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# World Humanitarian Day 2017: femLINKpacific - Women's Weather Watch

## (/index.php/en/actions/archive/574-world-humanitarian-day-2017-femlinkpacific-women-s-weather-watch)

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Women's Weather Watch is femLINKpacific's inter-operable communication platform has been developed initially for Women's Weather Watch.

At the heart of this system is community radio, linking a network of women leaders and correspondents to real-time information via SMS alerts (mobile phone and bulk system) as well as a Viber group and Facebook. The system is a two-way information system enabling the network members to also provide real-time situation updates which are used for media and podcast productions.

The system is coordinated from femLINK's regional hub based at its Suva community media centre and activated in the disaster preparedness stage and is also used as a disaster impact assessment tool. It can be operated from a desktop, or mobile device.

Women's Weather Watch documents the lived experiences of women in disaster affected communities and supports the leadership of women to ensure more gender-inclusive preparedness and humanitarian response during times of disasters – storms and cyclones, droughts and floods as well as tsunamis, as well as in the recovery stages post-disaster.

*The leadership of women in Fiji like...*

**Bonita Qio**

*Coordinator, Pacific Rainbows Advocacy Network – Lautoka*



Actively involved in a variety of civil society organisations, Qio works tirelessly to engage all members of the community especially young women, sex workers and the LGBTIQ community. Following the aftermath of TC Winston she was out in the field, visiting members of the LGBTIQ community and distributing basic amenities under the Pacific Gender and Climate Justice program facilitated by Diverse Voices in Action (DIVA) for Equality, Fiji. Later on, she was also part of the Fiji Red Cross Response Unit, visiting each community in the Western Division and conducting field assessments, collecting analysis data and feedback.

*"I have seen less participation of young women. Young women have their own needs - our voices are different and we tell our stories better than someone else, that's why we have to be sitting in (decision making) spaces telling our stories."*

### **Mereisi Mara**



*Assistant President, Nasaulevu Women's Club – Savusavu*

During TC Winston, Mara took an active role in her community in ensuring the safety of her community – a role she felt ownership of as a mother and rural woman leader. From collecting food, water and clothing to helping the elderly and people with disabilities evacuate, Mara believes in that the protection with dignity for all is critical. Since the cyclone, she has been an active voice and busy pair of hands both in rebuilding her community and speaking out on the lack of provision of clean water to her community.

*"Women must be involved in all disaster management and responses program and committees because women knows the problems in our communities and families. It is very important for us women to be (prepared) all the time, like to be up to date with the news and weather bulletin."*

### **Nila Rao**

*Advisory Councillor, Caulasi Area – Rakiraki*

After retiring from a life of teaching, Rao became an active participant in local governance – first as a member of the Rakiraki town council in 2010 before becoming an advisory councillor in 2015. After Tropical Cyclone Winston, despite facing her own challenges after the devastating event, Rao was out in the community almost immediately. After the devastating event, Rao was out in the community almost immediately. Assessing damage was no easy task with Rao having to travel on foot amongst the closed roads and fallen power lines.



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*“Now the ladies are coming in... we have proved to the people that no matter like how intense the cyclone was, whatever we had to go through but we did whatever we were supposed to do.”*

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### **Unaisi Sela**



*Secretary, Soqosoqo Vakamarama Bua – Bua*

Coming from a community affected by TC Winston, Sela knows the challenge of recovery that is gender blind. Living in Vuya, a three hour drive from Labasa town, has continued to underscore the need for proper access to information including clear preparatory messaging ahead of natural disasters. During the cyclone, Sela housed those living close to the coast as well as supported the community through the canteen she was running.

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*“(Women) have to attend some consultation... the women in the villages, they need to be encouraged to attend the workshops, to know that (they are leaders through their roles) as mothers, as a woman.”*

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### **Vani Tuvuki**

*Leader, Koronubu Women’s Fellowship – Ba*

A breast cancer survivor, a former teacher, and counsellor, a certified lay pastor and community advocate on gender awareness, and ending child abuse and domestic violence – Tuvuki is a pillar of the community. Women’s Weather Watch has been a critical source of information for the cane-farming community of Koronubu as many residents look to Tuvuki for information whenever a shift in the weather happens. After TC Winston, she



was involved in relief work, distributing food to those without homes after the cyclone. She continued to call for equality in decision making at all levels to improve the standards of living for all.

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*“Disaster preparedness could be improved by giving us accurate information. As women leaders, we all have to stand up - we are the first responders in most of the communities.”*

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### **Vikatoria Tuivanualevu**



*Leader, Naweni Women’s Club – Savusavu*

A community hard-hit by TC Winston, Tuivanualevu has continued to highlight the challenges not just after the cyclone but the gaps created by a lack of preparation. Shortages of food supplies, in particular, at the evacuation centre was a major issue that threatened the protection with dignity of her community members. In her community, the women are continuing to work in partnership to recover from the damage to housing and their surroundings, over a year and a half later.

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*“We women have an important contribution during natural disaster. We bear the burden of the disaster either it hurricane, tidal waves or even flooding.”*