



COMMUNITY RADIO SOUNDBYTES

WOMEN'S WEATHER WATCH: PREPAREDNESS, PARTICIPATION AND PROTECTION



“The women get up at 3am and go to bed at 10pm to do all the chores but now (after TC Winston) their work is double, tripled. Now they have to replant or try and manage the farms or look after the dairy cows.” **Pushpa Mannu, Akriti Mother’s Club, Nausori**

“ I went to the village right after Cyclone Winston to visit my elderly parents and relatives and all I could see as I entered the village was just sand and stick of trees. All the voivoi trees are washed away together with roots crops and coconuts which is one of our main sources of income in the village”. We greeted each other with tears; my dad and my two brothers were both badly injured and luckily my mum and elder sister were looking after them”.

Akesa Lewamotu United Markets Vendors Association Suva

Since 2004 femLINKpacific has managed a unique and accessible community radio network demonstrating that women can use media technology to enable women and young women of all diversities to access news and information but also produce their own content to highlight their priorities.

Radio, especially community radio, has proven to be an effective tool for femLINKpacific to ensure the women of Fiji, especially rural women, have a voice in national decision-making.

Radio after all is an accessible and inclusive information and communication platform for target groups and local government networks. In 2016 our community radio stations in Suva and Labasa dedicated over 1,800 hours to promoting women’s voice on local weather and environmental issues.

Combined with the innovative use of an SMS information-communication system, our Women’s Weather Watch campaign(WWW) between January and December 2016 reached over 19,000 women across our network including over a further 27,000 households in Fiji.

The Radio with Pictures television series in 2016 meant women from TC Winston affected communities were seen and heard on a national television media platform!

Women spoke about their experiences, not as victims but as resilient leaders, who are too often sidelined from decision making:

“If women have control over land agricultural production will increase, improving food security and it will benefit the family and the community,” **Inise Dawai, Sikuturu Tikina Women’s Club, Nadi.**

“In my community, women are not included in decision making. I feel that when there is a village consultation, the village heads, advisory and other official decision making members to come to the women for their input. They should include the women as women have their groups and clubs who are already very active with community service work” **Sheleni Lata, Waituri Women’s Group, Nausori**

“At the moment there is no committee or corporate that has Fiji Sugarcane Women’s Growers Council...(whose role is) to elect leaders, women leaders into this council because they will be the one looking after the welfare of women farmers and laborers.”

Vani Tuvuki, Koronubu Women’s Fellowship, Ba

Community media, including radio and SMS updates combined with the use of appropriate and accessible ICTs is bridging the information-communication gap between rural women and the National Disaster Management Office.

Women's Weather Watch is more than just about infrastructure and political structures but a gender inclusive information and communication channels that brings women's needs in the immediate response to the attention of decision makers.

It is a community media platform that supports rural women's advocacy efforts to ensure that disaster preparedness and response addresses protection and human security in preparedness, response and recovery phases.

What the women say:

In Suva as well as Tavua disability rights activists identified particular barriers to women living with disabilities in terms of their safety and security both during and after humanitarian situations. A lack of disability friendly transportation systems and evacuation plans including evacuation centres were priority issues for women living with disabilities.

"Safety needs to look in to what persons of disability needs in terms of accessibility and not climbing up the stairs or getting out of wheelchair." **Sainimili Naivalu, Fiji Disabled Persons Federation, Suva**

"When they are sick they have to go to the hospital but they can't board the bus because it is not disability friendly because there is no ramp in the bus." **Unaisi Bakewa, Tavua Disabled Persons Association, Tavua**

"While the increase in money to disability sector is welcomed the relevant departments need to use the budget appropriately including increased outreach of doctors and nurses to disabled persons to ease transportation difficulties and accessibility issues." **Unaisi Bakewa, Tavua Disabled Persons Association, Tavua**

The impact of TC Winston, flooding and the onset of the dry season has greatly impacted food supply for rural women in all 14 districts including Rabi Island. The National Women's Plan of Action contains specific reference to women's access to health services. However, it is imperative that the status of a woman's health is not just considered in terms of her reproductive health roles but as a way to empower her, thus to ensure more women are able to participate in decision making processes.

"Rehabilitation carries a lot of weight in terms of mental survival. We are able to cope with it physically but mentally it is the biggest challenge. We need to go through some kind of psychological therapy. It is very important because it can help us make positive decisions to enable us to help the community and protect the community we represent." **Bonita Qio, Pacific Rainbow Advocacy Network, Lautoka**

"We know person with disabilities need to be accessing affordable, nutritional food that is beneficial to one's health as persons with disabilities have health complications when consuming processed food too much" **Luisa Miracle, Fiji Disabled Person's Federation, Suva**

"We need the doctor to be present at the health centre and for the community to be informed on the doctors visiting hours at the health centre." **Salome Raqiyawa, Soqosoqovakamarama Nalalawa, Rakiraki**

"As the nurses visit our communities for health check-ups for the women it is very good because they explain about health but when they go to the hospital they can't explain to the doctor about health so it is easy for the ladies to talk to the nurses." **Jai Mati, Vuqele Multiracial Women's Club, Tavua**

"As a leader in a community we need more training to be done for village nurses and also we need more participation of young women for health and medication training in our communities." **Mereisi Mara, Nasaulevu Women's Club, Savusavu**

Communicating despite natural disasters:

Women's Weather Watch (WWW) is ensuring more rural women are informing disaster preparedness and response as we continue to update our WWW information and communication systems.

This was evident as we tracked tropical depression (TD04F) from December 16 – 22nd producing a series of podcasts with reports from our network of women leaders who have all participated in our series of divisional and national consultations since TC Winston. These women are all regular contributors to the radio programmes produced during our district and divisional meetings and have also featured in the 2016 Radio with Pictures TV series.

During TD04F, women from rural communities featured in RNZI reports, including helping break the news of the impact of the floods on Toga Village: "Toga Island was cut off as the river, one of Fiji's largest, rose well above normal, cutting off road access. After six days of rain the villagers made a plea for help as their supplies ran low. Bale Bulimaivale of Muana village, one of three villages on the island which accommodates 1000 people, said a boat finally came to their rescue and people were able to get to town for supplies." (<http://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/320982/christmas-spirit-helps-fiji-people-through-massive-floods>).

And as a result of featuring in our podcast report, our Rakiraki network leader, Nila Rao also featured in this RNZI report

Our report from our rural convenor in the North, provided the only coverage on the situation on Rabi Island: <https://www.facebook.com/femlinkpacific/posts/10158082476365093>.

femLINKpacific is a feminist media organisation founded on fundamental and universally recognized human rights and freedoms, specifically the principle that all persons, especially women, should be treated equally regardless of actual or supposed personal characteristics including (but not limited to) gender, age, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, primary language, disability, economic status, family status or opinion

Our Vision: *femLINK will be a local, national and regional catalyst for change through the use of accessible media and information, communication and technology as we seek a Pacific Region where there is gender justice, ecological sustainability, peace, freedom, equality and human rights*

Our Mission: *Our mission is to be a strong and effective feminist community media and policy network recognising and affirming our multi-ethnic and multi-faith founding principles.*

Our Feminist Principles: *femLINKpacific believes that all persons especially women should be treated equally regardless of actual or supposed personal characteristics including gender, age, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, primary language, disability, economic status, family status or opinion*
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