

Search...



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



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



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



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

FemTALK: Women's Peace Tables (/index.php/en/actions/archive/588-femtalk-women-s-peace-tables)

Written by **Media Advocacy**

Published: **14 September 2017** Hits: 1020



press release - 14th September, 2017

“Women are the source and foundation of peace,” says Seruwaia Todua, a member of the Cagiveisau Women’s Group in rural Macuata.

Ahead of the International Day of Peace on the 21st of September, 165 members from femLINKpacific’s Rural Women Leaders network representing more than 11,871 women and youth of all diversities, have been meeting in Bua, Savusavu, Labasa, Lagi, Rakiraki, Tavua, Ba, Lautoka, Nadi and Nausori to discuss peace and human security priorities of their networks, community groups and clubs:

“Peace for them... (is) about protection of natural resources, access to clean drinking water, as well as... working together and communicating better,” said Adi Vasulevu, convenor in the Northern Division for femLINKpacific. “Women are the first responders and they are the ones that know at the end of the day whether we have peace in this country.”

The messages will be shared at femLINKpacific’s inaugural Women’s Peace Table event on the 21st of September in Suva in collaboration with the Peacewomen Across the Globe (PWAG).

What the Women Say:

“Peace is inclusiveness of diverse women at all levels.” Sapeci Vereivalu, member of the Koronubu Methodist Youth Group in Ba.

“Peace is safety and security that includes accessible services.” Bonita Qio, Executive Coordinator of Pacific Rainbows Advocacy Network in Lautoka.

“Peace is acceptance.” Joviliti Veikoso, LGBT representative in Nadi.

“Peace is to live in a clean environment.” Kamlesh Lata, Vice President of the Varoka Tavarau Nari Sabha in Ba.

“Peace is putting good quality food on the table for myself and my entire family.” Satya Kumar, Secretary of the Sanatan Nari Sabha in Nadi.

“Peace is important for my community because we have the right to access clean drinking water.” Urmila Kumar, President of Shakti Women’s Club in Tavua.

“Peace within ourselves will lead to peace in the home then to the community.” Shanti Sharma, National President of Shiri Sanatan Dharam Pratinidhi Nari Sabha Fiji in Lautoka.

But to engage they need to be meaningfully engaged in decision making spaces and processes – there needs to be genuine space made for them - a gap that remains as a barrier for these leaders.

“Women continue to push for increasing the number of participation in all levels of decision-making in the community, local and also at the national level,” outlined Fane Boseiwaqa, convenor for Ba, Tavua and Rakiraki for femLINKpacific.

“Women continue to highlight that they need to be heard in terms of making plans for being part of the committee meetings or sitting in in any meetings that their voices need to be heard. Most of these women have been in leadership roles but their roles have not been recognised. We need to recognise them and include them and empower them when we talk about peace and security I think that comes in when we include women at all levels of decision-making.”

Talking about peace is not just happening in communities, but continues to be amplified through Fiji and the Pacific’s first women-led community media network, including FemTALK89FM’s stations Suva and Labasa. The two contribute approximately 800 broadcast hours a month of content about gender equality, peace and human security.

“The community media is more and more being appreciated by rural women because we use the space and opportunities for women to raise their concerns and come together to speak about many of the issues that they are facing,” said Vasulevu. “It is a non-violent approach and accessible to rural communities.”

“It is also providing the kind of information that will help them participate and know it is important to have their voice heard for development and to fill the gaps in their own communities,” added Losana Derenalagi, convenor for Nadi and Lautoka for femLINKpacific. “This includes issues like the under-resourcing of the police in their communities and the health services.”

“Media has been an important platform for them coming together every month, to continue to share their stories, having their stories being documented and having the opportunity to speak on our radio station,” continued Boseiwaqa. “For them that is conflict prevention - coming out of the issues that they get with them every month, to share their stories and also at the same time making recommendations to the issues being addressed.”

According to Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, the Executive Producer-Director of femLINKpacific is an example of how femLINKpacific is working with women leaders to localise UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which was first adopted on the 31st of October, 2000:

“We continue to localise UNSCR 1325 through the district convenings which support the production of radio programmes that amplify messages of gender equality, peace and human security,” said Bhagwan Rolls. “A key message since 2014,

has been the call for a Women's Human Security First agenda, one that ensures development and governance processes are inclusive of human rights and peacebuilding and supports the participation and leadership of women of all diversities including rural women, women with disabilities, LGBT, young and older women.”

For more information, listen to the podcasts: <https://soundcloud.com/femlinkpacific/sets/femtalk89fm-sep17-womens-human> (<https://soundcloud.com/femlinkpacific/sets/femtalk89fm-sep17-womens-human>)

Similar Peace Tables were organised by the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) Pacific network members in Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu linked to the efforts to progress Gender Inclusive Conflict Prevention and Human Security as advocated by GPPAC Pacific – Pacific network which is supported by the Pacific Islands Forum-Non-State Actors programme with funding assistance from the European Union:

FemTALK Pacific: Localising UNSCR 1325 in Vanuatu

by Carolyn Kitione

Localising UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security means having to find ways to form strategies to achieve gender equality in the community.

One way to do that is through a traditional peace building process with the support of local chiefs.

To mark International Day of Peace this year, the Vanuatu Young Women for Change in partnership with The Vanuatu Human Rights Coalition, hosted a ‘nakamal’ or talanoa session between 17 chiefs - 1 from each of the 17 islands in Vanuatu.

