



National Budget Submission

*Women's Human Security First:
Communicating Gender Inclusive
Transformative Development*

April 2017

Introduction and Overview

This submission is an opportunity to draw on the work and experience of women's civil society networks to integrate the commitments of the National Gender Policy (2014) into the national budgetary process as well as the 5 and 20-year development plans to ensure women are informed, engaged and can contribute to peace building strategies that address the root causes of violence at the local and national level.

Despite the role that women are contributing in responding to extreme weather conditions (floods and droughts) as well as first-responders during TC Winston (February 2016) supporting the response evacuations, protection issues for their communities and their children and then in leading the recovery programmes, we still have women underrepresented in all levels of decision-making.

By the first anniversary of TC Winston (February 2017), we still did not see a shift in the representation of women as government has not met its minimum target of 30% commitment to appoint women to decision-making positions especially at district and divisional level.

Fiji's national development plan and national budgets which define and resource government's strategic direction must be aligned to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) as well as the National Gender Policy (2014) and in line of the adopted conclusions of the recently concluded 61st session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61) which noted:

“the promotion and protection of, and respect for, the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all women and girls, including the right to development, which are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, are crucial for women's economic empowerment and should be mainstreamed into all policies and programmes aimed at the eradication of poverty and women's economic empowerment, and also reaffirms the need to take measures to ensure that every person is entitled to participate in, contribute to and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, and that equal attention and urgent consideration should be given to the promotion, protection and full realization of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.”


This is also a valuable opportunity for government, in consultation with women's civil society, such as femLINKpacific's Women's Weather Watch network, to make linkages with the recommendations of the Global Study on UNSCR1325.

Gender equality must be about resourcing the National Gender Policy to ensure women's participation at all levels of decision making, in line with the Women's Plan of Action – simply having an increase in the number of women in parliament is not going to bring about the transformational change that is urgently needed.

The recommendations therefore reflect femLINKpacific's commitment to amplify the voice and support the leadership of the very women who are leading in their communities not just during times of natural disaster but in the every day.

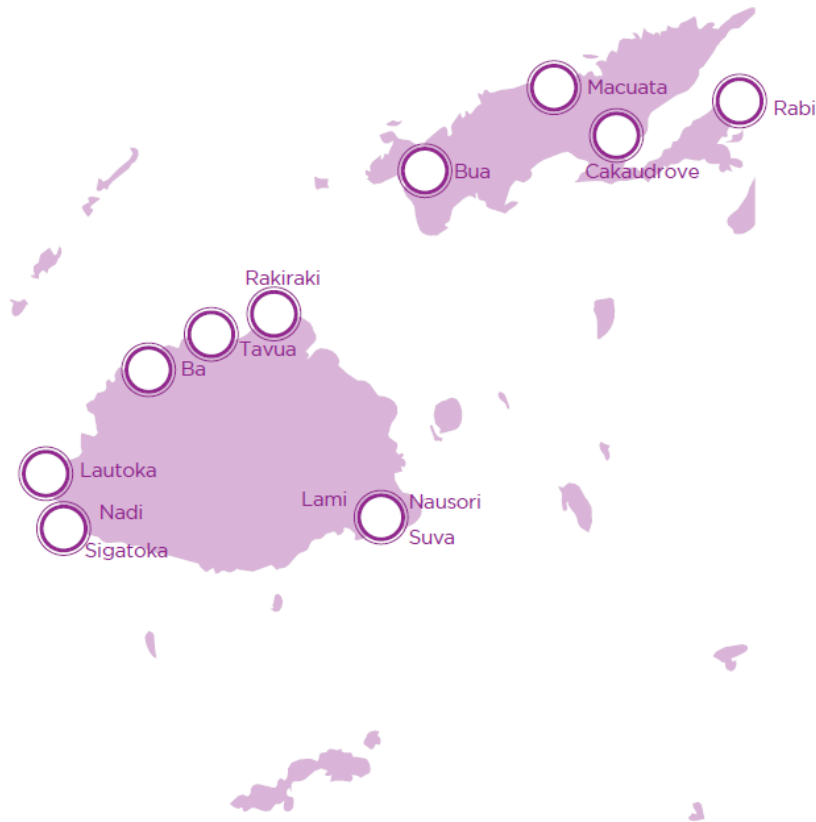
Ultimately this is about a better human security approach – one that is gender inclusive and will ensure women feel secure in their homes and communities.

