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Here are the Women (2017): Losana Derenalagi (/index.php/en/actions/here-are-the-women/482-here-are-the-women-2017-losana-derenalagi)



By Sulueti Waqa



“When we talk about development, we are talking about people,” underscored Losana Derenalagi. “Development is for the people and in order to have a successful and a fruitful government, we need a consultative and participatory process where all members of the community are represented.”

“Good governance is like having a good family where all the member of the family are able to share and talk freely with one another and contribute to the welfare of the family.”

It all began with an interview for a suitcase radio broadcast in Nadi in 2006. For Derenalagi, she wanted to highlight the situation of single mothers, an issue that she was well aware of as a leader of the Nadi Tikina Soqosoqo Vakamarama iTaukei.

In 2012, she accepted the mantle of convenor in Nadi and has since has expanded to engage with diverse rural women leaders in Lautoka as well – a role that supports her leadership.

“These meetings facilitates women coming out of their shells, to advocate to other women and to the policy makers,” she explained in 2014, as reported by the Fiji Sun (<http://fijisun.com.fj/2014/07/17/nadi-rural-women-meet/>). “It is important to consider the needs of (women).”

“Development priorities concern (them) as well.”

Through her extensive experience as a leader in her community, one of the ongoing issues she has seen raised is the frequent flooding of Nadi town.

“Right now in Nadi, the challenges that the women still face is the environment,” she explained in 2014 (http://www2.kobe-u.ac.jp/~alexroni/TR2014%20readings/2014_9/FemLINKPACIFIC%20Women_Peace_Human%20Security&Development%20Report_February%202014.pdf). “We just had the flood and what we have noticed is that the level just keep on rising up and they think it is due to the development on Denarau Island.”

“They have cut most of the mangrove and the reclaiming of land and that where most of the water from Nadi River, that where it rests but now when it goes out, it looks like it’s coming back.”

It is through the continued engagement of a multicultural network of women leaders, femLINK’s Women’s Weather Watch campaign is able to assist their mobilisation through enhancing their access to information.

“Women still find communications and information (of the weather bulletins through the mainstream media) are unclear, inaccurate (for their areas), infrequent or ineffective,” she explained. “Women’s Weather Watch have also helped government officials in providing information through the Local Government, Divisional and of course the NDMO - especially through interactive dialogues with women, (our policy) reports and the comic books.”

While Derenalagi is a key focal point for femLINK in the West, she is deeply passionate about empowering the community of women she has come to know.

“We do need a stronger women’s movement to strengthen our network in order to have a stronger voice (and to) empower one another so that more women can be part of decision making processes,” Derenalagi explained. “For women to participate at a political level, we need to continuously empower women through consultation and speak of the importance of their input into the development process.”

“In order to have a successful society we must have equal participation and contribution of man and women. (But) I think there is still a gap for women and other minority groups in terms of representations in our country even though we have ratified CEDAW and other international conventions. There (is also) a need for more civic education and the need for Temporary Special measures (TSM) to ensure equal participation of women in political structures (<http://www.thejetnewspaper.com/2013/03/13/preparations-for-not-just-sweet-talk-here-are-the-women-simulcast-reaffirm-priorities-of-the-fiji-womens-forum/>).”

It is these promises that she has continued to raise, wanting to see a realisation through shared decision making by men and women, from the provincial level to the Bose va Koro (<http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/WO1303/S00170/gender-inclusive-governance-a-call-from-rural-women.htm>) and up to Parliament, for the benefit of all.

It is for this reason that Derenalagi continues to work together with women leaders in all their diversities to strengthen the women’s movement at the community level to improve the status of women throughout the country.

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