

Community Radio Times

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the Australian Government and through the partnership of the We Rise Coalition. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of femLINKpacific and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of these development partners.

Publisher: Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Executive Producer-Director, femLINKpacific

FEMTALK 89FM TURNS 13!

PRESS RELEASE – 18TH MAY, 2017

It all began with a shared vision following the events of May 2000 in Fiji to promote 'women speaking to women for peace'. It linked Section J of the Beijing Platform for Action and UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 which was adopted on October 31 2000. The vision of the co-founders collective of femLINKpacific was to provide a media platform for women across the Pacific - starting in Fiji, which included radio, press and television programmes. It included linkages and support from feminist media allies like FEMNET, ISIS Manila International and the 'motherhood' - the International Women's Tribune Centre - and making connections with the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) at a global community radio conference in 2003 and discovering the 'suitcase radio' as the most appropriate equipment for the organisation to develop 'Women's Weekend' radio broadcasts in the capital, and more importantly, take radio out to women in rural communities.

In May 2004, femLINKpacific launched Fiji and the Pacific's first mobile women's community radio station - a complete radio station with a 100 watt transmitter which began monthly 'Women's Weekend' radio broadcasts with a team of 5th Form volunteers from the St Joseph's Secondary School and NGO contributors to the broadcast schedule including the women's network of the Fiji Disabled People's Federation, ECREA and Fiji Media Watch. "That broadcast hosted by student volunteers brought the diversity of Suva-based civil society together – human rights and disability activists, ecumenical groups and the Fiji Media Watch – they all became part of a monthly broadcast," explained Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Executive Producer-Director of femLINKpacific. "The difference we wanted to make was to bring radio programmes from rural women to the capital city to bridge the gap of information. We

also identified a core team of correspondents from CSO networks interested in producing content as part of their field work. And we hosted our first 16 days of community radio campaign with our initial rural team and interested Suva based women and youth led organisations like KIDSLINK. One of our first correspondents was Adivasu Levu who today continues to work with femLINK as a convenor for the work we do on Vanua Levu and Rabi. In fact she was the person who catalysed the development and production of the Community Radio Times. It is about giving back and sharing from the interviews we document across Fiji back to the women leaders who share their voice and opinions."

"We needed to break the silence, so that's what we did," added Adi Vasulevu, convenor in the North for femLINK. "We created an enabling space where women's thoughts, voices and ideas mattered."

Between 2005 and 2010, the 'suitcase radio' became a women's caravan of news and information - travelling out to women from Rakiraki to Sigatoka, Labasa and Savusavu producing content with women and then broadcasting these in each centre.

In 2007, the 'Generation Next' project brought young women on the airwaves with the development of a model that has enabled young women to lead broadcasts, produce content and also develop and grow within the organisation.

"By 2011, we had trained a core group of Labasa based young women so that we could establish Fiji's first rural community radio station in Labasa," continued Bhagwan Rolls. "In that journey since then, I have often been asked about our audience. Our community radio approach when it comes to our audience is not like a commercial radio in order to attract advertisers. Our community radio platform is first for women in rural centres, outside of the capital to talk about their development and human security, peace and development priorities. Our target audience, the women, in rural communities are defining the content."

Today, FemTALK 89FM continues to bring people, especially rural women, young women, women with disabilities and LGBT advocates and activists together in a safe space to share their

views and opinions and the Suva radio station has expanded to run 24 hours with a 300 watt transmitter targeting an audience in the densely populated Suva-Nausori.

FemTALK 89FM Labasa continues to be an important platform for the network in Vanua Levu and a mobile unit continues to travel out for rural broadcasts, including the most recent in April from the Nadi market – a continued collaboration with town councils that has remained since FemTALK 89FM's early days.

Things have come a long way but the technology is still the 'suitcase radio'.

FemTALK 89FM is about community empowerment; it is about taking radio to women in their local communities; it is about enabling women and young women to have a voice share an opinion about a range of social, economic and political issues that will help bring about sustainable development and peace – including throughout the disaster cycle.

As our Women's Weather Watch campaign has illustrated, there is still a long way to go for women to be meaningfully engaged in decision making – at the detriment of resilience.

At the same time, through the 2 way communication facilitated by the community media process, rural women leaders are empowered as first responders to mobilise their communities.

"Each broadcast is an opportunity to promote the potential that exists within women leaders in local communities to identify critical development priorities as well as advise development programmes," explained Bhagwan Rolls. "The women who participate in each broadcast are supported to freely to express their opinion and belief, to communicate a culture of peace. The radio broadcasts, are an opportunity of the women to be heard by local leaders from those in local government to the leadership of district and provincial councils, who remain predominantly men. During the broadcasts in the capital city, the broadcast of these interviews, also reaffirm the need for national decision making to be inclusive of rural women's realities." FemTALK89FM broadcasts 24 hours in Suva and from 9am to 5pm on weekdays in Labasa.



CONTENTS

Women's Human Security First	2
Access to Justice	7
Women's Weather Watch	10
On FemTALK89FM	12
Fiji Young Women's Forum	14



BRIDGING THE INFORMATION-COMMUNICATION GAP FOR WOMEN LEADERS

BY HANNAH HICKS

"It is about us rural women, we don't really have time to listen or talk on radio due to the busy schedule at home but having our own community radio station it has given us a lot of freedom," said Vani Tuvuki, leader of the Koronubu Women's Fellowship from Ba who has been part of the femLINKpacific network for 7 years.

It is this feminist that has seen the vision of the founding management collective of femLINK to be innovative and inclusive. It is a demonstrated spirit of Section J of the Beijing Platform for Action, as we celebrated FemTALK89FM's 13th birthday.

The radio network is making women's leadership visible.

"We can pass information to our community that the disaster will be here, all the ladies in my group and in our community they were well prepared. They are very proud that we are doing something for them in our community," shared Jai Mati, President of the Vuqele Multiracial Women's Group in Tavua.

As a leader it is very, very important," added Inise Dawai, Secretary of the Sikituru Women's Club from Nadi, who has been part of the network of rural women leaders for almost 5 years. "In voicing my issues

I feel very comfortable with the community radio media. I know that I am not only out there for myself, I represent other women where I come from voicing their issues."

The network began in 2004, organising Women's Weekend Radio with a team of broadcast volunteers from Saint Joseph Secondary School as volunteers. These young women gave rise to the 'Generation Next' project.

In 2013, it began a weekly radio show dedicated to promoting disability rights, 'Look At My Abilities', and since 2014 'Rainbow Connections' is a commitment to supporting LGBT allies.

The monthly broadcasts remain dedicated today to bringing the stories from rural districts - beyond the 100W transmitter's 10km broadcast radius.

Today, we are now a 24 hour station with a 300W transmission - covering the Navua- Nausori corridor. Since November 2011, we operate first rural women-led community radio station.

"From my experience one of the things that really stood out for me was when women say this is really a peaceful approach for them, in terms of raising their voice, in terms of giving them freedom of space to speak," shared Adi Vasulevu, convenor of the Northern Division for femLINK.

FemTALK89FM broadcasts the programmes produced at district, divisional, national and regional meetings which are the evidence for policy advocacy. And for listeners beyond the broadcast range there are podcasts available online.

femLINK is a valued member of the global community media movement of community media, with two important media partners - The World Association of Community Radio Broadcaster (AMARC) and The World Association for Christian Communication (WACC).

Today, it is a regional broadcast hub for the members of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) Pacific network and 40% of airtime is dedicated to regional content.

SUGAR TALKS MUST FEATURE WOMEN'S VOICES

BY ALISIA EVANS

"I used to have 200 tonnes, 150 tonnes (of sugarcane after harvest) but now it (has) drop(ped) down to 10 tonnes (following Tropical Cyclone Winston)," fretted Sarojini Gounder a sugar cane farmer based in Rakiraki. "So, if it's \$10 (per tonne)... \$100 (will be my only income) so I don't know how I'm going to pay for my labours."

On the 16th May, 2017, top headlines in the Fiji Times focused on the final pay instalment for the 2016 harvesting crop. The figure released made for some tough reading - \$10.57 per tonne.

This brings the total payment for the 2016 harvest to \$72.41. It was also unfortunate to note that all of the stories in the paper were gender-blind with no female sugarcane farmers quoted as sources of information.

Through gender-focused media monitoring, femLINKpacific is able to counter gender-stereotypes portrayed in the media. This is especially so for the agricultural sector where more often than not women are ignored despite their role as managers - not just of their farms but also their household and families. With the announcement that they will receive a final payment of \$10.57 per tonne, women farmers from across femLINK's network highlighted several concerns most notably how they will manage to make ends meet for the labourers.

Firstly, women have been highlighting the continuous impact of Fiji's unpredictable weather patterns on their farms.

In Labasa, the women's tonnage has been affected by constant bouts of heavy rain.

"We have to cut all the expenses," shared Dimakita Lena, President of the Naleba Multiracial Women's Club, who lives in Naleba No. 2 - a sugarcane farming community of over 200 people located 40km outside of Labasa. "(The) expenses for... buying chemicals because of the flooding...all the chemicals was washed away and also the manure and also the land leases and the education of the children, food for the table. That's all the expenses (we have to look at cutting back on). We feel farmers are not benefitting for this money unless we have increase of price... to become \$20 to cater all for our family needs also because of the education of the children, they need some shoes, their uniform and the food on the table and the food parcel to school."

"Due to the continuous rainfall the sugarcane we have to hire more labourers to do extra work and we are finding it very hard to survive." added Manjula Devi, who manages 33 acres of farmland in Vunimoli, 10km outside of Labasa. "I think we should have \$120 per tonne to survive."

According to Gounder, it was the lack of rainfall that was a concern for farmers in Fiji's Western Division. "So maybe (for) two months we didn't receive any rain," she highlighted. "Our sugarcane is coming up. If we get rain then it will pick up."

Ahead of the 2017/2018 national budget announcement, expected to be on the 29th of June, while spotlight attention has been placed on the sugar industry, the experiences of women farmers like Dimakita Lena, Manjula Devi and Sarojini Gounder must inform agricultural policies and strategies so that they are not just gender responsive but are in line with Fiji's National Gender Policy (2014).

"Without gender inclusive programmes the backbone of communities are vulnerable," explained Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, femLINKpacific's Executive Producer Director. "This is the gap for agricultural extension programmes at the moment. Addressing these problems isn't about doing something totally new. They can build on women's skills and expertise to ensure that there are resources for women as farmers and providers of food security so they can first feed the family and then earn a living from the surplus."



SUPPORTING WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE, NOT ADDING BURDEN

BY HANNAH HICKS

It's no secret that women are the central providers of food, fuel and water in their homes and communities.

Not only are women and girls made primarily responsible for feeding their families in context of food security but also are often impeded from earning an income outside the house leaving them more dependent on food assistance, particularly after disasters – cyclones, droughts and floods.

Earlier in the year femLINKpacific, went out to see whether there was a gender policy and plan for the Pacific Island Farmers Organisation Network (PIFON) – an organisation established to coordinate capacity building, share success stories and the lessons learnt, support regional exchanges of expertise between farming organizations and their associated private sector and donor agency partners to empower rural people to take advantage of economic livelihood opportunities.