This is an opportunity to transform structures so that you are not just inviting women to the decision-making table but making the table bigger and more inclusive of women of all diversities.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sharon Bhagwan Rolls', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

Sharon Bhagwan Rolls
Executive Producer-Director
01 May 2017

Women's Human Security First Outreach



Since 2015, using a solutions-based journalism approach we have unveiled the development and human security priorities documented during district, divisional and national convenings working including in the immediate aftermath of TC Winston (2016):

In 2015, we reached 124 women, including women with disabilities and representatives of the LGBT community and young women, via district level baseline assessment interviews as well as 3 divisional consultations as well as via our Women's Weather Watch SMS platform:

- Participants in our convenings included 50 women from the provinces of Bua, Cakaudrove and Macuata, representing over 600 women; 50 women from Rakiraki to Sigatoka, representing over 3000 women and 24 women representing 1600 women from the central division.
- As a result of our actions, we produced 477 radio programmes
- FemTALK 89FM Suva and Labasa contributed 7900 radio hours to the broadcast airwaves

In 2016, we reached 440 women, including women with disabilities and representatives of the LGBT community and young women, from 71 communities via 84 district meetings as well as 6 divisional consultations and 3 national consultations as well as via our Women's Weather Watch SMS platform:

- These women lead an additional 7390 women in the western division, 3613 women in the central division and 1461 women in the northern division
- As a result of our actions we produced over 400 radio programmes
- FemTALK 89FM Suva and Labasa contributed 8093 radio hours to the broadcast airwaves
- In 2016 32 women leaders appeared in 3 seasons (24 episodes) of Radio with Pictures with our broadcast partner Fiji Television

From January to April 2017, we have reached 114 including women with disabilities and representatives of the LGBT community and young women via 31 district convenings, 3 divisional convenings as well as 1 national convening as well as via our Women's Weather Watch SMS and Viber platforms:

- During this period, we have produced 105 radio programmes
- FemTALK 89FM Suva and Labasa contributed more than 3000 radio hours to the broadcast airwaves
- Between 32 rural women appeared in Season 4 (8 episodes) of Radio with Pictures with our broadcast partner Fiji Television

Development issues which have emerged prioritize access to basic services including health care, income generation programmes, access to education and job creation, access to natural resource management including land for women-led food security agricultural programmes.

The priority of infrastructure development (land and sea transport, electricity and communications, as well as information systems) is also inextricably linked to social infrastructure and gives rise to the need for national development plans to address the social and economic disadvantage that women experience because of gender inequality and systemic discrimination against women, including the power imbalance between women and men in access to decision making and resources.

Key Recommendations for the National Development Plan:

- The development plan must be accountable to gender equality as well as women's empowerment as there remains persistent under-representation of the women of Fiji in development planning processes, including governance systems, resulting in the perpetuation of discrimination and the ongoing cycle of violence.
- All indicators of the national development plan must be aligned to the SDGs and related social policies in CEDAW, the National Gender, Disability and Senior Citizens policies and that all implementation mainstream a gender perspective including in all reports which must highlight the specific gender budget allocations and benefits and impacts on women and girls
- The development plan should not simply provide the delivery of services but ensure the social and economic conditions that will support women's representation in political and economic decision-making processes.
- Monitoring and Evaluation should:
 - Be by way of bi-annual divisional and annual national development summits to discuss the annual reports of the implementation of the national development plan. These summits should be held as part of the national budget consultations
- Recognise the important role the media can play in the achievement of gender equality and women's economic empowerment, including through non-discriminatory and gender-sensitive coverage and by eliminating gender stereotypes, including those perpetuated by commercial advertisements.

The national development plan must be accountable to gender equality as well as women's empowerment as there remains persistent under-representation of the women of Fiji in development planning processes, including governance systems.

The development plan must be revised to include SDG 16 indicators to ensure development strategies:

- Ensure clear reporting with qualitative and quantitative evidence to demonstrate how the national development plan is enabling women's full, equal and effective participation and access to leadership and high level positions, including through temporary special measures, as appropriate, in economic decision-making structures and institutions at all levels, as well as in enterprises, corporate boards and trade unions
- Invest in the capacity building of local governance structures to provide local leaders with good governance and leadership skills training as well as to support the strengthening of women's leadership and participation in decision making
- Encourage and support women's participation and leadership in trade unions, workers' organizations and employers' organizations, and urge all leaders of these organizations to effectively represent the interests of all women workers
- Encourage training of those who work in the media and the development and strengthening of self-regulatory mechanisms to promote balanced and non-stereotypical portrayals of women and girls, which contribute to the empowerment of women and girls and the elimination of discrimination against and exploitation of women and girls

Support women's economic empowerment and economic security at all levels:

- Take steps to measure the value of unpaid care and domestic work to determine its contribution to the national economy, for example through periodic time use surveys, and include such measurement in the formulation of gender-responsive economic and social policies
- Local government should strengthen and support the contributions of rural women and women farmers to the agricultural sector, food security and nutrition and the economic well-being of their families and communities, and to enhancing agricultural and rural development, including small scale farming, and ensure that they have equal access to agricultural technologies
- Investment in infrastructure development to reduce poverty and enhance opportunities for all must also be inclusive of appropriate and accessible ICTs to ensure the reduction of the digital divide between communities i.e. between urban and rural, able bodied and disabled.

