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Women's Weather Watch - Fiji: TC Ella (/index.php/en/actions/archive/551-women-s-weather-watch-fiji-tc-ella)

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“I spoke to Urmila Kumar – President of the Shakti Women’s Club - this morning,” reported Fane Boseiwaqa, femLINKpacific convenor for Ba, Tavua and Rakiraki. “She says in Dramasi settlement, Tavua, the weather is windy and cloudy.”

“She has shared #womensweatherwatch updates to more than 200 families in Dramasi, Rabulu and Balata #2. In terms of their preparedness, they have stored clean drinking water and packed clean clothes as well as securing their homes.”

In Ba, according to Mayotri Chand of the Naari Sabha, the winds are yet to pick up.

“Ba is silent... it’s cloudy and hot but no rain,” she said. “I have passed on the #womensweatherwatch information to my community and we are (preparing).”

In Rakiraki, community members are mobilising to prepare following the issuing of #womensweatherwatch updates – information directly to women leaders that is currently filling the communication blind spot.

“Members of the community are helping one another in securing their homes especially helping the widows and the elderly,” outlined Boseiwaqa relaying updates from Urmila Prasad, advisory councillor for Wairuku settlement. “Most of the 244 families in Wairuku are still re-building after TC Winston although there have been 10 homes built by Habitat for Homes Fiji which are hurricane proof.”

“Those that are far from the nearest evacuation centre can seek shelter in any of this homes.

For communities like Koronubu in Ba, the information was also happily received.

"Because this community is located near the Sea and most of the women goes out fishing... after receiving these weather updates, I quickly share this to the Turaga-Ni-Koro to inform the villages," explained Vani Tuvuki, leader of the Koronubu Women's Fellowship. "My concern goes out to families here in Koronubu that are still waiting to rebuild and are still living under tents."

"I also (made sure to) inform them and they know their nearest evacuation centre which for us here in Koronubu it takes about 15 to 30 minute walk to reach it. If it rains, the worry for us now is our drainage - flooding is a possibility in our area."

According to Prasad, Rakiraki Town was quite full yesterday as people committed to preparedness, collected what they needed. However, it is not as simple as a stroll to the nearest shop – whether one lives in Rakiraki, Tavua or Ba.

"People will have to travel about 15km to Tavua town to do their shopping for basic food items such as tinned food, batteries, candles, first aid kits," said Boseiwaqa, who added that community members in Koronubu would also have to travel 15km to town. "Urmila Kumar explained that they have a little shop in their community but it does not have all the things needed."

The Dramasi shop hasn't any kerosene, mosquito coils or repellent or batteries. Kumar's husband will be on a bus this morning to get the things they need from town.

As rural leaders through femLINKpacific's network demonstrate, women are demonstrating what is possible when they are invested in – equipped with information, they are ready to mobilise and prepare for disasters.

"There is a continued need to ensure that humanitarian response during disasters support women-led organisations and amplify diverse women's voices, agency and decision making in disaster preparedness and women-led innovation in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), Disaster Risk Management (DRM) and humanitarian response," said Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Executive Producer-Director of femLINKpacific. "We continue, as well, to call for the gender gap in participation and protection in preparedness and humanitarian response to be closed."

"There is a need to ensure that responses to disasters like the recent TC Donna as well as the developing TC Ella are done through a women's rights based approach. As partners of the Shifting the Power Coalition, we also amplify the ongoing need for policies and humanitarian responses to be institutionalised in line with UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and human rights commitments. Systems and processes must enable women to take up and be included in formal decision making spaces and processes at national and local levels. One of the ways in which policies can better reflect the voices of women and girls, is to engage women at the community level to support early warning systems and humanitarian preparedness and response as well as resilience and recovery, with a gendered lens and approach."

This is one of the reasons, according to Bhagwan Rolls, that femLINKpacific is hoping to develop a Public Emergency Broadcast strategy that builds on its Women's Weather Watch model.

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For more information, visit femLINKpacific's website for our ongoing Women's Weather Watch documentation and policy recommendations: <http://www.femlinkpacific.org.fj/index.php/en/> (/index.php/en/)