PIFON's current membership includes various farmer organizations from Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

"Family farming really is enabling the right environment for farmers to have a dignified life," share Lavinia Kaumaitotya, Programme Manager of PIFON. "For us here in the Pacific, many of our farmers are smallholder farmers, they're not the big farm, commercial farms, a lot of them are smallholder farmers."

She explained that this would mean enabling the right environment for farmers across the region to be able to plant properly, get

fertilizers at the right price, the proper planting material and a ready market for their produce.

It might seem easy on the surface but there are a multitude of challenges that often arise.

"Sometimes when they plant, they don't have anywhere to sell," explained Kaumaitotya. "It's a big issue. If there's a pest and they can't work, then it's a problem for their plant as well... so (we look at) introducing policy that can fix the issues that they have."

One such policy is to develop family farms.

A National Committee for Family Farming would provide a platform for dialogue between stakeholders related to family farming in the country – such as agricultural organisations and rural development associations and women.

In many of the family farms in Fiji, we see women toiling the land, planting and managing crop growth and even organising harvest and sale – but where do women fit into the planning?

This May, the Fiji government announced that sugarcane farmers would receive a final pay of \$10.57 for their 2016 harvest - bringing the total payment for the 2016 harvest to \$72.41.

"With the payment for the \$10.00 we'll be receiving, we have to cut all the expenses like expenses for chemicals," outlined Dimakita Lena, President of the Naleba Multiracial Club in Vanua Levu.

"Because of the flooding, it was washed away - all the chemicals (were) washed away."

And away with the chemicals goes the human security, threatening the education of their children and quality of food on the table.

These rural women leaders continue to express their concern on the lack of economic security when it comes to engaging in sugarcane farming, where sadly the cost of production exceeds the revenue earned and has been this way for some time.

Here families are then forced to make hard decisions in order to meet their needs on a day to day basis.

Manjula Devi, who owns 3 sugarcane farms in Vunimoli in Labasa, shared the same sentiments.

"We are very much concerned about our welfare - very less for us, the amount is too little, it's very hard for us to survive as sugarcane farmers and we have too much workload," she said.

In addition, with the rising cost of living is leading to farming families facing multiple challenges as they endeavour to continue in the sugarcane industry.

This includes the challenges posed by climate change resulting in droughts, floods and even landslides have a direct impact on agriculture and the farming community.

"It (has) affected the cane because the place where we have our farm (floods) so it's affecting the farm (including) the cane," highlighted Lena. "They are very small and weak because all the manure has been washed out."

"In disaster, what happens our vegetable farming and our cane farming drops a lot even with me as a vegetable farmer in drought it dries out," added Nirmala Sharma, Project Manager for Vunivicui Multiracial Group also in Labasa. "When it's heavy rain, the big flood takes all our vegetables away because we just living near by the river."

This just reaffirms the need for women to be represented and included in decision making structures like local governance.

The sugar industry has come a long way and it is only in recognizing the roles women play can communities and decision makers work together to ensure 30% representation of women farmers with bodies such as the Sugarcane Growers Council and to have a Women Farmers Council established in Fiji.

All in all it is about sustaining livelihoods.

"I guess it goes back to the role of woman, we can't overemphasize the role of woman in families, at the end of the day I've always said the woman is the glue in the family," continued Kaumaitotya. "The woman is the one that moves the family, so if you are empowering women, you're actually impacting her and her family and normally in a family in the Pacific Islands."





GENDER BLIND DATA MAKES GENDER BLIND DECISIONS

BY ALISIA EVANS

“There is no database that’s specifically states women farmers with us,” pointed out Jone Sovalawa, Director of Extension Services for the Ministry of Agriculture. “There are a number of women farmers but the assistance that we give is to all farmers irrespective of gender.”

In late May, Tropical Cyclone (TC) Ella came within a hair’s breadth of Fiji – out of season and painfully slow-moving.

Sovalawa, speaking to femLINKpacific, was outlining the level of support the Ministry provides to farmers after a disaster.

“So whenever we distribute seeds,” continued Sovalawa. “Mostly the farmers in our list it can be men and women, it’s a family thing because we don’t really demarcate whether they are widows or single women but most that we assist are... in a family.”

Unfortunately, this lack of gender and sex-disaggregated data is par for the course in an industry where the role of women is often overlooked.

“My husband is the owner of the land but I keep the money for that

and I farm (the land).” explained Yashmin Khan, President of the Al-Madina Women’s Club in Nadi. “I am a home manageress - I produce those food in the farm and I have to sell it (to) then earn (money) to feed my family too. But at the end (of the day)... there is no credit for the woman.”

Khan, a farmer from the village of Navakai in Nadi, continued to highlight the importance of women’s ownership over land in order to enable women to access and benefit from agricultural extension services and programmes.

“The agriculture department should come into our communities and perform workshops to give some sort of information so women can learn how to cope with these agriculture programmes and teach us new ways of farming.” proposed Khan.

Women’s traditional knowledge of the impact of disasters on their farm land must also be recognised.

“I am very concerned about food security in Koronubu,” added Vani Tuvuki, leader of the Koronubu Women’s Fellowship in Ba in May this year. “If the rain (is) to continue for these few more days, then it will fill up the compounds and also our cane fields and our vegetable plants which we just planted recently at the beginning of the year.”

Having a database of women farmers and land owners is therefore critical to ensuring disaster response strategies are resilient as well as responsive to and reflective of the needs of communities on the ground.

Additionally, ensuring the collation and analysis of gender disaggregated data can also support women’s participation in and

representation on decision making structures within the agricultural sector.

This is in line with the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) particularly General Recommendation 34 on the rights of rural women which paves the way for gender-responsive agriculture and rural development, policies and initiatives.

“Sex and gender disaggregated data are vital to preparing for natural disasters and providing the appropriate assistance in the immediate and long term aftermath particularly in terms of ensuring supporting the leadership of the very women who are leading in their communities not just during times of natural disaster but in the every day,” added Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Executive Producer-Director of femLINKpacific. “There must be a change in the way in which government engages with women to ensure women’s participation at all levels in line with Fiji’s commitments in the National Gender Policy.”

Regardless of such experiences, the recommendation from women farmers has not wavered. Women continue to call for greater inclusion and representation in the agricultural sector – even if it means creating a parallel decision making structure to ensure their contributions are valued.

“There (should) be a Fiji Sugarcane Women’s Growers Council to elect leaders, women leaders, into this council because they will be the one looking after the welfare of women farmers and labourers,” concluded Tuvuki.



RURAL WOMEN REDEFINE LEADERSHIP

BY SIAN ROLLS

femLINKpacific's monthly consultations in June brought together 133 Rural Women Leaders from across 8 districts - Nausori, Nadi, Lautoka, Ba, Tavua and Rakiraki as well as rural and urban Labasa. The convenings took place as part of a collaboration with the Pacific Centre for Peacebuilding to identify ways to support women leaders to enhance collaboration and partnerships to achieve common goals of gender equality, peace and human security particularly through local governance structures (district advisory council, tikina and provincial development planning committees) as well as

identify ways to support women leaders to enhance collaboration and partnerships to achieve common goals of gender equality, peace and human security particularly through local governance structures. The Rural Women Leaders network come from faith, agriculture and local community networks and represent more than 19,000 other rural women. "For the women they know what they want, they know what type of leader they want," shared Frances Tawake, Programme Associate: Network Coordination who convened the Nausori consultation. "Most of them are already practising their skills in the different areas, in the different communities and in the different groups they involve themselves in." "They also discussed the governance structures today as well as the flow of communications," said Adi Vasulevu, convenor for the North. "Women are also raising resourcing – a lot more spaces

need to be created for awareness and empowerment for women. We can see with the women that have participating regularly they are able to analyse further and build on their issues and make linkages and connections to each issue." "Women want to see more workshops to build skills as leaders to ensure that they are well equipped to represent their communities," outlined Losana Derenalagi, convenor for Nadi and Lautoka. "The use of our community media, including community radio, has been important platform for rural women leaders coming together on the monthly basis," added Fane Boseiwaqa, convenor for Ba, Tavua and Rakiraki. "Women also highlighted the importance of having this network that provides clear information which enables them to communicate their development issues to benefit their communities and bring about sustainable peace and sustainable development."



WOMEN MUST ENGAGE BUT NOT OVER-SACRIFICE

BY ALISIA EVANS AND SULUETI WAQA

"Promoting women's participation in formal and informal decision-making structures and local and national government processes is a mean(s) of conflict prevention and peace building," shared Sapeci Cerevalu, a young woman from Koronubu in Ba. The way that the world is, nothing is gender neutral. Natural disasters, development programme implementation and service delivery all have varied impacts on men and women. Therefore, decisions made in political spaces and through political processes must be done with a gendered lens to prevent women from becoming more disadvantaged. This means representation of the diversity of people that make up our society in the development planning, implementation and review processes – this includes ensuring that women are part of decision making spaces and are able to hold positions of leadership. This may seem easy on the surface in 2017, but there are deeply entrenched cultural, financial and structural barriers. "We need to engage closely with our leaders especially at the local district level such as district officers, town councillors, administration officers so that we can address to them our messages and issues,

like development priority issues in our community," shared Esita Waqa, a representative of the Senijale Women's Club from Tavua. "There's a lack of empowerment and leadership training and programs to encourage women especially in the community or in the rural areas," outlined Unaisi Bakewa Sadranu, President of Tavua Disabled People's Association. "There is no encouragement or empowerment from the family members or from the community as a whole in order to encourage them to participate or to take part in the leadership role." "Quite often, women are busy taking care of their family and do not have time to participate," added Rev. Angela Suruj Prasad, representing the Association of Anglican Women in Labasa. However, according to the rural women leaders who met last month to unpack concepts relating to leadership, their experiences within the home are applicable in decision making beyond their four walls. "We women are nurturers and we ensure every small bits of details are taken care of," explained Adi Ana Ramatai, President for the Soqosoqo Vakamarama Bua Province. "This kind of attitude will always be evident or translated in everything that we do even in leadership or member of group or committee." But while women may have the skills and willingness to enter decision making, the path to the positions need to made clearer to them. "We have to educate more women so that they know the steps to be taken in order to achieve the leadership role at the local level such as advisory council," continued Sadranu. "I think 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," added Ramatai. While women leaders are looking forward to more opportunities to balance the scales in decision making, they want to see a just transition – a shift where their representative role does not add undue burden on their cultural and societal role. "Women need the resources to in order for women to contribute effectively or participate in decision making processes," said Sadranu. Whether these resources are monetary or in kind, women's drive and willingness must not be taken for granted or lead them to sacrifice their own welfare in order to attend to their family's needs as well as keep up with their leadership roles. femLINKpacific's monthly consultations in June brought together 133 rural women leaders from across 8 districts - Nausori, Nadi, Lautoka, Ba, Tavua and Rakiraki as well as rural and urban Labasa. The convenings took place as part of a collaboration with the Pacific Centre for Peacebuilding to identify ways to support women leaders to enhance collaboration and partnerships to achieve common goals of gender equality, peace and human security particularly through local governance structures (district advisory council, tikina and provincial development planning committees) as well as identify ways to support women leaders to enhance collaboration and partnerships to achieve common goals of gender equality, peace and human security particularly through local governance structures.

