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Here Are The Women (2017): Alesi Vidrali Siga (/index.php/en/actions/here-are-the-women/562-here-are-the-women-2017-alesi-vidrali-siga)



by *Sulueti Waqa*



“To increase women’s participation at political level, they need to be supported financially and with more training,” said Alesi Vidrali Siga from Ba Housing Assistant Relief Trust (HART) Village.

Vidrali hails from Nanoko, Navatusila in the Province of Nadroga/Navosa. She is not just a grandmother and mother – she’s my mother.

All my life, I’ve seen her involved with community work, but she specifically joined femLINKpacific’s network in 2005.

femLINK was conducting an outdoor broadcast at the Ba Senior Citizen’s Centre and a few years later, she got me involved as a community media volunteer.

At the time, she was a Treasurer of ‘Shady Cool’ – a cooperative shop. It was a position she held for 5 years.

‘Shady Cool’ was set up as a project through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in collaboration with

Soroptimist International to assist women in the Ba HART Village.

Vidrali is no stranger to leadership – as a leader, she believes in transparency and accountability and since her time as treasurer, she has since been the HART Marama Ni Koro in 2015 and is currently the President of the Ba HART Women’s Club.

In her role, she shared the realities of natural disaster as Ba – a district that has always been affected by flooding - was badly hit by Tropical Cyclone Winston

“Women have an important role during natural disaster as they are the one moving their family to safety before the disaster strikes,” she said.

She also raised the issues of upgrading evacuation centres that are accessible to everyone including women, children and the elderly.

Vidrali is creative and hard working.

Apart from baking, she is also involved in handicraft work. She weaves mat, does home decoration, and makes earrings and necklaces which she mostly sells as a source of income.

She says that since 2005, she has seen how community media is improving women’s lives.

“Through media we can raise our voice about issues like resource centre, equipment for making earrings and mat for weaving and also markets to sell our items,” she explained. “Women need to be supported with skills, training and empowerment for a stronger women’s movement.”

Coming from a community where most of the households are headed by women, she believes that women are good decision makers.

Representing the 37 women from Ba HART Village during the Western Division consultation last month, she shared that there is a need to invest in Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation.

“My recommendation for the National Budget 2017/2018 to the government if they can allocate more money to the Ministry... so that they can increase the allowances or the money for the individual women,” she stressed. “Social Welfare is just giving the women \$30, \$50, \$70 monthly.”

“If the government can increase it to \$150 per month.”

This amount, she added, will assist to buy their needs and also pay rent, water and electricity bills – integral factors to peace, which she defines as “a good house, food on the table and (having) children (who are) educated and employed.”