



Section J in Action

PACIFIC WOMEN AND THE MEDIA: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

‘SPC recognises that the media are a source of empowerment for communities, as information and knowledge enable people to make informed decisions about issues that affect their lives’ (SPC, 2013)



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The Beijing Platform for Action: A Visionary Commitment

Women's information and media networks have been responsible for sharing information from global and regional conferences to women at the community level, since 1975, when the first UN Conference on Women was held in Mexico.

This has contributed to building a truly global women's movement with a solid basis of leadership and linkages resulting in an expanded network of communications and information that stretch into the farthest reaches of the world.

The legacy of women's media networks who negotiated for the broadening of the Women and the Media section of the Beijing Platform for Action, to reflect the opportunity for women to be recognized as producers of their own media form resulted in the inclusion of the Strategic Objective in Section J which recognizes the need to increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication:

Women and Media - Section J - of the Beijing Platform for Action - has two strategic objectives:

- Strategic objective J.1. Increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication.
- Strategic objective J.2. Promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media.

Realising the Potential of Women's Media Networks

"Policies should also ensure that participation in media training programmes and in the production of content is inclusive and reflects the diversity of the communities." (Pacific Beijing+20 Report)

Since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) advances in information technology have facilitated a communications networks linking women and bridging the rural and urban divide, as well as sharing information across national borders.

The communiqué of the 2005 Pacific Women's Ministerial Meeting affirmed the important role of the media in advancing gender equality in their outcomes statement which stressed the importance of the media as powerful tool which can either promote or shut out women's issues from public discourse. They further recognized the need to work with the media to change the stereotyping of women in line with the gender equality agenda.

The Pacific Women in Media Action Plan led by UNESCO and SPC (2006) was an attempt to work with the media organisations including national and regional media networks such as the Pacific Islands News Association (PINA) highlighting the need for media guidelines, standards and practices to explicitly state a commitment to gender equality. Media gender monitoring projects were identified as ways in which the media could also analyse their content to prevent negative and stereotypical portrayal of women.



The Beijing + 15: Review of progress in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action in Pacific Island countries and territories (SPC, 2010) noted that the media has a key role to:

- Disseminate all health-related sex disaggregated data
- Programmes to eliminate VAW should feature a collaborative approach involving NGOs, government agencies (NWMs, health ministries, justice and legal sector, police and state-owned media)
- Support through voter education, to eliminate patriarchal attitudes to women and leadership and build support among political and community leaders as well as the public.
- Disseminate information on the human rights of women widely It also noted the use of media initiatives as a platform for collective policy advocacy for the advancement of the UN Security Council's women, peace and security resolutions.

Specifically in relation to the implementation of Section J of the Beijing Platform for Action, the report highlighted the absence of national and regional mechanisms for standard-setting in media and communications (electronic, print, visual and audio) and that in 2010 only two national media organisations had developed gender policies – the Fiji Broadcasting Corporation (2007) and Palau Office of Broadcasting Services (2008) however monitoring and reporting under them would be key.

The report also noted that while electronic networks have succeeded in advocating for specific gender equality and women's rights priorities, such as Violence against Women as well as Peace and Security, there is a danger that rural women especially are becoming further marginalised in the new 'digital divide' due partly to affordability but also to the lack of infrastructure to provide services to rural areas.

femLINKpacific's women-led community radio model is cited in the report; what is lacking are the regulatory frameworks addressing content for community-based media operations as well as a policy for the equitable operation of community information centres.

However, as AMARC's Gender Policy notes, that while community radio together with internet and online communications provide opportunities for women to network and communicate on an equitable footing, there is a need to also bridge the policy divide (because unfortunately):

“policy-making has largely ignored women's needs online, leading to an environment that has been largely designed by and for men, and which worsens both the information gap between men and women as well as the negative portrayals, overt commercialization and sexualisation of the female body. Community radio can play a role in helping to bring these specific concerns to the policy table, and promoting the role of women both in the use of ICTs, and redressing this political imbalance”.



The 2010 Beijing + 15: Review of progress in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action in Pacific Island countries and territories provided the following set of recommendations:

Governments

- Review or develop national media policies and strategies with reference to the BPA and RPPA strategic objectives on Women and the Media to ensure they are aligned.
- Support training of NWMs and other gender advocates in the use of the media to progress the BPA and RPPA goals including through the preparation of media releases on gender-related issues and strategies for responding to media reports that present negative and stereotypical images of women.
- Support training of the media to increase awareness and encourage the promotion of the BPA and RPPA goals.
- Develop policies and programmes to give rural women and communities access to information and discussion forums on gender and development issues, including through ICT.