ADDRESS THE UNDER REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AT ALL LEVELS OF DECISION MAKING

BY FANE BOSEIWAQA WITH LOSANA DERENALAGI

"We need women in decision making processes, help them get there," says Losana Derenalagi, convener for femLINKpacific in Nadi and Lautoka. "Women's participation in decision making process is important to realise the sustainability of development"

Temporary commitments are not an option - there is a need to apply special measures to bridge the stubborn gender gap in decision making because without women, peace is impossible.

"We have 14 advisory councillors in Lautoka and we are only two women in the team," shared Shakuntla Pernal, Lomolomo Advisory Councillor in Lautoka. "So, putting our issues across is a bit difficult to go through the other 12 men."

Despite the adoption of the Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the National Gender Policy (2014) in Fiji, there is still a need to address the under representation of women from local government to Parliament.

We have to work together to demonstrate how systems and processes must enable women to be included in formal decision making spaces from local to national level to realise the shift from reacting to preventing conflict.

"This is one of the reasons as an organisation we are collaborating with sister organisations as co-convenors of The Fiji Women's Forum and the Fiji Young Women's Forum because now more than ever we need more resilient leadership which women have demonstrated after every cyclone and floods, yet remained under-represented in local governance, which is really needed right now," outlined Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Executive Producer-Director of femLINKpacific.

"Processes of decision making have a lot of gaps, especially at local level," said Adi Vasulevu, of Transcend Oceania and convener for femLINKpacific in the North of Fiji. "Because of the gaps, the development priorities and the decisions that are made don't match what the women are experiencing in the communities."

This adds to the burden on women – including through the feminisation of poverty.

The economic disadvantage continues a cycle of discrimination that women experience as it is a contributing factor to the power imbalance between women and men in access to decision making and resources.

Therefore, there needs to be a gendered approach that is much more than just adding more women in spaces.

For gender equality to be a reality, decision makers must represent and reflect women in all their diversity - this includes people living with disabilities, rural women, young women and the LGBT.

These individuals are affected differently by development so therefore their participation is important to ensure that no one is left behind.

"You cannot achieve a sustainable peace with leaving a portion of the population out, whether it is women, disability, and people living with HIV or LGBT," said Sulique Waqa, Creative Director of Haus of Khameleon. "Everyone needs to be part of the peace process because it affects every people, everyone needs to be part of it."

"Most of the villagers are unemployed and depend on the farms as the main sources of income and also for our food every day," added Sereima Meli, from Naboutolu Village. "After the cyclone, our food (was) washed away, we are left with nothing. With 41 households in the village, 39 were fully damaged, our sources of living have gone. We don't know where to start from."

With the underrepresentation of women in decision making, we see huge gaps in people's ability to realise their peace and human security.

It affects their access to education, employment, food security, health services and facilities, and clean drinking water.

Without everyone involved, you cannot have effective disaster risk management.

You cannot address and eliminate gender based violence.

But accessible and appropriate information and communication systems are bridging the gap. Community media networks like the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) Pacific network, including femLINKpacific, is working to ensure women are informed and are able to influence the decisions that affect their lives.

Community media, in particular community radio, offers a platform for women to amplify their voices and reaffirm their leadership roles in their homes, community and country.

This is an important role of our network as civil society leaders who continue to learn together and develop our messages and recommendations to strengthen our engagement to use political commitments to progress our common agenda not just in regional levels but more importantly at community level including reaching faith and traditional leaders.

"We are creating a safer environment for everyone to sit together and talk because it is about ensuring safety with dignity," summed up Vasulevu.



During the month of July, femLINKpacific met with Rural Women Leaders to discuss Access to Justice through a series of district level consultations conducted in collaboration with the Fiji Women's Rights Movement's Access to Justice Programme supported by the European Union.

The following stories were issued from the field throughout the period of convening.

femLINKpacific is committed to providing safe spaces for women including through community radio so they are provided information to be able to actively and meaningfully participate across decision making levels. This is to ensure that women are both empowered and are able to question and hold governance structures accountable including in relation to access to justice. The consultation series also builds on femLINKpacific's Women, Peace and Human Security work in ensuring that there is a greater promotion and application of women's rights through local governance structures and a strengthened collaboration between women leaders to achieve gender equality and human security.

ACCESSING JUSTICE REQUIRES INFORMATION

BY SIAN ROLLS

"When women are showing their voice in every family - the challenges and difficulties we are going through, we can overcome," shared Merelesita Matadamudamu, Secretary of the Naqai Women's Club in Labasa

She was speaking during the first of nine consultations that took place in July with Rural Women Leaders from femLINKpacific's national network conducted in collaboration with the Fiji Women's Rights Movement's Access to Justice Programme supported by the European Union.

In the first consultation at femLINKpacific's Labasa community media centre, women defined Access to Justice through a human security lens.

They saw it as an opportunity to provide recommendations on the reforms they need to ensure women have access to and knowledge

of their legal rights, there is a gender inclusive approach in the manner in which the branches of Fiji's justice institutions respond to the existing barriers including infrastructure and the lack of accessible information.

"We are already coming from the rural areas to share our story or what we're going through and then you're being sent around to lots of places... and when you get back, something isn't written properly," said Lucille Chute, Programme Assistant of femLINKpacific.

"They need to explain the system step by step," affirmed Nirmala Sharma, Project Manager of the Vunucuicui Multiracial Women's Group, Treasurer of the Vanua Levu Arya Mahila Mandal and President of the Vunucuicui Mahila Mandal.

"Through personal experience, having those supportive mechanisms in place that are supportive of justice (is vital)," added Sulueti Waqa, Programme Associate of femLINKpacific. "The police are there but not well trained. They become a barrier to justice. Even the medical system, only certain doctors are approved to sign the medical slips. So, for women, accessing police and going to court is a big achievement. There are women who go through these cases, they don't even have this kind of information. I wonder what their life would be like."

It was this specific gap in awareness and knowledge that was the

primary recommendation from today's consultation – the information must reach people in their communities to be able to realise justice for all.

"The lack of knowledge in the community – they should educate and bring more awareness... because in the community, legal rights is very new," explained Dimakita Lena, President of the Naleba Multiracial Women's Group. "All they think is about from court to jail – they don't know about the other processes. If there is knowledge, they will be secured."

"When women don't understand that they have their rights... some men think that they totally own a woman," continued Mareta Tagivakatini, Secretary of the Labasa Market Vendors Association. "They think they can apply anything whether it's physical or any type of violence. We have to educate men to that that are limits to everything. If they don't have that knowledge, they will just follow what the men are doing to them."

"We women in the communities know legal rights are there but we feel under pressure when the men say not to go out," stressed Nalini Deo, Assistant Treasurer of the Vunimoli Arya Mahila Mandal and member of the Vanua Levu Arya Mahila Mandal. "The women here are representing our members and when we have our sittings we can share what we learned here."



ADDRESSING SILENCE FOR JUSTICE, PEACE

BY SIAN ROLLS

Women leaders continued to define Access to Justice through a human security lens and are providing recommendations on the reforms they need to ensure women have access to and knowledge of their legal rights, there is a gender inclusive approach in the manner in which the branches of Fiji's justice institutions respond to the existing barriers including infrastructure and the lack of accessible information. These discussions are happening as part of a collaboration between femLINKpacific and the Fiji Women's Rights Movement Access to Justice programme supported by the European Union:

"One of the things we are bringing to this project as a partner of the We Rise feminist coalition is enabling a cadre of women leaders to define access to justice from their vantage points," explained Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Executive Producer-Director of femLINKpacific at the end of consultations in Bua (on the 11th of July). "For the Rural Women Leaders here in our network, as well as Labasa, access is not just about having strong and accountable police and justice institutions and infrastructure to get them there. This is linked to rural women budget priorities - good roads, affordable transport and addressing the isolation they feel from the service providers and institutions of justice like the police. For these rural women from remote communities, accountability of these institutions would mean having resources and personnel mobilised and reaching them regardless of population size."

Access is also about inclusive information and communication systems.

"Communication is very hard as there are some places where you can't catch any phone network," said Unaisi Maria, Secretary of the Soqosoqo Vakamarama Bua and member of the Vuya Women's Group. "Only some places have access to radio and television."

"So, if the infrastructure doesn't work for them, then women are going to stay in situations where their safety is at risk," continued Bhagwan Rolls, adding that the organisation is looking at ways to extend community radio broadcasts to bridge these gaps. "Today, women continued defining Access to Justice through a human security lens and see this as an opportunity to provide recommendations on the

reforms they need to ensure women have access to and knowledge of their legal rights, there is a gender inclusive approach in the manner in which the branches of Fiji's justice institutions respond to the existing barriers including infrastructure and the lack of accessible information."

"This is why we're recommending that the information comes down to the community," said Ana Ramatai, President of the Bua Soqosoqo Vakamarama. "There are some communities right at the coast and others are all the way in the interior."

Barriers are also social constructs.

"What I've noticed is that women are trying to voice issues during (village) meetings... but they're ashamed of what their facing," continued Ramatai. "It's the culture that what happens in the house remains there."

This barrier of shame is a challenge that transcends culture and was at the core of today's discussions in Nabouwalu, Bua – the second of nine consultations taking place over the next three weeks, bringing together 140 rural women leaders from femLINKpacific's national network.

Legal Literacy and Human Rights education is a way to build peaceful communities for men and women together.

"We used to have awareness in our village but mostly only the women came," explained Fulori Sealolo, Secretary of the Nabouwalu Women's Community Group. "Maybe only a third of the community would not come. And the men, they are not working. They drink a lot of grog and go home (and are violent). When we call the police, there's no answer. If we need to get to the police station, the women can't afford the vehicle hire costs. And if they get to the police, most of the officers are from the community – they will be related to the woman's husband and so they won't do anything. We have to find ways to make it easier to communicate with them so the communities are safe."

This separation from services also extends to social service provision as well as counselling.

"People need to be able to get the counselling so they can solve the issues within their families," recommended Rita Beda Anjali, Centre Chief of the Namau Women's Group, who shared that some women in their community have had to travel all the way to Labasa town to find assistance. "If they are able to get the counselling, the men will respect the women. But right now, when meeting take place in the community, the women are told to keep quiet and the men just talk."

WOMEN RECOMMEND A2J REFORMS

BY HANNAH HICKS

Human security underpins access to justice for rural women leaders who have been participating in femLINKpacific's consultations across the Northern Division.

Meetings have been convened in Labasa, Bua and in Savusavu in collaboration with the Fiji Women's Rights Movement Access to Justice programme supported by the European Union.

Access to Justice requires a women's human security approach, ensuring the availability of legal rights information, the affordability and availability of legal services and removing infrastructure

barriers:

"The word access, it's a long time now we still haven't got water in our village and I want to drink clean water and use it in my house as I need it but it's not," shared Ruci Senicevuga, President of the Jerusalem Women's Club, echoing priority issues including access to proper housing, a secured source of income and participation in decision making highlighted by 23 women leaders from community groups and clubs as well as the private sector.

Access is also defined by whether you live in town or beyond the town boundaries, explained Alumita Drokamaisau, a member of the Yaroi Women's Club:

"I think our access is okay, even though we living close just to the police station, (but) many problems still arise like especially our youths. They're using drugs"

Recommendations that will be provided back to the Fiji Women's Rights Movement include supporting women's convenings to

consistently support leadership development and access to information as women leaders work together to overcome the economic, social and cultural barriers to decision making structures, particularly as a way to prevent and report violence.

