

Search...



(<https://www.facebook.com/femlinkpacific>)



(<https://twitter.com/femlinkpacific>)



(<https://www.youtube.com/user/femlinkpac>)



(<https://soundcloud.com/femlinkpacific>)

# Here Are The Women (2017): Eta Tuvuki (/index.php/en/actions/here-are-the- women/565-here-are-the-women-2017-eta- tuvuki)



by Hannah Hicks



“My main priority is for us to have a clean and reliable water source because after TC Winston our water source was fully damaged and right now we are fully relying on rain water and for that rain has somehow finally stopped and dry season is coming up and we are fetching up to the creek and getting water from the creek is another burden,” shared Eta Tuvuki, member of the Soqosoqo Vakamarama and Buretu Women’s Club in Rakiraki.

Tuvuki is also a single mother of five who has been part of femLINKpacific’s rural network of women leaders since 2012.

Her concern was reiterated during last month’s rural district convening; more than a year since Tropical Cyclone (TC) Winston hit Fiji.

For Tuvuki, this lack of proper access to clean drinking water affects her community’s food security.

“During the dry spell we find it very hard to water our crops and concerning the villages up in the highlands of the town area,” she explained. “There’s not much pressure to pump the water up so (rationing) of water is done here - especially at Waimari, a suburb outside Rakiraki town.”

But access to water is not the only obstacle to putting fresh, balanced meals on the table.

“For food security, our main priority is (access to) land,” Tuvuki continued. “We women are capable of cultivating land but we need to be equipped.”

Women’s right to access and owning of land is critical in maintaining their food security, their economic and environment security as well as their political security.

This not only benefits them individually but their families and the wider community.

While TC Winston was the strongest cyclone to affect the country, communities like Tuvuki’s continue to face the brunt of constant change in weather patterns – long droughts contrasted by heavy rains and flooding.

As women are the central providers of food for their families, the lack of environmental security has placed undue burden of responsibility on women to manage the impact of these changes.

“When I say climate change that covers all, that covers flooding, unplanned raining and the long period of raining that also spoil our food source,” Tuvuki explained. “When we try to recover from the previous flooding, we can’t fully recover because during our recovering period there’s another flooding.”

Rural communities that are close to rivers usually do farming along the riverside to make it easy to water gardens.

Now due to the constant flooding, Tuvuki said plans have been made through village and mataqali meetings to relocate farms to the highlands, which increases the burden of having to fetch water for the gardens.

But whether these decisions are being made with women as leaders are yet to be seen as systematic exclusion remains at the community level.

“We are being left isolated,” she explained. “We go up to our village headman and we voice our concern individually because at the village meeting, we (the women) weren’t given the time and space.”

“So, again, our food source has been damaged... when they cannot get the adequate water for the vegetables and the crops.”

Without the ability to grow their own food, many are left to purchase from the market; since TC Winston, price of vegetables has soared.

“For a small bundle of dalo which just cost me for \$10 now I’m buying it for \$20 to \$25,” outlined Tuvuki. “It’s really costly.”

“Before, I used to buy long beans for only \$1.15 a bundle. Now, it is \$3 for that same bundle and for that it can’t even feed us - a small family - catering for myself plus my five kids.”

Without the security to sufficiently budget for their families’ needs, some children are either left to take very little for lunch or even miss school at times.

“My recommendation for the National Development Plan is to increase the budget allocation to the Ministry of Agriculture so that they can bring down workshops to the community and village level on the cultivation and usage of land,” Tuvuki shared, adding that much support is needed for women farmers.

They also need to be efficiently resourced to enhance the visibility of women as decision-makers within their communities and as first responders to disaster.

