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Here Are The Women (2017): Rev. Angela Suruj Prasad (/index.php/en/actions/here-are-the-women/564-here-are-the-women-2017-rev-angela-suruj-prasad)



by *Sulueti Waqa*



“(Women) are the first (responders) to disasters, poverty and everything so women should be given chances to participate at the political level as they understand women better,” stressed Rev. Angela Suruj Prasad of the Association of Anglican Women (AAW) in Labasa.

A retired bank officer, she currently a priest with the St Thomas Anglican Church in the diocese of Polynesia.

Rev. Prasad has been the president and the treasurer of the association and continues to represent the 50 women at femLINKpacific’s district and divisional consultations in Labasa.

“I was motivated for the first time to hear the sharing of the rural women, the difficulties and the success stories,” she reflected. “Through femLINKpacific, we share and our voices are heard and we get results.”

She has always raised the issue of high cost of living and consistently highlighted the need for agricultural assistance to go beyond supplying commercial farmers.

Rev. Prasad would like to see women who do backyard gardening also be supported as she is well aware of the high cost of food in both the municipal market and supermarkets – a challenge often felt hard after disasters.

This, she explained, is why communities need well development preparedness plans.

“femLINKpacific’s Women’s Weather Watch model is very helpful (in this regard),” Rev. Prasad continued. “It informs us of the natural disasters and makes us alert.”

“When I receive the information, I share it to my family, my neighbors, my AAW group members and friends so that they become aware of the weather and share it to their friends and families so that everybody gets the alert.”

In addition, the process of community media has always been the space that women look forward to every month. It is where women like Rev. Prasad share their achievements and challenges that others could assist in providing solution. It has become a solidarity space for many women leaders.

“Community radio gave us a lot of information,” she added. “There’s a lot of knowledge and wisdom that we can get.”

While she knows she has been able to access a space to share her story and build her body of knowledge, Rev. Prasad wants to see more for other women.

“I believe the message of women’s rights, security and peace should be passed to all women out there so that they all are aware of what is available for them so that they can use the resource to up bring their standard of living,” she explained. “One of the barriers is the society’s perspectives of how women should behave or shut them from speaking out and therefore women are not empowered to take part in decision making.”

“(We will have) good governance (when) everyone is treated fairly and justly regardless of gender.”

But the challenges do not stop for women when they reach their front door – sometimes it is within the home where women are stripped of opportunity and voice. When responsibilities are not shared equally in the family, for example, women do not have time to participate in either decision making or empowerment programmes.

And according to Rev. Prasad, this is far from a peaceful situation.

“To be safe in the environment where I live (is peace to me),” she reflected. “It means I am safe having enough to live on and finding satisfaction with in myself which I can share to my families and others.”

“The peace and security I can find is in my Lord Jesus Christ who is the prince of peace. My message of peace is having peace with in yourself so that you can share these peace with others.”