Legal aid information needs to be available and accessible in towns away from the main divisional centers and the Fiji Police Force needs to be resourced and trained to be more responsive so that women are more confident to report issues, and seek advice and assistance.

"So we need more women to work in different sections, let the police have more training for particular places or sections, so that we can bring our issues and so that we are heard," said Mereisi Mara, the Assistant President of the Nasaulevu Women's Club who also recommended an increase in the recruitment of women in the police force.



A2J REQUIRES AWARENESS

BY SIAN ROLLS

"Women need to know that there's a light at the end of the tunnel for whatever they're facing," explained Unaisi Bakewa, Vice President of the Tavua Disabled Organisation. "We need to educate women so that they are aware of what services are available and how to access them."

Bakewa was speaking during the first of four Western Division Access to Justice consultations held in Tavua - continuing the series of district consultations which began in the Northern Division last week in collaboration with the Fiji Women's Rights Movement Access to Justice programme supported by the European Union.

"If someone like me who lives right next to the town only found out this year that there's the Legal Aid that's free, the information needs to go to the communities, to the women," Bakewa continued.

"A trend we've been hearing from the Rural Women Leaders here in our network, in the North last week and (on the 19th of July) in Tavua, is that access is not just about having strong and accountable police and justice institutions - it's also the

infrastructure to get them there," said Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Executive Producer-Director of femLINKpacific. "This is linked to rural women budget priorities - good roads, affordable transport and addressing the isolation they feel from the service providers and institutions of justice like the police. For these rural women from remote communities, accountability of these institutions would mean having resources and personnel mobilised and reaching them regardless of population size."

"So many services are available but people are not aware," outlined Nila Rao, an advisory councillor for Caulasi in Rakiraki and National Vice President of the TISI Mother's Sangam. "We need a lot of awareness programmes. The women, they stay at home - they can't be always asking for bus fare from the husbands to go to town to access information. So, the people need to come down to educate them."

While media platforms were identified as important to disseminate information, not all households in the Tavua and Rakiraki have access to television and radio broadcasts and thus recommended face to face meetings and trainings as well as SMS as more appropriate and accessible.

However, these awareness and outreach must take into account the current barriers to participation in public life - especially for women, persons with disabilities and members of the LGBT community.

"We can't participate freely... in the village meetings," explained

Eta Tuvuki, member of the Nalawa Tikina group of the Burenitu Soqosoqo Vakamarama. "(So, it's for) those in leadership to create that link between traditional and legal systems and bring these services down to us."

The need for sensitisation was also raised as a key point of action for addressing access to justice for people in all their diversities.

"We see those who should provide the (peace in our communities) - the police - that are pushing us away," shared Jona Drua, a member of the LGBT community in Tavua. "They need to be trained to understand that we are all equal."

"Overcoming shyness and bullying are barriers to justice for us," added Robert, also a member of the LGBT community in Tavua. "We need to have safe spaces."

"Without these changes, there will still be no justice served," summed up Drua.

In this same vein, the need for women represented throughout governance and legal systems was also raised.

"We need good advisory councillors and more women in decision making," said Jai Mati, President of the Vuqelevu Women's Club.

"When the people (in those positions) are men, they don't want to give any help. The women can't talk to them. If the women are there, then other women can raise up anything."

A2J MEANS ADDRESSING TABUS

BY SIAN ROLLS

"It's surprising to see our young people don't know their rights," highlighted Vani Tuvuki, Leader of the Koronubu Women's Fellowship and Koronubu Methodist Women's Group. "We think that it is our age group – the older women and our mothers and grandmothers – but our young women don't know where to go, what to do, what their rights are. They don't have enough information to keep them safe even in their homes."

In Ba, 12 rural women leaders continued to define Access to Justice for them, their network of women and their communities - continuing the series of district consultations which began in the Northern Division last week in collaboration with the Fiji Women's Rights Movement Access to Justice programme supported by the European Union.

"There's the tabu in our society," shared Sapeci Vereivatu, member

of the Koronubu Methodist Youth Group. "We have respect for the elders. It's good but when the elders abuse the youth, they are telling the youth to keep quiet and don't say anything. And for young women because of our gender roles we are doing all the work but we are not recognised."

The need for access to information has continued to remain a constant message throughout the last five district consultations in the North and in the West.

"For the market vendors, we haven't read or don't understand market bylaws," explained Ruci Adicabenalotu, President of the SPBD Tavualevu Centre and member of the Tavua Market Vendors Association.

"So, what the need is for the sound systems in the market to be a platform for information to be readily available – to explain the by laws so that everyone understands," added Fane Boseiwaqa, Convenor for Ba, Tavua and Rakiraki for femLINKpacific. As underscored yesterday, the information does not reach women through one off campaigns or the occasional mention in a news story. The information needs to be constantly disseminated including face-to-face in communities themselves.

"The (service providers) can come to the women's group to tell (the

women) that there are services for them," said Temaleti Sauka, Secretary of the Ba Zone Women's Group of the Nailaga Tikina Soqosoqo Vakamarama. "This way, the awareness and training will reach them."

At the same time, for justice to be realised, all of society must change – education must reach the religious communities, traditional leaders, police and people of all diversity.

"Our tradition and religious norms are barriers," continued Tuvuki. "These village by laws concentrate a lot on the men. The women are isolated from the big picture."

"We have to make more awareness for the police and Legal Aid," concluded Kamla Lata, Vice President of the Varika Tavarau Nari Sabha. "They need to have more responsibility and bring the services to the people. We need to have male and female (advisory) councillors so the information reaches everyone and social welfare needs to change too. They can't just look at someone's house from the outside. They need to come in to the house and understand that it's not the size of the house, it's the situation inside that needs help."

PARTICIPATION, VOICE AND SUPPORT - KEY FOR A2J

BY SIAN ROLLS

"We still find that marginalised women are taking their pain into themselves and hurting themselves," shared Bonita Qio, Executive Coordinator of the Pacific Rainbows Advocacy Network. "Whether they know their rights or responsibilities, they think that if they tell their story they will be victimised more."

She was speaking as femLINKpacific continued a series of consultations in Lautoka yesterday - in collaboration with the Fiji Women's Rights Movement's Access to Justice programme supported by the European Union.

"Women are reaffirming that legal literacy and human rights education contribute to building a culture of peace in homes and communities," said Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Executive Producer-Director of femLINKpacific.

"We don't have the Fiji Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Commission or the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre here in Lautoka," Qio explained. "This limits our access to information and access to services and justice especially for the LGBT community. So, their empowerment is vital (to they can tell their stories)."

"We also need to participate (as young women)," added Akanisi Togiga, member of the Lauwaki Youth Group. "In conversations like here today, in these spaces to come and (share) ideas and broaden or knowledge."

Rural women leaders in Lautoka also recommended media campaigns and programmes to enhance awareness of legal processes and procedures.

"Women have less knowledge of who to contact when they are facing difficult situations," said Leba Finau Nalairuwai, member of the Lomolomo Village Youth Club. "(And if they know), some women

have the power to discuss their situations but others are shy."

"Elders in the family... must support women," added Shakuntla Permal, advisory councillor for Lomolomo and Vice President of the TISI Mother's Sangam Lomolomo. "Even the neighbours – we should not let anybody suffer. We must take initiative to help. So, there must be awareness programmes in the community and community leaders must hold meetings for the outreach for all to know their rights."

The training and empowerment of female police officers was also a recommendation put forward by rural women leaders of Lautoka.

"We don't want only women in just one police post," continued Permal. "It has to be at all levels (and in all communities)."

The consultations continue today in Nadi before convening next week in Nausori.

"We look forward to continuing the collaboration with the Fiji Women's Rights Movement as chair of the NGO Coalition on Human Rights to progress peace education programmes," concluded Bhagwan Rolls.



ENGAGE COMMUNITIES, ENSURE A2J

BY HANNAH HICKS

"Legal service providers should conduct workshops in the rural communities and also provide legal resources to educate the community," recommended Sheleni Lata, Secretary of the Sheetal Sharda Mahila Mandal.

Lata was speaking at the last of 8 consultations unpacking Access to Justice for women of all diversities held in Nausori.

Over 3 weeks, femLINKpacific met with 120 Rural Women Leaders, representing more than 18500 other women and more than 45000

people.

"Centralising legal services, public services and government organizations for women, also (ensuring) the ease of access," outlined Emosi Waqabaca, a member of the Tebara Rainbow Pride Foundation, explaining ways on making access to justice possible for women.

"(There should be) a database of contacts for public services, allowing women to access where to go," added Leena Reddy, Secretary of the Korociriciri Mothers Club.

Another concern raised by the rural women leaders; shared across the divisional meetings, was the traditional barrier that women face within their homes, villages or communities. This also limits women's participation in decision making spaces at the community level and even at the district level.

Again reaffirming the need to educate women; including young women, disabled and the LGBT community on their legal rights and the legal services available near them.

"Another barrier is access to information, for (women) in rural areas we don't (have) access to information on health, personal," said Lee Domonilabau, Assistant Treasurer of the Nausori Village Youth. "The mindset in the village is still there in the traditional ways so whenever an issue for a women comes up in the village meeting they tend to put it aside, so the first priority is the men's issues."

This was also echoed across all the consultations.

Domonilabau explained that due to the gap in information sharing women are then unable to identify proper channels to follow in addressing their legal issues and distinguish the relevant authorities within their communities.

In order to bridge that gap in disseminating information the line of authority from the provincial councils, down to the district offices and then to the village headman or members should be made use of.

The training and empowerment of female police officers was also a recommendation put forward by rural women leaders.

'ASK A LAWYER' COMING TO 89FM

BY SIAN ROLLS

"The idea is to link the women to lawyers through community radio and I think that's a really exciting opportunity because a lot of the questions that are being asked won't just be relevant to a woman who's asked that question in Nabouwalu or Savusavu or Tavua and Rakiraki, it will also be relevant to women in communities between the Suva-Nausori corridor and in Labasa town also where FemTALK89FM broadcasts," explained Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Executive Producer-Director of femLINKpacific.

She was explaining the newest media initiative of femLINKpacific

– a series of 'Ask A Lawyer' questions to be broadcasted on FemTALK89FM Suva and Labasa as well as made available via other media platforms including through femLINKpacific's quarterly 'Community Radio Times'.

"Ask a Lawyer' actually was conceptualised in 2014 because as we went out talking to rural women leaders ahead of the 2014 elections, we were finding that they weren't just asking about the constitution, they were also wanting information about the changes in legislation," continued Bhagwan Rolls. "Fast-forward to 2017, as we've been going out with the Fiji Women's Rights Movement programme – Access to Justice – I thought it was time we also then give the women leaders an opportunity to identify and ask questions that they do need legal advice about because we know that even though there are Legal Aid Commissions set up in each of the towns, the women aren't always able to access the Legal Aid Commission."

The last two weeks has seen femLINKpacific carry out 7 district level consultations in the Western and Northern Divisions – engaging with more than 100 women who have collectively identified at least 25 questions seeking advice.

