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Here Are The Women (2017): Dimakita Lena (/index.php/en/actions/here-are-the-women/495-here-are-the-women-2017-dimakita-lena)



By Sulueti Waqa



“Peace and security for me is about the transformation of spaces to allow an equal participation of women,” shared Dimakita Lena, the President of the Naleba Multiracial Women’s Group in Labasa.

This 54 year old farmer, mobiliser and community leader hails from Nuku Village in the district of Nadogo in Macuata. And, assigned from the role she she has played since marrying into Naleba as a mother and a grandmother, her dedication to her community is evident from the assistance she provides to the elderly in her community, sharing information on the social welfare assistance. Where she cannot help directly, Lena responds as a strong woman of faith with counselling and prayers.

Her leadership is also transforming the community structures as well as she identified economic security as a priority not just for the landowners and her family, but also the community of labourers and women who have settled in Naleba.

femLINKpacific got to know Lena when she joined our fledgling network in Labasa in 2010 – embracing the approach to strengthen women’s networks through multiracial organising.

As the President of the Naleba Multiracial Women's Group, she has taken a lead role in taking care of income generating poultry farm. She frequently raises the challenges they have come across in the management of the project, continuously highlighting the need for responsible authority to provide relevant trainings and long-term strategizing to cater for the changes brought about by climate change and natural disasters.

"We were supplying eggs and it was going now \$10 a tray," Lena outlined during last year's Radio with Pictures produced in March. "But for the disaster (since TC Winston) what's going on now... I don't know."

"It's decreasing. They aren't laying eggs."

Through this collective project and despite all the challenges, the experience has inspired members of the group into having their own farms to assist their families. Lena's own family owns a small sugarcane farm in Naleba. She often talks about its development and what's needed to help it grow.

The farm makes it difficult to attend consultations during harvesting season. Lena has to wake up at half past 4 in the morning to cater for her family and labourers to prepare and load the cane for crushing.

This firsthand experience and networking with other cane farming women is one of the reasons why she has often discussed the need to increase the price of cane as it is too low to meet the costs of labour, land, equipment and even their own families for the rest of the year.

She has since started a pig farm to supplement her family's income during this difficult period.

In all her years of experience, a constant has been the need for clear information to reach the people, women included.

"(We need to know) whether there is only one license for small income generating projects especially for women's economic security," she stressed in 2011, adding they all need to better understand the fine print of income generating programmes and facilities being offered.

At the same time, since TC Winston, she can carried this sentiment to weather reporting.

"The problem was the lack of access to accurate information and weather update," she explained, going on to add she needs such information because of her income sources. "It about environmental security and the negative impact of natural disaster, the impact of Climate Change that affects the food security and economic security of many communities."

She sees the gap being bridged by community media, including community radio networks like FemTALK89FM.

"It help to solve problem by providing information and advice and allowing women to provide solution when dealing with issues like poverty," Lena said.

When women have access to information, they are better equipped to participate.

"Raising women's knowledge and skills in policies is key," Lena continued. "By providing more workshops... this will help increase women's participation at all levels of decision making even at the political level."

"Now in Naleba we have overcome these challenges by educating the men of our community to understand the importance of our women's group."

At the end of the day, she wants not only better opportunities for equality in decision making, but investment in the quality of decision making.

"(There needs to be) transparency," she concluded. "Policy makers must know their roles to the community... and all men and women should have a voice in decision making."
