasa. “If women are there (in local governance), they will understand the women’s problems.”

“We need more training on that so that ladies are able to take the issues up.”

The consultation included discussions on recovery since Tropical Cyclone (TC) Winston while also contextualising recommendations for the National Development Plan made before the category five cyclone. The women leaders also features in the production of femLINKpacific’s web series and FemTALK89FM radio programme, Radio with Pictures in the Field.

The consultations, ‘Amplifying Women’s Human Security First: Celebrating Resilience and Defining Economic Security’, are supported by the Australian Government’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the International Women’s Development Agency (IWDA) and ActionAid Australia.





# WOMEN LEADERS CALL FOR GREATER INVESTMENT IN AGRICULTURE

BY SULUETI WAQA

"The fertilisers were washed away and the tonnes of sugarcane goes down because of the continuous heavy rain," shared Nirmala Sharma, Project Manager for Vunicuicui Multiracial Women's Group. It has been one year since Tropical Cyclone Winston but a question remains on the mind of our rural women leaders: what progress has been made for women's peace and human security? Food is still expensive at the market, the cost of transport is rising and poor infrastructure remains a daily challenge; these were the

major issues discussed by rural women leaders of Macuata Urban during March's consultation at the Community Media Centre in Labasa.

Amongst the 14 women leaders, 4 were representatives of the Labasa Market Vendors Association who shared the challenges despite their efforts towards a full recovery in the market.

"We can really feel it from the market because of the supplies of vegetables and root crops from Bua and Cakaudrove was really affected," shared Mareta Tagivakatini, Secretary of the Labasa Market Vendors Association. "This affected us vendors with the high cost due to the insufficient supply."

While the leaders noted some government assistance, relief is far from realised as continuous heavy rains and flooding further damages infrastructure.

"Because of the flooding, most of the roads in the village areas are really bad and we can't get enough vegetables in the market," explained Amra Wati, a market vendor in the Labasa Market, who adds the result is a high buying price from suppliers leading to tough choices as resellers.

"The price of root crop is quiet high compared to the amount of

money we have and the producers are selling it at the high price which disabled us to buy and we resort to other type of produce to earn income," added Melania Raitabe, a vendor and member of the Bulileka Young Mother's Club. "The root crops are mostly damaged in the village and if we go and uproot the cassava, it has the bad odour because of the bad weather."

"(But we can't just buy from the market because) it's too expensive – it's 5 dollars a heap (of root crops) and too small to cater for the family."

Dimakita Lena the President of the Naleba Multiracial Women's Group shared that she wanted to see an inclusion in the National Budget to address some of these issues as often women in rural areas don't see agricultural programmes reaching them.

Rev. Angela Suruj Prasad from the Association of Anglican Women also wants to see that the Ministry of Agriculture has resources, like seedlings, reaching women as backyard farmers.

According to Rev. Prasad, quite often families are forgotten but if seedling are properly distributed, it could tackle the problem of high cost of food in the markets.





# SUPPORTING RURAL WOMEN'S COMMUNICATION - FROM THE REEF TO THE AIRWAVES

PRESENTED BY LUCILLE CHUTE TO THE WOMEN IN FISHERIES FORUM – 8TH MARCH, 2017

Tawake village is located at about 150km away from Labasa Town, along the coastal line of Udu Point, in the Tikina of Tawake and the Province of Cakaudrove. Through the years of my growing up, listening to my grandmother, my mother and aunts, talking about the changes in accessing sea food resources and my own experiences over the years going out fishing whenever I am at the village. I have seen how the tides are becoming higher, reaching out further in land, increase in coastal erosions and has gotten worse during the past 10 years from my own personal experiences. This has caused changes and impacts in marine food resources. Where we used to access fish closer to the coast and villages, now

we have to go out further, and fish and sea food sources are getting scarce and facing out based as an impact to weather changes. I remember 5 years ago along our coast at Udu point and Natewa bay there were thick layers and spread of pumas (soata), fish and seashells died and after that certain sea resources like beche-de-mer and seashells disappeared. Today, the sea line has moved in at least 2 meters during my life experiences. Also how my grandmother who weaves mats for a living is very concerned about the pandanus leaves disappearing as the tides are reaching up and washing away her (voivoi) pandanus trees as it grows best beside the coast. As a young woman who for 17 years goes fishing regularly with my father, I have also noticed clear changes with the rising sea level. I started fishing Mullet (Kanace) fish with my dad when I was 9 years old, back then we had the almanac book, where we could check for the tide times and also its measure, I noticed that the biggest tide then was 1.7 to 1.8 and usually at the ending of the year or mostly during full moon, at certain month of the year was the best time to fish Kanaca. Compared that to now, the biggest tide I have seen was at 1.9 to 2.1 and it is more frequent than usual and in Tawake it reaching to women's kitchens and high tides coming halfway into the village. In terms of protection my concern rural coastal communities using the under size fishing nets, or the selling of small size nets below 3 inch, where rural people along the coastal areas are using these

small nets, for fast food due to these changes they are using these and catching under size fish, and how this impacts our future. Also lack of monitoring with the activities that happen around our rural coasts, for example the selling of sea cucumbers to the Chinese people, looking for fast money due to economic insecurity people are influenced to picking up all different sizes and types they can get to sell and damaging food chain and no one is policing these things that relevant policies are followed. As a young woman, I recommend that fishing nets below 3 inches should not be sold and coastal security is strengthen and more training done to our rural communities to further educate them with managing their resources and understanding climate change and impacts on ecosystem. After Cyclone Winston, in Tawake, our white sandy beach disappears and eroded and that our new beach colour is the green grass as the beach line has moved in and the high tides flow into the village grounds. I have also noticed that the people faced with the new struggles and changes impacting their economic security are finding an easy way to earn a living while waiting for the grog (kava) farm recently planted after TC Winston to mature, our marine life is dying away economic resources disappearing and damaged farms impact women's safety with dignity, human security and development. Thank You.

# FEMLINKPACIFIC FIRST NATIONAL CONSULTATION FOR 2017 BEGINS

FEMLINKPACIFIC STATEMENT – 6TH MARCH  
(7/2017)

femLINKpacific's first National Women's Human Security First: Women's Weather Watch Consultation in 2017 will see the organisation once again bringing together a cadre of 40 rural women leaders from across the Northern, Western and Central Divisions.

"The national consultation is building on the successive series of consultations, at district, divisional and national level, which enable rural women to come together to develop strategies and recommendations aimed at informing the National Development Plan and next National Budget," said Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Executive Producer-Director of femLINKpacific. "The consultation will also enhance the advocacy towards a more gender inclusive national disaster management strategies."

"Inclusive preparedness, response and recovery requires the representation and recognition of their leadership, experiences and challenges of women in all their diversities; something that is vital to women as well as communities as the first months of 2017 are a clear signal of the future – greater climate unpredictability, such as frequent flooding, persistent droughts and stronger cyclones, resulting in more complex and frequent humanitarian emergencies."

During the consultation, 32 women leaders in all their diversities will feature in the production of a new season of femLINKpacific's television series 'Radio with Pictures' – a media collaboration with Fiji Television - which is providing a national media platform to enhance the visibility of rural women's leadership, at a time when women remain under-represented in local governance structures.

"The consultation will culminate in an event dedicated to the HEROWINS across Fiji who are represented by the rural women leaders attending our National Consultation at the Fiji Museum for International Women's Day on the 8th of March," continued Bhagwan Rolls. "In the spirit of feminist solidarity for International Women's Day and ahead of the 61st session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61), we acknowledge women across Fiji as first-responders, as peacebuilders and as leaders – from their homes to farms and communities across Fiji, but particularly from rural and remote communities; women who bring creativity and innovation in community development and enterprise."

"This event is our way to provide another platform, in the capital city to amplify 'Women's Human Security First' and say 'Here are the Women!'"