Sabrina Rasu, Secretary of Vanuatu Young Women For Change, said that it was important to invite the chiefs because they were leaders in their community:

“We see that they are the ones that have the responsibility and...they are the boss,” she explained. “If you want to go through this place, you want to go through this island or through this community to do whatever you want to do awareness or like you go there for public speaking or anything, you have to go through them first.”

Inviting these chiefs to the ‘nakamal’ session allowed for a wider discussion on the cultural challenges that make it difficult to achieve gender equality in the community.

“I grew up in a chiefly family, my grandfather is the chief and when it comes to talanoa session like nakamal, my grandma has the right to sit beside my grandpa when he’s talking about community problems, village problems or issues, so she has the right to drink grog with him too,” continued Rasu. “So, it gives us the picture...we have different cultures and sometimes when we take it back to the nakamals, sometimes some woman and some girls they have got the right to talk.”

However, Rasu also recognised that despite chiefs having the responsibility to look after the welfare of everyone in the village, sometimes only the men’s issues were brought to light.

“One of the chiefs that stood up and talk(ed) about his culture and said (on) his island, young woman and young girls they are not allowed to be in the nakamal... like, in a talanoa session and listen or drink kava, like drink grog,” she explained.

One positive outcome of the nakamal session, though, was acknowledging the need to include young women in politics.

“The (chiefs) said their aim is to put a young woman or young girl in the 2020 election back at home,” Rasu beamed. “So, they said now it’s time to make a change and they said it’s time for young people to take the lead in politics.”

(Ends)

FemTALK Pacific: Breaking the Culture of Silence

by Carolyn Kitione

When it comes to women's peace and security, women's issues are often stories that are in a 'no-go zone' - where things that happened are 'taboo'.

These were the sentiments shared by Vois Blong Mere Solomon Islands Director, Josephine Teakeni, during the launch of the documentary, 'Breaking the Culture of Silence: Strong, Brave, Solomon Islands Women Telling Their Stories' in September.

The video documentary tells the stories of women in the Solomon Islands who have faced gender-based violence, thus shattering the 'culture of silence' often prevalent in the country.

In a gender assessment of the country, the Asian Development Bank estimates that 64% of women in intimate relationships have experienced physical/sexual abuse. 37% have reported being sexually abused before the age of 15, most often by a male acquaintance or a male family member.

The same report also revealed that there was an alarmingly high level of stigma against those who try to break away from a violent relationship - thus, making it even more difficult to break that culture of violence.

By producing this documentary and telling these women's stories, the hope is that it can provide information to women in violent relationships and help them make better decisions. But while these were stories that needed to be told, extra care had to be taken to ensure the survivors' safety.

"Solomon Islands is so small and everybody knows everybody and so we have to tread it very carefully but the stories were very important to influence change," explained Teakeni. "So that other women who are living in similar relationships can make a choice to decide whether they'll keep on going living like that or ... in the video it has some happy ending stories as well, women who went on services and who were able to come back and live their lives together peacefully."

The documentary will also be shared to rural women to be used as advocacy material to address gender-based violence in the Solomon Islands.

"It was a challenging project for us but the stories have to come out somehow," continued Teakeni. "They have to come out if we are to move forward and for those women they have moved on and they were comfortable to share their stories. This video we have agreed with the women that it will go and be shared with the mainstream media as well who can also screen those videos but as you know it was in response to the women's information need, the rural women so copies of the video will be shared to rural women so that they can use in their own activities, advocacy and as a resource that they can keep."

The video was launched on September 25 in partnership with UN Women and femLINKpacific as part of International Day of Peace commemorations.

(Ends)

FemTALK Pacific: Keep Talking to Women and Girls

by Carolyn Kitione

"We have to equip and empower them (girls) to give them information," emphasised Adi Mitimiti Pasikala, Project Officer for the Talitha Project.

To do so, the Talitha Project organised a 3-day Girls Empowerment Camp for 35 girls between the ages of 13 and 16 years old, to coincide with the International Day of Peace on September 21.

For many of the girls, it was the first time to even hear about International Day of Peace.

Addressing the many issues prevalent in Tongan society, the Talitha Project organised sessions on sexual health, Sustainable Development Goals, violence against women and girls and physical health activities.

To commemorate International Day of Peace, the girls were asked to define their peace.

For some, peace meant access to technology and education.

For others, it meant being free from violence.

“One of the young girls that she said that peace... start(s) from home,” explained Pasikala. “Mothers and fathers, they have to work together, understand everything. For example, they don’t have to fight in front of (their children) so the children will (not) follow...so there’s no violence.”

Key findings of a report released in 2012 titled, National Study on Domestic Violence against Women in Tonga, revealed that at least 68% of Tongan women and girls were affected by physical violence perpetrated mainly by their fathers or teachers.

And according to Pasikala, the sessions opened up the eyes of the young girls to the different ways violence was presented in communities.

“Because right from the first day of camp, (we found that) a majority of them, they didn’t know what violence is, what types and forms of violence, how they gonna solve the violence when it comes to domestic, sexual and (so on),” she explained.

With information a key factor in how these girls respond to issues in their community, it’s also important for young women and girls to have a role model to look up to.

“I don’t know where did I get that idea from - I just said to Vanessa, ‘Vanessa we should invite the first female Law Lord (Linda Simiki Folaumoetu’i) to come and just say some encouragement and motivate the young girls,” reflected Pasikala.

With the camp and International Day of Peace serving as a catalyst for these young women to come up with solutions in their community, there is now an even greater need to keep talking to young women and girls.

“Because all the young girls it’s already mentioned - peace start(s) from home and home to the community, and community to the country,” summed up Pasikala.

(Ends)