Ranging from market by-law clarifications to issues relating to land access, rural women leaders have identified gaps in their knowledge base that they hope to address to be able to create action at the community level and address their human security concerns. "So, what we will do with these 25-plus questions is obviously get them transcribed, typed up, classify the questions – because we know not everything is about legal advice – it's also almost like a citizen's advisory bureau," outlined Bhagwan Rolls. "There are some questions that... we will then pass on to the relevant government ministries."

Women's Weather Watch

PREPARE NOW - AMPLIFY WOMEN AS LEADERS, FIRST RESPONDERS

BY ALISIA EVANS

"Women leaders (can) take a leadership role in educating the women especially those (in local communities) who are most vulnerable and those who are most disadvantaged with getting (weather) information on time," highlighted Ravind Kumar, Director of the Fiji Meteorological Office during an interview with femLINKpacific in late July.

Since 2004, femLINKpacific's Women's Weather Watch has been addressing this information gap. By providing information through accessible and appropriate information and communication channels we have been supporting and enhancing rural women's leadership before, during and after natural disasters.

"Even we are really isolated from the... news, information and all that - we don't have it," commented Titaku Tabuariki, President of the Buakonikai Women's Group in Rabi. "(So, Women's) Weather Watch is important to us and my community."

"I was listening to the radio when I heard about the Cyclone Winston warning," shared Inise Dawai, Secretary of the Sikituru Women's Club in Nadi in 2016. "Thanks to femLINKpacific, I was able to get clear messages about this cyclone and through that I was able to prepare myself, get everything ready before the cyclone comes."

In early May this year, the Fiji Meteorological Office issued a tropical disturbance warning for TD22F which would later be upgraded

to a tropical cyclone – Tropical Cyclone Ella. During this time, femLINKpacific, through its Women's Weather Watch platform, was able to inform and amplify rural women leader's preparedness strategies.

"From yesterday we've been talking to other women and so we've been preparing... gathering water, especially, as in Nabaci we are (experiencing a) lack of water," shared Mereisi Mara, Assistant President of the Nasaulevu Women's Club in Savusavu. "We don't have the government (supplied) water but we are having the water that comes from the stream... but we are collecting the water that comes from the rain... in the pot and we prepare (boil) it and put it in the bottle (for storage)."

According to Kumar, being prepared is also a necessity when it comes to floods and dry spells - preparation is not just in the event of a cyclone but must be undertaken throughout the year.

"So the (earlier) the preparatory work begins, the better for all the communities," he stated. "It will certainly help all the communities in Fiji if you do that starting from now."

Preparation also means being aware of traditional warning signs that can indicate the possibility of approaching natural disasters. Mango trees are bearing fruit early this year - similar signs were noted by our women leaders across Fiji prior to Tropical Cyclone (TC) Winston.

Since 2015, Rural Women Leaders from across our network have noted the state of flux in Fiji's weather patterns.

"It has been from one extreme to another," explained Adi Vasulevu, convenor for femLINKpacific in the North. "We've had droughts and we've had a lot of periods of rain and that resulted in landslides in Vanua Levu and in Rabi and... also coastal erosion."

Kumar said this variation in rainfall is caused by shifts in the larger global weather system.

The El Nino Southern Oscillation is a natural phenomenon that occurs every 4 years and is currently in a neutral stage.

"During a neutral phase, we see that there is a high variation in

vital lifesaving information as well as report from their communities," she explained.

Bhagwan-Rolls will co-chair the Special Session on Early Warning at the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in Cancun. The session is planned for Wednesday the 24th of May.

And, Women's Weather Watch, she added, is an example of how appropriate and accessible media and ICTS can enable women's access to information including community radio.

It has a demonstrated commitment to disability and LGBT inclusion as well as addressing linkages to peacebuilding practice, in particular conflict prevention.

"It is vital that the outcomes of the meeting enhance a commitment to inclusive, just and gender equitable societies and access to global humanitarian response capacity," continued Bhagwan Rolls.

"We also need to see attention to gender inclusive and gender responsive practice in terms of not just disaster management strategies but also closer attention to the demonstrated role of community radio in all stages of Disaster Risk Reduction."

"In the Pacific, this means looking at how public emergency broadcasting should be strengthened for the Pacific and communication systems more inclusive."

This is amplified through coalitions and networks such as the Shifting the Power coalition which aims to catalyse localised gender responsive humanitarian action with a specific goal of strengthening Pacific women's leadership in emergencies, including disaster

rainfall from one month to the other," clarified Kumar. "We've seen that from April to May and June there has been below average rainfall and we're seeing that the trend is continuing in July."

While he noted that the below average rainfall patterns will most likely continue into August and September, the key message regarding water storage and conservation has been a strategy implemented by women living in communities in Fiji's drier zones such as Rakiraki, Tavua, and in Vanua Levu.

However the prolonged nature of Fiji's current dry spell has negatively impacted rural women's capacity to implement their preparedness strategies.

"(We have a) water problem in Tauveqaveqa," stated Kamlesh Lata, Vice President of the Varoka/Tavarau Naari Sabha in Ba. "During rainy season, it is little bit better they can collect the rainwater and store in the containers but they lack tanks and in dry weather the water problem is too high there because (there is) no (piped) water."

"Women's Weather Watch has enabled rural women leaders to share and receive information that is resulting in women-led preparedness and response in Fiji," concluded Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Executive Producer-Director of femLINKpacific. "However evidence from the Women's Weather Watch campaign has highlighted the reality that - despite leading in their communities before and after the events of 20th February, 2016 - women continue to be invisible – they are still under-represented in decision making despite a pre-existing commitment of 30%. It is time for government to not just commit, but highlight how they will work with women's civil society to meet the representation targets in decision making processes to ensure that women are empowered to equitably and meaningfully participate with men, their needs and interests are prioritised in strategies and responses and the human rights of women and girls are promoted and protected in all development efforts."

preparedness, response and recovery.

"This is one of the reasons femLINK has joined other partners including ActionAid Australia, the Pacific Community (SPC) and Pacific Disability Forum in the inception of the coalition in 2016, as our recent experiences particularly with TC Winston shows we need a transformative agenda during disasters that uplifts women's capability and leadership for the benefit of the whole community," said Bhagwan Rolls.

As an example of how the coalition is building on existing capabilities of women frontline responders, Adi Vasulevu, femLINK's rural convenor for Vanua Levu and Rabi, will be attending the Core Humanitarian Standards training in May 2017 in Auckland New Zealand.

"This is also a demonstration of shifting power to local actors, especially women as first-responders," said Vasulevu. "The training will also be a chance to hear and share perspectives with civil society representatives from Pacific Island Countries looking at the challenges opportunities and best strategies in localizing humanitarian responses, Core Humanitarian Standard and practice."

"For me, this will benefit our work with Women's Weather Watch and women's human security with informing our rural women leaders as first responders strengthening approaches to disaster risk reduction and relief activities, to be effectively conducted locally."

SUPPORT WOMEN AS LEADERS FOR DRR, RESILIENCE

BY SIAN ROLLS

"To achieve inclusive, gender-responsive Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), we urge States and local governments to – first - protect, promote and fulfill women's human rights, including rights to land and other assets, mobility, formal and informal education, and information, as well as sexual and reproductive health and rights," said Menka Goundan, speaking on behalf of the Women and Gender Constituency at the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction 2017.

Fundamentally, without the realisation of gender equality, state responses to and management of disasters in all their forms will not engage, support and assist at least half the population – women. "We need a transformative agenda to not just respond to the multiple range of disasters but also uplift the diversity of women's

capability and leadership for the benefit of the whole community through preparedness strategies that builds on traditional knowledge," reflected Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Executive Producer-Director of femLINKpacific, after co-chairing a special session on 'Availability of and access to multi-hazard early warning systems and disaster risk information'.

"(While) gender norms and roles can limit women and girls' access to resources, finance, decision-making, time, and power structures...women are crucial leaders and changemakers with diverse knowledge and perspectives," added Goundan. "They are not inherently vulnerable, passive recipients of disaster aid." Instead, states must shift their ways of working outside of and throughout the disaster cycle of preparedness, response and recovery, to ensure that they are creating communities where all members are informed, prepared and resilient.

"Prevailing social, cultural, economic and political systems often facilitate root causes of inequality, especially gender inequality, challenging inclusivity," continued Goundan. "The result is that systemic barriers exclude women from participation and decision-making in DRR."

"We need information and systems that not only save lives, but ensure safety and protection with dignity and that this is possible when we empower and capacitate communities as well as

institutions," outlined Bhagwan Rolls, drawing from femLINKpacific's Women's Weather Watch work in Fiji and the Pacific. "We have recognised the need for Participation, Preparedness and Protection at all stages so that women's knowledge and expertise are informing disaster risk reduction and preparedness and Women's safety, security and dignity are not compromised during disasters." Ultimately, taking a gender inclusive approach is intrinsic to both the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction as well as the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

"Successful implementation of Sendai must recognise the rights of all people, in all their diversity – including gender, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, race, ethnicity, geography, income, migrant or refugee status and disability," Goundan added. "It should contribute to sustainable development, gender equality, and address underlying risk factors through a human rights-based approach."

"Focus on women's participation, leadership and decision-making within local, regional and global platforms for DRR and beyond, by committing to addressing gender parity at all levels; by reducing and redistributing unpaid domestic and care work of women and by establishing mechanisms to provide capacity building, financial support and public services that ensure women actively engage in DRR processes."



IDAHOT 2017: COMMUNITY RADIO FOR ALL FAMILIES, EVERYWHERE

BY ALISIA EVANS

"For me, on a personal note, our family... none of them were sensitized about LGBTIQ (issues) until I came about," highlighted Tamani Rarama, a young trans-activist and member of the Rainbow Pride Foundation, during an interview for FemTALK 89FM's weekly show Rainbow Connections. "It was a hard task at first but then over time they've learnt to not just respect but enjoy (and celebrate) who I really am "I feel blessed to have grown up in a family where I knew I could go back to."

Every year on May 17th, members and allies of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ) community gather to celebrate the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT).

This year the campaign's theme is 'Families' with a focus on both the role of families in the well-being of their LGBTIQ members as well as ensuring respect of the rights of LGBTIQ families - also known as rainbow families.

Creating spaces where young women feel safe is crucial particularly when many young LGBTIQ women face discrimination and violence - often from within their own families. According to Rarama, it is in these instances where young LGBTIQ women have moved out of these families and made new families out of friends.

"For the LGBTIQ community itself, we have a strong network and this goes to show through the coalition that is now organizing IDAHOT, (which is made up of a) diversity of organisations - you

have DIVA for Equality for lesbian and bisexual women, DroMo (Drodrolagi Movement), Oceania Pride," outlined Rarama. "You have a new one (called) Panchaal - a (transgender) network in Navua... for (our) Indo-Fijian brothers and sisters. This goes to show that we are building strength by strength."

Outside of Fiji's capital, however, making a change and creating safe spaces can be extremely challenging. This is particularly so when there is a lack of resources being channelled towards supporting young women of all diversities to feel secure.

In such a context, the support provided by feminist organisations like femLINK are invaluable.

"This hierarchy structure is still a challenge especially in rural villages," reflected Lucille Chute, femLINK's Programme Assistant in Labasa and a Management Collective member for DIVA for Equality in the North.

