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# Here Are The Women (2017): Pushpa Manu (/index.php/en/actions/here-are-the- women/488-here-are-the-women-2017- pushpa-manu)



By Alisia Evans



“I think a leader should have knowledge of what is happening in our community around you and around in the world, so you can pass information on,” shared Pushpa Manu.

Pushpa Manu the 57 year old President and founder of the Akriti Mother’s Club in Nausori. A natural born leader, Manu has been a core member of femLINKpacific’s rural women leader’s network since 2009 and knows a thing or two about what it takes to be an effective leader.

Manu married in 1987 and moved from Suva to live in Vuci with her husband. At first, Manu experienced some difficulty balancing full-time employment, raising a family and establishing a club where women could meet to discuss issues that affected their lives and that of the wider community. But her perseverance paid off.

“We started the club and I am the leader of it and am trying to do my best,” said Manu during an interview in 2013. “I was a bit

outspoken when we started and wasn’t afraid of anything, but then I had a family that was always very supportive.”

She was also proud to note the changes in the members of the club in the years that followed its establishment.

“Now the members, they can stand up and talk to you, they are not scared as they were before,” Manu stated proudly. “I share information and we talk about what is on the news and perhaps someone has a pamphlet... (so) they know a lot now.”

Her continued engagement in femLINK’s district, divisional and national consultations has paid dividends for her skills as a leader and has enabled women to drive positive development in their communities.

“That suitcase radio is a very good platform for us the rural women because some of them they can’t afford to go to the media,” Manu explained to development partners during femLINK’s September Partners’ meeting in 2016. “In Nausori, we have a big problem over the drainage system because every time it floods, we can’t do our backyard gardening (and) that is how we save our money.”

“Through femLINK, we started complaining, then we went to the advisory councilor, from there we went to the commissioner central. Two letters later and everything is done.”

However, despite her leadership skills, one of the many challenges Manu faces is the lack of female participation and engagement in local governance processes.

“The males never invite women so we don’t know what they are thinking,” she said. “How can the male people know what we ladies are thinking?”

“(The answer is) they don’t know.”

In terms of equal representation of women in her local government, the reality Manu depicts is just as unappealing.

“In Nausori, (on) the advisory council... there are 18 to 20 males there and only one female,” she highlighted. “How can she move around and meet all the women in the area?”

The simple answer is she can’t.

“More women should be on advisory councils,” urged Manu. “So if we cannot go and talk to the men, we can go (to) the women and say that we are having this problem. If women are there, they will understand.”