Rural Development including Disaster Preparedness, Response and Recovery:

- Develop and adopt gender-responsive strategies on mitigation and adaptation to climate change, in line with international and regional instruments, to support the resilience and adaptive capacities of women and girls to respond to the adverse effects of climate change
- Strengthen and support the contributions of rural women and women farmers to the agricultural sector, food security and nutrition and the economic well-being of their families and communities, and to enhancing agricultural and rural development, including small scale farming, and ensure that they have equal access to agricultural technologies
- Improve women's access, control and ownership of land
- Ensure the inclusion of community radio broadcasting as an information-communication structure to guarantee rural women's access to information on agricultural extension programmes

Health Sector:

- Take steps to achieve the full realization of the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health by improving access to timely, affordable and quality health systems for women and girls of all diversities through gender-sensitive national strategies and public health policies and programmes
- Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes
- Senior Divisional Medical Officers to organize meetings with women leaders and women to gather feedback to inform health budget procurement processes so they are responsive to the needs of rural communities
- Support the development of community media strategies especially community radio to assist in information dissemination to local communities

National Security including Protection with Dignity:

- Government must take steps to address the under-representation of women of all diversities in development planning processes including district advisory councils to ensure processes are gender, disability and sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) inclusive paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations by enhancing their participation in community mechanisms
- Improve the security and safety of women on the journey to and from work and the security and safety of women and girls on the journey to and from educational facilities through gender responsive rural development strategies and urban planning and infrastructure, including sustainable, safe, accessible and affordable public transportation systems, street lighting and separate and adequate sanitation facilities, to facilitate women's access to places, products, services and economic opportunities
- All indicators of the national development plan must be aligned to the SDGs and related social policies in CEDAW, the National Gender, Disability and Senior Citizens policies and that all implementation mainstream a gender perspective including in all reports which must highlight the specific gender budget allocations and benefits and impacts on women and girls
- Support femLINKpacific as the already established and reliable information provider, in the expansion of women-led rural community media/radio hubs operating community media centres which can also be referral points and safe spaces for women and girls

Fiji National Budget 2017 – 2018 Recommendations

- a. Government must take steps towards ensuring a responsive, inclusive and participatory budget making process that addresses the growing feminisation of poverty in Fiji
- b. Government must increase the national minimum wage to \$4 an hour
- c. At least 5% of the annual Public Service Broadcast grant should be allocated to support community radio stations like FemTALK 89FM
- d. Annual grant for the Women's Plan of Action (WPA) is currently at \$1million which is 0.02% of the total estimated expenditure for the 2016/2017 Annual Budget. This allocation should be increased to \$1.5million to include:
 - \$150,000 allocated for each WPA task force activation
 - \$400,000 for 3 annual quarterly convenings including research and capacity development and resourcing of Women's Interest Officers
 - Specific annual grant of \$5000 for district level disabled people's organisations
 - \$100,000 for the National WPA consultation should be to review the implementation in line with the Gender Policy and CEDAW as well as other treaties
 - \$50,000 for WPA media promotion campaign
- e. The national budget must also review the Women's Exposition budget allocation to ensure that programmes support income generation activities cover all production related funds including labour, overhead and transport costs
- f. Ministry of Agriculture should allocate at least 30% of funding specifically for gender inclusive agricultural extension programmes in the Northern and Western Divisions to assist in curbing rural-urban drift
- g. An increase in the per capita allocation to the Ministry of Health to ensure service delivery and the availability of medicines including improvements to the efficiency of procurement and distribution systems especially to hospital pharmacies outside of the capital city
- h. Increase in the annual budget allocation for the Fiji Police Force in order to enhance per capital allocation to undertake its key role of the protection of all citizens, as well as to
 - (i) enhance gender and protection programmes in collaboration with women's groups and human rights organisations
 - (ii) enhance community policing programmes particularly for rural and remote communities
 - (iii) enhanced career pathways which support the leadership and decision making roles of women officers

National Disaster Management:

Government must also recognize women as first responders and include their voices in formal decision making bodies on disaster and humanitarian emergencies.