Chute grew up along the coastal area of Nakula Estate near the village and in the district of Tawake, in the province of Cakaudrove in Vanua Levu. For her affirmation and solidarity is critical as a young feminist and LBT activist.

"We need to continue to build on the existing women's movement," she stressed. "To be more inclusive, open minded in our diversities using our strengths and staying focused on women's priorities to build a stronger women's movement."

Chute added that having a community radio network, enables intersectional and important discussions in a safe space.

A space that frequently is claimed by Bonita Qio, an outspoken trans-activist and the Coordinator of the Pacific Rainbow Advocacy Network (PRAN), an organisation based in Lautoka for women of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity and expression including transwomen and sex workers.

As a core group member of women leaders who participate at femLINK's consultations at district, divisional and national level, Qio sees this as a valuable opportunity to bring the perspectives of transwomen into the inter-generational and rural-urban dialogues with women leaders and government officials.

"Our voices are different and we tell our stories better than someone

else," outlined Qio. "That's why we have to be sitting in (decision making) spaces telling our stories."

"There are eligible individuals in my community that are fit to take up leadership roles. All they need is empowerment and spaces to utilise our skills."

Although such work by civil society is much needed, the State - as a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) - is mandated to provide resources for the empowerment of women to feel safe, included and respected.

"As a community leader I personally feel that the Ministry of Women should review their Plan of Action to accommodate marginalised women specifically those of the minority like the LGBT and sex workers so that they may be able to have a sense of ownership to assistance that's been given and to feel comfortable, and not to be isolated on their own," she stressed.

Since its early days, femLINK has been amplifying the voices of the LGBT community across Fiji particularly through its community radio network, FemTALK89FM.

In 2014, Rainbow Connections was established created and has demonstrated the organisation's commitment to ensuring diversity on air, including through productions that take place during rural network convenings.

Rainbow Connections is also reflected in the television show Radio with Pictures.

"9 hours of weekly programming is dedicated to LGBT allies who are supported to produce and present their programmes," explained Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Executive Producer-Director of femLINK. "The programmes are mainstreamed throughout the weekly broadcast log."

"Whether it's age, ability, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation and gender identity and expression our work has always been to enable women, in all their diversities, to come to a space where they tell their own stories and to then find ways, from their sharing and experiences, to make change."

CONTINUING TO ENABLE 'WOMEN SPEAKING TO WOMEN FOR PEACE'

BY FRANCES TAWAKE

"There is too much conflict and too much stress in our homes and in our world," wrote Tessa Mackenzie, Treasurer of Interfaith Search in Fiji. "We hear people say 'I long for some peace and quiet' what they mean is time to be away from it all – time to be alone. But peace is not an individual thing. Peace is about our relationships with one another and sharing is a very necessary part of relationships and relationship building." These were the words shared during a Peace Vigil to commemorate the occasion of the International Women's Day for Peace and

Disarmament organized by femLINKpacific at the Holy Trinity Anglican Cathedral in Suva. As an organisation embracing the culture of peace in our community, femLINKpacific continued to support 'women speaking to women for peace' with a continued commemoration of a Blue Ribbon Peace Vigil – a space from which femLINKpacific was born after the May 2000 crisis. The crisis highlighted how women's voices were often invisible within formal decision making structures and yet women's lives were time and again affected by violence over which they have no control. "We are still scared," shared Rev. Amy Chambers from The House of Sarah. "We are scared of our neighbours, we are scared within our own homes, we are shared because we don't really know the person that we meet - do they bring peace in our midst or are they there to create violence?" "We don't need to talk about disarmament if we have love - love for ourselves, love for our neighbour and love for the world. The word disarmament dissolve or disappear in the face of love - to love exceedingly, to love beyond measures." But that love is something we still wait for today. But there is some

hope for disarmament on the horizon. From the early days of Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), women continue to be at the forefront of peace and gender justice activism. "It was shocking, in the 1970's and 80's and 90's, to know we had nuclear testing in the South Pacific - in Tahiti and in the North Pacific, in the Marshall Islands, where the United States continued to test nuclear weapons on defenceless islanders," shared Vanessa Griffen in a written message. She recalled that women were giving birth to jellyfish babies – at the forefront to the suffering but never giving up the fight for a nuclear free Pacific. These various narratives of women peacebuilders are all critical as we continue to work to prevent conflict in all its forms - building a culture of peace within communities, countries and the world. "We got to do something," concluded Rev. Chambers. "Each of us in our own little way." "No matter big or small and that's where peace begins - when you say 'I'm an agent of peace, I can do something'."



ANALYSING IMPACT INVESTING FOR GENDER EQUALITY

BY SIAN ROLLS

"Gender lens investing is looking at investments that are trying to create social good," explained Joy Anderson, President of the Criterion Institute. "It comes out the background of a field called impact investing which is really how do you move investment capital, in such a way that it's trying to create social good." Speaking to femLINKpacific, Anderson was reflecting on a training on gender lens investing that took place in Fiji in late May. The training is part of a pilot program by Pacific Readiness for Investment in Social Enterprise (Pacific RISE), an Australian Government funded initiative designed to create an impact investment market in the Pacific. "Social impact investing has been around for some time now and think we heard a statistic the other day," added Kate Nethercott Wilson, gender specialist with Pacific RISE. "There's \$76 billion a year of private investment going to investments around the world that are trying to create social change and social good to address some of the complex challenges that, maybe, government doesn't have the funds to address in the world." "Up until now, none of that money has been channelled to the Pacific so the goal of Pacific RISE is how can we start getting people interested in the Pacific and how can we start having some of that money channelled here to do good and gender lens investing is such an amazing framework for doing that because systems and processes of finance are all about power and we want to take that into consideration when we are looking at how and where our money to go." The 15 participants, comprised of gender experts from civil society, regional organisations and government institutions in Fiji, Vanuatu and Samoa, dived head-first into financial logic, how private finance and investment work and how finance can be used as a tool to create social change as well as the importance of creating networks between gender organisations and investors. "We've been having lots of conversations over the last couple of days of how finance and investments don't always create social good, they're not always good for communities," Anderson explained. "But how do you shape them so they can - to have a

better attention to questions of gender and not just gender but how gender fits within all kinds of intersectional identities." "Whether that's class or race or disability or age – there's so many other issues that intersect with our identities – and how do we have that experience, that incredible human reality actually shape how people make financial decisions so that we move away from kind of the spreadsheets and black boxes of formulas that figure out where money goes and make it more responsive to the realities of human communities and particularly making sure that we're paying attention to the experience of women and girls." "Pacific RISE (is) working from both ends so we're working with financial intermediaries and investors to build their understanding of why gender matters, why power matters, you know – economic activity is all about people," said Nethercott Wilson. "You can't have economic activity without people so understanding how that works, the different power dimensions that play out, we're working with our intermediaries to provide them with that knowledge and awareness." "Our great hope is that training them in gender lens investing will actually be able to shift and change their processes so that even when they're not working with Pacific RISE, when they're working in social impact investing whether it be in the Pacific or elsewhere, they're now much more attuned to why gender matters and when we're working with the women's organisations to train them in finance so that we can bring them together and have everyone speaking the same language and that's why it's so exciting to be at the forefront of pioneering a social impact investment market in the Pacific is we can set it all up with great systems and processes right from the start, where gender is baked in to everything we do and that is really exciting." The three days have also been an opportunity for the gender experts to unpack and strategise to overcome challenges to addressing gender based violence through financial environment and policy interventions using the Criterion Institute's TOOLKIT approach. "A lot of the conversations is really about power," continued Anderson. "(We've been) talking to a set of some really powerful women who have lots of influence in their communities and they know how to get things done to be able to shape government policy, they know how to get things done to be able to shape the media or whatever their sort of strategy is." "What we're hearing over and over again over the last couple of days is, 'oh good, now we've got another tool and this finance thing, I think I can change it'. So, it's that moment of realising there's another... there's another bunch of language in the world that you thought was out of your reach, that you thought 'well, that just works the way somebody, you know, some banker in Sydney is going to

define all of this or some of this New York lawyer is going to make it all happen' and the idea that you can actually shape that and use the skills of advocacy and the power that you have from your communities to be able to advocate for grassroots communities in how finance is used." While the 15 participants came with various backgrounds, both professional and cultural, it's no secret that the attendance wasn't fully representative of Pacific populations. "We are a pilot so we're learning so any feedback is welcome," said Anderson. "One of the things I love about working in Pacific RISE is we've adapted, we're learned and we keep learning how many things we're wrong about and fixing them and especially with something as innovative as looking at impact investing." "There's a really, really important focus placed on a rights... a rights based approach to say how do we actually make sure that everybody's rights from wherever they sit and whatever their experience is are protected. It's about being smart, challenging your assumptions, looking out into the world and seeing it as clearly as possible and that's where everybody's experience matters and the more particular it can be, so that you're not working at mass generalisations. I don't want to sound like some Polly Anna – 'oh, all we have to do is train 15 women and we're going to change the entire approach to finance in the Pacific'. We (should) be realistic and say it's not going to turn things overnight but anytime there's that little glimmer that something else is possible, the women that are in this group will grab that glimmer and tackle it and make sure it becomes a reality." "Our goal for Pacific RISE in general is to be able to attract at least \$5 million of new private investment in to the Pacific," explained Nethercott Wilson. "That's our sort of shorter term goal and longer term, you know, sky's the limit." "Coming out of this workshop, we are going to be developing a strategy for what's the best way for us to engage with women's organisations and gender specialists in the Pacific to make sure that they can have a seat at the table, that they have the knowledge and the confidence to shape finance and also then continue to work with our intermediaries and our investors to build their understanding of why you would want to invest in the Pacific, why would you want to invest in the Pacific with a gender lens. We're targeting people who are already interested in women's issues and gender issues and want to invest in social change that can benefit women and girls and so we're working from a number of different angles to bring everybody together as well pioneer this approach in the Pacific." The Pacific RISE Gender Lens Investing training took place from the 31st of May to the 2nd of June at the Novotel, Lami.

READ TO LEAD EXTENDS PARTNERSHIPS TO MEDIA

BY SIAN ROLLS

"This is commendable because it takes commitment from media for us to be able to deliver what we report we wanted to deliver," enthused Galaza Akbar, Chair of Vision Fiji. She was expressing joy at the launch of the third phase of Vision Fiji's Read to Lead programme which includes collaborative

dissemination of stories via media platforms – namely femLINKpacific's FemTALK89FM stations in Suva and Labasa as well as Fiji Television and the Broadcast to Schools platform. "This phase of Read to Lead, we are really trying to engage with the media to raise literacy because our literacy standards are always reflected in the media - in written or in broadcast," Akbar explained. "So, this is one of the ways we thought if we engage the media, everybody gets together to support literacy and to support Read to Lead." She added that the objective of Read to Lead, to ensure that every school has materials that support literacy programmes, lined up well with the Ministry of Education's literacy guide. "So, this was an opportune time to connect the two – the literacy guide (with) Read to Lead Fiji - and the media so that we can all work together as a community," continued Akbar. "We're hoping that other media organisations will come on board

because the level of literacy is of course reflected in the work that they do and the type of people that would work in their industry in future." Read to Lead Fiji has so far distributed 133 sets of 250 books to schools around the country and aims to continue to distribute the packs to schools in Ba and Tavua before moving on to other districts. According to Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Executive Producer-Director of femLINKpacific, the collaboration with Vision Fiji is an important opportunity to generate content targeting children and the organisation. "We are keen to continue to generate content that is more child-centred and hope other civil society partners working with children can also generate broadcast content that we can broadcast on FemTALK 89FM Suva and Labasa stations," Bhagwan Rolls said.



