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Here Are The Women (2017): Amra Wati (/index.php/en/actions/here-are-the- women/511-here-are-the-women-2017- amra-wati)



by Frances Tawake



“The quality of a leader that I would like to uphold is to be honest, faithful and respect everyone and most of all to be well presented when serving the community.”

Meet 51 year old Amra Wati from Vunivau Labasa who has been making a difference in her community since 2011.

Wati is a market vendor in Labasa - one of the committee members of the Labasa Market Vendors Association who believes that skills should not just be learned, but shared.

“I always encourage the women in the market to attend consultations so that they can learn and speak out to share their issues,” she said. “More importantly, they will be encouraged to step up and work towards change in their communities - especially accessing services that is available.”

Trying to manage her role at home and at the market is not easy because she needs to earn money to support herself and her family. When she first started as a vendor, educating her daughters was the goal and she had no idea what future lay

before her.

“My daughter was going for FNU and my husband has to work for CDP and there was not enough money for the family support and I went to the market,” Wati shared. “I started at the market November 20th (2011) and on... 11th of

December, I was appointed for the leader in the market to go to Suva (for a workshop).”

“From that time, I had leadership from that time till now.”

Wati feels that a leader needs to have confidence in standing up and making that step forward no matter the challenge in life may be – including actively looking for opportunities to learn and grow.

“Women market vendors have to be educated more in skills business training that will motivate them in improving their business,” she explained. “I’m fortunate that I got more skills and I have collected more money, financially I have grown.” Some skills include value adding to simple products – for example, Wati will peel and cut vegetables to orders placed by busy young working people in Labasa town who pick up their packets of vegetables on their way home.

While there have been successes for herself and other vendors, she still sees the need for a more resilient marketplace to support those who depend on it as a source of income.

“When hurricane comes it’s flooding everywhere here in Labasa,” she outlined. “It spoils all the vegetables and the environment so we are affected badly.”

She hopes to see change not just in the environment for herself, but for other vendors – including the 80% of whom are women at the Labasa market.

“I always advise them to come with me and we go for the workshops like for femLINKpacific or for market,” Wati concluded. “We want new members to come so that we can step down and give some other ladies to take over from our places so that they can learn, they can speak out what their voices to others.”

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