The national budget must:

- Ensure adequate financial allocation to the National Disaster Management Office to develop and implement a gender policy to support strengthening of women's leadership and participation in assessments and distribution planning and management monitoring as well as protection.
- Ensure practical measures to ensure equality in the appointment of men and women s advisory councilors as well as Turaga and Marama Ni Koro
- Provide funds for institutionalization of gender equality measures through capacity building programmes of disaster committees at community and village, district and Tikina as well as provincial level

Infrastructure:

The 2017/2018 National Budget must ensure there is adequate resourcing for the rural electrification scheme to prioritize affordable and clean energy delivery to communities in the following areas:

- Central Division: Waituri including a population figure greater than 500, Vunimasi including a population figure greater than 40, Kaba Island including a population of 54 villagers
- Northern Division: Nadamole village including 33 families and a population figure greater than 100 villagers; Dromoninuku village including 71 families;
- Western Division: Sabeto, Barara, Vuda Back Road, Lomolomo, Viseisei, Teidamu, Drasa/Lololo, Savu/Abaca, Tomuka, Tavakubu and Taiperia seaside with a combined population figure greater than 2000.

The 2017/2018 National Budget must ensure funds are allocated for the upgrade of roads including maintenance of culverts and drainage systems for the following areas:

Central Division:

- Draumakita including 60 households, upgrade of the Vuci road to cater for communities in the interior of Nausori
- Vuci, Waituri, Kaba village, Kalabu Housing, Dilkusha and Valelevu with a combined population figure of approximately 1684

Northern Division:

- Vunimoli with a population figure of approximately 3000
- Naleba and Naleba No. 2 with a population of approximately 680, Vunivau with a population of 500

- Nasoni Settlement and Vunicuicui with a population of approximately 3000

Western Division:

- Ba -improved drainage system for all rural, urban and agricultural sectors in Ba.
- Lautoka - Sabeto, Barara, Vuda Back Road, Lomolomo, Viseisei, Teidamu, Drasa/Lololo, Savu/Abaca, Tomuka, Tavakubu and Taiperia seaside with a population figure greater than 2000
- Nadi - Malomalo, Tubeinasolo, Malamala and Nawaka with a combined population of approximately 647
- Rakiraki -Irish crossings at Savusavu and Burelevu washed away during Tropical Cyclone Winston affecting access to services for 15 villages in the interior of Nalawa and Saivou,
- Tavua - Dramasi, Natolevu Kadavu Settlement, Lubulubu, Qalela, Wainivoce and Matalevu with a population figure greater than 300; ensuring funds are also allocated for the provision of bus shelters along all roads in the Tavua district

Water Supply

The 2017/2018 National Budget must ensure there is adequate funding for provision of clean, piped water supply in the following areas:

- Central Division: Kaba village with a population of 54
- Northern Division: Jerusalemi settlement including more than 24 families and 168 women, Nabaci village including 23 families and 30 women, Naweni Village including 40 households
- Western Division: Volivoli, Ellington, Wailevu, Wairuku, Narewa, Dugopatu, Navolau No. 1 and Nakorokula in Rakiraki

Flood Prevention:

The 2017/2018 National Budget must ensure there is adequate resourcing for flood prevention measures to address flooding in the following areas:

Central Division:

- Vunimasi and Nakaulevu with a combined population of approximately 200
- Kalabu Housing
- Valelevu, Dilkusha, Waituri, Vuci and Lami with a combined population figure of approximately 1050

Northern Division: Vunivau, Lagi, Tawake, Vunicuicui, Bulileka, Vunimoli, Naleba and Naleba No. 2, Namara, Namau, Nanuku and Nabaci with a combined population figure of approximately 10,132

Western Division:

- Ba - dredging of rivers and creeks including the Ba River, Namosau, Toge, Koronubu, Nailaga, Natutu, Nawaqarua and Votua as well as villages across the Tikina Ba Zone including Tikina Bulu, Tikina Nailaga and Tikina Qaliyalativa
- Nadi - completion of dredging for the Nadi River impacting flood affected communities along its banks including Namotomoto including 202 households, Navoi, Nakavu including 60 families, Saunaka, Navakai including 150 families, Avasania, Sikituru including 300 families, Magalevu, Nawaka including 600 families, Nadi Town and the Nadi Back Road with a combined population figure of over 1312
- Rakiraki - dredging the Vaileka River impacting flood affected communities with a population figure greater than 2000
- Allocation funds for the diversion of the Navakai sewerage line away from the Nadi River.