Donors and development partners:

- Support programmes aimed at women and media including the expansion of innovative projects to enhance rural women's access to ICT.
- Integrate gender into and develop gender-related indicators for all regional ICT strategies.

Civil society

- Ensure that programmes and strategies include women in the media component.
- Network and partner with existing women in the media groups to ensure strong media coverage of your work including in mainstream media.
- Develop capacity within your organisations to develop media publicity on the gender dimensions of your work.

Women and the Media was also included in the Recommendations and outcomes of the 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women (2013):

- Called for governments to recognise that community media and women's media networks are important for collaboration and partnerships.
- Called for governments and NWMs to use the Global Media Monitoring project to conduct quantitative and qualitative analysis of content to be able to ensure that government communication and media strategies effectively promote their gender equality commitments.
- Called for PICTs to recognise and fully respect the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples, especially the knowledge held by women, as well as in territories and areas conserved by indigenous peoples and local communities.
- Called for research with gender analysis by PICTs, in collaboration with development partners, on the impact of inappropriate uses of ICTs, and called for the development of national regulatory infrastructure and policy.



The Fiji National Gender Policy defines media as: “Any organisation or person which or who disseminates information, news, entertainment, opinion, advertisements, and similar items to the public, and includes newspapers, magazines, television, audio visual and radio broadcasts and electronic means of communication” - which is an example of how government policy can reflect the role of women-led community media within national policy.

It further commits to:

- Support women-led media initiatives including community radio, television and print media, and consider financial support for the supply and importation of media equipment.
- Consult with Information Communications Technology specialists from women’s media organisations when any reform is contemplated in relation to the regulation of Information Communications Technology.
- Review the Media Industry Development Decree from a gender perspective, and in particular regular reviews of the Codes of Conduct in the Media Industry Development Decree 2009 to incorporate a gender perspective of media ethics in Fiji.

In the Pacific, there have been several women’s media networks in the Pacific with women mobilizing together with appropriate and accessible media and ICTs, in particular community radio as well as the internet to bring women’s voices and recommendations to the attention to the general public, policy makers and private sector.

There is now also greater opportunity to enhance networking through the development of information programmes for non-governmental organizations, women’s organizations and professional media organizations to respond to the needs of women in the media, and support Pacific-women-led innovation in media and communications. to promote the human rights of women and equality between women and men.

In addition to the opportunity to use online media platforms such as Facebook and Internet, mobile phone technology has also been a new platform for mobilizing and supporting women in the agriculture sector, as well as a disaster preparedness and response tool such as Women’s Weather Watch.



Women's Weather Watch

“Without (an) updated database from the communities, we would not be sure of what the humanitarian assistance (would be for specific populations). Information and collection of data is really important because we are able to identify why, how many people living with disabilities, the pregnant mothers, the children so in terms of having humanitarian assistance, their specific needs would be addressed through the collection of the database” **Fane Boseiwaqa, femLINKpacific convenor/correspondent**

“For women with disability, access to information and communication is really needed especially during disasters. From experience, communication was not accessible and it was not accurate during the last disaster (TC Winston)” **Unaisi Bakewa Sadranu, Vice President of the Tavua Disabled People's Association**

Since 2004, femLINKpacific has demonstrated the relevance of a community radio network and what is possible when investing in gender inclusive public broadcast systems. The successful use of its “suitcase” radio model has shown that women are able to use media technology to help rural and young women to not only access news and information but also to produce their own radio programmes to bring attention to their own priorities.

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 the needs of the community, packaged in local language. It has been used to disseminate information and early warning messages.

Women's Weather Watch is femLINKpacific's inter-operable communication platform. 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 femLINKpacific'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.

