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# Here Are The Women (2017): Mareta Tagivakatini (/index.php/en/actions/here-are-the-women/510-here-are-the-women-2017-mareta-tagivakatini)



By Hannah Hicks



“We have to encourage women (so that they know) we can do what men are doing because we can know and easily understand all the issues that are faced in the market,” said Mareta Tagivakatini, Secretary of the Labasa Market Vendors and Farmers Association. “Dealing with it in a woman's matter, it really boost us as women leaders in the market.”

Tagivakatini is a handicraft vendor is originally from Nawi Buca Bay, in Cakaudrove, and lives in Bulileka, Labasa. Her first encounter with femLINKpacific was in 2015 during a leadership and communication training with the Labasa Market Vendors committee members, supported by UN Women under their Markets For Change Project and facilitated by femLINK. After the training her journey as a member of the women leader's network began.

The space opened up to her enabled Tagivakatini to engage with more women, discuss and define her peace and security –

building a vision of a Fiji where everyone loves and cares for one another as well as feeling secured in our homes and in our communities.

It also enabled her to deepen her thinking around her own leadership within the market vendors association and articulate that something she would like to see is that more women are included in decision making in the Labasa town council.

“For many, many years, when the market was there, many men were leading the vendors association but I was very happy when the vendors association was just registered, and a lady was elected as the President of the Labasa Market Vendors Association”, she shared.

She is also happy that majority of the committee is comprised of women as well and hopes that in years to come there’s going to be more changes in the market.

“I want to see more washrooms for ladies because at the time being we only have one washroom for all, the public and the toilets are there,” she said. “For women vendors we need our (own), we need to have a safer place”.

When it comes to disaster response and recovery, Tagivakatini highlighted that there needs to more training and awareness for women market vendors. She also believes that there needs to be a safe and secure space in the market.

“As market vendors and the market is near the river, we want to see that there’s a mark on the river’s side so if in case flood comes, we have to see the mark (and) the people will have to tell us that they have to evacuate the market if the water reaches there,” she shared during last year’s third season of Radio with Pictures.

She also emphasised the importance of having weather alerts and warnings announced through the PA system in the market. With such systems in place, vendors would be better informed and thus better able to prepare, respond and mobilise.

Tagivakatini also believes that there is a need for the Ministry of Agriculture to have more supplies of seedlings and stems as part of disaster preparedness – a glaring issue since TC Winston.

Now, through her participation at the femLINK’s monthly district consultations and beyond, she feels she is now more efficient when it comes to educating other women on their preparedness and protection plans come any natural disaster, as well as more active in participating in meetings at different decision making levels.

“It really helps me to know and understand that what I am going through is faced by many women out there,” she explained. “While sharing your experiences and knowledge through radio productions, it can help and inspire women who are facing similar situations to come out from their shells and share what they are going through because there are solutions to every situations or issues we face”.

She also highlighted the need for women to be supported by family members and communities, villages to district levels through to trainings.

“Women are to be given equal opportunities in decision making and in higher education,” she emphasised “Some of the barriers to participation is because of tradition and culture when they (feel they) are not highly qualified in terms of education.”

For Tagivakatini, she really wants to see leadership transformed and leaders treating everybody equally and being transparent. She also hopes for an increase in women’s participation in government – especially for the 30% commitment to women in decision-making to be met.

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