Local Government:

- The budget must reflect a specific provision for (i) development and implementation of a gender policy for each town council (ii) allocation for local government elections including ensuring special measures to enhance representation for women in local government
- Additionally, the 2017/2018 national budget must also make an allocation of funds in all town council budgets for the establishment of children-friendly spaces including spaces for breast-feeding mothers, development of public convenience facilities such as in Tavua town including the upgrade and maintenance of rubbish bins

The 2017/2018 National Budget must ensure there is an allocation of funds for substantive consultations with local women and human rights organisations on development planning processes including local governance systems that takes a human security approach including:

- Women's Information Network (WINET) Fiji with more than 30 members including communities in Valelevu, Samabula and the Laucala Beach Estate, Haus of Khameleon including 50 members of the LGBT in Suva.
- Pacific Rainbow Advocacy Network (PRAN) to ensure the human rights of approximately 60 members of the marginalized communities including LGBT and sex workers in Lautoka, Nadi and Ba are protected,
- Tavua Disabled People's Organisation with approximately 120 members
- Fiji Disabled People's Federation – Nadi Branch

Agriculture:

The 2017/2018 National Budget must strengthen and support the contributions of rural women and women farmers to the agricultural sector, food security and nutrition and the economic well-being of their families and communities, and to enhancing agricultural and rural development, including small scale farming, and ensure that they have equal access to agricultural technologies, through investments and transfer of technology on mutually agreed terms.

Funds allocated to the Ministry of Agriculture must ensure a greater inclusion of women in food security programmes which will ensure effective crop rehabilitation.

Agri-marketing programmes should be reviewed to reflect the role of women in agricultural production

Investment in the agricultural extension programmes should include the broadcast of crop prices which should also be made available via public information channels which also involve women in market committees such as Central Division: Suva United Market Vendors Association with 365 members; Northern Division: Labasa Market Vendors Association with 500 members; Western Division: Tavua Market Vendors Association with 96 members

The national budget must ensure the Women's Plan of Action (2010-2019) is allocated funds and monitored to assure food security programmes, particularly food preservation strategies, are made available especially for rural women, single mothers and elderly women in the following areas:

Central Division:

- Kaba Women's Club with a membership of 37
- Arkriti Mother's Club with a membership of 10
- Navua Multiracial Women's Club with a membership of 30
- Korociriciri Mother's Club with a membership of 18

Northern Division:

- Buakonikai Women's Group on Rabi Island with a membership of 40
- Naleba Multiracial Women's Group with a membership of 32
- Association of Anglican Women with a membership of 50
- Bulileka Young Mother's Club with a membership of 12
- Vunicuicui Multiracial Women's Club with a membership of 57
- Vunimoli Arya Mahila Mandal with a membership of 17
- Soqosoqo Vakamarama Bua with a membership of 500
- Nasaulevu Women's Club with a membership of 15

Western Division:

- Lomolomo TISI Mother's Sangam with a membership of 320
- Badrau Multiracial Women's Club with a membership of 40
- Badrau/Clopcott Youth with a membership of 30
- Ba Senior Citizens centre with 55 members
- Nalalawa Women's Club with a membership of 50
- Nasivi Women's Group
- Soqosoqo Vakamarama Vuda with a membership of 312
- Veilomani Women's Club with a membership of 20
- Sangam Women's Club in Rakiraki with a membership of 50

Rural Development:

The 2017/2018 National Budget must ensure there is an investment of funds that will ensure women's access, control and ownership of land in communities in the following areas:

Central Division: Vunimasi in Navua with a population figure of more than 40 and Korociriciri in Nausori with more than 600 households

Northern Division: Naqai with more than 38 households, Vunicuicui with more than 40 households, Naleba including 69 families and a population figure of approximately 480 and Naleba No. 2 including 30 families and a population figure of approximately 200, Bulileka including 100 families and a population figure of approximately 700, Lagi village including 20 families and a population figure of approximately 140

Western Division:

- Tavua - Vuqele including 93 households and a population figure of 300, Tagitagi with 465 households and a population figure greater than 2000,
- Ba - Koronubu including 150 families, Namosau including 70 families and Nailaga Tikina including 150 families in the Western division;

Health sector:

The 2017/2018 National Budget must ensure there is adequate funding for the resourcing of local and district health centres including essential medicines, medical personnel and equipment in the following areas:

Central Division:

- Upgrade the Valelevu health centre to hospital to cater for the increase in population in the Suva-Nausoru corridor
- Upgrade of the Nausori and Valelevu health centres to cater for communities in the interior of Nausori as well as Vuci, Waituri, Kaba village, Kalabu Housing, Dilkusha and Valelevu with a combined population figure of approximately 1684

Northern Division:

- Tawake Nursing station to be upgraded to cater for the district of Tawake including 6 villages with a population figure of approximately 350,
- Upgrade of the Lagi village health centre including 20 families and a population figure of approximately 140,
- Upgrade health services on Rabi island including for provisions for a dispensary in Buakonikai village with a population figure of approximately 800

Western Division:

- Upgrade of the Koronubu Health Centre to cater for Benai, Qerelevu, and Korovuto, the Nasavu area and Nakavika, FSC compound, Badrau, Tauvegavega, Varoka, Nailaga and the Ba HART Home with a combined population figure of approximately 6811,
- Nacula Health Centre in Yasawa including for provisions for the building of a maternity unit with qualified midwives and a medical boat for approximately 800 families,
- The Sai Health centre in Viseisei including for provisions for an ambulance and an extension of operating hours from Monday – Friday for communities including Drasa Vitogo, Lomolomo, Lautoka Rifle Range, Vuda, Matawalu, Delana, Waiyavi and Tomuka with a combined population figure of approximately 7360
- Upgrade of all health centres across Tavua district catering for communities including Vatukoula Backroad, Nakavika, Yalado, Vuqele, Tavualevu, Dramsi, Waikona, Waikubukubu, Toko, Yasiyasi and Tavua town with a combined population figure of approximately 1851

The 2017/2018 National Budget must ensure there is adequate funding for the resourcing of sub-divisional hospitals in the following areas:

Central Division: Navua Hospital to cater to the health needs of communities in Vunimasi and Nakaulevu with a combined population of approximately 200

Northern Division: Savusavu Hospital to cater to the health needs of communities including Buakonikai in Rabi, Nanuku in Vuya, Bua, Namau in Nabouwalu, Naweni and Nabaci villages in Savusavu with a combined population figure of approximately 1,909

Western Division: Nadi and Lautoka hospitals to provide non-discriminatory services for women and young women of all diversities including people living with disabilities and members of the LGBT community

Human Security Trends

Political Security

Women and girls from across Fiji have shared that political security for them is about having 50% representation of women of all diversities in all community, local and national decision making structures such as villages, disaster management, local government and national parliament.

In communities in Suva, Lautoka, Tavua and Labasa for example, women have identified the need to invest in supporting women leaders already in local governance structures including in faith-based organisations, farming communities as well as in market places.

However cultural and social barriers continue to prevent women from meaningfully participating in decision making resulting in the perpetuation of discrimination and the ongoing cycle of violence.

What the Women Say:

“Women who are managing the farms (are) not only managing the farms but they manage the family, the community, and also the farms that they work in. What they need, is that promote strategies to increase the participation of women in decision making at all levels... that at least we push at least 30% of women to be represented when they are planning, when they are managing the farms - they should be included to be involved in managing these areas of agriculture. When we talk about farming, when we talk about getting their produce to the market, there are broken bridges,” Boseiwaqa added. “They do not have proper access to roads so that is an increased burden for women (who have to) send their produce to the market.” – Fane Boseiwaqa, femLINK rural convenor

“Where women are always the recipient of violence, it is always money. It has to do with money because what the women say is in most places, the men when they come home, they expect food on the table but they don’t really know the financial struggle that the woman is facing.” Losana Derenalagi, femLINKpacific Nadi/Lautoka convenor

“What I would like to see in the Development Plan is more budget for... training of our women leaders so that the voices could be raised.” Reverend Angela Prasad, Anglican Association of Women, Labasa

“We have 14 advisory councillors in Lautoka and we are only two women in the team, so putting our issues across is a bit difficult to go through the other 12 men.” Shakuntla Permal, Lomolomo Advisory

“Mostly I been following most of the village about the Turaga-ni- koro, anything happen in the village like disaster, you hardly see any Turaga-ni- koro to follow up, to see what is happening.”
Dimakita Lena, Naleba Multiracial Women’s Group

Economic Security

Women’s participation in decision making is inextricably linked to their economic security.

Our network convenings have identified key issues affecting women and girls’ ability to secure their economic livelihoods including affording healthy food, access to health care services as well as access to clean and reliable drinking water.

For example, in communities in Ba, Tavua, Rakiraki and Nausori as well as across Vanua Levu, women leaders have noted the negative impact of poor quality infrastructure on their ability to access market places placing further strain on their ability to sufficiently budget for their families’ needs.