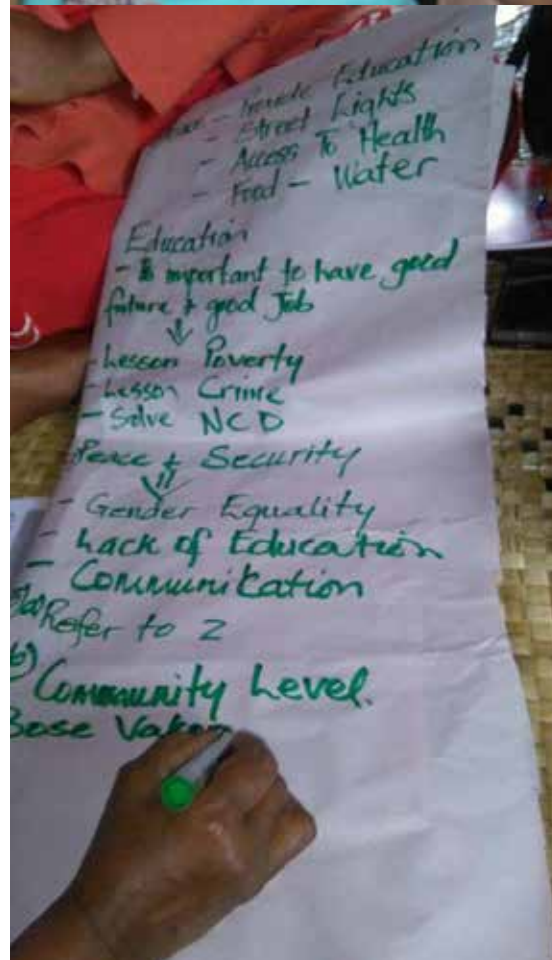
Women's Weather Watch is about more than addressing the infrastructure and political structures but a gender inclusive information and communication channel that bridges the gap between rural women's needs in the immediate response, the National Disaster Management Office and Meteorological Service.

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.



Recommendations for Governments:

- i. Governments must ensure that broadcast policy and regulations support women's media networks, in particular community media/ radio and feminist networks who have a demonstrated role to enable women of all diversities, including young women, to use accessible and appropriate Media and ICTs bridge the gap in media content in particular via the public airwaves.
- ii. Donors and development partners must earmark specific funding towards the resourcing of women's media networks in particular community media networks and feminist media initiatives which are addressing the persistent societal gender inequalities through the use of qualitative and quantitative research including media monitoring linked to the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP).
- iii. Donors and development partners must re-define sustainability of women's media networks in particular community media networks and feminist media initiatives by ensuring that at least 30% of all media capacity development funds are ear-marked for young women's development and content creationSupport the establishment of women's media networks, including electronic networks by enabling formal registration as media organizations.
- iv. Guarantee the freedom of the media and its subsequent protection within the framework of national law and encourage, consistent with freedom of expression, the positive involvement of the media in development and social issues.
- v. Develop, consistent with freedom of expression, regulatory mechanisms, including voluntary ones, that promote balanced and diverse portrayals of women by the media and international communication systems and that promote increased participation by women and men in production and decision-making.
- vi. Develop and implement community media policy in consultation with women's media networks to build on the experiences and knowledge of women's media networks;
- vii. Support women-led innovation in the area of Media and ICTs such as by ensuring National ICT Policy is consistent with policy and treaty commitments to inclusive gender equality and by providing financial subsidies for equipment and technology costs.



Women in Decision Making in and Through the Media

While there have been advances in certain areas of media across the Pacific region large gaps continue to exist in both traditional and digital media outlets. Pacific women are challenging the status quo as the producers of our own print and electronic media. Women also operate community radio stations, are media correspondents, producers of video documentaries, Information providers, Communicators and Media Activists.

To effectively represent women's role in media there is a need for media content to be able to redefine leadership through its content and ensure that language is empowering.

"This research showed that oral forms of communication, such as story-telling, popular theatre and face-to face interaction, were the most empowering way of sharing information between intermediary groups and grassroots women, and that radio was the most accessible communication tool for facilitating this interaction. Radio was preferred because of its low cost, accessibility in rural areas, linguistic flexibility, interactivity (for example, through talkback programmes), ease of use and lack of dependence on either electricity or literacy." - **People's Communication for Development Research Report (2004)**

By the time Pacific Governments adopted the Beijing Platform for Action, they were already implementing structural adjustment programmes that resulted in the reduced funding for public-service content because of corporatisation and commercialisation of public service airwaves. The limited funding that was available, was not enough to integrate commitments to gender equality in and through the media.

Subsequently broadcast airtime previously allocated for the communication of information that supported the empowerment of communities, and programme production and management styles that stemmed from the

communities, airtime has been dedicated for commercial advertising and programmes which promote and support the advertising agenda of commercial enterprises.

