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FemTALK: Diversity in Media Fosters Peace, Justice and Inclusiveness (/index.php/en/actions/archive/546-femtalk-diversity-in-media-fosters-peace-justice-and-inclusiveness)

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“There is a need to ensure that there is a diverse, pluralistic and liberal media landscape in Fiji and across the Pacific which is inclusive of community media forms such as community radio that provides and promotes a diversity of voices,” stated Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Executive Producer-Director of femLINKpacific and a Global Ambassador for The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP). “This is a prerequisite for providing the enabling environment for participatory and inclusive democratisation.”

Bhagwan Rolls’ comments are made in commemoration of World Press Freedom Day (the 3rd of May, 2017), this year marking the theme ‘Critical Minds for Critical Times: Media’s role in advancing peaceful, just and inclusive societies’.

According to Bhagwan Rolls, the press still remains vital to enhancing democracy, despite the surge in the popularity of citizen’s journalism and social media.

“As an industry, it has a role both to have the press report events as they unfold and provide analysis from a range of perspectives,” she explained. “Coming back to the global theme, SDG 16 on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions has an indicator on access to information: 16.10 - Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements.”

“This shows just how vital communication and information is to sustainable development and ensuring peaceful societies. In my role as chair of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), it’s one of the reasons why we’re committed as a network of peacebuilders across the world – to work with the media to shift from reaction and violence to enhancing prevention and voice.”

This voice is also about ensuring that the diversity of a country is reflected in its media.

“People are not passive consumers and there is a vital need for media content to reflect the diversity of society - age, location, gender and political perspectives,” she added. “However what we are seeing and the evidence is clear through the Global Media Monitoring Project since 1994 is that the perspectives of 50% of the population remain side-lined and the diversity of that 50% includes young women, rural women and women living with disabilities as well as the LGBT community.”

“The media today is therefore about engaging with and through multiple sources of information because we now have multiple platforms. There has definitely been the growth of citizen’s journalism however it is different from community media and our solutions-based journalism approach as well as the wider media landscape.”

Since 2000, femLINKpacific’s use of a community media approach is in response to the need for content to for citizens to engage beyond the parameters of a daily newspaper or a mainstream news bulletin.

“From a People’s Communication For Development perspective, using a solutions journalism approach, femLINK uses a number of platforms to engage with those very citizens,” Bhagwan Rolls stressed. “The majority of whom are women but they are not just providing their personal opinion.”

“They bring a perspective from their communities. For every woman that brings an issue, she brings her family, extended household, community and beyond on access to maternity care, access to district hospital, having to travel by horseback to the market with produce because there are no roads where they live, what the minimum wage should look like and why as well as the challenges of farming communities after TC Winston and through floods and droughts.”

femLINKpacific is a member of the World Association of Christian Communication (WACC), The World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC), a partner to the UN Women Media Compact and the Global Alliance on Media and Gender (GAMAG).

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