What the Women Say:

“Economic security means going out at sea in the village, collecting beach-de-mer, going out fishing to sell in the market to feed my family.” Merewairita Nasiri, Kaba Women’s Club, Kaba Island

“We need capacity-building and more workshops to educate our vendors because if anything comes up and they don’t know what is going on and they are going to say why am I going to benefit from that if I go and attend the workshop.” Akesa Lewamotu, United Market Vendors Association, Suva

“Where women are always the recipient of violence, it is always money. It has to do with money because what the women say is in most places, the men when they come home, they expect food on the table but they don’t really know the financial struggle that the woman is facing.”
Losana Deranalagi, femLINKpacific Nadi/Lautoka convenor

“Economic security is for me... because of (my) disability (means ensuring I) can get employed in any companies.” Laniana Serukalou, Fiji Disabled People’s Federation, Ba

“We plant a lot of vegetables for our home-use and this has been destroyed and now we have to buy from the market and there’s not enough vegetable in the market as well and we have to spend a lot of money on that.” Reverend Angela Prasad, Anglican Association of Women, Labasa

“The Department of Road should allocate more money for the tarsealing of rural road... at least 30 km from Labasa Town.” Manjula Devi, Vunimoli Arya Mahila Mandal, Labasa

“We don’t have enough space to do gardening at home so we end up buying things from the market and... the market prices are really high and (so we have) to buy cheaper things like... tinned stuff from the supermarket which is no good for (our) health.” Yashmin Khan, Almadina Women’s Club, Nadi

Food security

Rural women leaders are the central providers of food, fuel and water in their homes and communities. Women from our networks have reaffirmed the inter-linkages between food security and other pillars of human security including the impact of disasters and women’s access to income-generation opportunities.

Since 2015, unpredictable climate patterns have continued to affect rural communities in Fiji for a prolonged period. The impact of long droughts and periods of heavy rains have only been compounded by stronger cyclones such as TC Winston. For example, in Tavua, Rakiraki, Nadi and Ba as well as Macuata, Cakaudrove and Bua, women have reported the poor-quality soil impacting their ability to plant vegetables and crops.

As women are the central providers of food, water and fuel, the lack of environmental security has placed an undue burden of responsibility on women to manage the impact of these changes.

What the Women Say:

“From last month, they’ve been provided these seedlings but all these have been washed out or washed away from the three days of continuous rain.” Fane Boseiwaqa, femLINKpacific Tavua/Ba/Rakiraki convenor

“They usually say here “go and look for food” that means they go out to the sea, they go out to the bush and all these things here and they are the ones that keep getting up early.” Lucille Chute, femLINKpacific Programme Assistant, Labasa

“My recommendation is that increase budget allocation for the Department of Agriculture to support the promotion of women in agriculture programmes including through community radio and media platforms.” Mareta Tagivakatini, Labasa Market Vendor’s Association, Labasa

“We don’t have enough space to do gardening at home so we end up buying things from the market and... the market prices are really high.” Yashmin Khan, Almadina Women’s Club, Nadi

“In my locality the produce has gone down, the vegetables are all decaying and the root crops are almost damaged so the cost of living is high.” Shakuntla Permal, Lomolomo Advisory Councillor, Lautoka

“The price of food items is increasing every month. We really have to squeeze our (food) budget to fit the monthly budget.” Filomena Koroi, Dilkusha Methodist Women’s Group, Nausori

"We have noticed that the high rising sea level along coast...it has really spoilt our vegetation and we are trying very hard to do our backyard gardening." Inise Adikuila, Soqosoqo Vakamarama Vuda, Nadi

Environment Security

Since 2015, unpredictable climate patterns have continued to affect rural communities in Fiji for a prolonged period.

In Vunicuicui, Labasa, Nausori as well as communities in Rakiraki and Lautoka, women are constantly facing flooding during periods of heavy rain due to blocked drainage systems.

The successive natural disasters that impacted the Fiji Islands in the first months of 2017 are a clear signal of the future – greater climate unpredictability, persistent droughts and stronger cyclones, resulting in more complex and frequent humanitarian emergencies. Increasingly, complex and frequent disasters are confronting an existing humanitarian system of response that is not properly prepared to cope.

Radio, especially community radio, has proven to be an effective tool for disaster management because it is an efficient way to give information suited to needs of the community packaged in local language. Our Women's Weather Watch model has been a platform for women in affected communities to get facts and news and share their innovations in disaster preparedness and responses despite the disruptions to lives and livelihoods of families and communities.

What the Women Say:

“Now as the Advisory Councillor I think the Women's Weather Watch and femTALK89 FM has given us all the early warnings of disasters coming in, the correct and accurate information that we can share with the community, it empowers the girls and the women so they can go up and be part of that team.” Shakuntla Permal, Lomolomo Advisory Councillor, Lautoka

“Living in the delta of... the Nadi River we have to know in advance and (so) resilience means to me that I have to know what's gonna happen.” Inise Dawai, Tikina Sikituru Women's Club, Nadi

“When the heavy rain fell in the Laqele area the buses did not come for one week so the schoolchildren stayed at home.” Jai Mati, Vuqele Multiracial Women's Group, Tavua

Health Security

Health security concerns for women have been inaccessibility and affordability of medication, lack of maternal health care, poor hospital facilities and lack of medical and health professionals as well as an increased need for psychosocial care.