This has resulted in the further marginalisation of women from the public airwaves.

"In terms of accessible information, for what does it really mean for us women with disabilities...we see there is a variation of access needs depending on the type of disability in terms of information, accessible information. It's not a... one size fits all. It has to be looked at on the impairment." **Lanieta Tuimabu, Pacific Disabilities Forum**

"What community radio means to me is it is very easy access of information to the rural women, to the community and to me it is very important because communication is a tool of development for the women." **Susanna Evening, Catholic Women's League, Fiji**

The 2006 Pacific Women in Media Action Plan led by UNESCO and SPC reaffirmed the powerful role the media plays in shaping people's attitudes and beliefs, and that this power can be used to combat persistent negative, degrading, and stereotyped portrayals of Pacific women, and present a more balanced depiction of women's lives and contribution to society and recommended specific strategies to promote a balanced depiction of women and their lives as well as address the status of women in Pacific newsrooms.

The Fiji Government Gender Policy (2014) commits to allocate at least 30% of Public Service Broadcasting funding for the promotion of CEDAW and gender equality projects, and requiring all Public Service Broadcasting to have a gender policy and gender codes.

Recommendations for Governments:

i. Promote research and implementation of a strategy of information, education and communication aimed at promoting a balanced portrayal of women and girls and their multiple roles.ii. Support the development of and finance, as appropriate, women-led media, including community radio programmes, and the use of appropriate and accessible media and ICT platforms to disseminate information to and about women and their concerns.

iii. Support the development of and finance, as appropriate, women-led media initiatives, including community radio programmes, to promote women’s leadership, and women’s many different life experiences, including but not limited to their experiences in balancing work and family responsibilities, as mothers, as professionals, as managers and as entrepreneurs, to provide role models, particularly to young women.



Who Makes the News?

The Pacific has participated in the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) since 1995 when Fiji was the sole Pacific Island country to contribute towards the global study. In 2010 Papua New Guinea, Tonga, Australia and New Zealand joined enabling data to be collated across the wider Pacific region.

femLINKpacific has been the regional coordinator of the GMMP since 2003, using media monitoring as a tool to track the fair and equal representation of women and men in news media to promote gender equality in Pacific communities.

The power of the media to address gender inequality and the role of the GMMP to qualify and quantify the portrayal of women was also reaffirmed at the 2013 Pacific Women's Triennial conference, Pacific Island Countries and Territories:

- Governments to recognize that community media and women's media networks are important for collaboration and partnerships
- Governments and National Women's Machineryes to use the Global Media Monitoring Project to conduct quantitative and qualitative analysis of content to be able to ensure that government communication and media strategies effectively promote their gender-equality commitments

The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) is the most extensive global research of gender in news media ever undertaken. The first was completed in 1995, the second in 2002, the third in 2005 and the 4th in 2010. As a tool for change, the strength of GMMP lies in the fact that it provides hard facts and figures, the staple food of journalists and programme makers. In discussions about what is wrong with, or missing from, the pictures of the world we get from media content, hard data - together with concrete examples - reach media professionals with an immediacy never achieved by theory or abstract argument.

(<http://www.whomakesthenews.org>)

The 2010 Pacific report of the GMMP noted that in the Pacific/Oceania region, less than 30 % of the subjects of the news are women (28% in newspapers, and 22% for radio and television news). This was comparable to the percentages of female announcers or reporters producing the news on the day (28% of stories in newspapers and 22% for radio and television featured female news staff).

The GMMP Pacific 2015 report findings revealed women were still in the minority of news topics reflecting the gender inequality in the formal structures of decision-making and power of Pacific media outlets. In the Pacific region women make 25% of news subjects indicating that there has been no improvement in the presence of women in Pacific news in a decade.

It should however be noted that there has been a marked increase in the number of female reporters and presenters making the news from less than 30% in 2005 to nearly 50% across a wider scope of traditional media outlets.

In line with the Fiji Government Gender Policy (2014), recommendation to Governments:

- i. Conduct annual qualitative and quantitative gender audits by the Ministry of Information of content produced by government information networks using the Global Media Monitoring Guidelines, and support other media organisations in the conduct of similar audits for other media.
- ii. Collaborate with women's media networks to ensure the training and competence of all government media personnel on CEDAW, gender equity and women's empowerment, conducted by the Ministry of Information and/or the Ministry of Women.