



COMMUNITY RADIO SOUNDBYTES

AMPLIFYING WOMEN'S WEATHER WATCH PREPAREDNESS, PARTICIPATION AND PROTECTION



“Women who are affected are taking up the issues to the advisory councilors but most are too shy to talk to the male councilors but when they meet me they ask me to take it up to the PA (provincial administrator).” Nila Rao, Rakiraki Advisory Councilor and President of Colasi Mother’s Club, Rakiraki

“So we women support each other to not just be in the kitchen but to listen and take part in discussion with local government” Merewairita Nasiri, Kaba Women’s Club, Kaba Island

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With the increasing prevalence of natural disasters and environmental insecurity in the Pacific, ensuring women’s full participation in all levels of decision making on disaster response through a women’s rights based approach is essential. 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.

Since 2000, members of our GP-PAC Pacific network have experienced a range of natural disasters from severe droughts in Papua New Guinea to intense tropical cyclones in countries including Tonga, Vanuatu and Fiji, to earthquakes and flooding affecting the Solomon Islands as well as widespread flooding across the wider South Pacific region. The estimated average annual direct loss caused by natural disasters in the region amounts to USD\$284 million¹.

“In order to address the issue and catalyze action we must see women and girls as powerful agents of change in humanitarian action in their own right. They are not the problem; they should and must be an integral part of the solutions.” Deputy Prime Minister of Samoa, Honourable Fiame Naomi Mata’afa.

“.. the news that we got here was from the femLINKpacific, the text message we had Women’s Weather Watch we are grateful for that and we’ve started collecting water, we started buying food stocks - rice, flour, salad oil, sugar and also we’ve also cut down our cassava plant since there was a little bit of wind and also our vegetables we’ve collected here and our beddings also we’ve piled it up”, Vani Tuvuki, Ba.

“(the women) did the preparation especially they collect all the waters, they packed their clothes and everything because they thought the cyclone will be coming so they packed their clothes, all their belongings like blanket and all those things”, Sarojini Goundar, District Advisory Councillor in Tavua.

“..how can we better improve our work, with regards to what we do in the humanitarian sphere and what we actually do in the development sphere and where does gender and protection lie in all that?. In any humanitarian context, in a disaster, I become a gender and protection actor - I have to respond to different needs. In a development sphere, I go back to my normal job which is the administration of local government and community development.” Samuela Pohiva Ministry of Internal Affairs, Tonga

“The inclusion of women is very important in this framework. Women need to tell their stories; they need to come out and let the government know this is what is happening in our community so (these) are the solutions of what is happening in the communities.” Lisa Horiwapu, Vois Blong Mere, Solomon Islands

¹ <http://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2012/04/01/pacific-islands-disaster-risk-reduction-and-financing-in-the-pacific>

Evidence from recent natural disasters in the Pacific highlights the need to support women's leadership and amplify their voice at every level so that National Disaster Management Committees, as well as development partners, ensure women's leadership in preparedness, decision making in planning and implementation of recovery strategies, including ensuring security in evacuation centres and affected communities. This is one of the very reasons that femLINKpacific linked humanitarian crises situations to the priority areas of the Pacific Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (RAP) (2012 – 2015)

Putting Women's Human Security First

Participation:

Equal Participation is key to Informing Long Term Recovery and Building and Sustaining Resilience as we weave back the social fabric, ensuring economic and political security and this must ensure compliance with all international treaties including the UN Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) as well as UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (Women, Peace and Security) - UNSCR 1325.

Accessible and Appropriate Information and Communication systems ensure women inform and influence decisions, which affect their lives, including through equal participation in local and national governance is vital and the efforts of community-based women's movements must also be recognized and supported to bring about long term prevention and social transformation so that all women and girls can claim their right to peace and security in the immediate, medium and long term recovery

Preparedness for Protection, Response & Recovery

Protection strategies involve investing in women's peace and security by making it possible for women to inform and influence decisions that affect their lives, through equally participating in local and national governance:

- *All disaster management, preparedness and response programmes and committees, including determining the location, management and coordination of evacuation centres to make sure they are accessible to everyone*
- *Sex and gender disaggregated data must always be collected and analysed to ensure the appropriate assistance is delivered in the immediate response and long term recovery*
- *Recognise the reality of women-led households and their role in organising their families and communities, including the preparedness of evacuation systems, by identifying women leaders within communities and establishing strong communication links to provide them with Information*
- *In line with the National Women's Plan of Action 2010-2019 and the National Gender Policy, the Department of Agriculture must be allocated specific funds to ensure food security programmes are available, especially for rural women, single mothers and elderly women*
- *In line with the National Gender Policy, support the expansion of women-led rural community media centres which can also be referral points and safe spaces for women and girls*

Women's Weather Watch

Since 2004 femLINKpacific has managed a unique and accessible community radio network demonstrating that women are able to 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 and 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.

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

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
To find out more visit: www.femlinkpacific.org.fj
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We acknowledge the support of



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