Specific health security issues were raised for pregnant women, women living with disabilities, elderly as well as women of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE).

Additionally, environmental concerns such as floods and polluted water sources are causing further health issues due to the impact on food crops and outbreaks of mosquito-spreading diseases such as dengue.

What the Women Say:

“For mental health, there’s not a lot of resources available... so I think we need to increase the resources and also increase information... to grass root levels.” Maxine Tuwila, Youth Champs 4 Mental Health, Suva

“(There is a) Lack of equipment and medicines in the hospital and if private sector pharmacies could be placed on an on-call roster to deliver medicines to the rural hospitals too.” Ashna Lata, Navua Multiracial Club, Navua

“Tawake is a district of about six villages, but the quarters for the nurse it’s the same building to serve the patient.” Disavu Daugunu, Tawake Women’s Club, Macuata

“(In) our village... because of the landslide, they can’t go to health centres for treatment.” Titaku Tabuariki, Buakonikai Women’s Group, Rabi Island

“In terms of the Sexual Productive Health and Rights Curriculum what they’ve actually done is they’ve sort of simplified the curriculum to basically be about just your body biology and genetics. It doesn’t talk about relationships, it doesn’t talk about diversity at all.” Benjamin Patel, Haus of Khameleon, Suva

“Most of the school children are still studying in tent(s). Whenever it’s rainfall (students) come back with wet clothes, uniform, bags, books and shoes...it’s not safe, it’s not healthy.” Salome Raqiyawa, Nalalawa Women’s Club, Rakiraki

Personal Security

Women from our networks have reaffirmed that personal security is about feeling safe and secure at all times. It is about having safety with dignity as well as empowerment, self-worth, freedom and autonomy. Rural women leaders have collectively expressed a large degree of fear and uncertainty which prevents them from realizing their human security to the fullest.

Poor quality infrastructure in remote communities in Nausori, Lautoka, Ba, Macuata, have been identified as a common safety concern for women and girls and members of the LGBT community who are also vulnerable to discrimination and violence. In Tavua and Suva, disability rights activists have also identified particular barriers in terms of accessing disability friendly transportation.

What the Women Say:

“They need to build more hostels in the campus so that young ladies, young girls are safe instead of staying with their relatives or some unknown family members where things can rise up like violence.” Salome Raqiyawa, Nalalawa Women’s Club, Rakiraki

“This is concerning about the safety in the nights when they go out to the communities or when they visit other friends, some of the communities they don’t have street lights.” Agu Tuinasau, Pacific Rainbow Advocacy Network, Lautoka

“As a young trans, personally, security is very important to me, because (I) grew up in a community with many different races, of peoples ... discrimination and violence are the problems that us trans are facing.” Steve Allen, Youth Champs 4 Mental Health, Suva

“I need a safe environment ‘cos I’m a young girl with disability and where I am staying now, like sometimes I’m scared... when I go out at night.” Laniana Serukalou, Fiji Disabled People’s Federation, Suva

“What’s most important to women at that time is their safety and security or safety with dignity and most of the time that is overlooked especially with service providers.” Adi Vasulevu, femLINKpacific Northern convenor

“While the increase in money to (the) 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 Sadranu, Tavua Disabled Persons Association, Tavua

“Going into bus is very hard because sometimes even with me it happens, when you climb into a bus the steps are very high.” Sudeshna Singh, United Blind Persons of Fiji, Suva

Community Security

Rural women play an essential role in supporting their communities when affected by crises. They understand their family's priorities, community needs, local realities, and how this connects to national development agendas.

Women from communities in Ba and Tavua in the western division, Nausori in the central division and Macuata in the north have expressed a clear need to train local government officials to carry out comprehensive and continual community assessments to assess the needs of the community.

Additionally, the investment in women as first responders will ensure the availability of sex, gender, age and disability disaggregated data that can inform local and national development strategies including during humanitarian settings.

What the Women Say:

“Information is very important, but for those living in the interior like that or those living in rural areas like that, they been feel left out in (terms of accessing) information.” Unaisi Sadranu, Tavua Disabled People's Association, Tavua

“For us the conversation of inclusivity is about having that evidence... based information for us to be able to have a clear dialogue and understanding of the reality and the experience that transgender women face in Fiji.” Sulique Waqa, Haus of Khameleon, Suva

“The Ministry of Women should review their Plan of Action to accommodate marginalised women specifically those of the minority like the LGBT and sex workers so that they may be able to have a sense of ownership... and to feel comfortable to go to evacuation centre and not to practice their own resilience and be isolated on their own.” Bonita Qio, Pacific Rainbow Advocacy Network, Lautoka