NATIONAL BUDGET MUST SUPPORT HUMAN SECURITY APPROACH

PRESS RELEASE: 29TH JUNE (17/2017)

Ahead of the announcement of the National Budget 2017-2018, femLINKpacific continues to stress the need to resource gender equality to ensure that women are informed, engaged and can contribute to peace building strategies that address the root causes of violence at local and national levels. "Implementing gender equality has to be more than cosmetic," said Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Executive Producer-Director of femLINKpacific, earlier this year. "This includes resourcing to capacitate women's interest officers to be the agents of action for gender equality at the local level." femLINKpacific's recommendations for the National Budget,

due to be released today, have called for the resourcing of the National Women's Plan of Action as well as better resourcing of the implementation of the national gender policy across all government departments including Agriculture, Health, Infrastructure and Rural Development as well as the National Disaster Management Office. "Despite the role that women are contributing in responding to extreme weather conditions (floods and droughts) as well as first-responders during TC Winston (February 2016) supporting the response evacuations, protection issues for their communities and their children and then in leading the recovery programmes, we still have women underrepresented in all levels of decision-making," continued Bhagwan Rolls. "By the first anniversary of TC Winston (February 2017), we still did not see a shift in the representation of women as government has not met its minimum target of 30% commitment to appoint women to decision-making positions especially at district and divisional level. Fiji's national development plan and national budgets which define and resource government's strategic direction must be aligned to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) as well as the National Gender Policy (2014) and in line of the adopted conclusions of the recently 61st session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61)."

Recommendations made in May included:

- access to basic services including health care;
- income generation programmes, access to education and job creation;
- access to natural resource management including land for women-led food security agricultural programmes;
- and a priority on infrastructure development – including land and sea transport, electricity and communications, as well as information systems – inextricably linked to social infrastructure.

Collated from community media outreach with a solutions based journalism approach since 2015, the recommendations therefore reflect femLINKpacific's commitment to amplify the voice and support the leadership of the very women who are leading in their communities not just during times of natural disaster but in the every day. "Ultimately, this is about a better human security approach – one that is gender inclusive and will ensure women feel secure in their homes and communities," concluded Bhagwan Rolls. "This is an opportunity to transform structures so that you are not just inviting women to the decision-making table but making the table bigger and more inclusive of women of all diversities."



THE FIJI YOUNG WOMEN'S FORUM (FYWF)

FYWF builds on the intergenerational The Fiji Women's Forum, which was first convened in 2012, as well as the rich tradition of activism and feminism by Fijian women throughout our national history. The mission of FYWF is to increase and progress young women's political leadership in an effective, meaningful and inclusive participation in Fiji's communities, legislative bodies and national process. FYWF is built on the guiding principles of mutual respect, active participation, transparency and good governance, accountability, gender sensitivity, respect and appreciation for human rights and diversity.

FYWF has successfully convened three national forums with a combined total of over 100 young diverse women. These young women actively participated in the lead up to Fiji's 2014 national elections in their local communities. These included nationwide distribution and awareness of the My Guide to Voting (young women's voter guide) and the forum declaration to political parties and other stakeholders. Following the first national forum (November 2013), FYWF noted the importance of State obligation and accountability to translate gender equality, transparency and human rights into legislation, policy and budget allocations. This process is critical for young women to be able to not only understand their needs reflected in the policies but at the same time the State is fulfilling its responsibilities.

GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING WILL SUPPORT MORE YOUNG WOMEN TO ENGAGE IN NATIONAL BUDGET CYCLE

VIA FIJI YOUNG WOMEN'S FORUM: PRESS RELEASE – 13TH JUNE (2017)

A three day workshop focusing on enhancing the participation of diverse young women to engage in national development planning and budgetary processes took place from the 14th to the 16th of June.

The 'Gender Responsive Budget Capacity Enhancing Workshop' was convened by the Fiji Young Women's Forum, funded by the United Kingdom's Magna Carta Fund (MCF) for Human Rights and Democracy.

Through the MCF, the British High Commission is pleased to support the work of the Fiji Young Women's Forum in promoting gender equality.

British High Commissioner to Fiji Her Excellency Melanie Hopkins ahead of the workshop said:

"Ensuring greater female political participation is a priority for the British Government. It is also an essential building block for the long-term strengthening of democracy. Ms Hopkins also said she has been inspired by the work of the co-conveners of the Fiji Young Women's Forum in areas such as mentoring, advocacy and policy-skills development and was delighted that the British Government was supporting this workshop."

The 'Gender Responsive Budget Capacity Enhancing Workshop' brought together diverse young women from the Central, Western and Northern divisions and is an opportunity to apply national commitments to gender equality and human rights with tools that will ensure more young women are making recommendations for the national budget process.

"This is going to be something new for us as DIVA for Equality and for that we thank the Fiji Young Women's Forum for convening this workshop," said Audrey Seru of Diverse Voices and Action for Equality (DIVA for Equality). "We work from an interlinked approach which talks about gender and feminist economic justice so attending this workshop will be a bonus in terms of understanding how budgets are allocated and what policies align to the distribution of funds. For us, understanding about how decisions can be influenced and are made on what makes it into the national budget would be a learning milestone."

"Our organisation is committed to continue to equip more young women with skills and understanding they need to be seen and heard in media spaces," explained Frances Tawake of femLINKpacific. "This workshop is enabling young women who have been engaging in our Women's Human Security First convenings in rural centres to share their experiences with their peers. The intergenerational learning, skills building and dedicated time to

compare their priorities to the National Budget allocations means more young women through our networks will be equipped to engage in the budget cycle process."

"Representatives from our network and affiliates included the Emerging Leaders Forum Alumni members, ASPIRE Youth Network and general FWRM young women's network," added Kele Gavid of the Emerging Leaders Forum Alumni (ELFA). "We are excited to have these young women be part of this learning and exposure to build their knowledge base and to make the linkages between their lived realities and Gender Responsive Budgeting. Gender Responsive Budgeting entails so many issues and it's not with regards to the national level only, so young women need to know more about the process, the systems and its significance to them as members of a network and as citizens of a nation. Democratization, as we understand it, is a process that will impact everyone and as young women representatives who represent a significant part of the population and who have specific vulnerabilities, we need to work towards building knowledge, experience, exposure and capacity. Young women deserve to be present and heard at every available space!"

The workshop will also culminate in community media productions – including 3 episodes of Radio With Pictures in the Field – to further amplify their recommendations across a range of media platforms. The FYWF is co-convened by young women for young women, with DIVA for Equality Fiji, ELFA, and femLINKpacific's Young Women's Leadership Team.

The Magna Carta Funding for Human Rights and Democracy (MCF) is the Foreign & Commonwealth Office's dedicated strategic fund supporting our global human rights and democracy work.

WE DON'T NEED A BUDGET FOR WOMEN, WE NEED A BUDGET WITH WOMEN

BY ALISIA EVANS

"The gender budget is not a separate budget for women - it's about showing how women are affected in the government budget," explained Maraia Tabunakawai, Team Leader - Intergenerational Women's in Leadership of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement. Tabunakawai was one of three speakers at an intergenerational open dialogue during a 3 day 'Gender Responsive Budget Capacity Enhancing Workshop' brought workshop convened by the Fiji Young Women's Forum.

"You also have responsibilities as a voter, (it's) not just the government (who is responsible) in running the country and making sure that the budget is reasonable and it reflects what you want to be reflected," added Adi Finau Tabakucoro, Secretary General for the Soqosoqo Vakamarama.

While sharing her own experiences as a pioneer within the women's movement in Fiji, Tabakucoro shared pragmatic advice for the young women attending the workshop.

"For you to influence that budget and what goes into it, you have to have evidence," she underscored. "For anybody to have reasonable input into the budget, you must have statistics (and) you must have data."

Tabakucoro was assistant secretary for the Ministry of Urban Development, Housing and Social Welfare from 1971 to 1975 as well as assistant minister in the Prime Minister's Office in 2000. To the workshop, she brought this wealth of experience and knowledge of government's budgetary process to share with the young women in the room.

According to Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Executive Producer-Director of femLINKpacific, data can also be quantitative and qualitative in form. This is where civil society can work together to ensure that the issues being raised within their networks are addressed in the budget.

"Bringing issues from the communities to the national platform... requires information sharing," she explained. "The community radio airwaves are a space to have conversation about what budget priorities as well as budget analysis. One of our strategies as femLINK has been about 'vox pops'... to bring viewpoints in to public (media) spaces and bring it from an informed perspective." The 'Gender Responsive Budget Capacity Enhancing Workshop' was an opportunity for young women to learn and apply national commitments to gender equality and human rights with tools that will enable them to make recommendations into the national budget process.



NATIONAL BUDGETS MUST LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND - ESPECIALLY YOUNG WOMEN

BY SULUETI WAQA AND SIAN ROLLS

"With regards to economic security, one thing I've noticed that most of the members in my community are involve in very low income earning employment," shared Bonita Qio of Pacific Rainbows Advocacy Network. "I feel that measures need to be made in order to lift the level of their economic security. What I want in the National Budget is (an) increase the minimum wages to \$4 an hour because I find 50% working women are earning approximately \$80 to \$90 per week."

Qio was underscoring a shared challenge of many young women across the country – a lack of opportunity to upskill, earn and feel a sense of security.

It was this vision – a vision of human security – that she shared with 26 other diverse young women from across the country at the recent 'Gender Responsive Budget (GRB) Capacity Enhancing

Workshop'.

Organised by the Fiji Young Women's Forum (FYWF), the three day training offered not just a platform to learn but a platform to share and communicate their priorities for the national budget due to be announced later this month.

"I want the national budget to include more funds for mental health and suicide prevention because of the alarming rate of attempted and completed suicide cases in Fiji," shared Regina Rakacikaci from Youth Champs 4 Mental Health. "This is due to the negative coping strategy people have and the lack of dissemination of information at any level of the community."

However, mental health wasn't the only concern – although health security was a shared concern.

"There needs to be an increase in the Ministry of Health budget to cater for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans) specific needs and services because they are being discriminated and this include from public services to access to basic Sexual Reproductive Health Rights services," shared Tamani Rarama of Rainbow Pride Foundation.

"Because SRHR (sexual reproductive health and rights) is central to gender equality and women's empowerment and ultimately sustainable development," concurred Audrey Seru of Diverse Voices and Action (DIVA) for Equality.

While diverse young women are able to envision a better resources and more inclusive health service, they also expressed that the economic insecurities that Qio underscored exacerbate their

realisation of wellbeing.

"Tertiary level education costs a bit high and most of the subjects learnt is not (offered) in Labasa and we need to go to Suva to study which is very hard because of its cost living," outlined Nunia Vunivalu of DIVA for Equality – Labasa hub.

These costs have caused many young women to drop out of school and look for jobs to make ends meet. However, this only continues the cycle of poverty.

