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# Here Are The Women (2017): Fane Boseiwaqa (/index.php/en/actions/here-are-the-women/481-here-are-the-women-2017-fane-boseiwaqa)



By Alisia Evans



Fane Boseiwaqa, one of femLINKpacific's convenors in the Western Division, has been journeying with femLINK since 2005. Beginning as a volunteer, Boseiwaqa was a founding member of the Generation Next project (2007 – 2011) and is now a wife, mother and a leader in her community.

"I was given the confidence and felt empowered as a young woman to have a voice and speak out on the issues that women and young people faced in the community," recalled Boseiwaqa, of her first encounter with the femLINK. "The suitcase radio station, travelling around Fiji, was a platform for the women to come together and have a safe space."

Now, twelve years later, Boseiwaqa plays a lead role in organizing and facilitating safe spaces for 99 other rural women leaders in Ba, Tavua and Rakiraki for femLINK's monthly network convenings.

"I only took time off to get married and have children," she said in an interview with ActionAid Australia in 2016. "Otherwise, I have

been there all this time.

"I volunteered initially because I wanted to get involved in femLINK's feminist work supporting rural women to participate in political processes because I grew up in a rural village. I have seen the issues that women are dealing with on a daily

basis. It is women, who are responsible for ensuring that there is good food on the table. In rural villages in Fiji, families are dependent on their farms for fresh food. When there is a drought, or a cyclone, as there so often is in Fiji, when there is not enough water to sustain them, or crops are devastated, putting food on the table becomes almost impossible.” When Severe Tropical Cyclone (TC) Winston struck Fiji on 20th February, 2016, devastating the Western Division, Boseiwaqa was invaluable as part of femLINK’s Women’s Weather Watch (WWW) network.

When the nation was in a state of emergency, Boseiwaqa continued to communicate information to and from femLINK’s Community Media Centre in Suva and the rural women leaders leading the response and recovery in their communities. “It was really an important information (source) that we were giving out to this women in the sense that most of these communities, at that time, do not have access to electricity to be informed through radio or television or through SMS message,” remarked Boseiwaqa. “(They were kept informed) through the work with Women’s Weather Watch with femLINKpacific.”

“The women won’t be excluded (as) we are (enabling) them to speak out about their needs... to set the agenda of the emergency response.”

Boseiwaqa’s continual engagement in our WWW process means she was able to network to break the story of flooding in Toga (<http://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.radionz.co.nz%2Finternational%2Fpacific-news%2F320982%2Fchristmas-spirit-helps-fiji-people-through-massive-floods&h=ATN-xYFVhgoTQJbM7NKt-kQp38IM6lmNuhoHOA13GFRHGMBXtZyKF3FRQlh6aGDJlc6gyyMdeO9wQstqJOg-72f3V8PVM02NtqcEdxXJLddnQQzljTFcJHexl0ecSdv8dl&s=1>) and ensures she asks very specific questions about the local weather for specific purposes.

“When there’s a storm they need to prepare not only in terms of stocking up food but also in terms of saving their livelihood,” explained Boseiwaqa. “How well do they look after their (cattle) – because, most of these women, they are unemployed, they’re rural women and they depend on income generating projects.”

When questioned on why she continues to meet with women month after month, Boseiwaqa said that in terms of engaging with local decision makers the results speak for themselves.

“They believe that it’s through (the) femLINKpacific network (and) having this platform that had really empowered and (educated),” she said. “To stand and speak out not only for themselves but for their community as well.”

“(But) women need resources for continued mobilization... to be heard at the local and at the national level.”

Since its establishment in 2000, beginning with the Blue Ribbon Peace Vigil, femLINK has continued to invest in providing a space for women to share and connect their stories – linking its work with the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 ensuring women’s participation in decision making.

Seventeen years later, women like Boseiwaqa are working to ensure that global commitments to achieving gender equality are realised at the local level.

“Most of these women leaders make use of the opportunities when any of the government departments are visiting our district to attend and also to participate in addressing different issues that they face in their communities,” outlined Boseiwaqa. “(The women know) it will take long for development but they want their voices to be heard.”