# RURAL WOMEN LEADERS SPEAK'OUT!



“Through the production of Radio with Pictures, the awareness of women’s issues in all our diversities have been amplified on a level that have reached a global audience influencing people of all gender, race, (and) religion. I’d been also labelled in my community as the ‘weather girl’... because of the Women’s Weather Watch. To me, commemorating International Women’s Day is looking back at the achievements and recognising these achievements.”

Bonita Qio, Pacific Rainbows Advocacy Network – Lautoka



“I was at my home for 30 years just a simple housewife and life was not that easy. I know all the difficulties that been faced because I always came across it. I know how to be punched, how to be kicked, how to be slapped, hearing swears. I was diagnosed of cancer. I’m always shy to be seen. When I started to build up my capacity of sharing not to be in that box but come out of that box and share what you are going through. We women may be sitting here (but) we are not only women, we are not only mothers, we are not only wives. Yes, we are leaders. We have to walk the talk, we have to join hands and see that everything that we have been taught, or learnt, or shared, (that) it’s put into practice, put into action.” Mareta Tagivakatini, Labasa Market Vendors Association – Labasa



“As a young woman I’ve learned a lot from all of you and when I go back to spread the news I don’t actually go back to the women I go back to the men in the church and to the boys because I feel that they are not hearing us so I start at the church level”

Mereani Nawadra, Methodist Church and FemTALK89FM Broadcaster – Suva



“We are the leaders! And I am an active, bold and committed leader in my community. Today I want to tell our ladies here and out of this environment who are listening to us or who might be seeing us they should be committed, they should be bold, they should take part with us to be the leaders!” Shakuntla Permal, Advisory Councillor – Lautoka



“I stand up as a leader not just a leader I want to be an effective leader. When I say something I want to see that it’s done.” Salome Raqiyawa, Nalalawa Women’s Club – Rakiraki



“Us women, we have the skills with us, so that skills it must be practised, if you have the skill and you’re just saying it from your mouth and not put it in action I think it won’t do.” Dimakita Lena, Naleba Multiracial Women’s Group – Labasa



## TRANSFORMATIVE DEVELOPMENT MUST BE GENDER INCLUSIVE

BY SIAN ROLLS

"We need women in decision making processes - help them get there," remarked Losana Derenalagi, speaking to Ministry of Economy officials on the 5th of April as femLINKpacific presented recommendations on the National Development Plan. "Women's participation in decision making process is important to realise the sustainability of development."

"When we look at the smaller picture, we see the home and we see (mothers) doing all these things... the children's welfare, the healthy environment, the food security... and in the bigger picture, we see the government and see what they want to do. In order to have this bigger picture fulfilled or do its work best, it's the small picture that has to be taken care of."

Derenalagi spoke alongside femLINKpacific's other convenors, Fane Boseiwaqa and Adi Vasulevu, as well as femLINK's Labasa based staff Sulueti Waqa. They collectively drew from the sharing and experience of more than 400 women leaders throughout our network.

"Women who are managing the farms (are) not only managing the farms but they manage the family, the community, and also the farms that they work in," continued Boseiwaqa. "What they need, is that promote strategies to increase the participation of women in decision making at all levels... that at least we push at least 30% of women to be represented when they are planning, when they are managing the farms - they should be included to be involved in managing these areas of agriculture."

Another challenge that further distances women as leaders in the agricultural sector has been the continued lack of connectivity since TC Winston – there are communities in Tavua and Rakiraki still

without access to radio and television.

"When we talk about farming, when we talk about getting their produce to the market, there are broken bridges," Boseiwaqa added. "They do not have proper access to roads so that is an increased burden for women (who have to) send their produce to the market."

In 2015, femLINKpacific's series of convenings documented recommendations from rural women leaders in our network for the initial series of National Development Plan consultations.

"Post TC Winston, we have obviously had an opportunity to analyse the Post Disaster Needs Assessment and so this meeting has also been an important opportunity to communicate a series of recommendations which can assist the government comply with gender equality commitments in the SDGs, CEDAW and the National Gender Policy and Women's Plan of Action," said Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, femLINKpacific Executive Producer-Director.

"However, this must be more than words on paper."

"The commitments must be linked to budget allocations and also contribute to transforming decision making processes otherwise we won't achieve sustainable development."

Bhagwan Rolls added that femLINKpacific believes that development plan must demonstrate the nexus between peace, development and human security in line with SDG16.

"We know the cycle of violence in homes and communities is often linked to families being disconnected from the development process," she continued. "Institutional violence prevails when women are not supported to participate in decision making especially in local governance processes."

"Economic security for our country must also be realised in the attainment of food security, access to clean drinking water and infrastructure. But economic security must also arise from participatory decision making."

The group also shared experiences with and learnings from ongoing documentation of women's cooperative models "Supporting cooperative model is building capacities to invest well in building a source of unity, rebuilding community resilience, I believe, and also building local communities savings and how to generate and keep local economy within the system," explained Vasulevu. "This has not

only been just a space where they generate income."

"It is also a space where women come together to talk about other important issues or priorities for them, especially to share about their conflicts. Even if they're struggling to get that cooperative up and running... the women continued to find creative ways of rebuilding that."

Without these models, the rural-urban drift becomes the only option for meeting the ever-increasing cost of living.

"There has been some issues of violence and parents leaving their homes," Vasulevu continued. "(They are) having to go and work to keep their families surviving and ending up in children facing violence in their homes because of the negligence of their parents." The drift is also a by-product of a lack of investment in educational facilities, including tertiary institutions.

"(Families) have to move from their rural communities to the urban in order to access education and most of the courses that are available in Suva is not available in the rural communities especially in Labasa, in most tertiary institutions," said Waqa. "They have to come to Suva, look for accommodation and stay with relatives – those are costing them and their family more. And most of these young women come from a community who are farmers, sugarcane farming communities and so this thing is very expensive and also they would like to see if there is an investment in these rural communities."

As Derenalagi outlined, underpinning this has been the local governance structures that also remain under-resourced as illustrated by the experience of advisory councillors through our networks.

"If they tell their stories, they will tell you – after disaster, they go out of their way to look into all these families, no car, they have to walk," shared Derenalagi. "So, that is why this big gap has to be linked and we need women but you have to have women leaders to be part in this decision making processes."

"Start from the tikina, the local government, all committees. After all, the government already ratified CEDAW, you know? At least 30% we're asking for."



# GENDER INCLUSIVE TRANSFORMATIVE DEVELOPMENT

With the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (2015), gender equality is recognised as a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable country. Human security for us is about transforming spaces and processes for women's equal participation – in all our diversities.

Since 2015, our Women's Human Security First reports have unveiled the development and human security priorities from 14 districts across Fiji including as a result of the impacts of droughts and floods as well as Tropical Cyclone (TC) Winston.

Priority issues have included the need to improve access to basic services including health care, income generation programmes, access to education and job creation, access to natural resource management in particular land for women-led food security agricultural programmes.

The priority of infrastructure development (land and sea transport, electricity and communications, as well as information systems) is also inextricably linked to social infrastructure and gives rise to the need for national development plans to address the social and economic disadvantage that women experience because of gender inequality and systemic discrimination against women, including the power imbalance between women and men in access to decision making and resources.

Without involving women in mechanisms such as the task forces for the National Women's Plan of Action and local governance structures - including meeting the 30% targets in town councils, district and divisional planning committees as well as disaster management structures - development will remain gender neutral. There will not be dedicated resources and indicators to demonstrate progress in advancing the status of women in Fiji in line with the UN

Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), including associated General Recommendations (in particular 30 and 34), as well as other treaties and policies on disability, young women, the elderly and LGBT rights.