Only able to attain low paying jobs due to their lack of qualifications that their families could not afford. This puts them in the path of further risk – they may be unable to afford family planning services, leave violent relationships or even participate in capacity building workshops out of fear of losing the jobs that they are able to get. The situation is far from being addressed and young women know that it will not be easy to find a long term solution but they do not just want to be a statistic – they want to be consulted, included and allowed to participate in the decision making processes that determine how public money and made and spent.

"The government has ratified CEDAW, they have adopted the National Gender Policy... they have made a commitment to women and what we are doing now is following up on that," stressed Qio. "We are taking the lead as young women, convening our spaces and projecting our voices. If you want to win the election then you need to consider everyone and leave no one behind."

GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING - ADDING VALUE AND AMPLIFYING VOICE OF DIVERSE YOUNG WOMEN

VIA FIJI YOUNG WOMEN'S FORUM: PRESS RELEASE - 20TH JUNE (2017)

As a close came to the Fiji Young Women's Forum's (FYWF) 3 day 'Gender Responsive Budget (GRB) Capacity Enhancing Workshop', several productions were conducted, coordinated by co-convenor femLINKpacific - documenting the priority concerns of the group of diverse young women.

"This was a safe and enjoyable space," shared Gorgia Lilo of the Emerging Leaders Forum Alumni (ELFA). "More of this needs to be done to educate people."

"As a gender leader in the eastern division and maritime islands, what I've learnt from this workshop I'll take back to my grassroot level communities and give this information to them," added Helynah Netani of Rainbow Pride Fiji. "I'll explain that we are also included in this national budget process and making your point in the issues - that you are important."

"We are taking the lead as young women, convening our spaces and projecting our voice at national and regional levels - we know that we are all accountable," continued Bonita Qio of Pacific Rainbows Advocacy Network (PRAN). "That's why I feel these kinds of spaces are very important."

Fundamentally, the three days were an opportunity for young women to learn and apply national commitments to gender equality and human rights with tools that will enable them to make

recommendations into the national budget process.

"It was a productive three days, learning new things and engaging with like-minded and diverse young women," shared Chandra Fisi'iahi of ELFA. "We could not learn everything about GRB but we touched on the basic and important things. It was all about understanding, analysing and getting facts together."

"One thing we learned was that gender budgeting is not just about the content of budgets - it is also about the processes involved in budget-making," added Kelerayani Gavidu of ELFA. "This is the work of mainstreaming gender budgeting. It requires an ongoing commitment to understanding gender, which includes analysis and consultation, and ongoing budget readjustments to take account of the changing needs of women and men, boys and girls."

The co-convenors of FYWF also felt that it reaffirmed their purpose and added value to their work as an individual organisation.

"To be part of this gender-responsive budgeting workshop reaffirmed the principle of DIVA that while knowledge is sometimes regarded as power the dissemination of knowledge is also important," explained Audrey Seru of Diverse Voices and Action (DIVA) for Equality. "We can already identify where DIVA will use the knowledge from this workshop into our own grassroot social organising."

"The production of Radio With Pictures in the Field was also a great practical exercise, especially for the young women who were new to the community media process, to bring in both their own experience as well as work with policies and data to strengthen their lobbying skills," said Alisia Evans of femLINKpacific.

The FYWF's 'Gender Responsive Budget Capacity Enhancing Workshop' was funded by the United Kingdom's Magna Carta Fund (MCF) for Human Rights and Democracy. The Magna Carta Funding for Human Rights and Democracy (MCF) is the Foreign & Commonwealth Office's dedicated strategic fund supporting global human rights and democracy work.

DIVERSE NEEDS, ONE BUDGET

BY HANNAH HICKS

"There is 1 (suicide) attempt every 36 hours in Fiji, and basically (what we need) is (to be) talking to (people) about having positive coping mechanisms," explained Regina Rakacikaci of Youth Champs 4 Mental Health.

To end the 3 day 'Gender Responsive Budget Capacity Enhancing Workshop' convened by the Fiji Young Women's Forum last week, a special Radio With Pictures in the Field production took place.

The programmes focused on recommendations by diverse young women in relation to the National Budget that would be coming out later this month.

They aimed to highlight issues as well as a solution-based approach in regards to an efficient allocation of funds to the various sectors of the government with a more integrated gender approach.

From Lautoka to Labasa to Levuka, a common issue was the access to quality health services - whether it be the maternity health services, comprehensive sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR) or the training of health personnel to provide services inclusive of all diversities.

"I would like to recommend for more health facilities and more fully equipped health centres in all rural areas not just for us in Lagi

village," said Jojiana Waqanitoga of the Lagi Women's Group.

Her community, Lagi village, is located 140km away from Labasa town.

Waganitoqa shared that just three months ago, there were two cases at the health centre where the mother came out healthy but the babies were sick.

The health centres were unable to address the medical issue, leaving families to bear the cost of hiring transport to get the unwell newborns to the Labasa hospital - almost three hours away. These kind of stories are nothing new in her community and not at all isolated to Lagi.

"There've been few cases where children and others had infections and died and ministry launched several investigations but little has come out," added Gorgia Lilo of the Emerging Leaders Forum Alumni (ELFA). "The health care system needs to be upgraded for the betterment of all women. There are not a lot of people who can afford good health care including maternal health care".

As Rakacikaci alluded to, she would like to see a budget for medical services specifically aimed at mental health and suicide prevention. While she feels deeply about resourcing mental health, Rakacikaci was pragmatic about the constraints on resources.

"We can piggyback ride with the (Ministry of Health) staff who go out into the communities," she explained. "What we have been seeing in the past few years is that (people) are more comfortable with youths and not professionals".

Indeed, it is not just about financing but also being able to provide

quality service to the people - whether that means regular training of health personnel, frequent assessment of systems and policies in place or even proper resourcing within the health service.

"I'm not a mother but I have friends and sisters and family members who have gone through experiences being brought to Suva for safe deliveries," shared Lilo.

And these are just the hurdles for birthing mothers. The issues become even more complex when considering women of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity who struggle to access sensitised health personnel.

"Coming from an LGBT view, we don't have access to medical services," said Vika Kalokalo of Diverse Voices and Action (DIVA) for Equality. "We face discrimination and stereotypes and stigma and the mind set of service providers. When we go for general check-up, the way they see us is totally different because they are mainly focusing on men and women not gender specific so that's one of the barriers for an LGBTI community member to go and have a medical check-up."

Kalokalo stressed the need to have more education for these health service providers.

These are just a few of the many issues and recommendations that were put forward by just 27 diverse young women but only scratch the surface of just how much there needs to be done to address the gender sensitivity of national planning, development and budgetary allocations.

LABASA'S WOMEN-LED AND ONLY RADIO STATION EXTENDS BROADCASTS

BY SIAN ROLLS

"They listen what we are saying and what changes which we have shared...it's really appreciated," remarked Dimakita Lena, President of the Naleba Multiracial Women's Club.

She was reflecting on the recently extended broadcast hours of FemTALK 89FM in Labasa – the only radio station based on Vanua Levu.

As of this week, the station is doubling its time on air extending transmission from its Labasa Community Media Centre in the town centre for listeners within the 10 kilometre radius which is the current reach with the 100 watt transmitter of the "suitcase radio" station.

FemTALK 89FM Labasa is now on air from 9am to 5pm throughout the week:

"This is what is possible when you invest in women-led media

initiatives," said Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Executive Producer-Director of femLINKpacific. "We appreciate the support from DFAT via the We Rise Coalition and in our Women's Weather Watch programme. It is enabling us to have the broadcast infrastructure including the community media centre, broadcast personnel and production of radio programmes during our monthly district convenings so that women leaders can claim the space of the radio airwaves to discuss their issues especially when they are not represented in decision making processes. Government officials can easily tune into the station to hear what women have to say from communities across Vanua Levu as well as from the western and central division."

The expanded hours, according to Bhagwan Rolls, is also linked to communicating gender inclusive disaster preparedness strategies in the upcoming months – vital information for rural women leaders. Even for Lena, who lives in Naleba and 20 kilometers from Labasa and outside of the reach of FemTALK 89FM - she still feels deeply connected to the women-led community radio network.

"The (Women's) Weather Watch has been a big change - like before, (weather bulletins were) not accurate to us now it's accurate when femLINK is connecting with us," she shared. "So, it's really a big step. The time has been extended... and we really appreciate (that this has) been done. Mostly those that don't listen from morning, they can catch up from the afternoon."

For other rural women leaders of Labasa, the community media spaces continues to offer a platform to reaffirm their leadership

and amplify the human security concerns from their communities – whether it be Naleba, Lagi which is 140 kilometers away from Labasa town or even across any of the districts in Viti Levu. "I would like to hear my voice in the radio because I want more women like me to become a leader or can be a national leader or in the district area," explained Amra Wati, Committee member of the Labasa Market Vendors Association. "I want to learn more ideas from other women... of other people in our organisation, in our environment so that I can help them."

The femLINKpacific team are also excited to not just run the island's only radio station, but continue to build the station from the ground up and continue to provide a platform for rural women leaders.

"Now, we get to broadcast more of the women's stories," reflected Lucille Chute, Programme Assistant of femLINKpacific. "It's really good because now I know the changes that are coming with the years that I've been with femLINKpacific. The people around here like to tune in, especially the women in the market, and hear their stories as well as other women from around Fiji."

"It's about... bringing in voices of women into the airwaves," said Sulueti Waqa, Programme Associate of femLINKpacific. "It's trying to create the space where voices of women who are often not picked up by mainstream media, whom their issues are not heard and whom are often ignored are able to be visible and the issues are also known – not only too at the local level, at a national level."

"HERE ARE THE WOMEN"



Shanti Sharma
<http://bit.ly/2vaFi5T>



Alesi Siga
<http://bit.ly/2udlAVA>



Eta Tuvuki
<http://bit.ly/2vDHYfn>



Vikatoria Tuivanualevu
<http://bit.ly/2vtvfLJ>



Ana Ramatai
<http://bit.ly/2v8PjIt>



Urmila Prasad
<http://bit.ly/2wwuQoq>



Angela Suruj Prasad
<http://bit.ly/2wiMzkh>



Jojiana Waqanitoga
<http://bit.ly/2va8IX7>



Rohini Nadan
<http://bit.ly/2wwbTck>



A publication of femLINKpacific, the operators of FemTALK89FM Fiji and the Pacific's first mobile women's suitcase radio station.

Edition 3, 2017

The Community Radio Times is a quarterly publication of femLINKpacific.

Contributors:

Fane Boseiwaqa (Ba, Tavua and Rakirak), Losana Derenalagi and Sokoveti Lutumailagi (Nadi and Lautoka), Adi Vasulevu and Lucille Chute (Labasa), Hannah Hicks (Programme Associate: Broadcast), Sulueti Waqa (Programme Associate: Multimedia)

Publication and Editorial Team - femLINKpacific:

Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Executive Producer-Director

Sian Rolls, Programme Associate: Media Advocacy

Alisia Evans, Programme Associate: Policy Research

Frances Tawake, Programme Associate: Network Coordination

Design and Layout:

Albert Rolls



The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of femLINKpacific and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of these development partners.

Publisher: Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Executive Producer-Director, femLINKpacific

This publication has been produced with the assistance of:

