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Here Are The Women (2017): Ana Ramatai (/index.php/en/actions/here-are-the- women/569-here-are-the-women-2017- ana-ramatai)



by *Sulueti Waqa*



“If women have the information, attend workshops, empowerment programs and awareness, they will be able to question many things that are being discussed especially developments and things that they are not aware of,” said Ana Ramatai, the President for the Soqosoqo Vakamarama (SSV) Bua province.

A former civil servant, Ramatai retired to Nabouwalu 5 years ago and has since been instrumental in her community and the ongoing work to address the issue of women’s participation.

Her passion is evident in the work that she does as President of the SSV Bua province and member of the Bua Provincial Council.

“What we have done so far is trying to improve the lives of women firstly at least for them to participate in the village, tikina and of course to the yasana as a whole,” she explained. “I have been requesting the head of the mataqali, yavusa and community to include women in their meetings – (for) at least 30% to be members of committee... for example, the education committee

and whatever small committee they have in the village.”

However, Ramatai has found the shift from her career's work environment to the village setting a challenge – often concerned by the stark lack of women's participation in meetings.

But the gender gap does not leave her feeling downhearted – instead, it further encourages her to speak out, stressing the need for awareness programmes to motivate women to participate.

“Some kind of training... I think is needed in the village,” Ramatai underscored. “Awareness on setting up small business and before they set up any business, they have to first ask themselves what kind of business will be profitable in that village or the location they are in.”

Unfortunately, investing in women means overcoming the culture of silence and the generational information gap.

“There is a lot of things that is happening and we are not aware of,” she continued. “It is kept in the village. The tradition of Fijians that we just silent about things that are happening to our children and also to the women.”

But, at the end of the day, Ramatai believes in progress.

In her own outreach to 54 villages throughout the province of Bua, she has seen women's groups set up income generating projects fail because of a lack of training and project design assistance.

Beyond this, she also believes that investment is needed to enhance women's participation in Disaster Risk Management – noting that some of the work has already started due to femLINKpacific's community media outreach.

“I am grateful for the awareness on women (through Women's Weather Watch),” Ramatai shared. “(The women) are prepared and know how to respond instead of waiting for assistance given by government.”

She further explained that women are reaffirming their role as first responders, taking charge of evacuations and doing all they can to assure their families, and their children in particular, are feeling safe at all times.

“We women are nurturers and we ensure every small bits of details are taken care of,” she added. “This kind of attitude will always be evident or translated in everything that we do even in leadership or member of group or committee. We will always see the consequences of things before making any decisions - taking into account the welfare of our children.”