The Fiji Government National Development Plan therefore must be strategically aligned to CEDAW as well as the National Gender Policy (2014) in line of the adopted conclusions of the recently concluded the 61st session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61) which noted:

"the promotion and protection of, and respect for, the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all women and girls, including the right to development, which are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, are crucial for women's economic empowerment and should be mainstreamed into all policies and programmes aimed at the eradication of poverty and women's economic empowerment, and also reaffirms the need to take measures to ensure that every person is entitled to participate in, contribute to and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, and that equal attention and urgent consideration should be given to the promotion, protection and full realization of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights."

The Development Plan and associated national budgets must give rise to the social and economic conditions that will ensure a smooth transition, in particular, from relief to resilience by supporting women's leadership and innovations.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- The development plan must be accountable to gender equality as well as women's empowerment as there remains persistent under-representation of the women of Fiji in development planning processes, including governance systems, resulting in the perpetuation of discrimination and the ongoing cycle of violence
- The development plan should not simply provide the delivery of services but ensure the social and economic conditions that will support women's representation in political and economic decision-making processes

• Monitoring and Evaluation should:

- o Include community based information and communication systems such as an accountable public service broadcast system
- o Be by way of bi-annual divisional and annual national development summits to discuss the annual reports of the implementation of the national development plan. These summits should be held as part of the national budget consultations
- o Provide for an enabling environment for all civil society actors and increase resources and support for grass-roots, local, national, regional and global women's and civil society organisations so that they can fully contribute to women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work
- o Ensure clear reporting with qualitative and quantitative evidence to demonstrate how the plan is enabling women's full, equal and effective participation and access to leadership and high level positions, including through temporary special measures, as appropriate, in economic decision-making structures and institutions at all levels, as well as in enterprises, corporate boards and trade unions
- o Strengthen the role of the National SDG taskforce to ensure all indicators are aligned to the SDGs and related social policies in CEDAW, the National Gender, Disability and Senior Citizens policies and that all implementation mainstream gender perspective including in all reports which must highlight the specific gender budget allocations and benefits and impacts on women and girls
- Recognise the important role the media can play in the achievement of gender equality and women's economic empowerment, including through non-discriminatory and gender-sensitive coverage and by eliminating gender stereotypes, including those perpetuated by commercial advertisements
- Investment in infrastructure development to reduce poverty and enhance opportunities for all must also recognise the importance of utilising appropriate and accessible media and ICTs to ensure the reduction of the digital divide between communities i.e. urban and rural, able-bodied and disabled

## WHAT THE WOMEN SAY

**"We need women in decision making processes... to realise the sustainability of development - help them get there. When we look at the smaller picture, we see the home and we see (mothers) doing all these things... the children's welfare, the healthy environment, the food security... and in the bigger picture, we see the government and see what they want to do. In order to have this bigger picture fulfilled or do its work best, it's the small picture that has to be taken care of. Where women are always the recipient of violence, it is always money. It has to do with money because what the women say is in most places, the men when they come home, they expect food on the table but they don't really know the financial struggle that the woman is facing."**  
**Losana Derenalagi, femLINKpacific rural convenor for Nadi and Lautoka.**

**"Women... (are) not only managing the farms but they manage the family, the community. Promote strategies to increase the participation of women in decision making at all levels... that at least we push at least 30% of women to be represented... they should be included to be involved in managing these areas of agriculture. When we talk about farming, when we talk about getting their produce to the market, there are broken bridges. They do not have proper access to roads so that is an increased burden for women (who have to) send their produce to the market."** Fane Boseiwaqa, femLINKpacific rural convenor for Ba, Tavua and Rakiraki.

**"Information is very important, but for those living in the interior like that or those living in rural areas like that, they (have) been feel left out in (terms of accessing) information."**  
**Unaisi Bakewa Sadranu, Tavua Disabled People's Association.**  
**"We have 14 advisory councillors in Lautoka and we are only two women in the team, so putting our issues across is a bit difficult to go through the other 12 men."** Shakuntla Permal, Lomolomo Advisory Councillor, Lautoka.

**"Nausori is a developing town but... we need our health services to be good as well... some others are right in (the) interior, they don't have the transport...to go to the health centre, they have to wait for the transport, and if not then they have to pay for their own fares."** Pushpa Mannu, Akriti Mother's Club, Nausori.

**"Supporting cooperative model is building capacities to invest well in building a source of unity, rebuilding community resilience, I believe, and also building local communities savings and how to generate and keep local economy within the system. This has not only been just a space where they generate income. It is also a space where women come together to talk about other important issues or priorities for them, especially to share about their conflicts. Even if they're struggling to get that cooperative up and running... the women continued to find creative ways of rebuilding that."**  
**Adi Vasulevu, femLINKpacific rural convenor in the North.**

**"Development means for me better facilities and a safe and secure working environment."** Akesa Lewamotu, United Market Vendors Association, Suva.

**"What I would like to see in the Development Plan is more budget for... training of our women leaders so that the voices could be raised."** Reverend Angela Suruj Prasad, Association of Anglican Women, Labasa.

# A NEW WAVE OF GENDER EQUALITY IS RISING IN FIJI

BY SHARON BHAGWAN ROLLS

It is a renewed wave of collaboration building on the legacy of almost 100 years of women organising at all levels of Fijian society. "There is strength in numbers and it means a wider representation when we organise and collaborate to enhance women's political participation and representation," said Adi Finau Tabaukacoro, the General Secretary of the Soqosoqo Vakamarama iTaukei (SSVM) - one of the co-convenors of the Fiji Women's Forum alongside the National Council of Women Fiji (NCWF), the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) and femLINKpacific (femLINK). She was reflecting on the recent dialogue and planning meeting that brought together a diverse group of women leaders committed to build on social, cultural, economic and political diversities "I think it's important to work together because we bring to the table our diverse identities and experiences.... I reckon working together is a good way of producing something diverse and exceptional," added Fay Volatabu, the General Secretary of the National Council of Women Fiji. The focus is an inter-generational concern – the persistent under-representation of women in decision making positions and while both the Fiji Women's Forum and the Young Women's Forum will have their own action plans, it is a pivotal moment in the work towards achieving women's human rights and gender equality, according to Nalini Singh, the Executive Director of FWRM. "I think the key thing to remember is whilst it's important for the different generations to have their space to strategize and put

together their Action Plans for their own forums," she added. "It is at this pivotal moment very important to come together to plan, to discuss contexts that we currently are in, and strategize forward to make sure that the collective voices are reflected in a way that is not only just a stronger reflection of what both the Forums' perspectives are, but it also reflects on in other various communities they are representing."

The co-convenors of the Fiji Young Women's Forum – the Emerging Leaders Forum Alumni (ELFA), Diverse Voices and Action for Equality (DIVA) and the Young Women's Leadership Team of femLINK - also want to make their mark in the movement, to be part of defining the way forward as well as being equal partners in the journey ahead.

That also means ensuring the strategies going forward do not homogenise women.

"We are not the same even though we all address ourselves as a woman or a young woman, even within (the definition of) a young woman we are not the same," explained Viva Tatawaqa of the DIVA Management Collective. "We don't live in the same status of economic as every other young woman."

"Some young women are not privileged enough to even be involved in a movement or in a forum as such, but I feel that is the importance of identifying those areas, it is because we are totally different, we have different experience of different issues."

"It's very important to understand diversities because both the Forums bring in richness in perspectives that they have," continued Singh. "It's important to be a cohesive group with one voice because the contexts that we are in at the moment, we have to have a united voice to address those issues."

**About the Fiji Women's Forum:**

While the Fiji Women's Forum was initially formed to bring together diverse women's groups towards the shared aim of increasing women's participation in leadership, focusing on women's participation in Fiji's national elections (September 2014) the co-convenors (the National Council of Women Fiji, Soqosoqo Vakamarama I Taukei, Fiji Women's Rights Movement and femLINKpacific) have convened four more forums with the purpose of:

Securing and supporting the full participation of women in all levels of decision-making

Engaging more women in the development and political processes of Fiji

Bringing attention to the diverse needs and concerns of women by facilitating appropriate responses and communicating this to a wider audience.

The four national forums enabled a diversity of women to mobilize in large numbers and implement civic education in collaboration with other women. Women participated in the constitution making process at different levels and degrees allowing for their voices and experiences to be included in the democratization process and the 5th Women's Forum held in April 2015 specifically focused on women in local governance.

**About the Fiji Young Women's Forum:**

Since 2012 these young women leaders have been committed to work together to secure and support the full participation of young women in all levels of decision making and have more young women engage in social, economic, environmental development and political processes, peacebuilding, media and communications. The Fiji Young Women's Forum works to demand open and participatory decision making processes at all levels of government and actively support all young women's access to these processes including information.





# UNPACKING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN WITH SPECIAL RAPPORTEURS

BY SIAN ROLLS

"Violence against women is the most pervasive human rights violation that we face today whether in times of peace or conflict transitions or displacements," said Rashida Manjoo, speaking to Sharon Bhagwan Rolls last September at the Commonwealth's 11th Women's Affairs Ministerial Meeting. "There's the lack of political will to acknowledge that this is a human rights violation, a lack of understanding that this is a human rights issue - it isn't a social welfare issue, it isn't a charity issue, this is not something that happens to poor black women and we don't have to worry too much about it."

"This is a human rights issue and if we understood and if we acknowledge, understood and accept that then we have to start thinking about remedies in a different way. So that's one of the problems."

Previously, as a Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women (VAW) from August 2009 to July 2015, Manjoo not only reported to the Human Rights Council, but also – under her mandate and according to the UN – was requested to:

- (a) Seek and receive information on violence against women, its causes and consequences from Governments, treaty bodies, specialized agencies, other special rapporteurs responsible for various human rights questions and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, including women's organizations, and to respond effectively to such information;
  - (b) Recommend measures, ways and means at the local, national, regional and international levels to eliminate all forms of violence against women and its causes, and to remedy its consequences;
  - (c) Work closely with all special procedures and other human rights mechanisms of the Human Rights Council and with the treaty bodies, taking into account the request of the Council that they regularly and systematically integrate the human rights of women and a gender perspective into their work, and cooperate closely with the Commission on the Status of Women in the discharge of its functions; and
  - (d) Continue to adopt a comprehensive and universal approach to the elimination of violence against women, its causes and consequences, including causes of violence against women relating to the civil, cultural, economic, political and social spheres.
- femLINKpacific has since had an opportunity to hear from another former Special Rapporteur on VAW. Dr. Yakin Ertürk, who held the position from August 2003 to July 2009, provided a snapshot of the global context of VAW to the Center for Women's Global Leadership 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence strategizing meeting – 'From Awareness to Eradication: Galvanizing the Global Within a Human Rights Framework' last week.

"Not only has (the role) made me realise how difficult this task of ensuring women's human rights is because it's about changing the social contract – the social contract that is so deeply rooted, not only between men and women but how societies are structured, how our laws are shaped, how today the economy is run, the neoliberal economy is run," explained Ekturk. "Globalisation is very patriarchal."

"We don't associate patriarchy with globalisation, we associate patriarchy with... the known countries that we see as being archaic with misogynist cultures well that's not how it is unfortunately. I wish it was."

This international context that is embedded in national structures makes it harder and harder to ensure action and accountability for the global epidemic of violence against women in all its forms.

"There is no way we can do accountability without the justice approach because the justice system can send a message that this is not normal, this is unacceptable," said Manjoo. "For me, accountability in the 6 years (being Special Rapporteur), I have argued that impunity is the norm for crimes against women and girl children in particular and we need to make accountability the norm." "We know there's something wrong with our world (when) over half the world's population is subjected to violence in one form or the other."

And, according to Ekturk, words are critical to ending violence – including advising against limiting the understanding of VAW to 'domestic violence'.

"Domestic violence... just tells us where the violence takes place," she explained. "What is important to understand is why and how violence takes place - that gives us a different understanding of how different members of the domestic sphere experience violence."

"Men are increasingly being harassed, being mistreated by women, by their wives in the family, but it's a different dynamic, isn't it? It's not about controlling men, but about really challenging their control and not all men are as clever as putting their thumbs to keep women passive so these poor men may get mistreated but that does not say anything about the global agenda for violence against women which is about control over women. Which is about maintaining an unequal relationship between men and women whether it takes place in the home or outside."

To upset the unequal relationship requires a huge effort to rebalance power in the home, community and nation.

"What we need to do today - meaning not this moment but at this juncture in history," stated Ekturk. "To revisit what we have learned in our struggle against violence against women – not only our strategies and I think the 16 Days (of Activism) is one of the most significant strategies which has become a household word around the world."

"But that in itself carries threats because it is being co-opted so we need to be vigilant and react to that but also our concepts. The invention of the term gender was really quite revolutionary in unlinking the fact that we are not born, yes biologically, we are born male-female but we become constructed as women, as femininities and as masculinities and this is where the possibility of re-structuring that social contract lies and this is a very strong argument although it doesn't take us too far in terms of the reality but it really is an invention. What has happened in the course of this invention is that certain things got astray."

Sometimes, not only do efforts focus too often on the symptoms of the societal ill of VAW, they also ignore looking to addressing the root causes of the violence – be it through patriarchy, culture, economic imbalances or structural discrimination. At the same time, resources are not going towards the systematic change and sustaining commitment and financing to ending VAW.

"The trend has been to look at laws and policies and not to allocate budgets for the effect of implementation of remedies and redress measures and that's also a challenge," explained Manjoo. "Why is that we never have this conversation on resource constraints when it comes to military spending but when it comes to social spending, when it comes to spending on women and children, addressing vulnerabilities, the budget and the resource issue comes up." While civil society is trying to bridge the gaps the state system has created, Manjoo cautioned against focusing too much on the provision of services.

"We give women tools through legal literacy and then the system and the institution fails them, so we raise expectations," she outlined. "We talk about discrimination against women but we don't address the discrimination in the access to justice for women because it fails at every level, from police right up to the (top)." "The other argument is that if they don't have the legal tools, if they don't know what their rights are, then how do they exercise the rights and how do they hold the state accountable? One of the things that I've constantly stressed to civil society is that you need to develop the tools to hold your government accountable. So how do you hold them accountable? One is data gathering, keeping statistics to show prevalence, manifestations, to monitor the functioning whether it's effective implementation of legislation, the kind of jurisprudence that comes out of your country."

"Women have been given piecemeal or even more fundamental rights but what really works and makes a difference in women's lives," continued Ekturk. "To have a transformative capacity, a liberating capacity, is when the legal reform hits at the heart of male domination."

"Has a law been able to change the concept of male head of household? It's not just terminology, male head of household carries weight. It not only reproduces our understandings ideologically, but it literally has a direct impact on whether a woman can work, whether they can travel, they can become a minister but can they travel without the husband's permission? You know, these are important."

"The other thing I think for civil society, my message would be is when you dive in to do the counseling, the legal aid, the shelter services you do it because there is a need, someone has to do it but what you forget to do in that context is remember that the state is the ultimate duty bearer, you're not the duty bearer," Manjoo underscored. "So, it is a challenge for civil society that they're to address the needs which are there because the state is not fulfilling its role or fulfilling it in a way that's not holistic, substantive, remedial and they don't have the resources and time to do the accountability work which is keeping the information in a way the empirical evidence which shows that the state is failing in its obligations." "In conclusion, the fight is never over," summed up Ekturk. "It's a very dialectical process... so let's all be ready and strategise for this."

# POSTCARDS FROM CSW61

The sixty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women took place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from the 13th to the 24th of March, 2017.

## WOMEN'S RIGHTS ENSURE SUSTAINABLE PEACE

BY SHARON BHAGWAN ROLLS - UNHQ, NY - 13TH MARCH, 2017

It is a premier global gathering dedicated to the empowerment of women and girls which gives impetus to galvanising action and to ensure that leaders are held accountable to commitments made. While the 20 year review of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPA) offered 6 implementation strategies, including a gender responsive strategy to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the 61st session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61) is a further reminder that progressing gender equality and human rights is a universal task and requires the involvement of all stakeholders including civil society, NGOs, trade unions, national human rights institutions and activists of all diversities.

CSW61 got underway this morning, ahead of the scheduled blizzard tomorrow, which is bound to disrupt proceedings.

"The BPA recognised the full diversity of women and addresses the intersectionalisation of issues," said H.E. Antonio de Aguiar Patriota of Brazil, the Chair of CSW61.

CSW61 theme is 'Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work', the Review theme is 'Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls' (agreed conclusions of the fifty-eighth session).

"This a timely and forward looking theme and requires forward looking strategies to rapid changes in the labour work," said de Aguiar Patriota. "The future of work should not perpetuate existing inequalities."

"When women participate in peace processes, the chance of sustainable peace goes up by 15 years," added Antonio Gueterres, the UN Secretary General (UNSG). "I will invest in more women to foster peace and security in the world."

"Women's rights are human rights and the attacks on women are an attack on all of us."

The UNSG also called on participants to hold member states accountable to commitments and the UN accountable to progressing gender equality.

"Every day you are on the frontline for a more just and decent world and as champions of equality you make the globe a better world," he said, adding that investing in women's empowerment is a way

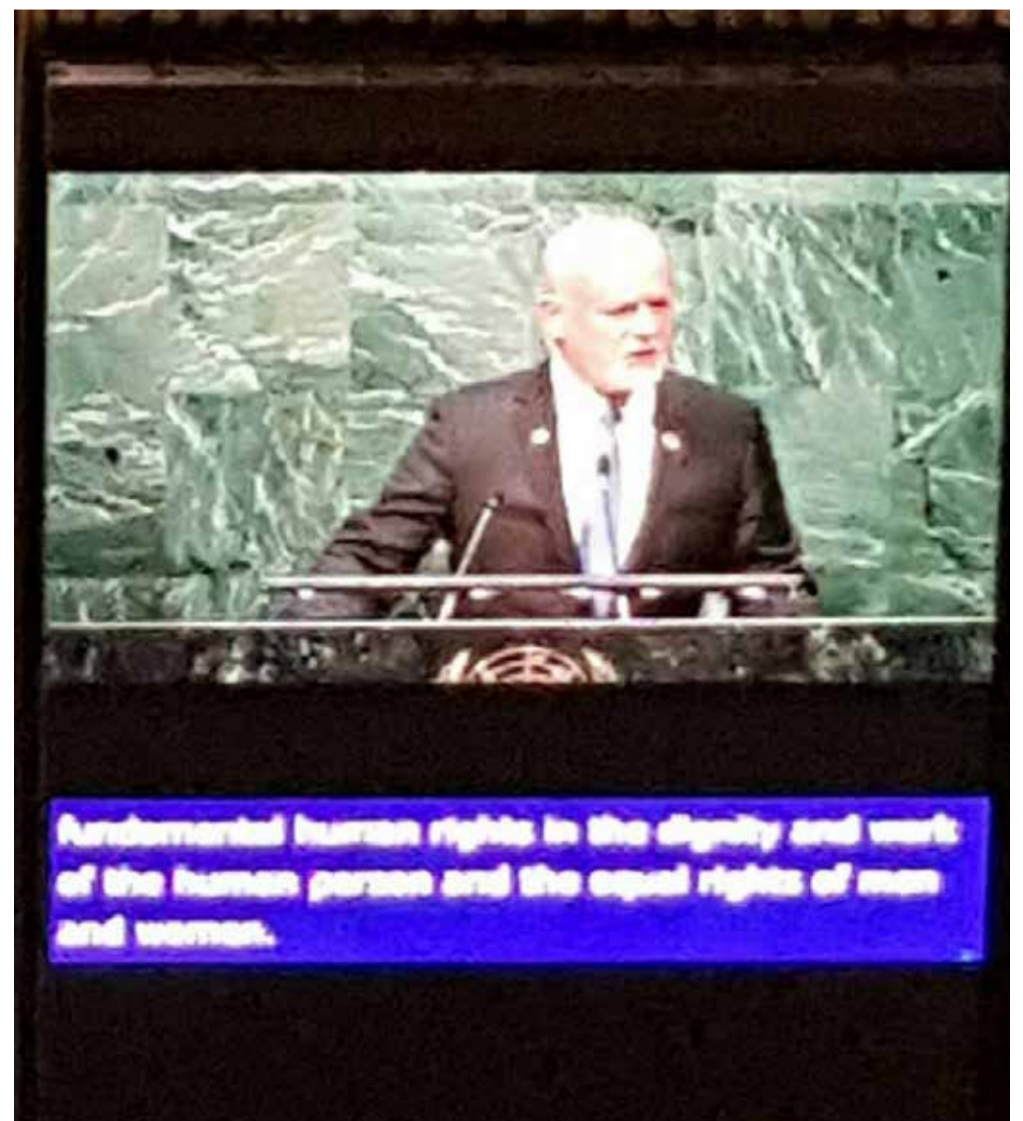
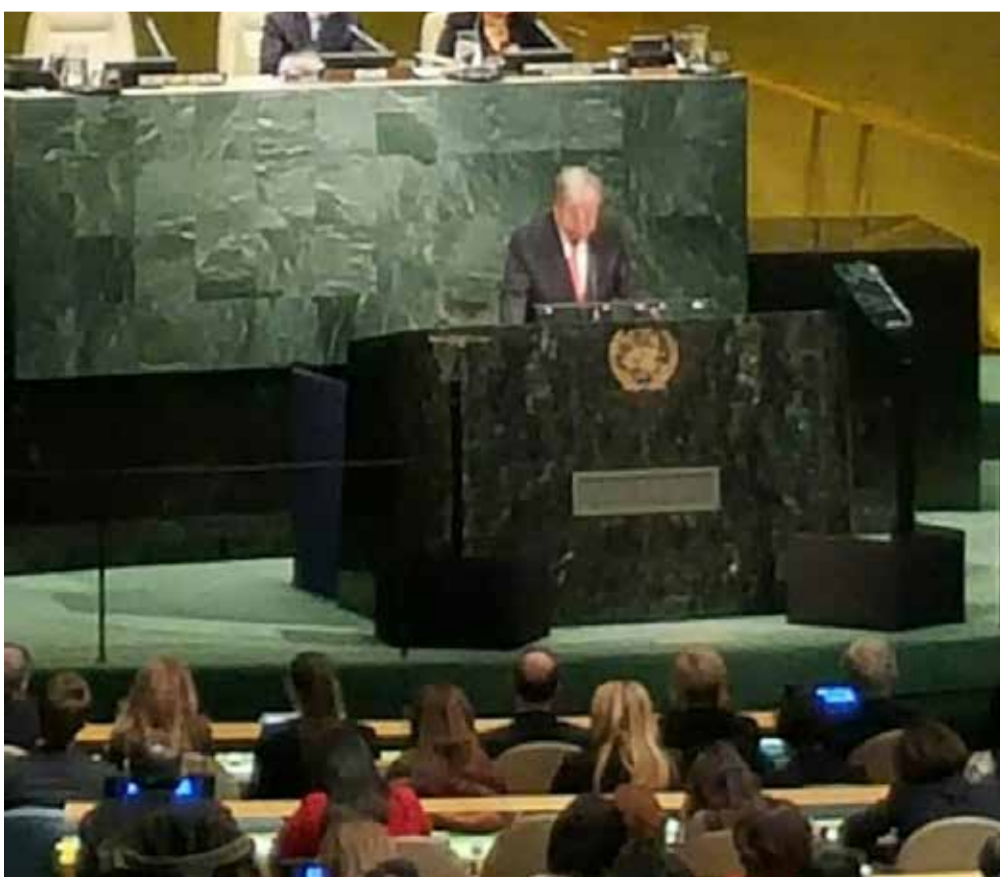
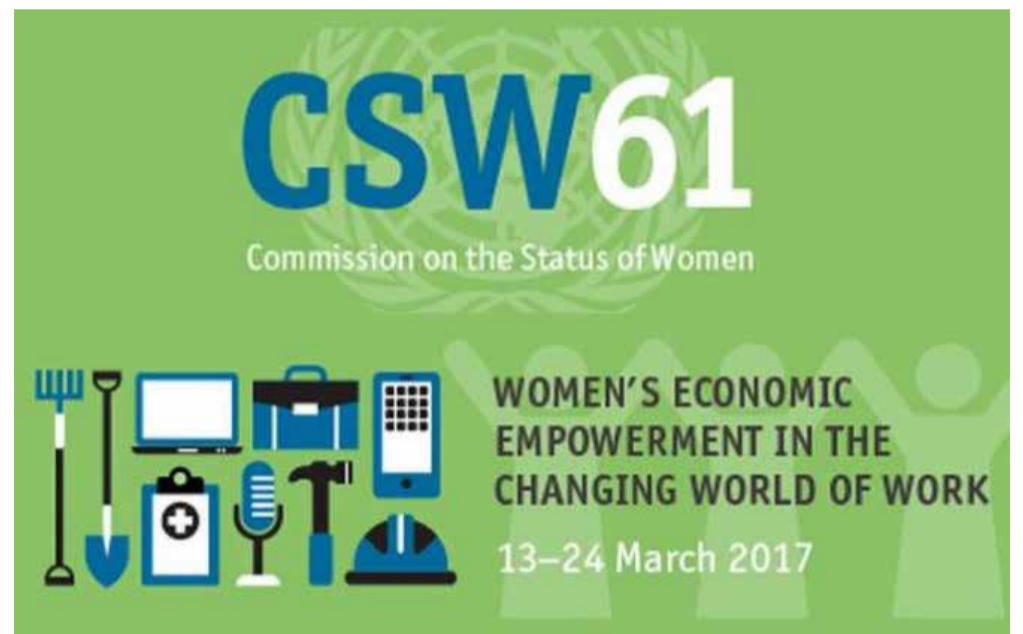
to breakdown structural and social barriers. "Male chauvinism blocks everyone and we need to address historical injustices and transforming institutions including the UN to be more gender responsive at work."

Responding to the theme of CSW61, the UNSG stressed that women's equality in the economy means better returns on investment as well as investing in protection and prevention measure of violence.

The deliberations of the CSW61 have the potential to inform the implementation of the SDGs particularly as women and poverty was one of the 12 critical areas of concern of the BPA and remains a subject of longstanding concern of the Economic and Social Council of the UN.

"Women must be able to freely access technology, shape its development and benefit from its use," said Ambassador Peter Thomson in his role as the current President of the General Assembly who noted that despite the adoption of the BPA, the world has not achieved gender equality and stressed that the achievement of sustainable development requires a systematic mainstreaming of gender equality.

Access to technology, he noted, has the potential to enable access to education in rural and remote communities as well as enable access to economic empowerment and justice.



# PACIFIC FEMINISTS CALL FOR A REMOVAL OF THE ECONOMIC BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

BY SHARON BHAGWAN ROLLS, FEMLINKPACIFIC - NEW YORK, NY – 14TH MARCH, 2017

It is vital that the 61st session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61) addresses the intersections of women's productive and reproductive labour, their paid work and their unpaid work so that women can equally participate in the formal leadership spaces say a group of Pacific feminists who are working together to send a clear message about women's human rights issues in Fiji during CSW which continues until March 24.

In response to the CSW61 theme, "Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work", Diverse Voices and Action (DIVA) for Equality, Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM), femLINKpacific and the International Women's Development Agency (IWDA), the partners in the We Rise Coalition are also amplifying the call for greater recognition of women's own definitions of economic empowerment:

"Women work all their lives but then the State often will say 'ok you haven't been in the paid workforce, in the formal workforce and you can't have a pension'," said Noelene Nabulivou, political advisor for DIVA for Equality. "So, for us, it's about the wider economic issues of living in societies that don't recognize the amount of work that

women do every day."

Nalini Singh, Executive Director of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM), stresses the importance of ensuring women are actually empowered and positioned to take centre stage because they are ensuring the health, wellbeing and security of their communities

"We see women as leading small business and we also see the recognition of domestic work... as work - however it remains unpaid," she said. "So, this theme is very apt but our message is that we cannot see a reneging in terms of seeing women as equal and as key contributors to ensuring that households and communities are healthy, that livelihoods are met."

At the opening of CSW61, Phumzile Mmlabo-Ngcuka, the Executive Director of UNWomen, also stressed the importance of ensuring a women's human rights framework is maintained in the engagement with private sector and Singh also wants to ensure that progress on women's economic empowerment through a public-private sector partnership approach does not come at the cost to ensuring and safeguarding, promoting and protecting women's rights.

"We need to be cognisant with the fact that in our Pacific cultures women are the custodians of natural resources," she outlined.

"We cannot have a situation where there's a breach of this role and there's negative costs in terms of how women who are at the community level responsible for ensuring that the sustainability of resources that they are directly engaging with as well as them ensuring that they can negotiate and defend their right."

The We Rise coalition therefore wants to ensure that Pacific women's experiences inform deliberations particularly to ensure that the diversity of women's work is recognised and accounted for in national economic systems according to Caroline Lambert, Director, Research and Policy and Advocacy at IWDA.

"When we look at the way that international economic indicators around Gross Domestic Product, and even the way our National Statistics Officers measure economic contribution, they do a very poor job at recognising the unpaid care work," she explained. "IWDA has been very interested in that work, including the development of a new poverty measure the Individual Deprivation Measure, which

looks at intrahousehold experiences of poverty."

"We hope partnerships will bring to light the work that women are doing in their communities as well as bring to light the fact that women and men have a gender wage gap, and carry this double burden of unpaid work of alongside their paid work"

"The changing world of work is not just about changing economic systems, but also the impact of climate change," added Nabulivou, who is calling for the Pacific Small Islands Developing States (PSIDS) to ensure the inter-linkages with the Beijing Platform for Action, the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement to ensure the outcomes statement of CSW61 include specific language on the issue of gender and climate change. "We look to the PSIDS Group for strong leadership on gender, climate change and DRR, in a context of quickly developing international precedence-setting and jurisprudence."

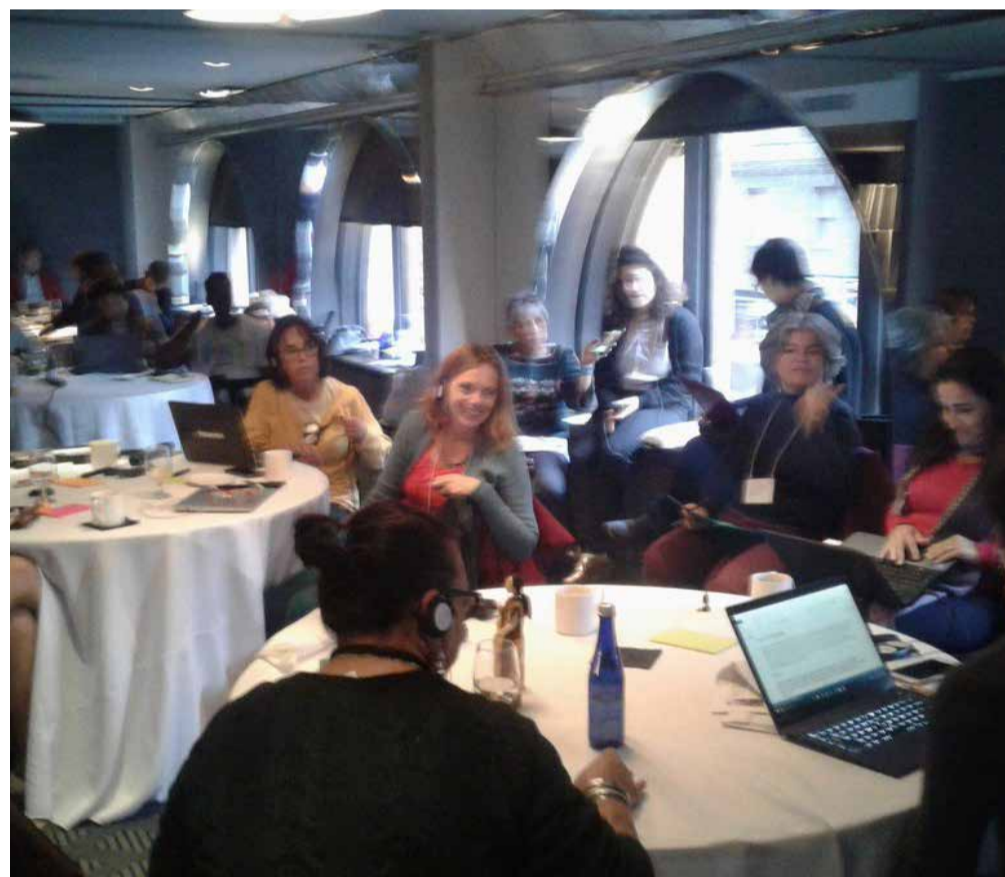
"Pacific leadership on this issue must be consistent with regional and national commitments including the Paris Agreement. As one of our highest priorities in the CSW61 Agreed Outcomes, this would require language on strong and urgent action to address climate change and to respect, protect and promote women's and girls' human rights in a just transition of the workforce, through low carbon economies that support decent work opportunities for women, while redistributing unpaid work."

## About the Coalition

The We Rise Coalition is a dynamic, learning Coalition led by four feminist organisations:

- Diverse Voices and Action for Equality (DIVA)
- femLINKpacific (femLINK)
- Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM)
- International Women's Development Agency (IWDA)

At the centre of the We Rise Coalition is a commitment to building and sustaining the collective power of women in all their diversities. This includes building a movement to demand that women are able to realise their full human rights, equality and justice, and creating a political force for change that cannot be ignored by families, communities, governments, or society at large.



# GMMP - A REMINDER OF WHO DOES AND DOESN'T MAKE THE NEWS

BY SIAN ROLLS - NEW YORK, NY - 11TH MARCH, 2017

"In the Pacific, while there was no significant change in the numbers, we can see the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) institutionalised within the Fiji National Gender policy as well as engagement with media allies and intergovernmental organisations," highlighted Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Executive Producer-Director of femLINKpacific and GMMP Global Ambassador, this past weekend. Speaking at the close of a symposium organised by the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) on 'Gender and

Media: Challenges and Opportunities in the post-2015 Era', she encouraged participants to continue to use the GMMP to reflect the lack of progressing gender equality, including through the media, in society and by the state.

"Since 1995, the Global Media Monitoring Project has been an important quantitative reminder and has provided the evidence via a global snapshot of who or who does not make the news," Bhagwan Rolls continued, adding that not only did gender inequality exist in commercial media, but state machinery and state run media as well. "While it is important to assess our success and impact, we need to also remember that we are challenging media ownership and power."

"The evidence of persistent inequalities that prevail as we work to progress women's access to the media – ensuring women of all diversities are reflected in content – but with a significant focus generating content and addressing the power imbalances which result in the prevalence of sexism in the media. The power of organising as members of the human rights, peace and justice movement means we have the opportunity to link our priorities to

progress the commitments of the Beijing Platform for Action – and make the global commitments local."

She also outlined the ongoing developments with the media landscape, including the need to reflect on the role of citizen's journalism as well as ensure safety of women and girls through online platforms as well.

"Thank you for your contributions and efforts in progressing our collective goals of equality, development and peace," she concluded. "As a global network of media activists, it is critical that we remain connected and aware of social, economic and political trends as they all influence the status of women and in doing so invest in inter-generational learning as well as strengthening and infusing feminist values into the communication systems of faith and social movements."

The 'Gender and Media: Challenges and Opportunities in the post-2015 Era' workshop took place from the 9th to the 11th of March in New York, ahead of the 61st Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61).



# DOCUMENTATION STRATEGIES - WORKING TO ENHANCE VISIBILITY OF WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

BY ALISIA EVANS – NEW YORK, NY – 22ND MARCH, 2017

When it comes to promoting women's political participation, the stigma associated with women's role and status in society is a global reality that women's rights organisations must continually address.

Following the elections in Fiji in 2014, women's representation in parliament is now 14%. This is up from 11% in 2006, but Fiji remains well behind the global average of 21.8%. To bring women's participation rates up, the Fiji Women's Forum published a Public Perceptions of Women in Leadership (2015) which gives insight into public attitudes towards women in leadership in the lead-up to Fiji's 2014 general elections. It draws on responses from more than 1400 participants, solicited through survey questionnaires, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews.

I mentioned the issue is a global reality - and this was the basis of a series of interviews conducted during the UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York which highlights that the experiences and challenges are not limited to our region.

"Women should be seen and not heard - that's the broader perception," stated Urvashi Gandhi, Deputy Director for Advocacy, Quality and Knowledge Management at Breakthrough, an international human rights organization based in India that works on violence against women, sexual reproductive health and rights as well as gender equality.

"We trained women to be prepared to be effective parliamentarians and to see that it is not too large a step from where they were and the work that they are doing and their communities and their organisations from being in the 'Big House' of Parliament," outlined Hazel Brown, Executive Director of Network of NGOs Trinidad & Tobago for the Advancement of Women.

Brown's experience of advocating for women's political participation and leadership in the Caribbean stretches back to 1984 - a year prior to the UN's Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi.

"We started with 32 member organisations and I tell people it is significant that, before 1984, women's organisations in Trinidad and Tobago wouldn't speak to each other," explained Brown. "So, this was an opportunity for us to maximise the resources and help and support each other in a really functional way."

Reaffirming women as leaders in and through public dialogue is a particular challenge in society.

"(The) public space is a very male (dominated) space," explained Gandhi. "You will not find women there easily."

"Quite a few times in the public space, even if women are standing, you will not see them come forward, contribute or even to participate there is a hesitancy. There is a lot of stigma around how women... talk, walk (and) dress so there is a whole lot of restrictions on them." This stigma is reflected and also reinforced through media.

Since 1995, the Global Media Monitoring Project - the GMMP has found that mainstream media is largely gender-blind with women making up less than 25% of media new stories and the 2015 GMMP - the longest running research and advocacy initiative for gender equality in and through the news media - the rate of progress towards media gender parity has almost ground to a halt over the past five years.

"Even to go back through the newspaper archives to see what at that time and how at that time the media portrayed those women because their success or lack of it might have been how it was portrayed in the newspaper," elaborated Brown. "How do women in power behave or not behave?"

Although Trinidad and Tobago elected a woman prime minister in 2010, according to Brown, the deliberate portrayal of women leaders in the media can be misogynistic.

"The way the pictures that the newspapers took of her in

compromising pictures where she'd sit down in a short skirt and they would take the picture of the short skirt so now she knows if I'm going out there I have to dress in a certain way otherwise some person will take a picture that is totally inappropriate and it's not by accident," she added.

Nevertheless, media can be a powerful ally in the journey towards gender equality and improving the status of women across all sectors of society including politics.

Indeed, media and information and communication can be effective tools in addressing the misperception that women's rightful place is in the kitchen and build on the her-story of women's political participation.

The Network of NGOs successfully used information and communication to raising the visibility of women's political leadership in the form of a booklet - 'Women in Local Government Elections in Trinidad and Tobago 1946-2013'. The booklet profiles the experiences of over 300 women candidates who contested local government elections.

"Now, we have an opportunity to recognize... the contribution that those women made!" concluded Brown.

According to Sharon Bhagwan Rolls of femLINKpacific, a GMMP Global Ambassador and GMMP Pacific coordinator since 2003, the issue is not simply that the media does not want to cover women but there is a need to deconstruct notions of leadership and power. "Feminist networks and practice are essential to support women leaders at the grassroots level to embrace and articulate their leadership and power because social constructs continue to tell us otherwise," she explained. "Feminist media networks are publishing stories of community mobilization and leadership by women because otherwise we only hear from government officials and political leaders who remain men."

"So, there is a need to take a multi-pronged approach. It is not just supporting women's progress into elected office but also development committees. It is not just monitoring the news to show women are not in the news but to create content. We need the support of a range of strategies which when linked together can bring about the desired change and impact. A good example is the We Rise Coalition."



# DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES VITAL

BY ALISIA EVANS – NEW YORK, NY – 23RD MARCH, 2017

“Some of the communities... they don’t have street lights or (they have) poor road facilities that they have to travel (on) from one place to another,” shared Agu Tuinasau, concerned about the wellbeing and security of her community.

The former Adi Senikau represents the Pacific Rainbow Advocacy Network (PRAN) in many fora including femLINKpacific’s network convenings at district, divisional and national level in Fiji. She together, with Bonita Qio, Executive Coordinator of PRAN continue to advocate for an approach to economic security which takes into account women of all diversities including sex workers.

“One thing that I’ve noticed that most of the members in my community are involved in very low income earning employment,” Qio told femLINKpacific in a recent taping of a new season of Radio with Pictures. “For example, garment factory, sex workers and all these market vendors.”

“So, economically they are not secured. They don’t have the protection to be economically – what should I say – to be economically empowered to sustain themselves also in the future.”

At the 61st session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61) where the theme is ‘Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work’ a civil society intervention by an alliance

of peacebuilders - the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), World Federalist Movement/International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect as well as femLINKpacific has amplified a women’s human security first approach.

“What is vital (is) to ensure that women’s definitions of economic security are taken into account and amplified through appropriate and accessible information and communication systems well aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals - to women’s human rights treaties, including CEDAW and UNSCR 1325 - to ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels, including by ensuring public access to information through accessible and appropriate communication systems are taken into account at the national level including the economics of infrastructure and the gendered impacts of unequal development planning on women and young women of all diversities,” said Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Executive Producer-Director of femLINKpacific and the chair of GPPAC.

Inclusion is key but also a challenge as activists like Miki Wali are facing again at CSW.

Wali is a representative of Haus of Khameleon, a trans-activist led movement devoted to ending discrimination and violence against transgender people through education and advocacy on issues important to transgender people in Fiji and the Pacific. This is her 3rd CSW and she recognises that she has been fortunate to receive funding support to make the annual trek to UN headquarters including to attend the Pre-CSW Youth Forum. According to Wali, being present from the Pacific Island region is critical.

“We are here at a critical time when young people and children have

been told so many times at the COP level – conference of parties on climate that young people and children are going to face the brunt of climate change,” she stressed. “So, if there are statements that are made like that it also means that spaces must be open enough for young people to not just be part of but to be celebrated.”

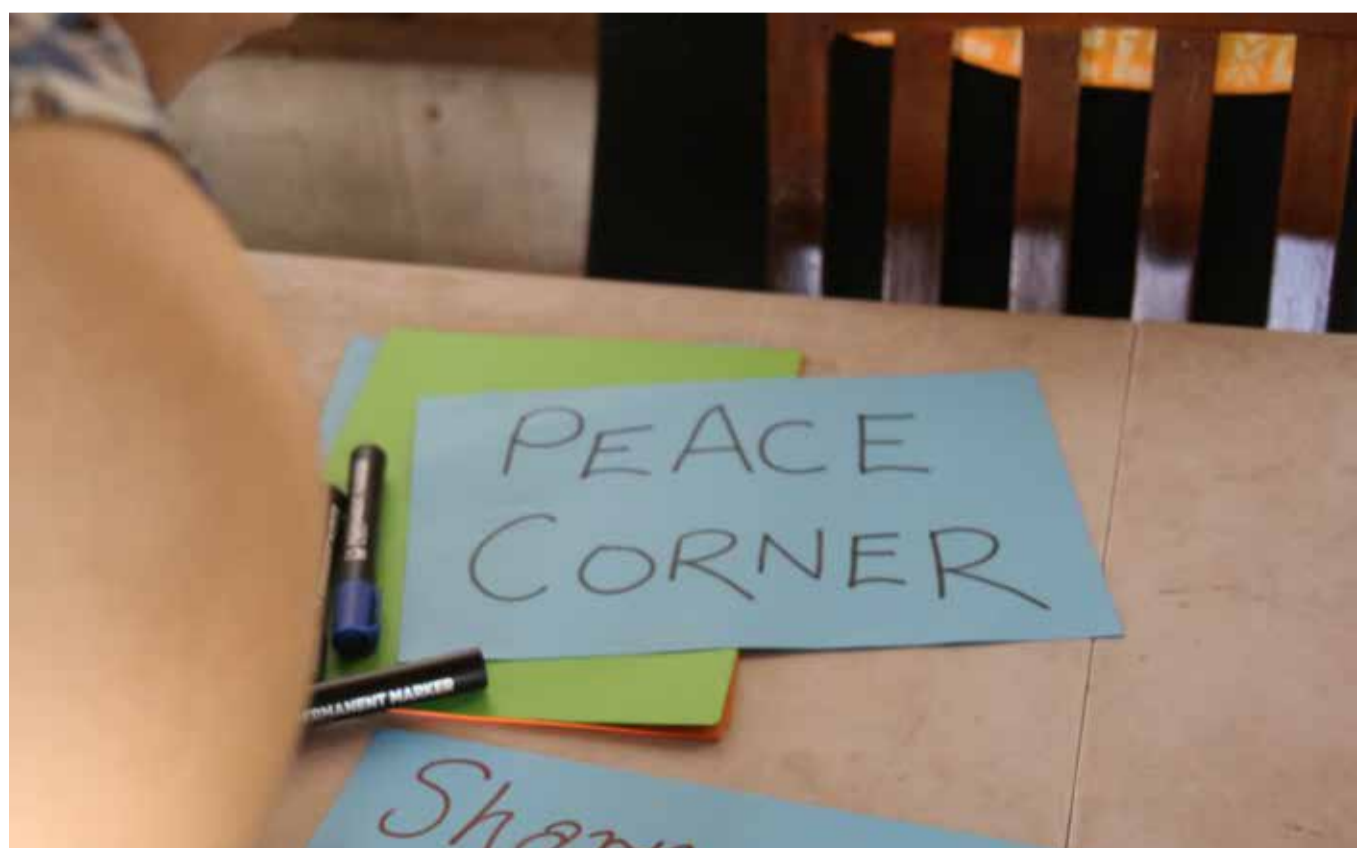
Investing in the equitable participation of youth in all their diversities, says Wali, should be institutionalised at CSW in a manner in which the gender equality agenda and women’s rights are integrated into the systems of governance at national and regional levels; and that parliaments should facilitate special hearings to ensure the inclusion of women and girls of all diversities.

“The issue that I see for young people...is the level of support,” continued Wali. “How much support governments and civil society (are) providing to ensure that the youth agenda is something that must be taken into consideration.”

What is clear is now, more than ever, the diversity of our Pacific people needs to be acknowledged, celebrated and incorporated into how we make decisions, develop our communities and build resilience, as Qio back in Lautoka has told us.

“Resilience is now part of our daily life from TC Winston up until now,” she explained. “To us, resilience is not waiting for maybe a blessing to fall from the sky.”

“It’s mobilising around our community what can work at that particular time and what will happen as a result of what’s going to happen... it’s making future plans and preparing us not only for what has happened in the past, but preparing us as well for what’s going to come in the future.”





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