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Here Are The Women (2017): Shanti Sharma (/index.php/en/actions/here-are-the-women/556-here-are-the-women-2017-shanti-sharma)



by Alisia Evans



“(The) employment agency should find (the) right jobs for the right people, not just allocate whatever they have on hand (because) people (will) get frustrated,” explained Shanti Sharma, National President of the Shree Sanatan Dharm Pratinidhi Nari Sabha Fiji. “Look at the person’s capability, their strengths and weaknesses and then provide that kind of job for them.”

As President, Sharma has become a strong voice for her community – highlighting issues such as unemployment, low wages and poor infrastructure and putting forward recommendations during our femLINKpacific Lautoka monthly network meetings.

“Recently (in) Lautoka, in Drasa Vitogo, there has been flooding in the area because of rain,” Sharma highlighted in our Lautoka April 2017 district meeting. “There has never been flooding in that area before but now because of the poor drainage system it has happened. I urge the government to look into the drainage system of Lautoka.”

Following her early retirement as a bank officer, Sharma, who is also a former scholar of the Dudley High School, found she had more time to get involved with the Nari Sabha, one of the seven committees of the Sanatan Dharm Pratinidhi

Sadbha of Fiji (Sanatan Fiji) which is the largest organization of Hindus in Fiji.

And for Sharma this is where she demonstrates her passion for social work and her ability to lead. As the incumbent National President, Sharma now represents over 5,000 members across Fiji. Many, if not all of their members, she says have a key role of ensuring the peace and security in their homes.

“When we talk about peace it’s about (the) livelihood of the family (e)specially as mothers,” Sharma clarified. “We should see that there’s enough food on the table and how they cater for all the family needs.”

And it is this leadership role in the home that should be recognised more in the community.

“It all comes down to women (because) they are good decision- makers,” she emphasised. “When it comes to women they (are) the household managers and they know what is going inside their home and how to manage (the) expense of the house.”

“When they go out into the (workplace or community) then they know how to make the decision(s) there as well.”

femLINK has been providing a safe space for rural women leaders, like Sharma, to meet and discuss their human security issues particularly since 2004, when it launched Fiji and the Pacific’s first women-led ‘suitcase radio station’.

Today, Sharma is one of a core group of 440 women leaders in 13 geographical centres throughout Fiji who participate in district and divisional convenings to support their capacity development and ability to promote women’s leadership and influence local governance processes and contribute their news, information and stories which result in the production of a range of media initiatives including community radio programmes and podcasts, the ‘Community Radio Times’, ‘HEROWINS’ comic books, and the television series ‘Radio with Pictures’.

The human security updates from these leaders provide the evidence and analysis of the organisation’s Community Media Database, such as the ‘Women’s Human Security First’ and ‘Community Radio Soundbytes’, for policy recommendations which reach the various tiers of decision making including parliamentary submissions.

Ultimately, says Sharma, an enabling environment for women in their homes, communities and districts can support and empower women to be leaders in all sectors of society.

“They can be politicians, they can be teachers, they can be civil servants. They can be strong leaders.”